

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

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

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

**THE CHURCH OF GOD BELIEVES IN:**

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

**SOME SPIRITUAL FACTS  
PERTAINING TO THE CHURCH**

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

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**Vol. 34 January 2004 No. 1**

# Guest Editorial

## What Does the Bible Teach About the Rapture?

### Part 2 of 2

*1 Thessalonians 4:16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:*

*17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*

In the last article we began to study concerning this subject that is termed "the rapture." We found that the word rapture does not appear in the Scripture and neither does the teaching that men espouse. We have been examining the supposed proof texts and rightly dividing them in the light of Truth.

In this article we want to examine another text that advocates of this persuasion use to support their erroneous position. We want to consider Matthew 24:40-41: "Then shall two be in the field, the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left." Do these verses of Scripture not conclusively prove that "the rapture" will occur, stating that some will be taken and others left? We found that the Scriptures teach that Christ is only coming "the second time" (Hebrews 9:28), and when He does, this event will be seen universally (Matthew 24:27). When He comes, there shall be "a resurrection . . . both of the just and unjust" (Acts 24:15), and then "we which are alive and remain shall be caught up" (1 Thessalonians 4:17). When we all are "in the air," "the earth . . . and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (2 Peter 3:10). Second Corinthians 5:10 tells us that "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ."

What was Jesus referring to when

He spoke of the "two . . . in the field" and the "Two . . . at the mill"? Those verses should not be taken literally. Why? Because Jesus said, "Then shall two be in the field" and "Two women shall be grinding at the mill." If they were literal, there would be many more than "two." What was Jesus revealing here? The Bible speaks of "the simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:3). Christ had a unique ability to reduce things to a very simple level. When He spoke of humanity, He reduced them to two positions: those who are with Him and those who are against Him. Jesus said in Matthew 12:30, ". . . he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." In Matthew 7:18 He spoke of a "good tree" and a "corrupt tree," and in Matthew 25:32-33 He mentioned the "sheep" and the "goats." Jesus was letting us know that at His second advent, there will be only two types of people.

Jesus said, ". . . two be in the field." In Matthew 13:38 He told us, "The field is the world." Therefore, He was telling us that regardless of the many positions that people think they can occupy, in His sight there are only two types of people in the world: "he that believeth" and "he that believeth not" (Mark 16:16).

What does the Scripture mean when it says, ". . . the one shall be taken, and the other left"? Jesus was referring to the ultimate disposition of souls that will take place as a consequence of His second coming. In Matthew 25:33-34 He stated: ". . . he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

The saved are "taken" to their eternal reward. However, to those on "the left hand," He shall say unto them, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire" (Matthew 25:41). They are not taken into Heaven, but rather they are left to the fate that they have chosen. In Matthew 24:41 He spoke of "Two women . . .

[continued on page 12]

*Proverbs 24:30 I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding;*

*31 And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered*

*the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down.*

*32 Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction.*

*33 Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep:*

*34 So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man.*

# The Slothful & the One Who Received Understanding



*Brother Roger L. Decker*

## **The Results of Slothfulness**

When we get saved, we enter a spiritual battle. You cannot fight the good fight of faith if you do not work at it. It takes effort to stay saved. Although salvation is God's unspeakable gift, you have to do some things after you have turned your back on sin.

In these verses are three main thoughts that we want to consider: the vineyard, the slothful, and the one who received understanding. This parable is most instructive for us. In it is a description of what can happen to the one whose heart is

not into serving God as he ought. The field of the slothful represents the experience of one who has fallen, showing us how the slothful's experience with the Lord had degenerated and come to nought because the man was lazy.

The vineyard is a place of vines that produce fruit, and it takes much work. The owner of a vineyard cannot afford to be lazy. The Scripture lets us know that the man with the vineyard was void of understanding. In other words, he failed to keep up the vineyard.

Often those who are slothful in domestic affairs are also slothful in

spiritual affairs. The main reason for having a vineyard is to produce fruit. A man would be foolish to buy a vineyard and then let the vines fall down and let the fence topple. It would become unsightly and of no value. You can read much about vineyards in the Old Testament. No doubt, vineyards were a source of income for families. The owner could take care of himself, his family, and even help others. The vineyard spoken of in our Scripture text was overgrown with thorns and nettles, and the stone wall was broken down. In that state the vineyard was worthless. Had anyone

purchased that vineyard, he would have had much work on his hands to restore it to a productive state.

In the parable the writer also mentioned a field. It had become overgrown with all kinds of weeds and rubbish. The writer called the owner of the field a slothful one. He is described as one who was sluggish, or one who loitered. A slothful person is also a loose, undisciplined person. The Hebrew word for slothful refers to a bow that is not strong or a bow without an arrow for action. The slothful man is not a leader, but simply follows another's rules. Proverbs 12:24 says, "The hand of the diligent shall bear rule: but the slothful shall be under tribute."

### Consider It Well

Our Scripture lesson also speaks of a man who looked on the field and the vineyard and saw the deplorable condition, and he also received instruction. The Bible says he "considered it well." He meditated on it. In other words, what he saw penetrated his mind, his heart, and his soul, and he received an important lesson from it. What lesson did he receive? He received this: "Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man" (Proverbs 24:33-34).

Notice that the writer used the word "little" three times. The word *little* means "very small." Again, verse 34 says, "So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man." To go into poverty means that he had wealth in his possession. You cannot go into poverty if you are already poor. The man had to have had something worth a great deal in his possession. What does the Scripture say? "So shall thy poverty come. . . ." That individual was going to suffer great loss, and it was going to come immediately, just as an armed robber comes. A robber comes when you least expect it, at an unguarded

hour.

Now I want to take these words of wisdom and apply them to the Christian. Saint, you are in a spiritual battle, and the devil is very deceptive. The slothful one is not going to make it. If you are lazy, you are not going to make it to Heaven. I want to tell you now so that you will not be surprised when the Day of Judgment comes. You must work to maintain your Christian experience. Paul said, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7). You are in a spiritual battle, and the devil is bidding high for your soul. If you are lazy, the devil is going to take your soul. You can look back through the annals of history and read of men who were used of God, and you will find that none of them was lazy.

What did Jesus say about the lazy one, or the slothful one? What did He say about the one who had been given one talent and hid it in the earth? In Matthew 25:26 He said, "Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strowed." In verse 28 He said, "Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents." What did Jesus call him? He called him a "wicked and slothful servant." The Lord expects you to use what He gives you or you will lose it. You need to use your gifts and talents for the Lord. If you do not, the Lord will take what you have and give it to someone else who has many other gifts and talents. Oh, I know you could probably continue, but continuing with the anointing of the Lord is far better.

### Neglect Brings Impoverishment

Too many are impoverished spiritually, and they are trying to live on the overflow of those who are spiritual. They do not produce anything in their own lives. Their joy and happiness only come about when someone else becomes joyful

or happy. In serving God there are times when the saint gets alone with the Lord, and He pours out a special blessing. You can be happy in serving God. When you please God, He will take care of you. God notices when you please Him, and He will bless you for it.

Jesus said in Luke 13:24, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." What does the word *strive* mean? It comes from the word **agonizonia**, which means "to struggle"; it also means "to contend with the adversary." Another part of the meaning is "to fight or to labor fervently." So it could read, "Struggle to enter in at the strait gate" or "Contend with the adversary to enter in at the strait gate."

Another translation makes it a little plainer: "Make every effort to enter in through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able." Paul said it a little differently in Philippians 3:14: "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." The word *press* means "to follow after."

What happened to the vineyard of the man void of understanding and the field of the slothful? I would like to use the word *vineyard* to represent that which all men possess—the soul. What happens to the soul of the man who is void of understanding and the field of the slothful? How many souls are like the vineyard in the parable—rundown, covered over, and on the verge of complete ruin? Only God knows how many are in that condition.

By neglect, their lives are a wonder to look upon. They have been neglectful, and they have put off doing what they know they ought to do. The things of the world have crowded in upon them. Some are even in confusion about what is right. The absolutes they once stood for do not look so absolute any more. Why? They have neglected to do those things that

they knew they needed to do to keep their vineyard productive. Maintaining a vineyard takes work. One must water and cultivate the ground.

### **The Way of the Froward**

The wise man said the vineyard was covered with thorns and nettles. A thorn is a prickly plant that can hurt and sting and could even cause infection. One does not knowingly grab hold of thorns, especially if he is not wearing good gloves. Proverbs 22:5 says, "Thorns and snares are in the way of the froward: he that doth keep his soul shall be far from them." Proverbs 15:19 reads, "The way of the slothful man is as an hedge of thorns: but the way of the righteous is made plain."

What are the thorns in people's lives? Numbers 33:55 says, "But if ye will not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you; then it shall come to pass, that those which ye let remain of them shall be pricks in your eyes, and thorns in your sides, and shall vex you in the land wherein ye dwell." The thorns represent things that people will not drive out of their lives. When they let those things remain, they will vex them.

What does the Scripture say? Those things that you let remain will be pricks in your eyes and thorns in your sides and will vex you in the land wherein you dwell. In other words, those things will continually trouble you. In the beginning those things seem so harmless. You may say, "I can lay that thing down whenever I want to." You need to go right back to the lesson concerning the vineyard. Through neglect the thorns had overtaken the vineyard. Caring for a vineyard is just like weeding a garden. Uprooting the weeds when they are little is so much easier than waiting until they grow into big plants.

Friend, God put us here on this earth to serve Him. He wants every-

one to serve Him. When you allow thorns and snares and nettles to overtake your life, your life will be used for that which God did not intend. Those things need to be dealt with before they vex and destroy your soul. Some thorns could be evil habits, evil speaking, evil surmising, or even evil suspicions. When those things are let go, they will destroy your spiritual life. You can see by the Scriptures that you cannot be lazy and get rid of them. You cannot merely say "go" to rid your life of them. The Scripture in Numbers says you need to drive them out, which expresses action and force. You have to put forth effort.

### **Do You Have Thorns in Your Life?**

Many people are bound by the tobacco habit. For some, smoking made them feel important, and it was just a small thing in their lives. After a while, they became chain smokers, and the habit became much stronger. Then when they try to quit, they find themselves unable to do so. They find that smoking is damaging to their lungs and that it smells up their clothes, their automobiles, and their homes. The truth is, they needed to deal with that habit when it was in the budding stage. You can take it from one who knows.

Then there are those who chew tobacco. They think, "You are not macho if you don't chew tobacco." Many ball players do it. They have big wads of chewing tobacco in their mouths, and they spit all over home plate when they come up to bat. I once read in a newspaper that some of them have gotten lip cancer, so a little scare went through some of them, and they took their tobacco and substituted it with bubble gum. Those habits should be dealt with when they are but temptations.

For many, the alcohol they drank so they could be one of the crowd now has hold of them. When people drink, often they do embar-

assing things. If they were in their right minds, they would never think of doing such things. It gives people a false sense of boldness and causes them to become reckless. It will cause one's foot to get heavy on the accelerator and to take chances that he would not normally take. It may cause one to fight. Normally, that person might be mild-tempered and easily entreated, but when he drinks alcohol, he thinks he can whip the world. The next thing he knows, he may get in a fight with someone who has a switchblade or a gun or a club, all because he let that habit grow in his life.

