

The Gospel Trumpeter

JUSTIFICATION SANCTIFICATION

UNITY & TRUTH

"So will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day." Eze. 34:12 Jer. 32:39

"But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished." Rev. 10:7 Mal. 2:13

SOUNDING FORTH THE SEVENTH AND LAST TRUMPET

Vol. 38 September 2008 No. 9



Church of God Tabernacle in Newark, Ohio

*"I was glad when they said unto me,
Let us go into the house of the Lord."*

Psalm 122:1

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

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

Brother Roger L. Decker Editor
Workers Too Numerous to Mention

THE CHURCH OF GOD BELIEVES IN:

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

**SOME SPIRITUAL FACTS
PERTAINING TO THE CHURCH**

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

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Vol. 38 September 2008 No. 9

Guest Editorial

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may
see your good works, and glorify your Father which is
in heaven."

Matthew 5:16

Let Your Light Shine

This world is filled with spiritual darkness, and Ephesians 2:2 lets us know that Satan is the "prince of the power of the air." He is striving to blind the minds of men and women to the Light and the love of God. Multitudes in our day and age do not know the right from the wrong. They grope onward in a lost condition, unaware of the love of God or how to live a life pleasing to Him. The light of the glorious Gospel needs to shine to show them the way of salvation and deliverance from the bondage of sin. We who are saved are in the world but not of it. Christ placed each of us here to be a light and an example of the reality found in salvation. Honest hearts that see the Gospel light shining in our lives will be drawn to Christ. In John 12:32 Jesus said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth [through the lives of the saints], will draw all men unto me."

It would be well for those of us who profess Christianity to examine ourselves to see if we are living lives that are pleasing to God. It is easy to profess to be a Christian and yet fail to truly live the way a Christian should live. The Lord wants our light to shine. Why? So that all can see Him through the lives that we live. We are to be witnesses to those around us of God's goodness, grace, and power. It is Christ dwelling on the inside that radiates out and makes the difference in the Christian's life. The

things we do and the way we conduct ourselves will have a great effect on those around us. Man cannot see our hearts, but he can see the deeds of our lives. If your heart is truly right with God, His goodness will show forth to the outside. Your life may be the only Bible that some people will ever see or read.

We are to be an example in word and deed (our talk and our walk). The words we speak and our actions must reflect godly character. Too often ones get careless and fail to be on guard as they ought to be. Some conversations and conduct are unbecoming to a Christian. Words and activities influence others; therefore, it is necessary to always live a Christlike example. Slang words must be eliminated from our vocabulary, because these words are only substitutes for words that actually take God's name or Christ's name in vain. You should avoid words that imply vulgarity or filthiness of any sort. We who profess godliness must lay aside everything that is hurtful to our Lord.

Our conduct is so very important. Worldly people are eager to ridicule us should we do something wrong. The places we go and the things we do should be done with Christ in mind. Again, too often carelessness overtakes individuals, exemplifying the wrong example to those looking on. God does not want His children to live in straitjackets, so

[continued on page 15]

*Proverbs 6:16 These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination [or a hated thing] unto him:
17 A proud look [a proud look comes from a proud heart], a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood,
18 An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief,
19 A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.*

A False Witness



Brother Roger L. Decker

A Serious Offense

Let me clarify that God hates all sin, but these sins in our Scripture text are sins that divide. These are sins that get into congregations and have to be battled continually. These sins split congregations and divide the best of friends. I am not talking about sins out in the world. Notice that the writer said in verse 19, ". . . he that soweth discord among brethren."

In verse 12 the wise man talked about "a naughty person." In verses 12-15 he was talking about the same naughty person, showing us that these sins are tightly woven to-

gether. Usually if someone is caught up in one of these sins, they are caught up in all of them. These sins divide and destroy the body of Christ. God has a special hatred for these transgressions. Again, God hates all sin. From the Book of Genesis to the Book of the Revelation, God dealt with sin. These are sins that get among the people of God and cause division and heartache.

Some people have had a special relationship with friends, and these sins have separated them and left them as bitter enemies, not speaking and not having anything to do with one another. At one time they were friends and confided in one another,

prayed for one another, and attended the house of God together. Now they shun one another, not worshiping in the same place, not going to revivals together as they once did. They do not go out to eat together, but they act as though they are enemies of one another.

Proverbs 16:28 says, "A froward man soweth strife: and a whisperer separateth chief friends." Proverbs 19:5 reads, "A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall not escape." Verse 9 says almost the same thing. It states, "A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall perish."

Exodus 20:16 says, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour." The Word of God cries out against a false witness that speaks lies. There were very severe penalties for bearing false witness in Bible times. In Athens, Greece, the false witness was levied a heavy fine. If a person was convicted three times, he lost all civil rights. In Rome, under a law that was brought forth by the twelve tribes, a false witness was hurled headlong from a cliff. In Egypt a false witness was punished by amputation of the nose and ears. This sin had severe consequences. Society would not accept a false witness; they dealt harshly with the offender.

Sometimes there are private lies that may involve serious consequences to individuals, as false witnesses in a court. Private lies can ruin a man. They may completely destroy him and his family. Proverbs 14:5 reads, "A faithful witness will not lie: but a false witness will utter lies." We read in Proverbs 21:28, "A false witness shall perish: but the man that heareth speaketh constantly." Another translation makes this verse a little plainer. It states, "No one believes a liar; but everyone respects the words of an honest man."

Proverbs 25:18 tells us, "A man that beareth false witness against his neighbour is a maul, and a sword, and a sharp arrow." What does this verse mean? When someone brings false accusations against a man, the hurt is like hitting him with a large hammer, stabbing him with a sword, or shooting him with a sharp arrow. I trust that you can see that this is a very serious offense.

The Shedding of Innocent Blood

We want to look at a few places where this sin took place and consider the outcome. Some individuals have been destroyed and completely ruined because of this sin. Once a lie is put forth, it makes no difference if one can prove it to be false; the fact that a charge is out there brings

questions to people's minds.

Whenever you read the words of King Ahab and Queen Jezebel, you can rest assured that there was deceit, lying, and mischief taking place. Ahab was the king of Israel, and his wife Jezebel was just as evil as he was. First Kings 21:1-15 reads: "And it came to pass after these things, that Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard, which was in Jezreel, hard by the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. [Naboth had a vineyard that was very close to the palace of King Ahab].

"And Ahab spake unto Naboth, saying, Give me thy vineyard, that I may have it for a garden of herbs, because it is near unto my house: and I will give thee for it a better vineyard than it; or, if it seem good to thee, I will give thee the worth of it in money [Ahab was willing to give Naboth a better vineyard or pay him whatever it was worth]. And Naboth said to Ahab, The LORD forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee.

"And Ahab came into his house heavy and displeased because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him: for he had said, I will not give thee the inheritance of my fathers. And he laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread [Ahab went to bed without eating because he was pouting; he was used to having his own way]. But Jezebel his wife came to him, and said unto him, Why is thy spirit so sad, that thou eatest no bread?

"And he said unto her, Because I spake unto Naboth the Jezreelite, and said unto him, Give me thy vineyard for money; or else, if it please thee, I will give thee another vineyard for it: and he answered, I will not give thee my vineyard. And Jezebel his wife said unto him, Dost thou now govern the kingdom of Israel [look at the pride that Jezebel had]? arise, and eat bread, and let thine heart be merry: I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.

"So she wrote letters in Ahab's

name, and sealed them with his seal, and sent the letters unto the elders and to the nobles that were in his city, dwelling with Naboth [look at all these things coming together: the lying, the wicked imaginations, and the pride].

"And she wrote in the letters, saying, Proclaim a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people: And set two men, sons of Belial, before him, to bear witness against him, saying, Thou didst blaspheme God and the king. And then carry him out, and stone him, that he may die. And the men of his city, even the elders and the nobles who were the inhabitants in his city, did as Jezebel had sent unto them, and as it was written in the letters which she had sent unto them. They proclaimed a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people.

"And there came in two men, children of Belial, and sat before him: and the men of Belial witnessed against him, even against Naboth, in the presence of the people, saying, Naboth did blaspheme God and the king. Then they carried him forth out of the city, and stoned him with stones, that he died [the shedding of innocent blood]. Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, Naboth is stoned, and is dead. And it came to pass, when Jezebel heard that Naboth was stoned, and was dead, that Jezebel said to Ahab, Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give thee for money: for Naboth is not alive, but dead."

God Sees All

First Kings 21:25 says, "But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the LORD, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up." Jezebel kept Ahab stirred to do evil. Naboth was owner of a vineyard in the Jezreel valley, which was adjacent to the country palace of King Ahab, and Ahab desired the property for an herb garden. Naboth refused to sell the vineyard to King Ahab on the

grounds that the property was a family inheritance. That is not unusual. Property was often passed down as a family inheritance. Naboth was a common man, and he was a child of God. No doubt, he did not have much, but what he had he wanted to pass down to his children. Naboth was a man of good character. Jezebel had no regard for Israel's laws, but she plotted Naboth's judicial murder on the charge that he blasphemed God and the king. Naboth's murder evoked God's judgment on Ahab and his family.

Jezebel had quite a plan. Her imagination went to work, and she was swift to run to evil. She wrote letters in Ahab's name, sealed them with his seal, and sent them to the elders and the nobles in the city. She sent it to the men with whom Naboth used to mingle. "Proclaim a fast, and set Naboth on high." That meant they were to put Naboth in a place of honor in front of the people. Across from him sat the false witnesses, sons of Belial, who claimed that Naboth had blasphemed God and the king. Then they took him out and stoned him until he died. When the elders received those letters, signed with the king's name and sealed with his seal, they had no choice but to obey. They did that which was written in the letters.

The word *Belial* means "worthless, useless, and wicked." That is what those two witnesses were. These are the type of men that the devil uses as false witnesses to speak lies. One of the ancients said that spectacle was of a just man suffering shameful wrongs with dignity and patience. What a shock that must have been to Naboth! They set him on high, as one being honored, and then took him away and stoned him. What a shock! Because of Naboth's faithfulness to God and God's Law, he was judicially put to death by the representative of God, the authority appointed to execute the Law.

Ahab was a spoiled king who was told no and then went to bed

and pouted. After he had refused to eat, his useless wife came on the scene and devised a wicked plan against a man of integrity and honor. Naboth's honor was stripped away by liars who gave a false testimony. The punishment for blaspheming God and the king was death, which they carried out immediately. Jezebel knew exactly how to take Naboth out of this world and make the vineyard free for her husband Ahab to possess. When Jezebel received word that Naboth was dead, she told Ahab, and he arose to take possession of the property. God had seen all of the wickedness. He saw the entire transaction take place, so He stirred up the Prophet Elijah to pronounce judgment on the household of Ahab.

