

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

THE GOSPEL TRUMPETER
USPS #871620

Periodicals postage paid at the post office in Newark,
Ohio 43055.
POSTMAN, send form 3579 to the printer:

THE GOSPEL TRUMPETER
675 N. Cedar Street
Newark, Ohio 43055

This periodical carries no subscription price; however, it
is partially maintained through the gifts and offerings of
its readers, with the balance of the expenses being paid
by the local congregation.

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

Brother Roger L. Decker Editor
Workers Too Numerous to Mention

THE CHURCH OF GOD BELIEVES IN:

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

SOME SPIRITUAL FACTS PERTAINING TO THE CHURCH

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

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Winter 2004 Camp Meeting Report

*"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who
hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in
Christ."*

Ephesians 1:3

*"And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in
heavenly places in Christ Jesus."*

Ephesians 2:6

Once again the saints of God were privileged to come together and sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Although the Winter Camp Meeting was short, the Lord certainly was in the midst and accomplished great things. New souls were saved and others returned to the Lord. The preaching was on target as God's ministering servants faithfully sounded forth the Gospel trumpet. It is through the preaching of the pure Word of God that hearts are cleansed from sin and error, and understanding of the right way to live in this world is gained. The fellowship with the saints was rich and sweet, as the Psalmist stated: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity" (Psalm 133:1).

Many agree that God moved in a miraculous way despite the bad weather, the loss of electricity, and the possibility of not being able to have the meeting. Wednesday before the camp meeting was scheduled to begin, a major winter storm settled in Newark and the surrounding areas. This storm brought freezing rain and cold temperatures that caused power lines and tree limbs in many areas to break and fall. At God's Acres the electricity was off for several days. When the electric was restored, the brethren found a major problem with the heating system. This problem prevented having worship services all day Sunday, and the problem still was not resolved Monday morning. Through the faithful efforts of the brethren working many hours, the problem was corrected and all things were made ready for camp meeting to proceed. We thank God for making all of this possible.

It certainly would have been disappointing to find it necessary to cancel the camp meeting. Many look forward to this time of rejoicing together with the saints of God and feeding on the precious Word. Our God, who sees all the effort put forth and the prayers, pleading for His help in this hour of crisis, was there, ready to send the needed help and strength to all who called on His Name. His eyes are always watching and His ears are ever open to the cries of His people. He desires to show Himself strong to all those who trust in Him. Many times people are deprived of a blessing and a miracle all because they give up too soon. They feel there is no use in asking, thinking it is impossible to overcome a great obstacle. It is in times such as these that God is able to do great things. To the natural eye, it looked as though there would be no camp meeting, but God never fails to reward the prayers and the efforts of those who love Him and want to serve Him. For all we know, this could have been a trial to see how desperately we desired to have the services.

Surely, we have more to praise God for now than ever before. May God help us to render Him the praise that is due. In Psalm 116:12 the Psalmist asked the question, "What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me?" He continued in verses 13-14 by saying: "I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD. I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people." To take the cup of salvation is to receive the Lord into your heart, to completely surrender your all to His control, and then to strive daily to serve Him. You must faithfully keep the vows, or the promises, that you have made to Him. Truly we thank God for an outstanding camp meeting!

Jeremiah 18:1 The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying,

2 Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words.

3 Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels.

4 And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it.

5 Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

6 O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel.

7 At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it;

8 If that nation, against whom I

have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them.

9 And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it;

10 If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them.

THE POTTER'S House



Brother Roger L. Decker

The Absolute Power of God

God had the Prophet Jeremiah go down to the potter's house. When he went there, God gave him a message. Verses 3-4 say that he saw a work on the wheels, and he saw that the vessel was marred in the hand of the potter. So the potter made another vessel that seemed good to him. Verse 5 says, "Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying," and

then verses 6-10 explained the allegory about the potter and the clay, representing God and Israel.

Some very good lessons are in this allegory that can help the Church of God today. The relationship of the potter to his clay is a clear picture of the relationship between God and His people. Some have thought that God was very strict in this particular chapter; nevertheless, you can see the mercy of

our Heavenly Father. God is always merciful. We read that God broke the vessel, but there was a reason for His breaking it.

In this Scripture text you can see how God works to shape and form people. I think most people know about the art of pottery. That art was practiced in Egypt before the entrance of the Hebrews. The clay that the potter used to make the vessel was first trodden down by his feet.

The potter walked on it with his feet until it reached the right consistency to put on the wheel. After he put it on the wheel, it was fashioned by the potter's hands into whatever shape the potter desired.

I want you to consider some thoughts found in these few verses of Scripture. I believe these thoughts can help us. The first thought is that men and women and all creation are under the absolute power of Almighty God. You need to keep that thought in your mind. You are not your own. In this allegory the power was in the potter's hands: he could either leave the clay untouched or make it a beautiful vessel. He could make it a vessel of honor or dis-honor. It all lay in the potter's hands.

God has absolute power, for He is omnipotent; He is all powerful. In this lesson we find that we are powerless against God, just as the clay is in the potter's hands. No one can succeed who resists the will of God. Such a person cannot prosper in this life, and he certainly will not prosper in eternity. We depend upon God as a baby depends upon his mother. We depend upon Him for the air we breathe. We must have God, just as the clay has to have the potter. The clay is nothing until it is put on the wheel and shaped. Likewise, we were nothing until God put us on the wheel. What does the wheel represent? It represents God's Word; that is what molds us and forms us.

The God of Refuge

In this allegory in Jeremiah, the potter represented God and the clay represented His people. The Psalmist David said in Psalm 61:2, "From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I." In other words, the Psalmist was saying, "Lead me to a place of safety."

In Psalm 18:2 the Psalmist David said, "The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust;

my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower." Oh, that is a thrilling verse to read! He said, "The LORD is my rock, and my fortress. . . ." He owed his safety entirely to God. In times of danger, a lofty rock is often sought as a place of safety to escape from the enemy. David went on to say that God was his "fortress." A *fortress* is a place of defense, a place so strengthened that an enemy cannot approach it, and one is absolutely safe.

Next, David said the Lord was his "deliverer." God delivered him from his enemies. "He is my God." God was his Protector, his Helper, his Friend, his Father, his Savior, and his strength, in whom he trusted. God was his refuge of protection. What was David saying? He was saying, "I have found Him to be such a refuge that I can trust Him. In view of the past, I will confide in Him always."

David went on to say the Lord was his buckler and the horn of his salvation. What is a *buckler*? It is a shield from the fiery darts of the enemy. What was he talking about when he said "the horn of my salvation"? A horn is an animal's defense. Its strength lies in its horn. He meant that God was to him what a horn is to animals: God was his means of defense.

Lastly, in that verse he said that God was his "high tower." Towers were erected on mountains, rocks, and walls of a city. They were regarded as safe places, mainly because they were inaccessible to an enemy. By the same token, when you are in the safety of God Almighty, the enemy cannot get to you. Oh, he would like to, but he cannot do it.

God has the authority and the power to form and fashion kingdoms and nations as He pleases. Our Scripture lesson reads in verses 6-7: "O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel. At what instant I shall speak concerning a

nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it." The Lord may dispose of you as He thinks fit, and it would be absurd for you to dispute it, just as it would be absurd for the clay to quarrel with the potter. The clay cannot change the potter's mind. It cannot tell the potter what to do.

God always goes by fixed rules of justice and goodness. Should God come against you in judgment, you can be sure that somewhere along the line you failed Him. If ones would truly repent from the evil of sin, God would have mercy upon them; that includes persons, families, and nations. Our Scripture lesson reads in verse 8, "If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them." What a promise! That is great news. Friend, there is mercy with God.

The Clay Cannot Shape Itself

Another thought I want you to consider is that you cannot shape your life to please God anymore than the clay can shape itself without the potter, yet many people try to do this. They continually try to maneuver through this life without God. Common sense lets you know that the clay cannot shape itself. The clay cannot become a vessel of honor by itself, yet ones are trying to succeed in this life without God.

Before you leave this world, you must please God if you are going to see the inside of Heaven. Some people seem to think they can wait until the last hour of their lives and then dump their sins in His lap. If you are thinking of doing that, it will not work. You cannot choose when you are going to get saved. The time to get saved is when God calls. The time to get help is when God reveals to you a need in your life.

Hebrews 11:5 says, "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this

testimony, that he pleased God." What does that word *pleased* mean? It means "satisfied or delighted." Enoch satisfied, or delighted, God. He lived in a world where he had no church to meet together with, and he had no pastor. Enoch could not call spiritual brethren for prayer, yet he pleased God.

What a Judgment there is going to be, saint, when ones such as Enoch, Abraham, Job, and Daniel could please God! They could be standing there and watching as people begin to tell their stories and excuses for not serving God. Many people laid down their lives for the Gospel. Some were sawn in half, like Isaiah, because they would not recant; they would not turn away from the Living God. What a Judgment Day, when the patriarchs of old stand there, if God permits it that way, while others give their many excuses for failing to serve God wholeheartedly! I can imagine that gets very sickening to God to hear the same old stories.

Some people will probably say, "Lord, I couldn't give up my worldliness" or "I couldn't stand, Lord, because of peer pressure. What would the young people have thought had I really sold out to You? They wouldn't have gone out with me unless I had gone down to their level and told smutty stories. They wouldn't have wanted anything to do with me." What a sad testimony! Others may say, "Lord, I would have given up to You, but I couldn't give up my fleshly habits. I was bound with tobacco and just couldn't lay it down. I didn't want to turn it over to You, Lord, because I liked that tobacco."

No doubt, some people will say, "Lord, I would have served You, but I got into drugs, and You know how binding they are. I just didn't want to give them up entirely" or "Lord, I would have served You, but I couldn't go without my makeup." Others may say, "Lord, I would have stood for You, but I couldn't do it without my companion. He [or she] just wouldn't serve You" or "Had I

served You, Lord, I would have lost my boyfriend [or girlfriend]." If that is the case, you have the wrong one.

The list of excuses will undoubtedly go on and on, but they will never stand. In the Old Testament God did not demand of them what He demands of us today, but for what light and understanding they had, they loved God and pleased Him, and they served Him faithfully.

