

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

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

Brother Roger L. Decker Editor
Workers Too Numerous to Mention

THE CHURCH OF GOD BELIEVES IN:

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

**SOME SPIRITUAL FACTS
PERTAINING TO THE CHURCH**

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

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

CONTENTS

Seek First the Kingdom of God 3
Winter 2003 Camp Meeting Tape List 7
The Wrong of Gambling 8
How to Handle Questionable Things 13
Youth Corner 22
The Vessels of the Lord 23

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Winter 2003 Camp Meeting Report

"I will hear what God the LORD will speak: for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints . . ." (Psalm 85:8). These words of the Psalmist well describe the privilege the saints enjoyed in the Winter Camp Meeting held at God's Acres. We were certainly privileged to hear the Lord speak through His faithful ministry. The meeting began Sunday morning, and as the saints gathered from near and far, the Spirit of God saturated the midst, so much so that the meeting began with an altar call, and many sought the Lord to gain help. Following that mighty outpouring, Brother E. David Stegmeier from Canby, Oregon, preached a challenging message from the Book of Esther entitled "For Such a Time as This." Sunday evening the host pastor, Brother Roger L. Decker, delivered a message concerning "A Real Christian."

Monday began with a rousing delivery of the words of the Prophet Ezekiel, "Show the House to the House," by Brother Wayne Hafley of Minvera, Ohio. That evening as a quartet sang "I Traded My Past for His Presence," the Lord moved into the service in a glorious manner. It was much as it was in the days of Moses or Solomon when "the priests could not enter . . . because the glory of the LORD had filled the LORD'S house" (2 Chronicles 7:2). The altars were so lined that it took much of the remainder of the service to deal with souls.

Tuesday morning the church was admonished by Brother C. H. Dickerson from Medina, Ohio, as he delivered his heart on the subject, "Coming Short of Spiritual Strength." The Tuesday evening service offered a very informative message concerning the use of tobacco. Brother Calvin Foster from Kensett, Arkansas, dealt with the topic "The Cigarette Smoking Christian." (This message tape should be obtained for every new convert who may be struggling with the habit of tobacco.)

Wednesday, the final morning of the meeting, began with Brother Charles Ferguson of Phoenix, Arizona, dealing with the words of the wise man in Ecclesiastes, "The Conclusion of the Whole Matter." In the evening service we heard Brother Allen Polston of Mechanicsburg, Indiana, preach on "God Is Seeking a People."

The Lord indeed gave us a glorious meeting. Each day began with the saints assembling together in the morning prayer service to seek the Lord's face in behalf of that day's services and to plead for the souls of the lost. Every evening prior to the evening service a Young People's service was held. The Lord gave us very favorable weather for the winter meeting, thus the attendance was very good. Each service and each message was divinely ordered of the Lord and edified the body of Christ. If you were unable to attend, we recommend that you order the tapes of the messages. We would encourage you now to put it into your plans to attend the Spring Camp Meeting here at God's Acres. We are confident that you will go home strengthened and renewed. We trust that we will see you in June when once more we will "hear what God the LORD will speak."

2004 Camp Meeting Dates

June 20-27

August 1-8

December 27-30

*Matthew 6:33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.
34 Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.*

SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD



Brother Roger L. Decker

Becoming Overanxious

In our Scripture text we find that Jesus was teaching His disciples on a mountain. Matthew 5:1-2 says: "And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying." Our Scripture text is a part of that same teaching. In Chapter 6, verses 25-34, Jesus dealt explicitly with thoughts of worry, or overanxiousness. In verse 25 He said to take no thought for your life, what you will eat or drink or wear. In verse 26 He mentioned that the birds do not sow or reap, yet God takes care of them. Then in verse 27 Jesus let you know that worry cannot add to your stature.

In verses 28-30 Jesus spoke of

the flowers and how God lavished much beauty on such short-lived species, so surely He will not forget you and me. God, who so wonderfully cares for the animals, the birds, the bees, and the flowers of the field, cares for you and me.

Jesus let us know that worry is a characteristic of the heathen, because they do not trust in God. He said in verse 32, "(For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." Jesus said they worry and seek after all these things. Why? They do not trust in God. They do not have God to help them, so they worry about what they are going to eat, where they are going to live, and where they are going to work; they become overanxious. Jesus said your Heav-

enly Father knows that you have need of these things. In the Scripture text Jesus gave the remedy for being overanxious, or burdened down with worry. Jesus let you know that being overanxious or worried could be overcome when God becomes the dominating power of your life. I am not talking about having forethought concerning what you are going to do tomorrow or on a job. I am talking about being so burdened down with the cares of this life that you cannot trust God. Instead of taking things to God, you become burdened down with them.

What is the remedy for overcoming these things? Jesus said, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God," or seek the will of God. When you seek the kingdom, you are seeking God's will. Too many peo-

ple are troubled, worried, fretful, and anxious about things because they do not seek the Kingdom of God. They are out of the will of God. When you get out of the will of God, those things that God would take care of for you become a real burden to you.

Again, in verse 25 Jesus said, "Take no thought for your life." He said in verse 28, "And why take ye thought . . . ?" In verse 31 He said, "Therefore take no thought," and then in verse 34 He said, "Take therefore no thought." Worrying to the degree that it affects you spiritually is the same state the heathen are in. They do not trust in God. That is what Jesus was dealing with. These are the main things the Gentiles seek in life: what they are going to wear, where they are going to live, and what they are going to eat.

Ways to Overcome Worry

Jesus gave two ways to overcome worry. First, you must seek first the Kingdom of God, or seek the will of God. Second, you must live one day at a time. Again, our Scripture text reads: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

Child of God, you must seek first the kingdom, and then live one day at a time. Your greatest need is to seek the will of God and to do those things that please the Father. God already knows what you need, and He will take care of His children. Do not let the things that the Gentiles seek after become number one in your life and cause you to become overburdened and over-anxious with worry. When you are out of the will of God, you cannot pray as you ought. If you are doing things that displease God, you cannot have audience with Him as you

might desire to have.

First John 3:20-22 reads: "For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight."

If you have condemnation in your heart, then you cannot have confidence in God. If you do not have confidence or trust in God, then you cannot please Him. It is only when condemnation is gone that you can have confidence in Him. Then when you ask, you will receive. However, you must keep His commandments and do that which is pleasing in His sight. When you seek first the Kingdom of God, you are seeking His will. If you are displeasing God, then you are out of His will. When you get out of the will of God, you can be overcome with worry and become over-anxious.

Friend, if you are a sinner, you are out of the will of God. If you will be honest, the things that trouble the Gentiles are troubling you: what you wear, how you look, your money, and so on. When all these things become troublesome to you, you become over-anxious. You may ask, "How do you know that every sinner is out of the will of God?" It is God's will for all men to be saved; that is right in the Scriptures. Paul, writing to Timothy, in 1 Timothy 2:3-4, stated: "For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." The will of God is that all men be saved and come to the knowledge of the Truth.

Second Peter 3:9 says, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." God does not want to see you perish, or die lost. He takes no pleasure in the

death of the wicked, whether it is spiritual death or physical death.

Are You Troubled With Condemnation?

If you have condemnation in your heart, you are out of the will of God. The cares of this life, just the strain of everyday living, are too much without God. Certainly the Christian has cares and pressures and demands, but thank God for One to whom he can talk. Without God these things are too much to bear. God did not ordain for us to live without Him. Many people turn to alcohol and drugs in an effort to overcome feelings of over-anxiousness. Many people try to drink themselves into a state of contentment, but they cannot do it. Why? They cannot stay drunk long enough. They have to become sober sometime, and when they get sober, the demands and the pressures of life are still there.

Friend, if you are without God, you are like the troubled sea. Isaiah 57:20 says, "But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." When people get troubled, they become discontented and they get in trouble. They are prey for every fowl spirit. Many spirits are working against God's people today. The wicked are troubled in their souls and in their spirits continually.

If there is condemnation in your life, then you are troubled. No matter how much you smile and try to overcome it in your own strength, there is always that time when you are alone with God. When no one else is around, the still, small voice of God will be true to you, and that condemnation is going to trouble you. You should thank God that it does, otherwise you would go into a devil's hell without knowing that you are out of the will of God.

When you are living in sin, you are out of the will of God. John 3:18 says, "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believ-

eth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." There is no way out of condemnation except through Jesus Christ. You may join clubs and organizations, but that will not get rid of your condemnation. You could even join a church and yet have condemnation. The only way out of condemnation is through Jesus Christ. Romans 8:1 says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

Nothing can take away condemnation, or sin, except Jesus Christ. You could work yourself to death but not get rid of that guilt, except through Jesus Christ. If you were to be unfaithful to your wife and then go home and say, "I'm sorry," that would not heal the sin. Why? You must take that sin to Jesus Christ and be saved. The only way to get rid of condemnation is for sin to be removed from your heart. You cannot remove sin by religious works. Oh, many people try to do that. They work to put on a show with religious works. With their slick tongues, they try to express concern and act as though they have such a burden for people, but it is all phony because they have sin in their lives.

Religious Works Without Salvation

Jesus told of religious people who had false professions. In Matthew 7:21-22 He said: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?"

Look at the boldness of those people in those two verses of Scripture. People are bold today, bold enough to go to the Judgment with

their false professions, still deceived. What will they bring up? They will speak of their religious works: ". . . in thy name done many wonderful works?" Jesus said to them in verse 23, "And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Many people will stand before Christ and point to their religious works. Religious works without salvation is like having an automobile without an engine: it may look good, but it will not go anywhere.

God is not against righteous works, but He is against sin. Those people will brag about their religious works, but Jesus will tell them of their true condition: they still work iniquity. You may work yourself to death in a congregation and run door to door and talk about the wonderful works of God, but if sin is down in your heart, your efforts are a waste of your time and God's time. You must put first things first. You must get rid of the sin first, and then you can do the religious works.

Jesus will say, "Depart from me [not because of their religious works, but because of their sin], ye that work iniquity." Oh, how hard people are working on religious works, yet they have wrong attitudes, rebellion, compromise, bitterness, and unforgiveness in their hearts. They are trying to work religious works, but there is a deception in it. Those people will bring up their religious works at the Judgment; they were strong in their lives. Nevertheless, religious works cannot fool Jesus, and they do not fool the people of God who have discernment.

Church Joining

Religious works cannot remove condemnation, and neither can church joining. When I was living in sin, I did not know one church from another. I thought, "I'll become a Catholic. There are so many of those people." I knew they still lived in sin. I thank God that I heard the Truth. You can join every church on

the face of the earth and still be lost. You may ask, "What about the Church of God?" You cannot join the Church of God; you must be born into her. You have to come into the Church of God through the new birth. You should not join the church of your choice. God chose the church for us, and He never asked you or me about it. The Church of God is it! There is only one body, one faith, one Lord, one God, one baptism, and one Spirit. The Apostle Paul did not write to the *churches* of God at Corinth; he wrote to the Church of God at Corinth. He did not write to the *churches* of God at Galatia, but to the Church of God at Galatia.

Have you ever read about the church at Corinth? There were approximately one hundred thousand people in that congregation. They did not split up because they had too many people. They knew that division was sin and that those who took part in it were sinners.

