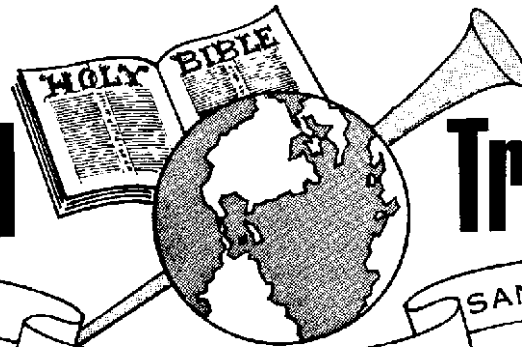


The Gospel



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. 40 September 2010 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?"

Guest Editorial

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

Brother Roger L. Decker Editor
Workers Too Numerous to Mention

THE CHURCH OF GOD BELIEVES IN:

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

SOME SPIRITUAL FACTS PERTAINING TO THE CHURCH

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

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Vol. 40 September 2010 No. 9

"Oh that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat!"

Job 23:3

Discouragement Can Come to Us

Trials, misfortunes, hard places, and even the death of a loved one will come to all at one time or another. These things are difficult to endure, and we wonder why they fall on our pathway. In the above Scripture we can see that the great Patriarch Job was burdened with deep heartache. He suddenly lost all his cattle and his property, and even his children were taken from him through death. Also, he was sorely afflicted in his body. Job was a righteous man in God's sight. He walked in a pleasing way before God day after day. In his hour of desperation, his trial became so very heavy and burdensome. From the human standpoint, it looked as though God had forsaken him. As Job was feeling all alone and pressed down, seemingly unable to gain God's attention, he cried out from the depths of his soul, "Oh that I knew where I might find him!"

Further in this chapter, Job related what he would do if he could find God and the way he felt that God would react to his situation. Read his words in verses 4-6: "I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments. I would know the words which he would answer me, and understand what he would say unto me. Will he plead against me with his great power? No; but he would put strength in me."

Although Job was sorely oppressed and knew not which way to turn at that time, he had faith and knew that God was able to help him and was assured that

He would come to his rescue. Job was unable to feel God's presence, yet he kept his faith and trust fixed in God's ability to deliver. In addition to losing his family, his possessions, and his health, he also had to contend with some so-called friends who accused him of sinful deeds. It seemed that trouble was coming from every side. The pressure and the burden that had fallen on him seemed to be more than he could bear, yet Job refused to abandon his integrity. Surely the consistent, godly life of this faithful patriarch has been a comfort, a strength, and an encouragement to millions of people through the ages as they, too, faced deep trials.

When we think of the many who are loaded down with adversity, trials, and afflictions of various types, we can understand their feelings of discouragement. Discouragement can come to anyone; however, it is something that each individual must overcome. If not dealt with quickly and properly, discouragement can lead to murmuring, complaining, and finally, sin and separation from God. Trials are not sent to the Christian to turn him away from God, but to strengthen his faith and to build him up spiritually so that he may be drawn closer to Him. During times of trials and afflictions, a person may become weary because of the lingering circumstances that have befallen him. If an individual is not careful, the devil will cause him to give up in the midst of the battle.

[continued on page 26]

3 John 1 The elder unto the wellbeloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth.

2 Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.

3 For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth.

4 I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.

5 Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers;

6 Which have borne witness of thy charity before the church: whom if thou

bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well:

7 Because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles.

8 We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellowhelpers to the truth.

9 I wrote unto the church: but Diotrefes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them, receiveth us not.

10 Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would,

and casteth them out of the church.

11 Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.

12 Demetrius hath good report of all men, and of the truth itself: yea, and we also bear record; and ye know that our record is true.

13 I had many things to write, but I will not with ink and pen write unto thee:

14 But I trust I shall shortly see thee, and we shall speak face to face. Peace be to thee. Our friends salute thee. Greet the friends by name.

TROUBLE WITHIN



BROTHER ROGER L. DECKER

The Apostle John's Exhortation

The Epistle of 3 John, although it contains only fourteen verses, is a letter from the Apostle John to a Christian named Gaius. Verse 1 says, "The elder unto the well-beloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth." Third John and Philemon are the only two epistles written as personal letters. These are precious letters because they portray early Christian correspondence. Although three men are mentioned in the

letter, I want to look especially at two of them.

Most scholars ascribe the term "elder" to John. The same language is used throughout all three epistles. The term "elder" was a fitting name for John. He was writing in his elder years, and the epistle is similar to language used in the Gospel of Saint John. The one to whom the letter is addressed is Gaius. No doubt, he was a dear friend of John's, and John praised him for his hospitality. Gaius' name comes from a Latin

word that means "I am glad; rejoice." John said he loved this brother in the Truth. John called him "beloved" three times in this short letter: in verses 2, 5, and 11. John's love toward Gaius was genuine and in accordance with God's Word.

John wrote the epistle in Ephesus, which was where he abode in his latter years. In this epistle John gave much praise to Gaius for his reputation, for his walking in Truth, for his faithfulness, and also for his hospitality. John even prayed

that he would prosper in his soul as well as physically. John prayed that God would grant Gaius three things: health of body, health of soul, and prosperity in secular affairs. Gaius was a real asset to the church, and John was making it well known. The brethren had testified of the truth that was in Gaius and said that he was walking in the light of the Truth.

Gaius was a common name used in the Word of God. You can read about a Gaius whom Paul baptized in 1 Corinthians 1:14, who also was a traveling partner of the Apostle Paul. All of them mentioned in the New Testament had good reports. With all the praise going out to Gaius, evidently he was worthy of it; he was a real asset to the church. Unfortunately, there was a troublemaker in the congregation. John had something different to write about those who stirred up trouble.

A man named Diotrefes was in the congregation. The word *Diotrefes* means "love nourished by a pagan god Zetas." What did John have to say about him? John's language changed. He no longer wrote of praise and exhortation, as he did when he told how great a man Gaius was. He could not give a good report of Diotrefes. He said in verse 9, "I wrote unto the church: but Diotrefes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not."

The first thing John mentioned about Diotrefes was that he wanted to have the preeminence. What does the word *preeminence* mean? It means "fond of being first; ambitious of distinction; someone who wants to be recognized." Only One should have the preeminence in the church, and that is Jesus Christ. Colossians 1:18 says, "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence."

The love of this sin got hold of Diotrefes, and it led him into other sins such as blasphemy and slander, all because he wanted to be first, or

wanted to have the preeminence. Loving to have the preeminence is a terrible sin, and it is contrary to the Word, the Spirit of God, and the will of God. There are always those around who think too highly of themselves. This is something, dear one, that you have to keep in check. The Spirit of God can help you to bring the body under. If that thinking is not brought under, it always leads to trouble. Some think they should be promoted or elevated instead of being humbled.

He Bringeth Low and Lifteth Up

Have you read the prayer of Hannah, the mother of one of the greatest high priests in the Old Testament? She got very specific in her prayer, and she prayed for a man child. First Samuel 2:1-8 states: "And Hannah prayed, and said, My heart rejoiceth in the LORD, mine horn is exalted in the LORD: my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in thy salvation. There is none holy as the LORD: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God.

"Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogancy come out of your mouth: for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed. The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girded with strength. They that were full have hired out themselves for bread; and they that were hungry ceased: so that the barren hath born seven; and she that hath many children is waxed feeble. The LORD killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. The LORD maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the LORD'S, and he hath set the world upon them."

Some individuals feel that they should be in high gear when really

they should be downshifting. Why? God has more work to do on them. They feel that they are in good shape and there is not much left that they do not know or that they have not walked in. On the contrary, God has more work to do on them before they start moving into cruising gear. You see, driving a tractor in the field is not the same as driving a car on the road. There is oncoming traffic on the road.

Let us see what the Scriptures say about preeminence and humility. Romans 12:10 reads, "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another." Preferring others is difficult for some people. Romans 12:3 tells us, "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith."

Jesus, when speaking in Luke, Chapter 18, talked about two men who went into the temple to pray. The Pharisee prayed and exalted himself. The publican prayed in humility, but he exalted God. It makes a difference how you approach God. Luke 18:14 says, "I tell you, this man [the publican] went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." The wise man said in Proverbs 16:19, "Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud." Proverbs 29:23 reads, "A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit."

Becoming As Little Children

We read in Matthew 18:1-4: "At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, And said, Verily I say unto you,

Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

I want you to read how Jesus answered the mother of James and John in Matthew 20:20-28: "Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him. And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom. But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able. And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father.

"And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren. But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

If God has His hand on you for work in the Kingdom of God, you need to start visiting the sick, going to rest homes, and praying with people. Today some people want to go straight into the pulpit and begin as an evangelist or a pastor. No, you need to have a good foundation and start from the ground up. You need to learn how to work with people,

learn how to be compassionate with people, learn how to instruct and counsel people, and learn how to encourage people. When you go to a hospital to visit someone, you should not tell that person about someone who had the same condition and died. You should encourage and lift up that person. The individual is already going through enough by worrying about the test results. If the individual does not know Jesus Christ, you should try to lead him or her in that direction.

There are always people who think they should move up. When you get that thought, you ought to take it to Christ right away. A thought like that will get you into trouble.

Once I read a story of a young minister who attended a camp meeting, and he could not wait to preach. Finally, the word came that they were going to use him in a service, and he was thrilled. He had his outline ready to get into the message. When the time came for him to stand in the pulpit, he was exuberant. He was all fired up and ready to go; but as he left the pulpit, he went out feeling like a big flop, feeling depressed and discouraged. He no longer had confidence in himself.

Afterward, he went to an older minister and said: "I don't know what happened. I had everything ready. I had my notes ready, I had studied, and I was well ready and well versed to go right in there and bring the message, but I feel discouraged and whipped."

The older minister told him, "If you had gone in the way you came out, you would have done well."

How we need God to help us! One time when I was sitting behind Brother Emerson Wilson on the platform, I noticed that his leg was shaking back and forth. He had that nervous habit. I asked him, "Brother Wilson, are you still nervous after all these years?"

He turned to me and said, "Yes, and I never want to lose it." What an answer! He meant that he was relying upon God to help him. He was

not going into the pulpit in his own strength.

Vengeance Belongs to the Lord

Going back to the Scripture text, Diotrephes thought he was something. Major problems develop when a person becomes exalted in a congregation. In Numbers, Chapter 12, you can read that Aaron and Miriam spoke against Moses. Therefore, Miriam became leprous and caused the congregation to be at a standstill for a week. Moses did his best to get the Lord to heal her, but God would not even hear Moses' prayer when He put judgment on Miriam.

God can still handle His church, just as He handled the congregations in the Old Testament. In 1 Samuel, Chapter 24, you can read that David would not touch King Saul because he was the anointed of God, even though David's life was in jeopardy. Diotrephes spoke against the Apostle John. We read in Psalm 105:15, "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm."