For some, their anger has become a thorn in their lives. Do you remember the anger you felt when someone wronged you? Ephesians 4:26 says, "Be ye angry, and sin not." Perhaps you felt anger swell up within you, but you did not deal with it. Then that anger turned to envy, strife, unforgiveness, and a wrong attitude, all because you allowed those feelings to become thorns through neglect.

The wise man said "nettles had covered the face thereof." The nettles could be likened to the hurt that one receives. Have you ever been hurt? Surely, you have. Have you ever felt as if someone had just about ripped your heart out? I have, and I am sure that you have too. Friend, if that happens, you should not nurse that feeling. If you nurse something, it will always get bigger. The next thing you know, you will justify your wrong feelings.

Anger can continue to grow until you actually seek revenge. Instead of letting God take care of a matter, you take care of it. Then you will rejoice in iniquity and speak bitter, offensive words. Some become very curt when they speak to others. They get so that no one can say anything to them without receiving smart answers. We can liken this condition to nettles that have grown over the face of the vineyard. When one gets in this condition, people wonder, "Well, I thought he

was a Christian, but look how rude he is and look how he acts. You can hardly talk to him without his cutting you down." Some people are always putting others down, and yet they claim to be children of God. A child of God does not act nasty and rude.

What is another thorn in some people's lives? Some husbands mistreat their wives and hurt them. Oh, the husband may not beat on the wife with his fists, but he continually puts her down verbally. He is rude. To hear him talk, you would think that his wife cannot do anything right. Even if the wife does something right in the husband's eyes, he would never give her credit for it. I dare say that mental abuse runs more rampant than physical abuse. The husband knows that if he were to physically abuse his wife, she would call the police, but he knows he can get away with mental abuse. Living under this condition, the wife may not really excel spiritually for God because she is being put down constantly. Husband, that ought not to be! You should help your wife to excel spiritually. Both the husband and the wife should work together. The wife is to be a helpmeet, one who is just right for the man.

If you mistreat your wife, just remember that, though you do it behind closed doors, that does not block out the all-seeing eye of God. The same is true concerning women who are rude and abusive to their husbands. The more a man loves his wife, the more she will submit; and the more she submits, the more he loves her.

### **God's Commandments Are a Wall of Defense**

In our Scripture lesson we read that the wall was broken down. Ephesians 2:14-15 says: "For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of command-

ments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace." I want to liken the wall in our Scripture lesson to the wall of God's commandments that the slothful man ignores. Those commandments are sent as a defense for the inward man, but the lazy man disregards them altogether. His attitude is, "So what if God said thus and thus?" Friend, God sends forth His Word as a defense for you and to strengthen the inward man. If you disregard it, you have no defense and you become open prey for the enemy of your soul. Too many people disregard the Word of God as if it does not exist. They think nothing of overstepping righteous principles in the Word of God.

A large animal of prey such as the lion is cunning in the way it attacks its prey. It does not go bounding out to attack a whole herd. It crouches down in the tall grass and takes its time to make sure it stays in a direction where the herd cannot smell it. What does it look for? It looks for the wounded, the young, or the neglectful one that has wandered away from the herd. The lion will get itself positioned so it can run down that animal.

Child of God, there is safety in staying with the church and in not neglecting to assemble together with the church. If you become open prey for the enemy, he will not run you toward the church; he will run you away from the church. The enemy knows what he is doing. He has been destroying souls for a long time.

Some are neglectful when it comes to reading the Bible. It is not how much you read a day that is important. What is important is that you read it. If you read even one verse and meditate on that one verse, you will be surprised how God can give you some understanding. However, if you fail to read the Bible as you ought, then the wall will be broken down and there will be no place for your soul to seek refuge. Soon you will wonder,

"What has happened to me? I used to be zealous for the things of God, but now I don't care whether I go to the revivals or the camp meetings." Some thorns and nettles have grown up and the wall is broken down. The enemy has come in and just about destroyed you. Oh, you may stop at the church services once in a while, but you do not have any time for just you and the Lord alone.

When the wall is broken down, true riches are then lost. You will no longer be concerned about souls; helping lost souls is out of the question for you. It is a burden to you to make it to church. Dear one, there is strength in assembling with the saints. You never want to lose sight of that, and you never want to lose sight of carrying a burden for souls. God's commandments are a wall of defense around you. God has put the wall there to help you.

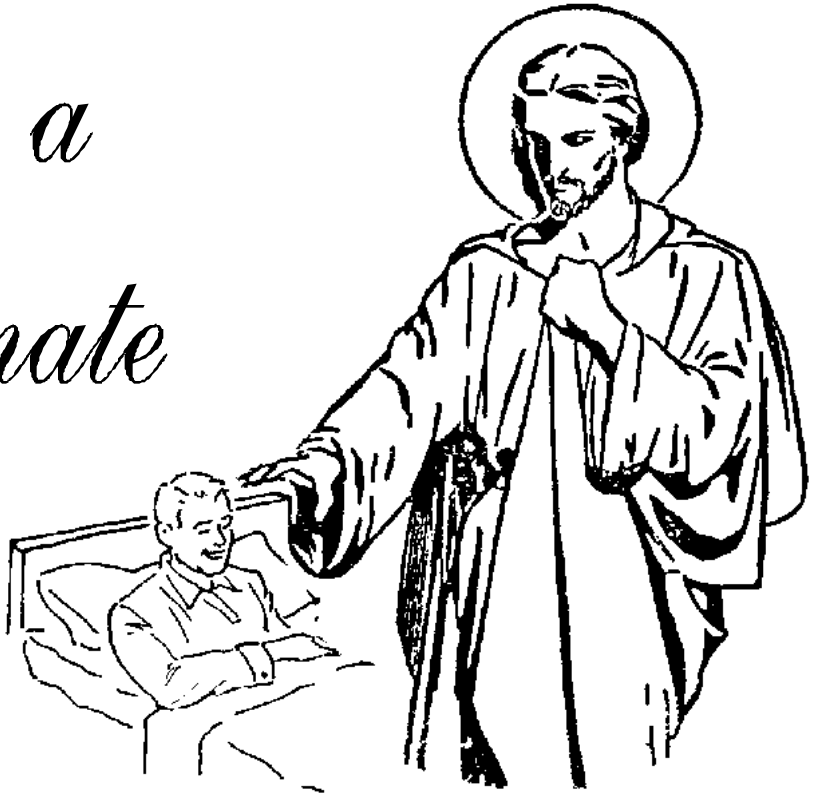
In our Scripture lesson a man was watching. What did he say when he went by the field and the vineyard? He said, "Then I saw, and considered it well." He looked upon it, he considered it, and he received instruction. One thing you can learn well from this Scripture lesson is this: You need to stay awake and stay busy in the Kingdom of God. If you do not, you will lose your soul.

If thorns and nettles have begun to appear in your life, you need to get busy, get rid of them, and rebuild the wall by measuring to God's Word; then you will find that your experience will become fruitful. Furthermore, you will enjoy your experience of salvation much greater than before.

There is nothing worse than going to church and sitting there unable to join in with your whole heart; that is miserable. I trust that you will receive instruction from this lesson. God wants to send forth His Word to energize you, so that you can get busy and get back to obeying God's Word. If you will do that, your experience will bring forth much fruit.

*(Cassette C-4477E)*

# We Serve a Compassionate Heavenly Father



*Brother E. David Stegmeier*

## **Suffering Can Work Good for Souls**

We have a wonderful Heavenly Father. He does not allow us to suffer because He is sadistic, but it is working for our good. He can heal us instantly or gradually. I believe there is a reason for our suffering; it can work for our good. God is more concerned about the soul than the body. Suffering can work good for our souls. It makes us more compassionate and more understanding. Suffering does great things for us.

Fanny Crosby was afflicted as a little girl, but God used that affliction in a marvelous way. Undoubtedly she is the most prolific songwriter of all time. She wrote more than eight thousand hymns. Probably one that we enjoy the most is "Blessed Assurance." C. W. Naylor was afflicted as a young man. We used to have a man in our congregation by the name of Brother Croaker for many years until he

passed away. He was old enough that he knew C. W. Naylor. He went to visit him not long after he was hurt in the state of Florida. Brother Naylor was helping to raise a tent for an evangelistic meeting of the early Church of God reformers, and a tent pin dropped and broke his back. He was confined to a bed for the rest of his life. When he was first afflicted, he struggled a little with understanding why that had happened to him, and bitterness sometimes knocked at his heart's door. Brother Croaker said that Brother Naylor really struggled in those early days, but eventually he got victory, and God used him in a marvelous way. So God can use affliction.

If you are afflicted, just stay right in there and do not waver in your faith. You need to keep trusting God, stay sweet in your soul, and remain steadfast, because your affliction is working good, perhaps for you and for others. Therefore, you should not relinquish your faith

in God. Have faith in God.

I sometimes marvel at the wonderful hymns we have in the Church of God. Of all people in the world, we are blessed with the most beautiful legacy of hymns. We are blessed with absolutely beautiful hymns. It is because of God. He blessed our brethren, especially the sixth-seal brethren, with marvelous messages that they wrote and set to music. I have sung these hymns for more than fifty years, and they are as fresh to me today as they were years ago when my family first came to the Church of God. I want you to read a song that Andy L. Byers wrote, entitled, "Arise, He Calleth Thee." He wrote in verse 1:

*Weary, lonely, sad, forsaken,  
Humbled to a station low,  
Sat a hopeless blind man begging,  
By the road to Jericho.  
Soon he heard the noise of footsteps,  
As of waters rolling nigh;  
For the Galilean Prophet  
With the throng was passing by.*

## Christ Is Evermore the Same

Paul said in Hebrews 13:8, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." I believe in divine healing. I am not preaching about something that I do not practice. I have been taught divine healing since I was a very small child, and God has healed members of my family many times. We never had a medicine cabinet as children growing up. We did not know what a medicine cabinet was. We called for prayer if we had anything wrong with us; it was just a spontaneous reaction. If my mother's prayers did not get the answer, then we called for the pastor or we went to church and asked the man of God to anoint us with oil and to pray the prayer of faith; then God touched us and made us whole.

Andy Byers wrote in verse 2:

*When he heard that it was Jesus,  
Who had healed the sin-sick soul,  
Then he called aloud for mercy,  
That he, too, might be made whole.  
But the multitude rebuked him,  
Saying he should silent be;  
Yet he only called more loudly,  
"Have compassion, Lord, on me!"*

When I was just a young minister in Oregon, I had a chance to work with a young lady who had come from the Church of Christ. She was disturbed and confused, and she needed help in her soul. My wife and I went to visit her, and she was gloriously saved. She got a wonderful experience, and she was thrilled that she had found the answers to the questions in her life.

Then she asked us, "Could I call my Church of Christ pastor?"

I said, "Well, I don't know if that would be the best thing to do."

She said, "I insist."