The Lord Makes Your Vessel as Seems Good to Him

There is no way that you can attain a good ending to this life if you leave God out, no matter how smoothly things are going for you right now. What if you should come down with a terminal disease? How well would you make it without Him? Well, I guarantee you, you would do some scrambling to get hold of Him then.

We were like the earth in Creation. Genesis 1:2 tells us, "And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." To be without form is to be without shape. Without Christ nothing about you resembles a Christian until the Spirit of God moves. Just as He brought this world, through Creation, into existence, He brings His new creation into existence through His Spirit, by moving on the hearts of men and women, and things begin to take shape. When God puts you on the wheel, He puts you up against the Word of God, and the Word begins to mold and shape you and make you a vessel of honor.

I remember when the Lord began to work on me. With tender, loving hands He began to shape me and smooth out all the rough places. Friend, God wants to make you a vessel of honor, fit for the Master's use. There is nothing about you or within you to make yourself into a vessel of honor. Without Christ your vessel is marred.

When I first came to Christ, I had some defects and needed a lot of work. When one comes to Christ, he does not instantly become as one who has been serving God for twenty years. No, one has to be put on the "wheel." Through the preaching and the teaching of the Word, with tender, loving care God begins to mold, shape, and form that vessel. Then one begins to look and say, "Wow! Was I like that?" Blemished, disfigured, and marred, the Lord makes your vessel as seems good to Him.

Under the old Law there were many flaws in the life of Israel, so God made a new covenant and gave us a sacrifice where all sin could be removed, and it seemed good to the Potter. We read in Hebrews 7:19, "For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God."

Turn From Evil and Live

Let us look at some really rich promises. Jeremiah 18:7-10 reads: "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. [That is thrilling!] And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them."

In those verses we see some promises that depend upon one's attitude and obedience to God. God can bring down a nation or a people, and He can do it in an instant. He does not need to have weeks and months and years to do it. Remember, the Scripture says that "at what instant I shall speak. . ." God can bring down an individual, a kingdom, or a nation at what instant He speaks. However, He also said, "If

that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them."

The Prophet Isaiah wrote of this same promise in Isaiah 1:16-20: "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land [that is God's desire for you]: But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: [How sure is this?] for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it."

This promise is scattered throughout the Word of God. God's Word is sure; it will happen just as God says it will happen. We read in the Old Testament in Deuteronomy 30:19, "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live." Dear one, that is God's desire. He wants you to choose right, and He wants you to live and prosper and succeed in this life. Nevertheless, with all the warnings and pleadings scattered throughout the Word of God, ones still try to mold their own lives.

Read the words of pleading that God spoke through the Prophet Ezekiel. These are touching words. Ezekiel 18:31-32 states: "Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye." You must turn yourself and live. It is God's desire that you live. God does not look forward to bringing judgment upon

anyone, and it is so unnecessary, if only ones would hearken to His Word.

A Vessel Meet for the Master's Use

Now, let me speak to you a little more personally. I am forewarning you, there is going to be a time, in an instant, when God will destroy you if you fail to turn away from evil. That is in the Bible. You just read it in Jeremiah 18:7, which states, "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom [or a person]. . . ."

Perhaps you have been comfortable without God, but you need to be careful. I stand on the authority of God's Word to warn you. God has this warning scattered throughout His Word. God has spoken to some individuals so many times that they are almost deaf to the Word of God. God has sent the Spirit of God to move upon their hearts, yet they have gone on and become hypocrites. Friend, you do not want God to bring you down. When God puts His hand on someone, who can take it off? You might have the church pray unceasingly in your behalf, but no one can change that until God lifts it.

God is merciful, and He goes out of His way to get ones to turn from evil. He pleads through His Word, yet they will not repent. Instead of their being willing and obedient, they refuse and rebel. Dear one, do you not think that God can handle you? Go to the lesson of the potter and the clay. The clay was nothing before the potter put it on the wheel. It did not jump on the wheel and shape itself; it took the potter to shape it, mold it, and form it.

God can take away your sin and give you power over it. Do not doubt that God can handle your drug problem, your tobacco problem, your bitterness, or your wrong attitudes. He specializes in such things. Those things are not too hard for God. He is God Almighty, and

He is all powerful. If you want to be delivered, where are you going to turn? There is no god besides God Almighty. How are you going to master your problem? How are you going to wind up in the end if you do not have God?

Some young people, when they could really be getting a good start in serving God, are fooling around, wasting their talents. Oh, they have a little thrill here and there, but if God pays them a visit, it is not going to be funny. All the thrill will be gone, just as it was for Belshazzar in the Book of Daniel when he was having a party. All it took to break up the party was the handwriting on the wall. The thrill was gone, and the drunks became sober.

It stirs my heart to see people go on, day after day, nonchalantly, as if time were on their side. They think they have plenty of time, and they take no thought for tomorrow. Friend, you do not even know that you will see the dawn of another day. Do not underestimate the power of God. He can make you a vessel of honor if you will let Him. Second Timothy 2:20 says, "But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour." He said in verse 21, "If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work."

There are always those who are vessels of dishonor. Just as in a house, where you find many different types of tools to work with, so it is in a great house, the church. Those whom God uses are those who purge themselves from things of dishonor. Again, verse 21 reads, "If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work." Child of God, you have to purge yourself. If it is sin, you must be purged. If certain things are hindrances to you in your life, you need to purge yourself from

them. Then what will you become? You will be "a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work."

Dear one, will you let God make you a vessel of honor, one that is sanctified for service for the Master? Remember, God is the Potter, and you are the clay. If you are ever

going to amount to anything in this life, it will be because of the Potter.

Young person, you need to really deepen down in your Christian experience, because the devil is bidding high for your soul. You need to really sell out to God and live steadfastly for Him. Never mind the peer pressure. Anyone

who is critical of your being a child of God is not your friend anyway.

God is looking for vessels that will allow themselves to be purged from things of dishonesty and dis-honor and be made vessels of honor, sanctified and meet for the Master's use, or service.

(Cassette C-5273E)

A GUIDING VOICE

A touching story came to us from Minnesota. A farmer, living on the edge of one of the many lakes of that state, started to cross it in a small sailboat one evening after dark. The wind changed, and a gust overturned the boat when he was in the middle of the lake. The surface of the water was covered with large masses of floating ice. The farmer was an expert swimmer, and he struck out boldly toward the shore, where he thought his house stood, but he grew confused in the darkness. The ice formed rapidly over the whole lake.

He was in a small, quickly narrowing circle, in which he beat about wildly, the chill of death creeping over his body. He gave up at last and was sinking in the freezing water when he heard a sound.

It was the voice of his little girl calling him: "Father! Father!" He listened. The sound of her voice would tell him which way home lay. It put fresh life into him. He thought: "If she would only call once more! But she will be frightened at the dark and cold. She will go in and shut the door—"

Just then came the cry, loud and clear, "Father!"

"I turned," said the man afterward, in telling the story, "and struck out in the opposite direction. I had been going away from home. I fought my way. The ice broke before me. I reached the shore and home at last. If my dear little girl had not persisted in calling me, though hearing no reply, I should have died there alone under the ice."

What a multitude of souls about us, like that poor man, have lost their balance and let go their grip on the lifeboat and are struggling amid the cold, icy waves of sin—soon to sink to the bottomless pit and be forever lost, unless someone goes as near to them as possible and calls them in the right direction. Just one word spoken in Jesus' name may show them the right way and be the means of their salvation.

Dear one, the sound of your voice, the words you speak, the kind action you do may show some fallen brother or sister the way home. Oh, let us not be weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not.

Selected

Win Them One by One

*If to Christ our only King
Men redeemed we strive to bring,
Just one way may this be done—
We must win them one by one.*

*Side by side we stand each day,
Saved are we, but lost are they;
They will come if we but dare
Speak a word backed up by prayer.*

*Only cowards dare refuse,
Dare this gift of God misuse;
Ere some friend goes to his grave,
Speak a word his soul to save.*

*Not for hope of great reward
Turn men's hearts unto the Lord;
Just to see a saved man smile
Makes the effort well worthwhile.*

C. Austin Miles

1 Kings 18:21 And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.

22 Then said Elijah unto the people, I, even I only, remain a prophet of the LORD; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men.

23 Let them therefore give us two bullocks; and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: and I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under:

24 And call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD: and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken.

25 And Elijah said unto the prophets of Baal, Choose you one bullock for yourselves, and dress it first; for ye are many; and call on the name of your gods, but put no fire under.

26 And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was

made.

27 And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked.

28 And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them.

29 And it came to pass, when midday was past, and they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded.

30 And Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me. And all the people came near unto him. And he repaired the altar of the LORD that was broken down.

31 And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the LORD came, saying, Israel shall be thy name:

32 And with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD: and he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two measures of seed.

33 And he put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid him on the wood, and said, Fill four barrels with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice, and on the wood.

34 And he said, Do it the second time. And they did it the second time. And he said, Do it the third time. And they did it the third time.

35 And the water ran round about the altar; and he filled the trench also with water.

36 And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word.

37 Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the LORD God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again.

38 Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench.



The Difference Between True Religion and False Religion

Brother Allen Polston

Living in a Dangerous Time

There are so many confusing and mixed-up teachings in the name of religion today that one can easily become confused by dabbling too much in all the different theories.

Spirits lurk in those different institutions, so I want to deal with some of the differences between true religion and false religion. We need to be aware of these differences, because we are living in a very dangerous time.

I have read many stories about saints of old who had to fear for their lives. Perhaps you have read about Christians who were tied to a stake or a post and burned to death because of their stand for Truth. Many had their heads chopped off

because they refused to back away from serving God. In this day and time we do not have to worry much about someone coming into our homes or our places of assembly and dragging us out to torture or kill us. That kind of persecution is rarely heard of today; nevertheless, we are living in a very dangerous age. While there may be little physical persecution, many spirits and false prophets have gone out. The enemy wants to destroy your chances of making Heaven your eternal home.

I think about the currency used here in the United States. People are making counterfeit money, so the government has made changes in the currency, and they have published those changes in the newspaper. They show a picture of the new currency and describe different identifiable features because they want you to recognize the real money and not be confused. Likewise, I want you to know the difference between true religion and false religion. There are definite differences, and God wants you to know the differences so that you can recognize what is true and what is false.

