

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

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

Brother Roger L. Decker Editor
Workers Too Numerous to Mention

THE CHURCH OF GOD BELIEVES IN:

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

**SOME SPIRITUAL FACTS
PERTAINING TO THE CHURCH**

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

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CONTENTS

Make a Battlement	3
God's Uncompromising Demand	8
Oregon Camp Meeting Announcement	13
Especially for Young People	14
The Destructiveness of Self-Will	16
Christian Self-Esteem	23
Fall Camp Meeting Announcement ...	27

Vol. 36 July 2006 No. 7

Guest Editorial

"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

Romans 10:13

"And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart."

Jeremiah 29:13

Becoming a Christian

Becoming a Christian is the wisest, the most serious, and the most important decision a man or a woman can make in this life. It is not a matter to be taken lightly or to be attempted on an experimental basis. Far too often individuals have begun with the thought of simply trying it for a while; then if it does not work out for them, they drop it. This is not the proper attitude to take toward this "pearl of great price" that cost Heaven so much. Becoming a Christian must begin first with a strong determination to go all the way with God, regardless of what may come or go or what it may cost. One must be willing to forsake all to follow the Lord. Anyone who desires salvation may obtain it.

You may ask, "How can I know that God wants me to be saved?" First of all, God loves and cares for you. John 3:16, a well-worn Scripture, states, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." God wants to save you, and He is calling to you daily and urging you to come to Him and become a Christian.

In Luke 19:10 Jesus said, "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." In the parable of the lost sheep,

we find that the good shepherd left the ninety and nine in safe keeping and went out to find that one lamb that had gone astray. In 2 Peter 3:9 we find that God is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." Knowing that God loves you so much certainly ought to assure you that it is His will to save not only you but also the entire world.

The Apostle Paul, writing in Romans 10:13, said, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." God is ready and waiting to hear the call that is coming from a broken heart, one who is sick of living a life of sin and disgrace. In John 6:37 Jesus spoke these beautiful words: "... him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." These are just a few of the many precious promises that reveal God's attitude toward the lost. The Lord is willing to save you if you will only confess your sins and allow Him to have complete control of your life.

Many in sin feel that it is too late for them because they have gone too far, or too deep in sin, for the Lord to ever want them. This is in no way true! Dear one, it makes no difference to God how far down you have gone into the depths of sin. His hand is very

[continued on page 22]

Proverbs 3:1 My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments:

2 For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee.

3 Let not mercy and truth forsake thee [in other words, let them be your constant companion]: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart:

4 So shalt thou find favour and

good understanding in the sight of God and man.

5 Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

6 In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

7 Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil.

8 It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones.

9 Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase:

10 So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.

Deuteronomy 22:8 When thou buildest a new house, then thou shalt make a battlement for thy roof, that thou bring not blood upon thine house, if any man fall from thence.

Make a Battlement



Build According to God's Plan

Houses in the East were generally built with flat roofs. Men walked on them to enjoy the fresh air, to converse, and to sleep. Therefore, having a battlement to help prevent persons from falling off was necessary. What was a battlement? It was a rail that prevented one from falling off the edge and getting hurt or killed. If a man neglected to make

a sufficient defense against such accidents and the death of another was occasioned by it, the owner of the house could be held liable.

I would like to use the word *battlement* as a type of the Word and the Spirit of God. I also want to liken you to the one who is responsible for its building. In Proverbs 3:1 the wise man said, "My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments." You have to keep

God's law in the heart. What will it do for you? It will give you length of days, long life, and peace. God's law instructed the man who built the house to put up a battlement. It was the responsibility of the owner to make sure it was put there as protection so that no one would fall over the edge. Psalm 127:1 says, "Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman

waketh but in vain." Thank God, the Lord does keep the city of God.

In Genesis, Chapter 6, you can read about the blueprint that God gave Noah. Genesis 6:14-22 reads: "Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch. And this is the fashion which thou shalt make it of: The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits [it was 450 feet long, 65 feet wide, and 45 feet high]. A window shalt thou make to the ark, and in a cubit shalt thou finish it above; and the door of the ark shalt thou set in the side thereof; with lower, second, and third stories shalt thou make it.

"And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die. But with thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee. And of every living thing of all flesh, two of every sort shalt thou bring into the ark, to keep them alive with thee; they shall be male and female.

"Of fowls after their kind, and of cattle after their kind, of every creeping thing of the earth after his kind, two of every sort shall come unto thee, to keep them alive. And take thou unto thee of all food that is eaten, and thou shalt gather it to thee; and it shall be for food for thee, and for them. Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he."

Noah built according to the plan of God. The Bible says he did all that God commanded him. Noah did not change the blueprint or leave anything out. We read in Genesis 12:1-4: "Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou

shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran."

Those brethren built their spiritual houses according to the plan that God gave them, and it reaped tremendous benefits. When you allow God to build your spiritual house, the battlement will be there. If you try to build your spiritual house and pay no attention to the plans that God has given, you are building vainly. It takes the presence of God to keep the house, and it takes the presence of God to keep the city, or the church.

The enemy of souls is working hard to tear down the battlement, take away the restraint, and let the people fall headlong into perdition. The reason men are setting the rails closer to the edge is that they want to make more room for the flesh, and instead of having the rails close together, they are moving them further and further apart. They want to make a "people's church."

God Warns of Dangers

God uses His Word and His Spirit to warn of impending dangers. In 2 Kings, Chapter 6, we read that a war was going on. Verses 8-12 tell us: "Then the king of Syria warred against Israel, and took counsel with his servants, saying, In such and such a place shall be my camp. And the man of God sent unto the king of Israel, saying, Beware that thou pass not such a place; for thither the Syrians are come down [in other words, the Syrians were waiting for them, so he was letting them know that they should not go there]. And the king of Israel sent to the place which the man of God told him and warned him of, and saved himself there, not once nor twice. Therefore the heart of the king of Syria was sore trou-

bled for this thing; and he called his servants, and said unto them, Will ye not show me which of us is for the king of Israel? And one of his servants said, None, my lord, O king; but Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber."

A war had broken out between Syria and Israel, and Syria was the aggressor. Israel was delivered from the enemy, not with the sword but by the Word and the Spirit of the Lord. The king of Syria was wise enough to know that he was not going to go to battle in an open field. He was going to work against Israel through the element of surprise, by ambushing certain areas. He was planning to win the war through craftiness, not strength. He knew better than to go head-to-head with Israel, so he planned to set up ambushes to pick them off a few at a time and diminish the ranks; then he would be able to overpower them after they had killed so many or taken them captive.

All the plans that the king of Syria talked about in his bedchamber before he lay down at night were revealed to Elisha by the Lord, and he then told the king of Israel. Therefore, the king of Israel went another way. He was delivered not once, but many times. That which was spoken in the ear at Damascus was proclaimed to all in Samaria.

God has a battlement to protect His children in the hottest of all the battles. Even when you are in a place where you think there is no way out, God's Word and His Spirit will show you a mountain pass and help you to come through with sweet victory in your soul.

The Hebrew writer said in Hebrews 4:12-13: "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow [it gets right down to the inner man], and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any

creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do."

The king of Syria was getting stirred because all his plans were in vain. He felt it was about time to have a meeting, so he called in all his servants and those who were in command and said to them, "Will ye not show me which of us is for the king of Israel?" In other words, he was saying, "Which one of you is a traitor? Which of you is just going along with me to find out what my plans are, but you really like the king of Israel better?"

One servant spoke up and said, "None, my lord, O king: but Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber." None of them was there to hear what he said, but God was telling the Prophet Elisha in Israel everything, and he was telling the king of Israel. When the king of Syria discovered what was happening, he went after Elisha, but it was to no avail.

The Deliverance of the Lord

Today God gives us His Word and His Holy Spirit to warn us of impending dangers that we, in our human eyes and in our human thinking, could not discern. God is faithful, and He loves and cares for His people. Many times God warns us of things we do not even realize lay ahead of us. Sometimes He just impresses us to make certain decisions. We may feel that to go another direction would please God. Perhaps we might not be able to explain it, but we feel it is right to do. Sometimes God may ask you to stand still and not do anything. The more you get into some battles, the more mess you will make, so God just has you stand still and see the deliverance of the Lord.

Israel could not have won that battle with Syria without God's intervention. No secrets can be kept from God. Young people may try to

hide things from their parents, and people may keep all kinds of secrets, but none are kept from God. He hears all, sees all, and knows all. Second Peter 2:9 says, "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished."

You may ignore the battlements that God has in place to protect you, but if you do, you will not prosper. If you have sin in your life, you need to obey God's Word. Things may be going well for you, and you may feel that you do not need to serve God right now. Perhaps you have the idea that if things start getting tough as you get older, then you will turn to God. Dear one, the Bible says to remember your Creator in the days of your youth. Do not let the enemy deceive you. Things can change very quickly.

We live in a world where there is an abundance of uncertainty. Plans have been made and then changed. Sooner or later, you must subject yourself to God's will, and the sooner you do, the better off you will be. Acts 17:28-30 reads: "For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent."

Notice that verse 28 says it is "in him we live, and move, and have our being." He is the very source of our existence. He is the reason that you are even here. The principle of life and the principle of motion come from Him. You have your being, your existence, and your life in Him. Without Him you can do nothing, and without Him you are nothing.

Jesus said in John 15:5, "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth [or dwelleth] in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much

fruit: for without me ye can do nothing." Dear sinner friend, do not ignore the Word of God. It is your source of deliverance from sin, and it will keep you from sin.

Obedience to the Word

Now I want to speak to the professed Christian. God has wonderfully saved you and brought you along spiritually. Remember, it was the Spirit of God that convicted you, it was obedience to His Word that saved you, and it takes His Word to keep you. God does not save you at an altar of prayer and just turn you over to someone else. God can save you, and He can keep you. God does not want you to try to be kept by something else. You need to stay with that which convicted you and saved you: the battlement.