So she called her Church of Christ pastor. She lived quite a distance out of town, but he arrived in a very short time. We had quite a long confrontation, and he undermined every bit of faith that had been planted in her soul. In the

course of our conversation, he said, "God no longer heals." That is a terrible statement!

The Bible lets us know that God remains the same and that "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (Romans 11:29). He still heals today. He is just the same today! That poor young lady became distraught and went back into the terrible confusion that she had been in. After that happened, she left the Church of Christ and went into a cult. There is such terrible unbelief in the world today.

Paul said in Romans 10:17, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Dear one, God loves you. I want to emphasize the fact that we are serving a compassionate, loving, kind, understanding God, and He cares about you.

Brother Byers wrote in verses 3-4 and the chorus:

*Paused the Master for a moment—  
"Bring him hither unto me."  
Some one ran to bear the message:  
"Come, arise, he calleth thee!"  
Oh, what words of cheer and comfort!  
What today could sweeter be  
To the weary, sick and suffering,  
"Come, arise, he calleth thee"?*

*Then as he approached the Master,  
Healing virtue to receive,  
Jesus said, "Thy faith hath saved thee,  
Be it as thou dost believe."  
And the blind man's eyes were  
opened,  
He had proved the promise true.  
Ye, who still in sickness languish,  
Lo, the Master calls for you.*

*Then arise, he calleth thee,  
Sick or suffering, blind or lame!  
Jesus healed in Galilee,  
He is evermore the same.*

## Keep Your Faith in God

Christ is the same today! In Psalm 63:1-2 David wrote: "O GOD, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a

dry and thirsty land, where no water is; To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary." Those words express my sentiments.

As I was thinking about divine healing, I thought of how compassionate God is. He loves you and cares about you. If you are a godly father, then you love your children, and I am sure that you would do your utmost to help a suffering child. I think of my grandchildren; they are very grand. Grandchildren are precious, and I love them as much as I do my children. I want to see them healed if they are sick. I want to see God have mercy on them and touch their bodies. I want to do my best every day to watch circumspectly so that when the time comes, just as our little babies rest in the arms of their parents, I can rest in the great arms of a merciful God. If you are suffering, you need to keep your faith in God. Do not become bitter, and do not give up; stay right in there. God has promised us grace for every day. The Bible says as your day is, so shall your strength be (Deuteronomy 33:25).

Again, David so beautifully expressed in Psalm 63:1-2: "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: [You should seek Him early in life and early in the morning. God loves you; seek Him early in your affliction.] my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, [We are living in a dry and thirsty land as far as this world is concerned. There are not many places in the world where you can go and receive a cup of Living Water.] where no water is; To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary." I want to see God's power manifested today as the sixth-seal brethren saw it. I grew up seeing great healings. Let us keep our faith in God. Faith is waning in so many places.

You may say, "Things are different today; times have changed." I will agree that times have

changed, but God does not change, and His Word does not change. Matthew 24:35 states, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." Lamentations 5:19 says, "Thou, O LORD, remainest for ever; thy throne from generation to generation." God is aware of your suffering; He is concerned and compassionate.

Hebrews 1:10-12 says: "And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail." David wrote in Psalm 44:1, "We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work thou didst in their days, in the times of old."

I have heard of great healings all my life. Brother and Sister Mullen had a great ministry of healing. I was brought up witnessing wonderful things in the church and in our home. God is the same today, dear one. When I was a little boy, I had appendicitis very bad, but God healed me in a miraculous way. One morning when I was having an attack, I was extremely ill. (A boy in our school not long before was found dead in his home because of an appendicitis attack.) My parents said, "Dave, what do you want us to do? Do you want us to take you to the hospital or what do you want us to do?" Brother C. N. Watson was our pastor then. I said, "Take me to Brother Watson." My parents took me to Brother Watson, and he anointed and prayed for me, and I never had a problem with my appendix from that day on. God is just the same today.

### **Effectual, Fervent Prayer Avails Much**

In Isaiah, Chapter 38, we have an account of Hezekiah's healing.

Hezekiah had a fatal boil, and the Prophet Isaiah came to him and told him that he was going to die. I like Hezekiah's prayer. You can read in Isaiah 38:3 that he prayed fervently, "Remember now, O LORD, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart." The Bible says in James 5:16, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." In the discourse concerning Hezekiah's healing, the latter part of Isaiah 38:19 says, "The father to the children shall make known thy truth." As fathers and mothers, we have the responsibility to make known God's Truth to our children.

I have often rehearsed with my children the ways in which God has moved in our behalf. When our son Reggie was born, my wife had some real problems in delivery, and when the doctor checked him, he said that he had a dislocated hip. My wife said, "Honey, let's pray." So we gathered the children around and had prayer. When the doctor came back into the room where they had taken my wife, he said, "I don't know what happened, but your boy is perfect." God can help us.

As our daughter Korine's little girl was born, she swallowed some of her bowel movement, and she had some real problems, so they whisked her away. They said she was going to have some really serious problems. My daughter had a real struggle, and she prayed, and we prayed, and God healed her baby. Today she is a specimen of health and so full of life. God can help us. We need to make known the Truth to our children.

Hezekiah prayed and, in essence, said, "God, You know how I have been living." It is a real blessing when you have a need and go through a serious situation in life and can say that. In so many words, Job said, "I don't know where God is, but He knows where I am. When He has tried me, I shall come forth as pure gold."

God can use an affliction. In the Old Testament we can read of

Naaman, the Syrian general who was plagued with leprosy, an incurable disease of that time. He had heard of a man of God in Israel by the name of Elisha. Elisha gave him the command to go dip seven times (not five or six times, but seven times) in the river Jordan. That is a lesson of obedience. If you want to be healed, you must be fully obedient to the Word of God.

### **Divine Healing Is an Answer to the Prayer of Faith**

There is much false religion and many false healers in the world today. I believe that they have shed a bad light on divine healing. One morning I had to be a substitute teacher in a psychology class, and I was to play a video for the class to view and discuss it with them. The video was about how people are taken in by different kinds of imposters. One imposter portrayed on the video was a man by the name of Mr. Popov. He professed to be a healer, and he raked in a tremendous amount of money by deceiving people.

Mr. Popov gathered thousands of people in various places in huge auditoriums, and then he would tell them intimate details about their lives. On the Internet you can see that this is documented. When people came into the auditorium, his wife would greet them, get their names, and ask personal information about people's lives while he was in the back. As he was speaking before the people, she had a little microphone and he had a little receiver in his ear so that he could hear her, and she would inform him of the details that she had gathered.

A couple of men were out to uncover some situations where imposters were deceiving people, so they went into that auditorium. They said they were going to find out whether this guy (Mr. Popov) was real or not. The first thing they noticed was a little black receiver in his ear. So they got a device to try to pick up the frequency waves to find



out if something was going on in that building. Sure enough, they got in on the same channel and heard his wife's voice. She was telling him information about some of the people. The people in the audience were amazed that he knew things about them. He was deceiving them and raking in a great amount of money. When they uncovered the situation, he went bankrupt.

There is a healing that is divine. When we speak of divine healing, it is an answer to the prayer of faith by God's people that transcends nature. God can divinely move upon us. The Bible says in 2 Chronicles 16:9, "For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him." What did Hezekiah say? He said, "Remember now, O LORD, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart." If we are going to see great things done today, we need to work hard to obey God in every detail of our lives. After Hezekiah prayed earnestly, God gave him fifteen more years. Naaman was healed miraculously of leprosy when he dipped seven times in the Jordan River. God wants each of us to be obedient.

### **God Is Still the Healer of Every Sickness and Disease**

We have many records of supernatural healings in the New Testament. You may ask, "How does God do this?" Well, it is the same way when you get saved. We do not know exactly how God does it. Nevertheless, He does it, and so it is with healing. Just as God can save the soul today, He can heal the body today! It is not God's fault that we do not see more healings; it is ours.

I want to see greater manifestations of the power of God. Jesus healed many times in fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies. Isaiah wrote in Isaiah 53:4-5: "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: [God knows when you

are grieved, and He also knows whether you have hurt a man of God or a saint of God. In essence, you are hurting God. That is scriptural. Also, if you hate a person that you can see, then you hate God whom you cannot see.] yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."

We find in Matthew 8:14-17 a direct fulfillment of that prophecy: "And when Jesus was come into Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother laid, and sick of a fever. And he touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose, and ministered unto them. When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses."

Not long after my wife and I went to Oregon in 1970, we met some very precious Mennonite people. In fact, many years before that, they had been married in the church building that we purchased. One day I received a call from someone saying that Brother Schultz had a heart attack and that he was in the hospital in a very serious condition. My wife and I went to the hospital to pray for him in the intensive care unit. We anointed and prayed for him, and then we drove back home. Soon after we had returned, Sister Schultz called and said, "Brother Stegmeier, do you folks believe in divine healing?"

I said, "Absolutely!"

She said, "Would you go and pray for my husband? He is extremely ill."

I said, "Sister Schultz, we have already prayed for him and have come back home." We had a wonderful visit with her some time ago,

and she said, "You know, there is a doctor who lives just around the corner, and he still says, 'That was my miracle man.'" The blood clot went through his heart, and it did not damage his heart. It lodged in one of his lungs, and God healed him, and he lived for many, many years after that.

God is still the Healer; He is just the same today. The healing of the body is as much a part of the Gospel as the saving of the soul. There is as much in the Word of God dealing with the healing of the body as there is the healing of the soul. As the Church of God, we have a full Gospel. We teach everything in the Book; we do not shun from teaching any of it. A full Gospel entails everything in the Word of God.

### **Conditions That God's Children Must Meet**

Jesus never turned anyone away, and He will not turn you away if you come with the right attitude and the right spirit. In the New Testament you can read of an old man's son who was miles away from Jesus, yet Jesus spoke the Word and he was healed. You can read of many instances of healing that took place, such as the leper who was healed, the lame man at the pool of Bethesda who was healed, the withered hand that was restored, the woman who was bowed down and was healed, the centurion's servant who was healed, the daughter of the Syro-Phoenician woman who was healed, and the blind man named Bartimaeus who received his sight. These are some of the many examples of divine healing in the New Testament.

We are serving a compassionate Heavenly Father, and He cares about each of us. With my children there is not anything that I would not do for them if it meant something good for them, and the same is true concerning my grandchildren. Psalm 103:13 says, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the

LORD pitieth them that fear him." You can see in this verse of Scripture that there are conditions that God's children must meet. God will not heal a person who is insincere. If a person regards iniquity in his heart, if he has rebellion in his heart, or if he has sin in his life, he must confess and forsake it first. I do not believe that a person who comes to God half-heartedly, not really serious about serving Him, is going to receive anything from Him. God is so interested in you that He even counts the hairs of your head. He knows you intimately.

Many refuse to accept divine healing in our day. They say that we no longer need divine healing because it was given to attest to the divinity of Christ and later to convince men that Christianity was the true religion. If those were true then, they are still true today. God heals us for other reasons as well. He is a compassionate Heavenly Father. Sometimes when I see people who are afflicted, I say, "O God, help me. In some way I would like to help them. Help me to be all that I ought to be for You. If it is Your will, if I can touch them in some way, help me to know when and where and how. If there is a lack, help me that I might have greater power with You."