First Samuel 24:1-12 states: "And it came to pass, when Saul was returned from following the Philistines, that it was told him, saying, Behold, David is in the wilderness of Engedi. Then Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and went to seek David and his men upon the rocks of the wild goats. And he came to the sheepcotes by the way, where was a cave; and Saul went in to cover his feet: and David and his men remained in the sides of the cave. And the men of David said unto him, Behold the day of which the LORD said unto thee, Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand, that thou mayest do to him as it shall seem good unto thee. [In other words, his men were saying: 'We have King Saul right where we want him. What an opportunity! God has delivered your enemy right into our hands.'] Then David arose, and cut off the skirt of Saul's robe privily.

"And it came to pass afterward, that David's heart smote him, because he had cut off Saul's skirt. And he said unto his men, The LORD forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the LORD'S anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the LORD. [At that particular time, Saul was in bad shape. David was despairing for his life because Saul had threatened him and tried to kill him with a javelin. Saul was in pursuit of David, yet David would not lay his hand on the backslidden king.]

"So David restrained [or kept back] his servants with these words, and suffered them not to rise against Saul. But Saul rose up out of the cave, and went on his way. David also arose afterward, and went out of the cave, and cried after Saul, saying, My lord the king. And when Saul looked behind him, David stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed himself.

"And David said to Saul, Wherefore hearest thou men's words, saying, Behold, David seeketh thy hurt? Behold, this day thine eyes have seen how that the LORD had delivered thee to day into mine hand in the cave: and some bade me kill thee: but mine eye spared thee; and I said, I will not put forth mine hand against my lord; for he is the LORD'S anointed. Moreover, my father, see, yea, see the skirt of thy robe in my hand: for in that I cut off the skirt of thy robe, and killed thee not, know thou and see that there is neither evil nor transgression in mine hand, and I have not sinned against thee; yet thou huntest my soul to take it. The LORD judge between me and thee, and the LORD avenge me of thee: but mine hand shall not be upon thee."

King Saul wanted to destroy David. He had access to the best trained men. He was a king, and all he had to do was speak and it was granted. David refused to lay his hand upon King Saul because he knew that God would take care of Saul. Romans 12:19 reads, "Dearly

beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." Vengeance, or repaying, belongs in the hand of the Lord.

Marks of a Troublemaker

In 3 John the Apostle John spoke to Gaius against Diotrephes. He said that Diotrephes loved to have the preeminence. In other words, Diotrephes loved to be in the forefront and outshine everyone else. He had a very competitive spirit.

Friend, you need to be careful that this spirit does not get hold of you, whether you sing, teach, play an instrument, or whatever you do. God gives each individual a gift. You need to stay within your own gift. You should not think of yourself more highly than you ought to think. You are not in competition in the work of God. If you get a competitive spirit, you are lean in your soul, doing things in your own strength. When you get in the spirit of competition, then you lose the Spirit of God.

Diotrephes was bold enough to speak out against the elder John, one of the Apostles. He had gone as far as to go against John and reject the Apostles. He was not hospitable to the Apostles. He loved to be first, and he did not want anyone else to be ahead of him. He would not submit to the authority of the elder John or the other Apostles. He was a troublemaker.

God has ordained designated authority in the Kingdom of God. As Creator, God is supreme and has all authority. We read in John 13:3, "Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God." All things were in His hands; He was in control. In Matthew 28:18 we read, "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." God is supreme in authority and in preeminence. However, the Father delegated all au-

thority to the Son, and then Jesus delegated authority to His Apostles.

We read in Matthew 10:1, "And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease." Jesus, speaking to the disciples, said in Matthew 28:19-20: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen." Jesus delegated authority through the office of the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 4:8-9 says: "Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?" He gave gifts to men.

John said in verse 10 of our Scripture text, "Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church." This is just how bold Diotrephes got. He had a take over spirit. He would not receive anyone who lined up with John and had fellowship with John.

Diotrephes loved to have the preeminence, but look at all the other sins laid to his charge: "Prating against us with malicious words." The word *prate* means "gossip, babble, and trifle." He was a gossip with "malicious words." What are malicious words? They are hurtful and vicious words spoken with malice. Examples of malicious words are "He's a liar" or "He's a thief" or "He's not even saved." Those are vicious, hurtful words. When people get crosswise, then they begin to say hurtful, vicious words.

You do not find Diotrephes'

name as being a minister, an Apostle, or a traveling companion on missionary journeys. However, he got so bold that he ran down the ministry. David knew better than to do that, and he lived during the Old Testament days. Diotrephes got very bold when he ran down the ministry. He refused to receive them, and even cast them out. He was a real troublemaker in the congregation, and he continually spoke evil against the ministry. I repeat, he ran them down with his mouth and put out those who received the ministry. He had self-proclaimed authority. He went after the Apostle with his mouth and false charges.

The Weapons of Our Warfare Are Not Carnal

Which of the two would be a pattern for your life—Gaius or Diotrephes? Gaius had a good name among the church, but Diotrephes stirred up trouble within. It is always trouble within that tears up a congregation. It is not false religion or blasphemy from the outside. Ecclesiastes 7:1 says, "A good name is better than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of one's birth." Why is that? If you die with a good name, as far as God is concerned, you are relieved of all life's heartaches. Coming into the world, heartaches are just beginning. On the other hand, when you leave and you are a child of God, you are relieved of all earthly responsibilities.

Gaius is remembered as a pillar in the church. He loved the Truth, and he allowed Truth to be a part of him. The trouble in the congregation that John was trying to straighten out came from a carnal heart. Dear one, whenever there is trouble in a congregation, you are going to find carnality involved.

When dealing with division in the Corinthian church, that division was within that congregation. What did Paul say? He said they walked as men and thought as men. Paul stated in 2 Corinthians 10:4 that "the

weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God." A child of God uses the weapons that God has given him. He prays, he looks into God's Word, and he follows after Truth. Carnal men use their mouths, just as Diotrephes did, to tear down others and to boast of great things. They will even use force before the church.

John said that Diotrephes was prating against them with malicious words. Gossiping is talking rapidly with sharpness and abruptness. Also, it is foolish and idle talk. Diotrephes was telling others whether or not they were saved and working his mouth overtime to destroy the reputations and the influences of other people.

Some men form unions to try to overthrow the work of God, but God uses the opposite. He uses unity to keep His people together, but men will unionize. In other words, they try to get people who are in agreement with them. You can have the unity of the Spirit and people still disagree, but they agree on salvation. God will bring us together, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit. Unity starts with the Holy Spirit. We did not start unity; the Holy Spirit started unity. When you were saved, you were brought into fellowship with every brother and sister in Christ. You did not go around choosing who you were going to fellowship. The Holy Spirit brings you into fellowship with the saints of God.

Do you love the Truth? Are you prospering in your soul, in your health, and in the secular things of this world? Dear one, if a man and a woman will truly live for God, God

will take care of a lot of things that tear down people's lives. You can prosper spiritually, and you can prosper in health. A lot of people today have such bitterness in their hearts, and it is making them look like old men and old women before their time.

Diotrephes was a troublemaker. In essence, John said, "When I see you face to face, I am going to take care of it." John was writing during a time of apostasy in the morning time. First, Second, and Third John tell you what was going on. The love of many was waxing cold, and that was the reason John talked much about love, not only love to God but also love for the brethren. One of the first signs of an apostasy is that love begins to dwindle.

Diotrephes could not have cared less that John was an Apostle. Diotrephes ran the Apostle John down with malicious words. He had much boldness, and a wrong spirit had caused him to love the preeminence; that was what overtook him.

Do you love the Truth? Are you prospering in your soul? Could John write you a letter, if he knew you, and say that he wished that you would prosper in your soul and in health? Or would God consider you to be a troublemaker who loves to have the preeminence?

Do you think more of yourself than you ought to think? God has ways of humbling you that you would not want anything to do with, but He can do it. If you need help in your soul, God is right there ready to help you.

(Compact Disc TR-578M)

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

2 Chronicles 26:1 Then all the people of Judah took Uzziah, who was sixteen years old, and made him king in the room of his father Amaziah.

2 He built Eloth, and restored it to Judah, after that the king slept with his fathers.

3 Sixteen years old was Uzziah when he began to reign, and he reigned

fifty and two years in Jerusalem. His mother's name also was Jecoliah of Jerusalem.

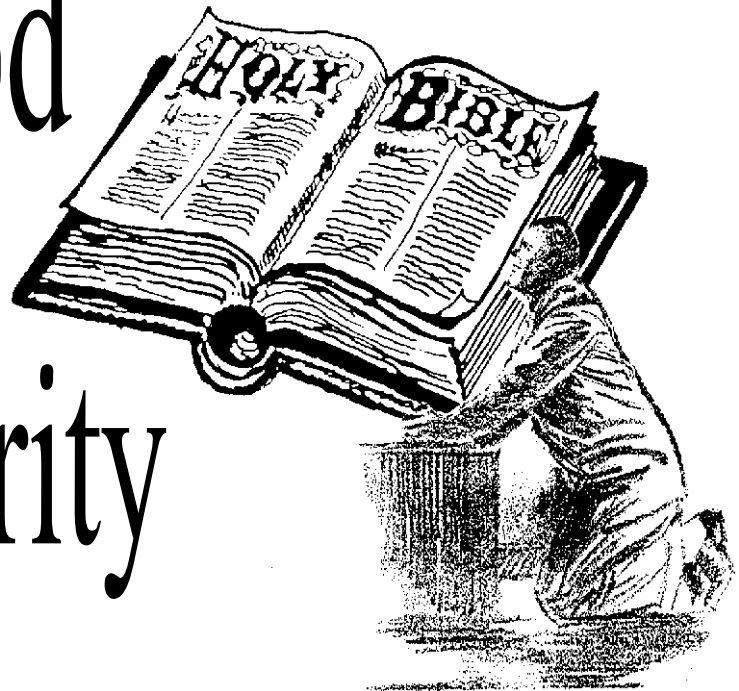
4 And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father Amaziah did.

5 And he sought God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God: and as long as he

sought the LORD, God made him to prosper.

6 And he went forth and warred against the Philistines, and brake down the wall of Gath, and the wall of Jabneh, and the wall of Ashdod, and built cities about Ashdod, and among the Philistines.

Serving God and Prosperity



Brother Esau Brooks

True Prosperity

The Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 1:21, "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." It is only by obeying the Gospel that we are raised to the position where we can reign in this life. In the midst of all the wickedness, all the corruption, and all the ungodliness and while people are falling flat on their faces

because of the various conditions that exist in the world, we can reign in Christ, thank the Lord. This is an opportunity that each of us has set before us. I trust that you will avail yourself of it and that you will reach out to the Lord from the very depth of your heart and ask Him to raise you up to heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

I cannot help but rejoice when I sing the song, "I Have Found It *All*

(not a part, but *all*) in Thee." Sometimes people get the impression that this is just a dream or a fantasy, but it is not; it is a reality. Jesus makes a difference in a person's life. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:17 that "old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." God is striving to open our eyes to the deeper things of God, and He is endeavoring to open the eyes of those who have not yet started to

open their eyes to what they are really missing by following the ways of sin and the devil.