In our Scripture lesson we read about an event that took place approximately three thousand years ago. This recorded history lets us know that men of God had to deal with false religion even in those days. The devil has always been in the business of providing an alternative to the Truth. Should someone become offended by the Truth, the devil always has other options. Sinner friend, God is interested in you, and He will prick your heart because He wants you to repent and draw close to Him. Nevertheless, the devil will always be right there to give you another option. He has always been in the business of providing men and women with alternatives to true worship. Sometimes in this Christian walk, things get a little difficult. However, the Apostle John said in 1 John 5:3 that "his commandments are not grievous," but sometimes they are hard on the

flesh. Whenever times get a little difficult, the devil will supply you with an alternative.

A Problem Facing Christianity Today

According to our Scripture text, one is made to realize that having a large following is not evidence of being on the right side. Greater numbers do not necessarily mean that you have favor with God. If you study this entire chapter, you will read that 450 prophets of Baal were at the altar and another 400 prophets were out in the groves. This made a combined total of 850 prophets of Baal (false religion) compared to one true man of God, Elijah.

Large numbers of people do not indicate that the presence of God is in the midst. In our day and time, unfortunately most ministers are more interested in obtaining quantities of people rather than quality saints of God. They are interested in large numbers because they feel that it gives them more prestige, more income, and greater ability for advancement. How sad that they sacrifice the Truth to draw in more people! They ought to be more interested in quality. In other words, they ought to be more interested in having people who genuinely want to serve the Lord and walk in the way that God has outlined in His Word. Many people will sacrifice Truth to gain a greater following.

Solomon wrote in Proverbs 15:17, "Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith." In essence, the wise man was saying that it is better to sit down to a little meal of herbs and have peace and love and the presence of God than to have all the high quality cuts of meat that one can eat and have hatred raging. It is better to be in favor with God and to dwell in the presence of God with few provisions than to have plenty and be filled with anger. Virtually the same thing is recorded in Proverbs 16:8, which says, "Better is a little with righteousness than great

revenues without right."

Friend, we want people to come to church to hear the Gospel and to be saved. We are not against having large numbers of people in attendance. We are seeking to get as many people in touch with God as we possibly can, but we are not going to compromise Truth to draw people in.

Surely you have heard the old adage that says, "The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence." While a cow, a goat, or another kind of animal may be grazing in a field of green grass, it will stick its head through the fence to eat on the other side. This wonderful salvation is something that really is greener and truly is lasting. So, naturally, we want as many people as possible to be saved. A faithful minister will labor to win souls, but he refuses to sacrifice the Truth to gain numbers. A problem that faces Christianity today is that people are looking for signs. They want to see something, such as large crowds or big events taking place. They have been taught that by false religion.

The Possibility of Backsliding

Revelation 9:1-2 says: "And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit. And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit."

Christian men and women are not infallible, but I am thankful that, should one fall, God can restore that soul. God's faithfulness is great, and anyone who lives for God will soon realize that. The possibility of backsliding is always there, but thank God, it is also possible not to backslide.

Some people falsely teach that it is impossible to go back on God once you have been saved; nevertheless, the Bible lets us know that it is possible to backslide. Thank God, even

though the possibility is present, God can give you the power and the grace to keep you true to the end. Again, Revelation 9:1 reads, "I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth." This lets us know that even ministers are not infallible. We need to realize that ministers who are anointed and ordained by the Spirit of God can yield to temptation.

James said in James 1:16, "Do not err, my beloved brethren." In other words, do not give in when temptations are strong; do not follow after the flesh. Sadly, not everyone heeds that advice. Some who once preached the Gospel and stood strong for the Truth have walked away from God. The Apostle Paul knew this was true, and he admonished in 1 Corinthians 11:1, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." Paul understood that if he failed to keep under his body, he could become a castaway. He knew that he could get out of the will of God and become of no use to God.

In the natural sense, stars are a form of light, just as the sun and the moon are. However, Revelation 1:20 lets us know that stars represent the ministry that God has called to bring forth light and understanding to lost souls. Jeremiah 3:15 reads, "And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding." Ministers are to live godly lives and to preach the Gospel to others. Nevertheless, if they become disobedient and get out of the will of God, they can fall just as anyone else can.

In Revelation 9:1 we find that a star, or a ministry, fell. It says "... to him was given the key of the bottomless pit." The bad thing about a ministry that falls is that many times it refuses to take down the sign and go home. The best thing one can do if he should backslide is to say, "Pray for me; I am not right in my soul." Regrettably, too many choose an alternate way that involves less suffering and less humility, a way that is easier on the flesh. They just go on as if nothing ever happened and keep singing, preaching, and doing

as they did before they fell, but God is no longer with them.

The result of that kind of activity brings about a never-ending fall. Whenever an individual or a group of individuals begins to go contrary to God's way and men begin to be the head, they are on a fast track downward into a bottomless pit, because they have no foundation on which to stand. This is being proven in our world today. Several years ago no one would have even considered having a homosexual or a lesbian stand behind a pulpit and preach, but this is taking place today because men are falling further and further away from the Truth.

The Result of Letting the Flesh Gain Control

It is impossible to satisfy the flesh. There will never be a time in your walk with God when the flesh will simply give up. It does not work that way. You may surrender to the flesh a little today to try to satisfy it, but it will soon be back to demand more. The flesh must be crucified and brought under control. The Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:31, "I die daily." Every day he had to bring his flesh into subjection, lest it start to go the wrong way. If you let the flesh gain control, there is no end to how low it will take you.

A few years ago, no one would have thought of being a drunkard and claiming to be a Christian at the same time. I attended an auction some time back, and a man whom I knew was the auctioneer, and he held a prominent position at a local church. However, he could barely auction the items without cursing. He auctioned items and then walked over to a refrigeration unit. Someone made the comment, "You could put your coats in there." He said, "I'd rather put my whiskey in it." One day as I was at a grocery store, I saw him, so I said, "How are you getting along?" He replied, "Well, I'm sober," yet he is a high-ranking member of a church in town.

Years ago one would not have

dared to be so bold. Can you see what is happening in modern religion? People are falling further and further away from the Bible standard. Some things may not be outlined in black and white in the Bible, but we know they are wrong in principle.

A fallen ministry began to let man be the head rather than God. I am thankful that Jesus Christ built a sure foundation. He is the Chief Cornerstone and the Apostles are the foundation of the Church of God. You can build a good life on Jesus Christ. He will never do you wrong or deceive you. You ought to build your life on Him. Christ is solid, and He will not change. You can trust in Him. Great is His faithfulness! Friend, He is real, and He will be true to your soul. Jesus is wonderful!

In the early church some were dissatisfied and caused much trouble and overthrew the faith of some. Paul, when writing to Timothy, in 2 Timothy 2:19, said, "Nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure." The foundation of God is sure, and it will not change.

When I was a young Christian and a single man, I prayed and attended young people's meetings and such. Soon afterward, God gave me a good wife and a family. Friend, you can take hold of God's Truth and uphold it. As I look at Christian young people and see them singing to the glory of God, I know they are growing strong in this same Truth.

Young person, you can live for God successfully. I see many other saints who are standing true and upholding the Truth. The years do not have to change you. Why? Because the foundation of God stands sure; it is unchangeable. God's Word has remained the same throughout the ages. Our duty is to be obedient to it. We should not try to put our heads together and try to change it. There should not be any of that business going on. We should just stand on the foundation.

If you lay aside the Bible teachings and put a man at the head rather than God, you are heading for

trouble. You may say, "You do not know this individual. He has great wisdom and insight. He has been instrumental in getting many people converted, plus he has money and influence." No matter how good a man may be, if you put a man at the head of the church, you are pushing God out. Regardless of the abilities a man might have, he will take it down every time. Some may go down faster than others, but it will be a bottomless pit. Revelation 9:2 says, "And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit."

The God of This World Has Blinded Men's Minds

Paul wrote to the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 4:3-4: "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."

False religion has blinded the eyes of many people. The Bible says that smoke was coming out of this bottomless pit. You know what happens when smoke gets in your eyes: you can hardly see. Sometimes I have burned trash or brush or a pile of wood and the wind direction changed and brought the smoke toward me, and then I could hardly see. Smoke blinds your eyes.

People in false religion are blinded to the Truth. We should do our best to let our light shine before them. We need to be careful of how we live, even in the little things. People need to see the Gospel light shining. In a restaurant if the waiter takes too long to serve us, I do not act too impatient, but I do my best to keep the peace. I also try to refrain from becoming impatient in the grocery store.

As I was standing in the checkout line at one store, a foreign

woman was trying to pay for several items and was having a hard time communicating with the clerk. I think she had to put some things back and then replace some other things. When she finally got it all worked out and went to pay the bill, she found that she had left her checkbook in the car and ran out to get it. The people in line directly behind her were very upset with her. They had no patience. They became so angry that their faces turned red and they were cursing and carrying on shamefully. Ungodly people may do that kind of thing, but a saint should never behave that way.

Child of God, you need to let your light shine. People need to see Christ in you. I try to be very patient with adults and children. Even children need to see your light shining. Sometimes children can really try you, but you need to pray for God to help you to be patient with them. You should not allow your temper to get out of control. If a neighbor throws trash into your yard, you may not like it, but you ought to be patient and kind so that he can see your light shine.

False religion blinds people to the Truth. The smoke that comes up out of the pit obscures Truth and makes it impossible to see clearly. One thing in particular that blinds people in false religion is all the activity. Some boastfully say, "Did you know that we had five hundred people at our Easter service? I'm telling you, we had ourselves a time! We had a festival and a dinner like you wouldn't believe. We've got so many people coming now that we have to set up several assembly times on Sunday mornings. We are really being blessed."

Many people are deceived by all that is going on in false religion. However, if you talk to them about the Truth and tell them that God said we must live free from sin, they do not have any time to listen. If you try to explain that God can help them to get their lives straightened out, they will say, "Oh, I'm already a member of a certain church, and we

really have a lot going on over there." They have been blinded.

"From Such Withdraw Thyself"

The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy in 1 Timothy 6:5, ". . . supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself." Basing one's relationship with God on material things and certain accomplishments is futile. That is not what serving God is all about. Thank God for every blessing and for everything that He enables you to do, but what really matters is how you live your daily life.

