

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. 2:1-31

SOUNDING FORTH THE SEVENTH AND LAST TRUMPET

Vol. 41 January 2010 No. 1



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

Guest Editorial

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

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

Brother Roger L. Decker Editor
Workers Too Numerous to Mention

THE CHURCH OF GOD BELIEVES IN:

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

SOME SPIRITUAL FACTS PERTAINING TO THE CHURCH

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

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We reserve the right to edit and/or decline any material for any reason. Not responsible for unsolicited articles or items.

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Vol. 41 January 2011 No. 1

"For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building."

1 Corinthians 3:9

"We then as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain."

2 Corinthians 6:1

Workers Together With Christ

As born again men and women, we are a part of the Church of God, the body of Christ. Therefore, we are to be laborers working together with Him in harmony to build the Kingdom of God. God's church is to be a soul-saving station, a place where our efforts are united together to win other honest hearts to the Lord and to the Truth. God has a specific work for each loyal member to perform. Every worker is important and vitally needed to accomplish this great task of spreading the Gospel to a lost world.

Earnest prayer, reading God's Word, and being faithful in church attendance is an absolute must. Having a real burden and being willing to contribute our time, energy, and talent to the work is necessary. Faithfulness to God and His work conveys an important message to those who are watching our lives. Not everyone is a preacher, an evangelist, a singer, or a teacher; yet we all can be workers and helpers together, each filling his or her place in the body. It is not just working and doing what we think is good, but it is working together in harmony for the glory of God. Working together demonstrates unity.

Laboring together creates a close relationship with Christ and with one another. Unity in heart

and spirit is so essential, especially in a world where division and strife run so prevalent. Satan has people in denominationalism so divided and separated that is impossible for them to be profitable for the Lord. Through deceitfulness, he strives to bring division in among the ranks of the saints. God's people must be on guard and reject Satan's tricks to separate them from Christ and one another.

There is power in unity, and Satan knows this; therefore, we must stay focused on the directives that the Lord has laid out for us to follow. Jesus reminds us of the need of being one with the Father. He prayed for this oneness and unity to be among His people. His words in John 17:11 were, "Holy Father, keep in thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one as we are."

As the world looks on the church and sees genuine love and concern being manifested from heart to heart, it creates a drawing effect on honest, peace-seeking souls. Love for Christ, first of all, and then love for one another are key to real success and unity. In John 13:34-35 Jesus spoke these words: "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love

[continued on page 6]

Genesis 13:1 And Abram went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the south.

2 And Abram was very rich in

cattle, in silver, and in gold.

3 And he went on his journeys from the south even to Bethel, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Hai;

4 Unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the LORD.

The Need of Returning



Brother Roger L. Decker

Keeping Your Commitment to God

The word *Bethel* means "the house of God." Genesis 12:7-8 reads: "And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him. And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west, and Hai on the east: and there he builded an altar unto the LORD, and called upon the name of the LORD."

God called Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees. God had been with

him and blessed him, and he was on his journey. At this time he was a much wiser and a much richer man. Proverbs 10:22 says, "The blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it." No doubt, while Abraham was in Egypt, his soul was vexed. His heart was grieved because of the inhabitants that dwelled there. In Egypt he feared for his life, and it was only the mercy of God that he was spared.

In Genesis 28:20-21 we read that it was in Bethel that "Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to

eat, and raiment to put on, So that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the LORD be my God."

It was in returning to Bethel that God told Jacob to go and make an altar to Him. Jacob had problems right in his own household. His household had drifted away from the true and living God. The responsibility of Jacob's household rested upon him. First, there had to be a cleaning up to prepare for his return to Bethel. Bethel became a prominent figure in the lives of the patriarchs. You can read a lot about Bethel in the Old Testament. It was a place where the presence of God

was and where Jacob made his vow. Also, it was a place where God was asked for His divine guidance and protection.

Today people need to come back to where they first made their commitment, or vow, to God. Only God has the record of how many people have asked for prayer in the hospitals or on their death beds. God so wonderfully moved upon them and restored their health to them. Their cry while they were in that condition was, "As soon as I get back on my feet, you will see me at the house of God." Oh, how that commitment was short-lived with many people! When they got on their feet and began to feel well, they went back to their daily routines and neglected their commitment to God.

Some people need to return to where His presence was real in their lives. Dear one, you should not get to the place where you go through a religious form or a routine. You need to have the presence of God in your life. You need to let God be real to you so that you can actually feel His presence in your life.

Some people have been away from the presence of God for so long that they have become satisfied in that condition. When they are in the worship services where the Spirit of God moves, they are hardly touched. They left God. Remember, God will not leave you or forsake you. If there is any turning away, you will be the one who turns away,

Going Back to Bethel

Too many people are trying to dwell in the regions of Egypt, or sin, and their souls become vexed. God told Jacob to go back to Bethel. God wanted him to return to the place where he made his vow to Him. The Lord wanted Jacob to return to worship the one true God of Israel. Dear one, is your soul being vexed? Have you drifted away from true worship? Are you worshipping the

Father in Spirit and in Truth? Are you worshipping the Father when you are not in the house of God? Have you drifted away from God? If so, you need to return to where the presence of God is real in your life.

Genesis 35:3 says, "And let us arise, and go up to Bethel; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went." You need to come back to where you once felt the hand of God upon your soul, where you knew that you were His child and that He was there for you in the day of adversity. You need to know that God is truly present in your soul. You must come back to the place where you know that if you were to draw your last breath within the next moment, you have a home in eternity with Jesus Christ. It was God who reminded Jacob that he needed to go back to Bethel. God is faithful. He is so faithful to tell you when your soul is in trouble. It is only when you obey God that you truly find peace in your soul.

The Psalmist said in Psalm 116:1-8: "I love the LORD, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications. Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live. The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the LORD; O LORD, I beseech thee, deliver my soul. Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful. The LORD preserveth the simple: I was brought low, and he helped me. Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee. For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling."

The Psalmist said the Lord heard his voice; He gave him attention. He went on to say that the Lord is gracious, righteous, and merciful, preserving the simple and

protecting the foolish. He dealt bountifully with him. He delivered his soul from death, dried his tears, kept him from falling, and made him alive spiritually to walk among the living. No wonder the Psalmist said, "I love the Lord, because. . . ."

Returning to True Worship of God

Too many people are spending too much time in Egypt (or sin). Revelation 11:8 says, "And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified." In the Bible we know that Egypt is a type of bondage, a type of sin. Egypt is where God's people in the Old Testament were in bondage. It was where God's people were under hard labor. You cannot spend time in Egypt and still have the Word and the Spirit in your life. You need to return to the fold of God, so that you are right in the sight of God.

Jacob had let down by not holding the things of God before his household as he ought to have. He had trouble right in his own household: his sons Levi and Simeon and his daughter Dinah brought shame to his household. She became involved with the daughters of the land and paid the price. She was taken away by Prince Sheham. Her two brothers planned a deceitful revenge.

You can read about it in Genesis, Chapter 34. Verse 30 states, "And Jacob [when he found out what had taken place, he was upset at the deceit of his two sons] said to Simeon and Levi, Ye have troubled me to make me to stink among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites: and I being few in number, they shall gather themselves together against me, and slay me; and I shall be destroyed, I and my house." Jacob's household had gotten into a terrible condition.

The worship and the fear of God had not been held in its right-

ful place before Jacob's family. His two sons took revenge, not because of a wrong against God, but because of a wrong against the family. Their revenge was filled with deceit, murder, and robbery. We know that revenge, or vengeance, belongs to God. It does not belong to you and me. 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."

Jacob's household was torn apart because there had been a let-down. Jacob needed to return to the true worship of God. God told Jacob to go to Bethel and make an altar to Him. The same God was with him when he fled from Esau. This lets you know that as God was with Jacob then, He would be with him again. Jacob had to do a cleansing in his own household.

Have you let down on the worship of God in your home? Do you have family worship in your home? If you do not, your home will become a mess and may be torn asunder. When my children were in the home, we had family worship above everything else. The devil fought it, but we kept it up. If you do not worship together as you ought, you will find that the devil is going to slip in. The next thing you know, the only worship your family will know anything about is when you come to the church services.

Jacob's household had gotten completely out of the will of God. His sons raised up and took vengeance, and they embarrassed Jacob. As I mentioned previously, his daughter, Dinah, messed around with a prince, and he just took her. Then the sons planned a deceitful revenge to get her back, not because he was the enemy of God, but to save face in the family. God wanted Jacob to get back to true worship; therefore, He told him to go back to Bethel, build an altar, and worship the true God, the God who was with him when he met Esau, the God with whom he wrestled.

Walk in the Old Paths

God blessed the patriarchs, Abraham and Isaac. They were very wealthy. They had plenty of livestock, and they received their direction from God. God did the same with Jacob, but because of Jacob's letting down, his children began to wander, and Jacob felt despair. In essence, Jacob said: "You have caused me to stink in front of my enemies. They used to think that I was an honorable man, but because of the deceit that took place, they think that is how I am. I always tried to raise my family to be honest and upright."

You may wonder why your home is in trouble. You do not need new counsel. You need to walk in the old paths and put the old counsel into effect in your life. You do not need anything new. You need to walk in what you already know.