Our Scripture text refers to a portion of Uzziah's life history. The great thing this man did in his day is beautifully presented in the language of these words. He enjoyed great blessings because of the path that he chose in the early years of his life. You may wonder why I would resurrect the memory of Uzziah. I am constrained to ask you to consider this portion of his life so that you can become aware of the possibility of doing the very same thing in these days.

In verse 5 of our Scripture text, a very sobering thought was introduced for our consideration. It reads, "And he sought God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God: and as long as he sought the Lord, God made him to prosper."

I am sure everyone is very much interested in whatever will bring prosperity their way. In fact, I believe that one reason many people are rejecting the Lord is that they have developed the notion that, should they dare to serve God, it would automatically ruin their future. I want you to consider what is stated regarding this man, as found in the latter part of verse 5, which says that "as long as he sought the Lord, God made him to prosper."

Whenever God allows a person to prosper, as mentioned in this verse, it is actually speaking about *real* prosperity. All that people call prosperity is not spiritual prosperity. Most people have come to judge a successful life in terms of the things that one may accomplish, achieve, or amass in this world. While this Scripture does not tell us very much regarding the material riches this man might have acquired in serving God, it reveals that God made him to prosper.

Many people are following the wrong philosophy regarding life. True prosperity does not merely consist of the abundance of things that people have; true prosperity

includes not only the body but also the soul. A man can be rich in this world's goods and yet find himself a pauper, spiritually speaking. In Jesus' message to the people of His day, He gave them a glimpse of what took place in the life of a certain individual.

Before Jesus delivered that illustration, He warned His people against becoming covetous concerning the things of this life. In Luke 12:15 He stated, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." One of the greatest mistakes an individual can make in this life is that of seeking only earthly treasures and failing to recognize his obligations toward God. Dear one, salvation is not an option or a matter of choice, but it is an obligation.

The Whole Duty of Man

The wise man said in his deliberation in Ecclesiastes 12:13, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man." This was not meant to be restricted in its interpretation to the people of yesteryears, but it was meant to be understood as God's plan for everyone. Fearing God and keeping His commandments is what our duty in this life consists of.

Jesus went on to illustrate the dangers of one devoting his efforts in this life merely to amass earthly riches or to be successful in terms of material things. He said in Luke 12:16-19: "The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry."

A certain man planted a great

crop, and he had such a tremendous harvest that he ran out of storage room to store his goods. Notice that this man began to think only in terms of this physical life. In essence, he queried within himself, "What am I going to do? I have all of these goods and no place to bestow them." He planned to tear down his barns and build greater ones. In so many words, he went on to say, "When I have finally achieved this end, I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have much goods laid up for many years; take your ease, enjoy life, eat, drink, and be merry.'" At the very moment he was planning to enjoy the labors of his hands, God came on the scene. Luke 12:20 tells us that God's message was, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be?"

This is a good question for you to ask yourself. All the things that you are sacrificing your life for, all the things that are causing you to run the risk of losing your soul, whose shall they be? We each are faced with the possibility of life being suddenly cut off without a moment's warning. We could be ushered to the shore of a long eternity, unprepared to meet God.

Regarding Uzziah, our Scripture text says that as long as he sought the Lord, God made him to prosper. I should think it would arouse your interest. Surely you are interested in prospering. Well, this is God's formula for *real* success. In this Scripture the whole outcome of Uzziah's life was summed up in these few words: "As long as he sought the Lord." What a pity he did not choose to continue in that way! What a shame that, after experiencing so many blessings from God, he chose to do otherwise. As we look around at our generation, we cannot help but see the same mistake being commonly committed by our enlightened generation.

Despite all the knowledge that we have achieved along many lines, it would appear that few (and they are getting fewer) have actually

discovered that true prosperity lies in serving God. There is no disappointment in Jesus, friend. There is no disappointment in the outcome of a life lived to the glory of God.

A Warning to All

The point that interests me regarding the story of King Uzziah is the fact that he had the opportunity to serve God, and he even embarked on the journey of serving God. Second Chronicles 26:4 states, "He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord." He sought God. It was the right thing for Uzziah to do, and it is still the right thing to do.

I am not striving to induce you into a life that will prove disappointing in the end. I am not striving to convince you to take a step that you are going to regret in the long run, but I am endeavoring to open your eyes to the realization that as long as you follow the course of sinful people and wrong, you are bound to be disappointed with the outcome. Again, verse 5 says, "As long as he sought the Lord, God made him to prosper."

This story was not placed in the Word of God merely to entertain or to afford reading material. It was written to serve as a warning to all. The Bible faithfully tells us in 2 Peter 2:4 that God did not spare the angels that sinned. This is not talking about celestial beings, or angels in Heaven, because the angels in Heaven cannot sin. One song reads, "*Heaven is a holy place, filled with glory and with grace. Sin can never enter there. All within its gates are pure, from defilement kept secure. Sin can never enter there.*"

When the Scripture speaks of angels that have sinned, what is it talking about? Hebrews 1:13-14 reads: "But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool? Are they not all ministering spirits [angels are ministering spirits], sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?"

When the term is used in reference to the servants of God, it is speaking of men and women who have been called to a life of ministering the Gospel. This is the reason that in the Book of Revelation, the pastors of those seven congregations were called angels, not in the sense that they were celestial beings, but in the sense that they were ministers, ministering to the spiritual needs of mankind.

With this understanding in mind, the Apostle Peter was saying that as holy, devoted, dedicated, and consecrated to God as the men of old were, many of them failed to go on for God, just as Uzziah did. They failed, as Jude told us in Jude 1:6, "And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day." They kept not their first estate. In other words, they let it go.

This type of failure is happening all around us today, and it concerns me. Everywhere you turn, individuals are making the same mistake that Uzziah made after enjoying the good things of God. The Hebrew writer spoke about those who were once enlightened, who had tasted the good Word of God, who were under the blood and knew the Word, who were partakers of the Holy Ghost, and who had tasted of the heavenly gift. He spoke of those who had experienced the power of salvation and then fell away. I want to remind you of the danger of drifting away from these things.

As long as this man in our Scripture text served God, God made him to prosper. As referenced earlier, Peter said in 2 Peter 2:4-6: "For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly; And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrhah into

ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly." These things are on record as examples to those who afterward should decide to live ungodly.

Resisting God's Spirit Is Dangerous

In God's message to the Prophet Ezekiel, He spoke of the righteous turning from his righteousness and doing that which is not right. If one should do so, all his righteousness that he had done would not be mentioned.

I want to remind you of these solemnizing words. Ezekiel 3:17-19 reads: "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul." Do you understand that? When God says to the wicked, "Thou shalt surely die," he is going to die. Unless he accepts the warning that God sends him and turns around, he will perish.

All we hear about today are the mercies of God and the love of God. In fact, most people do not even want to mention the justice of God. They do not want to hear you preach on the possibility of God taking vengeance on those who do not know God and disobey the Gospel. They seem to believe that this was all right for years gone by, but not for today. On the contrary, it is still true. The Lord is going to be revealed from Heaven in flaming fire. He is going to come and take vengeance one of these days on

those who do not know God and on those who disobey the Gospel.

Ezekiel 3:20 states, "Again, When a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumblingblock before him, he shall die: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thine hand."

It is not a good thing to backslide or to flirt around with wrong. Resisting the moving of God's Spirit upon the soul is dangerous, no matter how long you have served God. What God was warning Ezekiel about back then, He is warning people about today. If you turn from your righteousness, you will die in your sin.

Someone may say, "That is an Old Testament Scripture." The only thing Old Testament about this is the setting. It is New Testament teaching in an Old Testament setting. Peter said in 2 Peter 2:21, "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." As Jesus said to Judas, it would have been better for that man who was going to betray Him had he never been born. In 2 Peter, Chapter 2, God assures us of divine retribution for disobedience and wrongdoing.

The Need to Look at Life Seriously

Again, Uzziah started right by seeking God when he began his reign, but little did he realize the privilege and the blessing that was his. He took it for granted, as many people do in our time. As long as he served God, all went well with him, but no doubt, he was influenced to believe that all would still be well with him no matter what he did. Are some people today making that same blunder? Have you failed to stop and consider this?

Today people in the world feel

that as long as they bother with God, they will never succeed in this life. Contrariwise, only by serving God can they succeed. I know it is getting more and more popular to live in sin and to live for the devil, but you need to look at life seriously enough to see the recompense of the reward that people are reaping.

There has never been a time when there has been more sickness and so many different kinds of sicknesses than there are today. I suppose some people try to find comfort in saying that cancer and AIDS have been around for a long time. That might be, but not to the same alarming degree as they are in our day. Every once in a while we hear about the discovery of some different kind of malady or ailment, and each one seems to be more terrible. Not many years ago, all people had to worry about was cancer, and most of the research was focused on finding a cure for cancer. However, before they succeeded, along came AIDS and other destructive diseases for which the medical profession has no remedy.

Once I had the privilege of speaking to a nurse in a leading hospital. Her remark to me was this: "If we really knew all the truth concerning the fatal results of AIDS, it would create a panic in our world." People are growing more passive and more indifferent to the things of God, and in spite of the judgments of God that are falling all around us, they seem to have no time to pay serious attention to Him. All the while, God is speaking in judgment to awaken people to what the ultimate end of life for the wicked will be.

God wants people to have all that is good for them in this life. Everything comes from God. King Uzziah chose his course of action, and it was a good choice as long as he sought the Lord. However, down toward the end of his life, he decided to abandon that course, and he had a very miserable end. That is the reason I want to emphasize to you the words "as long" in verse 5 of

our Scripture text, which imply that somewhere down the road, the king stopped going in that direction. As long as he was serving the Lord, God caused him to prosper. Later, he was wrongly influenced, and contrary to how he started, he ended terribly.

Why am I telling you this? I am trying to help you not to make the same mistake. Perhaps you have not started to serve God or you might have started but have given up. I want you to know from the standpoint of the Word of God what to expect.

The Benefits of Standing With God

Notice that verse 5 of our Scripture text tells us that "he sought God." Then verse 6 states, "He went forth and warred against the Philistines, and brake down the wall of Gath, and the wall of Jabneh, and the wall of Ashdod, and built cities about Ashdod, and among the Philistines." God was well pleased with that, because Uzziah was doing right.

Dear one, the Lord brought you into this life for a purpose. The purpose for your being here is not to live wickedly and to follow your every whim. As one songwriter stated, we were made to serve the Lord. People living in sin have no more business living in sin than a fish would have living in the top of a tree. You know that a fish would not last long in a tree because God did not make it for that kind of environment. Likewise, if you are living in sin, you are losing sight of what you are missing, and you are losing what there is for you to enjoy.

If this life were to continue forever, then you could go on and make decisions for the here and now. However, the most we are going to be in this life is approximately one hundred years or less, and then we will have to leave. What happens after we leave? Friend, there is life after death.