The prophets of Baal had much activity going on. They were jumping on the altar and cutting themselves with knives. The Bible says blood gushed out upon them. You talk about seeing activity, they had it going, but God was not in any of it. Today people are looking for signs, and they want to see all kinds of activity.

They are blinded by all the "smoke." In the Old Testament sometimes smoke was an indication of the presence of God. At times, smoke filled the tabernacle and the glory of God came down. However, the smoke that the Revelation speaks of blinds men and women through false religion. One major difference between true religion and false religion is the focus. The primary focus of false religion is on gaining large numbers of people, on activities, and on events.

We read in our Scripture text in verse 37 that when it came time for Elijah to talk to God, he said, "Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the LORD God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again." The focus of true religion is in getting people to know God. If large numbers of people come to the Lord, to God be the glory. If not, our focus is not going to change. Our focus is to help lost souls to get in touch with God. We want to preach, sing, pray, and live in such a way that others can get to know God. My prayer is that many

more people will find a personal relationship with God so that they can have their sins washed away and live clean lives.

The focus of false religion is on gaining numbers through the many activities and events. Do not misunderstand me. I love times of fellowship with God's people. However, if that is your focus and the Truth is crowded out, then there is a problem.

The Bible gives warnings concerning these things. Titus 1:16 reads, "They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate." A verse that has been a help to me is found in 2 Peter 2:18, which states, "For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh." The flesh has a natural desire to want good things. God designed us that way. Desiring good things will cause one to get out of bed and go to work. Nonetheless, one can easily be allured by great swelling words of vanity if he is not careful.

False religion will boast of having many people in attendance and of having a good time. They will even say that God is in their midst, but they speak great swelling words of vanity. There is no wrong in letting people know that you have been having good services, but you can do so without boasting of having large numbers of people in attendance and of all the many activities and functions you have taking place. What is important is, did God speak to your heart? Great swelling words of vanity can allure you and cause you to lean that way because it sounds good. Dear one, you need to be cautious, lest you get caught up in that because someone came along and really put on a show.

False Religion Brings Torment

True religion clearly preaches deliverance from sin through salvation and holy living. If you will read

on in Revelation, Chapter 9, you will find that false religion brings torment to people. Sinners go to church wanting to be delivered because their conscience is bothering them and they need help. A false preacher will approach them and ask, "Won't you make a decision to join the church and be a Christian?" Then they are told, "No one can live free from sin." That is torment. They are not told that they must die out to sin. False ministers convince people to come forward and get involved, and then they tell them, "Everyone sins a little." Friend, that is not true.

The true church preaches death to sin. One must give up sin and die out to it. You have to turn away from all wrongdoing and leave it alone. You must put it all behind you and walk with God. Living a holy life does not permit one to sin a little more or less every day. The problem with that teaching is that it leads to more sin rather than less. If something hinders you in your walk with God, you must give it up and put it behind you. If you are having a struggle, you should ask someone to pray with you for strength and grace to overcome it. The Bible says to come to Him in every time of need. You can obtain victory if you really want to. God will supply the power to overcome.

The servants of Baal, after all their activity and carrying on, were unable to awaken their god. Elijah chided them and urged them to cry louder. They carried on until evening. When evening was come, the Bible says they were worn out. They sought Baal, but he never did answer. Then Elijah told the people to come near, and he called upon God for all the people to see. The fire fell from Heaven and consumed the sacrifice, the wood, the stones, and licked up the water.

Much activity is no sign of power. You can run, jump, shout, and carry on, but what really is important is how you walk when your feet hit the ground. There is no harm in praising God by shouting, running, jumping, or whatever you feel God

would have you to do decently. However, when your feet come down, you ought to walk right. In your daily living, you ought to talk right, treat your spouse right, and treat your family right. Living right brings the power. God can give you the power to live a clean, holy life.

Count the Cost

The difference between true religion and false religion is in the power. There is power in the blood of Jesus. It gives you power to live a clean, holy life. Friend, you do not have to run back to the honky-tonks and hellholes of this old world. You can live a clean life, thank God! Others may do you wrong, but you can look at them with a heart of love and treat them right. There is not an ounce of power in all the activities in false religion, just as there was no power in all the demonstrations of the prophets of Baal. I thank God for His power. Hebrews 4:12 tells us that the Word of God is quick and powerful. As Jesus was ready to leave this world, He told His disciples that He would give them power to be witnesses. He said in Acts 1:8 that when the Holy Ghost came upon them, they would receive power. Friend, He can give you power to live right and power to witness to others.

Another difference between true religion and false religion is the cost. False religion is very cheap. You can become a member in good standing and even obtain a high position with very little cost. There is a saying, relating to business, which states, "The bitterness of poor quality will remain long after the sweetness of the low price is forgotten." This applies to false religion. The bitterness of its poor quality will remain long after the low price is forgotten. It does not cost much to be a nominal Christian. You can join a church without giving much at all. Nevertheless, long after the sweet, low price is forgotten, the bitterness will haunt you eternally, because you failed to serve the Lord as His Word

demands.

True salvation does not cost you any money, but Jesus made it very clear that He must have first place in your heart and life. You cannot be His disciple without a willingness to forsake even your own close family, if necessary. Also, you must be willing to lay down your own life. Paul said in Romans 8:18, "For I reckon

that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Dear one, it does cost you something to gain eternal life. The cost of true religion is greater than the cost of false religion, but the rewards of truly following Christ are outstanding; they are a blessing.

You should not allow yourself to

be fooled into thinking that one religion is as good as another. True religion will give you the power to live free from sin. It will cost you, but the rewards are well worth it. It is worth it all to be His child. May God bless you.

(Cassette C-5255M)

A Call for Reapers

*Brother, see the fields around you
Ripening fast with golden grain,
Someone has gone forth with weeping,
Sowing seed while God sent rain.*

*Some in tears and prayers have labored,
God has heard their cries and blessed;
Each and every faithful effort
Has sprouted seeds within men's breasts.*

*But now the harvesttime is coming,
The grain is ripening and falling fast,
And God is calling for more reapers,
Will you be first or wait till last?*

*Our time is flying, the night is coming,
Our work on earth we then must cease;
Oh! let us haste to join the reapers,
Our pay from God will then increase.*

*You say you cannot leave your father,
Your mother, brother, sister dear:
Our Lord said all must be forsaken,
He said it very plain and clear.*

*To each of us our God has given
Some talents, one or two or three,
But from their use there're no excuses,
None for you and none for me.*

*We are taught, as faithful reapers,
Not to regard clouds or threatening storms;
Unfaithful men and all who neglect
Will see the grain fall in the thorns.*

*Our reaping time will soon be over,
The Lord will then call for our sheaves;
Oh, hasten, hasten to the harvest,
Lest you be found with naught but leaves.*

Selected



Have you visited
our website lately?

Check it out at
www.godsacres.org



Especially for Young People

Little Scotch Granite

Bert and John Lee were delighted when Gordon, their little Scotch cousin, came to live with them. He was little, but he was very bright and full of fun. He could tell some curious things about his home in Scotland and his voyage across the ocean. He was as far advanced in studies as they were, and the first day he went to school, they thought him remarkably good. He wasted no time in play when he should have been studying, so he advanced rapidly.

Before the close of school the teacher called the roll, and the boys began to answer "ten." When Gordon understood that he was to say "ten" if he had not whispered during the day, he replied, "I have whispered."

"More than once?" asked the teacher.

"Yes, ma'am," answered Gordon.

"As many as ten times?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Then I shall mark you zero," said the teacher sternly, "and that is a great disgrace."

"Why, I did not see you whisper once," said John after school.

"Well, I did," said Gordon. "I saw others doing it, and so I asked to borrow a knife, and I did several such things. I thought that it was allowed."

"Oh, we all do it," said Bert, redenning. "There isn't any sense in the old rule. Nobody can keep it; nobody does."

"I will, or else I will say I haven't," said Gordon. "Do you suppose I will tell ten lies in one heap?"

"Oh, we don't call them lies," muttered John. "There wouldn't be a credit among us at night if we were so strict."

"What of that, if you tell the truth?" asked Gordon bravely.

In a short time the boys all saw how it was with the Scotch boy. He studied hard, played with all his might in playtime, but, according to his reports, he lost more credits than any of the rest. After some weeks the other boys answered "nine" and "eight" oftener than they used to, and yet the schoolroom seemed to have grown quieter. Sometimes when Gordon's mark was lower than usual the teacher would smile peculiarly, but she said no more of disgrace.

Gordon never preached at them or told tales, but somehow it made the boys ashamed of themselves to see that this sturdy, blue-eyed Scotch boy must tell the truth. They felt like cheats and story tellers. They loved him though, and before long they nicknamed him "Scotch Granite"

because he was so firm about the truth.

At the end of the year Gordon's name was very far down on the credit list. When it was read he almost cried, for he was very sensitive and had tried hard to be perfect. But the very last thing that closing day was a speech by the teacher, who told of once seeing a man muffled up in a cloak. She was passing him without a look, when she was told that the man was a great general, a famous hero.

"The signs of his rank were hidden, but the hero was there," said the teacher. "And now, boys, you will see what I mean when I give a present to the most faithful boy in school, the one who really stands highest in deportment. Who shall have it?"

"Little Scotch Granite!" shouted forty boys at once, for the boy whose name was so low on the credit list had made truth noble in their eyes.

Selected

We hear a lot of good mixers these days, but what we really need is more separators.

Romans 13:1 Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.

2 Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.

3 For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same:

4 For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.

5 Wherefore ye must needs be

subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.

6 For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing.

7 Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.

8 Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.

9 For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour

as thyself.