The Lord told Jacob, "Go back." Jacob cried out, in so many words: "What are my enemies going to do when they see me start to go back? They will attack me when they see my family and me traveling toward Bethel. They are going to get revenge." You can read in the Bible that God stopped all the enemies and made a clear path for Jacob to return. The enemies could see Jacob and his family traveling, but they never attacked them.

Dear one, God will make a way for you if you want to return to the presence of God. Some people have been "churchy" for so long that they no longer remember how it felt to have the presence of God in their lives. Many people have lost their households because of their failure to keep the fear of God in their homes as they ought.

The Prophet Isaiah said in Isaiah 44:21-22: "Remember these, O Jacob and Israel; for thou art my servant: I have formed thee; thou art my servant: O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me. I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed

thee."

This is a promise in God's Word. Just as God was with Jacob, to rescue him and his family, He will deliver you when you return to His presence. In some homes the standard of holiness has been let down so far that the household has lost the fear of God. It is time to return to the presence of God, where you know that you are in the will of God. It is time to return to the blessings of your life. God made a way for Jacob to return, and He will make a way for you.

I want to emphasize this: Jacob was fearful to return because the presence of God was not there in his household. Those Canaanites and Perrizites outnumbered Jacob's household. We read in Genesis 35:5, "And they journeyed: and the terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob." God put restraint upon the neighboring cities and kept them from taking revenge. Today God will put restraint on the bondages that have hold of you, if He sees you coming back to Him.

It is amazing how God makes a way for individuals to return to Him and get their needs supplied. God loved Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but not any more than He loves you. God loves you just as He did them. He bids the one who has been entangled in the things of this world to return to Him. He asks the one who has walked away from His house of worship to return and repent; then He will kill the fatted calf, put the best robe upon him, and make him one of His own household.

God's Mercy Is Interceding

Jacob's household was in a deplorable condition. Historians say Bethel was only about thirty miles away from Jacob, so he could have easily made the trip. It was God's mercy that interceded on Jacob's behalf. God spoke to Jacob. He could have just let him continue as

he was and get in a worse condition and end up losing everyone in his household, but His mercy reached out to Jacob right at the time of need.

Friend, God could just let you continue to go further away from Him, and perhaps get to the place where you have seared your conscience to the degree that nothing bothers you anymore, such as letting down on the standard of holiness. You could take the attitude, "That is what the church says, but I will do as I want." Yes, God will let you do that, but you will have to suffer the consequences. If you will return, you can rest assured that God will be ready to receive you again. Jacob had been away from God, or true worship. Even though he was not far away from Bethel (only thirty miles), Jacob had not returned, and his household was paying the price.

Some individuals have been away from the presence of God for many years, even though they have not been far away from the place of receiving help. God is close to you, dear one. All you have to do is cry out to Him. God is not a god who is afar off in some other land. The presence of God is close to you. All God has to see is godly sorrow and

a repentant heart, a heart that desires to quit the sin business, and He will be right there.

I ask you, dear one, are you away from the presence of God? You need to be honest. Do you have the presence of God in your life? If you are away from God, you need to return as Jacob did, before the devil destroys you and your children completely. You need to return before the devil wrecks havoc on your family. The devil can turn you to the place of becoming an atheist. He can work on you so much that you will feel comfortable down in Babylon when the Bible says, "Come out of her, my people" (Revelation 18:4).

Some wonder why their children do not seem to care about the things of God. They cannot get any of their household interested in the things of God anymore. If this is the case with your family, have you let down on true worship in the home? Have you left the house of God? Sometimes individuals have their thoughts all taken up with other matters, but God is saying "Return." The good news is that God has made a way so that you can find the help that you stand in need of.

Jeremiah 4:1 states, "If thou wilt return, O Israel, saith the LORD,

return unto me: and if thou wilt put away thine abominations out of my sight, then shalt thou not remove." In other words, the Lord was saying, "If you will return, you will no longer go astray." Ezekiel 18:30 reads, "Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord GOD. Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin."

Niagara Falls has a place called "Suicide Point" where many people have despaired of their lives and jumped over the falls. Above the falls is a sign that reads, "No Small Craft Beyond This Area" because the small watercraft do not have enough power to pull out of the currents. Dear one, if you start drifting, the currents will get stronger and stronger, to the place where, if God does not have mercy, they will take you into a lost eternity.

If you need to return to God, do not go on in hypocrisy. Do not go on when the reality is not there as it ought to be. Won't you come back to Jesus? You need to come back to where you know that you can get help in your soul.

(Compact Disc TR-585M)

[Guest Editorial—continued from page 2] one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." Love is the major ingredient in Christianity that binds the hearts of God's people together and causes them to work in unity and harmony. Without the love of God ruling and reigning in our hearts, laboring together is impossible. Real love is long-suffering and kind, and it demonstrates humility. Love does not demand its own way or create problems when things go differently than one would desire.

When love becomes cool toward God, it will not be long until love also becomes strained toward one another. Laboring together can no

longer be a joy, a benefit, or a pleasure. Unfortunately, it soon becomes an irksome task; then schisms and separations will be created and will begin to divide the church body. If this is allowed to continue, it will portray a distorted picture of Christianity to the world around us. Those who are looking on will begin to wonder what has happened and why those who claim to be the church do not get along with one another. They may see the members working, but laboring independently of one another instead of together, thus hindering the promotion of the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Laboring together for the cause of the Gospel may require forsaking

our ideas, our wants, and our desires. One may strongly feel that things should be done a certain way in order to attain the best results. Being laborers together first calls for submission to God and then to one another. Paul admonished the Ephesian brethren with these words: "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God" (Ephesians 5:21). The Apostle Peter said in 1 Peter 5:5b, "Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." Let us all be true workers together with Christ and one another.

Selected



"Let Brotherly Love Continue."

Hebrews 13:1

Brother Richard Talbot

Letting Love for Fellow Believers Continue

One day a man fell into a pit and could not get out. A subjective person came along and said, "I feel for you down there." An objective person came by and said, "Well, it is logical that someone would fall down there." A Pharisee came by and said, "Ah, only a bad person would fall into a pit." A mathematician walked by and calculated how he fell into the pit. A news reporter happened upon the scene and wanted an exclusive story of how he fell into the pit.

A fundamentalist said, "You deserve your pit." An Internal Revenue Service man asked him if he was paying taxes on his pit. A self-pitying person said, "You have not seen anything until you have seen my pit." A charismatic fellow said,

"All you need to do is just confess to yourself that you are not in the pit." A pessimist came by and said, "Things are going to get worse." Jesus, seeing the man, took him by the hand and lifted him out of the pit.

People have many ideas and questions about loving. Someone may say, "If you just knew my situation . . ." or "If you could only understand what happened to me and what they did to me." Others may ask, "What if . . . ?" or "How about . . . ?" They are perplexed about all the "what ifs" and the variables and the situations they have, but I am going to stay with the Word, which states, "Let brotherly love continue." You might have your particular circumstances and your own set of difficulties. You might have your own problems with certain individuals, but I am not deal-

ing with your personal issues. I am preaching the Word, and it instructs us to "Let brotherly love continue." The Amplified Bible words it this way: "Let love for your fellow believers continue and be a fixed practice with you; never let it fail." As you consider this, I want you to focus your attention on these four words: "Let brotherly love continue."

The word *let* means "to allow something; to permit it; to give permission for something to happen or to occur." If you *let* something happen, then it is in your control. Letting something continue leaves you with the idea that you can stop it. You do not have to allow it to work. It is your responsibility to allow brotherly love to continue. The word *brotherly* refers to "that which is, of, or like; befitting or befitting a brother; to be affectionate, loyal, fraternal; having brotherly

love." That means having sisterly love as well.

The word *continue* means "to keep going, to last or to make something last beyond the present or throughout a period of time; not to stop something; to keep on an activity or state or condition already begun; to start something again; to start doing something again after an interruption or a pause; to begin speaking again or to say something again after an interruption or a pause."

When I was growing up, sometimes I would fuss around the house. My mother would correct me and say: "Richard, I want you to shut your mouth right now. I do not want to hear another word out of you." A little later I would start fussing again. She would smack my mouth or paddle my backside, and then she would sit me down and say, "I don't want to hear another word." A couple of hours later, I would begin fussing again. I might have only done that three times during the course of the day, but when my father came home from work, she said to him, "Richard has been a constant problem all day," and I would get in trouble again.

I would say that it was not all day, but only three times. However, in her mind I was continually a disruptive person. Why? Because I never stopped complaining, tormenting, and aggravating. Though I stopped periodically, I always started it again, so that falls under the word *continue*. When you start something repeatedly, you keep it going.

The Christian's Duty

Some things may interfere momentarily with your expression of love to someone. Circumstances may develop that put you under a strain and under some pressure; nevertheless, the Word says, "Let brotherly love continue." I want you to read the two verses following our Scripture reading. Hebrews 13:2-3 says: "Be not forgetful to entertain

strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body."

The writer of Hebrews was referring to the bonds of those saints who had been cast into prison. He said to remember those who were in prison, as being bound with them, and those who suffered adversity, as being yourselves also in the body. In order to "Let brotherly love continue," you must always keep in mind the focus of the entire body of Christ. When a brother is going through adversity, trouble, trial, or difficulty, the Scripture does not say to let him go through it on his own, but it teaches us to allow brotherly love to continue.

I am just preaching the Word. You must believe in the Word of God and let the Word work. This love is the only thing that holds the saints together. We each have to believe the Word of God to such an extent that we lay down our own feelings, take the Word, and let it work in our individual lives.