That which has molded you is the Word of God. Do not allow the enemy of your soul to persuade you to tear down or move the battlement. Do not push the railing back so far that it will not stop you from falling. I want you to notice something else that is in that Scripture. It will protect not only your own family but also others. People are watching your life. If you move the battlement, you may cause others to fall.

Satan is causing some saints of God to become discontented and to want more worldly freedom. They say they are in bondage with all the rules and commandments and church theology. A child of God does not feel that way. The commandments of God are not grievous. You can never satisfy a worldly spirit. It wants more and more. You will end up giving in to whatever that spirit wants.

If Satan gets into your spiritual house, he may enter through a little crack, but it will not be long until he will open every door and window that he can find. In Galatians 6:9 the Apostle Paul told the Galatians, "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." If you move

the battlement, you will take the power out of the Scriptures and cause the Word to be of none effect; then you will begin to doubt the Scriptures.

First Timothy 2:9-10 says: "In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works." Modest apparel is a battlement God has placed around His people.

When the enemy causes you to move the battlement, you will take a costly fall. Do not move the battlement of modest apparel to do whatever is right in your own eyes. Our measurement is not Hollywood or Paris or ourselves. We are to measure ourselves by Jesus Christ. When you dress immodestly, you might be popular with the world, but how is your popularity with Jesus Christ? You may say, "Well, I checked in the mirror." You need to check in the mirror of the Word of God. Some people have poor spiritual vision.

Be Not Wise in Your Own Eyes

The Prophet Isaiah wrote in Isaiah 5:21, "Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!" That refers to those who are inflated with a false opinion of their own knowledge and who are self-confident and vain. Some people are puffed up with pride. They think too much of themselves.

Proverbs 3:7 says, "Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil." Those who are wise in their own eyes think they are all-knowing. They are self-conceited, and they will not take instruction. They refuse to listen to others. Jesus requires His followers to be meek, humble, and teachable, just as children are.

A congregation is overseen by the pastor who uses the Word of God, not a board of trustees. The trustees do not have any voice in

spiritual matters. God does not work through six or seven people to instruct a congregation. That would bring confusion, and God is not the author of confusion.

God only put one church in the Bible. Had He put two in there, you would get confused and choose the wrong one. You would wonder if you picked the right one, so God took away the choice. He does not want you to choose the wrong one, so when you are saved, He only put you in one church. Be not wise in your own eyes, but fear the Lord and depart from evil. God has set the standard, and it is for our protection. It protects the sisters from evil doers, such as rapists, and it keeps men from becoming rapists. It is a protection that God gives. God has placed a battlement around us as the church.

One attribute about God that you always find in the Scriptures is that God is a real gentleman. He will never force you to heed His Word or His Spirit. He made you a free, moral agent, and the choice is yours. However, God takes the choice out of it when it comes to eternity. When it comes to the end, your destiny will be based on the way you have chosen in this life. God wants to surround His people with protection against the enemy of souls. First Peter 5:8 tells us that the devil, "as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."

Job 1:7-10 states: "And the LORD said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him [there is the battlement], and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance

is increased in the land."

Why did God do that? Verse 1 tells us, "There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil." If that is your condition, then God has a hedge around you too. Many times when we are perplexed about what to do, His Word and His Spirit have been true to our souls and made the way plain for us to follow.

Keeping the Battlement Where It Ought to Be

The Psalmist wrote in Psalm 18:32, "It is God that girdeth me with strength, and maketh my way perfect." Psalm 32:8 reads, "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye." Sad to say, some people have made shipwreck because they detoured from the way the Lord had laid out for them. Some have moved away from Truth only to wind up back out in the world.

Child of God, you need to consider some things before you move away from a congregation. First of all, what is your reason for moving? You have to deal with that. Second, is there a Church of God congregation that has not compromised where you are going? You should not consider going someplace where the pastor has let down the standard or the congregation has compromised. When some people move to take a position to make more money, all they consider is how much money they will make, but people need to consider their souls first. Some have made shipwreck spiritually because they have gone the wrong direction. They followed the dollar, but money has wings to it. You need to consider your soul's welfare above everything else.

Some people forsake the assembling of themselves, and then they eventually go back into sin. You cannot live for God and be

spiritual if you stay out of the services. You are not that strong. Sickness is unavoidable, and other things may come up occasionally, but to habitually miss the services without due cause is to commit sin. You might stay out of the services with only a headache. The next thing you know, you will get in such a habit of missing the services that you cannot sit and listen to a message without going in and out. You become fidgety and discontented. That is not a physical problem; it is a spiritual problem.

We did not allow our children to run in and out freely during the services. If one of them went out, it had to be a necessity. People need to settle down, get in the services, and serve God wholeheartedly. The devil is trying to pave your way to hell. Some people sit in the services and just run their mouths. Now, they definitely would not want God to shut their mouths for them.

Keeping the battlement right

where it ought to be will prevent you and your family from falling. Then when others see your life, they will still have confidence that Jesus saves and keeps. They might have been watching your life from a distance. When you move the battlement, that is called compromise, and people will see you as one who has fallen off the edge. Then, just as the Scripture says, there will be hissing, and people will wag their heads and say, "Isn't he the one who was really zealous for God at one time? Look at what has happened to him now. Look how that person dresses now compared to how he used to dress."

The Word and the Spirit are necessary to build a spiritual house for the Lord. The Word and the Spirit will put a mother and a father in their rightful positions in the home. They will raise spiritual children if they keep the battlement where it should be. The writer said in Deuteronomy 22:8, "When thou buildest a new house, then thou

shalt make a battlement. . . ." Notice that he said "*a new house*." Child of God, when you were out in sin and under the bondage of the old man, you did not have a battlement, but when you build a *new* house, you become a new creature in Christ Jesus. Then you must keep the Word of God present in your house. If you are saved, you are building a new house, so you need to keep the Word and the Spirit active in your life.

Is the battlement still in your home? Are you raising your family with the battlement of God's Word? Do you have a battlement so the children will not fall into sin? Proverbs 14:12 says, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." Is the battlement still in your spiritual house? Do you still have the guardrails up?

(Cassette C-5424E)

Is This the Road to Happiness?

As a tramp was walking down the highway, a car slowed to a stop, and the driver asked the tramp to ride. He said, "No, thanks. I ain't goin' anyplace, so I'd just as soon be here as twenty-five miles down the road." Millions of people are like that. Life has little real purpose for them but to eat and sleep.

If man could use his speed and atomic energy to carry him out of his sorrows and sins, he would get somewhere fast, but his troubles are spiritual and not material. Change of location will not solve his problem, for his sickness is in his own bosom.

People are making a lot of commotion, and the speed in the material world can be frightening, but it is heart-breaking to discover how slowly people are progressing in the direction of genuine happiness and peace. There is only one road that leads to peace. Jesus told us about it nearly two thousand years ago when He said in John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." He said in John 8:12, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." Then He stated in Matthew 11:28, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Jeremiah wrote long ago, "Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is

the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein" (Jeremiah 6:16). Actually, we would make faster progress on our knees than by increasing our already frightening speed in the air. We are "up in the air" in more ways than one and need to get not only our feet but also our knees on the ground.

Second Chronicles 7:14 reads, "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."

It is high time that we give more consideration to the moral laws of God with which we have to do. We should know by this late hour that we can neither escape them nor annul them. Therefore, we will do well to observe them.

If you continue on as you are living today, if you live this kind of life to the limit, if you follow the desires of the flesh, what do you think you will find? happiness? Again, the Prophet Jeremiah wrote in Jeremiah 6:16a, "Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls."

Selected

Matthew 5:17 Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.

18 For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

19 Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

20 For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

God's Uncompromising Demand



Brother Esau Brooks

True Religion

We are living in a world that has many churches, but in spite of the many brands of religion, only one is worth having. Our Scripture text is part of the great Sermon on the

Mount that Jesus preached. He preached many messages when He was here in the flesh. I am glad they have been preserved so that, with all the religious confusion in the world today, we still have the authenticated Word of God and can know

the Truth. Jesus said in John 8:32, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." We know we have the Truth because we are free, not to do as we please but to do what pleases God.

In our Scripture text our Savior

gave an outline of the fundamental doctrine of the Kingdom of Heaven. In verses 3-12 He revealed the way to find entrance into the Kingdom of God. Matthew 5:1-3 reads: "And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Nowadays we hear much about the Kingdom of God, or the Kingdom of Heaven. That is where God reigns. In hearing people talk about going to Heaven, I have wondered how they would enjoy it when they hardly want to attend church services. What do they think they would do in Heaven?

One songwriter wrote, "*Heaven is a holy place, Filled with glory and with grace; Sin can never enter there; All within its gates are pure, From defilement kept secure, Sin can never enter there.*" How could those folks who tell us that we all have to sin more or less every day enjoy Heaven? In most cases, they are sinning more rather than less.

True religion saves you *from* sin. If you are among those who talk about going to Heaven, you had better start living without sin, because no sin can enter there. You must not think you can wait until you get to Heaven to stop sinning. When God saves you, He saves you *from* sin. Therefore, if you want to go to Heaven, you need true religion that will take you out of sin. You need to attend a church that will help you live free from sin.

Sometimes people say that the preaching is too straight. Friend, if you are planning to go to Heaven, you cannot set your mind on the things of this life. Many people rebel against the Bible standard of modest apparel, and I wonder what they think they will do when they get to Heaven. Do they think they are going to have Paris or Hollywood to set the standard of how to dress in Heaven? Jesus, in speaking of Heaven, called it His Father's house.

Heaven is God's house, and since God is holy, so is Heaven.