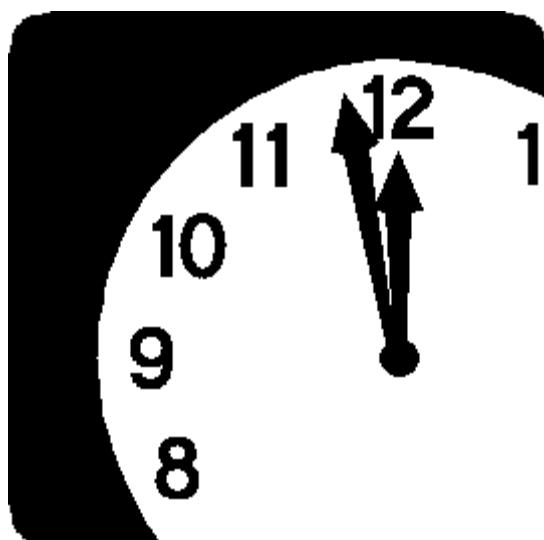
10 Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

11 And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.

12 The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.

13 Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.

14 But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.



IT IS TIME TO BE AWAKE SPIRITUALLY

Brother C. H. Dickerson

The Danger of Deception

I want you to focus your attention on verse 11 of our Scripture text. Paul said, "And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." He let us know that we are living in one of the most perilous, dangerous times in which man has ever lived. In fact, we read in the Book of Revelation that the

devil would be loosed for a season and that he is out to deceive people. There has never been a time of such deception on every side.

We are living in a time when many people are being deceitful. Many elected officials are deceitful. Also, some people pretend that they are for you when they are not. Some people, if not for the consequences, would be like Joab. You can read in 2 Samuel, Chapter 20, that Joab greeted Amasa, took him by the

beard to kiss him, and then he stabbed him and killed him. Today is the most dangerous time that man has ever lived in because of all the deception.

Deception can easily creep in upon you if you let down your guard. If you are not careful, the devil will sow a little seed, and it will grow until you finally become deceived. That is what the devil wants.

We are living in a day of

advanced technology. That certainly could be to our advantage, but at times it is to our disadvantage. Television could have been a blessing had it been used by the right people, but because it fell into the wrong hands, it has become a curse. In too many cases, the Internet has become everything but a blessing, for the simple reason that it has led many people down the wrong way. We are living in a day of satellite communication and cellular phones, which can be carried anywhere you want to go and used to call people all over the world.

Many devices could be an advantage, but they have become a detriment to some people. Also, the devil uses a multitude of voices to try to get your attention. The devil has one thing in mind, and that is to get your mind off the things of God. The devil uses the voice of prestige to cause people to want to be popular and want to have praise. You cannot be popular with the world and also be a child of God. You cannot have the praise of men and have the praise of God. You have to make up your mind as to which one you want. As far as I am concerned, I would rather please God and have His blessings upon me than to have the praise of men. We can take what we get from God over into the next world.

Child of God, you had better close your ears to any voice that would try to draw you away from God. The devil has one thing in mind, and that is to take you down. When you are popular with God, it will stir people, and they may turn against you.

True Riches

You might have riches in this life, but true riches will last throughout the endless age of eternity. Jesus said in Luke 16:11, "If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?" If you are not true and faithful concerning unrighteous matters, God will not

entrust you with anything important. On the other hand, if you will be true to God, He will trust you with an experience of salvation and with His Spirit. You have to choose one or the other.

God's people are the children of light. We are not in sin and darkness anymore. We are free from sin. Many people in our modern day say, "I'm a sinner saved by grace." Well, I thank God that I am not a sinner of any kind. When God saved me, He saved me from sin. A man or a woman who has truly gotten saved does not continue to live in sin. If a person is still living in sin, that individual has not gotten saved.

When a person gets saved, he gets a new spirit, and he is different all the way through. He becomes a new creation. God gives him a new heart, and he goes to different places and dresses differently. You will never see someone who has gotten genuinely saved continue to keep company with the same people, act the same way, and go to the same places. No, friend, when one gets saved, everything is different in that person's life: he looks differently, acts differently, goes to different places, talks differently, listens to different things, and sees things differently.

The storehouse of Heaven has been opened to every saint of God, to those who have tasted of the true riches of God. When one gets saved, he gets a taste of the sweetest experience. It is far sweeter than honey. He gets a taste of salvation. Also, he gets a taste of how God can heal, of how God can work out problems, and of how God can guide one's life. My friend, that should cause you never to want to go back to the life of sin. This experience is the sweetest thing on this side of Heaven.

God wants you to use His power to overcome this world. In John 16:33 Jesus said, "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation [you are going to have trials, tests, and problems]:

but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." In other words, Jesus was saying, "I will give you the power, and you, too, can overcome the world."

Are You Living Carelessly?

Friend, it is time for you to prepare to meet the Lord. It is time to be awake spiritually and to get established. Christ is coming, and that time could be near at hand. Because years have come and gone since His first advent, many have become careless. Nevertheless, I have never seen a time when the signs are being fulfilled as they are in this day. God's Word tells us that at the very end of time certain things would take place. Friend, we are seeing those things take place, and as a result, we realize that we are right down to the end of time. There is no time to put things off. God has given each of us time to prepare for eternity, and now is that time.

As we look at the uniqueness of our day, by all the signs, it appears that the coming of the Lord is very near. Jesus said in Matthew 16:3, "And in the morning, It will be foul weather to day: for the sky is red and lowring. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?" An old saying is, "Red sunrise in the morning, sailors take warning. Red sunset at night, sailors take delight." In other words, when you look at the sky and see the clouds rolling in, you can discern that a storm is coming. If you see a cloud with what seems to be a tail coming down to the earth, you can discern that a tornado is coming. So it is in the spiritual.

We can discern these things by the signs that we are seeing today, such as the letting down and the division. These things are signs of the perilous, dangerous, ungodly times in which we are living, yet people are going on as if they will live for another hundred years. In essence, Jesus said, "You can discern the sky and realize that a storm is

coming, but you cannot discern the signs of the times. You are living carelessly. You claim to have an experience of salvation, yet you have no power to live righteously."

Many people have a mere form of religion. They are far from being what God wants them to be. Too many people are not excited about being saved. They go on without giving it much thought. If you are going to make Heaven your home, you must dig deep and get settled on a sure foundation, because the storms of life are coming, and they are knocking many people off the foundation. Why? Because they have not dug deep enough.

Some trees have their roots near the surface of the ground. They may withstand many storms, but one day a storm will take down those trees. Other trees have tap root systems, and the roots go deeply into the ground. The more the wind blows and the drier it gets, the deeper the roots go. Storms come along and bend those trees almost to the ground, but they come right back up because their roots are deep.

Friend, the storms are rolling in as never before. If you will let the storms do their work and dig deeply into God's eternal Truth, then when someone comes along with false doctrine, you will not be moved.

Paul said in 2 Corinthians 6:2, "(For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted [if you ever get saved, it will not be when you make up your mind to get saved; the only time you can get saved is when God speaks to you], and in the day of salvation have I succoured [or assisted] thee.)" The only way you can make it to Heaven is for God to help you. You cannot make it on your own. If you get saved and stay saved, you must have help from God. He has promised "in the day of salvation have I succoured thee." In other words, "It is then that I will give you the power. It is then that I will help you, but no other time." You cannot make it without the power of God. He said He would give it to you in the day of salvation, and that is today.

Has Your Love Waxed Cold?

By all signs, it appears that the coming of the Lord is near. Jesus told what some of these signs would be. One sign was foretold in Matthew 24:12, which states, "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." What was Jesus talking about? Because iniquity, or lawlessness and backing away from God's eternal Truth will grow, many people will drift away from God. At one time, when people sat under Holy Ghost messages, the fear of God would come upon them, and they often grabbed hold of the seat in front of them and the seat would shake. Why? Conviction had gotten hold of them. However, to-day people can sit under Gospel messages and laugh and chew their bubble gum and pay no attention.

We are living in a day when people who claim to be saints are raising their children without reverence for God's house. Many people do not have enough reverence to bring their children to the house of God every time the door opens. They will take them to go fishing and everywhere else but to the house of God. As a result, those children have no respect for the house of God. Parent, you need to train your children in the way they ought to go. God will hold you accountable. You need to teach your children that God ought to be number one in their lives. The house of God is the place they need to go. When the doors open at the church, they need to be there.

Again, Matthew 24:12 says, "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." There has never been a time when the love of God has waxed as cold between the saints of God as it is today. There are exceptions, but I am speaking in general. This is a sign preceding Christ's Second Coming. He is not coming to the earth to set up a literal kingdom. That was not what Jesus was talking about. Whenever God moves in, He sets up a kingdom in one's heart. The only

kingdom mentioned in the Word of God is the kingdom in our hearts. One day Jesus will split the clouds and deliver the kingdom to the Father, and then the end will come.

Perils of These Last Days

Another sign of the times is found in Romans 1:27-28: "And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient."

Again, verse 28 says, "And even as [or because] they did not like to retain God in their knowledge." Have you ever seen a time when so many people have backslidden? Why is that? It is because they do not want to retain God in their knowledge. In other words, they do not want to sell out to God and let Him be first in their minds, in their hearts, in their time, and in their finances.

Talking about finances may hit a sore spot with some people, but when you are genuinely what God wants you to be, 10 percent of your paycheck will go into the offering plate. If you hold back on tithes and offerings, something is wrong with your experience. Something is lacking, because God must be first. If you crowd Him out of your finances, next you will crowd Him out of your time. Then you will not have time to pray, go to the house of God, encourage others, or visit the sick.

There has never been a time when we have seen sodomy and baby killing so prevalently as it is today. Abortion was made legal in 1973. From 1973 to 1997, more than thirty-seven million babies were aborted. That is approximately the population of the states of California and New York. When that law went

into effect, it made murder legal, because those babies are children. They each have a soul. Even partial-birth abortions are being performed. Anyone who endorses such an ungodly act does not have an ounce of godliness.

In 2 Timothy 3:1-2 Paul wrote: "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy."

There has never been a time of such unthankfulness as in the day in which we are living. When God sets a true pastor over a congregation, often he gives up his retirement pension and a higher income. Also, he deprives himself of sleep and many other things, yet many people do not respect him. They are unthankful, and they are in this category that Paul was speaking of. Saint, you ought to lift up the man of God who preaches the Truth and stand for that Truth. You ought to hold up the hands of the man who faithfully declares God's Word and defend him should anyone say something against him. Too many people do not have backbone enough to do that. The Bible says that such men are worthy of double honor.