Do you recall the story that Jesus

told of Lazarus and the rich man? They both died, but they were not annihilated. Luke 16:23 tells us, "And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom." They lived beyond the grave. We will do the same. That future life is what I am striving to get you to be concerned about. You are not merely a creature of this earth, but you are a creature of two worlds: the one that now is and the one that is to come. Only God knows what your future will be. One thing I want to assure you of is that you will have a future beyond the present life that you are now living and enjoying.

King Uzziah manifested a sincere desire to enjoy God's favor as he started his reign. He kept up the pure worship of God as his father had done. The Scripture text tells us in verses 3-5: "Sixteen years old was Uzziah when he began to reign [an early age]. . . . And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father Amaziah did [Uzziah had a godly example]. And he sought God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God. . . ." As long as Zechariah lived, Uzziah served God, but when Zechariah passed off the stage of action, Uzziah turned away from God.

Today many people seem to be like Uzziah. It seems as though all they think about is their life now. Uzziah began by making God the object of his pursuit. His heart was set in God's direction, but despite that, in the course of time he backed away from it all. That is what is happening to many people in this generation. They begin well, but the trouble is, they back away from it. Others are adopting new ways and new practices about serving God. I want you to notice that the blessings of God only followed Uzziah as long as he served God. The moment he abandoned that course of action, his life changed completely.

Church, we must get ready. Instead of things getting better all around us, they will continue to wax

worse and worse. The Scripture forewarns us that evil men and seducers will wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. God's call to man is still to seek Him and to forsake his own ways. Many people are failing in God's great plan by ignoring His call. They are setting themselves against the demands of God, and to do so is to invite disaster. The Bible says that as long as Uzziah sought the Lord, God made him to prosper. Those who prosper are only those whom God causes to prosper. As long as Uzziah served God, God helped him. Many people feel that to go God's way is to waste their time and to throw away their lives. It still pays to stand with God and to obey His Word.

The Worst Kind of Disaster

The devil knows he will never get some people to go to a honky-tonk or to a dance house or to drink a bottle of liquor. However, if those individuals are not careful, they can become captivated by the devil in another way and end up in a life of destruction the same as those who are reveling in the worst kinds of wickedness.

This Biblical account stands out to teach us that no matter what elevation you might have received in God, if you reject Him and choose to go your own way and set yourself up against God, you are in for the worst kind of disaster. I want to emphasize that as long as Uzziah lived for God, God was on his side. However, the moment he turned God down, trouble came.

Second Chronicles 26:16 says, "But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction." Is it not strange that with all these warnings in the Word of God, people still go on and do the very same thing that the Word of God warns against?

At one time, God blessed Uzziah, and he prospered because God helped him. He was able to build towers and dig many wells. Also, he had fighting men who were able to face any enemy's army.

Therefore, he waged successful wars and gained many victories. He prospered in the fact that he could count on God's help. This might have caused him to become lifted up in his heart. Many poor souls are making the mistake of their lives by allowing themselves to be lifted up too much in their hearts, and they will not bend their knees to meet God's conditions, as outlined in the Word of God.

We have come to the place in our world that if we were to preach to those same people the things they once rejoiced in, they would call us fanatics. They find no pleasure in the preaching of Truth. They would have us to believe that they have discovered a better way and that they are making more progress now than they ever did, but look at the condition into which their lives are gradually slipping.

Many people cannot even abide by the doctrine of the Church of God anymore. They cannot stand solid Bible Church of God preaching any more. You need to have the grace of God in your heart to be able to take what "thus saith the Lord." That is where the trouble is, but many people do not realize it. Without Church of God preaching you cannot have Church of God people, because the name on the outside is not what makes the Church of God; it is that which is on the inside.

When we speak of the Church of God, we are talking about the church that belongs to God. When we talk about being the people of God, we need to understand that it means we belong to God. People must first belong to God to be the people of God. A mere profession of religion or a mere association with a religious group does not constitute the people of God; they must belong to God.

What does it mean to belong to God? I have five children. Now and then, I hear people say, "That boy looks just like his father." Who else is he going to look like? If he were to look like John Doe, then I would wonder if he were my son. He must

at least resemble my family to the extent that people would be able to tell that he belongs to the Brooks family. By the same reasoning, you cannot belong to God if you look like the devil, act like the devil, and walk like the devil. If you belong to God, you are godly. To be on your way to Heaven, you must be heavenly down here. This thing means more than just going to church at your convenience, carrying a Bible, and singing Church of God songs; it means having an experience with God in the soul.

Transgressing Against the Lord

There was a difference the moment Uzziah quit serving God. The prosperity was cut off. Today the moment people stop walking with God, other spirits come in and take charge. That is the reason so many people profess religion yet have such nasty, ungodly spirits. People fail to realize that the moment they turn their backs on God, they are heading toward destruction. I repeat, as long as Uzziah served God, He made him to prosper.

Second Chronicles 26:16 reads, "But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the LORD his God. . . ." His life turned just the opposite. When he was seeking God, God made him to prosper, but when he became strong, his heart was lifted up, and he no longer sought God. He was transgressing against God. You need to watch that a spirit does not come over you that would cause you to transgress against God instead of seeking Him. That spirit overtook Uzziah. He became presumptuous, and according to the latter part of verse 16, he "went into the temple of the LORD to burn incense upon the altar of incense." This was something he had absolutely no business doing. Many people in our day are getting themselves mixed up in things that they have no business being involved with.

God has a place for everyone in the church. You need to find your place and stay in it. You cannot do half as much good if you try to get into someone else's position as you can in your own place. Just because I am saved and you are saved does not mean that God has thrown us together and left us to do as we please. No, the Bible tells us that God has an orderly way of carrying out His business on this earth.

Notice that the Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 12:28, "And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues." Not everyone can be an apostle, yet if you look around today, it seems that everyone wants to lead and no one wants to follow. He was classifying these positions by degrees. Though someone may say you cannot make a difference in the Church of God, God has already made the difference. Paul even mentioned that there are helps and governments in the church. According to divine inspiration, these are God's inspired works in the body.

Why am I getting into these things? I want to emphasize that as long as we recognize God's way, submit to God's way, and subscribe to God's way, He will cause us to prosper. The moment people depart from obeying and submitting to God's Word, trouble will come in.

Second Chronicles 26:16-20 states: "He transgressed against the LORD his God, and went into the temple of the LORD to burn incense upon the altar of incense. And Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him fourscore priests of the LORD, that were valiant men: And they withstood Uzziah the king, and said unto him, It appertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the LORD, but to the priests the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense: go out of the sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed; neither shall it be for thine honour from the LORD God.

Then Uzziah was wroth, and had a censer in his hand to burn incense: and while he was wroth with the priests, the leprosy even rose up in his forehead before the priests in the house of the LORD, from beside the incense altar. And Azariah the chief priest, and all the priests, looked upon him, and, behold, he was leprous in his forehead, and they thrust him out from thence; yea, himself hasted also to go out, because the LORD had smitten him." What a woeful end!

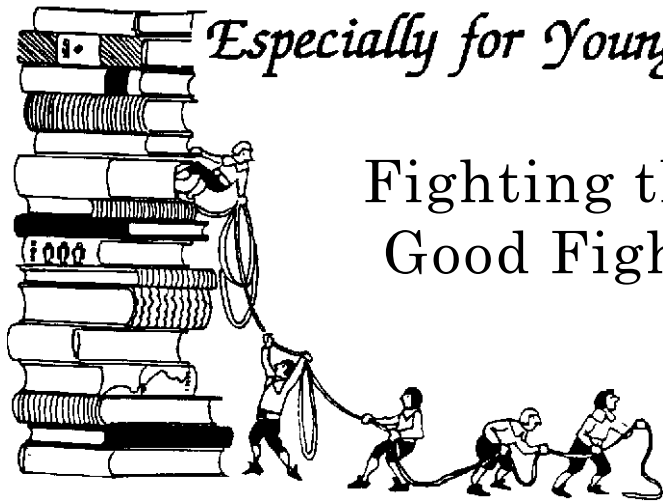
Verse 21 continues, "And Uzziah the king was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a several house, being a leper; for he was cut off from the house of the LORD. . . ." After doing all those great exploits and marvelous works for God, he was cut off. As long as he sought God, He honored him, blessed him, and prospered him; but the moment he turned his back in rejection and began to transgress against the Lord, God turned and rewarded him according to his doings.

Hebrews 4:1-2 reads: "Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." Dear heart, you must beware of the work of these evil spirits all around us. By God's grace, help, and strength, you must remain faithful to God at any cost. This is my prayer for you. May God bless you.

(Cassette C-2073E)

**Learn to BEAR
and to FORBEAR,
FORGIVE and FORGET;
For this is the way all
Christians should live.**

Especially for Young People



Fighting the Good Fight



A number of years ago, at an orphanage in a northern state, there lived a boy whom we will call William Jones. He was just an ordinary boy. No, he was not so in one respect, which I must point out, to his discredit. William had a temper that distinguished him from the general run of boys. William's temper might have been inherited from a Spanish pirate, and yet he was a boy whom everyone loved. However, his hair-trigger temper at times terribly spoiled things. It would be tedious to recount his uprisings of anger and the direful consequences that often followed.

Mr. Custer, the superintendent of the orphanage, had hopefully striven to lead William to the paths of right, but it was a difficult task.

Sometimes it needs but one small breach to begin the overthrow of a giant wall. One small key, if it is the right one, will open the most resisting door. One small phrase may start a germ thought growing in a human mind, which in after years, may become a mighty oak of character. So William Jones, the incorrigible fighter, was to demonstrate this principle, as we shall see.

On a Sunday evening, as the hundred or more orphans met together and sang "Onward, Christian Soldiers!" they saw a stranger seated at the speaker's desk in the chapel. He was a venerable old man, straight and dignified, his hoary head a crown of honor, because he was all that he appeared: a father in Israel.

In a brief speech he told the boys that he had once been a Union soldier

and had fought in the battles of his country. He told of the courage it required to face death upon the battlefield. He described the charges his company had made and met, the sieges and the marches, the sufferings they endured, and lastly, the joys that victory and the end of the conflict brought.

Then, when the boys were at the height of interested expectancy, he skillfully drew the lesson he wanted them to learn. He told of a greater warfare, requiring a higher courage, and bringing as a reward a larger and more enduring victory. "Boys," he said, "the real soldiers are the Christian soldiers; the real battle is against sin; the real battleground is where that silent struggle is constantly waging within our minds." Then he told of Paul, who said, "I have fought a good fight." "Did any of you boys ever fight a bad fight?" Every head but one turned to a common point at this juncture, and the eyes of only one boy remained upon the speaker. William Jones had the record for bad fights, and that is why about ninety-nine pairs of eyes had sought him out when the speaker asked the question, which he hoped each one would ask himself. The reason William did not look around accusingly at the other boys was that he had taken to heart all that had been said, and because of this, the turning point had come. His conversion had begun. William gave his heart to God that day. Henceforth, he determined so to live that he could say with Paul, "I have fought a good fight."