First Peter 1:22 instructs, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently." First Thessalonians 3:12 says, "And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you."

First Thessalonians 5:15 states, "See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men." Galatians 6:10 reads, "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." How important are these commands? Failure to obey them will prove the grace of God insufficient to meet your need. Failure to let the love of God continue will cause the world to think there is nothing to the Scriptures. Failure to let the power of this

love work in the midst of the church will testify to others that we do not know what we are talking about. It is the Christian's duty to "Let brotherly love continue."

Having Love One to Another

Second Corinthians 6:1 states, "We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain." No doubt, Paul drew this conclusion from the words of our Lord in John 13:35, which states, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

Above anything else in this world, it is imperative for the church to be filled with the power of brotherly love. Now, everyone is entitled to his or her own space. When we look at one another, we should *not* look at one another with magnifying glasses or with a pair of binoculars. It is a bad thing when saints do that. If you are looking for something, certainly you are going to find it, no matter how perfect a life someone is living and no matter how good that person is before God. If you want to find something to gripe and complain about, you surely can. If you want to "Let brotherly love continue," you have to throw away the magnifying glass and give everyone his or her space.

In order to illustrate this, you could look at a block wall. What holds the blocks together? I was asked that question years ago when a brother was building a cellar. The brother was laying the blocks, and another brother came along and said, "What is holding those blocks together?"

I said, "Mortar — that's obvious!" He repeated the question, so I looked closer and then said, "The mortar is holding them together."

"No," he said, "Look really close." I looked really close, and not one of those blocks was touching. The mortar separated each individual block, yet provided the adhesion necessary to create a wall. When you look at the wall, you do not call

it a bunch of blocks; the individual blocks became a wall. Every block that came out of the pile lost its individual identity as it was placed in the wall, smeared on all four sides with mortar.

God has placed each of us in the wall and surrounded each one of us with His love, and the final result is not merely a group of individuals, but it is the Church of God. God puts us in the body as it pleases Him. Each member has his or her own place in the body of Christ. Each of us is necessary for the functioning of the work of God. The church's duty is to "Let brotherly love continue." We have to put our shoulders to the work. It is not always going to be easy, and it is not always going to be pleasant.

If I were to ask a married couple if all their days of marriage are as perfectly loving as the first day they got married, I think they would have to say: "We have had some difficult times. We have had to work our way through some things." That is how it is with any marriage.

Sometimes we have to do things that we do not want to do in the family of God. It is not easy to love a difficult person. Do you know any difficult people? There are difficult people in each of our lives, yet we have to love them and manifest love toward them. In order to do so, we have to work on ourselves. Not everyone is as easy to love as some people are. You can love some people and get along well together and have a great relationship. Then it is not hard to "Let brotherly love continue." However, someone will come along who will test your resolve to let it continue. In some circumstances you will be strongly tempted to withdraw that love. Sometimes you may feel justified in it because you want to teach that person a lesson, but the Word says, "Let brotherly love continue." It does not say that you have a right to teach someone a lesson; vengeance belongs to God. It is your duty to show love and mercy.

Enduring Hard Places

The words of the Scripture text were never thought to be easy. Paul spoke those words because that was a need in the morning-time church, amidst all the contention of changing from Judaism to Christianity. At that time there was great strife in the church. Some people wanted to hold to the Jewish customs and ceremonies and others embraced Christ and wanted to do away with all of that. Much commotion was taking place. The writer of the Book of Hebrews spent much of his effort in the Hebrew letter edifying Christ. He compared Christ with Moses, with the old Law and the Old Testament. He let them know that we have Someone better, Someone more real to get hold of: Jesus Christ. However, not everyone was able to grasp that immediately. Some people had a hard time getting hold of that, so the Hebrew writer tried to encourage the church. He said, "Let brotherly love continue." He said, in essence, "Do not fall out over these things; hold yourselves together."

The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:1-4: "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier."

Being a good soldier of Jesus Christ requires you to endure difficulties and hard places and to be a good soldier while you are doing it. There is not a need for this admonishment unless something is working in your life to hinder your brotherly love. Where there are no hindrances, it flows automatically. It is not hard to love when someone is returning your love. It is not hard to get along when others are getting along with you. However, in the

most beautiful picture, someone is going to upset things. Your job is to let brotherly love continue.

My father talked to my wife and me before we got married and said: "Richard, if you will treat Diana like she is the queen of your life, and Diana, if you will treat Richard like he is the king of your life, you will never have any problems." When I treat her as a queen and she treats me as a king, we get along very well. However, sometimes it was hard for me to treat her as a queen when she upsets me. She did not always think as I thought, and she did not always do what I wanted her to do.

There were times when I had to stop and think and remember, "Love is a choice, and I am going to love her regardless." Sometimes it is hard to put self down and love her over top of my own feelings, but it has worked for more than forty-two years. We have had a rich, wonderful marriage. I have never regretted getting married. I have enjoyed it immensely, but there have been times when we had to work at it.

We have to choose to love each other. Marriage takes a tremendous commitment. You do not see much of that today. Church, serving God and being true to one another takes a tremendous commitment. I am committed to the body of Christ and to letting love continue. We need strong soldiers. Men and women need to know how to endure some difficult situations for the sake of the Gospel, for a testimony to the world.

Forbearance

Colossians 3:1-3 reads: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." Verses 8-13 continue: "But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another,

seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all. Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye."

Those verses do not tell you to judge others and to watch them through a magnifying glass. We are to forbear one another and to forgive one another. If a man has a quarrel or a complaint against another, should he pout over it, tell his friends about it, spread gossip around, get on the telephone and call others about it? If you have a complaint, verse 13 says that even as Christ forgave you, you should do the same. Verse 14 reads, "And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness." That is a tremendous mouthful.

If you have a complaint against someone, you ought to forgive that person, even if he does not ask for your forgiveness or does not act as though he is sorry. Christ forgave me before I ever asked Him. He forgave me before I ever considered Him. I shamed Him and brought embarrassment to Him. There were times in my youth when I was up and down in my Christian experience. I shamed the Lord even after I was saved. I brought disgrace to His name, yet He forgave me.

Do you know why it is hard to forgive sometimes? It is hard because you know that as soon as you utter the words, "I forgive you," you have to let it go forever. Sometimes that is hard to do because you do not want to let it go, but the Word says, "Let brotherly love continue." Sometimes people forget that God is still the ultimate Judge. There is not a

thing going on that He does not know about. No one is saying a thing about you that He does not know about. He is fully aware of every circumstance happening on the earth. He knows your hurt, and He knows how you feel, yet He still teaches you to forbear and to forgive even as He has forgiven you.

The word *forbear* simply means "to put up with and to love." You have to learn to put up with some people. As Christians, love is required. We must love one another, but appreciation is earned. Confidence in someone is earned, but we are instructed to love. Loving does not mean that you are always going to appreciate someone's behavior or conduct, but you must allow brotherly love to continue.

Forgiveness

As God's children, unforgiveness is never an option; it is not our prerogative. We must forgive every injury, every hurt, no matter what it is. Unforgiveness is not a choice that we have as God's children. Forgiving others requires as much personal discipline as does the love of God. You have to make up your mind to forgive. Sometimes I have to get down in earnest prayer and bring my flesh under subjection to forgive. Sometimes forgiving is not easy when you have been hurt, but you must. You have to bring yourself to forgive. It is not always instantaneous.

I encourage people not to get troubled because they cannot forgive instantly as long as they have a desire to forgive. I believe God will bring a person to that place if he or she really wants to forgive. Soon God will bring you to the place where you can let it go and have true forgiveness. It is easy to say the words, "I forgive you," but it is much harder to get unforgiveness out of the heart and over into God's care. You have to forgive to be at peace with yourself, with God, and with all others.

You might not always forget it,

but you can forgive. You may never forget some things, but you must strive to do so. God has forgotten all your past sins. Even though you truly forgive, you may not completely forget some things; but you must try, by the grace of God, to keep them buried under the blood of Christ. By His grace, you can move on in true forgiveness.

It takes two willing people to make brotherly love effective. One person can pour himself out in an effort to prove himself to his brother, and if that brother is not receptive and turns a cold shoulder, it is going to hit a one-way street. What can you do then? You must make sure that you keep that love open; then it becomes that other person's responsibility. He will stand before God according to what he does with it, but do not become guilty of stopping brotherly love toward someone because that person is rejecting your love.

Church, there are always going to be problems. Therefore, we must be strong soldiers who know how to endure hardness and please Him who has called us to be soldiers. The Lord did not call us to serve Him on beds of ease. He knew we would be tested and tried. We are going to be pressed to the limit sometimes, but in all circumstances, we must "Let brotherly love continue." If an individual rejects it, makes light of it, refuses to reciprocate that love, it will never be able to accomplish the desired purpose, but it will keep you clear before the Lord.

A Threefold Cord

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 reads: "Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up. Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone? And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken."

I picture that threefold cord as a braided rope. God and I are woven together, and God and I get along well. I do not have any trouble with the Lord at all, but it does not stop there. He mentioned a threefold cord. That is where individual problems come from. You may say, "God and I were getting along well until you came along." It is our dealings with others that evoke problems. When the cord is threefold, it is not easily broken, because we all are endeavoring to let the love of God continue.