God Will Bring Judgment Upon the False Witness

God has the record of the countless souls that have been destroyed by false witnesses who spoke lies. They did not actually witness it themselves, but they went by what someone else said. This was right out in the open. Jezebel used her husband's authority and got some men who were worthless, useless, and wicked to witness against a just man. That is just the kind of people that get involved in these things. Jezebel knew that it would require at least two witnesses. Those who knew all of that was a lie could not do anything but watch him be taken down as an animal.

Many reputations that have been built up over years have been destroyed in a moment's time. That is wrong! Often when it starts, there is no let up of lies spoken as truth. Many souls are caught up in the sin of being false witnesses. God hates. God despises this sin!

The life of an innocent man was snuffed out by liars. God was not through, though. He visited this sin, and the household of Ahab suffered His vengeance. Jezebel, Ahab, and their family posterity were destroyed. God will visit that sin yet

today, maybe not at the moment it takes place; it may not be for ten or fifteen years afterward, but God will visit it in His own time. Calamity is coming for those who get caught up in these things. This sin will grasp every soul that it can engulf, and then there is shock and disbelief when God pronounces judgment on it.

Again, what do these sins do? They separate and divide, and they will not allow reconciliation. Individuals can ask for forgiveness and ask the church for forgiveness, but these people still hold them. Why? Those individuals might not have done it the way they wanted them to do it. These sins are against restoration and reconciliation, and God will visit them in His time. These sins are so easy to get caught up in. They are communication sins: they involve the mouth, they involve what you listen to, they involve your feet, and they involve your hands. When individuals try to work things out and get back in fellowship, these false witnesses work hard to counteract their efforts. Naboth went from a place of honor to being stoned to death because of the testimony of false witnesses. God visited the sin of Ahab and his household because they lied against an innocent man.

The First Christian Martyr

In the New Testament you can read about some false witnesses that rose up, but God used the situation to preach the Gospel. Acts, Chapter 6, lets us know that Stephen was one who was chosen to serve tables. He had a very short life, but what he accomplished in that short life! Verses 8-15 read: "And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people [the wonders and the miracles being performed stirred the Orthodox Jews of that day]. Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called the synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of

Asia, disputing with Stephen.

"And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake. [They had to turn to another way to handle the situation. Why? Every time they brought up their own wisdom, the Lord gave Stephen the wisdom to deal with those Christ rejecters. Every time they brought up their questions, he answered them. He was full of faith and wisdom. He was full of the Holy Spirit and anointed of God.]

"Then they suborned men, which said [they incited some men and stirred them up], We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God. And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon him, and caught him, and brought him to the council, And set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law [they had Jesus charged with blasphemous words against Caesar]:

"For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us. And all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him [notice how the presence of God was with Stephen], saw his face as it had been the face of an angel." As Stephen stood before the council, they were all stirred and grim looking and ready to rip him apart, but his face was as the face of an angel. God was with Stephen in that hour. Dear one, if you will be faithful to God, He will be faithful to you.

None could withstand Stephen's arguments, so the Jews resorted to force and arrested him. Stephen's career was very short. Although he did not have a long life, he was the first to see that Christianity was not just a privilege of the Jews, but it was God's offer of mercy to the entire world. I repeat, verse 11 says, "Then they suborned men." In other words, they had men incite the crowd. Verse 13 tells us they set up false witnesses.

Eventually they took Stephen before the Sanhedrin, and that is where God wanted him. There he preached Jesus Christ, and he became the first martyr of the church. Although his life was cut short, God used his preaching to set the record straight concerning the Jews. God used this opportunity to anoint Stephen, and He gave him victory over the crowd. Also, God used him to bring in another Apostle. Look at how God turned that situation around. The Jews sought to eliminate Stephen, but their actions brought in another named Saul, whom they later called Paul. The replacement that was brought in wrote fourteen Books of the New Testament.

Stephen preached Christ to the Jews. He went all the way back before Moses and came up through to Christ. He called them stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart; that was exactly what they were. They needed new hearts.

Judas' Testimony

Again, we see these sins running together: the pride of the Jewish nation, false witnesses speaking lies, the shedding of innocent blood, hearts that devised wicked imaginations, and feet that were swift in running to mischief. All these sins were incorporated in that chapter. These sins were present when the antediluvian world was destroyed. When God destroyed the world in Noah's day, it was not fit for saving.

Then there was Jesus, our Lord and Savior and our example. Judas was a false witness. The Jews wanted him above anyone else. They wanted a disciple, one who had first-hand knowledge of the activities and the whereabouts of Jesus, to be on their side. This thing went to court and the Jews wanted to present Judas, but he gave first-hand testimony to the chief priests and the elders. Let us read this testimony that Judas gave before he left this world, clearing Jesus of all charges. God intervened in this, but before

He intervened, Judas gave a testimony to Jesus' accusers.

Matthew 27:1-5 states: "When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death: And when they had bound him, they led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor. Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself." The chief priests lost their key witness, but before that witness left this world and went into eternity, he gave testimony that he had betrayed the innocent.

In Matthew 26:59-60 we read: "Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death; But found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. At the last came two false witnesses." They came to proclaim that He had blasphemed Caesar.

In this trial the Jews could not sentence Jesus to death. They had to get Rome involved, and the only way to get Rome involved was to say that He said something against Caesar, and that would take it to a Roman court. Once that happened, they could not make the final decision; Pilate would do that. All the Jews could do was heckle Pilate and holler in the midst, "Crucify Him, crucify Him!" but they could not sentence Him. However, they could put pressure on Pilate, who was a compromiser. Also, Pilate wanted to try to do something to get back in favor with the Jews. He feared the people, and they kept hounding him to crucify Jesus and release to them Barabbas, who was a murderer.

When I speak of crucifying Jesus and of Judas betraying Him, let us

talk about how people betray Him and crucify Him afresh today. Oh, they do not do it literally, but they do it in a spiritual sense. They put Jesus back on the Cross and crucify the Son of God afresh daily.

Heed the Warning

The testimony of false witnesses is cruel. It is cruel for an innocent man to stand as Naboth did, as Stephen did, and as Jesus did, as others listen to men pour out lies and charge that person with things that he knows nothing about. Psalm 27:12 says, "Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies: for false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty." False witnesses are cruel. When false witnesses get on the trail of someone, they are cruel in their talk, and they are harsh, mean, and revengeful. God has the record of how many souls have been destroyed by people swearing to something false, thereby ruining men's

reputations and the work of God that they have done. False witnesses have destroyed their influences and have wrecked lives.

We find that these sins are used by members that God wants to use for His kingdom: the mouth, the feet, the heart, the eyes, and the hands. These are members of the body that we use to communicate with one another. I repeat, these are sins of communication. When the enemy gets control, then these members that could be used to build up the Kingdom of God are used to do a destructive work—destroying, blaspheming, slandering, lying; then the innocent end up losing their souls.

I am bringing this message to warn you to stay away from these things. They are like a spider's web: once you get stuck, you will get drawn in to other sins that go with it. The next thing you know, you will end up lying but too proud to repent. Innocent people can lose out with God because of your actions.

May God help the false witness!

I trust that God will use this message as a warning to help you to be careful. You need to be careful of what you listen to and of what you repeat, no matter who says it. Do not accept it as being true just because someone is a good friend and you have known that person for a long time. Souls have been lost and division has come because of such. In everyday living you will be faced with these things. By the grace of God, you must stay away from these sins. If you get entangled in them, you will come under the wrath of God. Proverbs 6:15 states, "Therefore shall his calamity come suddenly; suddenly shall he be broken without remedy." When calamity comes upon one involved in these sins mentioned in Proverbs, Chapter 6, God's Word lets us know there will be no remedy.

(Compact Disc TR-257E)

Have you ever heard of the famous "Tate Family" that belongs to every church?

There is old man Dick Tate, who wants to run everything in the church. Uncle Ro Tate tries to change everything. Sister Agi Tate stirs up trouble whenever possible. Her brother, Irri Tate, helps her do so. Whenever new projects are suggested, Brother Hesi Tate and Sister Vegi Tate pour cold water on proposals.

Then there is Sister Imi Tate who tries to have the church mimic everybody else. When the church budget is announced, everybody tends to quake if Brother Devas Tate stands up in the meeting. Brother Poten Tate wants to be a big shot.

But not all members of the family are bad, for Brother Facili Tate is quite helpful. A delightful member of the family is Miss Felici Tate. And the pastor is always delighted by Brother Cogi Tate and his twin brother Medi Tate.

Matthew 23:34 Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city:

35 That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto

the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.

36 Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation.

37 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy chil-

dren together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!

38 Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.

39 For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

The Serious Threat of Your House Becoming Desolate



Brother Esau Brooks

What Kind of Preparations Are You Making for Eternity?

We are living in a time in which compromise seems to be the rule of the day. Many people seem to be falling victims of various religious spirits. Everyone is looking upon himself as being right and as being ready for Heaven, and yet they are so ineffective and so unable to meet the demands. Christian friend, you were saved to do a work for God. Before we get to Heaven, there is a particular place that we have to reach in God. Salvation is not an

end, but it is the means to achieve the end. Many people think that as long as they are saved and the Lord is keeping them from sin, that is all they have to worry about. I wonder if they really have an experience of salvation.

The great Apostle Paul, in his writings to the church at Corinth, told them that the love of Christ constrains us. It constrains us, motivates us, and moves on us. I cannot see how the Christian can look at our generation today and not become concerned. We should be concerned about the future of our

youth and the future of God's great work. You may say, "Don't worry about that. The Lord will provide." There were instances in the Old Testament when God did not choose to provide.

In the ministry of the Prophet Jeremiah, he warned those people concerning the righteous judgments of God that were to befall them if they continued in their rebellion and their rejection of the will of God. They disregarded his warning and went on their way, no doubt holding to the idea that they were Abraham's children, and thus thinking

they had nothing to worry about. However, the time came when God delivered the land into the hands of their enemies.

In the Book of Nehemiah, when Nehemiah was told about the condition of the city of Jerusalem, he wept and mourned because Jerusalem was lying in ruin. Someone may say, "Don't you remember that Jesus said the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church?" No, I have not forgotten that, but what I do remember is that people have to be in the church in order for the gates of hell not to prevail against them.

James found it necessary in his writings to tell the people to be doers of the Word and not hearers only, deceiving themselves. He also said if a man seems to be religious and does not bridle his tongue, that man's religion is vain, and he deceives his own heart. Furthermore, he said that pure religion and undefiled before God is to visit the fatherless in their afflictions and to keep one's self unspotted from the world. That is a great need!

While we can rejoice in the good things of God, we must not lose sight of God's great plan for His people. We must keep before us the great objective that God has for us, but we must also keep in mind the objective Satan has for us. Satan has a plan for us too, you know. His plan is to keep us out of Heaven, while it is God's plan to get us into Heaven. Just as it takes preparation to make Heaven your home, it is going to take preparation to make hell your home. Many people fail to realize that one can prepare himself to be destroyed the same as he can prepare himself for Heaven. Who is going to hell? The person who prepares for it. In Matthew 25:41 Jesus said, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Hell is a prepared place, just as Heaven is.