In Matthew, Chapter 23, you can read about what Jesus said to the religious hypocrites of that day. He pronounced many woes on them. He was not addressing the publicans and the sinners. He was speaking to the orthodox Jews: the scribes and the Pharisees. He called them hypocrites. He said they would not enter into the Kingdom of God themselves, and they hindered other people from entering.

When you get saved, you become a member of the Church of God; He does not put you in any other church. Man does that. God puts you in the body of Christ, the Church of God. There is no other church. All others came from the minds of men who were out of the order of God. The Church of God came down from God out of Heaven, and that is where she is going back.

You may ask, "Can't I join the Church of God?" No. Psalm 87:5-6 states: "And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her: and the highest himself shall establish her. The LORD shall count, when

he writeth up the people, that this man was born there. Selah." Acts 2:47 reads, "Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."

Are You Seeking the Will of God?

Condemnation leaves only when you seek the will of God, not when you join a church. Religious works, church joining, and good works cannot remove condemnation. In Isaiah 64:6 the Prophet said, "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away."

Saint, your own righteousness was as filthy rags. Some people claim to be Church of God, yet they are backslidden. Oh, they may live a higher outward standard than most religious people, but there is a deception in that. They know how to talk and how to act, so there is a danger in that. Some people are full of self-righteousness. One may be a good mother and be charitable, loving, and kind; however, those qualities will not get her into Heaven. One may be a good father, support his family well, obey the laws of the land, and do community service; nevertheless, those attributes will not get him into Heaven. Only those who seek first the Kingdom of God will make it into Heaven.

Deathbed repentance does not offer much hope, especially when that person would not serve God when he was well. I would not want to go out of this world having a deathbed repentance. It is better than no repentance at all, but there is not much hope when that person knew better yet he lived to please self.

Sinner friend, only when you turn to Christ will condemnation be removed. If you profess to have an up-to-date experience of salvation, but you are not seeking the Kingdom of God first, then you are trou-

bled in your spirit and in your soul. Are you pleasing the Father? Are you seeking that which pleases God? Is God's will above everything else in your life? Jesus said to "seek ye first the kingdom of God." That means nothing else is tied with it, or in first place with it.

When it comes to Sunday school and the worship services, whose will comes first? Some people feel that attending church services once a week is enough. They struggle to make it on Sunday mornings. As a Christian, when the body assembles together for services on Sunday nights and Wednesday nights, you are duty bound to be there.

When it comes to soul winning, are you seeking God? Some people say, "Well, I don't have time" or "I don't have the patience" or "I don't have the finances," and on the list of excuses goes. What if people had said that when it came to your soul? If you are saved, undoubtedly someone had a big influence in your life and took time to seek God in your behalf. You may say, "Well, I have a job, and I have to work." You will not have any problem with God over that. However, you do not work twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Sometimes you are not working. Sometimes even at work, if you are not working alone, you can talk to others. Also, you can witness for the Lord when you are shopping.

Worry and the Cares of Life

When people get sloppy in their Christian experience, fears overtake them. Instead of having a concern for souls, they worry about their clothes, food, houses, and everyday life. All these things crowd out the will of God. The next thing they know, instead of being burdened for souls, their concern focuses on "me, myself, and I." The cares of life overtake them. Jesus said in Luke 21:35, "For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth." Jesus' answer to overcome these things was to watch and

pray always and to stay awake.

When the cares of life begin to work on a soul, what happens? First, the prayer life begins to dwindle. When that happens, one is not as keen on spiritual things as he once was. Often God reveals things through prayer. He can show you things that are working when you go to Him in prayer. Joshua would not have been defeated at Ai had he sought the Lord first instead of sending brethren to check it out. God would have revealed something to him. Had Joshua prayed first, he would have dealt with the sin in the camp and he would not have sent out only a part of the men. When Joshua got rid of the sin in the camp, God had him send out all the men to fight and defeat their enemy. When time spent in fervent prayer begins to dwindle, the burden for the lost decreases, and a snare begins to secure its captive and weave its web around him. How can you make sure this does not happen to you? You must seek first the Kingdom of God.

You can overcome worrying if you seek God's will and live one day at a time. Jesus said in verse 34 of our Scripture lesson, "Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Worrying about the future will hinder you from taking care of one day at a time. You might not even be here tomorrow. Jesus could come tonight. You need to take each day as it comes and each task as it appears. You should stop worrying about things that you know nothing about. You do not know a thing about next week, and neither does anyone else, but God does.

James 4:13-15 reads: "Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For

that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that." You know what a vapor is. You can see vapors coming from the stacks of factories. You can see vapor coming from a teakettle. It appears for a little while, and then it is gone. That is what your life is like. Even if you should live seventy, eighty, ninety, or one hundred years, it is as nothing compared with eternity. Many people are wasting their lives in sin. If they do not get straightened out, they will end up in torments in a lost eternity. What a waste for a human being to be destroyed by sin!

Worrying will destroy you. It is a disabling sin. The Prophet Isaiah wrote in Isaiah 26:3, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee." Sometimes worrying causes people to commit suicide. Some try to drown their sorrows in alcohol or drugs. There is a cure for it: one must seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. You must seek God's will above all else. Friend, you will never be sorry when you put God first and make His will the goal of your life. Only Jesus can satisfy your soul. Won't you let Him reign on the throne of your heart? You

will never be sorry.

A story was told of a man who once met a beggar on the street. The man said to the beggar, "God give you a good day, my friend."

The beggar answered, "I thank God that I have never had a bad one."

The man said, "God give you a happy life, my friend."

"I thank God," said the beggar, "that I am never unhappy."

The man asked, "What do you mean?"

"Well," said the beggar, "when it is fine, I thank God. When it rains, I thank God. When I have plenty, I thank God. When I am hungry, I thank God. Since God's will is my will, whatever pleases Him pleases me. Why should I say that I am unhappy when I am not?"

The man looked at the beggar in astonishment and thought, "What kind of fellow is this?" Then he inquired, "Who are you?"

The beggar said, "Well, I am a king."

"Where, then, is your kingdom?" asked the man.

The beggar answered quietly, "In my heart."

Friend, that is where Jesus wants to be—in your heart. If Jesus is in your heart, you can overcome

the obstacles that cause many people to end their lives quickly. Paul said in Philippians 1:21, "For to me to live is Christ." To Paul, Christ was most important in his life. You need to let Jesus be most important in your life. He is the One you need to seek above all else. He wants to help you. He wants to come into your life today. He wants to bind up your broken heart and heal it. He wants to open the prison door of sin so that you can go free, but you must seek first the Kingdom of God. You have to seek His will above your will. If everyone would seek the will of God, we would see unity as we have never seen it before.

Dear one, have you been overcome with worry? Have you slipped in your Christian experience and now things are beginning to trouble you? If that is your condition, the answer is to seek first the Kingdom of God. You must come right back to God and get help, and then you can live one day at a time. You should live each day to the fullest for Jesus Christ. If you will do that, those things that trouble the Gentiles will not overtake your life. You will have victory over them.

(Cassette C-2921E)

WINTER 2003 CAMP MEETING TAPE LIST

TAPE NO.	DATE	MESSAGE TITLE	SPEAKER	COST
C-5143M	12-28-03	For Such a Time as This	Bro. E. David Stegmeier	2.50
C-5144E	12-28-03	A Real Christian	Bro. Roger L. Decker	2.50
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Deuteronomy 24:6 No man shall take the nether or the upper millstone to pledge: for he taketh a man's life to pledge.



The Wrong of Gambling

Brother Calvin Foster

Satan's Stronghold

Through this message, I want to pull down one of Satan's strongholds, and that is gambling. In our Scripture text was a constitutional law of justice, equality, and charity. The Israelites used the millstone to grind their grain into flour. If someone took away an Israelite's millstone, it would have been the same as condemning him to starve to death or keeping him from making his living. This was a law that God set in place. If a man would have said, "I pledge my millstone," God would have been against that. One was not to take a man's millstone to pledge, because he would have taken away the man's means to eat and make a living.

When the gambling spirit gets hold of a person, he could care less about taking a man's millstone from him. One might even be taking a man's life from him, but that person could care less. That is a mean spirit out in the world of gambling. A gambler does not care about taking a man's millstone.

The word *gamble* means "to play games of chance for money or other valuable stakes; to bet on an uncertain outcome; wager." To gamble is to stake something on cards or the result of a race or to take great risks in business on speculation. A gambler risks money or other things of value. He will gamble his fortune on a turn of the cards. To gamble away something is to lose or to squander by gambling. Some people have recklessly gambled away a fortune in one night.

"Gamblers Anonymous" is a worldwide organization that works to help men and women who suffer from the driving urge to gamble. Members include people who have solved gambling problems. They meet regularly to share their recovery experiences with others whose gambling problems have caused them trouble and misery and who want to do something about it. The only requirement for membership is the desire to stop gambling.

The popularity of gambling is growing in America, and it is popu-

lar throughout the world. Many people gamble because of the excitement and the tensions of uncertainty. Others enjoy taking risks and enjoy the challenge of testing their skill or luck. Some people gamble because they enjoy competing with others. Many people believe gambling is a quick way to make money. In most cases, however, winning is determined by chance.

Some people oppose gambling because excessive gambling brings financial ruin to gamblers and families. You should not want gambling to come into your home. It will cause financial ruin, and it will ruin your family. People may take gambling lightly, but it comes from a spirit of covetousness. To *covet* is to fix your desire upon a passion, whether the thing is good or bad. Also, it is to long for, to lust after, or to desire to have more, always in a bad sense.

Gain Is Not Godliness

I want to deal with some Scriptures and some things the Lord laid

upon my heart. In 1 Timothy 6:5 Paul wrote to Timothy, "Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself." We are living in a time when people think that gain is godliness. They think that because they can buy a beautiful building or drive a fine car or live in a fine home that God is blessing them, but material or financial gain is not godliness.

Paul said in verses 6-10: "But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

I thank God that godliness with contentment is great gain. Brother, sister, you brought nothing into this world, and it is certain that you can take nothing out. You may pile riches upon riches, but you cannot take any of it with you when you die.

I am not saying that it is a sin to be rich. You can be saved and still be rich. However, the first part of verse 10 says, "For the love of money. . . ." Paul did not say that money is the root of all evil; he said "the love of money is the root of all evil." We are living in a time when people love money and material things. The love of money and the spirit of covetousness in people are keeping them from God.

Verse 8 says, "And having food and raiment let us be therewith content." I thank God for contentment. I have shoes on my feet, clothes on my back, a roof over my head, and in the wintertime my house is warm. I am as happy as I can be in Jesus Christ. I am content in God. Many people think gain is godliness, but do not be fooled; gain is not godliness. Some people say,

"Look how God is blessing us. At our church we have three buses and a brand-new building that is paid for." Nevertheless, if they do not preach the Truth and people are not getting saved, their so-called godliness is not worth anything.

The Spirit of Covetousness

The Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 5:9-11: "I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat." Notice that he said if such a one wants to call himself a brother in Christ, do not eat with him; in other words, do not have communion with him.