If something occurs that stands in the way of your love and stops it momentarily, if you have been trodden upon and that love is not flowing as freely as it should, you need to get alone with God and pour out your heart to Him to get help and strength. Also, you may need to talk to your pastor. God can move into your soul and bring back that love and revive it. Then you can say, "I am letting brotherly love continue."

When Lot and Abraham had to separate, Abraham gave Lot the freedom to choose which way he wanted to go, so Lot chose the well-watered plains. He went and pitched his tent toward Sodom. I cannot help but feel that perhaps Abraham cautioned Lot. He might have said: "Lot, you know that you have chosen the well-watered plains of Jordan, and that looks good to you; however, you need to be careful. There is trouble out in that land. I am concerned for you."

I can picture Lot as a young upstart. Perhaps he replied, "I know what I'm doing, Uncle Abraham." I can imagine Lot getting headstrong, throwing his shoulders back, and saying: "I can take care of things, Uncle Abraham. Don't you worry about me."

Today people may say: "Don't worry about me, pastor. I am all right. I know what I am doing." Yes, but the pastor has a burden for you. God laid a burden on his heart concerning you. Many people take their pastor so lightly and carelessly.

Lot was persistent in having his way, so he ended up in trouble. He

was captured by an army, and they took Lot and his family away captive. We read in Genesis 14:14 that when Abraham heard that his brother (he referred to Lot as his brother, not his cantankerous, belligerent, stubborn nephew, or that hard-headed boy who thought he knew everything) had been taken, he did not say: "Well, it serves him right! He had it coming to him. I tried to warn him." Do you know what he did? He armed his best servants, those who were born in his own house, and went to rescue Lot. That speaks volumes to me about letting brotherly love continue.

Seeking God's Help

Jacob and Esau had a problem. Esau hated Jacob with a passion. He despised Jacob, and perhaps he had a reason for that. Jacob's mother sent him away for a while, but his time spent away from home turned out to be more than twenty years. He needed to get away because Esau said he was going to kill him. Jacob never lost his fear of Esau.

One night their travels brought them to where they were going to have to meet. After Jacob had spent the night wrestling in prayer with the angel, he was encouraged by God's promise that he should return to his own land, and then Esau stood in his way. God had given Jacob a promise. He told him, in essence, "Jacob, you are going to return to your own land, and there build an altar and worship Me." Jacob was encouraged, and he went to meet Esau. A runner came and told him that his brother Esau was out there.

In the midst of Jacob's fear, he divided his family into two groups, with the idea that if one group was attacked and destroyed, the others would have time to escape. He lived with an awesome fear of Esau, but in the midst of Jacob's fear, he prayed.

Genesis 32:9-11 states: "And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the LORD which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to

thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee: I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast showed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands. Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children."

Jacob's fears were very real. However, when Jacob and Esau finally got together, Esau came running toward Jacob and fell on his neck and began to kiss and embrace him. The hatred was gone, and Jacob's fear left. Those two brothers were reunited. What brought about this great resolve was Jacob's prayer. In Genesis 33:10 Jacob said, "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast showed unto thy servant." Jacob humbled himself and sought the help of God. Nothing is impossible when you humble yourself and seek the help of God. God can make you what you need to be, and He can be all you need.

Some people accuse the pastor of being angry. Well, sometimes he gets angry at the devil. If people would measure up, he could go to another subject. People like to find fault with the pastor. They may say that he is not so loving, not so patient, or not so kind.

Are You Giving Place to the Devil?

You can read in the Bible about a man who talked with God face to face. God hid him in the cleft of the rock and walked by, and he saw the glory of God as no other living man has ever seen. That man was Moses, and he got so angry when his people disobeyed that he destroyed the stone tablets that God had made. Then a short time later, he pleaded with the Lord and said, in so many words, "Father, if you are going to blot them out, blot my name out of the book too." Those were the same people.

Do you know why Moses was

angry? He was not so angry at the individuals as he was with what Satan had done to his people and what Aaron had allowed to take place. God sent plagues among the children of Israel. In essence, He said, "I will blot out those who have sinned against Me." God was ready to destroy the whole nation until Moses pleaded for God to spare them.

I am persuaded in my own heart and mind that many people are yet living today only because of the prayers of a good pastor and the prayers of loving parents and the prayers of a concerned congregation. That is all that is holding the wrath of God back from allowing some things. Saints need to work at the job of letting brotherly love continue.

God warned Cain when he was

full of hatred. He told Cain that sin was at the door. God warned Cain not to let that thing get hold of him. Child of God, you cannot afford to let such things get hold of you. You need to bring yourself into subjection to the Lord. Cain would not listen, and he went out and killed his brother. Many good people are being slain today by the word of the mouth. By the tongue, reputations can be ruined and characters can be destroyed. People's hope of Heaven could be ruined because some run their mouths against others. You need to be careful that you let the love of God continue. Do not let self or selfishness get in the way. You should not let vengeance become a part of you; that belongs to God. He never gave us the right to exercise any kind of vengeance, but He tells us to "Let brotherly love continue."

Jesus said in John 15:12, "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you." That is God's commandment. Do you truly desire to live according to the Book? If you do not want to live according to the Book, then no one can do anything for you. You have to believe the Book and put it into practice in your life, and then it will work. If you will let God work, brotherly love will continue and Satan will not have anywhere to work in your life. He can only work in your life if you give place to him. Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:27, "Neither give place to the devil." You must not let the devil have any place to work in your life.

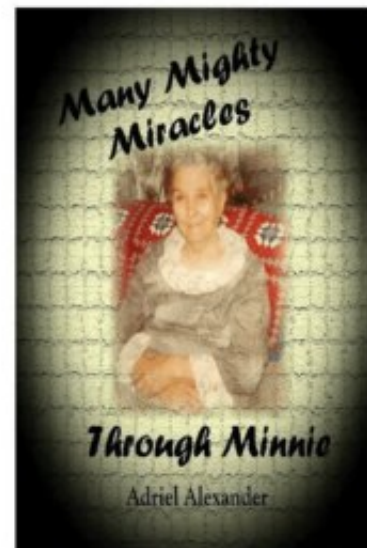
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My Personal Testimony

After my father, Brother Ervin L. Cultice, died in June 2008, I felt that the Lord wanted to use me in some way. I was pretty much bedridden at this time from a fall that I had taken in October 1977 while stationed in the Philippines as I was serving in the Navy. I was on twenty-nine different medications for my various medical problems. I had been told that my spine was deteriorating from C2 to S2. Neurosurgery told me I would soon be a paraplegic or quadriplegic, and when, not if, it happened, they would do whatever it took to give me the best quality of life. I had to sleep in a hospital bed and was on oxygen at night. Sometimes I needed it during the day due to chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). The doctors were looking into giving me a tracheotomy to help me breathe at night due to severe sleep apnea.

Answer to Prayer

I had been studying God's Word and praying that the Lord would reveal to me what He wanted me to do for Him. On July 12, 2009, my wife and I were hit by a drunk driver on our way home from church. The crash totaled our van. I was taken to the hospital where they increased my pain medications and more or less sent me home to die. They did not see much hope of my having any real quality of life. I was told to just make the best of it. They told my wife that they did not know how I was functioning at all. I do not remember much of the next month other than being in pain. My wife and I had planned to go to the Canby, Oregon Camp Meeting in August, but I did not know how was I going to get there. I could not

ride in the new van we had because the wheelchair lift had not yet been installed, and I did not know how I would be able to get into the church when I got there.

It was at this time that I realized that I could and should ask for prayer for healing. I did not need to give up and accept this as my lot in life. I finally told my wife that if I could get to the camp meeting, I would be healed. So we set about working on how to get me there and how I could care for myself once I arrived.

We knew that we both could not go. I flew to Portland, Oregon, and Brother David Stegmeier arranged for someone to meet me there. Sister Sandy and Brother Chad Holtry had taken care of my dad just before he passed away, and now they were taking care of me. I thank the Lord for them! They had just had a car accident and were recovering themselves.

I attended the services and all the activities from Wednesday until Friday night. At the beginning of the Friday evening service, I went to Brother Decker and told him I wanted all the pastors to anoint me and pray for me. So when the men's quartet was singing, I had Brother Decker go to the altar with me. I left my wheelchair, using two canes and the pews, to walk to the altar. They asked me how they should pray, and I told them that I just wanted the joy of my first love, Jesus, back in my life instead of pain. The pain was so bad that I could not meditate on Jesus and His Word, and this robbed me of my joy. I do not remember their prayer; all I know is what was in my heart. When I got up and started back to my wheelchair, I noticed that I had feeling in places where I had

not had any sensation in more than twelve years. I then noticed that I did not need one of the canes, and then I did not need the other one.

When I got to the end of the pews, I turned to the church and told them what had just happened and asked if anyone wanted a wheelchair. I gave mine away that night. I went back to my hotel room, and as I was getting ready for bed, got out my pills and insulin. As I started to take them, it was as if someone knocked them from my hand. I said: "Lord, You have already given more than I asked for. I just wanted my joy back, and yet You have healed me of my nerve damage, most of the pain, and I am walking."

The Lord said: "Do you want Me to heal you or not? And do you really want My joy?"