You do not want to use the time of your life to prepare yourself for destruction. That tragedy happened to many people of the past. In reviewing what took place in others,

may their lives serve as an incentive to provoke you to greater diligence in the great things of God so that you may fulfill the great purpose of Almighty God.

I want to remind you of what Paul said when he came to the end of his life's journey. He stated in 2 Timothy 4:7, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." Paul did not just fight a fight, but he fought a good fight. He concluded in the previous verse, "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand."

Satisfying the Lusts of the Flesh

Our text of Scripture is very solemnizing. We are living in a time when many people seemingly like to talk about the Truth but do not want to obey it. When someone preaches about the church and its glories, there are many amens and shouts. When someone preaches about the love of God and the great mercies of God, people are smiling and rejoicing. However, when someone preaches where people are living and in need of practical Christian principles of living, many people pull up the blanket, turn off the lights, and go to bed, so to speak.

I am constrained to bring to your attention the serious threat of allowing your house to become desolate. That is what Jesus was emphasizing concerning the people in our Scripture text. Note His heart-broken plea uttered in verse 37 before this solemnizing fact was introduced. Jesus cried as if His heart would break. What was so peculiar about Jerusalem? Back in that time, it stood to represent the people of God and the true worship of Jehovah God. After all, it was there that the temple of God was located, and it was there that the ark of God was dwelling. Surprisingly and disappointingly, the people failed to live up to their God-given privileges, very much as they do in our day. It seems as if history is repeating itself. As I have gotten

into the Word of God and studied, I have come to see that when people can least afford to be careless and indifferent, that is when they become more indifferent and more careless.

Consider the antediluvian age. Right up until the very destruction of the world, the people reveled in sin until the flood came and took them all away. Jesus said they "knew not." They did not even believe that a flood was coming. Why did they not know that a flood was coming? They had a preacher, and he was not just any kind of preacher. Noah was a man who knew God. He walked with God. He lived for God and with God. In spite of his closeness to God and his experience with God, he stood before that generation as if he was one talking out of his mind. The people were too preoccupied with having fun and too carried away by the revelry of sin.

Genesis, Chapter 6, informs us that as men began to multiply upon the face of the earth, they got their eyes entirely off God and His requirements. They saw the daughters of men and began to take wives. They decided on a course of perversion and of totally satisfying the lusts of the flesh. Why did they drift to such an extent from God and go down so deep in corruption that God said that every imagination of the thoughts of their hearts was evil continually?

Today we are fast coming to that. Nearly everywhere you look, evil is flashed or thrown before our eyes. Almost everything you hear out in the world has a suggestion of evil. You can hardly turn on a radio and listen to good Gospel songs without hearing something pointing toward evil. Many religious young people have gone all out for hard rock.

My friend, we are living in a serious time. We are posed with the same dangers that the people in Noah's day were posed with. We are exposed to the same serious threats that the people in Jesus' day were

confronted with. In verse 37 of our Scripture text Jesus said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem. . . ." He could have said, "O My fellow travelers to eternity, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them which are sent unto thee . . ." The prophets were sent for the express purpose of helping the people, but what was their reaction? They killed them. They did not want to be disturbed, molested, or troubled.

Anymore people expect something that will entertain them when they attend a church service. When God begins to open their eyes and causes them to think soberly about their own souls, they are about ready to kill the preacher! With very few exceptions, we are part of a generation that does not care much about preachers who preach the Truth to them. By their actions, they are saying, "You can preach around us, over us, or under us, but don't preach *to* us. We're not inclined to hear that."

Are You Pursuing the Wrong Course of Action?

In our Scripture text Jesus' words were not directed to heathenistic or paganistic people, but they were directed to religious people. He was characterizing them as those who stoned and killed the prophets that were sent to help them. Though the Jewish people had done that in the past, in essence, Jesus was saying, "I still would have often gathered your children together, as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, but you would not let Me."

What kept people in that frame of mind? Allow me to draw a contrast. If that was not right then, how can it be right now? If this is not right now, how could it have been right back then? They are so diverse in quality. The surprising thing about it is that with clearer understanding and greater knowledge, it does not seem to be drawing people any nearer to God. It does not seem to make people any more effective spiritually than the people of yester-

years who were so limited in knowledge and understanding.

Jesus said in verse 37, "How often I would have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" Today everyone seems to have taken his own way. Religion has become much like the cereals on your supermarket shelves: you can find anything you want to suit your fancy. If one place does not suit you, you can go down the road and find one that does suit you, one that does not disturb you, one that allows you to feel comfortable in your sinful condition. Friend, there is going to be an awakening one of these days! God is going to summon each of us to stand before His presence and give an account of ourselves to Him. What will your end be then?

I suppose that some people today do not even know what Jesus was talking about in verse 37 of our Scripture text, because about the only place they see chickens now is in the meat department of the supermarket. I can remember the time when I saw chickens running around in people's yards, and when they had little chicks, they had to set the hen. I can remember how a hen with her brood of chicks would run out in the yard, and if some kind of threat appeared, she would sit low, and all the chicks would run under her wings. That was what Jesus was talking about.

People are so spoiled any more that they are using dial-a-prayer. Instead of getting down on their knees and getting hold of God, they dial a certain number for prayer. I do not think it is going to be long before people watch someone preaching on giant screens to give them a few Scriptures to pacify their deadened consciences. We can see movement in that direction. People are saying, "Well, we don't believe in the old way anymore. We have learned better." While people are boasting about the churches they have and the numbers of members they have on record, children are

falling victims to AIDS, drugs, alcoholism, and satanic cults all over the land. People need to be awakened. As a whole, we are pursuing the wrong course of action.

In What Condition Is Your Spiritual House?

In our Scripture text in verse 38, Jesus said, "Behold." He wanted the people's attention to be called to what was taking place. This particular message can be regarded as one of the last messages that Jesus preached before He went to the Cross. What makes this message stand out is that our Lord was uttering some of the most severe reproofs and rebukes of His entire ministry to the leading people of His day.

In Matthew 23:25-27 Jesus said: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness."

Jesus was coming down to the end of His ministry, and He was constrained to bring the people to a realization of what was going to happen to them because of their rejection of His goodness and mercy. It has been the plan of God to deal with people first in mercy, and then if they do not let His mercy bring them to the place of repentance, His judgment will fall. Jesus was revealing His anger, His disapproval, and His disappointment of the deceptive, religious practices of that day.

I wonder, if Jesus were here in the flesh today, would He be constrained to teach us of the love of God or would He be disposed, as He was in Matthew, Chapter 23, to call our attention to the practices that people are becoming more and more

tolerant of? It is time to seriously consider this. We have only one chance to go through this life. If you miss it on this one move, you will never get another chance to make amends.

Some people are advocating second, third, and fourth chances, but that is not based on sound biblical teaching; it is based on misconstrued Scriptures. It is time for people to get closer to God. Many people are sacrificing the future generation on the altar of sinful pleasures.

In verse 37 of our Scripture text Jesus made this plea: "How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" Look at the damage that was done. Jesus said in verse 38, "Behold your house is left unto you desolate." We are living in a day when many are watching how to get by in this life and how to hold a certain appearance, but they are failing to take into consideration the condition of their spiritual houses.

Jesus was not speaking of a building made of brick and mortar. He was speaking of the house in which the soul of man is living, the very same one that Hezekiah was told to set in order.

Set Your House in Order

Hezekiah had lived close to God. He had done marvelous work for God, but he was about to step into God's presence, and the Lord wanted Hezekiah to know that he had some things yet out of order. Therefore, the Prophet Isaiah was commissioned to go to Hezekiah with this message: "Thus saith the Lord, Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live" (Isaiah 38:1b).

Things have to be set in order in your life. Heaven is a place of order. It is not a free for all. No one is going to be allowed there whose life is not set in order. Friend, you will not have a chance to do that in the grave. You must set your life in

order in this life.

In Romans 1:21-24 the writer stated: "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. [When God reveals Himself to you, it is for you to let it affect you favorably toward Him. When those heathen people knew God through His revelation, they failed to glorify Him as God, and they were not thankful. Also, they became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish hearts were darkened.] Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up [or turned them over] to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves."

We are on the verge of God giving people up today. In Luke 17:26 Jesus said, "And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of [the coming of] the Son of man." After Noah completed his job, God invited him into the ark. After Noah, his family, and the animals entered the ark, God came down and shut the door, without a drop of rain falling from heaven, without a dark cloud in the sky. After God shut the door, no one else could enter the ark, no matter how much they might have called on God. Someone may ask, "Are you inferring that we might face a similar situation?" I am persuaded that we are about to face it.

Many times I have questioned, "What is it going to take to get people to move?" Many people know down deep in their hearts that they have conditions that they need to give attention to, but they postpone it. They fail to realize that at any time they could drop out of this time world and end up on the shores of eternity. They are aware of the uncertainty of life and the cer-

tainty of destruction for sin, yet they are inclined to ignore it.

God Is Calling for Closer Living for Him

Many people are failing to take seriously what is being revealed in the Word of God. Romans 1:24-25 states: "Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen." What makes this so significant is that we are seeing the very same thing happen today. Look at the majority in our generation. What is their particular aim in living? It is to make a lie of the truth.

Let me give you one instance. The Psalmist David said in Psalm 133:1, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" Many are turning around and saying, "No, it is better to live separate, or divided, and have nothing to do with one another." This is the picture that people are presenting in the religious world today. Many times people on the street ask: "Why are there so many different religions in the world? Why is it that religious people are unable to get along among themselves?" What is wrong? Everyone claims to be saved and going to Heaven. What is their idea about Heaven? Do they think it is going to be a place that is partitioned off for this group and that group? That is not the way Heaven is going to be! The Kingdom of God is not that way now, and it will not be so in Heaven.

In Paul's writings to the brethren at Ephesus, in Ephesians 2:14 he said Christ "hath broken down the middle wall of partition" that separated us, and He has brought us together. How did He do it? He quickened us and raised us up and made us sit together in heavenly places. That is the way He made it in the beginning, and that is the way

it must remain until the end.

People can carry on as much as they want, but if they do not come in line with the Word of God, they are going to be disappointed. Dear heart, I am persuaded that the same devil that brought about the corruption in the apostolic time is the same devil that is bringing about the corruption that is going on today. You have never heard the likes of things today that are being tolerated in religious circles, and the corruption is widespread. I praise God for the knowledge of the Truth that He has given me. Despite these things, thank God, we can still live for God and shine for Him. God is calling for closer living for Him from people today. The quicker you come to that realization and do it, the better it will be for you.

A Recompense of Wickedness

Romans 1:26 tells us, "For this cause God gave them up to vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature." We have come to the time now when people are ordaining homosexuals in religious circles, professing to carry on the ministry of Almighty God. How far down are they planning to drag this thing? That is a curse, and it is a recompense of wickedness. You may say, "Oh, but homosexual people were born that way." No! They became perverted after they were born, and God's Word tells us that such a condition is sure evidence of a desertion on the part of God, such as Jesus stated in the language of our Scripture in verse 38 when He said, "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate."