We read in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10: "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." Look at all the things that Paul listed with covetousness. An effeminate man does not want to be a man; he wants to walk as a woman walks, dress as a woman, and talk the way a woman talks. Paul said an effeminate man shall not inherit the Kingdom of God. May God help you to teach your young boys to be boys. There used to be a time when boys wanted to grow up and be men. Now some boys want to grow up and be effeminate. If you are a father, you should play ball with your boys, wrestle with them, and help them to become strong, stalwart men. You should not allow them to act girlish.

What are the qualifications of a minister? First Timothy 3:1-3 tells us:

"This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; [Filthy lucre is money. Many will not go somewhere to preach unless people give them thousands of dollars.] but patient, not a brawler, not covetous." A minister should not have a passion for money or for other things, longing after them in a bad sense.

Second Timothy 3:1-2 says: "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy." That old spirit of covetousness causes people to want to have more, wanting to have what they do not need.

The Spirit of Gambling

What is the lottery? It is a popular form of gambling in which drawings are held for cash prizes. In most lotteries people buy numbered tickets from authorized sellers or vending machines. Winning numbers are determined at random in public drawings. Many countries run national lotteries as a means of raising revenue. In the United States about thirty states and Washington, D. C., operate lotteries to supplement tax receipts. Lottery game players may win cash awards in millions of dollars. Winners of lottery prizes of one million or more usually receive payments over a period of years, and lesser amounts are paid in lump sums.

Let us look at the wisdom in Proverbs 13:11: "Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished: but he that gathereth by labour shall increase." Wealth gotten by vanity is an empty way of owning; in other words, it falls under the category of "easy-come, easy-go." One does not treat that money the same as if he had to work and sweat for it. Easy

money often seems to fly away, "but he that gathereth by labour shall increase." God's way is for you to make your living honestly. You should work hard for your money, cherish it, and be thankful for it; you should not throw it away.

I often think about gambling like this: Suppose a poor fellow who is working a job in a factory takes a vacation and goes to a casino. (I thank God that I have never been to a casino. I got saved when I was eighteen years old, and that is one thing from which God saved me. I thank God that I missed that by being a Christian.) The poor fellow worked hard, and now he is at the door of the casino. Do you think the casino has hired a guy to stand at the door who will look the poor fellow over and say, "Listen, fellow, you look like a working man on vacation. Are you sure you want to come in here? Is your mortgage paid back home? Are your bills paid? Do you know that 90 percent of the people who come in here lose? Do you know that this casino is not set up for you to win?" They would not have anyone at the door to warn him. Undoubtedly, the guy at the door would tell him, "Hello, Buddy! You are going to *win!* I can see it in your eyes. Come on in!"

A few hours later, they will have cleaned him out. That is the spirit of gambling. They do not care if you pledge your millstone, so to speak. They do not care that your mortgage is not paid. They do not care if you are about to lose your home or if the creditors have been calling you. They just say, "Come on in!"

"Better Is Little With the Fear of the Lord"

Proverbs 15:16-17 reads: "Better is little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble therewith. Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith." A stalled ox is a fat ox. In other words, better is a dinner with a pot of greens, some cornbread, and some cucumbers if there is love in that home. You might have a fatted ox,

but if hatred is there, it is no good.

With salvation we have something that money cannot buy. Salvation makes us happy here. I would not give up my salvation for anything. We read in Proverbs 16:16, "How much better is it to get wisdom than gold! and to get understanding rather to be chosen than silver!" The Bible says that Solomon was the wisest man who ever lived. He had great wisdom, and he said it is much better to get wisdom than gold. When Jesus Christ came on the scene, He said a greater than Solomon was here. We have Jesus, and we have the greatest wisdom in the world when we have Jesus Christ. It is much better to get wisdom than gold.

Many people do not think about anything but the gold of this old world, but one day they are going to leave it all behind. Friend, you cannot take any of it with you. We are just passing through this life. James 4:14b states, "For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." You may pile riches upon riches, but when your unsaved children or your unsaved family get hold of your wealth, they are going to go through it like General Grant went through Richmond. In other words, they will waste it all. You had better do what you can for God while you are living.

Luke 12:13-21 reads: "And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you? And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?"

"And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say

to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry [that is what the world is doing]. But God said unto him, Thou fool [I would never call anyone a fool, because Jesus said not to do that; but if God calls you a fool, you are a fool], this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

God's All-Seeing Eye Is Watching

The best friend you have in this world is the man of God who will stand in the pulpit and preach the Truth to your soul. A fool is one who lays up treasures for himself and is not rich toward God. Jesus said in Matthew 6:33, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." In Ephesians 4:19 Paul spoke of people who do not have God. Child of God, that is how you once were. He said, "Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness." To be greedy is to want or to take all that one can get with no thought of the needs of others, desiring more than he needs or deserves.

Let me give you a little information on sweepstakes. Sweepstakes are systems of gambling on horses, races, or other contests. People buy tickets, and from the money they pay, prizes are awarded to the holders of the winning tickets. It is a race or a contest by which the winner or winners are determined under such a system of gambling.

In 1 Timothy 5:22 the Apostle Paul instructed not to be hasty in choosing a leader. He said, "Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure." I can remember as a young convert in Christ how that Scripture rang in my ears very strongly. When I had not been saved long, a relative of mine used to like

to play the horses. One day he said to me, "Calvin, go down to the paper stand and pick me up a racing form." Right away I froze in my steps. I was fearful and respectful of him, yet I went to him and said, "It is against God for me to do that. The Bible says not to be a partaker of other men's sins." He was a test to me early in my experience, but I thank God that I stood my ground. Later in life, he tested me a few more times, but he knew that I meant business with God, and he respected me. He and I became very close. He would come and help me fix things, and I would help him as well. God does not want us to commit sin, and He does not want us to partake of other people's sins.

Some people sit around and call themselves Christians, and they know their relatives and friends play the lottery, so they want to give them a number. I call them "number givers with hope." They give the players numbers, and if they win, they hope they can gain some benefits. Others are "sneak players." They say they are saved, but they sneak around and play the lottery and gamble, even though they know better. Proverbs 15:3 says, "The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." You may hide it from your pastor or your wife or husband, but God's all-seeing eye is watching you.

Most businesses in America are small. Many companies have one hundred or fewer people working for them. I would hate to be the owner of a small company if my employees played the fifty-million-dollar lottery and won. What would happen to my little company? Some of them might stay, but most of them would probably quit. Can you see the cruelty in that, if many of your skilled laborers, those whom you had already trained and depended on, should suddenly quit? One thing that grieves me so is to see men and women standing in the lottery line to buy their lottery tickets after church. Shame on them! Seeing church people in lottery lines is grievous, pushing people out of the way and gambling.

The Folly of Sudden Wealth and Gambling

Let me share with you a few newspaper articles from *The Sun Times* dated back a few years. One headline reads, "Want a Million Headaches? Just Get Rich Quick." The article reads: "Rapid change offers potential psychological risks, psychiatrists say. 'When wealth comes in a gradual process, one can accustom to it very easily,' said Dr. Jerome. 'When it is sudden, it may lift the ceiling off people's lives and destroy the routines that define their personalities.' He has treated patients who have handled sudden riches well. In his view that means they have maintained familiar friends and patterns and behaviors and gradually improved their lives. 'If a person has a weak character, he becomes too self-indulgent,' the doctor said. 'Some go after fancy cars or fancy homes. Some of them become alcoholics.' Dr. Jerome has treated patients who have handled sudden wealth well, but others may not be so lucky."

Another article published in 1985 entitled "The Bar Waitress" reads: "Such was the case a few years back for a bar waitress in another state who won a fifty-thousand-dollar annuity. She immediately moved out of her mobile home into a house with five bedrooms, which was about three more than she needed. She also bought a house for her daughter. Before long, she was borrowing to keep up with her payments. Soon, she said it became an annual ritual for her to visit the bank to take out a loan on the next year's income. Meanwhile, she hurt her knee in a scramble with her husband, from whom she is now divorced. The lady is now back in a mobile home, not as nice as her original one. Up to her neck in debt, she cannot even go back to her bar job because of her injured knee. As for the money, she wishes she had never seen it."

Look at how gambling stained a baseball player's integrity. Another article written in 1990 entitled "Baseball's Pete Rose" reads: "They called

him Charlie Hustle, one of the best ball players in the world of his kind. He was banned from baseball for gambling on pro games and may never make it into the Hall of Fame because of his record off the field."

There was a man in Chicago named Flukie Stokes who proclaimed himself a professional gambler. He wore diamond rings on his hands. The Bible tells of the rich man in Luke, Chapter 16, stating that he fared sumptuously every day. That was the way this man was. On his wedding anniversary, he passed out one-hundred-dollar bills. He was killed in a hail of bullets when three gunmen opened fire on his 1986 Cadillac with a shotgun and at least one nine-millimeter handgun.

The Path of Self-Destruction

Young person, do not think it is a glorious life when you see gamblers. It leads to nothing but trouble. It is sin, and it is something that will destroy you. You need to thank God if you have a father or a mother to whom you can talk. You should be thankful to God and appreciate godly parents. You need to honor them while they are living. One day when they are gone, you will wish they were around to talk to you. I am not trying to scold you; I am trying to give you some wisdom.

One ex-football quarterback was arrested for gambling. In 1983 he served a year's suspension for gambling. His own words were, "Gambling put me on a path of total self-destruction, making me a compulsive gambler and a liar."

An article from *USA Today* entitled "Gambling Entertainment—The Percentage of Americans Who Play" stated the following facts: "10 percent gamble in river boat casinos, 10 percent gamble using slot-video gambling machines in bars, 20 percent gamble by participating in sports bidding pools, 54 percent gamble through the lottery, 29 percent gamble in casino gambling, 15 percent gamble in casinos on Indian reservations, 11 percent gamble playing

bingo, 8 percent gamble through legal sports betting, and 8 percent gamble through horse race wagers."

I thank God that I am free from all of that. I praise God that I do not have to be tied up in any of that. Gambling is becoming more and more popular. Don Mitchell, the Executive Director of the Illinois Council on Compulsive Gambling, defines a compulsive gambler as one who has an irresistible urge to gamble, regardless of the effect on family, career, health, or reputation. He said there are anywhere from 4 million to 4.5 million compulsive gamblers in the United States. It has probably grown more since his article was published. Friend, you might have an irresistible urge to smoke cigarettes or an irresistible urge to commit fornication, but Jesus can take care of all your irresistible urges. You need to be saved, and He will take care of it.

Don Mitchell's testimony reads: "I started gambling like most kids, in nickel and dime card games. I always liked the feeling of winning, and as I got older, I started going to the race-tracks and became heavily addicted. After winning a lot of money one day, I was going night after night to try to win more. Then I was borrowing money to make up for my losses—loan companies, personal friends, anyway I could get it. I quit fourteen years ago. I just couldn't go another day. I couldn't get any money anywhere else in the world. I was drinking heavily, and I was on the verge of a nervous breakdown. I contacted Gambler's Anonymous. They have a twelve-step program that is spiritually oriented. I used to think money was the highest thing in life. Today I don't believe that. I believe man has an obligation to help his fellowman."

"Set Your Affections on Things Above"

I thank God that I am under a spiritual program: I go to the house of God, get close to God, and stay saved. Many people gamble and do not even know how to gamble. The

poor fellow who does not have much money goes out to gamble, and the man says, "Hurry up, man, what's your number?" He has no business going out there with the little amount of money that God gave him. He is doing something without being sure of his ability and without being sure of the outcome. That is a foolish way to live.