### **Healing Is the Children's Bread**

Many times the Word speaks of God's compassion. Matthew 14:14 says, "And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick." Mark recorded in Mark 1:41, "And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean." The Bible says Jesus had compassion on the widow woman whose son was dead, and He brought him back to life. Luke 7:13-15 tells us: "And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. And he came and touched the bier: and they

that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother."

Salvation is a gift, and so is healing. According to the Bible, healing is the children's bread. What father or mother would withhold the necessary bread from his or her children? Christian friend, do not doubt God. If you are suffering and going through a difficult place, you must stay true to God. He will never give you more than you can bear. He does a work in the lives of people who are willing to suffer. Do we not sing a song that says, "Who Will Suffer With the Savior"? Most people do not want to suffer. They want to do whatever they can to get rid of the suffering right away.

Paul stated in Hebrews 4:15, "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities." God is touched when you are hurting. We have many Scriptures that let us know that nothing is too hard for God. Healing is easy to God.

If you are afflicted, you need to ask God to help you. Search your heart. Do you have anything in your life that would hinder your healing? Do you have an attitude against the pastor or anyone else? If so, you need to pray. Be sure that you are clear with God. I believe and I teach this very strongly: you are not clear with God until you are clear with everyone else. A good man of God does not even kick a dog in anger. The Bible lets us know that he treats his beasts with kindness. A man of God acts right.

### **Have Faith in God**

James 5:13-16 says: "Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms. Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church [the elders of the church are those who have been faithful for a long time, who show the qualities of being good, stable men or women, and

whom the pastor can trust to stand by him]; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord [there is no saving virtue in the oil itself; it is a symbol of the Holy Spirit that does the work]: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him [if he confesses, forsakes, and makes them right].

"Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed [it could be that some faults need to be confessed and some things need to be taken care of]. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

Acts 19:11-12 reads: "And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them." A very precious woman who was once my Sunday school teacher had a running sore on her leg that she always kept bandaged. She asked if we would send an anointed handkerchief, so we anointed a handkerchief and sent it to her. She applied that to her leg, and God removed that sore and healed it completely. He is just the same today. Sometimes an afflicted one cannot get to where the church is, so an anointed handkerchief is a means of his or her healing. If you are afflicted, you need to come and allow the brethren to anoint you, lay hands on you, and pray the prayer of faith. God will touch your body in a wonderful way.

Everything we get from God comes through faith. Every blessing that we receive, we have to receive by faith. We must exercise faith. The Bible says in Hebrews 11:6, "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Galatians 3:11 reads, "The just shall live by faith."

You may say, "Well, I don't have the faith." You need to use the faith that you have, and God will increase it.

Sometimes when I get in a very difficult place, I sit down and count my blessings and rehearse the many times that God has helped us and come to our rescue. He has al-

ways come at the right time. I repeat, everything we receive from God comes through faith. Faith is an indispensable ingredient of our Christian walk. We have to use faith. We live by having faith in our government, our land, and our institutions. Why not have faith in the

One who has never failed? God has never failed. Suffering one, if you have a need, God can and will touch your body.

(Cassette C-4870M)

[Guest Editorial—continued from page 2]

grinding at the mill." They ground out meal to make bread. This portrays that at His second coming there will be true religion and false religion, both working to get their bread (or their doctrine) to the people. In biblical reality there are only "two women," or two types of religion: "pure" religion and "vain" religion (James 1:26-27). There is only one true church, and all else composes the false church; both will be working right up to the time of Christ's second advent.

The doctrine of a supposed rapture is one of many "damnable

heresies" (2 Peter 2:1) and "doctrines of devils" (1 Timothy 4:1). Why such strong language? Why is it not just a false doctrine? Why is it "damnable"? It causes people to feel that after the rapture occurs, they will have a second chance. It causes people who want to continue in their life of rejection and sinfulness to feel, "When the rapture comes, I'll know how much time is left, and then I'll get saved." That thinking causes people to rest their salvation on something that will never occur. The Bible says, "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2).

Dear one, do not put off your salvation. Today is the day of grace. Do not rest your salvation in the teachings of men. I trust that the Spirit of God has revealed the truth to your heart that there will not be any event occurring such as men call the rapture. Do not postpone gaining a real experience of salvation because of the false teachings of men. When Jesus comes again, it will be to "judge the quick [alive] and the dead at his appearing" (2 Timothy 4:1). If you are not saved, won't you be saved now?

Brother Earl R. Borders

# Radio Log



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

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

## My Personal Testimony

Psalm 9:11 tells us, "Sing praises to the LORD, which dwelleth in Zion: declare among the people his doings." This Scripture, along with many others, instructs the people of God to praise Him and to tell the miraculous works He has done. When we glorify God for His wonderful love, His saving grace, and His healing power to us, we open the gates of blessings for others to share and enjoy as well. An old song says, "Tell what the Lord has done for you, others may need Him, too."

In the June camp meeting of 1965, I met Jesus Christ at an altar of prayer, and God wonderfully saved me from sin and turned my life around. Since that time, I have gone through many trials, sicknesses, and afflictions, for the Psalmist said in Psalm 34:19, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all." The Lord has miraculously proven Himself to me time after time throughout my saved life, and all the praise and honor and glory belong to Him. Neither time nor space will allow me to go into all the details and tell you of all the miraculous ways that He has performed in my own life, but I would like to try to share just three miracles with you.

The first one began one Saturday afternoon back in 1968 when I was horseback riding with my young brother-in-law. The horse that I was riding threw me off onto the ground in such a way that my back was painfully dislocated. When I was able to get up off the ground, the pain was severe, and I could not straighten myself up so that I could walk in a half-way decent manner. My body was crooked, and I was actually walking sideways. On Sunday morning I made my way to the house of God and asked Brother Emerson Wilson and some of the brethren to lay hands on me and pray. After those brethren prayed, thank God, I stood up as straight as I was before I was thrown off the horse. God miraculously and instantaneously healed me.

Then in 1984 I was afflicted with a disease called gout. According to medical science, there is no cure for gout. This disease affects many joints of the body, and it brings intense pain that causes one to be unable to walk at times when it

settles in the feet or legs. The only relief a person can have, according to medical science, is to be given shots and medication. However, the prayer of faith was made in my behalf. God brought relief, and the gout seemed to have left; but I gave into some symptoms that came back onto me and the disease returned. One dear brother reminded me of the fact that healing comes by faith, and sometimes we must press and believe in God in spite of the symptoms. Sometimes symptoms remain, but when we have prayed, we must believe that God has healed us. After talking to this brother that night, I realized that God had healed me, but I had doubted when I had received a little pain in my legs and feet. So, when I got home that night, I got down before the Lord and asked Him to forgive me for doubting my healing. I had not been able to walk up and down the stairs the normal way a person would walk up and down stairs, because my ankles would not pivot up and down.

The next day when I went to work, I walked out to the stairway and I expressed to the Lord, "I believe, Lord, that You healed me, and I am going to walk up and down those stairs the way I am suppose to walk." At first the pain was intense, but I continued to trust God even though the symptoms were still lingering. It was approximately three or four weeks later that God took away every last one of those symptoms. I thank God yet today for the grace that He has given me to trust Him. There have been times since then that the symptoms of gout have tried to come back, but each time I have asked God to give me the grace to trust Him. It was not just trying to think within myself that the pain was not there, because the pain was starting to come back, but God gave me the grace to resist the symptoms and to trust Him. Today He has graciously given me victory. Bless His holy name! God is so good to us. He is always a present help in the time of need.

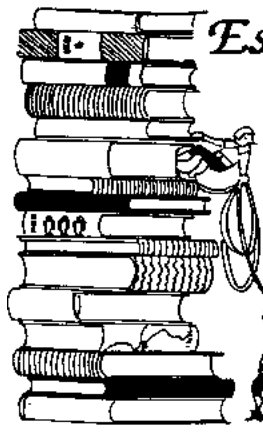
This third healing that I would like to share with you took place more recently. I was preparing to go to Kenya, East Africa, with Brother Roger Decker and some other brethren who were going to help Brother Mbui, when a lump appeared on my right arm just above my elbow. It was about the size of a ping-pong ball. I

have no idea what the reason for it being there was or how it got there, but the location of that lump was always in the way, getting bumped. Whenever I would hit it on something, it brought real pain. This pain would soon go away, for which I was always grateful. I asked Brother Decker and some of the brethren to pray for me, but I was not healed at that particular time. When we all returned from Africa, the lump was still there.

One time when I bumped this lump, I broke it open and it began giving me real problems. I went to Brother Decker again and asked him to pray, and naturally he did. Every time there was just a little progress in this lump going down, I would want to get up before the congregation and praise God for what He had been doing. This went on for a few months before God actually moved in and miraculously took it away. Today that lump is completely gone. There is absolutely no pain, for which I, again, give God all the thanks and the praise. When I was praying over this matter, I expressed a desire to God to have Him remove this lump, but I told Him that I did not care if He left a scar. Thank God, I can say that the lump is gone! There is still just a little scar, but even that scar is fading away.

There have been many other times in my life when God has healed me instantly. Also there has been many times when He healed me gradually. Mark 16:18 tells us that "they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." Divine instant healing happens immediately, but recovery may take a period of time. How long that period of time is, no one can really answer. There is two different ways of being healed: instantaneously or by recovery. Jesus has promised us that He would heal us of *all* our diseases. That is a promise that He has given to His children, and healing is a part of the children's bread. So, if you are endeavoring to trust God for healing upon your body or for a financial situation or for some other situation that you are faced with, I encourage you to just simply wait on God. God will answer in His own good time. Isaiah 49:23 says, "For they shall not be ashamed that wait for me."

Brother Fred Barrows



*Especially for Young People*

## The Theater



As I walked into a drug store some time ago, I noticed a stack of large books on the counter. They were about the size of a large city telephone book. I glanced through one and noticed the title, "Gone With the Wind," and realized it was the popular play of the screen, starring Vivien Leigh as Scarlett O'Hara, for which she was awarded the "Oscar" by the Hollywood Academy of Science. When I left the drug store, I wondered how people in this busy age would take the time and effort to read this voluminous non-sensical trash.

However, the title stuck with me, and I realized that morality is going with the wind of sexual prominence. The days of Noah are upon us. Spiritual things are discarded and the great majority of Americans are living after the flesh, fulfilling the evil imaginations of the heart (Genesis 6:5; Luke 17:26-27). The bars have been let down and public institutions have commercialized sex-appeal and demoralized the youth of our land.

The theater is positively immoral and rotten to the core. It defies reform. Good pictures, so-called, would bankrupt the theater in short order. The average movie crowd thrives on smutty, improper, and immoral suggestions. If the movie producers were to take the filth out of the movies, the crowds would dwindle, and that goes for the operas and plays as well.

They are teachers of crime and immorality, and to them sin is a joke.