I said, "Yes," and put away the pills. I was on insulin, morphine, Percocet, and two other medications for pain, plus four antidepressants. I'd had at least two strokes and was on four heart medications. I had Type II diabetes and was on pills and insulin. Because of my esophageal hernia, I was on strong antacids so I would not drown in my own stomach acid. Stopping all my medications was not a very sound medical choice. When I shared this with the brothers the next morning, they expressed some serious concerns for me. It took ten days for me to finally get all the drugs out of my system, and I will not tell you that it was easy.

When I got home, I was a different man than when I had left. I was able to work around my house for the first time in years. After about four weeks, I went into the doctors and told them that I was off all my medications. I met with different reactions. My psychiatrist was praising the Lord right along

[continued on page 27]



The circumstances I was born into were about as good as one could hope to have coming into this world. I was born into a good Christian home with good Christian parents, and I was raised in a thriving and flourishing Church of God congregation at God's Acres. I was further blessed to grow up under the preaching of Brother Emerson Wilson, one of the most godly men I have ever had the privilege of knowing. My father was a good man. He was hardworking, dedicated, and honest, although he struggled at times in his experience with God. My mother, on the other hand, was solid, standing tall and resolute for God throughout my entire life and for twenty years before I was born. Even when she had to stand alone during the times when Dad was struggling spiritually and none of her children was saved. She never wavered in her stand for God and the Truth! I thank God for my precious mother and the wonderful godly heritage she gave me.

Sadly, despite the wonderful blessings God bestowed on me, I squandered that wonderful spiritual heritage by turning to a life of sin at a young age. After turning eighteen in 1986, I quit attending church on a regular basis, and soon afterward I quit going altogether. Over the next few years, I tried many of the sins that the world has to offer. I drank, heavily for a while, dabbled in drugs, ran the bars, and

chased women; yet the entire time my godly heritage stayed with me. Eventually, I settled down to a fairly quiet and mostly law-abiding life. Despite my turning away from God, God was good to me and blessed me in many ways. As time went by, I worked hard and began to build up a reputation as a hard-working, honest individual.

In 2002 I was hired for my "dream job," working for the Public Retirement System in Columbus, Ohio. In May 2003 I purchased my first home, along with a coworker, and my first brand-new car. During this time, I continued to build my professional reputation, working my way up the corporate ladder and being promoted three times in six years. Soon I was being considered for another promotion that would have taken place in January 2009.

By August 2008, I had what many in the world would consider a good life. I owned my own home, having bought out my former partner the previous year. I purchased a second new car, as well as another late model car. I was employed at a job that paid well, working with top executives in my company. I had two beautiful daughters and money in the bank. Seemingly, I had it all; but despite all this success, I was miserable. The one thing I did not have in my life was God. In August 2008 my whole world came crashing down around me.

As I said earlier, I lived a mostly

law-abiding life, but I did have one sinful secret. It was something I never thought I would become involved in, but it became my ultimate undoing. On August 12, 2008, my life was changed forever. I was roused by a loud knock at my front door. When I opened the door, I was faced with police officers who had their guns drawn. They were serving me a search warrant on my home.

In order to spare my family and myself any further embarrassment, I will spare the details of my crime. I was arrested and faced multiple charges. Word of my arrest spread quickly, and I was immediately placed on leave by my employer. Two weeks later, I was fired. In the blink of an eye, all that I had accomplished in life was gone. My job, my reputation, my freedom, and eventually my house were all taken from me. I began to reflect on my life and on the situation at hand. Thanks to my godly heritage, it soon became clear to me exactly where I had gone so horribly wrong. Out of all the things I had accomplished, I had left God out of my life, the most important One of all, and my time of reaping had come.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-2 says: "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted." Hosea 8:7 tells us, "For they have sown the wind, and they

shall reap the whirlwind." Galatians 6:7 tells us, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

I had been going along in my own strength, doing my own thing (or so I thought), giving little thought to God or to spiritual things. Of course, I wanted to get saved "some day," but the devil kept moving that day further into the future. Someday was always tomorrow, next week, next month, or next year. As I was sitting in the Franklin County jail, contemplating the pile of rubble that sin and Satan had made of my life, I began to pray. I knew there was a good chance that the judge would set my bail higher than I would be able to pay, and I would have to remain in jail until my trial. So I prayed and promised the Lord that if my bail were low enough for me to pay, I would go back to church. As soon as I finished praying, I felt calmness and a peace come over me like I had never felt before. I quit fretting, worrying, and stressing, because I knew my prayer had been heard.

God answered my prayer, and two days later, I was released from jail on bail. The following Sunday morning, I attended the church service at God's Acres for the first time in two or three years. The enemy of souls never stops working, and he tried to convince me that I had fulfilled my promise to God by attending that one service. The enemy reminded me that I had only promised to attend one Sunday, not every Sunday. However, I was so thankful to be out of jail (and I knew it was a blessing from God), that even though I could not remember exactly what I had promised in my prayer, I knew I needed to continue attending the church services.

The enemy did not give up just because I was now attending church services every Sunday morning. Deep down inside, I knew that I needed to change my life and turn it over to God, but there was still a part of me—that stubborn,

sinful flesh—that did not want to yield to God's call. I just wanted the nightmare to disappear and things to go back to normal, to be able to continue living my life "my way." Despite the best efforts of the enemy to deter me, thankfully God is more powerful! The services and the love of the saints began to have an effect on me. Once again, my godly heritage was right there in front of me, close enough for me to reach out and touch it, so to speak. I knew what I needed to do, but I still lacked the complete desire to serve God.

Despite all the pain and heartache sin had brought me, its hold on me was absolute and powerful. Friend, this is the risk you take when you walk away from God. The devil works especially hard on young people. He does his best to convince them that they can always get saved later. He tells them, "You can pursue sinful pleasures now and turn to God when you are ready." Friend, the devil does not play fair. He tells you that you can get saved someday, knowing that each day spent in sin brings deeper and deeper bondage. The hold of sin becomes stronger and stronger.

My life was in shambles, and the mercy of God was right in front of me, just waiting to be accepted. However, I was so bound that a part of me still wanted to continue living in sin. I was at a crossroad in my life, and I had to make a decision. I do not know for sure, but that might have been my last opportunity to take advantage of God's mercy and turn my life over to Him. As the weeks went by, the saints of God could see the changes that God was working in my life.

One Sunday in early November, Brother Kenny Decker came to me after service and asked: "What's holding you back? Why are you resisting the mercy of God?" I honestly had to tell him that I did not know. I was just not ready to crucify my sinful flesh and live for God.

A week later, Brother Larry Dishman came to town for a re-

vival. The first Sunday morning, although I do not remember the title of the message, I remember that the message seemed to be aimed directly at me. During the altar call, I was under so much conviction that my legs were literally shaking. However, I was seemingly locked in place, unable to take that all-important first step toward the altar.

As the altar call continued, Brother Dishman asked for those who wanted to be remembered in prayer to raise their hands. I raised my hand, but as the service ended, I still stood at my seat. Then I felt an arm around my shoulders and heard a voice asking, "Do you want it?" I nodded my head yes, and the tears began to flow down my face. Brother Joel Barrows (I thank God for him) stepped closer, looked me in the eyes, and asked me the same question again. I nodded yes, and he said, "Then let's go get it!"

Thank God, the shackles of Satan were broken at that moment, and I headed to an altar of prayer! I surrendered myself and my terrible sins to God and laid them at His feet. When I arose from the altar of prayer, I realized that the saints of God had surrounded me, waiting to welcome the prodigal son back to Father's house. I cannot describe how it felt—all the love, the beautiful Spirit of God, and the fellowship with the saints of God!

Satan, of course, was not going to give up without a fight. Almost immediately, he began to bring unbelief and doubt to my mind. When I prayed at the altar, there was no great feeling of relief or exhilaration, no sense of the "blood of Jesus washing over me." The devil tried to use this to tell me that I did not truly get saved, that I had not prayed through and gotten the victory. In spite of his accusations, I knew something was different. I no longer wanted to commit sin. I no longer dreaded going to church, but I longed for it. I was determined to serve God.

I began to pray to God for help. I told the devil that if I did not pray

through or get the victory, I was going to keep praying until I did! That is exactly what I have done, by the grace of God. I have hung on to God, fighting tooth and nail, so to speak, against the devil and his attacks on my faith. Thank God, today my experience is stronger than ever. I am more determined not to let the devil win. I was saved on November 9, 2008, and for nearly seven months I attended services and rejoiced in the fellowship with the saints. Also, I immersed myself in prayer and the study of God's Word. I was able to attend the Memorial Day cleaning day at God's Acres. What a wonderful day of friendship and fellowship with God's people!

The last service I was able to attend was Wednesday night, May 27, 2009. The following Friday, I stood before an earthly judge to be sentenced for my crimes. Although God has forgiven me for my sins and washed them away, the State of Ohio had not. I was given a nine-year prison sentence. I am writing this testimony from a correctional institution. I must be honest — it has not been easy. I have struggled at times, and the devil is always there, trying to flood my mind with hopelessness, despair, unbelief, and assaults on my faith. In prison evil is rampant, as one might expect, but through it all, God has been there for me. He has not failed me once! He has come to my rescue each and every time I have called upon Him.

During this time, I have grown and learned so much from God's Holy Word. My heart is filled with joy every time I have a chance to witness to others of God's goodness and the wonderful news of salvation. Several guys have come up to me and asked questions about the Bible. Others have asked me to pray for them and the circumstances in their lives. I know that God is using me here and has a work for me to complete. One of my favorite Scriptures has become Isaiah 61:1-3: "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me

to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified."