When God withholds His mercies, anything is liable to happen, and anything could develop and be tolerated. Romans 1:24 states that God first gave them up to uncleanness, and then verse 26 says He gave them up to their vile affections. In verse 28 we read, "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave

them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient."

God gave them up to see if that would bring some kind of concern in their hearts. They plunged deeper into wickedness, so He gave them up further, and they continued to plunge deeper in wickedness. He eventually gave them over to a reprobate mind. What kind of mind is that? It is a mind that takes pleasure in wickedness and is under a strong delusion. Such a person would rather believe a lie than believe the Truth.

God is calling upon you today the same as He called upon Hezekiah in his day, to set your house in order. You only have a limited time to do this before something drastic will take place. Notice that in verse 39 of our Scripture text Jesus said, "For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." If your house is desolate and is being given up, what, then, is going to be left to bring you to the place where you will be able to say, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord"?

Someone may ask, "Do you suppose that was meant only for those people back then?" The fact remains that it is a part of God's Word, and it is the message of the Gospel. You need to regard it as a warning. By the grace of God, you must guard against such conditions, lest you be overtaken. This is a serious call. It is not your friend's house that Jesus is speaking about; it is not your neighbor's house that He is asking you to look after, but your own house. He wants you to be concerned about your own condition before Him.

Jesus ministered to those people all His life. He warned them and pointed out the dangers of the rejection of God's Word. Jesus told them in John 10:10, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly," but it was to no avail. They refused to give

heed, so He is calling on them to behold the damage that was done.

You see, friend, you cannot reject God and the things of God without suffering the consequences for doing so. Often people come to revival meeting and hear the Gospel, and then they think they can just pick up and walk out and nothing will happen. They fail to realize that something is happening. A chain of reaction is being produced, and if something is not done to stop that, sooner or later, they will awaken and find that they have been destroyed. Look at your house. This call is to behold the damage that rejecting God is bringing about in your life. Surely you can see it, because conditions have never been as they are today.

God's Spirit Will Not Always Strive With Man

Too many people are either blind or professing to be blind to this condition of their house being left desolate. If they are not awakened early enough, they are going to come to the understanding that their house has been deserted. Then the harm will have already been done. However, it might not appear as if it has been done. Oh, the sadness of this condition! Its awfulness cannot be put into words if Jesus should say to you, "You are left alone, so you can do whatever you like. God will not bother you any more. He will not convict you any more."

Many times in revival services ones can go to individuals and talk to them and say, "Why not give your heart to God?" They reply, "I'm not convicted." Many people are not getting convicted anymore. Why is that happening? In the Antediluvian age the first step God made toward those people's destruction was to restrict the operation of His Spirit. In Genesis 6:3 He said, "My spirit shall not always strive with man." He restricted His operation, and from then on, the people were left on their own, unmolested.

Today it seems that no matter

how long or how intensely you preach, people do not get serious about their souls. They do not seem to become awakened. Could it be that God has put a restriction on His Spirit moving upon them? In John 6:44 Jesus told the people of His day, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." When He withdraws the influence of His Spirit from people, there is no way that they can come to Him. God only will allow people to reject Him for a certain time, as He did with Pharaoh, which you can

read about in the Book of Exodus. Pharaoh started by hardening his heart, but it was not long until God took the work over and hardened Pharaoh's heart. The Lord might have said to Pharaoh, "Is that what you want? Then I will do it for you!"

Dear one, you need to become aware of the serious threat of your house becoming destitute of the movings of God and the dealings of God. Believe me, it is tragically happening. Today people are indulging in ungodliness without the least bit of conviction or con-

demnation. This should show you that something is terribly wrong! People can sit under the Gospel night after night and not be moved to obey God. Could it be that God is restricting the operation of His Spirit upon people's hearts? If so be, I say to you what Peter said to the people of his day in Acts 2:40 as he preached on the Day of Pentecost: "Save yourselves from this ungodly generation." May God bless you.

(Cassette C-2074E)

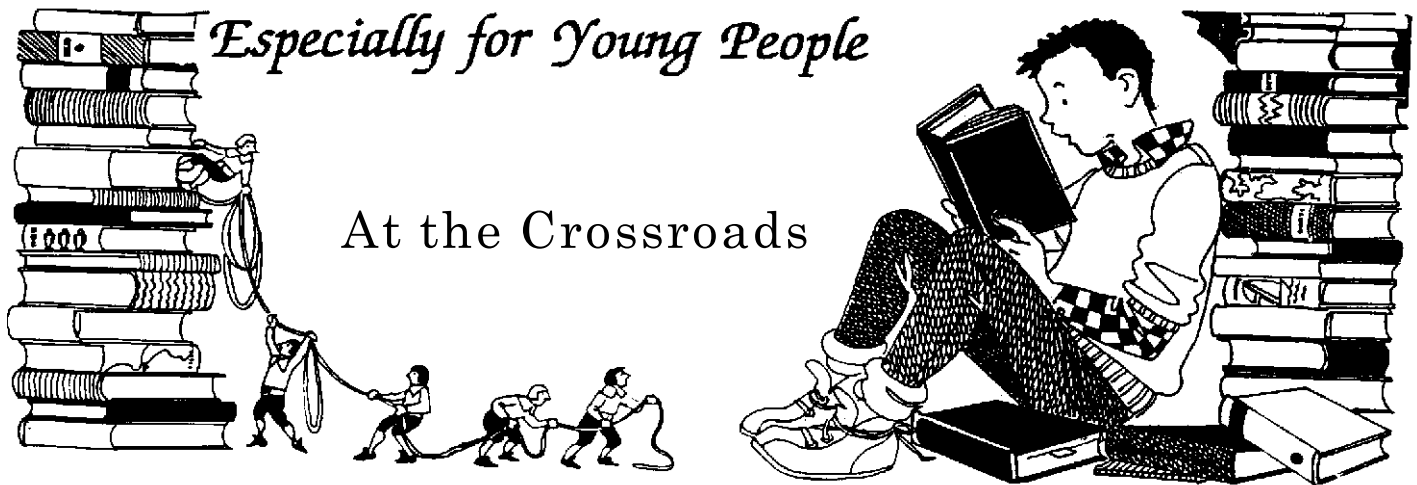
THANK GOD FOR THE THORNS

How graciously a gift of flowers is received, but with what spirit do we receive gifts of thorns? The Apostle Paul said, "There was given to me a thorn" (2 Corinthians 12:7). He prayed to be rid of it, but the thorn remained, as it was given to him for gain! It came to fill its God planned place. It was God's grace thorn; and as we follow the life of the Apostle Paul, are we not glad that God's grace was sufficient to take him through, even to martyrdom? God did not take away Paul's thorn. He mastered that thorn and made it Paul's servant. The ministry of thorns has often been a greater ministry to man than the ministry of thrones.

George Matheson, the well-known blind preacher of Scotland, said: "My God, I have never thanked Thee for my thorn; I have thanked Thee a thousand times for my rose, but not once for my thorn. I have been looking forward to a world where I shall get compensation for my cross, but I have never thought of my cross itself as a present glory. Teach me the value of my thorn. Show me that I have climbed to Thee by the path of pain; show me that my tears have made my rainbows."

What relation have thorns to the fulfillment of the great commission: "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature"? They have a very great part in this glorious, yet unfinished task. We are summoned to "fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ" (Colossians 1:24). As Calvary preceded the resurrection morning, so does the thorn crown precede the unfading crown of glory. Crowns are costly! They cost one's lifeblood. Are we ready to pay the price? Does it appear to be too costly? We who have been purchased by the blood of the slain Lamb of God are summoned to the coronation ceremony to witness Him being crowned King of kings and Lord of lords! "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him" (2 Timothy 2:12). "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18).

Today let each of us receive from His pierced hand our own peculiar thorn and place it within our hearts; and until that glorious day when we see Him face to face and crown Him Lord of all, may we wear it as a flower. "In acceptance lieth peace."



Clive Halloway lived down an off street of evil notoriety. He had not sunk as low as some others, but he was a sinner without doubt, without excuse, and without hope.

Drink and cruel temper were his undoing. His wife suffered at his hands and was half distracted at times, owing to his behavior. The family numbered four tiny tots, hardly two years between each.

The crisis came one night when she entered a saloon, placed her youngest child at her husband's feet, and hurried home, a ruse to lure him from the bar. He saw through it and was angry. He caught up the child in his arms, and on reaching home, thrashed his wife for "the game" she played. It was the last straw. Putting on her coat and tightening it about her, she left the house for the canal nearby, intending to end it all. By some intuition, Clive guessed what was in her mind, and rushing off, intercepted and brought her back, at the same time promising to mend his ways.

Half afraid and conscious stricken, he saw the woman that he had pledged to love going to pieces through his misdemeanors. His soul was aroused. Concern, deep and wholesome, succeeded indifference and neglect. He pulled himself together, vowed not to touch the drink again, and for six months the vow was performed. Then it was

New Year's Eve. Unable to resist temptation any longer, Clive was at home drinking the old year out and the new year in. At least that was his intention.

A city missionary and his helpers were singing at the street corner, inviting people to a midnight meeting. Clive listened and heard, "What of the night? Is it to close down on a life of sin? Are you carrying over your guilt and wretchedness into the new year? Get right with God! Plunge by faith into the crimson river of Christ's atoning blood and be saved ere the new year dawns!"

Clive pondered the appeal and was impressed. The broken pledge had not brought happiness. Instead, conscience smote him again and conflict raged within. He heard the invitation to the meeting. Should he go? He knew that moral wonders had been wrought at "watch night." Was there a chance for him? Thus he reasoned, and the "still, small voice" prevailed.

He left the house with a friend and made tracks for the meeting. They stood by the door hesitating. Strange thoughts and feelings seemed to block the way and hold them back.

"Won't you come in?" said a pleading voice. It was the missionary's wife who persuaded them to step in and make themselves at home. The midnight message, simple yet imperative, closed with

burning appeal. "We stand at the crossroads. On one hand is sin, weariness, despair, and the road to ruin; on the other is Christ, and in Him forgiveness, peace, and eternal life! Whither goest thou? Who will trust and follow Jesus and crown Him King?"

"I will," shouted Clive, who walked to the front and asked to be allowed to sing! Permission was given, and he proceeded in broken voice:

*"I heard the voice of Jesus say,
'Come unto Me and rest;
Lay down, thou weary one, lay
down
Thy head upon My breast.'
I came to Jesus as I was,
Weary, and worn, and sad;
I found in Him a resting place,
And He has made me glad."*

"He sobered as if by magic," said the missionary, "and in a little room in the small hours of the morning, he was loosed from his sins and made aware of his salvation." On bended knees his soul flowed out in prayer and confession and penitent trust. He had almost broken his mother's heart and had stifled every call to higher things. Now at midnight, like the jailer at Philippi, he called on the Lord and was heard "in that he feared." Drink and other evils lost their hold. Divine power entered the life once defiled and destroyed. So great was the change

that within two weeks his wife also yielded to the Savior, conquered by the love that had transformed the wolf into a lamb.