Any religion that allows you to sin and preaches that you *must* sin is false. You should get out of that place. No matter what name it carries, it is false. You must examine yourself quickly, because you might find that you are not ready for Heaven at all. If you are determined to go to Heaven, you cannot live in sin here on earth. I have heard people say, "You should not preach it so straight, because people won't take it." If they want to go to Heaven, they will. You ought to love the preacher who will preach against sin.

Misconceptions About Godliness

In our Scripture text Jesus was trying to clear up any misconceptions people had through false teachings concerning godliness. When Jesus began to teach, He said in Matthew 5:3, "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." When I see all that is mixed up in the religious world, it makes me wonder how so many false teachings have crowded in.

Jesus said in verse 4, "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted." In verse 12 Jesus said, "Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." To get to Heaven you must endure persecution, but you are to rejoice. You may ask, "Who can rejoice while being persecuted? Do you mean it does not make you feel bad?" No, you will feel bad, but it is a feeling that will pass. Soon you will understand that it is good for you. You can easily become heady, so a little persecution will bring you down where you belong.

Once a young man thought he was called to preach, and the day came for his ordination. He was to be the main speaker for the occasion. He studied and made himself ready, and when the time came for him to preach, he walked up to the plat-

form with his chest pushed out and his head held high. As he started to speak, he made a mess. When he came back down, he said to an older brother, "I don't know what happened to me. I did all I could to prepare for this day, and look at the mess I have made."

The older brother said, "Brother, if you had gone up there the same way you came down, you would have been further ahead."

Luke 14:11 states, "For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Jesus went on to explain the responsibility one has when he becomes a child of the King. Too many people have the wrong idea. They think that once they get saved, all they have to do is sit on the stool of do-nothing and rock themselves into Heaven. No, friend. Getting saved is the first step in the right direction, but it will not be long before you realize that you have a responsibility that goes with being a child of God.

In verse 17 Jesus said, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." If you turn the word *fulfill* around, you will get the thought: "I came not to destroy, but to fill to the full." Only salvation brings a man to the place where he can serve God. Joining a church cannot do it. Joining a church and shaking a preacher's hand cannot take you to Heaven, but living for God will.

Jesus went on to say in verse 19, "Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." If you break one of the least commandments and go on and teach others, then you will be least. If you do them and teach them, you will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven. Those in the Kingdom of Heaven may not be the ones to praise you or to look at you as the

least. Those outside the kingdom may do this. The main thrust of the message is this: you must do and teach by your doing, and then the world will see your greatness in the Kingdom of Heaven.

"The Lord Seeth Not as Man Seeth"

God evaluates things quite differently from the way the world does. Do you remember when the Prophet Samuel was sent to anoint a king for the people of Israel and God instructed him to go to the house of Jesse? They presented to Samuel all the robust sons of Jesse, and one by one, God rejected them. David, whom everyone saw as only a shepherd boy, was chosen. God saw him as a king. The main reason that religion is so confusing to the masses is that most of the people are dwelling on what they can see with the natural eye.

In 1 Samuel 16:7 God told Samuel, ". . . for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart." God does not measure a man by his stature; He measures his heart.

Jesus said in verse 20 of our Scripture text, "For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." Notice the positiveness of this statement. There is no room for misunderstanding. If your righteousness does not exceed that of the scribes and the Pharisees, you have no hope of entering Heaven. In Jesus' day false human evaluation dominated the religious world. People worshiped according to what seemed right in their own eyes, and they evaluated things accordingly. However, Jesus taught that man would have to see things the way God sees them.

A man is not a Christian because he goes to church, but a man who is a Christian will go to church. A man is not a Christian because he kneels

at an altar, but a man who truly repents will become a Christian. God demands that our righteousness must exceed that of professing church members. God does not save you to do what you can; He saves you to do what you could not do before. Salvation is not an experience that will help you to do the best you can. Second Corinthians 5:17 reads, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

Today things are becoming more confusing than they have ever been. While religion is on the increase and church membership is on the increase, wickedness is spreading at an alarming rate. Although some good things can be said regarding religious circles, that is not enough to satisfy God's requirement. God's Word speaks of people who would willingly give their bodies to be burned, yet they have no charity. You would think, "What a concern they have! What devotion they display in offering their bodies to be burned!" However, as God looks on the inside, He sees no love.

Measuring to God's Standard

Do you want to go to Heaven? If so, you must measure to God's standard, friend. This is not because I say so; this is because the Bible says so. Many are having a difficult time understanding the difference between what God wants and what people are willing to offer God, but there is a difference. Heaven belongs to God, and if you want to go there to live, you must be what He wants you to be. Have you ever really tried to picture what Heaven must be like? You will have angels as your next-door neighbors. You need to think about that! Many do not want the preacher to know where they go to shop, let alone live next door.

Heaven is a holy place, and angels inhabit Heaven, not crooks. People must start living as holy as the angels if they intend to go there. Many people feel that since they

have joined the church of their choice and have gotten their names on the church records, they will be all right. Friend, that is not even a start. The first step in the right direction is to repent, and the way to repentance is to have godly sorrow for your sins.

God has not changed the standard because the world has become more modern and technology has increased. God's standard remains the same, and it is the same standard for the young as well as the old. If you get saved, God will satisfy your soul, and you will not want anything more to do with the world. I am glad I was saved when I was young. I was in my early teens when God spoke to my heart.

They say you have to choose to serve God, but I was not ready. I had gotten away from home and the control and restrictions of my parents, and I thought that I was going to have the time of my life. I had just gotten my first job, and I was beginning to earn a little money. No one was going to send me to bed while the sun was still shining, because that is what they did when I was a young boy.

Fathers need to fulfill their responsibility of bringing up their children in the right way. Bringing up children is not just a woman's job; it is also a man's job. Paul wrote to the Ephesians in Ephesians 6:4, ". . . fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Young people need to seek the Lord and get saved, because then they will have the opportunity to see their families brought in also.

What is ruining the world is that people are turning away from Christ. The commandment is, "Honor thy father and mother." The father is the head of the family, and with the help of the mother, they are to bring up the children in the nurture and the admonition of the Lord. Do you know how many children in the world have never seen their father and mother on their knees praying? These same children are having

children. Do you expect them to bring up their children on their knees in prayer before God when they themselves have never done it? It will not happen.

Parent, if you will follow these instructions, you will see a change in this world that you have never seen before. People are looking to legislators to reform the world. Legislators are at the end of their wits when it comes to knowing what to do. As a result, the world is in great turmoil. Proverbs 1:7 tells us, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction."

Two Kinds of Religion

The Lord wants man to have happiness. He wants man to know the difference between what He wants and what man wants. The difference between the two is this: what man wants is popular and what God wants is unpopular. Therefore, we need to evaluate this today and save our generation. Does your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees, the religious order of Jesus' day? Your righteousness must exceed the best of the religious world.

At one time church people set the example for all to follow, but that is not a safe course of action now. Some of the worst people are those who are around religion but do not have genuine, up-to-date experiences with God. Twenty years ago I would not have said that. I would have said, "If you want to look for straight people, you can look to religion." It takes the miracle-working power of the grace of God in the life and the soul to enable one to set an example for others to follow.

In our Scripture text we see two kinds of religion: one is man-made and the other is God-sent; one is the religion of the scribes and the Pharisees and the other is genuine; one is the experience of the masses and the other is an individual experience.

The religious world has generally accepted many things concerning what should be the standard of living, but in reality it is a very poor example of what God requires.

We read in John 1:17, "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." Verses 19-23 state: "And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No. Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself? He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias."

John said he was not the Christ or one of the prophets, but he let people know that he was the voice of direction. It is a pity that in too many cases people cannot look to what is called religion to receive the right instructions and directions. God gave pastors to teach people and to bring them to the things of God. In too many cases, the moment a God-called pastor lifts up the Bible standard and draws the line, people get angry and want to walk out on him. This creates such pressure that, more than likely, he will fill a premature grave. Nevertheless, this is where instruction should be given out.

What Is God's Righteousness?

Paul tells us in Romans 10:3, "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." There is God's righteousness and there is man's righteousness; however, God's righteousness exceeds the righteousness of man. Denominations are filled with the righteous-

ness of men. Only the true church has God's righteousness. God's people exemplify it, preach it, teach it, live it, and exhort others to embrace it. Too often people are not taught the difference between the right and the wrong way to live. Whenever a religion contradicts what God demands in His Word, it is the wrong kind of religion.

What is God's righteousness? We read in Romans 10:5-9: "For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them. But the righteousness which is of faith [God] speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

The righteousness which is of God is predicated by God's Word. Do you want to know how to exceed the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees? *You must obey God's Word.* The starting point is found in Acts 17:30, which reads, ". . . now [God] commandeth all men every where to repent." In Isaiah 55:7 the Prophet Isaiah said, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

We are living in a time when people are being duped into believing that all religion is of God. Nevertheless, God is still demanding that your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and the Pharisees. Otherwise, you have no hope of entering Heaven. Nowadays people are getting so slack concerning the Word of God and taking the things of God so

lightly. God's Word does not teach that, and the quicker people come to this realization the better it is going to be. We must be more diligent in service to God than those in nominal religion.

The Righteousness That God Requires

Our living must be more than that of the average churchgoer; it must be supernatural. The righteousness produced by the true church is motivated by God, and it is an example to the world. In Matthew 5:44 Jesus said: "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you." What a wonderful way to live!

The world says to hate your enemies and love your friends. Contrariwise, the Gospel says to love your enemies and bless them that hate you. When sinners hate you, you can say, "God bless you." When they despitefully use you and persecute you, you should pray that God will open their eyes so they can see how wrong they are. Dear one, things are getting really confusing today; therefore, you need to open your eyes wide and do not allow the devil to deceive you. Do not allow false religion to mislead you, but fully obey the Word of God.