I am praying that my appeal will be successful and that my sentence will be shortened or that the case against me will be dismissed altogether so that I can get back home to my family and to the wonderful fellowship of the saints. Regardless of what happens, I am determined to live for God. I want His will to be done! Colossians 1:9 tells us, "For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." I ask that you pray this prayer for me. First John 5:14-15 says: "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him."

It is my prayer and desire to be in God's will. If He needs me in prison and it is His will for me to serve out my full sentence, then I know He will give me the strength and the grace to see it through! I trust this will be a sobering lesson to those who have had the privilege to grow up hearing the precious Truth of God's Word with a wonderful pastor and saints of God who love them. Dear one, if you choose to walk away from your godly heritage as I did, you will have to pay a high price. You may not end up in prison, but sin is its own prison. Sin extracts a heavy price for the few

short pleasures it brings. If you will turn to God and stay true to Him, you will avoid the pain and the heartaches that I live with every day.

I appreciate all the prayers, cards, and letters from the saints. My prayers are with all of you every day. I thank God for His mercy and for salvation! May God bless you all.

Brother Daniel Fowler

My Bible

*Though the cover is worn,
And the pages are torn,
And though places bear traces
of tears,
Yet more precious than gold
Is the Book worn and old,
Can shatter and scatter my fears.*

*When I prayerfully look
In the precious old book,
As my eyes scan the pages I see
Many tokens of love
From the Father above,
Who is nearest and dearest to me.*

*This old Book is my guide,
'Tis a friend by my side,
It will lighten and brighten my
way;
And each promise I find
Soothes and gladdens my mind
As I read it and heed it today.*

Author Unknown

The Whole Bible Contains

*The mind of God.
The state of man.
The doom of sinners.
The happiness of believers.*

*Its doctrines are holy.
Its precepts are binding.
Its histories are true.
Its decisions are immutable.*

Author Unknown

Mark 1:1 The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God;

2 As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

3 The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

4 John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

5 And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.

6 And John was clothed with

camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey;

7 And preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose.

8 I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.

9 And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan.

10 And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove de-

scending upon him:

11 And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

12 And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness.

13 And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him.

14 Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God,

15 And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.

The Kingdom of God Is at Hand



Brother Leamon Whitehead

God's Timetable

Notice that in verse 15 Jesus said, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye, and believe the gospel." In Matthew 3:2 Jesus called it "the kingdom of heaven." In the Bible the phrases "the kingdom of God" and the "kingdom of heaven" are used interchangeably. I want to tell you a little about this great kingdom that Jesus was talking about. The reason He said that the time

was fulfilled was that God works on a timetable, and it was time for the Kingdom of God.

Jesus said the kingdom is at hand, that kingdom that had been prophesied of. The time had come when everything that the prophets had spoken of concerning Jesus was at hand and the King of Glory was right there to perform the mighty works of God. Jesus said that the Kingdom of God is at hand, and He said to repent and believe the Gospel. Friend, you need to take the

opportunity to get into the Kingdom of God and to be set free from sin. Jesus did not come to take a powder puff and just powder sin. He came to put an end to sin in the hearts and lives of men and women, and He came to give them power and victory so that they could live above sin.

Jesus said, "The time is fulfilled." Daniel 2:44 says, "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the

kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever." This is the kingdom that I am in. The sacrifice of animals could not take away sin, clean the conscience, or make a man feel clean inside or out. However, Jesus came to put an end to those old animal sacrifices. The Bible lets us know that He made one offering for sin forever.

In the Old Testament you can read that the Prophet Daniel was concerned about his people. He was concerned about the captivity that they were in. They had been carried away to Babylon. He prayed and cried out to God, and he wondered how long it was going to be. The God of Heaven answered him and sent him a messenger who said, "Seventy weeks are determined . . ." (Daniel 9:24).

When Jesus said, "The time is fulfilled," it was time for God to set up the Kingdom of God on the earth so that men could enter it and get out of the kingdom of darkness. You can have power and victory in your life and live free from sin. No matter what has you bound, Jesus Christ has enough power to destroy every bit of sin and dross in your life and fill you with power and glory so that you can live right in this time world.

The messenger told Daniel that seventy weeks were determined upon his people. I am trying to show you that God has always worked on a timetable, and everything has happened just as He said it would. Today we are living in the seventh-seal period of time. We are right down to the end time, and there is no prophesy beyond that. When Jesus came, He fulfilled the prophecy that the prophets spoke about. He fulfilled everything they said would happen about Him in His First Advent. He brought in everlasting righteousness. He did not come to pet sin or to sympathize with people, but He came to put an end to sin.

"The Time Is Fulfilled"

During the First Advent of Jesus Christ, the people knew that a great One had come to them. They had not heard from God for about four hundred years, but they knew there was something very special about Jesus. In John 3:2 Nicodemus said to Jesus, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." Jesus walked up and down the shores of Galilee. He met men and women in all kinds of conditions, but He never had to back away from any case. When He found those who were possessed with devils and they cried out for help, He just bid the devils to go, and they had to leave those individuals. No case was too hard for Him, and He is just the same today. His power is still just as great. He can set you free from every fetter, from everything that has you bound.

Jesus said, "The time is fulfilled." The devil was having a heyday back then, just as he is today. However, Jesus came on the scene and began to preach, "The kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel." It is time for those who are unsaved to get their hearts right with God and believe the Word of God. *It is later than we think!*

Luke 4:16-19 states: "And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord." Now is the accepted time, the acceptable

year of the Lord.

In verse 21 Jesus said, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." Jesus let them know that He came to do all that was written of Him. He did mighty acts that caused people to wonder with amazement. One time when Jesus healed the sick of the palsy, the disciples said, "We never saw it on this fashion" (Mark 2:12). We can read of another time in Matthew 8:27 that they wondered, "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!" Once the chief priests and the Pharisees sent some officers to take Jesus, and when they came back without Him, they were asked why they had not brought Him. The officers replied, "Never man spake like this man" (John 7:46). Jesus had power over every power of the enemy, and He still has that power. You can live right if you get that power. Jesus will lift you up and you can soar as an eagle above this old world and not be tarnished by the things of this world.

The Kingdom of Heaven Is at Hand

God's kingdom is not just another kingdom. It is the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus Christ was coming to be the King. There are only two kingdoms: the kingdom of darkness and the Kingdom of Light. If you are in the kingdom of darkness, you cannot get out by your own power, or in your own strength. You cannot buy your way out. The only way out is to plead the blood of Jesus Christ and to cry out to Him for mercy. When He hears your sincere cry from the depth of your heart, He will be there with the key to unlock the prison door, and He will give you a pardon and set you free.

God sent His Son to set up His kingdom on earth. Many religious people say that it has not come yet, but it is already here. John 1:11-12 says: "He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave

he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." Today many people are preaching a perverted gospel. It has been watered down; it does not have any power in it. On the other hand, this Gospel that I am talking about is the Gospel that Jesus preached. It is the Gospel that He commissioned the Apostles to preach, other good brethren to preach, and me to preach. It has power in it!

Jesus did not have to back away from the devils. Once He went over across the sea into the land of the Gadarenes and found a man who was possessed with a devil. Mark 5:9 says, "And he [Jesus] asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many." Jesus did not have to fall back and go back across the sea, but He bid those devils to go. Those unclean spirits had to depart from that man. Jesus set him free, and then he was clothed and in his right mind.

The devil will tell you that your case is too hard for God. No, it is not. If you will invite the Savior in, He will come in, bind the strong man, cast him out, and spoil his goods; then He will come into your life. You can have power and victory. Glory be to God! You do not have to live your life with your head down, afraid to face the day. You can hold up your head and be as the Apostle Paul, who said he was what he was by the grace of God. God's grace can give you full and free deliverance.

A true man of God will not pat sin on the back, but he will tell you what sin is and how it damns your soul. Sin will send you to hell, and you will end up in a lost eternity. A true man of God will also tell you that you can have power and victory over sin, if you will let God come into your life.

Zechariah 13:1 says, "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness." God does not

excuse sin in people's lives. Jesus came to put an end to sin. Those who cried out for mercy in that day were set free. The Kingdom of God was set up in A.D. 33. Since then, men and women have been pressing into it and finding the peace of God that passes all understanding. God's power can put an end to the sin in your life and in the lives of those whom Satan has had bound for so many years. When Jesus touches you, you will never be the same.

The Compassionate Christ

Jesus reached out in compassion every time He met people who had needs. His compassion went out to those who were in distress. Friend, He loves and cares for you, and He is concerned about your condition. He is concerned about your plight. He is concerned about how the devil has you bound and how he is pressing you down in a life of sin. If you want to be free, if you want to be made clean, He will set you free.

Jesus had compassion for the dear man who sat by the pool of Bethesda. In John 5:6 you can read that Jesus went to him and asked, "Wilt thou be made whole?" The man replied, "Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me" (verse 7). Jesus told him to take up his bed and walk, and he went on his way rejoicing.

Jesus' compassion went out to the souls and to the bodies of men and women, and today His compassion still goes out to them. He will answer your cry if you will call upon Him. Jesus came to set up an everlasting kingdom. It is a kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. You do not have to continue under the power of sin; you can be set free.