The pictures that are generally a success are those that touch upon the shady side of life. Bad girls are pictured as good. Marriage is made light of, and illicit love is encouraged. Once a heathen country branded American films as immoral. At that time, a member of that country's parliament sought to prevent the children under sixteen years of age from attending the American-made movies. The reasons he gave were that they distort the brain, shake the nerves, suggest adventurous ideas, made girls fond of jewels and expensive dresses, convey premature information about sex, and inspire violent passions.

Many people attend the movies every week, and many are young people. To a great majority of these, the movies set the standard for dress, manners, religion, and love making. Their influence for evil is tremendous. Not only are the pictures bad, but so are the people that produce them. We cannot spare words in speaking of their licentious, rotten barnyard standards of living. The diaries of some of these would make a prostitute blush. To some face savers, divorcing and remarrying was only a cloak for their immoral behavior. The pictures of movie stars should never be found in Christian homes.

Some say, "We attend only good movies." Well, that is just like going down into the sewer to pick out something good that is floating by. Every good thing of the movies is polluted by the evil. It is the devil's

school and church for millions. It has debauched the actors and actresses and defiled its patrons.

Another attack that has been made on America's morals is through the music industry. Many years ago, a man connected with the music publishing business said that his business viewed with alarm the increasing manufacture of recordings with nice songs on one side and smutty ditties on the other. Also, smutty films have traveled into people's homes. Add these corrupting influences to the smutty shows, the morally devastating television shows and movies, the magazines of the lewd and suggestive type, and one wonders why all this filth is tolerated to corrupt our youth in a nation that has millions of professed church members.

Selected

### The Christian

It is not the ship in the water but the water in the ship that sinks it. So it is not the Christian in the world but the world in the professing Christian that constitutes the danger.

Anything that dims one's vision of Christ, takes away the taste for Bible study, cramps the prayer life, or makes Christian work difficult is wrong, and you must, as a Christian, turn away from it.

*John 12:23 And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified.*

*24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the*

*ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.*

*25 He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.*

*26 If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour [or receive].*



# THE OFFICE OF SERVANTSHIP

*Brother C. H. Dickerson*

## **Following God's Plan**

As we consider this text of Scripture, we need to realize that we are here in this life for a purpose. God had a purpose for saving you, Christian friend. The greatest thing that pleases God is to see the saints die to their wants and desires and to serve Him from the depths of their hearts. When God saved your soul, He had a work for you to do. He put you in the office of servanthship.

Verse 26 of our Scripture text lets you know that if you are going to serve Christ and follow Him, you must have eternal life. When Jesus said, "If any man serve me," He was saying, "If you assist Me, or carry out My duties. . . ." Paul once said that he was a prisoner of the Lord, not because he had to be, but because he loved God so much that he let Him control his life. Ephesians 4:1 says, "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of

the vocation wherewith ye are called." If you love God, you will do likewise. The saints of God love God so much that they are His prisoners, not because they have to be, but because they love God for what He has done for them. Child of God, where you are today is due to what God has done for you; He has made you what you are. Therefore, you ought to love God so much that you gladly let Him control your life. You ought to endeavor to be what He would have you to be with a determination to serve Him in a greater capacity than ever before.

The plan of God is for an eternal purpose. If you get the power of God on the inside, you will not put forth so much effort to satisfy the flesh, but your desire will be to satisfy God. God's desire is to satisfy your soul. A payday is coming, and you will be recompensed by God according to the work that you have done. Also, God has a payday for those who re-

bel against Him. His Word tells us that indignation and wrath will be upon those who have turned against Him. Romans 2:6 states, "Who will render to every man according to his deeds." Friend, whether your deeds are good or evil, you are going to get paid for what you do. If you have a rebellious attitude, an attitude that causes you to stand against the things of God, you are going to receive a just reward. On the other hand, if you serve God and go all the way with Him, He will recompense you for that. He said He would render every man according to his works.

## **Continue in Well Doing**

Verse 7 reads, "To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life." This lets you know that you must continue in well doing. This is not done spasmodically, doing well one week but

not the next week. If you really get hold of God and continue in His way, you must press, and then there will be "glory and honour and immortality, eternal life." Verses 8-9 state: "But unto them that are contentious [those who are contrary and rebellious and will not do what God tells them to do], and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath [of God], Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile."

We read in verses 10-11: "But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: For there is no respect of persons with God." God is not concerned about who you are, but He is concerned about what you do for Him and your attitude. Sinner friend, if you will confess that you are a sinner and mean business with God, He will give you all the power you need to finish the course victoriously. You can begin to win souls for God, and He will give you the power to do that if you will let Him have His way.

When it comes down to the end, each of us will be recompensed for the effort put forth. A payday is coming. God will reward you for what you have done, and He will be fair. Even in this life, there are paydays. When the Gospel is preached, some people are happy and joyous while others murmur and complain and find fault. Your payday will be determined by the attitude you have and by what you put into the service of God. Friend, He is not going to give you a spirit of rejoicing if you criticize and find fault with everything. If you praise God and lift Him up, He will flood your soul with happiness and joy, and He will give you freedom to praise Him with all your heart.

### **The Faithfulness of God**

We can read of many examples of God's faithfulness throughout the Word of God. The Old Testament

tells of the king of Egypt. God dealt with him and warned him, but he was a rebellious king. In Ezekiel 29:1-12 we can read of the things that were to happen to Pharaoh. God even told him of the things that were going to happen to him, but seventeen years passed before God brought judgment upon him. Today God has warned what will happen to people who are rebellious, but because He does not bring judgment immediately, people forget and think God has forgotten too. No, God has not forgotten! He will reward every man according to his deeds. My friend, it would behoove you to get hold of the right attitude and the right spirit and do what God would have you to do.

Pharaoh rebelled and thought he could get by, but one day God spoke to Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, and he took his army down to Egypt. Ezekiel 29:18 tells us, "Son of man, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon caused his army to serve a great service against Tyrus: every head was made bald, and every shoulder was peeled: yet had he no wages, nor his army, for Tyrus, for the service that he had served against it." God sent this king down there to do a destructive work.

In verse 19 we read, "Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will give the land of Egypt unto Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; and he shall take her multitude, and take her spoil, and take her prey; and it shall be the wages for his army." If God dealt fairly with a people who had no covenant with Him and made sure they got paid, He will surely take care of His people. If you make a covenant with God and do what He wants you to do, He will pay you; He will bless your soul. You do not have to worry.

Sometimes people may think, "If people do not notice me, there is no use for me to do anything." Friend, if that is your attitude, then you are trying to receive your pay from man. If you receive your pay from man, then God is not going to pay you. When you work for God, you should

not care whether people see you. If you get down on your knees and pray for the preacher, the song leader, the choir, the choir director, and the Sunday school teachers, it may be that no one ever sees you. Nevertheless, you need to remember that God sees you, and He is the One who will reward you. Saint, you need to work harder for God than ever before. It might not be physical labor, but you can pray for the sick, pray for the church, and pray for the preacher. You ought to back up the pastor, the song leader, the choir, and the choir director. If you do, God will give you a payday.

Since God was so thoughtful that He rewarded His uncovenanted servants, how much more will He do for His submissive children? He is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor. Hebrews 6:10 tells us, "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister." Child of God, when you minister to the saints, you do it to God, and He will not forget those works. God is faithful. If you do it out of a love for Him, He will reward you.

You may ask, "How will God pay me?" I do not know, but I know one thing: God gives joy and peace that the world knows nothing about. You cannot buy it or obtain it any other way, and it is beyond measure. Where does it come from? God gives it to you. When you work for Him and endeavor to do His will, He will reward you.

### **Be Steadfast**

Salvation is more than what any of us deserve. While living in sin, we willfully walked contrary to God's way. We wanted the flesh to have its way. Because of that, when God gave us salvation, that was more than we deserved. Saint, when you give yourself unreservedly to His service, your labor is not in vain.

Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:58, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be

ye stedfast." If there was ever a time that we needed to be steadfast, it is the day and age in which we are living. Sinner friend, God wants to save your soul today. He wants you to get a solid foundation and be steadfast in the things of God so that people do not have to wonder where you stand. They will know where you stand if you are steadfast in the things of God.

God's standard has never changed. What God said in the beginning is true yet today. You need to get hold of that, stand steadfastly upon it, and refuse to let anyone change you. The old devil works through people the same as God works through people. Satan has set out to try to get every saint of God off the highway of holiness. Saint, you need to keep holding on. It will all be over one of these days, and we will go marching down Glory Avenue, praising God for what He has done. You need to be unmovable in the things of God. Do not let anyone take the Gospel away from you, and do not let anyone change you along the lines of Truth. Truth has not changed; it is still the same today. I love the Truth. It is the only thing that will set you free. Without it you would be in bondage.

Paul admonished us to always abound in the work of the Lord, and your labor will not be in vain. Again, 1 Corinthians 15:58 reads, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." We each must give an account for everything that has been wasted.

In the business world books are kept, and in those books there are accounts receivable, accounts payable, and an account of the cash balance on hand. The books have to balance. If there is only a one-cent difference, they do not balance. You cannot just put a penny in or take a penny out. That will not balance the books. You have to go back and find that error and correct it.

We need to realize that God has

given each of us a gift called time. Every minute that has been wasted, everything that has not been spent for the things of God must be accounted for. You may say, "That is close." Absolutely, but it is not any closer than the Gospel. You must account for everything you do. We are living in a day when many people are not afraid to mistreat or speak against the saints of God. The day is coming when all will stand before the judgment bar of God, and the Books will be opened. If you are guilty of that, you will be found wanting.

I have worked with books enough to know that you cannot juggle the figures to make them look right. Also, I have been saved long enough to know that you cannot make excuses for what you have done and for how you have acted. God still has laws. It is not what you think that will judge you, but it is what God says. You will have to give an account at the judgment bar of God.

#### **Are You Abounding in the Work of God?**

Are you working more for the Lord in His work than you were last year? You may say, "Well, I am holding my own." The Word of God instructs you to be always abounding. In other words, you must continually grow and develop in the things of God. This is what God requires. It is impossible to hold your own. You are either going forward or going backward. You are either more spiritual or less spiritual.

The only way God is satisfied is when you are abounding and growing in the things of God. Child of God, can you look back on the past year and say without a doubt that you are more spiritual and closer to God now than you were when the year began or would you have to say that you have lost something? Today is a new opportunity. You can drive in the stake of determination that you are going to spend more time with God in prayer and in His Word. If you will do that, you will see God

in a greater way than ever before.

Paul said in verse 57, "But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Every year that passes should find you more concerned for the Lord's work. Secular work is in vain. You may say, "I am busy." Paul wrote to Timothy in 1 Timothy 6:7, "For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out." One of these days you will be gone, and someone else will spend your money, drive your automobile, and live in your house. The only thing that will matter then is what you have done for God. When you work for God, you are laying up treasures in Heaven. People work hard to lay up treasures here on the earth, but they are going to leave them. When we lay up treasures in Heaven day by day, they last for eternity. How can you lay up treasures in Heaven? You must be saved, and then you must back the pastor and the saints and labor in the work of God. When you are working to build up the Church of God, you are laying up treasures in Heaven, treasures that one day you can draw on throughout the endless age of eternity.