Again, Jesus said in verse 20 of our Scripture text, "For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." The Pharisees had a religion that demanded respect and obedience to the Law of God. They professed regard to the whole Law, every jot and tittle. They had great devotion to it. In fact, it is said that they had about eighty different forms of prayer. They never entered a house without praying. They demanded that all forms of pleasure be rejected, and they fasted often. They strongly supported their religion.

Jesus told about that in Luke, Chapter 18. They were very zealous for their doctrines, but when Christ spoke about it, He said, "Your righteousness must exceed theirs; you must be better than that." As good as the Pharisees appeared to be, you need to be better.

You may say, "I am doing the best I know how to do." Friend, that is not good enough. Why? Consider all that the Pharisees did, yet their religion was insincere. Jesus spoke of it in Matthew 23:14 and cited how selfish their religion was. Matthew 23:26 states, "Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also." You see, salvation does not work from the outside in, but it works from the inside out. It not only affects your thoughts but also your heart and your actions. It will constrain you to be an example to others.

You need to beware of all the traditions in religion and make sure that your righteousness exceeds that of the Pharisees in origin. Through the Spirit of God, you must obey God from the heart, not the mouth. God changes your nature by giving you a new heart, a new life, fervent love, and sincerity for winning souls to Him. This is the righteousness that God requires you to possess. You must embrace it with your whole heart. The purpose must be to glorify God and to affect the lives of others. How long you have gone to church is not important, but it is important that your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and the Pharisees; otherwise, you shall in no case enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

Stand Firmly for God

In the world today we hear much about security. Security is becoming more restrictive everywhere. The government is working in many ways to protect us. Likewise, God has set things in order so that Heaven is kept secure from wrong getting in there.

Many religious people advocate

that the devil was once in Heaven and that God had to go to war in Heaven to throw out the devil. That is nonsense! The devil was *never* in Heaven. If he were there, how could we be assured that he would not enter there again? Thank God, Heaven is devil proof, and that is one reason you should strive to go there. That is one place you will not have an adversary. The devil cannot go there. I think one reason people argue in favor of the devil being in Heaven is that they think that would be their only hope of entering there too. The Bible lets us know that the devil was never there, and he will never be there.

You may think times are hard, but just one moment in Heaven will more than repay all the struggles and the battles that you will have fought to get there. You see, without a battle there is no victory, and without victory there is no shout of praise. Friend, you can go through this life rejoicing in the God of your salvation. You do not need cocaine to make you happy, and you do not even have to smoke marijuana to get a thrill.

I thank God for the privilege of being a Christian. If I was not convinced that serving God pays, I would not try to persuade you to do it. It is much better than living for the devil. The devil's crowd does not have a thing over God's people. Many people think you must sin to have joy. No! The devil has no *real* joy. You must pay a high price for whatever pleasure he gives you. What a misery the life of sin is when the reaping comes! Be encouraged, dear heart, and stand firmly for God. If you are still living in sin, you need to forsake sin. Again, Isaiah 55:7 reads, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." May God bless you.

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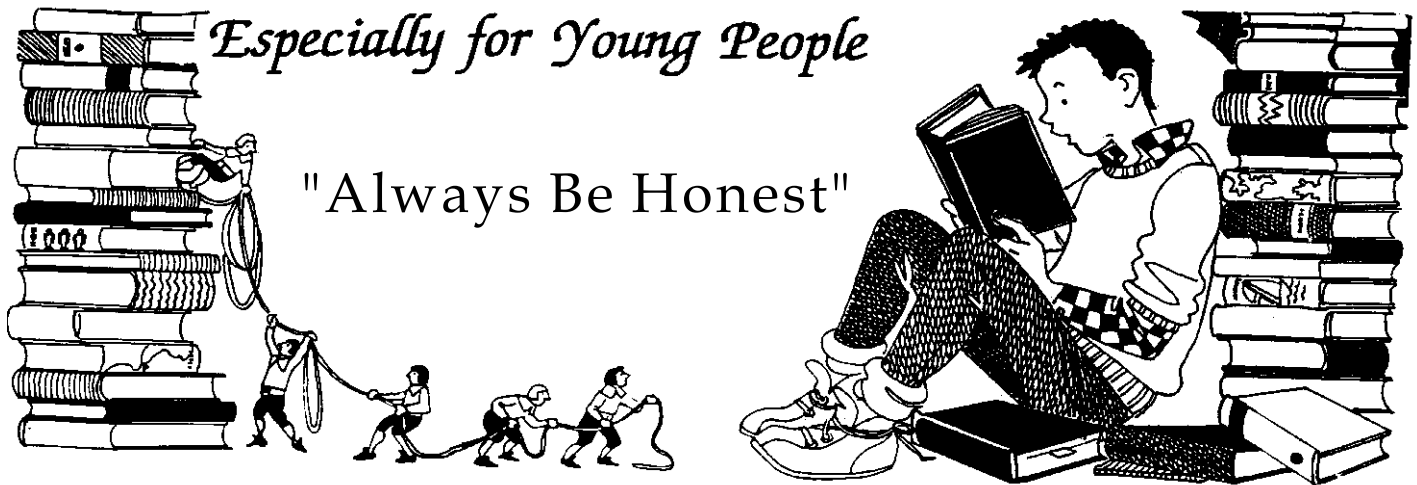
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Some years ago a father who had lost his companion lived in the slums of one of our large cities. With him lived his little son, whom people nicknamed "Freckles." Daily this man tried to do both a father's and a mother's duty in building into his boy's heart a faith in eternal things. They lived in very meager quarters, and there was not a square foot of grass on which, or a tree under which, the child could play.

Usually Freckles had to stay home and amuse himself while his father was away working here and there at odd jobs, but one day his father took him along. As they were passing a pretty home with a spacious lawn where grew shrubs, trees, flowers, and green grass, the little boy tried to pull away from his father's hand, "What is wrong, Son?" he asked.

"I want to go on that nice green grass and play until you come back, Father," he said.

"Those people will not let you play on that lawn, Son. That is their yard. They keep it very nice, don't they?" he explained to the little boy.

Freckles sighed and as they walked on, he kept looking back. The man felt keenly the lack of the temporal blessings for which the boy longed.

Upon returning to their dingy, slum home, Freckles asked, "Daddy, why can't we have some grass and flowers and trees where Johnny, Mac, and I sometimes play?"

Freckles' father was a faithful reader of the Holy Scriptures. He sat down in his chair and told the lad about the beautiful things he would be able to enjoy in the better world to come if he would be a good boy. In describing that eternal home, he said, "Listen, Sonny, when we get to that better land, we also will have a beautiful home. There we will have all kinds of lovely flowers, trees, and green grass for you to enjoy."

"Will the birds sit in our trees and sing for us too? Will Jesus let me have a little doggie to play with?" he asked. "And will there also be a nice Shetland pony for me?"

"I am sure Jesus will give you all the lovely things you need to be completely happy," came the assuring answer.

Freckles never grew weary of hearing of this beautiful home. One night his father returned late. He had had a hard, long day, but little Freckles crawled up into his daddy's lap as usual and pleaded. "Daddy, please tell me again about Heaven. When can we go there? How much does it cost to go there? I will go and sell some papers so that we can get the money quickly. May I, Daddy?"

Thus came the questions, one after another. The father pressed his little boy to his heart as he began, "No, my son, you are too young to sell papers. You can help me later, but not now. If you will be a good boy and always be honest and do right, then you will someday be able to go to that

beautiful home, and you will not have to pay your fare."

The boy listened very attentively, and all the while other questions arose in his anxious little heart. His father always stressed the thought that only right living would give him a home in Heaven. The child was deeply impressed by what he heard.

One evening the father came home very, very tired. Not able to eat supper, he lay down on his hard bed and sighed.

"Don't you feel good, Daddy? I will rub your feet. I know they are tired," said Freckles as he tried to rub his father's aching feet. Then he lay down beside him and soon was sound asleep.

The man was very ill. The next day he told Freckles to call the neighbor. He was now almost too ill to speak. When the neighbor arrived, the father said, "I am worried about my little boy. If something should happen to me, would you please take care of him? He is a good boy. He will help you when he has a few more months on him. Please, will you do that for me?" But the neighbor made no promise, for she, too, was poor.

The sick man's fever rose rapidly. He pressed his little boy to his heart, and admonished him once more. "Dear Son, I may have to leave you, but God will always be near you. He will care for you if you will talk to Him often in prayer and always be honest. Never take anything that does not belong to you, Son. Someday you

and mother and I will meet in that beautiful home which I have told you about."

With these words he fell asleep. Before morning he became delirious, and four days later the world looked very dark to little Freckles. The house seemed dreadfully empty; but it was home, and he hoped to continue there. However, this was not to be, for shortly after he had suffered his greatest loss, he was put on the street with his few belongings. Freckles could think of only one thing, and that was to find a corner where he might sell newspapers. At last he located a small nook between two buildings. He packed his few things there, and then went to look for a newsboy. Finally, he spied one. He ran over and gathered from him some information regarding his future work. As soon as he could get some papers, he, too, stood at the street corner calling out, "Newspaper! Buy a newspaper, please."

The days were long and lonely. He hardly sold enough to supply himself with food.

One day a little dog came sniffing along. He looked starved and homeless. Freckles talked to him and even gave him some of the dry bread he had in his pocket. Soon the nervous creature sat down and leaned against his new friend's legs. This pleased the boy very much.

When evening came, Freckles started for the little spot he now called home. The dog followed and crawled in with him. The two became fast friends. They slept together and were seen together day after day. Freckles shared his meager meals with this his only friend, who helped to keep him warm at night.