People often say, "Good luck." Have you ever noticed that when something good happens to someone, the media always says, "He was so lucky"? When something bad happens to someone, people say, "He was unlucky."

When couples get married, often people say, "Good luck" and throw rice on them. I do not want to live by luck, or by chance. I want God. God put me with my wife, and we have been together for more than twenty-eight years. It was not by luck; it was by God. We knew that if we would stay close to God, He would keep us in love and keep us together. Couples can be married twenty-eight years or longer and still have love. You do not have to become tired of each other.

Saint, you need to be watchful. You should not let the devil cover your eyes. Should you get something in the mail or if someone should call you and tell you that you have won something, but you need to send money, you need to be careful. If you have won, why do you need to send money?

How about this one: Someone calls you on the phone or sends you a letter in the mail, saying, "Buy this winning lottery ticket." Now, if it were a winning lottery ticket, why would they want to sell it to you? There is another fraudulent scheme where someone calls and says that you have won a vacation, but you have to buy something to win. I repeat, you must be careful, saint!

Most of the time people are looking for something for nothing. If you are looking for something for nothing, or if you are looking for something new but really cheap, you could get yourself into trouble. Most people who are looking

for something for nothing are the ones who get in trouble. That is covetousness and greediness.

Romans 13:13-14 says: "Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof." Paul said not to walk in wantonness. You cannot have everything out there in the world. You cannot afford everything out there. Young person, your parents cannot buy you everything you want. Many young people want expensive stuff, and they want to drive fancy cars. God's Word says not to walk in wantonness; it denotes excess, or absence of restraint and indecency. Many people are greedy and lustful. They want to gamble to get more and more, and they do not even need it.

Colossians 3:1-5 says: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry." Idolatry is image worship and pagan, and an idolater is eager for gain.

As we read in Ephesians 4:19-20, you have not so learned Christ if you are greedy and covetous and do not care about other people's needs, but only care about your own needs. That spirit of gambling will get hold of you if you are not careful, "but godliness with contentment is great gain. . . . And having food and raiment let us be therewith content" (1 Timothy 6:6-8). Gain is not godliness. May God bless you.

(Cassette C-5076E)

Romans 14:1 Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations.

2 For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs.

3 Let not him that eateth despise

him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him.

4 Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make

him stand.

5 One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.



How to Handle Questionable Things

Brother E. A. Wilson

The Bible Is for All People

We want to study about how to handle questionable things. I want you to think upon the last clause of verse 5 of our Scripture text: "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." There are decisions to make that we cannot find clear Bible teaching regarding the matters. Pastors have to deal with many things for which they cannot find clear Bible teachings, yet they have to hold a standard against them.

Sometimes people rise up and say, "Give me chapter and verse." Well, you cannot give them chapter and verse. We need to understand some Bible principles in dealing with questionable things. We must remember that the Bible was written for all people in all ages. That is the reason, when the Bible deals with the dress code, it speaks of modest apparel. The Bible does not say a woman's skirt should be worn halfway between the ankle and the knee,

nor does it say it should be worn three inches below the knee. However, the Bible states that our apparel should be modest. The Gospel has to be preached to every tribe, every nation, and every kindred.

Around the world are many different customs. What is counted as modest in one place would not be modest somewhere else. We all agree that if a lady's dress is long enough, when she sits down, it should come down over her knees and cover her nakedness. We accept that as modest. However, if a sister were to get on a plane and fly to India, the minute she got off the plane, the missionary there would say, "You need to change your clothes, because I don't want to take you before the saints dressed that way. You aren't modest." In India modesty means that skirts are worn down to the ground.

One Gospel, one Bible, was written for all people in all ages. It was so written that it fits every need and every situation, no matter where

it is around the world. This is the wonderful thing about the Bible. Now, since the Bible was written for all ages and for all people, we ought to begin to understand the reason that many things cannot be spelled out in detail and still be preached to all people everywhere.

To make that plain to you, I will illustrate. Suppose the Bible were to read, "Thou shalt not smoke Camels." Well, it was written for all ages. Can you see the rabbis back in A.D. 38 reading that? One might have said, "Oh, I know what that means. When you park your camel, don't park it too close to a fire; because if the wind is blowing the right way, you will smoke your camel. That is what God meant."

Today someone would say, "That is ridiculous!" Well, I am trying to make it sound ridiculous, because I want you to see that within the Word of God is something for people of every age. Things may not be spelled out in certain words, yet the Word of

God lifts up the standard to people in every age.

Suppose that in the Old Testament time, people had read such words as, "Thou shalt not watch television." They would have wondered, "What is that?" Although the television is not mentioned in the Bible, questionable things are dealt with in the Bible in an understandable manner. You know very well that people who lived three thousand years ago could not have understood, "Thou shalt not watch television."

The Bible Is Condensed

We have to realize that since the Bible was written for all ages, it is a condensed Book. John 21:25 tells us, "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written." Even if you should live a hundred years, you could never finish reading the Bible if all things had been written therein.

Though the Bible is a condensed Book, that does not mean that Jesus spoke teachings and words that were a waste of time. Whenever He opened His mouth, He taught direct teachings needed by people somewhere to live for God. The most important things were written down.

God chose to reveal to Bible writers what He wanted man to know. Someone may say, "The Bible is the mind of God." The world could not hold His mind. Through the Bible, God revealed to man what He wanted man to know. The Bible is not a revelation of what God knows, but rather a revelation of what God wants man to know.

I read once where a man asked the question, "Did it ever occur to you that nothing ever occurred to God?" And it did not. Why? He is omniscient; He knows everything. Nothing could just come into His mind as thoughts do with us, because He knows everything. He knows the end from the beginning, and nothing ever just occurred to Him.

Since the Bible does not give detailed answers to every question, people ask, "What are we supposed to do as believers?" Some say, "I believe you ought to follow your conscience." On the contrary, that is not sound advice. Too many people are dabbling with things that are harmful to them. Godly pastors have tried to point out those things, but many people turn around and say, "It doesn't bother me." Well, they are following their own consciences, and that is dangerous.

Many religious teachers are telling people to follow their consciences, but I repeat, that is not sound advice. Your conscience is regulated by what you believe. If you do not believe right, your conscience will not lead you right. Your conscience can be taught. You can lay hold of principles of Truth, and your conscience can be regulated and educated through the Truth of God's Word until some things may not bother you at all that would worry other people to death. Nowhere in the Bible does it tell you to follow your conscience. How are we going to deal with matters so questionable that one may believe and another may not?

Be Willing to Obey God

I am going to mention some guidelines to help you decide whether a particular thing is right or wrong. The first guideline is, you must be willing to be obedient to God, and He must see that you are willing to do right when you understand it. This is very necessary. Jesus stated in John 7:17, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."

You cannot approach God with the attitude, "Lord, You tell me if it is right, then I will make up my mind whether I am going to do it." Many people fail in that point. They say that they want understanding, that they want the question removed, and that they want clear-cut understanding of what is right and wrong; but then they want time to decide

whether they are going to do it.

If you get real understanding from God, first you must have a willingness, an attitude of heart and a frame of mind, that says, "You show me what is right, and I will walk in it." You cannot approach God with the attitude that you want understanding, you want the question removed, and then decide what you are going to do about it. That frame of mind will not work. If you are not willing to do God's will when you know it, then the rest of these guidelines will be useless to you.

For instance, take new converts. They might not have been saved long, maybe only a few weeks, and they see Truth clearly, rejoice in it, and measure to it. Then some saints who have been around for years say, "I can't see it." Friend, your will has much to do with how you handle your spiritual obstacle. You must will to do whatever God reveals to you as being right.

If it is a point of question between two things, God must see that either way is acceptable to you. No matter which way God leads, you must take your hands off before God will work. He used wasps, hornets, and other means to move His people in Old Testament times, but you do not read about these types of things in the New Testament.

God is not forcing anyone to move. In fact, when God begins to reveal light to you, and you begin to understand to the place that you are afraid that it might be true, and then you put out a fleece, you are in good shape to become deceived. You cannot read any place in the Bible where God instructs you to put out a fleece to know His will. Someone may say, "Gideon put out a fleece." Yes, but can you read anything in the Bible about putting out a fleece from the Acts of the Apostles on? No, because the Holy Spirit has been given to guide you. I cannot impress it upon you too much: you must have a definite willingness on your part to do whatever God clearly shows you to do if you are ever to get certain questions removed.

Taking Your Burdens to the Lord in Prayer

The second guideline is very simple but necessary: you must definitely pray about matters. There is more that you can do after you pray, but there is nothing more that you can do until you pray. There is a need to get people settled down to really pray through about things, to get an answer from God. In this modern time, people find it much easier to ask questions of others rather than to really pray.

Paul wrote in Philippians 4:4, "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice." This letter will mean more to you if you realize that Paul was writing it while he was down in a damp jail cell. He had been mistreated and misused, and he had every reason to feel sorry for himself. The saints should have visited him to encourage him, but no one went; so he wrote a letter to encourage them.

In verse 5 he said, "Let your moderation be known to all men. The Lord is at hand." James said, in so many words, "If you are thinking about going to this town or that town to sell and make gain, do not make a move until you see if the Lord is willing." Although we, as the people of God, preach on the kingdom and hold before the people that He is Lord right now, when it comes to practical living, too many feel they have to make the decision.

Jesus Christ is our Savior and Lord. He is at hand, or on the job, writing to the church. Since He is at hand, verses 6-7 tell us: "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."

One of the saddest Scriptures in the Bible is James 4:2, which says, "Ye have not, because ye ask not." James did not say that you do not have because you ask not, but it certainly includes the leading of the Lord in questionable things. We could put it in these words: You have not divine direction because you ask not. You are bound up in questionable things

because you fail to ask the Lord with a submissive attitude, to show a willingness to obey Him and to be ready to walk as He directs.

Paul said, "The Lord is at hand" and "Be careful for nothing." The Greek version says, "Don't be anxious about anything." Why? Anxiety is enfeebling; it will eat the very life out of your energies. When anxiety is working on you, you will use up your strength faster than you can get it from food. It will wear you out and make you sick. If you were to go to the best doctor in the country, he would tell you, "Your organs are fine. Nothing is organically wrong with you," but you are sick. What is the trouble? Anxiety has hold of you.

Someone may say, "I am in a sweat, and I don't know what I'm going to do. There are questionable things in my life. I wish I could take the Word of God and read, 'Thou shalt do it this way.'" Although you do not read it there, Christ is still Lord, and He has ways of revealing things to you, to give you understanding about the questionable things in your life. Anxiety leaves a man not only where he was but also where he is ten times less capable than he was.

Anxiety will bring confusion and failure. Why? Because in your anxiety, you will make the wrong move. Paul said, "Be careful for nothing"; in other words, you should be anxious about nothing, because it will work against you. Anxiety is an irritating thing that will ruffle the temper, upset the balance of the spirit, and bring moodiness and sharpness. Anxiety will set a man at war with himself and against his neighbor. It will cause one to war against God's providence and God's appointment.