In the religious world, if you talk about living free from sin, some people will raise their eyebrows and look at you kind of funny, but Jesus can still wash you whiter than

snow. He did not come to save people in their sins, but He came to save them *from* their sins. The reason people see the power of sin so great is that they only see a little of Jesus. If you will see Him greater than anything, then you will know that He can conquer the sin in your life and put an end to it. He is able to deliver you from the habits of life, those habits with which the devil has you bound. He is more than able to deliver you and set you free. He can deliver you from the kingdom of darkness and put you in the Kingdom of Light, where there is power and victory over every power of the enemy.

When Jesus came on the scene, even the devils knew that they had run into Someone who was more powerful than they were. They cried out and asked Jesus if He came to torment them before the time. They knew that all He had to do was speak the Word, and they would have to depart. There is victory in Jesus Christ. If you get hold of Him, He can set you free from the bondage of sin and death, deliver you, wash you whiter than snow, and send you on your way rejoicing.

Jesus is that fountain opened, and there is still power in the blood. Though millions have been washed clean in His blood, it has never lost its cleansing power. It will wash you whiter than snow and even take away the stain of sin. It is still powerful!

Be Reconciled to God

Earth is out of step with Heaven. That is what is wrong with the world. Jesus came so that He might bring the souls of men and women back in step, or back in fellowship, with God. The message is to be reconciled to God. If you are outside the ark of safety, you need to be reconciled to God. That is God's desire, that is Jesus' desire, and that is the church's desire. The Spirit of God is bidding you to come and make things right with God.

You need not spend another day in sin. This is the Gospel that the Apostle Paul said he was not ashamed of. In Romans 1:16 Paul said, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." There is power in this Gospel!

When the Gospel is preached in its purity, without being watered down or mixed with anything else, it will still cause spirits to rise up. I do not get alarmed when the Gospel is going forth and someone gets a little red in the face, gets a little troubled, or storms out the door. This Gospel will stir people. If you water down the Gospel, there will not be enough power in it to get down to where you are living and touch your life so that you can receive power and victory. If you water down the Gospel, there will not be enough power to increase your faith so that you can get hold of God and be saved. The pure Gospel is the Gospel that Jesus preached. The Bible speaks of a perverted gospel. Sadly, many people have perverted it over the land today.

Jesus said the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. It is not going to come later; it is already here. We do not have to offer animal sacrifices in Jerusalem, because the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. Glory be to God! Jesus said it would be an everlasting kingdom. He knew that one day the people of our day would need salvation. I am glad that His kingdom is still available, and there is a way that you can get into it. Precious soul, you need to get free from sin and get into the Kingdom of God. Jesus is bidding you to come to Him. He is bidding you to leave the ways of sin, to call out for mercy, and to hear His voice. You need to look to the Son of God. He is able to save you to the uttermost. He can set you free if you will cry out for mercy.

Jesus came to break the power of sin and darkness. The very best

that people could do under the Old Testament was for the high priest to take the blood of an animal into the most holy place once a year and offer it for his sins and for the sins of the people. He rolled their sins ahead for another year. Jesus came and offered Himself as a sacrifice, once and for all, for all sin, so that He might put an end to sin. He does not just roll your sins ahead, but He cleanses you. He takes away the guilt, the shame, and the defiled conscience and gives you a testimony. That is what He came to do.

One Touch From the Master

You need to call on the Lord while He is near. Jesus walked by many people because they would not cry out to Him for mercy, just as many people fail to do today. Some people did, but when you consider the multitudes of people with whom Jesus came in contact, very few of them accepted Him. As stated in verse 15 of our Scripture lesson, Jesus' message was, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the Gospel." That is the key. You have to repent and believe the Gospel. Those who repented and believed the Gospel received the experience. Those who did not were left behind. Friend, do not put Him off until it is too late. Do not wander in sin. You will face God without excuse if you die in your sins and go into eternity lost. You will face God without an excuse for the life that you have lived. I am trying my very best to tell you about the glorious Kingdom of God so that you can be delivered from the power of sin and death.

Spiritual death reigned over mankind and brought him into captivity. When Jesus came, He opened the way of Truth and life to a lost and dying world. Jesus said in Revelation 22:17, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." There is no need to go on in a sinful condition. There is no need for you to let the devil hold you in his

clutches and bind you in the prison house of sin. You can be free from the sin that has you bound.

One touch from the Master will set you free. Jesus still saves today. He is the only One who saves. A priest or a preacher cannot forgive your sin. You have to bring it to Christ. He is the only One who can wash away your sins. He is still able to wash away every sin and to free you from the bondage of sin.

Maybe you tried to serve God in the past, but the old enemy defeated you. You can dig right down and get on the Rock. You can dig down and get everything out of the way and settle it with God. If you will get hold of God and obtain this experience, you can go through this life with God and maintain real victory in your soul.

Too many people play around with salvation. They do not take it seriously. You have to get serious about it. This is a matter of life and death. Your eternity-bound soul is the most important business at hand.

Jesus came so that He might reconcile you to God. He came to put you on friendly terms with God. I like how He removed my sins as far as the east is from the west, and He cleaned me up. He made me a fit vessel so that the glory of God could come inside and dwell within me day after day. He gave me victory over this world.

Sometimes I am concerned that even some saints forget about the wonder of this treasure that we have on the inside. The Apostle Paul said we have this treasure in earthen vessels. Sometimes we need to let God know that we appreciate what He has done for us. Dear one, you need to think about the fact that He lives on the inside and gives us power and victory every day; He makes us overcomers.

Deliverance From the Powers of Darkness

In Luke 4:18 Jesus read before the crowd, "The Spirit of the Lord is

upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor." The prophets spoke wonderful things about Him, and the very One about whom they prophesied was on the scene in that day. Everywhere Jesus went, He was doing good and meeting the needs of the people. Friend, He is still real today. The Bible says that the first miracle that Jesus ever performed was when He turned the water into wine. Nothing is too hard for our Savior if you will believe and put your trust in Him. Oh, how He wants to wash you whiter than snow! He wants to deliver you from a life of sin and shame. The devil wants to destroy you, but Jesus wants to set you free. He has stretched out His arms to whosoever will come to Him. What a precious message that is!

No matter what your condition is, no matter what color your skin is, and no matter what your status in life is, you can come to Him and take the water of life freely. Friend, you have no excuse. There is room at the Cross for you if you will plead the blood and cry out for mercy. He will hear your cry. He will meet the need of your heart and set you free. Glory be to God for His goodness to the sons of men!

In John, Chapter 9, you can read that Jesus touched a blind man and healed his eyes, and some of the people scorned him. They asked him who did it and how He opened his eyes. They said Jesus was a sinner. Finally, the man said, "Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see" (verse 25).

Once I was dead in trespasses and sin, but thank God, now I am alive in Jesus Christ. At one time I was blind, but now I can see, through the glory of God and the grace of God that brings salvation. At one time my ears were deaf, spiritually speaking, and I could not hear, but now I can hear! Once my feet were lame and I could not walk in the ways of God, but now I can walk in the path of light! Do you

know who did that for me? A man called Jesus.

The blind man did not know much about the Lord. He sat by the wayside, but Jesus came by one day. The desire of every sincere Christian is to see others come to Jesus. Your feet may be lame, and you may not be living for God. Dear one, Jesus can heal your lame feet. He can strengthen your feeble knees and raise you up for the glory of God. He can fill you with power and glory so that you can go through this life and tell the devil no. You do not have to be afraid that the temptations will get too great. Jesus will give you enough power to overcome them. If you will meet God's conditions, He will meet the need of your heart.

The devil may tell you that you cannot live free from sin, but Jesus said that you can by His grace. I thank God for Jesus! He is the One to be praised. There is still power in the Gospel to set men and women free. There is power in it to bring souls under conviction and cause them to realize that God is still God of the universe. Will you honor Him, friend? Will you open the door as He knocks and let Him in? You do not have to be pressed down and bent under the load of sin and despair. He is ready to save you and deliver you from the powers of darkness and the habits of life. If you will turn to Jesus, He will give you power and victory over

the habits of life and set you free from every sin. You can sell out to God and let Him have His way. If you will call on His name, He will set you free. He wants to give you victory in Jesus Christ.

I am not preaching to you about just doing the best you can. No, I am telling you that you can lay all your burdens at Jesus' feet and get up and go on your way rejoicing. It is that simple! All you need to do is repent of your sin and believe the Gospel; that is all it takes. Matthew 4:16 says, "The people which sat in darkness saw great light." That Light can light up your life. He can give you light on the inside and send you on your way rejoicing.

The experience of salvation is not just emotion. It is not something that you work up, but this is real! It can give you peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. Praise God! You can be delivered from the kingdom of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son. You can have victory to live a life free from sin, the life that God intended man to live. Will you cry out to Him? You do not have to go on in sin and be forever sorry for the life that you have lived. You can cry out to Jesus as He is passing by. He will give you power to tell the devil no. He will give you power to stand and do the things that are right.

(Cassette C-2057E)

**When you THINK, when you SPEAK,
When you READ, when you WRITE,
When you SING, when you WALK,
When you seek DELIGHT—
To be kept from all evil
At home and abroad, live always
As under the eye of the Lord.**

Hebrews 4:14 Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.