Years have passed since that midnight invitation. No longer at the crossroads, Clive marches bravely with the people of God, Heaven-

born and Heaven-bound. Dear friend, how about you?

Selected

[Guest Editorial—continued from p. 2]
to speak, with no liberty or freedom to enjoy life. On the other hand, He does not want us to live loose, uncontrolled lives that will bring reproach and disgrace to His name and His cause. How we live, the way we talk, and the places we go make a difference. The Apostle Paul gave sound advice to Titus that is good for us yet today. He stated in Titus 3:8, "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men."

We are to be an examples in charity (or love). Genuine love is in great need today. First, love to God, and then also love to our brothers and sisters in the Lord. Jesus informed us in John 13:34-35: "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." We are to love those who are in sin and do not know God. We are not to love the sin that they commit, but we are to love the sinners. In Matthew 5:44 we read these words of Jesus, "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."

There will always be some people who will do things that hurt you. Remarks may be said about you that will mar your influence and character. Possibly you could be mocked or disrespected. In a time such as this, you will need to lean heavily upon the grace of God and continue to show forth the right example. A Christian must be ready to love his enemies and react as Jesus did when He was ridiculed, laughed at, and scorned. A Christian must always be ready to forgive that one even though the individual may never ask for forgiveness. As Christ forgave you of your sins, likewise, you must be willing to forgive all who sin against you. Doing as Jesus would have you to do will keep your spirit right before God and man. You must be the example that He desires you to be.

Our Lord wants each of us to be a vessel that He can work through to help others. Dear one, I admonish you to be a vessel of love and mercy that reaches out to others. A Christlike example may be the only Gospel some people will ever see or hear. It is not always what we say

that influences those around us; but more often it is our godly living and example. There is an old adage that states, "I'd rather see a sermon lived than to hear one." The example we live as Christians certainly has an influence on those with whom we come in contact with every day.

One last thought to consider is this: never allow discouragement to overtake you when those around you seem to be paying no attention. Many times people will never let on that your life is having an effect on them. They may seem not to notice when you bow your head in prayer before you eat, but they are watching. Be encouraged, and continue to be the Christian example that God wants you to be. He may place you where you are to be an example just to show men and women how a Christian ought to live. Even though they refuse to acknowledge God in this lifetime, someday they will wish they had. Many will stand before God at the Judgment Day and claim that they never knew what to do or how to live. Then God will point them back to the godly examples that others lived in their presence. This will render them without excuse.

Selected

*A loose tongue
may get a person
into a tight place.*

Psalm 119:25 My soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken thou me according to thy word.

26 I have declared my ways, and thou heardest me: teach me thy statutes.

27 Make me to understand the way of thy precepts: so shall I talk of thy wondrous works.

28 My soul melteth for heaviness: strengthen thou me according unto thy word.

29 Remove from me the way of lying: and grant me thy law graciously.

30 I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid before me.

31 I have stuck unto thy testimonies: O LORD, put me not to shame.

32 I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.

Are You a Sticker?



Brother Paul Prinkey

Choosing the Way of Truth

In this Psalm that David wrote, we find that David was beseeching the Lord to know His way so that he could follow His way and live a pleasing life for Him. He also told God in verse 30, "I have chosen the way of truth." That is a good way to choose. Later his son Solomon said in Proverbs 23:23, "Buy the truth and sell it not." You can never go wrong in buying the Truth. It is the best investment you could ever make. May God help you to seek the Lord and endeavor to live a life that pleases Him.

God's judgments are His

thoughts, His statutes, and His commandments, and they are contained in the Word of God. David asked a question and answered it in Psalm 119:9, which states, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word." You need to know the way of God. If you have chosen to live for God and trust in Him, you need His judgments laid out before you.

In our study I want to focus on verse 31 of the Scripture reading, where David said, "I have stuck unto thy testimonies: O LORD, put me not to shame." David was determined to stick to God's testimonies.

Are you a sticker? David made up his mind that he was going to adhere to God's judgments.

If you were to go to a hardware store and look at the rows of duct tape on the shelves, you would see regular grade duct tape that is the least expensive, a heavy duty grade, and a maximum performance grade. You may wonder what the difference is. The one that is least expensive has less stickiness and does not stick too well. The most expensive grade is for tougher jobs, and it is stronger and stickier. If you were to try to peel it off once it is stuck, you would say, "Wow! That stuff is really stuck on there." There is a

difference in the quality. What quality Christian are you? How much sticking power do you have? The maximum performance grade duct tape will not come off easily.

David said, "I have stuck unto thy testimonies." He chose the way of Truth and stuck to it; he would not budge. God was the final authority for him. He did not want to hear anything else, because what God said was good enough for him.

Have you ever heard people testify and say, "When I found the Church of God, I found Truth, and I stopped searching"? You do not need to search any further when you find the best. There is nothing better than serving God. One song says, "*I don't want to change it or rearrange it; I love it just like it is.*" It is good enough just the way it is. I thank God for that!

Are you a sticker like David was? The Gospel comes to everyone, and it requires each person to make a decision. Some people place no value on God's Word. To them, it is as a song that has already been sung; they have heard it many times before, and they do not allow it to have any effect on them. You need to have a receptive heart and allow the Word of God to sink in. Whenever the Word begins to come as a gentle rain, God has something to say to you, and you need to receive what God has sent your way. He will send help for whatever you stand in need of. You do not have to be defeated. You can have victory in your soul if you will allow the Word of God to have its intended effect on you.

Have You Been Stopped by Fear?

Some people who once made a start for the Lord did not complete their journey with victory. They were not stickers. I want you to consider a few reasons why some people have not stuck to the testimonies of God. They have not stuck to the salvation that God has freely given. Some people do not stick with God because they fear what

might happen if they should obey His Word. Fear is real. They fear what might happen on the job. They know they would have to make some changes, and they fear that people might persecute them. Fear of persecution has stopped many people.

Others fear what might happen if they were to tell the husband or the wife what God requires of them. The light shined on their path, and they understood what they needed to do, but then they became fearful. Fear is a work of the devil. Perfect love toward God casts out all fear. You do not have to fear. The Bible says you have been made a joint heir with Jesus Christ. You do not have to succumb to fear. How does the devil bring fear upon you? He will begin to fill your mind with all kinds of thoughts. You may wonder what will happen if you obey God. You may question, "Will my spouse leave me? Will my children hate me? Will my mother and father resist me and fight against me?"

The Bible says that a man's foes will be those of his own household, and sometimes loved ones will rise against you. People are going to come against you and resist you. Some people are not stickers because they succumb to fear. God can help you to have victory over fear. You do not have to allow the devil to defeat you. The Bible promises victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Child of God, no man can pluck you out of the Father's hand. Jesus said not to fear man, but rather to fear God. You do not have to fear what man might do to you. If God be for you, who can be against you? You can take courage through God's Word. You must resist fear, stand against it, and overcome it.

David was a man who stuck to God's testimonies. He believed God and trusted Him. He had faith in God, and God proved Himself to him over and over. The Bible testifies that there was no other man like David who sought God with his whole heart.

Have You Failed to Bring the Flesh Into Subjection?

Another reason that some people have made starts for the Lord but failed to stick with Him is that they failed to bring the flesh into subjection to the Word. I am not speaking of fear now, but of an experience on a personal level. You are your own greatest enemy. Whenever God reveals Truth as the Word of God goes forth, you listen and agree, but soon the preacher hits a touchy spot, and you think, "I don't know if I want to give that up."

God says, "This is the way; walk ye in it."

You may say, "But I like it."

God says, "Give it up. Do you love Me more than you love it?" Sometimes you will want to hold on to something or a habit, and God will reveal the Truth to you and show you what you need to do; then the battle begins between the flesh and the spirit. The flesh wars against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh. They are contrary one to the other. Jesus said in Matthew 26:41, "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

The fleshly man wants to rise up and claim things that are earthly, things that he finds pleasure in but God disapproves of. Many have failed because of weakness, and this is where they became separated from God. The Word came, they heard it and understood it, but they failed to bring the flesh into subjection to it. I have seen this happen. Some people get saved and live for God for a while. They walk in the light that God reveals to them and lay aside the things of the world, and then the preacher preaches on a certain Scripture, and they get hung up on it. The progress of their Christian experience stops right then because they fail to bring the flesh into subjection to the Word of God.

They begin to battle and struggle with it and say, "I don't want to give it up; I want to keep it." God continues to deal with their hearts and tells them, "You need to lay it

aside." They may say: "Well, I do not see it or understand it. God has never revealed it to me." If God has not revealed it to you, why has it stopped you? If God has not revealed a Truth to you, why are you hung up on it? The sad part is that some people have never brought their flesh into subjection and obeyed the Word, and they end up backsliding on God.

Becoming Offended by the Word

You have to be careful. The devil will try to find an inroad into your heart. Jesus told about the sower that went forth to sow seed, and the seed fell on four types of ground. One type of ground was stony. Immediately it sprang up and showed life, but the sun scorched it, and it withered away. The disciples wanted to know the meaning of this parable, so Jesus told them. He said it represented those who heard the Word and joyfully received it. I have seen that happen in people's lives. When they came to the Church of God, they were bound in sin, and God revealed the Word to them so faithfully. The Holy Spirit of God dealt with them, and they went to an altar of prayer and wept their way into Zion. God gloriously saved them, and with joy they received the Word. However, after a while they became offended by the Word. God revealed Truth to them, and they refused to accept it.

You can read in Matthew, Chapter 11, that when John the Baptist was in prison, he sent two of his disciples to Jesus. In verse 3 they inquired, "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" Jesus did not answer them right away. He went about doing miracles. He healed the sick, made the blind eyes to see, unstopped the deaf ears, made the dumb mouths speak, and cast out devils. John's disciples stood by and watched. Jesus was proving by His works who He was, and when He finished with those miracles, He turned to those two disciples and said in

verses 4-6: "Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me."

In Psalm 119:165 David said, "Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them." Love rejoices in the Truth. It does not resist it, fight it, or argue with it. If you are walking in Truth, you love God, and serving Him is your highest priority. You must love God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength. Whenever the Truth goes forth, you will love it. Those who are obeying the Truth will come to the light. As God reveals more light, they will say, "That's for me too." It may not always be easy to come to the Truth, but those who love the Lord are obedient to the Truth. It is important to stick to God's testimonies and adhere to the Word of God. You must be a hearer and a doer of the Word, not a hearer only.

Be Not Ignorant of Satan's Devices

Some people make a start with the Lord, but do not continue with Him. They allow the cares and the burdens of life to weigh them down, and eventually their spiritual life becomes snuffed out. Everyone is subject to this. We are living in a fast-paced age. The devil is working harder than ever, and if he can crowd Christ out of your life, he will do it. How does he do that? He smothers you with the cares and the burdens of life so that it seems as though you are boxed in with problems.