Anxiety Is a Sign of Mistrust

When you become anxious, you are showing that you do not really trust the Lord to bring the thing to pass. I do not want to hurt anyone, but anxiety is a sign of feeble faith and often a sign of languid obedience. Paul lets you know that you

should be anxious about nothing. Why? The Lord is at hand. He is One who has been given to govern your life. He is your Savior and also your Shepherd. He will lead, guide, and direct you.

The Lord is at hand, and He still says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). That verse is not just for sinners. Sometimes God's people labor under things. One of the hardest things to labor under can be a questionable thing to which you do not have the answer and you do not know whether to go or to stand still. You do not know whether to turn to the right hand or to the left. You can get heavy laden with that, but Jesus still says, "Come unto me, . . . and I will give you rest."

Someone may say, "I prayed about it." Well, that is not what the Bible teaches about praying. You just prayed about it and left it there. Jesus taught in Matthew 7:7-8: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." This is the law of prayer. Someone may say, "I asked, but I didn't receive it." Look at the word *asketh*. Jesus did not say "every one that asked," but rather "every one that asketh." That means one must keep on asking, keep on seeking, and keep on knocking. Everyone who does that receiveth. Too many times individuals pray and do not get the answer, so they turn to other means. That is where they get in trouble. Jesus taught that "every one that asketh receiveth."

God does not always speak directly to one, but He has called my name. When He called my name in the middle of the night, I sat up straight. He can holler "Emerson" as no one else ever has. One night He woke me up to some things that the devil had deceived me on. I did not know there was anything wrong, but God spoke to me and told me. Yes, He calls His own sheep by name. He

did not say "John." I would not have paid any attention to another name.

He called "Emerson," and that shook me. I was wide awake in a second of time, and He wanted to talk to me. I am in no way saying that God will always speak that way. I am not saying that He will speak to you in an audible voice and give you direction. Nevertheless, He will lead you when you pray through. When you hold on and ask until you touch God on His throne, He begins right then to work out a program, to lead you in the way He wants you to go through the leading of His Holy Spirit. You can depend on it.

Wait for the Leading of the Holy Spirit

Again, you need to pray and wait for the leading of the Holy Spirit concerning things that are not spelled out clearly in the Bible. Jesus said in John 16:13, "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth." You already read that all truth is not in the Bible; it is condensed. Now we are getting on dangerous ground. Someone may say, "I won't go any further than what the Word says." If you say, "I am not going to do anything except what the Word says," you are foolish. The big end of the things you are doing, the Word does not mention. Let us get right down where we are living.

When I preach, I preach down the main streets, so to speak. I cannot mention everything. However, while I am going down "Main Street," the Holy Ghost runs all the alleys. Often people have gotten convicted of things that I have never even mentioned. How did they get convicted of them? The Holy Spirit was doing His office work!

When things are not spelled out clearly in the Bible, if you really desire to do what is right in the matter, you can expect to be led of the Holy Spirit. Romans 8:14 says, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." The Scripture does not say, "As many as walk

by the Bible." You may say, "He is liable to lead you anywhere." He will never lead you contrary to the principles of the Word, but He gets down into more minute details than the Word mentions. He nails it down right where you are.

If you study about the church in the morning time, you can see how the Holy Spirit directed the work of God. I still believe the Holy Ghost directs. For example, in Mark 16:15 Jesus said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." From that point, if the Holy Ghost does not direct, you will not have the least idea where to go. Where are you going to go first? I want you to see that the Word and the Spirit work together. God's two living witnesses work together to direct our lives. Again, Romans 8:14 says, "For as many as are led of the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." The morning church waited when things were questionable until the Holy Spirit definitely directed them. Acts 13:1-2 reads: "Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them."

Many people do not understand the difference between a voluntary fast and one that God puts on you. When God puts a fast on you, you will not hunger. Jesus was not hungry until after the fast was over. When you voluntarily fast, you will hunger, but you turn it down to spend the time in prayer. God has put fasts on me. Once I was holding a tent meeting in the state of Pennsylvania, and we had a storm and the tent blew down. There was a brother there who worked so hard to help us. I had not been home quite a week when his wife called me, and she was crying. She said, "They found out my husband has a tumor on the brain,

and it is cancerous. They give him no hope."

My wife knows how much I like steak, and she had just prepared one and had placed it on the table. When I was called from the table, I was ready to eat it; but when she called me and that thing struck my heart, I could not eat steak or anything else. The thought of anything to eat was sickening to me, and it stayed that way for two and a half days or so, until I got a call back. Thank God, they went back to the doctor, and he said, "It's gone!" They X-rayed him again, and it was gone.

You do not have to worry about depriving yourself of food if God puts a fast on you. However, you can fast voluntarily because of a heavy burden, something you want to see worked out, maybe a questionable matter. You may not know which way to turn, so you fast before God. The fast does not get God to move; the fast puts you in better shape to see the hand of God in the matter.

Follow the Holy Spirit

Returning to Acts 13:2, we find that all those ministers were at Antioch, and the Scripture says, "As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them."

In Acts, Chapter 8, you can read of Philip going down to Samaria. A great meeting was going on, and all at once the Spirit told him to leave there and go over to a desert place where there were not any people whatsoever. I am sure that Philip had a struggle. (I have been in situations similar to that, when God would tell me to move. I thought, "Surely either God has made a mistake or I have made one. I must have misread the Spirit's leading.") All at once a chariot came along; it was perfect timing. What happened? The treasurer of Ethiopia found the Treasure: the Spirit of God.

When Philip finished preaching Jesus to the Ethiopian, the Ethiopian got saved, and the Spirit caught

Philip away to somewhere else. That is the positive side. Let us read Acts 16:6 and look at the negative side: "Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word [the Gospel] in Asia." They were all ready to cut loose and preach the Word in Asia, but the Holy Ghost said, "No, don't preach it there." I sometimes say, "The stops as well as the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord."

Someone may say, "Oh, the Gospel needs to be preached everywhere." Not right at some certain time. I want you to see that we need to lean on the Holy Spirit in a greater way. This is our greatest weakness. Too many people are trying to preach one place when God wants them somewhere else. Someone may say, "If you preach the Truth, it will work everywhere." No, I don't believe that. We have to preach the Gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven. The Holy Ghost is the One who convicts, saves, heals, and works the work of God. What good does it do to go out and preach and tell people what God will do if the Holy Ghost is not there to do it? We need to get our ears tuned in a keener way to what the Holy Spirit says.

In Romans 8:26 Paul let us know that "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities." What is one infirmity each of us has? Many times we do not know how to pray as we ought; that is one of the worst weaknesses we have. We think we know how to pray and what to pray for, but God realizes our infirmity, or our weakness. We do not know whether to pray, "Lord, send me this way" or "Lord, send me that way." We have a weakness, but we have a High Priest who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities.

One of the infirmities that He is touched with is our inability to know how to pray as we ought. If you will be honest, how much stumbling around do you do in your prayer life before you really get to praying? You sort of pray around the block. "Thank

You for helping me in the Sunday service. Lord, I thank You for every soul that is saved; please strengthen and help them. O God, give me something for Wednesday night." You keep going until you finally take hold and begin to really pray. Then the Holy Spirit, our great High Priest who understands our weaknesses, comes on the scene, and begins to line our prayers up according to God's will.

When you pray according to God's will, He hears you; and you know that when He hears you, you have the petition for which you ask. The Holy Spirit leads, guides, and helps you in prayer. You need to be willing to walk as God directs you.

Is Your Life Pleasing to God?

Someone may say, "There is something in my life, and I don't know whether it's right or wrong. Some preachers say it is, and some preachers say it is not. How am I going to know? I want to know." All right, we will apply some guidelines to it. The third guideline in dealing with anything, whether it is good for you, whether it will bless or hinder you, whether you ought to do it or not, is this: Does the thing please God?

We are living in perilous times, because men are lovers of their own selves. Many people are endeavoring to live to please themselves. You may ask, "Do you mean that I ought to ask God whether it pleases Him?" First John 3:22 says, "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight."

When you ask God about a questionable matter, you need to put the test on it: Does it please God? There is no problem when the commandment is clear. You can read it or someone can preach it to you right from the Word. "Whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep His commandments."

The commandments say, in part: "Thou shalt not steal," "Thou shalt not

kill," "Thou shalt not bear false witness," and "Thou shalt not commit adultery." However, there are no commandments in the Bible that say: "Thou shalt not dance," "Thou shalt not listen to rock music," or "Thou shalt not listen to country music if the lyrics are suggestive."

The point John was endeavoring to put forth was this: though some things are not written as a commandment, we know that "whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things [things that may be beyond His commandments] that are pleasing in his sight."

Certain matters are very plain when there is a specific commandment, but when we get into those things for which there is no commandment, we must turn to the second part of that verse and ask, "Does it please God?" This gets beyond the thought of "I don't feel it will hurt me." Do not even talk about that. The question is, Does it please God? Saint, to please God ought to be the highest ideal of your life. Why? Pleasing Him brings the greatest blessing that man can behold. If you displease Him, it will bring a curse upon your life.

Can you say that this questionable thing in your life pleases God? The way you dress, where you go, or what you do, does it please God? If you cannot actually say, "Yes, I *know* it pleases God," you should not do it, no matter what it is. I am still in the Bible. We receive what we ask because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.

Paul stated in 2 Timothy 2:4, "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier." We know that Christ is here in the spiritual sense, but we also believe in a second coming of Christ. A crown is laid up for only those who love Him and who love His coming.

Paul said in 2 Timothy 4:8, "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." If you really love His coming and love Him as you say, that love for Him will shine out through your life. You will want to please Him above everything else.

My wife and I were married when I was drafted into the military during World War II. When I went overseas, my wife could not go. Finally, thank God, when it was my time to come home, I landed in California and got to a telephone and told my wife, "I am back in the United States. In three days I will be in Indiana, and I am going to be discharged. I want you to be there."

When I landed, I saw her standing there, and do you know what she was wearing? She had on the dress I liked, and she also had her hair fixed the way I liked. The thought never entered her mind of how she liked to do it. Why? She was pleasing her husband, and when I looked upon her, she wanted me to see her just the way I liked her.

This same thing holds true for us as the bride of Christ. After all, this life is a dressing room for eternity. We are just fixing up to please Jesus. The world does not understand it. I tell all the sisters, "If you are going to make your own dresses, get the pattern out of this Book." We are not to follow the world's fashions; we are to set the standard for the world.

This point of pleasing Him will answer many questions. There may be questionable things of which you may say, "That doesn't bother me; it doesn't trouble my conscience." However, when you get right down to answering the question, "Does it please the Lord?" it answers the question for you. If you cannot honestly say, "Yes, it pleases the Lord," then you ought to quit it, or get rid of it. Not only should you do things differently, but you should do them right.

Paul brought up this very thought in 2 Corinthians 5:9, saying, "Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him." The Greek version says, "Wherefore we make it our aim

that, whether we are present or absent, we may be well pleasing to Him." Wherever you are, whether in Florida, in your yard, or in the church yard, you ought to have one aim, and that is to please God.

Are you living to please Him? This would get rid of much confusion in a congregation. Why? When you do things to please yourself, what you do may not please someone else, and what others do may not please the next one, and people fall into confusion. If everyone sells out to God to the place where each one is living to please God, making sure things are pleasing to Him, you can tell. I have been around long enough to know that when God is pleased, He will let you know.