One day, when Freckles was standing at his usual place and calling out his papers, a well-dressed lady dropped her purse as she stepped into her beautiful, shiny car and drove away. Freckles picked it up and looked into it. There he saw many shiny dollars. Would he take some?

"Oh, no," he said to himself. "They are not mine. I will run after the car. Perhaps I can catch up with it at the

stoplight at the end of the block."

Off he went, with his little dog right at his heels. He ran up to the car, waving the purse at the lady. "Oh, thank you!" she said, and tossed him a tip.

The lady was greatly pleased with the little newsboy's honesty. She felt that she ought to do something for him. After much meditation, she was impressed to adopt him if she could do so. She began procedures at once.

A number of weeks later, she drove up to the corner where stood the dirty, weary, freckle-faced newsboy. She called him to her car and asked to buy some papers. He had about a dozen under his arm. She bought them all. Freckles was happily surprised.

"Come, get into my car. I want to give you a ride. You have no papers to sell now," the lady suggested.

Freckles hesitated a bit as he looked at her beautiful clothes and lovely car. Then he said, "Thank you, Madam, but I am only a newsboy. I do not have nice clothes. Besides, I have a little partner. I call him Nip, and myself I call Tuck, because with us it is nip and tuck to make a living." He continued with a smile, "He goes with me wherever I go. He is the only friend I have."

"I am glad you have a friend. Let Nip come in too," she replied.

Freckles and Nip entered and settled down as the lady drove off. Soon they were out of the busy business district and were winding around in an attractive residential section. Freckles was wishing his father could be enjoying the ride with him, seeing the pretty houses and clean streets. Suddenly they were driving up a long hill. When they reached the top, they drove into a beautiful yard. As they neared the house, he saw a swing in a tree, and beside that tree stood a Shetland pony.

The car stopped, and the lady opened the door. "Step out, Son, and enjoy yourself! This is your home. That Shetland pony will be yours, and Nip may stay too," she said.

Freckles looked around nervously and excitedly; then taking hold of the lady's hand and looking into her face, he asked, "Is this Heaven? If it is, please take me to my father."

Tears filled her eyes as she answered the boy's question. "I will do my best to make this a little heaven for you until Jesus comes to take us all to His great Heaven. I hope that when we shall enter into that beautiful place, you will see your father and mother again. Jesus will be there too. Won't that be wonderful?"

"But— but, my father told me that Heaven was a beautiful place like this; and that— that— . Well, it is just like he told me. Please, tell me, is this Heaven?" he continued.

The kind woman took the lad into the house, washed him, and put new clothes on him. Then she said, "Freckles, my boy, you do not have to go back to selling papers; I am going to adopt you, and you will be my little boy."

"Oh! You talk just like my daddy did. How did you know that I prayed for a home? I was very lonesome after my father died," said Freckles.

"Shall I tell you how I knew?" she asked.

Freckles looked rather surprised while he listened to his new mother as she read: "*The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry*" (Psalm 34:15). "*The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles*" (Psalm 34:17). Then she added, "God heard your cries, and because you were honest, I was impressed to bring you home and adopt you as my boy."

Selected

**God's work, done
in God's way,
will never lack
God's supply.**

1 Samuel 15:32 Then said Samuel, Bring ye hither to me Agag the king of the Amalekites. And Agag came unto him delicately. And Agag said, Surely the bitterness of death is past.

33 And Samuel said, As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women. And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the LORD in Gilgal.

The Destructiveness of Self-Will



Brother C. H. Dickerson

Failing to Live in Complete Obedience

We read in 1 Samuel 10:1 that the Prophet Samuel anointed Saul to be the king over Israel. Later, God, through Samuel, commanded King Saul to go out and do a certain job. When Saul went to do that work, he did some things he should not have done, and he did not do some things he should have done. That displeased God; therefore, God dealt with him severely. I say that because I want you to realize that God has called every minister of the Gospel to go out and do a work. He commanded them to preach the Word and told them not to be afraid of their faces or of what they might do. However, today we find that many are doing as Saul did. They are doing some things they should not

do, and they are failing to do some things they should be doing.

People are making much commotion these days about things considered deadly. Some people want to outlaw guns because they say they are deadly. The government is trying to do away with illegal drugs because they realize that they are deadly. They are trying to stop certain diseases that are deadly through vaccinations and various means. Nonetheless, the deadliest problem we face today is self-will. This, my friend, is a sure cause of spiritual death. It has killed every person who has come to the age of accountability.

Paul said in Titus 2:11-12: "For the grace [or the Spirit] of God . . . hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that . . . we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this

present world." Romans 3:23 states, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Why? It is not because they do not know better, but because of their own deadly self-will. It brings spiritual death, and unless God resurrects them, they will die the second death. According to *Sole's English Symbol Dictionary*, to be self-willed is to be headstrong, stubborn, and persistent in carrying out one's own will.

As you consider the Scripture text, I want you to realize that Saul disobeyed God after He definitely told him what to do. First Samuel 15:3 reads, "Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass." Verse 9 says, "But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the

best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them: but every thing that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly."

Saul did some of what God, through the Prophet Samuel, told him to do, but he failed to do it all. As a result, God dealt with him in a severe way. Saul thought he was going to get by with his disobedience, but that was a false hope. He failed to do all that God commanded him to do, so God brought judgment upon him.

Many people have the idea that if they do most of what God says to do, that will be all right. On the contrary, my friend, if you do not do everything that God says, there is no use of your doing any of it, because you will be held accountable for *all* that God said to do. He said to live holy, and He told us exactly how to do it. If you fall short of living a holy life, when you stand before the judgment bar of God, you will not get by. People may pat you on the back and say, "You're doing a good job," but if you are not living in complete obedience, God will not let you get by. You must do *everything* that He says to do. God is precise, and He has drawn up a plan, and only that plan will work. That plan is holiness, and you cannot live holy unless you do everything that God tells you to do.

The Spirit of Self-Will

The commentators state that the name *Agag* comes from the root word *Hak*, which means a class of rulers, and it also represents the spirit of self-will. This spirit causes one to be persistent in carrying out his own will. Also, it causes one to be stubborn. This is a spirit that many people have today, and it causes them to feel they are always right. No matter what they do or how far off course they are, they twist things around and try to convince people that they are doing the right thing, though they are 100

percent wrong; however, God knows their motives, and He will deal with them.

The name *Agag* represents the spirit of self-will, self-assertion, and independence in the human heart, which gets right down to where each of us lives. When someone tells you to do something, do you feel stubbornness start to rise within you? Do you think, "Well, I am going to do it another way?" God can give you the power to suppress that and bring it under control. You do not have to give in to being stubborn. You can bring it under control. Stubbornness is in the flesh. The flesh does not want to be told what to do. Many people are as stubborn as an old mule, as the old saying goes, but they disguise it. Stubbornness can be imitated by the noblest and the highest qualities there are. I want you to realize this spirit makes people want to rule and to have their own way. It causes people to want to be independent and to refuse to be controlled. It also causes people to despise reproof.

My friend, stubbornness is wrong in its very nature. If you allow this spirit to work, it will cause you not to want God to tell you what to do. When the Lord first says, "You ought to get saved," most people go their own way. Why? The flesh does not want to be brought under control. I want you to realize that you cannot be independent and prosper. You need God every day, and you need your brothers and sisters in Christ and your family.

There is another side. You ought to stand for God's eternal Truth, even if you have to stand alone. You should not let down on Truth when others let down on it. You ought to stand for what is right.

The Proverb writer lets us know that stubbornness causes one to hate reproof, and one who hates reproof will die, spiritually speaking. Often the reason people disobey God and the reason this spirit is prominent is that people feel they are doing God a favor. Before Paul was converted, he felt that he was doing God a

favor when he was persecuting people who were not doing things his way. This is what happens today. Too many times people have things turned the wrong way, but if you look at this correctly, you will see that stubbornness is contrary to what God wants, and it is contrary to the very nature of God.

The Christian's Walk With God

God is humble, and His Son was humble: Christ humbled Himself to die on the Cross of Calvary. The Spirit that God puts within a person is a humble Spirit. He will cause you to die to your flesh, or to self, so that you can do God's will. Second Timothy 3:16 states, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable [if you will incorporate the Scriptures into your daily living, they will profit you] for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." We all need correction, just as children do, no matter how good they may be. You might have very good children, but no matter how good they are, sometimes you have to correct them. Likewise, no matter how close you live to God or how long you have been saved, sometimes God has to correct your course. The Word of God will correct your course.

We are living in a day when man can send satellites up in space that might take a year or so to reach their destination. Everything is precise to the minutest detail when they send up a satellite, but after it has been up there for a while, they may find that they need to correct its course a little, so they make an adjustment. That is just the way it is in the Christian's walk with God. You may get to the place where God has to get your attention. He might have to put you on a sick bed to get your attention. He may say, "You need to straighten up in this area of your life. You are off course." Paul said that "All scripture is given." Why? The Lord sent it for correction, not only to correct the course of the world but also to correct the course

of the Christian.

Paul also said that all Scripture is given for instruction in righteousness. We each must be instructed so that we can maintain the right spirit all the time. Something can easily happen to your spirit. If you get off course, what will God do? He will send someone to preach the Gospel to correct your spirit so that you can get back on course.

The very first thing you need to be used of God is to have your will broken. Many people would like God to use them in His work, but He does not use them. Sometimes man uses them, but that does not mean a thing. There is a big difference between God using a person and man using that individual. If God ever uses you, your will must be thoroughly broken.

I used to live on a farm, and we had horses. Sometimes a horse had to be broken so it could be useful on the farm. The first thing necessary to break a horse was to break its will. The same is true of children. To train children, you have to break their will; that is the hard part. If you break a child's will, he will do what you tell him to do, but until his will is broken, he will keep doing what he wants to do. The same is true with you and me as saints of God. One can come to Christ and get saved, but he still has a will, and until his will is broken, God will not use him. Your will has to be crucified.