No sooner does a boy determine to fight the good fight than Satan accepts

the challenge and gives him a combat such as will seem like a "fiery trial" to try him. These struggles develop the moral backbone, and if a boy does not give in, he will find his moral courage increasing with each moral fight. Just let that thought stay in your mind, underscored in bold-faced italics, and printed in indelible ink. If you have a tendency to be a spiritual "jelly back," it will be like a rod of steel to your spine.

The fear of William Jones' knuckles had won a degree of peace for him. He had lived a sort of armed truce, so to speak. Now he was subjected to petty persecutions by mean boys who took advantage of his new stand. He did not put on the look of a martyr either, but he kept good natured even when the old volcano within was rumbling and threatening to bury the tormentors in hot lava and ashes. The old desire to fight the bad fight was turned into the new channel of determination to fight the good fight. Today William Jones is still fighting the good fight, and someday he will be crowned with eternal victory, because he who fights the good fight is fighting for eternity.

Will you not try to live each day, subduing every sinful thought, so that at night when you kneel to pray, you can say to the Lord, "I have fought a good fight today" ?

Selected

John 10:1 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.

2 But he that entereth in by the

door is the shepherd of the sheep.

3 To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.

4 And when he putteth forth his

own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.

5 And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.

Discerning the Voice of the Shepherd



Brother Leamon Whitehead

The Clear Ring of Truth

In this Scripture text Jesus lets us know there are many voices in the world. Jesus said His sheep follow Him, and they hear Him because they know His voice. They do not know the voice of a stranger, and they will not follow that voice. The stranger that He was talking about is someone who is not a part of the family of God and does not have the interest of God and the church in mind. A stranger is someone who is out to do a detrimental work to the work of God. The Bible lets us know that we need to discern the voice of

the Shepherd because there are many voices today.

We need to be able to distinguish between the voice of the Shepherd and the voice of a stranger. We identify people by their voices. When you talk on the telephone, you cannot see the person, but many times you can distinguish who is speaking by the sound of the person's voice. There is a certain sound to the voice of the Shepherd; His voice is like no other. That is the reason you need to understand more about Him and be able to discern His voice.

The Scriptures tell us that one

time people of authority sent men to take Jesus, and they fully intended to take Him. However, when they were listening to Jesus speak, they began to feel and hear something that they had never heard before. The voice of Jesus and the message of Truth was coming through to them. When they returned without Jesus, they were asked, "Why have ye not brought him?" The men replied, "Never man spake like this man" (John 7:46).

David said in Psalm 89:15, "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound." The Truth has a clear ring about it. It is sweeter than

honey, and it is better than anything you have ever heard. It will thrill you way down inside. Glory be to God for the Truth of God's Eternal Word! When the call of Jesus comes to you, you will know that never a man spoke as He does.

The Bible says in John 1:11-12: "He came unto his own, and his own received him not [or did not hear Him]. But as many as received him [some people heard Him and recognized who He was, that He was bringing a message from Heaven], to them gave he power to become the sons of God. . . ." Others heard a different voice. Many people did not hear His voice, but some did, and they accepted what He said. They were saved and brought into the fold of God.

Each of our voices is unique and different. I once thought that it was the vocal chords that made our voices unique, but I learned that the vocal chords and the voice box are where the sounds are formed, and then air pushes the sounds up into the facial features. The banjo has what is called a resonator on the back of it. It resonates, or amplifies, the sound of the banjo. Likewise, the voice starts down in the throat and is amplified in the head and pushed out the mouth. It is the facial features that make the voice sound the way it does. If you have ever heard Willy Nelson sing, you know that he sounds like the sound is coming through his nose. That sound is coming through his nasal passages and reverting up into his head.

This may sound a little comical, but sometime when you are at home, get a big kettle and invert it on your head. Hold it up there and start humming and you will feel the vibration in the kettle. This will help you to see where the resonating sound is from. It is our different facial features that change the voice.

There is no other voice like the voice of the Shepherd. His voice is different from all others. Jesus said His sheep know His voice and follow Him. They do not know the voice of a stranger, so they will not

follow that voice. Some people will listen to anyone who will tickle their ears. You need the Truth of God's Word regardless of how much it hurts. Only the Truth will set you free and give you the liberty that makes you what God wants you to be.

The Great Shepherd

We read in John 10:25-27: "Jesus answered them [the Jews], I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me. But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." Many voices are in the world, and many of them are bidding for your allegiance. They want you to follow them. Never forget that there is something special about the Truth. The Truth will not always make you feel good. Sometimes it hurts and cuts to the bone. Do you remember that day in your life when the Word of God reached your soul and conviction seized your heart? You heard a voice like you had never heard before. It condemned you for the way you were living and for what you were doing, but you loved what you heard. That is the way it was with me.

I was saved down in sectism, but when God began to deal with my heart and I heard more Truth, the Lord bid me to come out of that sect and come home to Zion. Praise God! Sometimes it just burnt me up and I did not know what to do with it, but it was so sweet. It sounded so good that I wanted to get more of it. A part of me wanted to argue with it and did not want to believe, yet I knew that it was true.

The Bible says to "know them which labor among you" (1 Thessalonians 5:12). We are not to follow after every wind of doctrine. God speaks to us through His Word and His Spirit. He has a ministry in His hand, and among that ministry are evangelists, preachers, teachers, and

pastors, and God speaks to us through them. You may ask, "How can I know the difference?" You can know the difference by what they are saying. You can know whether they are speaking from the mouth of God. The Spirit of God will bear witness and let you know what is the Truth.

You are not following a man when you listen to the voice of God. God speaks through the men of God. You are to follow a man of God as he follows the Shepherd. Pastors are the under-shepherds, but Christ is the Great Shepherd. You can know whether you are hearing Truth because it will bear witness with your spirit that it is the Word of God. You see, Jesus Himself is not going to come down in a bodily form to talk to you. He came once, and after His death on the Cross, He went back to Glory. When He comes back the second time, it will be to get the church and take her home, but He is still speaking. You must know the Word of God.

You have to beware of strangers. Sometimes they may be people whom you have known all your life, but they are strangers to the things of God and against the teachings of God and the works of God. At one time, I was without hope, and I was a stranger to the covenant, but thank God, I am not a stranger any more! I have been washed in the blood of the Lamb. I have been made whole and made a partaker of the Son of God. That is wonderful!

Being Receptive to Truth

Jesus let us know that we need to be careful of the voices of strangers. You are not going to know who the strangers are unless you can discern the voice of the Shepherd. The burden of my heart is that you might be able to discern who the Shepherd is. The Hebrew writer said in Hebrews 1:1-2: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son,

whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds."

Matthew 17:5 tells us that on the Mount of Transfiguration, God's voice was heard saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." When Truth is going forth, it is coming from God; He is the author of it. There may be a man standing in the pulpit, a man anointed by the Spirit of God, but it is still the voice of God. It is the voice of Truth sent to us, and we need to be receptive of it. Not everyone loves God, and not everyone loves the Truth.

In Revelation, Chapters 2 and 3, we read, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." You have to have an ear beyond the physical ear. You have to hear the voice of God and hear what the Spirit is saying. The voice of Jesus is like no other; it has a special sound about it, and you need to know His voice from all other voices. You must know that it is God speaking the Truth through the messages that come forth. The Word may scorch you a little, but you must say amen to it.

In Mark 8:18 Jesus talked about people having eyes but seeing not and having ears but hearing not. In a church service anyone who is not deaf can hear the message and the songs. Each person hears, but some people in the crowd hear and heed the message. Some people hear but nothing really gets hold of them while others are eating from the Master's table.

God's people rejoice in the things of God. Their souls fill up and bubble over. That is the reason once in a while some break out in shouts of praise. The Word touches them down on the inside. This is the part that the world does not understand. They may feel sorry for us and wonder why we are wasting our time, but in reality we are not wasting our time.

We are having the time of our lives because we are listening to the voice of the Master. When you dis-

cern the voice of the Master, you need to keep listening to God, keep moving forward, and keep climbing higher all the time as you dig deeper into the things of God. God is so good to us!

Endure Sound Doctrine

Acts 13:26-27 states: "Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent. For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him [Jesus] not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning him."

When the Word goes forth, you need to be able to identify with it and get hold of it. If you refuse to take it from the man of God, you would not take it from Jesus either. There are many examples in the Bible of people who rejected Him. He was right there speaking to them in person, but they turned away. They were too busy trying to find fault with Him and looking for a reason to condemn Him so that they might be able to take His life. Others were connecting with Him as they heard something they had never heard before. I am so thankful for the Truth and for how it delivers us and sets us free and gives liberty to worship God in spirit and in Truth.

Multitudes heard Jesus, but they never heeded the message. I do not know about you, but it is hard for me to understand how people could just sit as Jesus was speaking and not take heed. When a man of God gets up to preach, the Holy Spirit will witness so that you can know that it is "Thus saith the Lord." God's anointed man receives the message from the mouth of God and gives it to the people. It is the voice of the Shepherd coming through, and if you are one of His sheep, you will hear His voice. Paul said some did not know Christ, and they did not hear the voice of the prophets. Therefore, they went about trying to

find a reason to condemn Him.

Paul talked to Timothy about some people having itching ears. Some people have itching ears today, and the devil has something that will sooth them and make them feel good. I am amazed at how God does His best to reach people with the message to try to help them. Do not be deceived and taken in by this and that. He talked about having ears to hear, and then he talked about a people who have itching ears.

The Apostle Paul stated in 2 Timothy 4:1-4: "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables."

In other words, Paul was saying that someone will tell you what you want to hear. You have to be careful. It is not what you want to hear, but you need to hear the Truth of God's Word. God will be honest with you and faithful to you. He will not tell you what you want to hear, but He will tell you what you need to hear. Many times people blame the man of God about something when he may not even know about their situation, but God is telling him what to say. God knows what the problem is, and He can direct the man of God to bring thoughts that apply to your life. You may even think someone has been talking to him about you, but that is the faithfulness of God. He knows your needs.

Take Inventory of Your Experience

I praise God for His faithfulness and His love. He loves each of us

and wants us to excel in the things of God. You must be careful that you do not become weary with the Truth and fail to endure sound doctrine. Do not get weary in well doing. Do not get weary in dressing modestly. Do not get weary on the road to holiness. You must keep pressing on for God, keep dressing modestly as God would have you to dress, keep walking as He would have you to walk and talking as He would have you to talk. It will cause your heart to rejoice when you truly yield to the blessedness of serving God.

You do not want to turn your ears away from Truth to fables. The enemy is a sly old fox, and he does not get in a hurry. He works slowly, but he is working to deceive your heart and cause you to cool off and back away from the things of God. You need to check yourself to see if your zeal is what it used to be. You need to be honest with yourself. You know whether or not you have lost ground with God. You know whether you have backed away from truths that you once held close to your heart. You need to take inventory to see if you have made progress and dug deeper, to see if you are gaining ground. By the grace of God, I intend to make Heaven my home. I do not want to miss it. I do not want to lose out with God. I do not want to become weary and fall by the wayside.