When people lose their thankfulness, they become unholy. If you have lost your appreciation for the Truth, the pastor, and the saints, you are on your way down. Becoming unholy is the next step. You will begin to allow things to creep into your life that are unholy. Verse 3 lets you know that the next rung down on the ladder is unnatural affections.

Some of the most unnatural affections are found in the early pages of God's Word. God told Adam that because of his transgression, by the sweat of his brow he would earn his living. God told Eve that because of her part in it, her husband would rule over her and in sorrow she would bring forth children. Too many women have gotten out of place today. They want to tell

their father or their husband what to do; however, that is not what God has ordained. When a woman has natural affection, she wants her husband to be her head. This is what the Word of God says. The reason that many who claim to be saints are in the condition they are in today is simply because they have deviated from God's Word. They have unnatural affections. The Bible says that the woman is not to usurp authority over the man.

More Signs of the Time

In 2 Timothy 3:3 Paul mentioned truce breakers. Here is an example of a truce breaker. One may say, "Brother, you have done so much for me. I will always love and appreciate you." Then it is not long until his heart grows cold, and he forgets about that. Well, God did not forget about it. A truce breaker will promise you something, but he will never do it. If you break a truce, you will meet it at the judgment bar of God.

Next, Paul mentioned false accusers. False accusers will be there to accuse you no matter what you do. We see this being fulfilled in these last days. We are down at the end of time, and what we do for God must be done quickly. Paul mentioned incontinent, or unrestrained. Today people are letting themselves just simply go unrestrained. They do not care what their moves do to others, to their companions, or to the church. They are fierce. When Joab killed Amasa, that was a fierce act. An act fiercer than that is to kill another person's influence. How can you kill someone's influence? You can do it without saying a word. For instance, should someone say, "Brother So-and-So is a good man," if you were to say, "Is he?" you would cast doubt in that person's mind about the brother and could kill his influence.

The Apostle Paul went on to say in 2 Timothy 3:3-4: "... despisers of those that are good, Traitors [in the army, when a soldier was a traitor, he was worthy to be shot], heady

[willful or shrewd], highminded [this is one who is proud and arrogant; he will omit God], lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God."

We read in Luke 21:25-26: "And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken." That is speaking of the stress and the pressures that we are living under. He said that men's hearts would fail. He was not saying that they would have heart attacks, but that they would simply give up living for God because of the stress. It ought not to be that way.

As saints of God, we ought to encourage and uplift one another. When you see someone discouraged or cast down, you ought to encourage that person and tell that one that you are praying for him or her. You should do whatever you can to help. We need all the people we can get in the Lord's army. We are seeing many earthly calamities today, such as earthquakes, floods, and tornadoes. They seem to be the worst I have ever seen. What are these calamities showing us? God is trying His best to awaken people so that they might get down to business serving Him and quit playing religion. He wants everyone to have salvation.

Redeem the Time

Time can be a friend or it can be an enemy; it has seen many fail. Many people have made initial preparations for eternity, but because the Bridegroom has tarried, they are lost and undone. Had the Bridegroom come when they were first saved, they would have been ready to meet the Lord, but they failed to remain steadfast. Matthew, Chapter 25, tells us of the ten virgins; five were wise, and five were foolish. At one time, they all were

ready, but because the bridegroom tarried, only five of them made it in. In the parable of the sower, the seed was sown in four different types of ground, but only one of them produced. Because Jesus has tarried, people have become careless in their experiences. They have listened to calls beckoning them somewhere else, and as a result, they have lost out with God.

Christ asked the question in Luke 18:8, "Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" Hebrews 3:14 reads, "For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold . . . stedfast unto the end." In Luke 21:19 Jesus said, "In your patience possess ye your souls." Matthew 10:22 tells us that "he that endureth to the end shall be saved." Again, I say, time can be a friend or an enemy, depending on how you use it. When the sower sowed the seed, in good ground, in due time it produced fruit. My friend, can you discern the time? I am not talking about the time on the clock on the wall, but do you really know where the hands on God's time clock are pointed? Jesus told the Pharisees, in essence, "You can discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the time."

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 7:29, "The time is short." If you could picture in your mind a big circle that represents eternity, you would see that it is never ending. God took a small wedge of that circle and called it time. In the fullness of time God did all these things, but we are almost to the end of time, and then we will go back to eternity. Time is short, so we need to redeem the time. We have no time to waste. We need to redeem the time because souls are lost in sin. We must win hearts for God and snatch them away from a lost eternity.

Our Scripture text says in verse 11 that it is "high time to awake out of sleep." When one is asleep physically, he is most vulnerable and absolutely defenseless.

A Shaking Time

According to Scripture, the seed is the Word of God. In Matthew, Chapter 13, Jesus told another parable. He said in verses 24-30: "The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. . . ."

Had they pulled up the tares, no doubt they would have pulled up some of the wheat too. What is the essence of the story? God has set ministers over the congregations as the overseers. At times, God might tell a pastor to do something that you do not understand. You may see something and wonder why he does not do something about that. Well, if he were to move on the situation, perhaps others would be uprooted.

In the harvest at the end of the world, God said He would send forth his angels, or the ministry, and they are going to have a message from God to shake the earth and also the heavens, spiritually speaking, and everything that should not be there is going to fall off. God is giving the church a good shaking, and everything that should not be there will be shook out. Let us take courage. God is doing this so that whatever is left will be holy. Let us not become disheartened. God said that He was going to send forth His angels to gather out everything that is offensive and does iniquity. In other words, God will gather out everyone who will not measure to the Truth. God has given the minis-

try a message that will separate.

People may think the ministry has no authority, but when they preach the Gospel, you must either get in or get out. You might still attend the congregation, but the Word will separate the tares from the wheat. God is shaking everything in the church. That is what Luke 21:26 is talking about when it says "the powers of heaven shall be shaken." If you are going to be a child of God, you must measure to the standard that God has given in His Word. He has given us a standard for the hair and for dressing modestly. He wants a woman to look as a woman should look, and He wants a man to look as a man should look. He wants a man to act as a man should act; he should not act effeminate.

Walk as Children of Light

Every act of obedience and disobedience first comes through the mind. When the devil puts something in your mind, you can discern whether it is good or bad. Thoughts begin in the mind and then proceed to the heart. If you behave as a saint of God should, you will make the necessary moves, and God will give you the power. We are told to keep awake. Often when Satan attacks the mind, that is when people are spiritually asleep.

We are told to keep the body under. In 1 Corinthians 9:27 Paul said, "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." Another translation says, "I treat it like a boxer." In other words, Paul was saying, "I discipline my body so that I will not be a castaway." Then he said in Ephesians 5:8, "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord [this is a tremendous responsibility; the way you walk, the way you talk, and the way you act tells people that is the way the Lord would do it]: walk as children of light."

It will not go well at the Judgment for those who have chosen to walk in darkness. My friend, committing only one sin makes you a sinner. One act of disobedience to God will cause you to be lost unless you repent. Failing to do one thing that you know you ought to do makes you a sinner. James 4:17 reads, "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." Sometimes people say, "I know I ought to do better." Jesus said if you know to do good and do not do it, it is sin. No sin can enter Heaven. It is a holy place filled with glory and grace. Sin can never enter there. To be in darkness is to be in sin. You may serve God for fifty years, but if in the last hours of your life you should become careless and not walk in the light, it will not go well for you as you stand before the judgment bar of God.

Prepare to Face the Judgment

Peter said in 2 Peter 2:17, "These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever." Jude 6-10 reads: "And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

"Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities. [Who are they speaking evil against? God's ministers and His people. Jude says they will not make Heaven their home.] Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.

"But these speak evil of those things which they know not: but

what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves." Many people today only know what others have told them. If there was ever a time when you needed to close your ears to garbage, it is now. If you listen to garbage, you will corrupt yourself.

Verses 11-13 state: "Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, [What was Cain's way? It was the way of jealousy.] and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward [prestige and money], and perished in the gainsaying of Core. These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds *they are* without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots [they will never bear fruit again]; Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever."

The Apostle urged us to be diligent and to take heed. Saint, you need to put on Christ and obey God's Truth. You need to dress for the battle: put on the helmet of salvation, the robe of righteousness, and get your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace. You must not make provision for the flesh. The Apostle warned against that.

In 1 John 1:5-8 John said: "This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no

darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." Christian friend, before you received Jesus Christ into your heart, you were bound for the same hell that the prostitute, the liar, the thief, and the murderer are bound for.

When God has saved one who was bound by drugs, involved in prostitution, or even one who has committed murder, he is just as saved as the one who has never gone out into deep sin. God put all their sins in the sea of forgetfulness, never to be remembered against them again.

My friend, do you realize that time is almost over? The signs of time show us that. Are you prepared to face God at the Judgment? When Christ appears, it will be too late to prepare then. The only assurance that you can have is to prepare now. Have you measured to all the light you know? Have you corrupted yourself by listening to what someone else has said? Have you accepted an accusation against an elder? If you have, you must get it straightened out and get it under the blood. You will not make it to Heaven unless you are clear before God.

(Cassette-C3868M)

Persevering Praise

Billy Bray, the Cornish miner, had been saved and was known for his life of victory. One fall he had a poor crop of potatoes. Satan came around and whispered into his ear, "There, Billy, isn't that poor pay for serving God for the past year? Just look at those small potatoes."

"Ah," said Billy, "there you go again talking about my Father. When I served you, I didn't have any potatoes! I am thankful for these little potatoes."

Selected

Psalm 42:1 As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.

2 My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?

3 My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?

4 When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday.

5 Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.

6 O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar.

7 Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.

8 Yet the LORD will command his lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me, and

my prayer unto the God of my life.

9 I will say unto God my rock, Why hast thou forgotten me? why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?

10 As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me; while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God?

11 Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

OUR NEED OF GOD



Brother E. David Stegmeier

How Can You Satisfy the Longing of Your Heart?

Our Scripture text says in verse 1, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." This is not merely poetry; this is a Bible verse, and it is the expression of a man who felt his need of God. I do not know what people do in life without God. If you do not know God, my burden is that you will turn your life over to Him. Do not wait another moment. You

need God.