Sometimes it seems as if you are surrounded by troubles. Job stated in Job 14:1, "Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble." Jesus said in Matthew 6:34b, "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Tribulations, trials and

troubles will come your way. They can begin to crowd you to the degree that you will start to give more time to the things of the world than you give to God. Then you will start to cut back on your prayer life, your Bible reading, and your church attendance. The next thing you know, the devil will begin to have an advantage over you.

In 2 Corinthians 2:11 Paul said, "Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices." The devil will work to get you to stay home from church one time without a real reason, and then he will work on you the second time, the third time, and the fourth time, until you stop going at all. One minister said something in a message once that really stuck with me. He said, "One time of laying out of church without a real reason is a vote to close the doors." You need to think about that! You may think, "Oh, I don't feel too well. I'm worn out, and I've had a hard day at work. I think I'll just stay home and get rested up for tomorrow."

It is a trick of the enemy to get you to stay home from church. You need to take care of yourself to stay healthy, and you need to get the proper amount of rest, because the more tired you are, the easier it is for the devil to take advantage of you. When you are tired, you do not have as much patience as you do when you are well rested. You may become short in your answers to people when you are tired.

The devil will cause cares and burdens to crowd in on you. You need to go to the house of God to be renewed and revived. You need to go to the house of God ready to worship. Also, when you go to church, you should get a songbook and join in the singing. You ought to put your whole heart into it.

Sometimes you have to force yourself to do what you ought to do. If you are not careful, you can become at ease in Zion. Apathy can set in, and you will become lazy and neglect to even take your Bible to church. We are blessed to have the

Word of God available to us. If you read about the history of the early church, you will find that many people suffered for the cause of God. You should be glad to carry your Bible with you to church.

A soldier would not think of going onto the battlefield without his weapons, but people go to church without their "sword." You need to be on guard and watch. Do not be ignorant of Satan's devices. The Apostle Paul said to redeem the time because the days are evil. He said to walk circumspectly, which means to walk carefully and cautiously. Peter said in 1 Peter 5:8 that "your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." The devil is looking for those who are weak. Those who are lagging behind become his victims.

Resist the Devil

Peter followed Jesus afar off, and that got him into trouble. He was still following Jesus, but he was too far behind. The devil can get an advantage over you when you are weak. He will try to crush the spiritual life out of you. I do not know about you, but I want to be a sticker. I want to be close to God. I do not want to allow a gap between us. I want to stick to His testimonies. I do not want the devil to get between us.

Some people made a start for the Lord but did not stick with Him because they desired riches and lusted after other things rather than God's way. It caused them to become unfruitful, and they withered and dried up. Their hearts were set on other things. Your attention can be drawn aside to other things. The devil has many ways to draw your attention away from God.

It is easy to become distracted. The devil will bring something around that catches your attention, and you will begin to follow after that thing. He will bring a temptation, and if you are not careful, you will begin to think on that thing,

ponder it, and entertain the thought of it in your mind. You can begin to be drawn to it, lust for it, and desire it. Do you know what will happen if that takes place? Your spiritual experience will fail, and you will no longer produce fruit.

Sometimes people start well. They sing and testify and thrive in the things of God, but then they begin to slack off. Soon something happens and you do not hear them sing or testify anymore. They become unfruitful in their spiritual experience. Their desire is not to win souls any more because they have fallen spiritually. God will tarry for a while with a soul in that condition, but He will not tarry forever. If you allow a distance between you and God, you will become unfruitful in the things of God.

In Ephesians 4:27 Paul said, "Neither give place to the devil." The devil is looking for an inroad into your experience. He has been angry since you gave your life to God. Why? He lost someone who drank and caroused and tempted others to do the same. He lost someone who would start fights and steal. When you got saved, all of that stopped. The devil lost someone who was on his side. Now you are on God's side, but the devil is awaiting his opportunity for an inroad into your life. Paul said not to give place to him.

When the devil comes knocking at your heart's door, you should send Jesus to the door. James 4:7 says, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." The devil cannot stay around if you will do this. You must have the determination: "I am going to stay with God. I am not backing off. I love God. He is my first love, and I love Him the most." One song says, "I'm not giving up."

Finishing This Race

The Bible lets you know that those who finish this race will win a crown, not those who quit. You need to finish this race! One thing I like

about serving God is that you do not have to be the first one to cross the finish line to be a winner. The world has races, and they get the runners together. When the gun is fired, all the runners take off running, but only one is a winner. That is not the way it is when we live for God. We all can start this race, and as long as we each cross the finish line, we all will be winners. In Matthew 10:22 Jesus said, "He that endureth to the end shall be saved."

When you chose to serve God and gave your life to Him, were you just trying Him out for a few weeks until you made it through your troubles? Were you merely testing God to see if His promises were really true? Were you planning to try it for a while, until you got your life settled and God worked out your problems, and then go your own way? Or did you choose to serve God for the rest of your life? What was in your mind when you gave your life to God? It can make a difference.

Some people have given their lives to God for selfish purposes. Maybe they were in trouble, and they were sorry they got caught, so they decided to turn to God. When I chose to serve God, I determined to serve Him for the rest of my life, however long that might be. I am not going back on Him. By the grace of God, I am going to go forward. This is an uphill climb, and He will give me grace and strength every day to climb to the next level and to take the next step.

Isaiah wrote in Isaiah 40:31, "They that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength." I do not have to worry about God not providing what I need for the day. He will give me the strength for my day. I have chosen to serve Him for the rest of my life, and I trust that is your desire.

Do you know what happens with some people? They simply quit trying. They quit putting forth effort. You cannot live for God that way. Just as the body requires nourishment, so does the soul. Some

people have gotten sick and have given up the will to live. They quit fighting for life and stop taking nourishment into the body. A person can survive for only a short time once he makes that decision, and soon the body will shut down. It works the same way in the spiritual realm. If you quit trying to serve God and give up, it will not be long until you lose your spiritual life with God. If you are going to finish this race with God, you must run the race that is set before you with patience. The Bible says to lay aside the weights and the sin that besets you. Shame and regret always follow a quitter. If you quit serving God, you cannot win; winners never quit. I do not want shame and regret to follow me. I want to follow the Lord.

Do Not Be a Quitter

Are you sticking to God's commandments? Are you sticking to His Truth, to His way of living? I have an article that a business manager wrote. He was responsible for hiring and firing personnel. He said, "I am more interested in what a person has finished than what he has started. I want a finisher." Our nation is full of people who started but failed to finish. This has caused a spirit of quitting to spread in our country. Quitters fill the ranks of the young and the old. It exists in every job market. The unemployment lines are filled with its practitioners. School dropouts stand on almost every corner. Many church programs are short lived, marriages and homes are breaking up. Half-finished houses, paintings, music lessons, books, and a host of other things testify to a nonfinisher's spirit that exists in our midst. Even people who started for God have failed to finish. For one reason or another, they have lost out with God.

There are those who say, "The Bible says that you are in God's hand and that no man can pluck you out." I will tell you one person who can remove you from God's hand,

and that person is you. No other man can take you out of God's hand, but you can leave on your own. You are the one who made the choice to serve God and put yourself in His hand, and you are the only one who can make the decision to take yourself out of His hand.

As long as you want to stay in His hand, God will keep you. He will care for you, protect you, and give you strength as your day, as long as you stay with Him. You are the only one who has control over your own soul. No one else can make the decision for you.

In our Scripture text David said in verses 30-31: "I have chosen the way of truth . . . I have stuck unto thy testimonies." Have you stuck to God's testimonies? Are you a stickler? Are you going to stay with God?

I will tell you one important thing that you must do if you are going to stay with God: you must listen to God. The devil will lie to you, so you have to tune him out. Are you tuned in to what the Lord is telling you? In James 4:8 James said if you will draw nigh to God, He will draw nigh to you, but it is

up to you to take that step. God is waiting for you. If you have a need or if the devil has been working on you to discourage you and tell you to give up, I want to encourage you to pray and commit yourself to God. Why don't you pour out your heart before the Lord and let Him know what you have been going through? You may say, "Well, He already knows." He wants to hear you tell Him. Let God know about the tests and the trials that you are in. Let Him know that you want to live for Him and that you are determined to go all the way with Him. You need to ask for His help. God will give you everything you need to have victory.

Psalm 103:13 says, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him." God cares about you. David said in Psalm 40:17, "But I am poor and needy; yet the LORD thinketh upon me." God is thinking about you. If you have a need, won't you pray and let the Holy Spirit of God have His way with you?

(Compact Disc TR-077E)

THE QUITTER

***I've taught a class for many years;
Borne many burdens, toiled tears—
But folks don't notice me a bit,
I'm so discouraged; I'll just quit.***

***I've led young people day and night
And sacrificed to lead them right;
But folks won't help me out a bit—
And I'm so tired; I think I'll quit.***

***Christ's cause is hindered everywhere
And people are dying in despair.
The reason why? Just think a bit—
Many churches are full of those who
quit.***

Author Unknown

Hebrews 10:31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

32 But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions;

33 Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used.

34 For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.

35 Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward.

36 For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God,

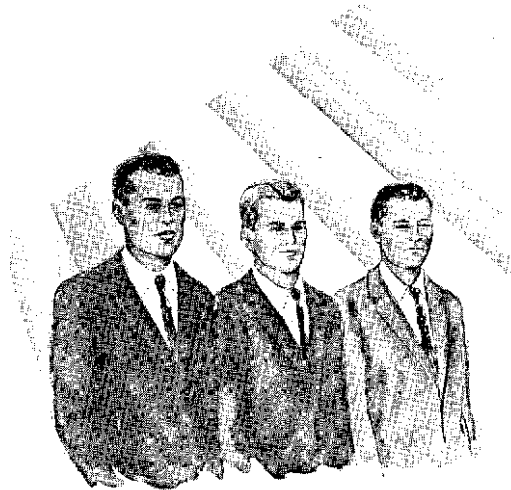
ye might receive the promise.

37 For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.

38 Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.

39 But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

Being Promoted by God



Brother C. H. Dickerson

Diligently Seek Him

I want you to especially look at that verse 38, which states, "Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." The Hebrew writer said to remember the former days, when you took your stand for Christ. There is a battle, but the Hebrew writer said that we live by faith. He also stated that if you draw back, God has no pleasure in you.

If your little child did not grow, as a parent, you would be very much concerned and would do everything you could to get him to grow. This is God's concern. We are His children, and He wants each of

us to grow and develop spiritually. Certainly, the developing is never easy.

The Apostles were exposed to physical abuse, and so were the patriarchs of old. The saints were tortured and tormented and martyred during the Dark Ages, but those things developed them and caused them to grow in the things of God. It takes the storm to make us strong. If it were not for the storms, we would never grow. The tree roots would not grow so deep if it were not for the storms. The nourishment comes to a tree through the roots, and the roots also hold the tree in place. If it were not for the roots, the wind would blow it over.