I trust that you can see the need of abounding more and more in the things of God and less in this old world. Saint, this old world should hold less value to you today than ever before. My mind is on the work of God and eternity. Eternal things are everlasting. Paul wrote in Colossians 3:23, "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily." In other words, you must put your whole heart into the work of God. You should not do it because you think the pastor will like you better. When you see the light, you ought to measure to it because it is right. You need to stand for the Truth because it is right.

#### **How to Meet God's Qualifications**

Too many people are wishy-washy today. They just sit back and wait to see which way the crowd is going, and then they go that way,



right or wrong. Friend, that is not what God wants. God wants you to buy the Truth and sell it not. He wants you to be established in the Truth and hold onto it. God wants you to be determined to live for the Truth even if you have to stand alone. If you have to stand against your companion, your children, or your family, you need to be determined to do so. Why? Because the Truth is the most precious thing this side of Heaven.

Anything short of the Truth is condemnation. When you take hold of the Truth, as God shows you more Truth, it will cause you to praise Him and thank Him for it. It will be precious to your soul. Nothing else will thrill your soul like the Truth of God's Word.

Saint, you are working for God, not men. Colossians 3:24-25 says: "Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons."

As we consider the fairness of God, we find that when God covenanted with people, He blessed them in a special way. You can read of Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Daniel, and many others. As I was studying along this line, my mind went back to Noah. God made a covenant with him and told him to build an ark. He told him to build it of gopher wood. Also, He told Noah what dimensions to make the ark, where to put the window, and how many stories to make it. God promised Noah that if he would do all of that, when the storms came, it would stand. Noah did what God said, and when the flood came, the ark stood the test. Why? Because God had made a covenant with Noah, and he obeyed.

God has made a covenant with His people yet today. Jesus said in Matthew 16:18, "I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Nothing can stop God's church. Friend, if you want to get into the church, you must meet

God's qualifications. He promised that if you will meet His conditions, your experience will stand the test. When other people give up, you can still be standing. The church is moving on; she is not going to give up.

In Isaiah, Chapter 43, God promised to take you through the fire. How are you going to get through it? Paul wrote in Ephesians 6:11, "Put on the whole armour of God." If you are going to stand the test, you must put on the whole armor of God. He has an armor that cannot be pierced. Our armed forces have what they call an "armor-piercing shell," and it will go right through metal. God has armor that even an "armor-piercing shell" cannot go through.

Paul told us what that armor was in Ephesians 6:17. The first part of the armor is the Truth. After you put on the Truth, you must put on righteousness, the Gospel of peace, faith, and salvation. Then you must take the sword of the Spirit (the Word of God) and stand. You need to read the Word of God, study it, and measure to it. Then if God shows you that your place of worship does not preach the Word of God, do not go along with it. The Bible instructs you to come out from among them and take a stand for the Truth with those who stand for the Truth.

Friend, you need to take hold of God's eternal Truth and follow the Truth wherever it leads you. Truth is getting scarce today. How can you buy the Truth? The first thing you must do is get the right spirit. Without the right spirit you will never receive the Truth. You must have the Spirit of God.

Years ago I lived on a farm. We wanted to have some ducks on the farm, so Dad bought some duck eggs and put them under one old hen. She hatched them, and when the ducks were old enough to leave the nest, they walked down toward a little creek that ran through the farm. When the hen saw where those ducks were going, she stood up and flapped her wings and carried on, but the ducks went right on toward

the creek. Why? Because the ducks had one spirit and the hen had another spirit.

My friend, if you get the Spirit of God, you will act the same way God acts. You are going to make the decisions that God wants you to make. You may ask, "How am I going to know what God thinks?" You must seek God's face, and then you will find out what His will is. Whatever His will is, you must do it wholeheartedly. If you will do that, you will stand for the Truth and hold up the hands of those who preach the Truth. You will not run them down, criticize them, or find fault with them.

When Israel was serving God, the Lord said that through Israel He would be glorified. Today it is through spiritual Israel that God is glorified. We must lift up Christ and exalt Him through our lives.

### **The Servantship of Christ**

If you look at the example of the servantship of Christ, you will find that He was sent into the world to execute God's eternal purpose. You can read of this in the Book of John and in the Ephesian letter. Christ was called a servant of God. Isaiah 42:1 reads, "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles." Jesus brought salvation to His people. Isaiah 53:11 reads, "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities."

Jesus came to do the Father's will. If you have the Spirit of God, you are not concerned so much about your own will as you are the will of God. Jesus said in John 6:38, "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." He said in John 4:34, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." Also, in John 17:4 He said, "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the

work which thou gavest me to do."

God's objective for the world is evident in the accomplishments of Christ, His servant. Christ came to make an end of sin. Before that time, people had to serve sin; but when Jesus came, freedom was introduced. Thank God, we can be free; we no longer have to serve sin. We do not have to live in sin. God has set us free. Friend, if you are living in sin, it is because you have chosen to do so. You cannot blame anyone else. Christ came to save the world *from* sin.

Christ did a work when He came to save people from their sins. Now Christ has handed this ministry to those whom He has called. He gave the Apostles the same power. He gave them power to cast out devils, preach the Word, and heal the sick. Christ's ministry needs to be fully received today. There was a time (and I remember it well) when people had absolute confidence and respect for a man of God, but things have changed today. Some people are not even afraid to lie about a man of God and destroy people's confidence in him. According to the Word of God, if you do that, you are in trouble with God.

Why should the ministry be more fully received? The only way that man can be restored to fellowship with God is through Christ. God ordains ministers, not man. Men can ordain them all they want to, but that does not make them ministers of God.

### **The Call of God**

We read in Ephesians 4:11-13 that God has called apostles, prophets, teachers, and so on. Why? He wanted them to go out to preach the Gospel to the lost and to preach messages to perfect the saints. People without the call of God have no God-given authority.

We read in Romans 10:13, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." If a person will call upon the Lord from the depths of his heart, he will be saved, and he will become a new creation.

He will go from being a sinner to being a saint. He comes in the filthy, dirty rags of sin, and when he repents, Christ gives him a spotless, white garment.

Verses 14-15 read: "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? [Those people had not been doing square business with God. To believe in God is to do His will. They were not doing His will; that is what made them sinners. Whoever calls upon the Lord will be saved. How are they going to call on Him in whom they have not believed?] and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent?" Who sends them? Are they to be sent by a church organization or a church headquarters? Absolutely not! Unless God has put His hand on a man and called him to preach, he had better go out and plant corn, because he would do better.

God calls men to preach, and when individuals are called, they have the signs that God has called them. What are these signs? They cast out devils, the sick are healed, and souls are saved. If God calls you, you will preach and people will hear, but you cannot preach unless God calls you. This is what is wrong today. Colleges all over the country are cranking out what they call preachers like products from a packing plant, and they are sent out to preach. Often their messages are fifteen minute sermonettes, and when things get a little rough, they close down and move on. For the least little thing, they cancel the services. They make everything convenient for the people.

Whenever God calls a man, he does what God wants, not what people want. God does not authorize His ministry to cancel the services so that people can go boating. Also, He does not authorize the saints to miss church services to do that either. I am not talking about going on vacation, but I am simply talking about laying out of church.

### **Respecting Men of God**

Let me ask you a few questions: Who did God set on the wall to watch for people's souls? To whom did God say, "You must be submissive to the man that watches for your soul"? To whom was Christ speaking in Matthew 18:18 when He said, "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven"? God has given the ministry more authority than He has given anyone else. He has lifted a man of God to a higher position, and you need to respect him.

We are living in a day when many people consider a God-called preacher to be nothing more than a man. If you get your eyes anointed spiritually, God's man will look different to you. He will not look like a common man, but you will see him as one who is watching for your soul. Once your eyes have been opened, when God's man warns you that he sees the enemy approaching, you will not get up a miff tree and turn against him and say, "That's none of his business!" No, you will say, "I praise God for you, preacher. You warned me!"

Men of God need to be exalted. There are Scriptures to back this up. They need to be lifted up and respected. Romans 10:15 states, "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel." He was not talking about their literal feet, but he was talking about the respect that you ought to have when you see a man of God come in. It ought to be uplifting to know that a man of God is in the midst. It ought to encourage you when you are sick to know that when you call God's ministry and ask for prayer, you are going to receive help.

Saint, you are faced with a challenge, and all the devils in hell are going to fight you to try to get you to let down a little. The enemy tells the man of God, "If you would only let the standard down a little, you could get more people in." A true man of God does not care about numbers. He wants people who will

live the Truth. He wants to help people and see them go to Heaven.

### **"Ye Shall Receive Power"**

Because Christ did the work assigned to Him, God can justify the ungodly who come to Him by His righteous Servant. Romans 5:6-10 states: "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."

Paul said, "For when we were yet without strength. . . ." We could not help ourselves. Paul once said, in so many words, "The things I wanted to do, I could not do." If you are a Christian, no doubt, this is what turned you to God. Things were happening in your life that you did not want to happen, and you wanted to be free from them. So you began to seek One who could give you the power you needed to overcome those things. John 1:17 says that "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." Today if you have the power to overcome sin, it is due to the grace of God. Without the grace of God you have no power and you do what the devil tells you to do. When God moves in and gives you His grace, you can be victorious over sin. You can be a part of the church that Jesus said the gates of hell cannot prevail against. Why? Because you have the grace of God.

When the devil tells you to do this or that, you do not have to do it, because you have the grace of God, and you can turn your back on him. God can give you the grace to walk away from the alcohol, the drugs, and all the filth and corruption that is in the world. Acts 1:8 says, "But ye

shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." Friend, you can receive power to live for God.

Saint, you are commissioned to preach the Gospel to every creature. You can preach the Gospel to people by living a holy life. One way that you can preach the Gospel is by the order of your priorities. When Sunday comes, what do you put first? When revivals and camp meetings come, what do you put first? Your life is preaching a message to people. Your neighbors are watching you. They see you when the snow is deep and it seems like it is impossible to get out, yet you try to go to the church services. They see when you put forth effort to go to church. If you are able to go to work on Monday morning, but on Sunday you stay in bed, your priorities tell the world something.

Also, you are preaching a message to the world by your attitude. What is your attitude toward the Truth? The world knows what your attitude is. They see your attitude concerning whether you want to go to the house of God. They see how you treat the saints of God. What is your attitude toward Bible reading and your prayer life? What is your attitude when you talk to people?

### **How Are You Representing Christ?**

God has promised that whoever will receive the Gospel and obey it will be received by the Father. Christ removed everything by His death that stood between God and man. In Colossians 2:1 Paul said, "For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh." In essence, Paul said, "I want you to know what great fear I have for you." Paul was speaking to those in this Laodicean church age. There are seven periods of time spoken of in the Revelation. Christ complimented six of them for their work, but He did not have one good thing to say about

the Laodicean church age. We are living in one of the most dangerous times, spiritually, in which man has ever lived. Devils are loose, and they are appearing as angels.

We are living in one of the greatest days of conflict. Why? Because the devil is throwing in everything he has to try to defeat the saints of God, but he cannot defeat us. We can stand and fight the good fight of faith. We may be few, but we are going to stay true to God. He is going to take the remnant out of the remnant.