Your Earthen Vessel

In Matthew 6:9-10, when the disciples asked Christ to teach them how to pray, Jesus said: "After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." Notice that He did not say *on* earth, but rather *in* earth; in other words, He was saying, "Thy will be done in this earthen vessel." If you are going to get hold of God, His will must be done in your earthen vessel. You may pray and pray,

but unless you are doing His will in your earthen vessel, God is not going to hear your prayer. What is His will? The same will that is done in Heaven must be done in your earthen vessel.

Jesus practiced this very thing. In Matthew, Chapter 26, as Jesus was facing the Cross, He was in the garden of Gethsemane, praying, "O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done." Jesus practiced what He taught, and this is exactly what God wants you to do.

Acts 20:28 says, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers [first a man of God is to heed the message himself; then after he takes heed, he feeds the flock over which the Holy Ghost has made him an overseer], to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." The only church that Jesus purchased was the Church of God. No matter what people say or how they stand against it, God's church is the only one that is going to Heaven. The only way you can get into it is through a born-again experience. Jesus is standing right at the door to test your spirit before you can go in, and if you do not have the right spirit, you will be rejected. He also lets us know that a crucifixion must take place.

In 1 Samuel, Chapter 17, Goliath challenged the whole army of Israel, and they were afraid. Finally, a young man named David came forward who was not afraid to stand against Goliath, so they took him to King Saul, who said, "You had better put on my armor." Saul put his armor on David, but David said, "I could not go with these. I have not proven them," so he took off the armor.

What happened next? David picked up his staff, went down to the brook and chose five smooth stones, and put them in his shepherd's bag; then he went to meet Goliath. David ran toward Goliath, took out a stone, slang it, and hit

Goliath right in the forehead, where there was no armor. It knocked Goliath out. Unfortunately, this is where many people stop. They pray, and they feel better. Just because the devil has backed off and let them alone, they stop there, but that is not enough. Next, David ran and stood on Goliath, took the giant's own sword, and cut off his head. David killed Goliath after he knocked him out. Friend, when you go to Christ, you must die out to your will completely and do God's will. Your will is deadly, spiritually speaking.

The devil will never leave you alone, no matter how long you have been saved. He will act like an opossum and play dead. When I was a boy, my father worked for twenty dollars a month. With four children twenty dollars a month was not much, so we did everything we could to earn money to help out. I set some traps, and one morning when I went out to check them, an opossum was in a trap. I thought, "Good! I'll get a little money out of the hide to put toward my school clothes."

I knew what opossums do, so I beat that animal till his head was almost raw. When I went home, I laid it in the barn because it was breakfast time. I thought, "After breakfast, I'll go out and skin it," but when I went out to the barn, the opossum was gone. It had played dead. This is what the devil will do. He will play dead and make you think you have the victory, but eventually, he will be back to tempt you. He will try to get you to say something out of line or to act in a way that will ruin the peace that God has given you, and you will find that self-will is still there. It is not enough to knock him out; he has to be killed. Self must be completely dead to this old world.

From the Power of Darkness to the Power of Light

In Romans 6:4 Paul wrote, "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as

Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Christ died to His will. When you die out to self, or to your will, Paul said you should walk in newness of life. You will be a new creature all the way through. Your thoughts will be new, your attitudes will be new, and where you go will be new. You will love the saints of God with all your heart, even if you have never seen them before. Why? Because you will have the same Spirit they have.

Paul said in verses 5-7: "For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth [or from this moment on] we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin." Sin is doing your will rather than God's will. When you quit doing your will, you will quit the sin business. If you do God's will, you will not sin. If you sin, it is due to doing your will and not God's will. You cannot do God's will and commit sin; it is absolutely impossible.

When he mentioned the "old man," he was not speaking of the devil; he was talking about your flesh, or self. When self is crucified, or put to death, spiritually speaking, you will no longer go after the things of this old world. The inner man is after the things of God when the outward man is crucified. You will go after the things that please God. You cannot please God and do what the flesh wants to do.

You may ask, "How will I know when I get saved and possess God's Spirit?" You will learn to take discipline. When the Word of God goes forth, you will receive instruction and apply it to your heart; in other words, you will obey it from the heart. You will not oppose the message or the message bearer. If you do, then you do not have an ounce of the Spirit of God in you. Anyone who rebels against God's

Word and God's man is twice dead and plucked up by the roots, and that individual is on the way to hell. If you oppose a man of God, you have the devil in you.

When God called Paul on the road to Damascus and struck him down, the Lord let him know that he had called him for a purpose. He called him to open the eyes of the blind and to preach the Word of God so that people would turn from the powers of darkness to the power of light. My friend, God has called you to open people's eyes by telling them about Christ; then when they get their eyes opened, you can help lead them to an experience with Christ. You cannot lead them to Christ until you get their eyes of understanding opened.

Denying Self

Hebrews 13:17 instructs, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief; for that is unprofitable for you." As the pastor preaches God's eternal Truth, you ought to submit yourself to him.

I would rather have fifty saints of God than to have five hundred people who oppose the Gospel. When I see what Jesus did with the twelve, I am encouraged. With merely twelve who are genuinely saved and doing as God directs, there is still an opportunity to get people saved by the tens and by the hundreds. Christ is just the same today.

We read in Ezekiel 3:17, "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me." God said to warn the people. One cannot make people do what is right; nevertheless, God said to warn them. When you get salvation, you will be pliable and do what God tells you to do. When God calls you to be His child, you will advance in God's school as you are capable of advancing.

The reason people are not used of God is that they have never settled down in their experience. Some have never even gotten saved. Proverbs 18:16 reads, "A man's gift maketh room for him." If you do not have a place in the body, it may be your own fault.

The real battle in salvation is in denying self. This was where King Saul lost the kingdom. Samuel said in 1 Samuel 15:23a, "For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry." If you allow stubbornness to be active in your life and do not do as God says, you might as well get a statue and worship it. Samuel said stubbornness is as idolatry. God does not want you to be stubborn. Samuel went on to say in verse 23b, "Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king."

Samuel said to Saul in verse 26, "I will not return with thee: for thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD hath rejected thee from being king over Israel." When you are saved, you are as a king reigning over sin. However, if you disobey God, your kingdom will be gone and sin will rule over you. Saul wanted Samuel to cover for him and hide his sin, but Samuel let Saul know that if God had rejected him, then he had rejected him also. My friend, that is the way it is today. Some people are trying to live on what they used to be, but if God rejects a man, God's people might as well reject him, because he will never help to build up the Kingdom of God.

A person's eternal destiny is won or lost as he learns to overcome self-will and receive the sweet grace to do God's will. Friend, each of us has to overcome self-will, and if we do, God will give us His sweet grace to do His will. Self-will is a trait of the natural man. It cannot be cut out; the old man must be destroyed. Self is the most important fellow to the natural man. Before one gets saved, who is he for? Self.

Often people say, "If I do not

take care of myself, nobody else will." What matters is that you do what God says and follow Him. You should not look back to see what others are doing. You must follow God and do what He says; then God will bless you, and you will be a pillar in the church. You will settle down and lift up Jesus Christ through your life. When God saves your soul, you will change completely. You are concerned about others, and the last fellow on your list is self.

The Bible lets you know that if you pray and care for others, God will take care of you. That is true of divine healing. If you are going to be healed, you have to call for the elders of the church. Sitting around and pouting will not cause them to come. You must call for them. You will not find a doctor in town who will come and call on you when he hears you are sick. You have to call him. After you call the elders, if you have prayed for others and confessed your faults (not somebody else's, but *your* faults), then the Lord will heal you. That is what He said He would do.

Be a Doer of the Word

Many people do not want to do things God's way, and as a result, they are not getting the help that God has for them. The Apostle Paul wrote in Colossians 3:5-10: "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection [in other words, unregulated feelings], evil concupiscence [or strong, abnormal desires], and covetousness [which is greed for gain], which is idolatry [if you are greedy for gain, in God's eyes that is idolatry]: For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: In the which ye also walked sometime, when ye lived in them.

"But now ye also put off all these; anger [excessive anger], wrath, malice, [Malice is active ill-will, or an attitude of getting even for what someone did to you. Some-

one who has malice is not even saved, according to the Word of God.] blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." In other words, you take off one and put on the other. You should not leave the house empty. If you do, the devil will come back and fill it, and you will be seven times worse than you were before. If you put off the old man and put on the new, you will have all new furniture in your house, so to speak. You will receive new knowledge after the image of Him who created you. Paul continued in verse 11, "Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all."

Paul testified that he had to crucify self, and that is the reason he could instruct others to do the same thing. In Galatians 2:20 he made this quite clear when he stated, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Paul taught this and practiced it. He did not just tell others to do this, but he showed them that it could be done. Jesus did not merely tell people what to do. He put the Word into practice to verify that it could be done when a person has God's Spirit dwelling within.

James wrote in James 1:22, "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." Many people can quote the Bible, but that does not make them saints of God. Some people teach their children Bible verses every week, but that does not make them saints of God. What makes people saints of God is their doing what the Word of God says to do. If you have the idea that hearing the Word of God is all that is necessary, you are deceiving yourself.

Many people fill church pews and some even fill pulpits who are homosexuals. They attend church all

the time, but regular church attendance does not make them saints of God. God's Word tells you that the reason people are homosexuals is that they did not retain God in their knowledge. They did not want to do what God told them to do, so He turned them over to do those things that are not convenient. It is not due to some genes that they have in them or because they were mistreated at home, but rather it is due to their disobedience.

Preachers can stand up in their pulpits and preach message after message on unity, but if they do not practice it, then it is meaningless. Others preach love, love, love, but if they do not show love, they do not have it, and they are deceiving themselves. We are living in a time when people know what the Word of God says, but they are not doing it. They preach unity and love, but they are a million miles from both of them. They are not doing what the Word tells them to do.