If you see anything amiss in your life, if anything is wrong, now is the time to take care of it. Do not let it go on. If you recognize that you have done wrong or if you have taken the wrong path, you need to turn around immediately and get on the right path. You need to make your wrongs right. You are not clear with God unless you are clear with all mankind. You do not love God any more than you love the man or the woman that you see. Further-

more, what you do to any man, woman, boy, or girl, you are doing to God.

You should not wait for a trauma to happen in your life to get clear with God. You do not know when you are going to be called to meet Him. I have heard that the little hart goes to the water to quench its thirst and for protection. You need God to quench the thirst of your soul. Your soul was created to be the habitation of God. You will never be satisfied in life without God, and you must

have a clear relationship with Him. If you do not, you are missing something, and you will never find it in the world.

God will quench your thirst and satisfy the longing of your heart. Also, He is your protection and your defense. Child of God, you do not have to be moved when you are standing on the Word of God. If you are standing on the Word, do not move.

The Psalmist went on to say in verses 2-3 of our Scripture text: "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?" We each need God. Job said that he looked here and there but did not know where God was, yet he said that God knew where he was. Friend, you need to live so that God knows where you are and so that you can have confidence in Him.

Our Scripture text reads in verses 4-5: "When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday. Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance." Romans 8:31 reads, "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

"In the Night His Song Shall Be With Me"

Verses 6-11 of our text of Scripture continue: "O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, [If you get in a tight spot, remember the times in the past when God came to your rescue. He has never let you down, and He never will. He has never failed; He has always come through.] and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar.

"Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy

waves and thy billows are gone over me. Yet the LORD will command his lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life. I will say unto God my rock, Why hast thou forgotten me [dear one, God has not forgotten you]? why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me; while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God? Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God."

I would like you to read that from The Living Bible: "As the deer pants for water, so I long for you, O God. [What is your greatest longing? My greatest longing is for God and to see Him manifest Himself. Christian friend, your first desires should be toward the work of God, the church, and the furtherance of the Kingdom of God.] I thirst for God, the living God. [We are serving a Living God, and we can see His influence in the lives of His people. God has worked so miraculously. We should do more and more for Him. Church of God, we have the greatest cause of anyone in all the world. We have the Gospel message for the world.]

"Where can I find him, to come and stand before him? [The time may come when it seems that you are alone for a period of time, but do not despair. God is always there.] Day and night I weep for his help, and all the while my enemies taunt me. "Where is this God of yours?" they scoff.

"Take courage, my soul. [Church of God, you need to take courage. God is working. I am greatly encouraged. Truth will always prevail.] Do you remember those times (but how could you ever forget them!) when you led a great procession to the Temple on festival days, singing with joy, praising the Lord? Why then be downcast? Why be discouraged and sad? [Happy is the

people whose God is the Lord. Church of God people are a happy people.] Hope in God! I shall yet praise him again. Yes, I shall again praise Him for His help."

God Is Worthy of Our Very Best

It is good for you to take time to meditate on the goodness of the Lord. God is so good. This is an exciting time to live for God. I want to be where God is. As long as God is in the midst, we do not have to be afraid. Sometimes we must remind ourselves of this.

Verses 6-11 of our Scripture text in The Living Bible continue: "Yet I am standing here depressed and gloomy, but I will meditate upon your kindness to this lovely land where the Jordan River flows and where Mount Hermon and, Mount Mizar stand. All your waves and billows have gone over me, and floods of sorrow pour upon me like a thundering cataract. Yet day by day the Lord also pours out His steadfast love upon me, And through the night I sing his songs and pray to God who gives me life. 'O God my Rock,' I cry, 'why have you forsaken me? Why must I suffer these attacks from my enemies?' Their taunts pierce me like a fatal wound; again and again they scoff, 'Where is that God of yours?'

"But O my soul, [Sometimes we have to talk to ourselves and say, 'O my soul, do not be discouraged or upset; expect God to act.' I have never been more excited in my life. Today is a wonderful time to serve the Lord. In the Book of Esther you can read that Mordecai said to Esther, in so many words, 'Perhaps you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this.' Each of us is here for such a time as this. Let us rise to the occasion and be all that we can be for God.] don't be discouraged. Don't be upset. Expect God to act! For I know that I shall again have plenty of reason to praise him for all that he will do. [Isn't that beautiful?] He is my help! He is my

God!" Every one of us should serve God and give Him our very best. He is worthy of our *very* best.

We should serve God, first of all, because we need strength to live a moral, righteous life. You cannot live this kind of life on your own. As a young person, I tried it, but I could not do it on my own. We all need God. Without God we do not have the grace to keep us from succumbing to temptations. We do not have the ability to say no to temptation. Why do children sin? Because the flesh is weak; it needs help. The flesh in itself succumbs to temptations and sins. Paul said in Romans 5:6, "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." We do not have strength in ourselves; therefore, we need God to help us say no to temptations. We all are tempted.

James 1:13-15 says: "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: 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." There is no exception to this. Sin always brings forth death. Without the grace of God we cannot overcome sin.

A Real Purpose for Living

Ezekiel 18:30b-31 says: "Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"

We need God to give us a real purpose for living. God can give you a purpose for living. I like to live, because I know I am living for God and my life is counting for something. No matter who you are or what you have accomplished in life, if you are unsaved, your life will not count for anything. In the Book of Luke you can read of the story of the

rich man and Lazarus. Today's society would say that the rich man was a success and that Lazarus was a failure. Based on the Word of God, I say the opposite is true: Lazarus was a success, and the rich man was a failure. Again, we need God to give us a purpose and a meaning for life. Without God there is really no meaningful purpose for life. He gives us true meaning; He gives us a reason for living. One songwriter wrote:

*Life was shattered and hope was gone
Crushing the load that I bore;
Then out of the depths I cried,
"O God, Give me something
worth living for."*

*There, with life at its lowest ebb,
Who could heal and restore?
Then He came and mended my
broken heart;
He gave me something worth
living for.*

*O the joy of sins forgiven
Nothing's the same as before;
My life overflows since Jesus came
And gave me something worth
living for.*

Friend, you need God. If you are considering turning away from God, do not do it. You need to hang in there. Life is rewarding when you are working for God. It is wonderful! In Psalm 27:4 David said, "One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple." What are the beautiful things that go on there? Lives are changed. God changes the lives that have been wrecked and ruined and puts the pieces together. He gives us a purpose for living. You need God to give you a meaning for life.

Also, you need God to help you in life's trials and problems. I do not know how people live without God. What do they do in great traumas? Many people go to pieces or trust in

man, but man can only do so much. You need God to help you in life's trials and problems. Trouble is inevitable, so we need God to assist us. We need God's wisdom. Division is sin, and you dare not die with sin in your heart. God must come before husband or wife, son, daughter, and friends. God *must* come first. You are responsible to God. You are not to follow your mother's or your father's religion; you are to follow God. You make your decisions on your own. You stand before God as an individual.

A Greater Power

There is a song that says, "Without Him I can do nothing." Do you believe that? The very breath that you breathe comes from God. God can withhold that breath. Should He see that He has put up with you enough, all He would have to do is stop your breathing, and you would be dead. God will call the shots, so to speak. Do not ever forget it. The song says:

*Without Him I could do nothing,
Without Him I'd surely fail;
Without Him I would be drifting,
Like a ship without a sail.*

*Without Him I could be dying,
Without Him I'd be enslaved;
Without Him life would be hopeless,
But with Jesus, thank God, I'm
saved.*

*Jesus, O Jesus, Do you know Him
today?
Please don't turn Him away,
O Jesus, O Jesus,
Without Him, how lost I would be.*

The words of that song are so true. We need God to give us purpose and meaning and life. Friend, you need God to help you through life's trials and problems. Even disciplining children in this day and age is more difficult than it used to be. Saint, you are going to have problems, and you may encounter some very serious problems.

Sometimes I go through a situation and say, "O God, please, I don't want to go through this trial again! Help me not to be ignorant, but what is the point? What do I need to learn? I don't want to repeat this lesson."

Being a pastor in this day and age is a very difficult task. Many people are so independent. All pastors should help one another. We need God. We need a higher power, a greater power. Job said in Job 5:7, "Yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward." I repeat, trouble is inevitable.

You need God to enable you to live a sinless life. That is what makes the Church of God unique, and that is the line of demarcation. The Church of God lives without sin. Other religions are involved in sin.

Are you involved in division? You cannot live without sin on your own. You need God to help you. Without God you lack control. Through situations of life, you need God to help you to be in control. Someone may ask, "Is division sin?" Absolutely! Division is sin. There is only one way out of division, and that is by way of the altar, through repentance. Repentance is on an individual level. I thank God for Truth and for His many blessings. We need God. I cannot express to you how serious life is. Psalm 133:1 states, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" That is God's plan. The way to keep unity is this: do not let anything come between you and God; you must keep clear contact with God. You never know when a very serious situation will come to your doorsteps such as a death or some other trauma. The Christian is not exempt from trouble. We all have some trouble in life.

You need God to help you to be in control of your temper. The Christian should not fly off the handle, so to speak, and carry on. God can give you the inner fortitude that you need. He can give you the grace you need to live free from sin.

How Do You Stand With God?

You have no hope beyond this life without God. After you take your last breath, it will be as Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes 12:7, which reads, "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." How will it be when you stand before God? You will not be able to ask for your wife or your husband or anyone else. You will stand before God alone. You are responsible for the decisions that you have made. No one has coerced you to do what you have done.

God will not pardon you because you succumbed to peer pressure. You must stand against it. Sometimes older ones are the worst offenders when it comes to failing to stand against pressure. Sometimes ministers succumb to peer pressure. I had a very godly, German grandmother, and she used to say, "Spend your time sweeping your own backyard, and you won't have any time to sweep the other fellow's backyard." When you are feeling peer pressure, you need to get alone with God and get direction from Him; then you will not be in any confusion. God is not the author of confusion.

When I was a boy, a young man in our congregation said to the pastor one night, "You are just trying to scare us into getting saved." That same night, he went out in the parking lot, and as he was walking behind a car, the driver did not see him and knocked him down and ran over him. They had to bring him into the church building, and at first he was lying there lifelessly. So they prayed for him and asked God to have mercy on Him. Soon he said, "I believe! I believe!" He got saved that very night.