Body builders, athletes, boxers, and wrestlers go through much training in order to achieve success. Even in the Armed Forces, the men go through rigorous training to develop the stamina they need to be a good soldier. Likewise, to become properly trained and be a good soldier in the Lord's army, you must put forth extreme effort. I cannot emphasize that enough. God wants good soldiers in His army. He wants people who will stand. He wants people who will grow and develop in the things of God. When you go through tests and trials, do not give up! Do not quit!

When people in the world see the Christian give up, that is telling

them something that is not true. Serving God takes your full loyalty and full dedication to Him. No training is easy. In order for a student to advance to the next grade in school, he must put forth effort, but oh, how good it is at the end of the year when he gets his report card and sees that he was promoted to the next grade. Then he realizes that it was worth all the studying and the training that he went through.

Hebrews 11:6 states, "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." If you are going to please God, you must adhere to His commandments. You must believe Him, trust Him, and rely on Him. If you draw back, or retreat, then you remove yourself from God's use. He bought you and paid the price for you! If you draw back, you are telling the world that God was unable to take you through that burden or that hard place.

God is displeased with anyone who draws back. You see, God saved you for His pleasure. The latter part of Revelation 4:11 reads, ". . . for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." Anything you buy and anything you have is for His pleasure. You should use it the way He sees fit for you to use it. He bought you, and you are His to use. God wants you to advance in His kingdom.

Spiritual Growth and Development

A baby lives in a narrow scope and depends entirely on someone else. An infant cannot do anything for himself. As a child grows, he learns to do more and more as he expands his knowledge. The same is true from a spiritual standpoint. As you grow spiritually, you are compelled to do more, and as you do, it will cause you to grow some more.

There is a great danger, spiritu-

ally speaking, in remaining in the realm of infancy and childhood too long. The trend today is for people to get saved and then relax. God does not want that. He wants us to grow. If you have a child, you would not be satisfied if that child was not growing and developing. You want to see that child develop in knowledge and character. The same is true with God concerning your spiritual development. When you are born into the family of God, He wants you to grow and develop so that you can be used in the Kingdom of Christ.

Whenever a child gets himself into trouble, he will run if he thinks someone is after him. He may lie when he is confronted by his wrongdoing and try to hide it or blame someone else. Sometimes when a child is confronted with chores and he does not want to take the time to do them, he will try to find someone else to do them. Sometimes that is the way it is in God's kingdom. At times people know they ought to do more for God, but what do they try to hide behind? They say, "Someone else is more qualified" or "Someone else can pray better than I can" or "Someone else can teach better than I can." God said that if you do those things and draw back, then He has no pleasure in you.

The Lord Searches the Heart

When you are born again, God does all He can to help you to grow. If you begin to make excuses, just as the Hebrew writer told us in verses 31-32 of the Scripture text: "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions." He said that was because they were made a gazingstock.

God's children have to be an example and sometimes have to do hard things. God allows His people to be tested and tried. This is the way we grow in the things of God. You have to go through trials, and if

you pass the examination, then you will grow spiritually. This is not something new. God allows this because many times when the trials come, people draw back. Again, God plainly taught in our text of Scripture that the reason they draw back is that they are satisfied to be as they are. They do not care about growing any more.

Often people think, "I'm saved, and that is all I care about." God wants His people to be willing to do as He directs. In Paul's writings in 2 Corinthians 10:12 he taught that if we measure ourselves by ourselves, we are not wise. This is another trick of the devil. He tries to get the saints to look across the aisle at others. Then when we see that we are doing as much or more than others, we become satisfied. Wise men still seek Christ.

If you come to the place where you settle down and become satisfied, then God has a message for you: He is displeased with that. God will not be pleased until you get up to full power and do everything that you can possibly do. God is still looking for people who are not content to be as good as So-and-So. He wants you to be obedient, not rebellious.

Jesus said in Matthew 23:27, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness." He called the scribes and Pharisees a bunch of hypocrites. He said they were as whited sepulchres. They tried to fool Jesus because of what they were doing, but He let them know that they did not fool Him at all.

We need to remember what the Prophet Jeremiah wrote. Jeremiah 17:10 reads: "I try the reins." Many times people have a spirit in them that is not a good spirit. They will say something and then try to make someone think they were kidding, when all the while they wanted to get their point across and tell someone off. They do it in a kidding way,

but they need to remember that God tries the spirit. The scribes and the Pharisees tried to pretend that they were righteous and that they did not understand what Jesus was saying, but Jesus looked at them and called them hypocrites. He let them know that they made themselves look good on the outside, but He said on the inside they were full of dead men's bones.

Jesus knows you from the top of your head to the soles of your feet. God does not go by what He sees outwardly, but He tries the spirit to see what things are down in the heart. The entire verse of Jeremiah 17:10 reads, "I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings." He will pay you according to your doings.

Being Used as God Sees Fit

God wants people to break away from being ordinary followers and be *extraordinary* followers. My friend, this will lead you to a deeper walk with God. God has always wanted people in training for His use. God sets the members in His body as He sees fit, and every member has a different use, just as the members in the natural body do. For example, the legs have one use, and the arms have a different use. God placed these members in the body and trained them to be used where He placed them. Likewise, in the spiritual body, down through time, He has trained everyone whom He saved for His use.

According to the Scriptures, John the Baptist was alone in the desert, being molded for his mission. He was a forerunner of Christ. The Apostle Paul spent three years in Arabia, receiving a revelation of truth for the church of his day as well as our day. John Bunyan wrote *Pilgrim's Progress* while he was in prison. There are many things we do not understand, but the Word of God makes it crystal clear to us that anything that happens to us when

we are serving God is for our training.

Joseph had two dreams that upset his brothers when he told them what God had revealed to him. They became jealous of Joseph and sold him, and then he was sold as a slave down in Egypt. Joseph went through some hard places. Can you imagine what Joseph thought when he did all he knew to do and did it right? No doubt, he wondered, "Why is this happening to me? I am trying to do the will of God and here I am a slave. My brothers sold me as a slave!" He probably could not understand that; nevertheless, he had a work to do for God. Later, it was revealed that God had sent him down there. As a result, after many years had passed, Joseph did a work for God. God had that in mind when his brothers sold him as a slave; He looked way ahead. Verse 38 of our Scripture text says, "Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." Whatever comes our way when we are serving God is what God wants. If you draw back, God will have no part with you.

John the Revelator was close to Christ. History tells that men tried to boil him in oil, but that did not kill him. When that did not work, they took him to the Isle of Patmos. There he was all alone and seemingly forsaken. It seemed as though no one wanted any part of him. Nevertheless, he was there for the purpose that God had in mind. The Scripture plainly tells us in Revelation 1:9 that he "was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ." That is the reason we are enjoying the Book of Revelation today.

The Book of Revelation is not one that you should be afraid of, but it shows the church where she is. It shows us the things that are going to come to pass. John was sent to the Isle of Patmos to write the Book of Revelation. God told John to write what he saw in a book and to seal it.

God also gave John a vision of when the time would come to open the Book, and they found no one to open the Book. John wept much, but an elder told John, "Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah . . . hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof" (Revelation 5:5). Christ opened the seven seals, one for each period of time, and revealed what the dangers are in the day and age in which we are living.

A Lukewarm Age

Although this took place in A.D. 96, almost two thousand years ago, He pinpoints that we are living in a lukewarm age. Brother, sister, if there was ever a time when we needed to get on our feet and work for God, it is in the day and age in which we are living, because we are living in a lukewarm age. We can see that lukewarmness today, not in the world, but right in the church. If we do not watch, we will think we do not need to pray to do the work of God. We need prayer to preach the Gospel and to sing the Gospel songs. If we do not have prayer to sing the Gospel songs and to preach the Gospel, all we are doing is saying words, and it will not affect people. Today many people are full of themselves, and they think they do not need to pray.

We are living in the Laodicean age, that lukewarm age that John wrote about two thousand years ago. The Laodicean age is the last age of time preceding Christ's coming. A lukewarm condition is the exact same condition as that of leaving your first love. The church at Ephesus was in that same condition. Why did they leave their first love? They did it for something more pressing. If we are not careful today, we will get to where other things are more pressing than taking time to pray and read the Word of God, more pressing than assembling ourselves together at the house of God.

God is going to have a people. If

He cannot get us to take hold, then He will send afflictions. Verses 32-33 of the Scripture text read: ". . . ye endured a great fight of afflictions; Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used." God is not going to have a lazy people. If He has to bring some heartaches and heavy trials on us, He will do it, because He does not want a lukewarm people.

Someone may say, "I don't know why these things happen to me?" Well, you need to check to see how on fire you are for God. It might be because you lack something. God wants you to wake up, so He said, "I'm going to put you through some trials." Things are going to happen to you if you do not get on fire for God. God wants His children to grow up. He does not want you to just sit on a street corner, so to speak. He wants you to work for Him. You can work for Him only through prayer and by being filled with His Spirit.

My friend, if you have any honesty in you, but you just sit down and relax and do not do anything, something is going to happen to stir you. God has always had a working body. His church is a working body, and if you are not working, He is training you. If you were to talk to someone who has been in the military, you would learn that he went through some strenuous training that he thought was absolutely ridiculous at the time. However, he would also tell you that when he was before the enemy, he saw how necessary that training was.

When I was in the military, we went through rigid training. In the obstacle course we crawled through barbed wire and through mud with live bullets going over our heads. We had to stay on our bellies and crawl or we could have gotten a bullet in the head. That was not overseas; that was in training! We had to learn what those bullets

sounded like when they were coming close to us.

Iniquity Is Abounding

Each of the individuals that I mentioned—John the Baptist, John Bunyan, Joseph, John the Revelator, and the Apostle Paul—had to spend much time alone. Also, it meant their being misunderstood, and they suffered hardships, neglect, and persecution. You should stop and think how you might have felt had you been Paul or Silas, considering the way they worked for God, yet they were beaten and stoned. What about John, when he was doing the work that God wanted him to do, yet they picked him up and took him over to the Isle of Patmos, and left him there alone to starve to death. Do you think he felt lonesome? Certainly he did. He had feelings just the same as anyone else has. I do not know how long he was there, but as the result of being there, he went through hard places. There is no doubt in my mind that the devil was right there. No doubt, he wondered, "Why is this happening to me?"

Most folks do not fully understand those hardships and trials and their results. Today many people are drawing back. There has never been a time when we have seen so much backsliding as we are seeing today, even among people whom others thought were solid. However, because of the various hardships and other things they have gone through, they have drawn back. God said that when they do, He has no pleasure in them.

Proverbs 14:14 reads, "The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways [in other words, the backslider will do what he wants to do]: and a good man shall be satisfied from himself [he does not live for himself, but he does what God wants him to do]."