Do All in the Name of Jesus

Colossians 3:17 reads, "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him." The fourth guideline is, Can you do it in the name of the Lord Jesus? We are ambassadors for Christ; we are here in His stead. The Church of God is the body of Christ, the only body of Christ here on the earth. Can you do whatever you do in the name of the Lord Jesus?

As a Christian, you are to put on Christ. The only way the world will ever see Christ is through the Christian. We are here to be followers of Him and to live Christlike. When you are in question about something, can you truly do it in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ? Can you actually smoke in His name? Can you say, "I know Jesus smoked while He was here, and I am His follower. I'm doing it in His name"? No, you cannot do that.

Can you curse and swear in His name? Can you dance in the name of Jesus? If you cannot do it in the name of Jesus, it is wrong. Psalm 23:3 says, ". . . he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. The latter part of Colossians 3:17 says, ". . . giving thanks to God and the Father by him." Can you truly,

from the depth of your heart, pray and give thanks to God for it? How would you like to stop at a bar on your way home, have the bartender pour you a drink, and say, "Just a minute, fellows. Father, I thank Thee for this drink that Thou hast given me." There are things that God put together that you must not separate, but there are things that God has separated that you must not put together. They do not mix.

If you are a Christian and you say, as some people do, that you cannot see the wrong of drinking, if you were to stop and really thank God from your heart in a prayer of thanksgiving, you would close down the bar. God would move in there, and men would choke on their drinks.

Have you ever read about Peter Cartright? He was an old-time minister who traveled on a horse. When the horse gave out, he walked. He believed in going into all the world to preach the Gospel. He was led from one community to another. Once he was down in the mountains of Tennessee when darkness came on him. It was a Saturday evening, and God told him to try to hold services in that community. There were just a few houses there in the mountains, and there were not any motels then. He had to ask people to allow him to stay either in the house or in the barn.

Those people were nice, and they invited him in the house and said, "Yes, we will keep you all night, preacher." To his surprise he heard them saying there was going to be a dance held there. The whole community came in for a Saturday night dance, as they did in those days. He thought, "My Lord, what am I going to do?" The Holy Ghost told him, "Don't be anxious; I'll take care of it."

Soon the fiddle playing started, and the people began to dance in the living room. He sat in the corner, since he had nowhere else to sit. To his surprise, about the third number, a beautiful young lady came and took him by the hand. She said, "Mr. Cartright, I want to dance this time

with you."

He asked, "My God, what am I going to do?"

The Holy Spirit told him, "Just go ahead, you will be all right." So he took her by the hand, got up, and went out in the middle of the floor.

He asked the fiddlers, "Would you stop the fiddling for just a moment. I never do anything without thanking God first. I cannot dance if I don't thank God first." So he dropped to his knees, and he gave a jerk on the young lady's arm, and she kneeled too. He prayed for about five minutes before he began to weep and cry. Fifteen souls got saved, and a revival broke out! He was there for two weeks, preaching the Gospel and establishing a congregation.

Limiting the Holy Spirit

We can limit what the Holy Spirit can and will do. Many are getting baldheaded and wrinkled with anxieties when the Lord is at hand. The Holy Spirit is here to direct and work out every circumstance. God wants to see the world saved. Regardless of what the devil sets up, God can upset it in a moment of time and glorify Himself right in the midst. Someone may say, "Oh, I would have told her that I would not dance." Well, he listened to the Holy Spirit, and many people were helped.

The fifth guideline is, does it bring glory to God? Someone may say, "The Bible does not speak plainly concerning this matter." Does it bring glory to God? First Corinthians 10:31 says, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." Can you do it to the glory of God? One translation says, "Do it to the honor of God." Are you honoring God as you do it?

There may be some things, at least in the beginning, that no one could say is sin; but they come short of the glory of God. You are not glorifying God in those things. Paul taught in 1 Corinthians 6:20 that you are to "glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

The sixth guideline is, Does it offend other Christians? This old, independent spirit that people have will not work. Some people say, "What I do is no one else's business! If they do not like it, so what?" That attitude will not work. You cannot be a part of the church and have that kind of attitude. You will not get beyond the thought of, "The thing that I'm doing doesn't bother me." Again, does it offend other Christians?

First Corinthians 8:12-13 says: "But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend." Paul knew well (he wrote it to Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:3-5) that there was nothing unscriptural about eating meats of any kind. However, the point Paul was bringing was that Christian liberty should not be exercised at the expense of offending another brother.

The word *offend* means to trip up. You have to keep in mind that Paul was dealing with what we call "conscience matters." There is no biblical commandment that states you must not eat meat, but we are getting into a closer realm of conscience matters, where one person might believe something and another person might not believe that. Paul let us know that we must not let our Christian liberty go so far that it gets into someone else's liberty.

For example, some brethren may not believe in insurance, and there are brethren who do, and God accepts both of them. You must not let your stand against insurance be so strong that you trip up a brother who believes in insurance. We are dealing with conscience matters; we are not dealing with things that pertain to salvation. We do not have to agree on every point to have unity.

It is necessary that we study these things. Why? Because people are tripping over certain things that people are trying to promote as doctrines and commandments, say-

ing, "You must do them." The Word of God does not put those things in that position. I want to be fair, just as fair as God is. When I talk about people getting offended, I realize that we are living in a time when people can get offended at most anything. I am not saying, in any way, that you need to do something or quit doing something because you heard that some person got offended by it.

However, I am saying that if what you are doing has become an offense to several people whom you know are good Christians, or it is offensive to the church, hindering the work of God, you ought to love God and the church enough to quit it. Though you do not see within yourself the wrong for you to do it, you should refrain from doing it for the sake of the church and for the sake of your brother.

We Are Our Brother's Keeper

There are places where I do not go and things that I do not do, even though I do not believe those things are wrong. Yet, because I am an example and someone weaker might be affected by those things, I do not go. We are our brother's keeper. I am not talking about getting offended at the Word of God, but about things that you cannot nail down by a commandment and say they are right or wrong. Some people get offended at almost anything, and if we moved every time someone got offended, we would not be able to live.

Paul was talking about a brother who is endeavoring to do right. You know his spirit is right, and you know he is doing everything he can to live right. When he tells you what you are doing is an offense, then you should not do it, even though you can freely do it and not bother a thing. Therefore, you need to ask, Is it an offense to others?

Jesus said in Luke 17:1-2: "It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe unto him, through whom they come! It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the

sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones." Whenever something you are doing is definitely an offense to a real Christian, and you take an attitude, "It doesn't make any difference to me what you feel about it. I'm going to do it anyway," it will bring sudden spiritual death to you. It will knock you out with God quickly.

James 3:2b says, "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body." We need to be reminded that we are our brother's keeper. If a thing in question offends other Christians, it is wrong. Putting it in plain language: what is right for one man may bring ruin to another.

"Hast Thou Faith? Have It to Thyself Before God"

The latter part of verse 5 of our Scripture text reads, "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." That is the seventh guideline. Verse 22a of the same chapter reads, "Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God." When Paul said "Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God," he was not speaking of justifying faith that cannot be hid. That kind of faith without works is dead. If you have it, you will show it. When the faith that saves you has works, then your life shines as a light to the world.

Paul was talking about some individual matters on which some may not agree but yet be Christians. Therefore, he said if you have a belief about a matter, have it to yourself. He was dealing with our knowledge and persuasion of our Christian liberty in things that could be disputed. Staying right with the same chapter, Paul said that if you are fully satisfied, you can eat all the meat you want, keep every day the same, have it to yourself, and enjoy it in your own life, but do not trouble others with it.

I am included in those people Paul talked about in our Scripture text. "One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth

every day alike . . ." (verse 5). I am in that group that esteems every day much the same. I do not believe that you must observe a certain holy day. I believe you ought to live as holy Monday through Saturday as you do Sunday.

Some religious folks teach against the old Sabbath and do away with Saturday, and then they elevate Sunday with the same legalism. They set up certain scruples, things they say, "I will not do that on Sunday." They throw people into the same bondage that the old Sabbath Saturday threw them into. I do not esteem one day above another. If you do, that is your business. I am not going to argue with you. Sunday is the Lord's day, and I respect it, but I refuse to be bound with a legalistic idea about it.

Let me explain. If I need milk on Sunday, I stop and buy it, but I do not go grocery shopping on Sunday. If I need gas in the car on Sunday, I buy it freely, but I do not wait until Sunday to fill up the car and grease it. Every day is alike to me. I believe you need to serve and worship the Lord in Spirit and in Truth. That has no geographical location, no certain day, no certain hour. The Jews served Him night and day in the temple. Now, though I am not bound by any day, I am careful that I do not do a lot of things unnecessarily on Sunday, lest I hurt those who esteem Sunday.

I once talked with people who told me, "We would like to come to camp meeting."

I asked the brother, "Why don't you come?"

He replied, "Well, I can only get off on the weekends. I figured it up, and I cannot get up there and back on a tank of gas, and I won't buy gas on Sunday." So they miss a whole meeting. Can you say that God is in that? No.

I believe we ought to live as holy, clean, and righteous one day as the next day. Certainly, Sunday is the Lord's day. It is the day that we have set aside for special convocations and gathering together to worship the

Lord. I believe in every bit of that. When it comes to esteeming one day and keeping one day above others, that is the trouble. Too many people act saved only on Sunday. At midnight Sunday night, they throw off their religion and away they go. Paul said in verse 5 of our Scripture text, "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind."

In Romans 14:22 Paul continued, "Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth." Basically, this means that we can set up things in our lives. The devil is a deceiver. If you feel that Sunday is a special day, you have to be careful of setting up something legalistically in your life. The time will come when pressure is put on you and you will have to break your commitment, and then you will feel condemned. When you become condemned over it, the devil will say, "You broke a commandment of God." You did not break a commandment of God at all; you broke something that you set up in your own life, and you brought condemnation on yourself.

In verse 23 Paul stated, "And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin." Paul made it plain that "he that doubteth is damned." If you are in the least doubt about it, it is wrong.

Let the Peace of God Rule in Your Heart

Colossians 3:15 says, "And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful." The eighth guideline is found in Proverbs 24:6, which states, ". . . in [the] multitude of counsellors there is safety."

Someone may ask, "What am I going to do? Things are still questionable." In Philippians 4:9 Paul said, "Those things, which ye; have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the peace of God shall be with you." As a preacher, if

you are doing something, the people ought to be able to do it freely also, if you are an example to the flock. Then, if you are not satisfied, seek the advice of spiritual people. You know they must have made good decisions or they would not be spiritual. Ask what they think about it; look them over well. Do not ask the person who never testifies or who hardly ever raises his or her hand.

I would like to tell you a story to illustrate this point. There used to be an old man by the name of Frank, of whom people would say, "He wasn't all put together." My daddy had several teams of horses on the road hauling railroad ties to sell to the railroad company. Frank would never ride with anyone; he would always walk.