Sometimes, day after day, living for God can become common to you. If you are not careful, you may not listen as carefully as you once did. That is the reason you need to check yourself. If you have become a little lax in your experience, you need to shake yourself and say: "God, help me. I am losing ground. There was a time when I rejoiced in my soul, a time when the pastor preached and I would get excited and raise my hand. I would say amen and praise God and stand on my feet, but I cannot remember how long ago it was." You need to take inventory if you really want to make Heaven your home. That is your most im-

portant business. You need to make sure that you are not losing ground; you ought to be gaining ground. Does the Truth thrill you as much as it used to? You need to get in front of the mirror of God's Word and check yourself. The enemy is so sly. After you do things so long, it just seems that is the way it ought to be. That is the reason you need to take inventory often.

God's Amazing Grace

I like to encourage the people of God with the songs in the hymnals. I believe that when those songs were written by the brothers and sisters in the sixth-seal church, they sang those songs with all the enthusiasm they had, shouting and praising God. You can lose ground and not even realize it, but I encourage people never to lose their enthusiasm for the things of God. I am not talking about working something up, but I am talking about singing those songs with the same enthusiasm that they had when they were first written. Truth is still Truth today, and it still thrills our hearts just as it did back then.

The old song "Amazing Grace" was written a long time ago, and it has blessed many hearts along the way. It is just as rich, just as true, and just as good today as when it was written. The songwriter penned, "Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound." God's amazing grace is always sweet. Serving God is not just something that you do on Sunday and Wednesday nights, but this is seven days a week. When you go to the house of God, that should not be the only time you get excited, and that should not be the only time you feel God's presence. No, this joy goes home with you, and this joy goes to work with you. It is rich and sweet and good!

How you need to hear the Shepherd's voice! If you do not hear His voice, you are going to hear the voices of strangers. The voices of strangers are always speaking. They are not always speaking in a public

place, but they are speaking. As previously stated, Paul told Timothy there would come a time when people would not endure sound doctrine, but they would heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears, and they would turn away from Truth and turn to fables.

I was saved while in sectarian religion, but one day I heard a voice that said, "Come out of her." This was a voice so sweet, and it was bidding me to come to the Truth. God began to deal with me and show me some truth, and He led me out. Brother D. S. Warner and others in the sixth seal, beginning about 1880, began to sound the trumpet of the Truth. There is still a "come out" message. It is a call to those who are down in false religion. People may hear some Gospel in sectarian churches and get saved, but they do not belong there. They need to come away from false teachings.

The morning-time church, symbolized as that great mountain burning with fire, which was cast into the sea (Revelation 8:8), was not a visible body, or a visible congregation, for a long time. Down through the Dark Ages and the years of Protestantism, where men were sowing the seeds of division, people were separated and divided into many religious organizations. Many of us today would not be in Truth if we did not have an ear to hear.

Coming Home to Zion

I was not brought up in the Church of God. I had not heard of the Church of God, but I am glad that I had an ear to hear or I would still be stranded in false religion. I thank God that I made my exit and came home to Zion. All down through the years of Papalism and Protestantism, there was no visible Church of God congregation that the world could see. God's people were scattered because of persecution.

I want to tell you why it is so important to discern the Shepherd's voice. The saints were scattered throughout Protestantism. To some

degree, some were happy and content because they did not know anything else. However, Brother D. S. Warner and others began to sound the trumpet of Truth. A message was heard "Come out of her, my people" by those who had ears to hear.

As the message spread throughout the courts of Babylon, saints began to make an exit and come home to Mount Zion, the Church of God, and she became a visible body once again. When the Truth began to be preached again, the people heard the Shepherd's voice. They were not satisfied any longer down in Babylon. They came home to Zion, the Church of God. The saints heard the voice of the Shepherd calling because they were His sheep, and they heard His voice say, "Come out of her, my people," and they came home to Zion. John said he looked again and saw the Lamb was standing on Mount Zion. That is the reason it is so necessary to discern the Master's voice.

When the Master is calling, you need to obey what He says. God called those saints out, and He is still calling people out. I grant you, the majority of the people want to argue with you and try to justify what they have. A true sheep will say: "That sounds good; give me more. I have not had food like that since I got saved," and they will come home to Zion.

Beautiful songs have been written about coming home to Zion, such as "Thy Children Are Gathering Home." One song says, "I have a good home in the fold of my Lord, where His sanctified children all dwell." There are messages in those songs. The saints are singing the songs of Zion, preachers are preaching the Truth, people are getting saved, and people are coming out of Babylon and coming home to Zion. It takes faithful preachers declaring the Word of God and the saints living it. Salvation is rich and wonderful, and serving God is the best thing this side of Heaven.

Those precious old songs such as

"I Surrender" tell of how bright the Gospel light is now. It makes the past of my life's way seem dim. We must not lose this! It might have been fifty years since you were saved, but do not ever lose that. People need to get "*back to the blessed old Bible, back to the light of His Word.*" These are not only songs, but they also contain messages. The people were rejoicing, praising God, and basking in the light that they came into. Songwriters were inspired and wrote new songs, and saints were praising God.

Are You Letting God Have His Way?

The thing that makes all the difference in the world is letting God have His way. The Spirit of God is able to do more than anything we can do. We could preach all day, but He can do more in fifteen minutes than we can do all day. When God pours out a time of refreshing, that does more for the people of God than you will ever know. It touches hearts in so many ways. God knows how to work, and He can use whomever He chooses. I have seen some older brothers and sisters get up and, maybe not profess to be singers, but the Holy Ghost blessed and moved the people.

God found a people who were willing to let the Spirit and the Word have their right of way, and they began to declare the Word of God. I would like to break this down

into three points of the truth. First, when Martin Luther saw the light, he taught that "the just shall live by faith." He taught all that he knew. Second, the Wesley brothers came along and taught sanctification, but there was still something more that needed to be taught. Third, D. S. Warner brought the message of unity. He taught justification, sanctification, and unity. People who were held in sectarian bondage began to make their exodus and come home to Zion. What a vision he had!

People escaped sectarian bondage because they had an ear to hear as the Shepherd was saying, "Come out of her, my people." I am a "come outer," and I intend to stay out of Babylon. I am thankful for the Church of God and for the Truth that has come forth. A true man of God is standing in the gap, and the food that he is serving is heavenly food. It is Truth that sets men free. It liberates us and takes us on to higher heights. Without God's presence and His anointing, the church services would be merely time spent. God makes all the difference! It is wonderful when the glory of God comes down and the goodness of God overshadows. You cannot wait to get back! God loves His people, and He feeds them on heavenly manna. I trust that you will consider these thoughts. How we need to discern the Shepherd's voice! If you lose that discernment, you will become a wanderer.

(Compact Disc TR-544M)

Anything that dims my vision of Christ, or takes away my taste for Bible study, or cramps my prayer life, or makes Christian work difficult is wrong for me, and I must, as a Christian, turn away from it.

Matthew 13:7 And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them:

22 He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.

Perils of the Kingdom



Brother Aurelius Raines

Snares That Satan Has Set

When Paul wrote to Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:1, he said that perilous times would come. The reason he said perilous times would come is that people would have a form of godliness but deny the power of God. In our Scripture text Jesus began to reveal what I like to call one of the mysteries of the kingdom. What Jesus taught in Matthew, Chapter 13, was not meant to be out of reach for everyone. When His disciples asked him why He spoke in parables, He told them in verse 11, "Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given." God's people do not have to be confused about the Kingdom of

God. It seems that major religions and Christian organizations want to put the kingdom off until some future time, but the Kingdom of God has already been set up. On the Day of Pentecost the Kingdom of God was established with power.

When God sent the Holy Ghost down upon the disciples, they became witnesses and began to preach the message of the kingdom, starting in Jerusalem. Then they went to Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the world. Therefore, when folks say that Christ is going to come back again to set up His kingdom, that lets me know that they missed the real one.

Paul did not believe in a future kingdom. When he wrote in Colossians 1:13, he said that God

"hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." Though John was physically located on the Isle of Patmos, he also claimed to be in the Kingdom of God. He wrote in Revelation 1:9, "I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ." As you can see, the Kingdom of God has been around for a long time. It has a King (Jesus), it has a people (the saints), and it has a territory (the whole wide world and everyone who believes and obeys the Gospel). As saints, we are in the kingdom, and we are subject to the rule of Jesus Christ right now.

In Matthew, Chapter 13, when Jesus began to explain the Kingdom of Heaven, He said it was like a sower who went forth to sow. As we read through this parable, we find that nothing was wrong with the sower or the seed. The problem was with the ground upon which the seed fell. The seed is the Word of God. If we could get the devil to stand back and leave folks alone, the Word of God would have such a dramatic effect on them. However, his job is not to let people get saved from sin and live victoriously with Christ without any problems.

Two snares that Satan has set for us are the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches. They choke out the Word until it becomes unfruitful. This is a challenge that each of us must overcome. Sad to say, many people rest in the fact that they go to church. Some rest in the fact that they have a strong pastor who preaches the Word. However, things may come up in your life that can contaminate your pure heart. Seemingly, the more conveniences we have in this world, the less time people have to serve God. They push the things of God back a little further. Spiritually, it has the same effect as when you put off eating natural food. At first, you may feel all right, but a few hours later you will feel weaker and weaker. After a while, you may feel sick, and the only thing that will help you is nourishment. Often people starve themselves spiritually, and then they wonder why they are discouraged.

Suffering Persecution

I want to draw your attention to Matthew 13:5-7, which states: "Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them."

Verses 20-21 read: "But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended."

I am convinced that persecution and tribulation are two perils that have done more to stop God's people in their tracks than anything else. As human beings, we do not like to suffer. However, the reality is that all who live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. The saints of God should spend less energy in figuring out how to avoid persecution and more energy in figuring out how to go through it, and then God can start getting glory from it. The world has heard people's testimonies, heard doctrine, and heard how Christ takes care of everything, and now they want to see it.

I believe we are living in a day and time when many people have forgotten why the Gospel was preached. God wants everyone to go to Heaven. The Bible tells us that God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should repent and come to the knowledge of the Truth. People are going to hell because that is where they choose to go. You may say, "No one in his right mind would want to go to hell." What are they doing to keep from going? God never invited anyone to go to hell. Some people get angry at folks and use the expression, "Go to hell," but God never said that. A saint who has the love of God in his heart would never tell anyone to go to hell. God saved us so that we can try to get folks to see that they do not have to go there.

Some people believe that once they get saved, they will not have any more problems and that everyone will treat them right, but that is not realistic. The minute you start to live for God, you will provoke the devil. I tell people, "If you do not believe there is a devil, get saved,

and then you will believe it."

First Peter 4:6 states, "For for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit." Child of God, you must follow the leading of the Holy Ghost. You are a witness to folks who are dead in trespasses and sins, to show others that God can take a sinner and change him or her into a saint.