Dear one, you need to get saved so that you can live a moral, righteous life. Temptation is lurking out there. Do not flirt with temptation. Do not allow yourself to think on something that could cause you to drift away from God. Without the

grace of God you are going to sin. Many people aimlessly wander through life with no purpose, no reason for living. That is very sad. The aim that most people have is to make more money, but there is no security in money.

Friend, do you know the Lord? You need God. Unless you are clear with God, you are taking a chance of dying and being lost for eternity. You need God to work out your problems. You are going to face some very serious things in life before it is all over, so you need God. You must not die without God. Without God you will be lost forever.

(Cassette C-5071E)



Prayer

*Oh, how heavy seem the burdens,
And the cross is hard to bear,
When we're out of touch with Jesus,
And His tender loving care.*

*Quickly vanish all the storm clouds,
Even shadows flee away,
And we feel His smile upon us,
When we go alone to pray.*

*When the friends that we have loved
most
Do not even seem to care,
We may still find sweetest comfort
When we turn to God in prayer.*

*When the heart is crushed with sorrow,
That seems more than we can
bear,
There is blessed consolation,
When we go to God in prayer.*

*Let us trust in every promise,
Cast on Jesus all our care;
He has promised to deliver,
If we keep in touch by prayer.*

Selected

The Fullness of Joy



Every community has one—the individual whose name is synonymous with success. John Blakely was just such a person.

"He's at the top of the heap," neighbors said. No one knew about the despair he battled until after his suicide.

On the other hand, Alice White was an ordinary housewife, but her inner strength showed through in time of crisis. When the angry flames of a forest fire extended to claim several homes in the surrounding neighborhood, Alice White's home and possessions were destroyed.

Reporters rushed in to capture the devastation on film. Then one reporter spotted Mrs. White, suffering with her neighbors. Somehow she seemed different from the others. Perhaps a word with her would be worth sharing with viewers.

Mrs. White blinked back a tear as the microphone was thrust into her face. Then she smiled. "I have to learn to be more thankful," she said. "It's been worse for some of the others—like the child who was badly burned."

These two real-life illustrations prove a paradox. The most promising situation can turn to sorrow, and a bad break does not mean the end of happiness.

If joy is unrelated to circumstances, what then is the secret of

that wonderful sense of well-being?

Mrs. White gives the credit to God. "It's like a ray of sunshine deep, deep inside," she says. "All else may fail, but I know God will never fail."

That His children are partakers of joy is indeed part of God's plan. After emphasizing the importance of a one-to-one relationship with His disciples, Jesus said, "These things I have spoken to you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full" (John 15:11). Again, in the very next chapter, the words of Jesus are promising: "Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full" (John 16: 24). The theme continues with Paul's statement: "The kingdom of God is . . . joy" (Romans 14:17).

At this point it may seem reasonable to conclude that the Christian experience offers admission to one big, lifelong picnic. Sometimes Christians come to expect such a utopia and are disappointed when a cloudburst spoils the crepe paper decorations.

The rain does fall on the just and the unjust. Illness is not always selective about whom it strikes. Accidents can and do happen to anyone. The Christian will sometimes fail when wanting most to succeed.

Does this sound like the fullness of joy? Well, not exactly. While

confusion remains on this point, another writer introduces yet another perplexing thought: "Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations [or when you meet various trials]" (James 1:2).

So the balloon of happiness has been punctured, and now there is an exhortation to be joyful about it all. It sounds a little like rubbing salt on a fresh wound.

Was not that the way it happened in the true-life illustration? The loss of home and possessions hurt Mrs. White just as much as anyone else, but she was able, with God's help, to look beyond the flames and see a blessing: her family had suffered no injuries. Mrs. White did not find joy because of misfortune, but neither did she allow misfortune to rob her of the inner joy she already had.

As James continued, the reason for joy even in troubled times becomes apparent. It has to do with the spiritual enrichment of the soul. Enduring trials develops patience, bringing the individual one step closer to Christian perfection.

Going back again to Christ's instructions for finding complete joy, the spiritual emphasis is clear. Joy is promised to those who share divine love and do God's will. Even when Jesus said, "Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full," He had prefaced the promise with a

condition. "In my name," He said, indicating it is the answer to Christ-centered prayer that brings joy.

Included with joy among Paul's descriptive words of the Kingdom of God are righteousness and peace—spiritual words that are necessary to happiness. Where does it all lead? James speaks of "the holy city." It is commonly called "heaven," and represents the culmination of spiritual joy.

To accept present-day adversity in the hope of a future reward is not always easy, especially when the unknown equation of the reward is considered. "Forget the spiritual," some argue. "It is better to seize the moment's pleasure."

This is no new idea. "Whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy," wrote the Preacher in Ecclesiastes 2:10. In verse after verse, he described the search for satisfaction in life, then concluded that, apart from God, "all is vanity" (Ecclesiastes 12:8).

John Blakely's suicide proves that what the Preacher said is still true. Most any newspaper on most any day could confirm it too. So there does not seem to be a logical alternative to the search for joy through spiritual channels. How wonderful to know that God actually wants to share His joy with every member of the human family!

Spiritual joy is something that must be experienced to be understood. It is an individual happening and is not always felt in the same way. The most phenomenal of all experiences of joy takes place when sinner meets Savior—when anyone, tired of trying to go it alone, accepts the love and forgiveness of Jesus.

That is the beginning of a new life, a spiritual life that makes spiritual joy possible, and there are so many ways that joy can be exercised. What an opportunity it is to talk to God in prayer! Imagine being able to discuss any personal concern with the Ruler of the universe! Some of the greatest blessings may come

while waiting for God to answer, while keeping the mind open to suggestions of the Spirit. "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you" (James 4:8).

For one interested in spiritual matters, nothing can bring greater satisfaction than delving into the Bible. What a thrill when something written long ago becomes the answer to today's need. "That verse was written just for me" has been said over and over.

Another source of joy is Christian fellowship, a time when ideas are exchanged and burdens are shared. "I'd never make it as a Christian without my friends," says Linda. "Sometimes Dad's drinking problem just about gets me down. Then I ask some of the kids at church to pray with me. Afterwards I feel strong enough to face Dad's threats."

Linda does not think of herself as one who helps others in return, but she does. One young man in the

group says, "Linda is an inspiration to me. If she can stay true to God in her situation, I should be able to trust God to handle my problems."

Common, everyday living experiences provide innumerable opportunities for the exercise of spiritual joy: living the Christian life at work or school, singing in the choir, using leadership ability for Christian influence, meeting a challenge, or just quietly taking a place among the faithful. The ways are as varied as individuals, but those who find a rightful place in God's kingdom can expect an unsurpassed feeling of joy.

Everyone wants to live life at its best, but only the Christian can do it. Misfortune, heartaches? Yes, they are a fact of life that no one escapes, but the Christian has access to the power of God. That power makes it possible to experience the fullness of joy.

Selected

A MOST MIRACULOUS ESCAPE

A mother sent us an account of several very clear and definite answers to prayer for the supply of temporal needs, received during her Christian experience of about ten years, during the greater part of which time she was a widow and added the following account:

"I would like to tell you how the Lord mercifully saved my boy from death. While I was on my knees praying for him, *I was strongly impressed that some evil was about to happen to him.* While in earnest prayer for him, the burden was lifted, and he was saved from a terrible death. In crossing the railroad, where there were many tracks, in trying to avoid one engine, he was knocked down by another and dragged a distance of a block or more. Though his face and hands were terribly lacerated and filled with dirt, yet not a bone was broken. The next morning there was an article in the newspaper under the heading: 'A Most Miraculous Escape.'

"When the railroad men tried to explain to me that it was because the road was so smooth that he was dragged along and said that if the ties had been above the ground he would have been crushed, I said, 'No, God heard his mother's prayer.'"

Selected

Winter 2004 Camp Meeting Tape List

TAPE NO.	DATE	MESSAGE TITLE	MINISTER	COST
C-5325E	12-27-04	The Prevailing Practice of Playing Religion	Bro. E. David Stegmeier	2.50
C-5326M	12-28-04	Restitution	Bro. Charles Ferguson	2.50
C-5327E		Temptation	Bro. Allen Polston	2.50
C-5328M	12-29-04	The Secret of Power	Bro. Adam Wolf	2.50
C-5329M	12-30-04	Doing Right the Wrong Way	Bro. Allen Polston	2.50
C-5330E		Drunkenness	Bro. Calvin Foster	2.50

Music Recordings . . . Please Specify Cassette or CD

MD-207	2004	Winter Camp Meeting Songs #1	3.50
MD-208	2004	Winter Camp Meeting Songs #2	3.50

Tapes may be ordered by writing The Gospel Trumpeter, Tape Ministry, 675 N. Cedar St., Newark, Ohio 43055, or by calling (740) 987-5905, Brother and Sister Roger Allen. If no answer, call (740) 345-1312, the Print Shop. Make check or money order in U.S. funds payable to The Gospel Trumpeter.

A Duty to Perform

Keep a bridle on your tongue, and think twice before you speak. Always say less than you think. Cultivate a sweet voice, because how you say it often counts more than what you say. Be dependable. Make promises sparingly, and keep them faithfully.

Praise good work done, regardless of who did it. If criticism is needed, criticize helpfully and not spitefully. Be interested in others, their homes, etc. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.

Be cheerful, hide your worries, pains, and disappointments under a pleasant countenance. Let your good speak for itself. Don't let your testimony be upstairs and your living be in the basement.

Omit gossip, foolish talking, and jesting. Make a rule not to say anything ill of others, especially when they are absent. Tell me my faults and tell my good to others.

Always be careful of another's feelings and of whom, what, how, when, and where you speak, because grievous words stir up anger, but a soft answer turneth away wrath.

Don't worry about evildoers. Pay no attention to the false things said about you, just live so God is pleased with you. Remember what Jesus said in Matthew 5:11-12.

Don't be a faultfinder; don't be a talebearer. Don't be slothful, and don't let others use you or your house as a garbage can by bringing you all the news.

Always do your duty, because Jesus is calling for a holy life and service too. Let not your hands be idle or slack (Zephaniah 3:16-17). Forget yourself. Come before the Lord with singing, prayer, and supplication. Be thou faithful unto death, and you will be rewarded.