One morning Frank was walking with a team. Several of them were going in that morning, and it was snowing. The men got off the wagons because it was too cold to ride, and they were walking beside the horses. The teamsters always stopped at a local saloon, but my daddy did not. The other teamsters stopped to get a shot of liquor because it was so cold. Frank would not drink. That morning, because it was so cold, they said, "Frank, come on in with us, and we'll buy you a drink."

Frank had a by-word: *doggies*. He said, "Doggies, it's cold." So he went in with them and sat down at the bar. They each ordered a drink by name that they were used to drinking. Frank never drank any; so the bartender came over and asked him, "Mister, what kind do you want?"

Frank said, "I don't know. I never did any drinking."

The bartender reached up, got a bottle, and said, "I've been drinking this for twenty years; this is good."

The bartender was an old-looking fellow who looked about half dead. Frank looked at him and said, "Doggies, you don't look very good. Fix me a sandwich."

When people who claim to be spiritual let their mouths run, saying, "That doesn't hurt me; I've done it for years," you need to back off, take a good look at them, and say, "You

don't look too good to me. I believe I will listen to someone else."

Many different Scriptures could be set forth against instruments over which the devil is taking control. I say with all due respect that the television was a wonderful invention, but the devil has a mortgage on it that the church can never pay off. It is an instrument through which the devil is working. Even many of our national leaders realize that the television has done more to wreck the homes and the morals of our nation than any other instrument that the devil has used.

God said something in Deuteronomy 7:26 that is deep enough and wide enough to reach our day and time. When Moses taught those people, he was talking about things that were abominations to the Lord. You need to realize the way to separate things that pertain to those people in the Old Testament time and things that could pertain to people in any age. You separate them this way: God had a moral law from the very beginning, and it never changes. That moral law was written into the Law of Moses, the Levitical Law.

When the Law of Moses was nailed to the Cross, God's moral law never changed. This is the way you can tell the difference between the Law of Moses and God's moral law: When God said, "If you do such-and-such, it will be an abomination to you," that was the Mosaic Law. When God said, "If you do such-and-such, it is an abomination to God," that is God's moral law; it has never changed. That which was an abomination to God is still an abomination to God.

"Unless You Become Devoted to It"

In Moses' day the people brought gods of silver and gold, graven images, into their homes. God said, ". . . for it is an abomination to the LORD thy God" (Deuteronomy 7:25). Verse 26 reads, "Neither shalt thou bring an abomination into thine house, lest thou be a cursed thing like it: but

thou shalt utterly detest it, and thou shalt utterly abhor it; for it is a cursed thing." In the Hebrew text, instead of saying, "lest thou be a cursed thing like it," the Hebrew actually said, "unless you become devoted to it." This is what happens.

Many people who brought the television into their homes got it as something for just a little entertainment on the side. Then they found it was something that got hold of them. The first thing they knew, they became as it was. The majority of the youth who are picked up for terrible crimes say that they learned those things by viewing them on television. They become just as it is.

Whatever you spend most of your time doing, that is what you are going to become. The devil has many hooks out in the world. You see, I did not mention specific things. I just dealt with some guidelines concerning how to handle questionable things. I could also mention video games and pinball machines. The stores are full of them, and many people get hooked on them.

Some people who do not have enough money to buy bread will stand and pour quarter after quarter into those machines. It gets hold of them. Many other things could be mentioned. I just dealt with the guidelines of how to deal with questionable things. May God help you.

Again, Paul said, "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." Putting it in different words, when you get down to the crossroads concerning a questionable thing, you can answer it by saying, "What would Jesus do?" I am glad there is a way to handle questionable things that go beyond the clear-cut, written commandments of God. You can please God, and greater than that, you can know when you are pleasing Him. Also, you can know when you are displeasing God.

I wonder if you have had questionable things in your life? Have you been tossed back and forth, not knowing exactly what move to make? There is a way in which you can be fully persuaded. You can

kneel down before God in prayer and say, "God, You can see within my heart that I want to do Your will. I want to live for You. I don't want to be foolish, but I want to live for You. I am ready to follow these guidelines. I want to know if this thing pleases You. I want to know whether I can do it in Christ's name. Show me whether it is an offense to others. I want to be fully persuaded in my own mind."

You can be relieved of the anxiety of that questionable matter. The Lord is at hand, and He is still saying to the church, just as much as to the world, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). That was the crumb that the Canaanite woman took hold of. You can read her story narrated in Matthew 15:22-28. When she found Jesus, in essence, He told her, "I cannot help you. This is not for the Greeks yet; it is just for the Jews. It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to dogs," speaking of the Gentiles.

She got down and said, "Yes, but the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table. Jesus said in Matthew 15:28, "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt." The latter part of that verse says, "And her daughter was made whole from that very hour."

A summary of the guidelines for questionable matters is as follows:

1. Make sure that God sees a willingness to do whatever He shows you.
2. Pray and wait for the leading of the Holy Spirit.
3. Does it please God?
4. Can you do it in the name of the Lord Jesus?
5. Does it bring glory to God?
6. Does it offend other Christians?
7. "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." If you are in the least doubt about it, it is wrong. Ask yourself, "What would Jesus do?"
8. Do spiritual Christians agree that it is right?

YOUTH CORNER

"I Carried With Me a Picture"

Several years ago, five young men left their homes in western Pennsylvania and went out into the great Northwest. They found things quite different from what they were in their old hometown, and the temptations were many. Sometime later they all returned to their former homes. Four of the five showed that they were much the worse because of their experiences in a strange country, but the other young man came back seemingly all the stronger and better because of the experiences through which he had passed.

When asked why he, too, had not gone the way of the other four, he calmly replied, "Because I carried with me a picture."

"Oh, yes, the picture of some young maiden back home, I presume," remarked a friend.

"Oh, no! Not that kind of a picture," said the young man. "It was a picture of quite a different kind. My last morning at home, we all sat down to breakfast as usual, with my father at one end of the table and my precious mother at the other. Realizing that there was to be a breaking of home ties in a few hours, conversation was not very brisk that morning. After breakfast, as was my father's custom, he took down the old Bible and started to read the morning lesson. He did not get very far. A lump kept coming up in his throat, and he was so blinded by tears that he could not read. He handed the Book over to my mother, motioning to her to finish the reading.

"After she had finished the chapter, we all knelt to pray. Father started his prayer as was his custom, but he did not get far until that same lump came up in his throat and choked back further expression.

"Then mother reached over and put her hand on my shoulder and began to pray, saying, 'O God, we thank Thee for our son. We thank Thee that Thou hast kept him true and faithful, and that we are able to send him out from our home chaste and clean. Keep him pure and clean, and may his feet never stray from the paths of virtue, purity, and the truth in which we have tried to bring him up. Bring him back to us as pure and true as he is going out from us.'

"The picture that I carried with me was the vision of my last morning in the atmosphere of a godly home and the remembrance of my precious mother's prayer. I could not bear the thought of breaking the heart of my father and mother and dishonoring my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, whom they taught me to love."

2 Timothy 2:15 Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

16 But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness.

17 And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus;

18 Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some.

19 Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

20 But in a great house there are

not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour.

21 If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work.

The Vessels of the Lord



Brother Ula Bland

The Message of Good News

The Psalmist wrote in Psalm 133:1, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" When there is unity, there is strength. Acts 28:15 lets you know that Paul met some brethren at "The three taverns" and "he thanked God, and took courage." Fellowship brings encouragement to one another. We should assemble ourselves together for fellowship so much the more as we see the day approaching. One song says, "What a fellowship, what a joy divine, leaning on the everlasting arms." We certainly appreciate all the saints.

It is good for people to give thanks. Many times I do not think we are grateful enough. Sometimes

I ask myself, "Am I grateful enough?" The Bible tells us in Romans 1:21, "When they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful." We ought to be grateful for what the Lord has done, for what He is doing, and for what He is going to do. God has been very good to me, and I believe He has been good to you too. Without the mercies of God we would be consumed. We cannot make it without His grace and mercy.

Timothy must have been a very fine young man. In the Bible we cannot read any words that Timothy spoke, but we can read what Paul wrote about him. He said he did not have anyone else like Timothy. Paul called Timothy his son in the Gospel. Today we need more preachers like Timothy who will

stick with you through thick and thin.

Saint, when you look back over your life, no doubt you can see how good God has been to you. You could have been killed, but God was merciful to you. He spared you and gave you a chance to be saved. Isn't He a good God? He is a God of love, comfort, and understanding. I thank God for what He has done for me and for what He is doing for others.

The devil may talk to you and cause you to think that you can go no further. He will tell you, "You need to stop right now. You are not doing any good." Dear one, he is a liar, and he is the father of lies, so you should not pay any attention to him. Psalm 84:11 says, "No good thing will he [the Lord] withhold

from them that walk uprightly."

Proverbs 14:34 states, "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people." You should hate sin just as God hates sin. He hates it with a passion. He hates sin so much that He does not want anyone to stay in it, so He gave His only begotten Son. John 3:16 says, "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." That is good news! News reporters bring much bad news, but God's preacher has the message of good news, thank the Lord.

Everyone who is saved is a chosen vessel of the Lord. The Bible tells you that he who bears the vessel of the Lord must be clean. You must be clean, free from sin, and not bound with bad habits. He is God's servant who is free to serve Him.

Walk in the Light While You Have It

In our Scripture text we read that some brethren had put out a bad report, so Paul was straightening out that false report with Timothy. As saints of God, we are to help one another. If any one of us gets to the place where he or she cannot be a blessing to others, then that person becomes as salt that has lost its savor—good for nothing but to be trodden under the feet of men. God wants each of us to be a blessing to one another. Paul was a blessing to Timothy.

Saint, the devil will be after your salvation until the day you die, but thank God, you do not have to let him have it. He cannot do any more to you than God allows. First Corinthians 10:13 reads, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful [He is watching over you, saint], 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." God can give you

power over every temptation. If a temptation gets tough, He can give you more strength. If it gets too tough, He can ease the temptation. He has power over all things.

In our Scripture lesson some men had put out the false report that the Resurrection had already passed. What a horrible report that went out among the brethren! Saint, if you have a preacher who tells you the truth, you had better sit down and listen. Many false prophets are out there. The devil is using them to try to take away your salvation. Do you remember Jim Jones? He was an American cult leader who used religion for evil and caused more than nine hundred followers to commit mass suicide by urging them to drink a grape-flavored punch laced with potassium cyanide. Do not forget about Jim Jones. He did what looked impossible for one man to do, yet it happened. John 12:35b says, "Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you."

First John 1:7 states, "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." John the Baptist looked on one day and saw Jesus and said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

Paul said in our Scripture text that those men erred and overthrew the faith of some. Thank God, verse 18 says "some," not all. Those men said the resurrection had already passed. Today we are living in hope of the resurrection. If the devil can convince you that the resurrection has already passed, you will not have anything to hope for. That was the idea the devil had those false brethren tell others. What a lie! It is good to know the Truth, and it is good to obey the Truth.

Jesus said to those Jews who believed on Him in John 8:31-32: "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Only the Truth can

set you free. Saint, you should love and cherish the Truth. Proverbs 23:23 says, "Buy the truth, and sell it not." You do not want to be like Esau who sold his birthright for a morsel of meat. Later he tried to get it back, but it was too late. You ought to walk in the light as He is in the light. God will give you the strength and the grace to do that.