Before Peter wrote those words, he said in verse 1, "Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh [in other words, Christ was our example of suffering], arm yourselves likewise with the same mind." As a child of God, you must settle this in your mind, because that is where an individual can lose his victory. Suppose you were sitting in a recliner at home and God laid it on your heart to visit the sick. The devil would say, "You don't feel well yourself, and you know you have to go to work tomorrow morning." By the time he stopped talking, you would not even get out of the chair to do what God laid on your heart. You would be defeated in your mind before you even started. Peter was letting you know that you must have it settled in your mind, "I am going to suffer for Christ."

Encountering Worldly Perils

Many people suffer because they are busybodies. Peter talked about this in 1 Peter 4:15. Some folks like to meddle in other people's affairs. If you suffer as a Christian, that is different; but first you must have the mind that you are willing to suffer for Christ. The Bible tells us that he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin. You must let the flesh know that it cannot have its way, that it cannot get angry because other folks are not doing what they ought to do, that it cannot take revenge on people who do you wrong, and that other folks will act up. When you get it settled in your mind, "I'm not going to act the way

others are acting," you will see your victory level start to skyrocket. Why? You will not make provisions for the flesh, to obey the lusts of the flesh. God wants the world to be convinced that salvation works just as the Bible says it does. If God did not need you to help convince others, He would have saved you and taken you to Heaven, but He left you here to labor in His kingdom.

First Peter 4:2 reads, "That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God." The reason the Gospel is preached is so that folks will stop doing what they want to do and start seeking the will of God in their lives. When folks mistreat you, you can pray, "Lord, how do You want me to treat them?" It is not a question of whether you treat them with kindness, but it is *how* you treat them with kindness. Many folks get discouraged over persecution and tribulation. The world is not satisfied with letting the saints alone to live as saints. They get angry that the saints uphold the Bible standard. There is a separation between holy folks and unholy folks.

The world does not want their sins to be revealed, so people become angry. That is the spirit of the devil in them. Child of God, the devil is angry. He fought to keep you, and then Christ came along and snatched you from him. That made him angry, so he wants revenge, and he wants you back. He does not fight by rules of fair play. He is out to get you by any means. As human beings, we value the flesh. That is the reason it is just a matter of time until he gets some individuals to give up. The enemy of souls is ruthless.

Peter said in 1 Peter 4:3, "For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles." Many people are comfortable with living in sin. Sad to say, more saints of God are becoming comfortable with the world. Many people cannot understand why the man of God preaches against some things

that the flesh wants to do. We need to be honest. Many people think, "What's the harm in the way that I dress?" Also, more and more people like the world's entertainment. They are polluting their minds with ungodly books, movies, and comedies, which cause them to become more and more like the world. Therefore, they do not see anything wrong with this worldly activity and that worldly entertainment, and they are succumbing to more and more ungodly spirits, and then they try to justify them. This is how hearts are encountering worldly perils.

"Make Not Provision for the Flesh"

Saint, you ought to love God so much that you avoid anything that would cause you to lose the fervency of your experience. You should have a personal relationship with God. He can talk to you one on one. There may be something that would not bother one person but would cause me to go into a tailspin, so to speak. I may never hear a certain thing preached from the pulpit, but I may hear it through the office of prayer.

There are some perils in this salvation. The devil has a plan A and a plan B. Plan A is to get a Christian to backslide today. If that does not work, plan B is to get him tomorrow or next week. He will work on you a little at a time in the hope that over time, he will get you eventually. You do not get credit for starting the race; you get credit for finishing it.

First Peter 4:3 continues, ". . . when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries." The devil will tell you that the Bible says you are not to have "excess of wine." If you have a job function or somewhere to go where there is an open bar, Satan will say that a little wine will not hurt anything, because that is not in excess. Then he will say, "You can handle one drink." If you give in to that

temptation, you are making provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof. You may argue that there is no harm in it, but you are still making provision for the flesh. If you make provision for the flesh, it will hurt your spirituality. You may say, "God knows, and He understands." Yes, God knows, and that is the reason you are in so much trouble. He knows that you know better. Romans 13:14 tells us plainly, "But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof."

First Peter 4:4 continues, "Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you." That is another reason that you must not make provision for the flesh. What people say about you matters, even what unsaved folks say about you. However, if you try to meet the approval of the world, slowly but surely, you will lose ground in your spiritual walk with God. It all starts in the heart when you become concerned with the cares of this life and with riches.

Many people are only concerned about money. One person received an invitation to speak at a church. At the end of the message, the preacher got up and said, in so many words, "I'm expecting to walk out of here with five thousand dollars." I was wondering how he was going to get all that money. He said, "The Bible says to ask and you shall receive." I thought, "You need to ask God, not me, because I do not have that kind of money." At least he could have said what he was going to do with it. Some preachers say, "Give me one hundred dollars, and God will bless you and give you some more." They reverse that old saying that says, "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush." They believe that two in the bush is worth more than one in the hand.

Verses 5-6 state: "Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead [this is talking about people who are running in excess of rioting; they

will have to answer to God]. For for this cause was the gospel preached." God is expecting us to live in such a way that folks are convinced, not only by what they hear but also by what they see.

"Partakers of Christ's Sufferings"

First Peter 4:12 says, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you." Why do saints act so surprised when they go through what the Word of God says they will go through? We should not think it is strange. We should expect it to happen. Many people down through the years have become discouraged because of what they were going through. Folks have no problem telling you that you do not know what they are going through. I learned a long time ago not to argue with them. I just give them my testimony and say: "I may not know what you are going through, but I can tell you from experience that God has brought me through everything that I have faced."

The Bible says that He will not put more on you than you can bear. If you will bear it, He will make a way for you to get through it. You may not hear much preaching on that kind of faith. The Bible talks more about exercising faith to obtain a holy life. Some people have faith for healing, and we thank God for that, but that is not the only kind of faith there is. If you have faith, you will see the effects of your faith because you will live free from sin. Having that kind of faith will enable you to believe that God can touch and heal your body.

The Apostle Paul told Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:7 to "exercise thyself rather unto godliness." When you do physical exercises, you get stronger physically. Likewise, when you exercise yourself spiritually, you get stronger spiritually. The way you exercise is by going through the tests and trials of life. You should not allow trials to get you down. God has not left you or deserted

you. Let the Holy Spirit build you up. You must exercise yourself. Being saved is like reading a good novel: you want to find out what is going to happen at the end. What you are going through may not feel good, but God is still alive. On one occasion Job said, in so many words, "I know my Redeemer liveth. I do not feel him, but I know that He is alive." One day your eyes are going to see Him. This is what keeps the saints going. It is not strange for a child of God to suffer.

Peter said in 1 Peter 4:13-14: "But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye." Have you ever read the Book of Acts? Have you read how the brethren were whipped and persecuted? They went back to the saints and rejoiced because God thought they were worthy to suffer for Jesus.

The devil knows that if you do not like people to talk about your mother, he can get one person after another to talk about your mother. Do you know what he wants to do? He wants to wear you out in the flesh. He wants you to get tired, and then he will say: "Look at that little guy talking about your mother that way. You could break him in half. Why don't you go ahead and do it?" That is the way the devil works.

Fulfilling God's Purpose

When you were growing up, was anybody in your school an instigator, someone who always wanted to start a fight? Perhaps he would tell you what So-and-So said about you. He did not want to get in any fights, but he wanted to see others get in fights. The devil is an instigator. He tries to keep things stirred up. If your mind is made up that you are going to go through and be what God wants you to be, there will be a difference in the level of discouragement that you feel around people. I am trying to use

this message to help you understand that God has a purpose for each peril that you face. Those perils are put there so that you can fulfill the purpose of God in your individual life.

You may say that you want revival, but are you willing to go through what it takes to have *real* revival? As you please God, He can use you to reach out to other folks, one at a time. Your desire should be to find an honest-hearted person who will get saved and be on fire for God. Then he can get someone else to be saved and be on fire for God, and then he can reach one more person. I want to take souls from the devil one at a time. I want to brighten the little corner where I live.

Someone may ask, "Don't you want to get glory and honor for winning many souls to Christ?" If God uses me to influence someone else to come to Jesus, that is God working through me, and He should receive all the honor and the glory. He is the One who says, "Go over and talk to So-and-So." I do not have that kind of wisdom. You have not wasted your time talking to people who do not want to hear it. God wants even the hard-headed people to hear the Gospel so that they can at least have the opportunity to hear about Jesus. It takes God to show us where to go and what to say.

We have many examples in the Word of God of how we should live. People need to go back to the Book of Acts and study the messages that the Apostles preached, the effects of the messages, and how those saints lived their lives, how they suffered, and how they stood for God. They need to review how the Church of God was started. Not everything that says it is the Church of God is truly the Church of God. A building with a sign that has the name Church of God written on it does not mean that the people who meet there are really the church. The Church of God is not a set of rules, creeds, and doctrines. The Church of God preaches Bible doctrines, but what makes the Church of God is

the people who have separated themselves from the world and joined Christ, and they are obeying the Word of God and the Spirit of God. If people are not doing those things, they are not a part of the Church of God. Young people need to understand that they are not in the Church of God because their parents are saved.

The Ministry of the Saints

Paul told Timothy that he wanted him to be an example of the believers. Folks should be able to look at your life and say, "That person exemplifies what the Church of God is all about." On the other hand, if you are always murmuring and complaining and you cannot get along with folks, or if you cannot get along with your spouse, people will not be able to see the true church. Child of God, you need to bring your flesh into subjection to the will of God so that no matter what is going on in your life, you can rightfully represent God.

In 2 Corinthians 4:1 Paul said, "Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not." Paul had a ministry, and we have a ministry. Everyone who is saved has received mercy, and for that reason the Bible says "we faint not." We should not become discouraged, go back to the world, or let situations cause us to become lukewarm. We must not faint, because we have a ministry. We have something bigger than ourselves, bigger than our own little problems. We have a ministry that came down from Heaven. God thought enough of us to give us a ministry. We do not have time to become discouraged and give up. We have a job to do.

Verse 2 says, "But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty [as saints of God, we must renounce them and have nothing to do with them], not walking in craftiness [we do not try to fool people], nor handling the word of God deceitfully [to try to get people to

give up money]; but by manifestation of the truth [by showing people the Truth by the way we live] commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."

We ought to live in such a way that others can say, "He is a genuine child of God." That is the reason we are here. There are many perils, persecutions, tribulations, and distractions along the way of life. You are either going to let those things distract you or put them in God's hands. When you put things in God's hands, you need to leave them there. If you keep running back and picking them up, you will not get anywhere. God wants you to give them to Him and leave them there. You can pray, "God, I need You to take care of this problem that I have, because I need to commend myself to someone's conscience today, and that is a distraction?" Saint, you need to quit letting things get in the way of your doing the will of God so that you can be what He would have you to be.

Second Corinthians 4:3 says, "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost." Child of God, since God has saved you and given you this great salvation, you need to share it with others to commend yourself to their conscience. If you do not share it, people will be lost. Can you see the devil's plan to get you carried away with the cares of this world and to bring persecution and tribulation upon you? If you do not become rooted, instead of helping others, you will be the one who is in need of help. How would you feel if you were deathly sick and you called 911, but when the paramedics arrived to help you, one of them had a heart attack and another one had an asthma attack, yet you still needed help? You would say, "These guys are worse off than I am." You should not be worse off than the people you are trying to help.