We read in Colossians 2:14, "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us." How much of the ten commandment laws were against us? All of them. Jesus nailed them all to the Cross. He said, "You cannot do it, so I will give you two other commandments in their stead." Jesus said in Matthew 22:37-40: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." He nailed all ten commandments to the Cross.

Man must receive that reconciliation in order to have it. Second Corinthians 5:18-20 states: "And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ. . . ." We are here to represent Christ.

You ought to ask yourself these questions: How am I representing Christ? Is the world seeing Christ as God wants them to see Him? and Am I representing Christ as a true and living God to this lost and dying world? Do I desire to be true to souls regardless of the cost? When Christ was true to souls, it put Him

on the Cross, and when you are true to souls, it will cost you, but it will be worth it all when you see Jesus.

Saint, you are here as an ambassador for Christ, or to represent Christ. Jeremiah, Chapter 35, tells us there is a work to do. Verse 15 reads, "I have sent also unto you all my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them, saying, Return ye now every man from his evil way, and amend your doings, and go not after other gods to serve them, and [if you will do that] ye shall dwell in the land which I have given to you and to your fathers." The command was to turn from your evil way, to amend your doings, and to go not after other gods to serve them. Other gods are things that takes first place in your heart and life and rob you of your time with God. They could be persons or things in your life, but God, through the Prophet Jeremiah, said to "go not after other gods to serve them."

### **"How Should We Then Live?"**

There is a work for you to do. You need to tell others of Christ by the Word and the Spirit working in your life. What are you supposed to say? God has the answer in Ezekiel 33:9-11: "Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul. Therefore, O thou son of man, speak unto the house of Israel; Thus ye speak, saying, If our transgressions and our sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how should we then live? Say unto them [this is what you are supposed to say], As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"

God finds no enjoyment in seeing people die. He is blessed when people live for Him. As long as you are dead to the things of God, you cannot be an encouragement or a help to others. You are not exalting

Him when you are unsaved. All you are doing is exalting yourself. God wants you to get over this old dead stuff and get hold of something that is alive. If you are living in sin, God does not derive any enjoyment from your life. Christ died on the Cross of Calvary for you, and when you do not live for God, He does not receive a blessing from your life. The blessing comes when you become alive spiritually and take a stand against sin, telling the world, "God saved me from sin, turned my life around, and made me a new creature." God receives a blessing from that.

When you work according to God's purpose in Christ, then you are serving God. Paul told us that in 2 Timothy 2:5. Verse 26 of our Scripture text says, "If any man serve me, let him follow me." To serve God, you have to follow the Word; the Word is Christ. You cannot follow Him and also follow man. The real purpose of Christ's coming was to serve mankind. As a child of God, your purpose in life is to be a servant: you must work for God to win souls. God let us know there that if we are faithful over a few things, He will make us ruler over many. This is our pay.

Just as you want your bank account to grow year after year, so you should desire spiritual growth in your life. What a blessing to work for God and see spiritual growth! As we grow, we have greater peace, greater happiness, greater contentment, and greater determination to reach out to the lost.

No doubt, you have family that are lost. Maybe your companion is lost. Spiritual growth will increase your determination to see them saved. How can this come about? You must pray, fast, plead for their souls before God, live close to God, and ask the church to pray. You should not take prayer for granted. You need to do whatever it takes to sow and water the seed, and then God will give the increase.

Child of God, it is time to get down to business. Do not listen to the devil. He wants you to compromise.

Oh, how the devil puts God's people through trials to get them to give up. He will tell you, "Nobody else is working that hard, so there is no need for you to work so hard." Do not pay any attention to the devil. If you see someone else becoming slack, then you need to take up the reins and work a little harder. God will reward you for it. One of these days those old skies are going to open up, and Jesus Christ is going to catch His saints up and take them home to glory, and we will forever be with the Lord. I want to be in that number, and I am going to be in that number by the grace of God.

I ask you, if those skies were to open right now, would you need to pray? Is there anything you need to get out of the way? Have you spoken against someone? Have you sown a seed of discord that you ought to clear up? Have you backslidden because of some situation? If so, you have no excuse. This is an individual salvation.

My friend, if you need to pray, why not do it now? Why not decide that you are going to be settled and established in the things of God? Have you been up and down in your Christian experience? What if Christ should come when you are down? You would lose your soul. God has an experience for you that the very gates of hell cannot prevail against. Why not accept it now? Will you make that covenant with God? I trust that you will.

*(Cassette C-4027M)*

**The world does not  
need a definition of  
Christianity as badly  
as it needs a  
demonstration.**

# *The Necessity of Having Keen Spiritual Eyesight*



*Brother Irwin Seshier*

## **Sin Brings Forth Death**

The world in which we live is waxing worse and worse. We hear things on the radio or read things in the newspapers that cause us to say, "I never thought I would see the day when anything like that would happen" or "I never thought anyone would ever commit such a crime" or "I never thought he would commit such a notorious crime." Friend, you must realize that sin is behind all of it. Sin is the worst thing that has ever befallen man. It causes people to do things that they never thought they would do.

If you do not have the Spirit of God dwelling within you, another spirit will overtake you. The spirit of darkness, the spirit of jealousy, the spirit of envy, the spirit of malice, the spirit of bitterness, and many other spirits can overtake you

without the Spirit of God in your life.

We are living in a day in which people are not seeing things as they once did. At one point in their lives, when they recognized that certain things were wrong, they immediately backed away from those things. They had no question in their minds about what they should do. They did not waver; they avoided the things that God told them not to do. Today, however, those same things do not look quite as bad to them as they once did. They have started to indulge in the same things that the Lord once so graciously steered them away from. Some people have adamantly said, "I will not partake of those things in my life anymore." Nevertheless, without the Spirit of God in their lives they do not know what they will do.

Spirits can overtake you so quickly that you may not realize what has gotten hold of you. On the other hand, some spirits will gradually overtake you a little at a time; that is the deception of the enemy. The enemy has all kinds of spirits that he can use to bring you down. Satan is cunning, sly, and deceptive.

James 1:14-15 reads: "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." When sin is finished with you, friend, you will be spiritually dead. Then you will have no hope unless God graciously intervenes in your life.

People would not be making the moves they are making had their love for God and the Truth not

cooled off. Friend, if you love the Truth, you will stand for it and obey it. Also, if you love the Truth, you will back the man of God. You will not be swayed by every little doctrinal wind that comes your way. Too many people are swayed by every doctrinal wind that comes along. They say, "I see it this way" or "I see it that way." The question is, is it of the Spirit of God?

### **How Deep Is Your Anchor?**

When you are deeply rooted in the things of God, you will not be swayed by every little thing that comes your way. You will not be swayed by every little group that calls itself "Church of God." Everything that calls itself "Church of God" is not necessarily the Church of God. Just having the name over the door does not make it the Church of God. How can you tell if people are truly the Church of God? You will know them by their fruits.

If a farmer who raises fruit trees has a tree that does not bear fruit, he has no other choice but to cut it down. We read in Matthew 3:10, "And now also the ax is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire."

I do not want to be cut down by God. I have so much to thank Him for. Sinner friend, God has allowed you to live another day and to take another breath of air, and He has allowed you to have the right use of your mind. You have much to thank God for. Don't you think it is time for you to give your heart and life to Him? He has been so good to you and protected you from so many things.

Christian friend, where would you be today had it not been for the mercy and grace of God? You have Someone to whom you can go, Someone to whom you can talk, and Someone on whom you can lean. You do not have to face this world alone.

There is something about that

name, Jesus Christ. He is the King of kings, the Lord of lords. I am so glad that one day I yielded to Him. I was sick of sin. Friend, the only way that you are going to get help for your never-dying soul is to become sick of sin.

Isaiah 9:6 says, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." Saint, aren't you glad that one day He spoke peace to your soul? The peace that He gives is a peace that goes beyond all understanding. This peace goes beyond writing about it, because He writes it upon your heart.

Friend, to have clear spiritual eyesight, you need to be rooted and grounded in the Word of God. Your spiritual anchor has to go deep, all the way down to the Rock, Jesus Christ. If you are not anchored in Him, you are anchored in other things. So many people are getting knocked around unnecessarily and, in some cases, getting knocked out of this Christian race because their anchors are not deep enough.

What gets on their anchors? Barnacles. They are a type of crustacean that cement themselves on things. When they fasten themselves on something, they hinder it from doing its job. Friend, it is time to get anchored in Jesus Christ. So many things are going on out in this world. If you are not anchored in Jesus, you are going to be carried away with the winds of this world.

### **Is the Holy Spirit Directing Your Life?**

To see what the Lord has in store for you, you need to have your spiritual eyes fully open. Luke 2:30 reads, "For mine eyes have seen thy salvation." Saint of God, when your spiritual eyes are not fully open to what the Lord expects of your life, you cannot get all the light that you need to serve the Lord. The problem is, many people are walking around

half-blinded, spiritually speaking. They see only what they want to see, they hear only what they want to hear, and they do only what they want to do rather than letting Jesus Christ guide them and point out things in their lives.

When Jesus Christ is in the midst, you can rest assured that things will be done right. I thank the Lord that when Jesus Christ is in the midst, everything is done in decency and in order. When people let the Spirit of God direct the services, they will get rid of all the preprinted programs. I like having the Spirit of God lead and direct the services. When people have a preprinted program, they have lost the Spirit of God. When the sermon topic is placed on a marquee outside the church building, the Spirit of God is not in control.

Friend, when the Holy Spirit is directing people's lives, the Light that you see, Jesus Christ, shines brightly. You will not have to go to church and say, "Do you think the Lord is going to be here?" He will be in the midst because the people of God love Him. The Church of God is the people within the building, not the building.

Saint of God, without the light of the Gospel you would be in spiritual darkness. Many church buildings have been closed because the Spirit of God was not there. First Peter 2:9 tells us, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light."

His light is marvelous and true, and He will guide you into all understanding. If you are saved, you know that you are saved. Your name will not have to be written on a church book, because you will know deep inside that you are a child of God. I thank the Lord for the change that takes place in the life of one who has been saved. If there has been a change in you, you have love for the brethren, the

church, and your pastor. There is something different about you, and people can see the difference and hear the difference when you talk. People can see that you are walking a different road.

I thank the Lord that this change is something that people notice. You do not have to wear a cross around your neck or jog down the street with a sign. If you live the life the way you are supposed to, people will notice the difference. I thank the Lord that I have been called out. By the grace of God, I want to stay out, because there is nothing to go back to in this world. I was there. I thank the Lord for what He has kept me from. I can say, "Lord, thank You for keeping me from getting involved with vile sins. I thank You, Lord, that I did not go into the depths of sin. You protected me and watched over me. I did not have to partake of those things." I am thankful that I was never caught up in the tobacco habit, the alcohol habit, or the drug habit.