Look Unto Jesus

Paul penned the letter to Timothy just in time. Sometimes the message comes just in time to encourage one's heart to look up and away from the troubles and to look away from self. You must look to Jesus, the Author and Finisher of faith. Paul said in Hebrews 12:1-2: "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses [this is in reference to Chapter 11, the catalog of faith], let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

Jesus is ever living to make intercession for the saints. He came to save souls. He went back to Heaven, but He is still praying for us. We have a High Priest who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. Hebrews 4:15-16 reads: "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain [God's] mercy, and find [His] grace to help in time of need." A child of God does not have anything to worry about but serving the Lord all day long. Fanny Crosby wrote, "This is my story, this is my song, Praising my Savior all the day long." I thank the Lord for His Word.

The enemy will try to sneak in and cause trouble, but every time trouble comes around, it does not have to trouble you. Jesus said in John 14:1, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me." That is where the Lord can help you go through the tests and the trials. They come to make us strong.

Peter said in 1 Peter 4:1, "Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin." In 2 Timothy 3:12-13 Paul said: "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse [if they do not get saved, they are not going to get any better; they are going to get worse and worse], deceiving, and being deceived."

If you have a pure heart and your purpose is to serve God and obey Him, He will not allow the devil to deceive you. You might not know any Scripture except John 3:16, but if your heart is right with God and you mean to serve the Lord, He will protect you. God protects His people. If He did not protect us, we could not make it. He wants to look down in your heart and see that you mean to do right.

How to Possess Your Vessel in Honor

Every saint wants to go to Heaven. Friend, Heaven can be yours if you obey God. You are either a vessel of honor or a vessel of dishonor. Second Timothy 2:21 says, "If a man therefore purge himself from these [from false doctrine, lying, and that which is unlike God], he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use. . . ." Child of God, you should want to stay fit for the Master's use so that He can use you whenever He is ready. It is not so much when you get ready, but

when He gets ready.

Jesus said in John 15:1-2: "I am the true vine [there must be some false vines, because Jesus said, 'I am the true vine'], and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." That is the protection the saints of God have.

Therefore, Paul could say in Colossians 3:2-3: "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." That is double protection. Child of God, your life is hid with Christ in God; the devil cannot touch it, and strangers cannot meddle with it. That is the kind of protection you are under when you are living in the will of the Lord. He takes care of His vessels of honor, those vessels who obey Him under any circumstances.

God wants you to know how to possess your vessel in sanctification and in honor. If you are a young preacher, it is not just a matter of learning to get up and preach to the people, but you must also learn how to conduct yourself as a minister of God. Paul told Timothy that he was expecting to come to him shortly, but if he did not, he wanted Timothy to know how he ought to behave himself in the house of God, "which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15).

Church of God folks ought to stick together. There is only one church. You should not do anything to bring reproach upon God's church, and you should not blaspheme the name of God. That is the reason we ought to stick together, church. We want people to see our good works and to glorify the Father in Heaven. We should not let anything separate us from the love of God. The solution to all problems is in the Word of God. Jesus said in John 5:39, "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life:

and they are they which testify of me."

We have no need to take one another to the law. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 6:1, "Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?" The church is supposed to settle problems. Why? Because God put the solution in the Word of God. As ministers of God, He has given us the ministry of reconciliation, or words of reconciliation. We can be reconciled to one another with the Word of God. However, in order for that to happen, individuals have to humble themselves. We read in 1 Peter 5:6, "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time."

Second Chronicles 7:14 states, "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven." That is a promise, and what God promises, He is able to fulfill. Hebrews 6:18 tells us, "That by two immutable things [His oath and His promise], in which it was impossible for God to lie. . . ." Nothing can stop God from fulfilling His promises. It is good to serve God! No one can stop Him from doing His will. I thank God for His Word.

Walking to Please God

In our Scripture lesson false prophets were promoting false doctrine, saying that the resurrection had already passed. If you do not serve God, you are making way for false prophets. If you do not want to do right, then a false prophet will come along and tell you there is no harm in doing what you are doing. Since you already want to do it, then off you will go. When someone asks, "What happened to So-and-So?" they will say, "He went astray." You do not have to go astray, saint. If you stay with God, He will stay with you. As long as you obey God, all the devils in

hell cannot lead you astray. I thank God for that.

First Thessalonians 4:1-4 says: "Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more. [Your objective should be to please God. The Bible says when a man's ways please the Lord, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.] For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour." You should know how to conduct yourself as a Christian. You should not do things contrary to the character of a Christian.

People out in the world want to see Jesus manifested in the lives of those who claim to be Christians. For that to happen, each of us must keep ourselves in submission to the will of God at all times, not just sometimes. Christian friend, you can show this dying world that Jesus saves from all sin. You might have to suffer a little, but you do not have to get out of God's divine order. The Christian does not cuss, lie, or steal. That is what I love about this salvation.

Christ is the Prince of Peace. If you have not experienced the joy of salvation, you can let this be the day that you let God have His way in your life. Perhaps you are holding on to an unforgiving spirit. If so, you need to ask God to forgive you and let go of your unforgiveness, because unforgiveness does not do anything but hurt you. Jesus said in Matthew 6:15, "But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." You may need forgiveness for something; therefore, you do not want God to have anything against you so that He cannot forgive you. You should not hold people for things.

It Pays to Walk Uprightly

Division breeds hatred, strife, and envy. That is the reason division causes so much trouble, and it causes people to hate good people because of something that someone said. God does not want that kind of spirit around the Church of God. People who are in division may be around the Church of God, but they are not in the Church of God. It makes no difference that they are preaching, if they are causing division, they are not in God's church.

In 1 Corinthians 1:10 Paul beseeched the church that there be no divisions among them. It causes the Word of God and the blessed Church of God to be evil spoken of. Division causes people to talk about the innocent. They do not talk about just one or two people doing this or that. They talk about the whole church. If you speak against God's people, you are speaking against God. You need to be careful that you do not speak against God's people.

When Paul was persecuting the saints, Jesus said in Acts 9:4, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Jesus was in Heaven, yet He said that Paul was persecuting Him when he was persecuting His people. Therefore, you must be careful that you do not do that, because it brings the wrath of God on the children of disobedience. When individuals get sick, often they call on God's people to pray. However, if that sick one has been speaking against them, his faith in God will be hindered and cut off.

Possessing your vessel in sanctification and in honor is walking in the Spirit and not walking after the flesh. The devil may tempt you to do evil, but you should not take a chance on losing your soul. Mark 8:36-37 states: "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

It pays to serve the Lord. I know

what I am talking about. It pays to walk uprightly at all times. It is a good feeling to know that you have God on your side and to know that you have not done wrong when you lie down at night. You can have a clear conscience when you have not spoken against anyone and you have not told any lies. You can lie down saved and awaken in the morning saved. This is a beautiful life to live. Before I was saved, I used to drink. I would wake up with a hangover, feeling bad, with a cigarette taste in my mouth. Now I can wake up knowing that I am a child of the King. This salvation is beautiful! There is nothing like it!

A man in our congregation was saved when he was eighty-one years old. He said, "Why didn't somebody tell me about this a long time ago?" We told him that someone tried to tell him, but he would not listen. Salvation is great! You cannot afford to neglect so great salvation. One who does not have salvation does not know what he is missing. If a man could live a thousand years and become a millionaire, but never experience the joy of salvation, he would have missed it all. I thank God for this great salvation!

God wants His people to show a lost and dying world that the Church of God is right. God has only one church. When you get saved, He puts you in His church. Ephesians 4:5 tells us there is one Lord, one faith, and one baptism. I thank the Lord for all His goodness that He has bestowed upon us.

God Has Set Before You Life and Death

Sometimes natural vessels get holes in them, and they will not hold water. Sometimes they rust out. How is your vessel? Is it a vessel unto honor or a vessel unto dishonor? A true man of God knows how to possess his vessel. He knows how to conduct himself. Young person, even amidst temptations, God wants you to know how to

possess your vessel in sanctification and in honor. God has His church in the world to show a lost and dying world that He is in control. The righteousness of the law must be fulfilled in God's saints. It is for us to show a lost and dying world that they do not have to sin.

Friend, you do not have to lie, cheat, commit fornication, or commit adultery. No fornicator can enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Sex is only for married people. God fixed it that way for our protection. When He tells you to do something or tells you not to do something, it is for your good, not for His.

God's people must be pure and clean. You will feel better and act better when you are clean. Brother, you will not go home and tell your wife a lie because you have been out with another woman. The devil will try to cause you to tell a lie, and then you will have to tell another lie to try to get out of that lie. He will try to keep you lying all the time.

I thank God for the Son of God who came down from Heaven to save a wretch like me! One songwriter called it "amazing grace." He did not have an adjective to adequately describe it, so he just said, "Amazing grace! how sweet the sound, That saved a wretch like me!" Saint, none of us deserve it, yet He saved us. He said, "I once was blind, but now I see." God so loved us, even while we were yet sinners, and gave His only begotten Son that whosoever (rich, poor, cripple, or simple), believes on Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

God has set before you life and death, but He would rather have you choose life. If you make the right choice, you will choose life. Moses was educated in all the Egyptian ways. He was raised in the house of Pharaoh's daughter, but he did not forget who he was. One day he had to make a choice, and he chose to suffer affliction with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. He esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the trea-

tures of Egypt.

You need to esteem Christ higher than anything else. Deuteronomy 6:5 says, "And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." That does not leave room for the devil. You must love God more than you love anyone or anything. You must love Him with all your heart.

Jesus Saves From All Sin

John said in 1 John 3:16, "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." You do not hear that taught much anymore. May God give you a greater understanding of this love, that agape love, the kind of love that not even death can stop. Agape love is God's divine love. Often people have conditional love: "I will love you if you will love me." God loved us when we were living for the devil. He loved us so much that He sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

We read in 1 John 2:1-2: "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. [He meant that you are not to sin at all. But what does the mercy of God and the grace of God say?] And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." No one has to live in sin. One lives in sin because he wants to live in sin.

It is impossible to live in sin and feel the Savior's love, because that is the purpose for which Jesus came.

Matthew 1:21 reads, "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins." Jesus saves people from sin. One cannot truly get saved and continue to live in sin. Let me illustrate it this way to you. If you were to save a drowning man, you would have to get him out of the water. Likewise, God lifts the sinner out of sin so that he does not have to live in sin. Isn't that wonderful?

You are not a Christian until you stop sinning. God does not have sinning Christians. Now, it is possible for a Christian to fall and commit sin, but he will repent of his sin. Paul said in Romans 6:1-2a: "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid." God does not have one Christian who is living in sin. One must quit the sin business to be a Christian. Sin has caused so much bad that people ought to be glad to quit the sin business. One song says, "You oughta been there when He saved my soul." It is a wonderful feeling to know that you do not have to sin anymore. Jesus said in John 5:14, "Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee." Jesus saves us to sin no more.

Do you want to be saved? I do not believe that you want to live in sin all your days. Don't you want to join the Christian band so that you do not have to lie or cheat anymore? If so, you can go boldly to the throne of grace and be forgiven; then you can love the Lord with all your heart and with all your soul.

(Cassette C-5073E)

**The reason some parents
don't lead their children in the right
direction is that the parents aren't going
that way themselves.**