Surrender to God's Terms

Another great danger that Paul warned of in 2 Timothy, Chapter 3, was self-centeredness and self-satisfaction. When you get saved, you must surrender to God's terms. Trying to bring down the Bible standard is dangerous.

In Genesis 2:16-17 you can read that the Lord commanded Adam: "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Soon afterward, the Lord gave Adam a helpmeet. One day Satan spoke to Eve through a serpent and said in Genesis 3:1, "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?"

Eve answered in verses 2-3: "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die." The serpent replied, "Ye shall

not surely die" (verse 4). The devil is still speaking deceptively yet today. He may say to you, "Do you really believe what that preacher preaches?"

Eve built up a false hope. No doubt, she thought, "I will try it. It does not sound reasonable that I would die." In essence, the devil said, "You won't die! Go ahead and try it." She took a bite of that fruit and thought it was good, so she gave it to her husband. The Scripture lets us know that she did die. Although she kept living for many years and reared children, she died spiritually. She thought she would get by, but she did not.

Lot's wife thought she could take just one more look at Sodom, so she looked back even though God had instructed them not to look back. She just sneaked a little look, but God saw her and turned her into a pillar of salt as a memorial.

A picture of self-deception is found in Revelation 3:17, which reads, "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. . . ." They thought they had everything, but God said they had nothing.

Every Gospel message that God anoints has something in it for you. The reason some people do not get anything from the messages is that they do not pay attention. I want you to see that today is a pruning time. God wants each of us to produce fruit, my friend. When you produce fruit, He will prune you some more so that you can produce more fruit. You need to ask God to expose self in your life.

Serve God Acceptably

Hebrews 4:12 states, "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of

the heart." All people need to be delivered from self and from sin; however, they must be willing to see their conditions and call sin by its rightful name. We are living in days when people seem to be afraid to say the word *sin*. They will say, "Well, I made a mistake." Hardly anyone will say, "I've sinned." Do you know when you will be forgiven? You can only be forgiven when you confess your sins.

Playing church is useless. James 4:17 says, "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." If you know you ought to read the Bible more and you do not do it, it is sin. If you know you ought to pray more and you do not do it, it is sin. If you know you ought to be in the house of God but you have been goofing off somewhere else, it is sin. Often people do not want to confess their sins; therefore, they do not receive forgiveness. If you are going to serve the Lord, then you ought to attend the church services and serve Him with all your heart. If you are going to be the Church of God, you must live holy and be faithful to God. You should not be a pretender!

Proverbs 23:7 says, "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he." What have you allowed your mind to dwell upon? The devil tries to plant things in your mind that you should not think upon. You may be sitting in a church service and the devil will bring something to your mind that is not right. If you are a child of God, God will give you the power not to meditate on wrong thoughts.

Colossians 3:1-5 states: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection [or your love] on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead [not physically, but you are dead to sin], and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. Mortify [or destroy], therefore your members which are upon the earth; forni-

cation, uncleanness, inordinate affection [feelings that one does not have under control], evil concupiscence [or strong and abnormal desires], and covetousness, which is idolatry."

Covetousness is greed for gain. How can a person be greedy for gain? One may be greedy for money, for recognition, or for self-exaltation. Many want to lift themselves up. Their attitude is, "Look who I am; I want you to be sure to notice me." The Scripture has a name for that: they are greedy dogs, greedy for gain, greedy for exaltation, and greedy for praise. Well, friend, God never pays anyone twice. If you want praise from man, then you have your pay. When you desire to please God, you may appreciate the kind words people express to you, but that is not your objective. You simply want to work for God, and you want all the glory to go to God. The Christian does not want his payday from man, but he wants to get paid from God.

Hebrews 12:27-28 reads: "And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved [God has given us a standard that cannot be changed or moved], let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear."

Isaiah wrote in Isaiah 33:20, "Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation [no wars will be there], a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken." I praise God that I am in a tabernacle that the devil cannot tear down. He cannot remove a stake from it! You ought to praise God for that and stand up for Jesus. Church of God, we have something that no one else has. If you will be true to God, this is yours.

The devil has been trying to tear

down the Church of God ever since it was built. He has hated it from the beginning. Since the Day of Pentecost, ungodly people started killing the saints. Approximately sixty million died during the Dark Ages, and then Satan moved through

Protestantism to lead people away from the true things of God. Nevertheless, the church is still standing. She is still on the mountaintop, and she is still the light of the world. Christ is still saving souls. The church is still reaching out to the

world and showing the old ship of Zion. She is on her way to Heaven, and if you want to go, you need to get on board quickly.

(Cassette C-3871M)

[Guest Editorial—continued from page 2]
capable of reaching further down than you have fallen. In Isaiah 59:1 the Prophet Isaiah informs us that "the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear."

To become a Christian, one must first be convicted, or convinced, of sin working in his or her life. Conviction brings an awareness of sin and wrongful acts and the power that sin has over one's life. With this awareness comes a deep sense of guilt, sorrow, and remorse because one realizes that he or she has hurt God. The Holy Ghost works through the conscience and strives with an individual to lead that person to an experience of salvation. The Lord speaks through His Holy Word to bring souls to the place of recognizing their need of salvation. Conviction from God is truly a blessing, for without it man cannot see himself as he truly is.

It is so important for men and women to hear and to heed the warnings and the pleadings that God sends their way. One cannot be saved just anytime he or she chooses to do so. Souls can only come to God and be saved when God calls or invites them. Jesus said in John 6:44, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." The time to receive salvation is when God is working within your heart and mind. Failure to obey could cause Him to turn away and never draw you to Him again.

When godly sorrow is truly working in the heart of a sinner, it will bring forth repentance. Godly sorrow does not come about because a man or a woman gets caught

doing wrong. It is the result of a person realizing that he or she has sinned against God. This type of sorrow causes a man and a woman to stop the wrongdoing and turn wholeheartedly to God in genuine repentance, thus forsaking everything that grieves the heart of God. When confession is made to God and forgiveness is sought diligently, then a transformation work takes place in the heart.

A sinner is transformed into a new creature through faith in the shed blood of Christ. It does not come about by the cleansing of one's self or by tapering off some worldly habits. Salvation is a miraculous work done in the heart and performed only by the Savior. Ephesians 2:8-9 tells us: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."

Salvation cannot be obtained by one who is merely trying it out to see if he or she might like it. Also, this experience cannot be gained by anyone who is attempting to bargain with the Lord, such as telling Him,

"If you do this or that, I will get saved." A sinner must come to God unreservedly. Jeremiah 29:13 tells us, "And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." Halfheartedness will never move God toward you or grant you peace of soul and mind. Seeking God with all your heart requires you to come to the place of forsaking all your ways and thoughts and submitting your life fully to Him.

Becoming a Christian is not difficult; however, it requires giving up your ways, your ideas, your desires, and most of all, the sinful life. Failure to yield your life to Him will end in heartache and misery. To love one's self more than loving God is the greatest mistake anyone can ever make.

Jesus Christ is very much interested in you. Will you take advantage of the opportunity that He is affording you? If you allow Him to come into your heart, you will find peace and joy such as you have never known.

Selected

MONEY WILL BUY

A bed but not sleep.

Books but not brains.

Finery but not beauty.

A house but not a home.

Medicine but not health.

Luxuries but not culture.

Amusements but not happiness.

Religion but not salvation.

Romans 12:3 For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.



Christian Self-Esteem

Brother Calvin Foster

Measure Yourself by God's Standard

The word *esteem* means "to regard with respect; to have high regard." It is not pride, or having too high an opinion of oneself. An example of poor self-esteem is a person who feels like this: "Something is wrong with me. I don't belong here. I don't like myself. I don't have what it takes." God does not want you to feel that way. God does not want you to dislike yourself, to feel that you do not have what it takes to compare well to others, or to feel that you want to go somewhere and hide. You should not entertain those kinds of thoughts.

If you feel that you have nothing

to offer, then you will act as though you have nothing to offer. Every Christian has something to offer God. If you are so sure that you are going to fail, you probably will. The devil tells people, "Don't get saved, because you are going to fail." If you tell yourself, "I don't belong here" or "Something is wrong with me" or "I don't like myself," the chances are that you will fail. You should not listen to Satan.

The Bible warns of being proud, or having too high an opinion of yourself. Romans 12:3 says, "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith."

I want you to notice the part of this verse that warns one not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly. Thinking soberly will cause you to say to yourself, "I know I must do the will of God and please Him, because God is in charge of my life." You should think soberly because you belong to God. You may want to be an automotive mechanic, but God might have other plans for your life. You should not think that you can do anything you want to do and be anything you want to be, because God is in charge of your life.

Saint of God, you must not measure yourself by human standards. You are living a spiritual life. In 2 Corinthians 10:12 the Bible warns of comparing ourselves to one

another: "For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise." I must walk in the light and understanding that God has given me, and you have to walk in the light and understanding that He has given you. You are not my standard. God's Word is my standard. Someone may say, "Well, that brother or sister can do it and get away with it, so I can probably do it and get away with it too." No, you cannot! You are not to measure yourself by others; that is unwise.

Education and community programs encourage self-worth and self-respect. They encourage the young people to stay in school and instruct them to avoid teenage pregnancies, illegal drugs, gangs, and alcohol. They tell men and women who are incarcerated, "You are not trash." God does not consider any of us to be trash. Each of us is special. Community programs admonish people not to be used by others. They instruct people, "You need to be yourself and to love yourself; trust yourself and be all you can be. Look out for yourself, because if you don't, no one else will." All these things have merit, but God must be in the picture. God's Word tells you how you ought to think of yourself.