Jesus said in Matthew 24:12, "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." Iniquity is sin. Some people let evil

thoughts linger in their minds. They let evil seeds be sown in their thinking. Many people let the cares of life overwhelm them. Because iniquity abounds, these things are being allowed, and the love of many is waxing cold for the things of God. They allow the devil to put certain thoughts in their minds, and then they let them linger there. Now, you cannot help it if the devil puts certain thoughts in your mind, but what will get you in trouble is letting those thoughts linger there. You do not have to let them linger in your mind.

Child of God, God sends you through training because He wants you to be a good soldier. He does not want you to be a sloppy soldier in His army. You represent the body of Christ. He wants you to go through rigid training so that you can stand the tests of life, because iniquity is abounding. The devil has your downfall in mind.

The devil has taken the television and turned it into a wicked thing. However, the television was never as rotten as the Internet is today. You do not even have to invite evil things to come on your screen. People will send filthy stuff right to your screen through email. It is a wonderful invention, but the devil has gotten hold of it. The devil will stop at nothing to put evil thoughts into your mind. They are as a cancer. If you do not get it stopped right away, it will grow.

Someone documented that in the Dallas, Texas, area, 50 percent of the ministry has viewed pornography! One pastor in the Dallas area would get up in the middle of the night and tell his wife that he was going downstairs to study God's Word, but instead he would go down and view pornography on the Internet. He would then get up in the pulpit and lie to his wife and the congregation. I tell you this for only one reason: All the devil wants to do is get something evil in your mind. He wants those things to get a foothold in your mind when you see them, and then they will grow un-

less you get them out of there in a hurry.

If you develop a lump on your body and go to the doctor, if he has any inkling that it is cancer, he will take a biopsy and send it away to be tested. Why does he do that? If it is cancer, he wants to remove it early enough in order to increase your chances of survival. The same is true spiritually. You see, the devil wants to put all these evil things in your mind because they will destroy you.

When iniquity abounds, it can grow on you and cause you to start backing away from what you once believed. If that happens, God will have no pleasure in you, and you will be in far worse shape than you were before. Then you will be in the same condition that Peter spoke of in 2 Peter 2:20-22 when he wrote: "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." There never has been a truer picture of a backslider. If after you have known God and have known the ways of God, you are overcome again, Peter said you are as a dog that returns to its own vomit. If you go back on God, you are setting yourself up to be lost forever.

How to Be a Good Soldier

The Ephesus church age left their first love. The Laodicean church age was lukewarm, and Jesus told them in Revelation 3:16, "So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." You were saved to do a work for God, not

according to your own desires, but according to God's desire. We each have personal desires concerning what we would like to do, but when God saved us, He placed each of us in the body as He saw fit.

You may say: "I would like to be used by God. I'm going to study and do all I can." If you really want to be used by God, then let God know that you do not know anything. He already knows that, but let Him know that you know it; then He can use you.

Job said in Job 2:10b, "What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" Many souls have been stunted in spiritual growth by drawing back. This is the reason Paul stated in Philippians 4:11, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." If God places you in the body as a helper, you should be content. If He places you in His body as a Sunday school teacher, you should be content. If God places you in the body as a singer or as an instrument player, you should be content.

Paul also taught in 1 Timothy 6:8-10: "And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

In other words, Paul was saying, "Wherever God has placed me and whatever I go through, I will be content." He did not mean that he would be content just to sit down and do nothing. I do not think anyone today has gone through what Paul went through. Some folks want to be like others, but they do not want to be criticized or misunderstood. They do not like to be looked upon as an example, but saints of God are examples. If you are a saint of God, when you are out with other people, you are an exam-

ple for salvation. Sometimes it necessitates taking a stand. Folks look at the trials, the temptations, the misunderstandings, and the hard places in the wrong way. God does not allow those things to happen to see people suffer. God has one thing in mind, and that is to see His children grow. We are in training, and this training is for our own good. We are living in a time when the devil is throwing everything he has at the saints of God. The devil is doing everything he can to defeat you.

In Luke 22:31 Jesus told Peter that the devil desired to sift him as wheat. That is exactly what Satan wants to do to you. Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 2:1-4: "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier."

Paul made it quite clear that as a child of God, you are not to entangle yourself with the world. God wants you to be a good soldier. People go to school to equip themselves so they can make more money. As God takes you through training in His army, He wants you to be better equipped so that you will have grace to go through the tests. Now, you can pray that God will deliver you from these tests, but where will you get any strength? Where will you get any training? Where will you get strength to overcome if you pray that God will deliver you?

Wait Upon the Lord

Had John drawn back, the beauty of the Revelation would be hid from us. The Revelation is a beautiful Book. When they took John to the Isle of Patmos, he was able to get alone with God. Moses would not

have been selected to lead the children of Israel had he not been willing to sit alone on the hillside. God chose David because he spent time with Him out on the hillside. We have salvation because Jesus did not draw back. In Luke 22:42 He prayed, "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done."

God puts you through tests because He wants to strengthen you. Many times people become lax in their experience, and God has to wake them up in some way, so He puts them through extremely hard trials. They will either pray that God gives them the grace to go through or they will draw back. If they draw back, God will have no pleasure in them. God wants each of us to fill the place in which He has put us. He does not want any of us to draw back, and He does not want us to become lax. We can do nothing without God.

How can you get hold of God? You must get hold of Him through prayer by faith. God's people need to be a praying people. If someone ever gets in the pulpit and does not pray, it will be so flat. In anything that you do for God, it takes Him. The only way He will be with you is if you ask Him. He does not push Himself in. If you are going to sing a song, you need to ask Him. If you are going to sing in the choir, you need to ask Him to help you. If you are going to preach the Gospel, you need to ask Him to help you.

When you get up in the morning, you need to ask Him to help you to live for Him. You need to ask Him through prayer. If you are not careful, my friend, you will let your prayer life get away from you. Remember, the devil is seeking whom he may devour. If you get lax in your prayer life, he will be right there to tempt you. Some tests and trials occur when people get lax in their prayer lives. That is a dangerous thing.

What happened to Joseph, Paul, Stephen, Jesus, Moses, and others was for the salvation of others. Once

when Paul was thrown in prison, many people were saved: the jailer and all his family.

Consider Stephen's ordeal. He was stoned, and then they took his clothes and laid them at the feet of a young man by the name of Saul, who later became the Apostle Paul. Do you not think it had an effect on Saul when he saw the attitude that Stephen took? Acts 7:59-60 states: "And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep." The salvation of others depends on your meeting the challenge that confronts you. Today we are saved because those people in the Bible met the challenges they faced. The salvation of others depends on whether you draw back or face your challenges.

If God is dissatisfied with you, that means trouble. Numbers 11:1 reads, "And when the people complained, it displeased the LORD: and the LORD heard it; and his anger was kindled; and the fire of the LORD burnt among them, and consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp." When they complained, fire consumed them. If you complain as they did, troubles and afflictions might consume you.

Zechariah 1:15 states, "And I am very sore displeased with the heathen that are at ease: for I was but a little displeased, and they

helped forward the affliction." You have a choice. You can draw back, but it will displease the Lord. Also, someone's salvation is at stake. God has made you a gazingstock, child of God.

Hebrews 10:35-36 says: "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise." You need patience to wait on the Lord. God saved you and put you in the body, and He lets things happen. He wants His church to be a militant church. He wants you to be on fire for Him. If you do not wake up, then He will put a little fire under you.

You cannot go forward without strength, and then you will be cast off as undesirable for God. If that happens, you will be lost forever; that would be a sad thing. Are you completely dedicated and loyal to the obligation to win souls for God? This is the reason God has you here. Jesus died on the Cross of Calvary to win souls for God. You are here in His stead to win souls for God, but you need to be completely dedicated. Are you drawing back? God said that if you draw back, He will have no pleasure in you. It is through the tests of life that people get the picture. Are you completely dedicated to the task of winning souls for God?

(No compact disc is available for this message.)

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Matthew 6:19-21

Announcements

COMSTOCK, MI

September 2-7

REVIVAL: Comstock Church of God, 5578 Comstock Ave, Comstock, MI 49048

Evangelist: Brother Earl R. Borders, Heath, OH

For further information contact: Pastor Jerry Miller

Telephone: 269-998-3194 (Bro. Jerry Miller) or 269-998-3197 (Sis. Carol Miller)

MINERVA, OH

September 19-21

REVIVAL: Mt. Zion Church of God, Minerva, OH

Evangelist: Brother Tim Yoder, Ashland, Ohio

Service times: Friday-Saturday 7:00 p.m.; Sunday 10:00 a.m. & 6:00 p.m.

For further information contact: Pastor Leamon Whitehead

Telephone: 330-868-1016

MECHANICSBURG, IN

September 21-28

REVIVAL: Church of God, Mechanicsburg, Indiana

Evangelist: Brother David Stegmeier, Canby Oregon

Service times: Sunday 10:30 a.m. & 6:00 p.m.; Monday-Saturday 7:00 p.m.

For further information contact: Pastor Allen Polston, 2020 Ralph St, New Castle, IN

Telephone: 765-521-8284 or visit our website @ www.churchofgodindiana.com

OVAPA, WV

October 4

FELLOWSHIP MEETING: Church of God, Ovapa, WV

Services times: 10:00 a.m., 2:00 p.m. & Sunday 10:00 a.m.

Meals will be served by the local congregation. LODGING: Sleep Inn,

Exit 1 – I-79N (304-345-5111); Country Suites, Exit 9 – I-79N Elkview

(304-965-9200); Elk Valley Inn, Exit 34 – Clay/W allback, approximately

12 miles from I-79N (304-587-7530)

For further information contact: Pastor Richard E. Talbot, 43 Ovapa Church

Road, Prociuous, WV 25164.

Telephone: 304-587-4693

SUMMERSVILLE, WV

October 6-12

REVIVAL: The Church of God, 74 Armstrong Road, Summersville, WV

Evangelist: Bro. E. David Stegmeier, Canby Oregon

Service times: Monday-Friday 7:00 p.m.; Saturday 6:00 p.m.; Sunday

10:30 a.m. & 6:00 p.m.

For further information contact: Pastor Earl R. Borders at 304-872-4047

Visit our website: www.ChurchofGodSummersvilleWV.com

MEDINA, OH

October 27-November 2

REVIVAL: The Church of God, 6745 Wooster Pike, Medina, OH 44256

Evangelist: Bro. Roger L. Decker, Newark, OH

Service times: Monday-Saturday 7:00 p.m. & Sunday 10:30 a.m. & 6:00 p.m.

For further information contact: Pastor Daniel Webster, 92 W. Main St., Seville, OH 44273

Telephone: (Home) 330-435-6490 or (Church) 330-725-5993

NEWARK, OH

December 28-31

CAMP MEETING: The Church of God, 675 N. Cedar St., Newark, OH 43055

Three services daily: 10:00 a.m., 3:00 p.m. & 7:00 p.m. The first service begins

Sunday morning. The afternoon service will be a teaching service.

For lodging reservation, please call Bro. & Sis. Bush at 740-345-1213

For more information contact: Pastor Roger Decker, 87 DeCrow Ave. Newark, OH 43055

Telephone: 740-344-2543

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