Ambassadors for Christ

The Apostle Paul went on to say

in 2 Corinthians 4:4, "In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, [Do you see why God wants you to escape the perils of the kingdom? Folks are blinded by the devil. God has given you everything you need that pertains to life and godliness. We are to help others.] lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." If others could see what we see and experience what we have, the devil would lose them too. That is the reason we have to commend ourselves to their consciences.

I learned a very important lesson many years ago. I like to tell people about Jesus. On a job a guy was assigned to work with me, so I wanted to tell him about Jesus. He was a former Marine, and he was mean looking. He seemed to have a chip on his shoulder. I told him about Jesus, and he said, "I don't want to hear it," so I did not say anything more to him.

For eight hours a day, he would have to sit there with me, and all I needed to do was let Christ shine through me. I was determined that no matter how ugly he acted, I was going to let Jesus live through me and rejoice in the Lord. One day he could not stand it anymore. He said, "How did you get into that Bible?" That was an invitation to me, so I read to him about as much as I could as fast as I could, before he could say, "That's enough." Saint, you can convince others, even if they do not want it. You can live in such a way that they will ask questions. I do not know if that man ever got saved, but he heard plenty of testimony.

Verse 5 says, "For we preach not ourselves [because it is not about us], but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake." Are you doing the will of God or are you pleasing yourself? Do you get your entertainment from the world? Do you strive to be what you want to be or are you a servant for Christ's sake? Is it about you or is it

about reaching the lost for Christ?

Paul continued in verses 6-7: "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, [The treasure is Jesus Christ, and the earthen vessel is the physical body. The reason that God left you in this earthly body is so that people can see that when Christ gets in you, the body will not act the same way.] that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." The fact that God has given us power over the body is evidence that Christ can come into your life and change you and make you a new creature.

Second Corinthians 5:17-18 states: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new [Paul was describing what salvation does for us; it makes us new]. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ. [You probably think of the word *reconcile* when you balance your checkbook, but reconciliation in the Scripture means that God has removed the thing that separated us from Him. He brought us together with Him. He made us one, and the Bible says He reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ.] and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation." No matter what tribulations you have to go through, you still have the ministry of reconciliation. You must not give up that ministry because the battle is getting hot.

Verse 19 says, "To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation." We have a ministry of reconciliation with the word of reconciliation. Our whole purpose and goal as saints of God is not to be overcome by the perils in the kingdom, but that we can reconcile people to God. Paul said in verse 20, "Now then we are ambassadors for

Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." We are not to push people away, but we must try to bring them back to God.

Will You Hear His Voice?

Our attitude is very important. Matthew 5:8-9 says: "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God." The message of reconciliation is to bring people to peace with God. Tribulation and persecution are what draw attention to us from the world so that they might see Christ in our earthen vessels. When you suffer tribulation and persecution, God allows it because He has confidence that you can handle it. You need to have confidence that God can bring you through it; then you can reach out to those who are lost with the message that they must be reconciled to God.

Hebrews 3:7-8 reads: "Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your hearts." Sinner friend, God wants you to break off from sin. You need to see what sin is doing to you. It is not preparing you to meet God. You need to move while God is talking to you. If you can see that you are a sinner, you can only see it because God has opened your eyes to that. God is not showing you your spiritual condition so that you can ignore it. He wants you to be saved. If you will trust Him and believe Him, God will show Himself strong to you.

Are you willing to surrender to God? Someone may ask, "How can anybody want to get saved when he knows that tribulation is coming on the whole world to try them? Tribulation does not work the same way on the regenerated as the unregenerated. If a person is unsaved and does not have Christ working in his life, tribulation does not make him better; it makes his heart harder. However, if you will surrender to Christ, that same tribu-

lation will make you more like Jesus. Everyone has tribulation, but not everyone handles it the same way, and tribulation does not handle everybody the same way.

Will you accept Jesus Christ as your Savior? Do you want to give God a chance? I was thinking about sin in the world today. I am convinced that the devil plans to keep people struggling with alcoholism. I believe the devil knows that time is short, so he has stuff out there that, if you take it once, you are hooked. He wants to lay a trap for you because he would like to make you so burdened down with sin that you cannot see your way out. Why give the devil a chance to continue to work? God can save you.

I was saved in my teenage years. I heard the Gospel message on the streets of Chicago. Also, I went to church because my mother made me go. I did not want to go, so I just figured that I would get my nap there. However, one Sunday I could not go to sleep. The pastor was preaching on hell, and the thought came to my mind, "If that preacher knows what he is talking about, I am in big trouble with God." I have never been the same since that day. I had to find out how to get out of trouble with God. That became my mission in life. It became plain to me one Sunday while he was preaching that the only way out is Jesus Christ.

The devil says, "Man, do you really think you can stay saved for more than fifty years?" When you are a teenager, fifty years is a long time. Back then, fifty years of age seemed old to me, but it does not seem old now. God let me know that all I had to do was live as a Christian one day at a time. I went to the altar and said, "Lord, if You can get me through today, I am going to be saved." Then every day I asked Him for one more day. Soon those days became weeks, the weeks became months, and the months became years. Won't you give Him a chance to change your soul? May God bless you.

(Compact Disc TR-323E)

[Guest Editorial— continued from page 2]

Discouragement is neither an uncommon nor an abnormal situation; also, it is not a sign of failure. Many have fallen prey to discouragement through no fault of their own. Sometimes circumstances arise and there appears to be no way out. For your consolation, dear reader, allow this writer to remind you that the Lord is a mighty waymaker. When there is seemingly no way out, if you will only trust God, He will create a way. Do you remember reading about the children of Israel when they were fleeing Egypt and they stood helplessly at the Red Sea with nowhere to turn? Every possible avenue of escape was gone, and their doom appeared to be sealed. In that hour of desperation, God instructed them to "stand still and see the salvation of the Lord" (Exodus 14:13). By faith, they obeyed and God made a way just in time. He will do the same for each of us! Our part is simply to stand still and to keep our faith fixed in Him. God will not fail a trusting soul!

Satan so often blinds the minds of individuals by telling them that their situation is unique. He tries to convince them that no one else has ever had to suffer what they are going through. Dear one, that is a lie and a trick of Satan to cause individuals to become discouraged. He will try to defeat you and rob you of your salvation. If you continue to entertain his charming but deceitful ways, you could begin to accuse God of not loving and caring for

you. Various Scriptures in the Word of God tell of people who have had to suffer greatly, often being isolated from family and brethren. A few examples of faithful saints who have trod the way before us include Joseph, Daniel, Jeremiah, and Paul.

Let us consider the Prophet Elijah, as recorded in First Kings, Chapter 19. This man of God was faithful and obedient to perform a great task on Mount Carmel. He prayed fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice that he placed on the altar, and then he killed the false prophets of Baal. After doing the will of the Lord, he became discouraged because of Jezebel (King Ahab's wife), who threatened his life. We find Elijah running to hide in the wilderness because of fear. He was trying to get away from the danger that he faced, so he went and sat under a juniper tree. He was very discouraged and felt that he was the only one who was truly serving God. Therefore, He asked God to take his life and free him from his situation. God did not grant Elijah's request, but instead He nourished him and urged him to go on. Later, God gloriously took him up to Heaven in a whirlwind of victory.

John the Baptist was put into prison to be beheaded for reproving Herod's sins. While awaiting his execution, John became discouraged. During this period of time, his heart and mind became clouded to the reality of Christ's true mission and purpose. John asked the ques-

tion in Matthew 11:3, "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" Jesus replied in verse 4, "Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see." Sometimes in the darkness of a trial, an individual can lose sight of reality. Past blessings, miracles, and answers to prayer can temporarily slip from the mind and need to be reaffirmed.

Dear one, if you are going through deep waters of adversity, trials, or afflictions, we want to encourage you to take to a moment to lift up your head and look to God. You must endeavor to look above the discouraging circumstance that you are facing, and you will see Jesus ready, willing, and able to help. There is no situation known to man that is too great for Him to handle. We challenge you to put your faith, trust, and hope in the One who can bring you through with great victory. There is no real reason for a saint of God to remain in a discouraged condition indefinitely. I ask you to ponder the words of the Psalmist where he spoke so profoundly in Psalm 42:5, saying, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance."

Selected

Twelve Things to Remember

1. The value of time.
2. The success of perseverance.
3. The pleasure of working.
4. The dignity of simplicity.
5. The worth of character.
6. The power of kindness.
7. The obligation of duty.
8. The influence of example.
9. The wisdom of economy.
10. The virtue of patience.
11. The improvement of talent.
12. The joy of helping others.

Meeting Announcements

- Medina, OH**
September 5
LABOR DAY MEETING: Church of God, 6745 Wooster Pike, Medina, OH 44256
Service times: 10:00 a.m. & 2:30 p.m.
A meal will be served by the local congregation.
Visit our website @ www.ChurchofGodMedinaOH.com
For further information contact: Pastor Daniel Webster, 92 W. Main St.,
Seville, OH 44273. Telephone: (Home) 330-435-6490 or (Church) 330-725-5993
- Grand Cayman
Island, British
West Indies**
September 8-12
REVIVAL: Church of God, 108 Reginald Parsons Drive, Grand Cayman
Evangelists: Brother Roger L. Decker, Newark, Ohio &
Brother Larry Dishman, Moss Point, Mississippi
Service time: 7:15 p.m. nightly
- September 11
New Sanctuary Dedication Service will be held on Saturday at 4:00 p.m.
For further information contact: Pastor Garrett Haylock
Email: pastorhaylock@candw.ky
Telephone: 345-916-1345
- Newton, KS**
September 13-19
REVIVAL: Church of God, 400 N. Meridian, Newton, KS 67114
Evangelist: Brother Irwin Seshier, Heath, Ohio
Service times: Monday-Saturday 7:00 p.m. and Sunday 10:30 a.m. & 7:00 p.m.
For further information contact: Pastor Sandy Killfoil, 415 SE 6th St.,
Newton KS 67114. Telephone: (Home) 316-842-5127; (Church) 316-283-1830
- Summersville, WV**
October 18-24
REVIVAL: Church of God, 74 Armstrong Rd., Summersville, WV 26651
Evangelist: Brother 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.
Visit our website @ www.ChurchofGodSummersvilleWV.com
For further information contact: Pastor Earl R. Borders at telephone: 304-872-4047
- Medina, OH**
October 25-31
REVIVAL: Church of God, 6745 Wooster Pike, Medina, OH 44256
Evangelist: Brother Tim Yoder, Ashland, Ohio
Service times: 7:00 p.m. nightly
Visit our website @ www.ChurchofGodMedinaOH.com
For further information contact: Pastor Daniel Webster, 92 W. Main St.,
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July 31-August 6
December 28-January 1

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