### **Be Followers of God**

Sometimes the enemy will work on the child of God who was saved at a young age by saying, "Well, how do you know that you don't like it if you don't try it? Wouldn't you like to take a drink? How do you know you wouldn't like to smoke if you have never taken a puff on a cigarette? You ought to try it; you might like it." Dear one, I have seen too many people bound by those habits. Many people spend their last dollar on them. I have no desire to try those things. I praise God for that!

The price of a pack of cigarettes is pathetic. It would make no difference if they were ten or twenty dollars a pack, people would still buy them. Wouldn't it be terrible to be hooked on a little white stick? That is sad. Many people are bound by that habit. It does not take much to get people bound.

Child of God, you need to make

sure that your spiritual eyesight is keen. You ought to make sure that what you have in your heart and life is real. If the Spirit of the Lord is dwelling within you, then you have the real thing. Sad to say, too many are going after illusions. For example, you may be driving down the highway on a hot day, and as you look ahead, you may see what appears to be a pool of water in the road. That is a mirage, or an optical illusion. The same thing could happen spiritually. A place of worship may appear to be the true Church of God, and the people may dress modestly and sound like the Church of God, but what kind of spirit do the people manifest? Do the people run down the true man of God? Do they run down the standard of the Word of God, the same standard that they once upheld?

When people go away from the Truth and the standard that they once upheld, they feel condemnation, and it causes them to point their fingers at others and make critical remarks. Making critical remarks is not a mark of a true child of God. How should a saint act? Ephesians 5:1-2 tells you: "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour." Saint, when people walk in love as Christ has loved us, they will automatically love the brethren.

I am preaching on the necessity of having keen spiritual eyesight. If you do not have keen spiritual eyesight, you will not have love in your heart for your brother as you should. You will act a different way. Someone may say, "Well, I don't have to love him." Friend, if you do not have love in your heart, you are not going to make Heaven your home. If you say, "I love these people, but not *them*," you are not going to make Heaven your home. You must love everyone. That is just the way it is. You cannot have any ill will in your heart toward anyone

and truly be a child of God.

If you do not have the Spirit of God in your heart and life, you are going to be directed by another spirit; then spirits of envy, jealousy, and hatred will enter your heart. For example, a child of God would never think about killing someone. Where would such a thought begin? A person does not just pick up a gun and say, "I wonder whom I can murder today." No, murder begins in the heart. If the heart is not right, what is inside the heart will come forth and be manifested by the outer man.

### **Serving God Takes Effort**

Friend, without keen spiritual eyesight you may develop a spirit of self-pity, thinking, "No one cares for me. No one cares what happens to me." If you act that way, you are not going to be a help to the congregation. If you have those types of thoughts come to your mind, you can go to Someone for help.

To be successful, not only in this Christian life, but in life in general, you must put forth effort. That is what is wrong with our country today—people do not want to put forth any effort. They want others to do things for them. They want an organization to take care of them when they could help themselves, but they do not want to put forth any effort. I am not putting down those types of things, because sometimes people do need help. Nevertheless, some people take advantage of those programs. If you are not careful, you could get to the point where you take advantage of people.

When you were living in sin, no doubt you put forth effort on Friday nights to get yourself all spruced up to go out. It seems as if when people are asked to do something to help others that may not benefit them, they do not want to lend a hand. Friend, it should not be that way. As the church, we are workers together in the work of God. We are to help one another and to edify, or build

up, the Church of God. The Church of God is the body of Christ. It is time to go to work for God in a greater way.

I am sure that you never said, "I want to get bad grades in school; that is my true desire." No, you wanted to get good grades in school. Also, you did not say, "I know that the teacher is going to make that test easier this week, so I'm not going to study. I'm riding on a D minus average, so I'll be all right." No, if you wanted to raise your grades, you knew that you had to put forth greater effort. It is no different in the work of God. You need to put forth some effort.

We sing the song "I'm on the winning side," but some people should sing, "I'm on the *whining* side," because that is how they act. They whine about this and whine about that; they complain about this and complain about that. They are so quick to complain and make critical remarks. So many people say, "Well, I don't like this" or "I don't like that." Rest assured, if you went to a third world country, you would love this country. If you were to spend a week there, you would be ready to get back home.

### **How Is Your Spiritual Eyesight?**

Saint of God, I want the true light sent from above, don't you? When it comes from above, you know where your help comes from. Too many are accepting artificial light. From a distance, artificial light may look good, but you cannot serve God from a distance. When you get close to God, you can feel His presence glowing in your soul. The closer you get to God, the narrower you want the preaching to be. You will not get that with artificial light.

Too many so-called Church of God congregations have turned to artificial light for their services. Friend, it will not work. How can you tell if it is *not* the real thing? The Spirit of God is not manifested there. You will feel the Spirit of God

if it is real. If you can pray, it will not take you long to recognize whether the Spirit of God is there.

How is your spiritual eyesight? Of all the senses that you have, your sight is the most important. Think of all the things that you would miss in this life if you were to lose your literal eyesight—the beautiful sunrises and sunsets, the beautiful flowers, your children and grandchildren. I could go on and on about the things you would miss if you did not have your natural eyesight. Sad to say, too many have lost their spiritual eyesight.

If you lose your spiritual eyesight, the most important thing that you would miss is Heaven. Some may say, "Oh, I could get along without my natural eyesight." Yes, but it would be an awful handicap. Saint, you have come too far with God to turn back now. There is no need to go back on God. You are too close to home to think about turning back.

It would be a feather in the enemy's hat, so to speak, to knock you out of this Christian race. How sad it would be to have once followed Christ and then turn away. To be so close to Heaven and miss it would be sad.

There is a familiar story in the Bible about someone who lost his eyesight. Judges 16:18-21 reads: "And when Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying, Come up this once, for he hath showed me all his heart. Then the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and brought money in their hand. And she made him sleep upon her knees; and she called for a man, and she caused him to shave off the seven locks of his head; and she began to afflict him, and his strength went from him. And she said, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the LORD was departed from him. But the Philistines took him, and put out his

eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison house."

You need to keep in mind that Samson lost his spiritual eyesight before he lost his physical eyesight. Many people would not do the things they are doing if their spiritual eyesight was keen in the things of God. Samson was warned repeatedly, but he failed to do what God instructed him to do. No doubt, he thought to himself, "I can handle this. I will go out as I have at other times." Friend, you are no match for the enemy without God in your life. This Scripture reading portrays a very sad picture of what can easily happen to you if you fail to heed God's Word.

### **Ways the Enemy Works**

Losing one's spiritual eyesight is usually a gradual process. It is slow enough for you not to notice until it is too late. You need to be wise to the evil snares of the enemy. He will try to get you to get your eyes on others to pick out all the faults in their lives, while you have just as many or more faults in your own life. The enemy wants you to become so weighted down that you neglect the needs in your own life. The devil is real; he is not a fantasy.

Many people's spiritual eyesight has dimmed. They make such statements as, "I am still Church of God. I just have greater light than I once had." If a person has more light or greater light, he or she is not going to look more like the world or run with the world. That person will be more like God.

Young person, the enemy of your soul does not want you to see the goodness of the Lord, and he does not want you to make Heaven your home. He will tell you of all the things that you will miss should you become a child of God, but the enemy is a liar. When you become a child of God, you need to consider all the things that you will avoid. You will avoid unnecessary heart-



aches, sorrow, mental anguish, a troubled conscience, physical ailments, and terminal diseases caused by sinful living. The devil does not show you all of that. Instead he offers you things to enjoy on the spur of the moment. It just makes sense to get saved at an early age. Then you will have the Lord to help you and guide you through life, and you can lean on Him in times of need and distress in your life.

The enemy is not going to sit back and say, "Oh, well, souls are getting saved and there is nothing I can do about it." He is working overtime to come up with things to knock you out of this Christian race. Sometimes after a camp meeting or a revival, the enemy will start sowing little things or cause you to start picking at faults in your brothers and sisters in Christ. You need to be careful of how you treat others. You should not speak evil of your brothers and sisters in Christ and sow discord. Division is sin. Also, you should not take advantage of a brother or a sister. Someone may say, "Oh, I will do this particular thing with this business deal. He is my brother, so he will understand." Is that how you would want someone to treat you? You may say, "Oh, I will pay him back when I get the money." Is that how you take care of your electric bill? You need to take care of your business dealings and things of that nature just as you would want to be treated.

Is your spiritual eyesight as keen as it once was? What do you do when your physical eyesight becomes weak? You go to the eye doctor and let him know that you cannot see as well as you once did. When your physical eyesight becomes weak, the eye doctor can prescribe stronger lenses. People do not hesitate or put off treatment when they realize they have a physical eye problem, but what happens when they realize that they have a spiritual eye problem?

Many spiritual eyesight problems can be avoided if you take care

of the need at an early stage. For many, however, day after day, week after week, month after month, and year after year goes by as their spiritual eyesight gets dimmer. Then the devil strategically places spiritual cataracts over the lenses of their eyes. A cataract is a crystallized growth that covers the lens of the eye. If you are not careful, the enemy will afflict you with spiritual cataracts.

### **How Keen Is Your Vision of the Church?**

Won't you let the Master do a spiritual eye examination on you? Is your vision of the church as keen as it once was or has it become dim? Some say, "Well, I just don't see it like I used to." Friend, the Truth of God's Word does not change. Do you see the standard as you once did? In your conversations with others, do you say, "I just don't see it that way anymore." You need to be careful. Second Timothy 3:5 says, "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away." Friend, if you slip into a form of religion, you will not make Heaven your home.

It is a cold, cruel world out there, a world that wants to destroy anything that calls itself pure and holy. Without God in your life, you are helpless and hopeless. It is time to get your eyes open to the goodness of God and to your true condition. Sinner friend, you have lived

the life of sin too long. You have allowed the devil to blind your eyes, and perhaps you cannot find good in anything anymore. The devil will have you sit in that seat from now until the time you die, and then you will split hell wide open if you do not get something done about the condition of your soul. He will be content for you to sit and do nothing. It is time to get saved.

Many need to get their lives rearranged. I thank the Lord for His amazing grace. Once I was blind, but now I can see. Once I was blind to the things of God. Brother Decker once said that before he was saved, he did not want anything to do with the things of God, but one day God opened his eyes, and then he could enjoy the things of God. I want to be around God's people and hear the preaching of the Word. Friend, that is the only thing that can help you. This is the quietest world that you will ever live in. In eternity you will either hear wailing and gnashing of teeth or the singing of the praises of God. It just makes sense to get things straightened out on this side of eternity.

If you are spiritually blind, there is only One who can get you out of that deplorable condition. You need to turn your life over to God, and He will help you. If you are unsaved, He will save your soul. Then you can sing, "It is joy unspeakable and full of glory!"

*(Cassette C-5083M)*

### **THE COST OF CONSECRATED LIVING**

**IT COST ABRAHAM THE YIELDING UP OF HIS SON.**

**IT COST DANIEL TO BE CAST IN THE DEN OF LIONS.**

**IT COST STEPHEN DEATH BY STONING.**

**IT COST PETER A MARTYR'S DEATH.**

**IT COST PAUL TO BE BEHEADED.**

**IT COST JESUS TO DIE ON THE CROSS.**

**DOES IT COST YOU ANYTHING?**



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