Having a Healthy Self-Esteem

Having a healthy self-esteem is not a false hope, but it is realistic if you think soberly and do as the Bible says. To have a healthy self-esteem is not to be self-confident. A person can have too much self-confidence and think, "I can be anything I want to be." Self-confidence says: "I deserve more than what I am getting. I don't need anyone else's help! I have no regrets and no fears." If you have a healthy self-esteem in the fear of God, you will say: "My life has a purpose. I belong here. I can love and be loved. I need others as much as they need me. I will seek

forgiveness if I have been wrong. I will not be proud, but I will humble myself. I can be anything that God wants me to be."

In Luke 16:15 Jesus said, "Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God." You should not highly esteem yourself. The first thing you must do to be Christ's disciple is deny yourself. The problem that many people have is that they are proud and their self-esteem is blown out of proportion. They do not want to humble themselves before God.

Some sources say that the way people think of themselves can sometimes be traced back to their parents. We know well that no child can escape the influences of the home. The home situation plays a great part in a child's life. Many parents out in the world do not want their children, and they neglect them. Many children grow up around alcoholism, drug addiction, physical abuse, and emotional abuse. Many children are from broken homes.

Have you ever seen the way some people mistreat their dogs? Some people kick them, throw things at them, and do not feed them regularly. Whenever someone goes around a dog that has suffered abuse, it will try to get out of the way. If you were to take that same dog and put it in a home with someone who loves it and give it time to adjust, that person can win that dog's love and devotion. So it is with people who have suffered abuse. We are living in a time when people have been abused, misused, and misunderstood.

Sometimes people who have been abused and misused come around the Church of God. When they get around people who love them, they do not understand. Pastors should reach out to them and love them as God loves them. They should let people know that they are serious about being true to their souls and being their friend. It may

take time for someone who has been abused to trust others.

The Old Testament lets us know that the sins of the parents can have negative consequences on the lives of their children. Exodus 20:5 states, "Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me." The sins of the parents will affect their children.

Hosea 4:6 reads, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children." I never want to forget God because I do not want to fail my children. I love to see children and young people singing for the Lord, playing instruments, and serving God.

God created you, and He knows that to be truly happy, you must learn to love, hate the devil, and die out to self. This may sound strange to you, but it is true. In Matthew 22:39 Jesus said, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." True happiness in the Lord comes when you learn to love yourself and yet die out to self, or to your own will. I do not want you to misunderstand. God does not tell you to hate your big ears or your crooked nose. He does not tell you to hate your complexion, your hair, or your bad memory. However, He does want you to hate that old stubborn, self-centeredness that is in your human nature and die out to that.

"Put Off the Old Man"

The Apostle Paul wrote about a man that God wants you to hate. It is the part of you that you must subdue when Christ comes into your heart and life. Paul, speaking of the time before his conversion, wrote in Romans 7:21-25: "I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the

law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin."

The man that you are to hate is the old wretched man who did everything the devil told him to do, that part of you that lacks self-control. Sin is stronger than any of us. You should not fool around with sin. It will destroy you. Remember, sin will take you further than you want to go. Paul said he could not help himself in Romans, Chapter 7, which was before his conversion. Prior to my conversion, I told myself that I was not going to go out and party. I was determined that I was not going to, but I did not have the power to stay home because of sin.

Again, Paul said in Romans 7:24-25: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." The man that God wants you to hate is the old man, or the old sinful man. In Colossians 3:9-10 the Apostle Paul spoke of putting off "the old man" and putting on "the new man." The new man is Christ Jesus.

In Luke 14:26 Jesus said, "If any man come to me, and hate not [or love less] his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." You should not love anyone more than you love God, and you should hate your way of living. You may say: "This is *my* life, so leave me alone preacher. I'm going to live my life the way I want to live it." I thank God that I gave my life to God. He gave His life for me, and His life is so much better than mine was. I do not want that old life any more. I want to keep the life of Christ.

Let us read what Jesus said in

John 12:24-25 concerning what will happen to you if you go your own way: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it [in other words, if you live your life the way you want to live it, you will lose it]; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal." If you give up your life and give your heart to Christ, then you will have eternal life.

The human standards of the world make people feel good about themselves. This is the way people look at things and the way they look at one another. They tell young women that they are beautiful, and they tell young men that they are handsome. They strive for wealth, prestige, education, great possessions, and power. They make people feel good about themselves, all the while they are believing lies, because true happiness cannot be found in any of those things. Proverbs 31:30 says, "Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised." All those things are temporary in life; they are fleeting. You should not concentrate on human standards. You need to abide by God's standard.

God wants you to have the right kind of self-esteem, or self-respect, and the right outlook in life. If you are a new convert, be encouraged. God wants to use you. You need to dedicate your life to God and obey Him so that you can grow in the things of God. You should not hang your head; lift up your head! Perhaps you did not like yourself before, but you should keep living for Christ, and you will love Christ more and more. One day you are going to look in the mirror and say, "Am I really the same person who was unsaved? I am a brand-new person! Look at the great change the Lord has made in my life!" You will do well if you keep growing. You can do as well as others have done. You just need to stay in the race.

God Looks Upon the Heart

Let us consider how the Lord looks at people and study His standard. The Lord sent Samuel to anoint someone to be the king, and in 1 Samuel 16:7 the Lord said to Samuel, "Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart."

Samuel was looking for someone who was great in stature. However, in essence, God told Samuel, "Don't look upon the outward man. I have refused the one you think I want." The Lord does not see as man sees. Man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks upon the heart.

First Samuel 16:10-12 states: "Again, Jesse made seven of his sons to pass before Samuel. And Samuel said unto Jesse, The LORD hath not chosen these. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all thy children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Send and fetch him: for we will not sit down till he come hither. And he sent, and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to. And the LORD said, Arise, anoint him: for this is he."

Of all Jesse's older sons, God chose the young lad who was out in the field keeping the sheep. God knew the kind of character and spirit David had. He did not fear the bear or the lion. He was a young man with courage in his heart. God does not want us to fear the world or Satan or what might happen. God will take us through one day at a time.

David went before the Philistine giant fearlessly. In 1 Samuel 17:26 David said, "What shall be done to the man that killeth this Philistine, and taketh away the reproach from Israel? for who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the

armies of the living God?"

When the giant Goliath saw young David, Goliath laughed at him. We are facing giants in this world today, but who is on our side? Paul wrote in Romans 8:31, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" David took a stone and put it in his sling and smote the Philistine. By the power of God, the stone sank into his forehead. Then David ran over and took the giant's sword and cut off his head.

Becoming a New Creature

God wants you to be victorious! Saint, it is His will that you "May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God" (Ephesians 3:18-19). Dear friend, if you do not know Christ, you are living beneath your privilege.

Second Corinthians 5:17 says, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." You can live a saved life. When you become a new creature, your thinking and your outlook on life will not be the same. God will give you a new identity, a new life, and a new way of thinking about yourself. I thank God for Jesus Christ!

If you have backslidden, you have listened to Satan and allowed him to talk you out of your salvation. You need to come back to Christ and build your house upon the Rock, Jesus Christ. You might have threatened to commit suicide or perhaps you hate yourself. You might have great possessions, but they cannot bring you any true happiness or peace. Maybe your self-esteem is low. Friend, God wants to lift you up. There is higher ground. He does not want you to walk around hanging your head. You can have a new way of thinking about yourself. Thanks be to God, you can have your sins forgiven. You should not let the devil torment you by bringing up your past life. When

you give your heart to God, old things pass away, and all things become new. Thank God!

Many people do not like themselves and think they cannot make it. May God help them. In Philippians 4:8 the Apostle Paul tells you how you ought to think. He said, "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

Friend, do you find yourself thinking about where you are going to party and have fun only to find that when the party is over, your fun is over; then you look for more fun? Are you searching for happiness, joy, and peace? I want you to know that real peace, happiness, and joy are found only in Jesus Christ. If you give your heart to Him, it will be the best thing that you have ever done. You will not want to trade it for anything.

Preparing to Meet God

Many Christians say: "I wish I had gotten saved a long time ago. It is a joy to have this treasure. Salvation is worth more than gold and silver." One day you are going to leave this old world, my dear friend, and you are going to stand before God. You need to prepare to meet God. Lift up your head.

Child of God, a Christian should have good self-esteem. You should not hang your head and talk about not wanting to live, not liking God, or being tired of going to church. You should not let the devil cause you to dwell on such thoughts. He wants to defeat you. The battle is not over. You do not have it made yet. Second Corinthians 5:10 tells us, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." You may turn down the Word of

God and the warning of Judgment Day, but you are going to face the Judgment. Every man and woman who has ever lived on the earth will be there. Even the sea will give up its dead on Judgment Day. Are you prepared to meet God?

I want to encourage you. The devil wants you to think that you can commit suicide and still make Heaven your home, but that is a lie! If you commit suicide, no matter how old you are and no matter what people say about you at your funeral, you are going to hell.

Having low self-esteem will cause you to have no hope in life, and you will not be able to see anything good about yourself. God works to lift you up, and the saints will love you and show you love. You should keep company with them. The saints of God love the souls of men. We love it when a person gets saved. We do not want anyone to die and go to hell. Friend, God does not want you to die and go to hell. You need to listen to God before it is too late. Hebrews 9:27 says, "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." Do not think you are going to escape it.

Some people blow their self-esteem out of proportion. They think they can be anything they want to be. No, you can be anything God wants you to be. In Philippians 4:13 Paul said, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

Saint, you need to have self-esteem with humility. You can do all things through Christ with respect for yourself, but with humility. We are living in a time when many people do not have respect for themselves. If they do not have respect for themselves, then they will not have respect for others. Remember, the Apostle Paul said, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." May God bless your soul. It is my prayer that you will be encouraged and enlightened.

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