15 For we have not an high priest

which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

16 Let us therefore come boldly

unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

The Christian Protocol



Brother Calvin Foster

How to Come Into God's Presence

The word *protocol* is defined as "a code prescribing strict adherence to correct etiquette and precedence, as used in diplomatic exchange." If you were to meet with the President of the United States at the White House, a protocol officer would meet with you to outline the proper procedure for the meeting. It would be unacceptable to burst out with an undignified or informal greeting. It would not be appreciated if you were to give negative criticism to the President as you shook his

hand, such as, "I did not vote for you."

In 1881, sixteen years after President Abraham Lincoln was assassinated, President James Garfield was assassinated. This brought about a change of procedure at the White House and on the White House grounds. When visiting the White House, the protocol officer of the United States will tell you how you ought to act.

Our Scripture text lets us know that there is a protocol for coming into the presence of God. Verse 16 says, "Let us therefore come boldly. . . ." You do not have to

hang your head when you come to God. You do not have to have the wrong kind of fear when you go before your Heavenly Father. You can come boldly before the throne of grace so that you might receive mercy and grace to help in the time of need. You can step up to the throne of grace boldly. No matter what you are going through, God has the help that you need. He does not want you to miss Heaven. He has given you permission to come boldly and talk to your Heavenly Father.

Hebrews 11:6 says, "But without faith it is impossible to please him:

for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." You can come to God with faith in your heart and believe that He is. You must come boldly and believe that you are talking to God. God is real! He created you, and He wants you to come boldly to Him and ask in faith for what you need.

The Book of James talks about faith. James 1:1-7 says: "James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting. My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord." James said to ask in faith, not wavering, and to ask believing so that God will give you what you are asking for. The Bible says that God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

Practice Humility

James 4:6 says, "But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble." You must humble yourself before God because He resists the proud, but He gives grace to the humble. It does not take anything from you to be humble before God.

An old saying states that when people used to go to the bank to borrow money, a person would remove his hat and put it in his hand and talk to the banker in a humble spirit. This is how God

wants you to come before Him. First Peter 5:5 says, "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble."

James 4:7-10 reads: "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up." Sometimes humbling yourself is hard. We have to practice humility as we deal with one another. Feet washing is one way that we practice humility. As Jesus washed His disciples' feet, in essence, Peter said, "No, Lord, You are not going to wash my feet," but the Lord said, "If you do not let Me wash your feet, you cannot have any part with Me." Peter said, "Then wash my hands and my head also."

We have to humble ourselves before God and resist the devil, because he is walking about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. The devil does not care how long you have been saved, how long you have been married, how much you love your companion, how long you have been preaching, or how many people you pastor. He is seeking whomever he may devour. The Bible says to resist him and he will flee from you. If you draw close to God, He will draw close to you.

Jesus gave a symbol of a genuine disciple 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."

This is the new birth. Jesus was saying that unless you are converted and become humble as a little child, you cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Little children have no prejudice, no worldly ambitions, and no lustful power. As they play together, they act as though they are equal. Adults could learn much from little children. Some people lust for power and selfish, worldly ambitions. One song says, "Some people like to be the wheel and have their name up at the top." In so many words, Jesus told His disciples, "When you visit a place, you should take the low seat. You should not head for the front seat. If you head for the front seat, someone else might come in greater than you and ask you to give up that seat.

Humble Yourself and Acknowledge Your Need

Luke 18:10-14 says: "Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man 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 Pharisee was a religious man and the publican was a tax collector. Many people in those days did not like tax collectors because they worked for the Roman government. Many times they would overtax the people and pocket the extra money for themselves.

We can see examples of the human race in those two gentlemen. The Pharisee told God what he had done and how good a person he

thought himself to be. He might have thought that God was definitely agreeing with him on this. Again, verse 11 reads, "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican." The Pharisee's words were spoken for nothing; but the publican spoke only seven words, and God heard his prayer.

Some people think if they pray for a long time and say many fine words, they are praising God, but the publican smote upon his breast and said, "God be merciful to me a sinner." The words sinner and saint both come from the Bible. If you are not saved, you will not get anywhere with God until you humble yourself and acknowledge that you are a sinner and ask God to be merciful to you. There is no sense in trying to cover your sin.

If you have sinned, you need to be honest with God and say, "God, I have sinned." You should not call it anything else; you should call it what it is. You need to come to God in faith, not doubting. You need to follow the right protocol to find God.

Spiritual Blindness

Christ healed many people with physical blindness during His time here on earth, but in Matthew 15:14 we find that Jesus' greatest concern was for the spiritual blindness of people. Fannie Crosby was blind, yet she wrote many beautiful songs. She wrote the beautiful song, "Blessed Assurance." You might lose your physical eyesight, but it is more important to realize how valuable spiritual eyesight is. You need to keep your eyes open spiritually.

In Matthew 15:7-9 Jesus said: "Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the

commandments of men." God does not want you to honor Him with your mouth when your heart is somewhere else. Have you ever noticed how far the giraffe's mouth is from his heart? That is how it is with many people. Their mouths are a long way from where their hearts really are. Jesus said in Matthew 15:9, "In vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." The commandments of men will not save your soul or take you to Heaven.

We read in Matthew 15:10-14: "And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand: Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man. Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying? But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch."

You would not want a blind man to drive you anywhere. You would not even get in the car with a blind man if he were driving. Therefore, you should keep your spiritual eyes open. You do not want to become spiritually blind, because a blind leader might lead you wrong.

In 2 Corinthians 4:3-4 Paul said: "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, [You have no excuse for being spiritually blind. You need to stay with the Word of God and stay with the church, saint of God.] lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."

God's Word Gives Light

Satan does not want you to see the light. He does not want you to

understand that if you are not saved, you are living in sin. He does not want you to understand that serving God is real and that it is a beautiful lifestyle that God has set up. God has an ordained plan for man to live this way and to live close to Him. If you turn down God's love and mercy, you are turning down His Gospel. God has a place for the wicked. Jesus said if you die in your sin, you cannot go where He is. Blind leaders want to soften the Gospel and water it down. Godly men are fair and honest with your soul. You have a never-dying soul.

Psalms 119:129-130 says: "Thy testimonies are wonderful: therefore doth my soul keep them. The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple." It takes God's Word to open up our eyes and cure spiritual blindness. You need as much of the Word of God as you can get. You need to hear the Word of God preached and taught. You need to eat the Word of God and learn to love it with all your mind, with all your soul, and with all your heart. If you love the Word of God, your spiritual eyes will open and stay open. You need to be faithful in your church attendance, the place where you will hear the Word of God.

We are in a time of great spiritual darkness. We need to follow the protocol to get to God and to stay with God. If you are a new Christian, you are a babe in Christ, and you need to go to church so that you can grow spiritually. This is a spiritual walk. If you are going to live a spiritual life, you need to eat spiritual food. On the natural side, if you were to stop eating, you would soon die of starvation. God fixed it that way. You have to eat and drink water in order to live, and so it is spiritually. When you get saved, you must treat going to church in a way that will help you to stay saved. If you just skip along in life and think Satan is not going to bother you, you are wrong. He

will try to take you down lower than you were before you were saved. True pastors do not want your money; they want to see your soul saved. Godly pastors are really concerned about your soul.

Invest in the Gospel of God

What better investment is there than to invest your life in God? My strength is in the Lord. In Matthew 16:24-25 Jesus said: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it."

I found my life when I found Christ, and I was able to say, "God, thank You for opening my eyes. This is the joy, the peace, and the happiness that I have been looking for." I found it in Christ. Mark 8:36-37 states: "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" You can lose your soul for something you feel that you want to gain in this world. It may be the lust of sinful pleasures or worldly success.

Some people have unforgiveness in their hearts and want to seek revenge. Others have the love of money and the love for material things. Your girlfriend or boyfriend can cause you to lose your soul. Refusing to let go of any of these things will cause you to lose your soul. You have only one soul. If you miss salvation in this life, you will not get a second chance. Material things and the things of this world are more important to some people than loving God and preparing for eternity.

You prepare for everything else. You prepare for work, and you prepare for almost everything else in life, but most of all, you need to prepare for eternity. People are going into eternity every day. One day we all are going to go into eternity—long, long eternity. You

may not feel that you are going to die today. Certainly, you do not want to die today, but you could. What is your soul worth to you? Would you sell out Christ for a million dollars? If someone were to give you forty or fifty million dollars, would you sell out Christ? What would it profit a man if he were to gain the whole world and lose his soul? When you die, you cannot take anything with you. You brought nothing into this world, and you can carry nothing out. You may like and enjoy everything you have in your home and in your wardrobe, but you cannot take it with you.

After I die, if someone were to put my wallet in the casket with me with five hundred dollars in it, what good would it do? I could not use it. If someone were to put my Bible in the casket with me, what would it accomplish? I could not read it. What value do you place upon your soul?

Preparing to Meet the Lord

God showed us how much He loves us when He told the story of the man who had one hundred sheep. He left the ninety-nine in the wilderness to look for the one lost sheep. When he found the sheep, he told his friends, "Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost" (Luke 15:6). Jesus said the angels in Heaven rejoice over one sinner that repents. He said in Luke 15:7, "I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance."

Sinner, if you get saved, you will make all of Heaven happy. I will never forget when I got saved. I used to give my mother a lot of trouble, but when I got saved, she was a happy woman. Oh, it made me happy just because I made her happy! She was the happiest person I had ever seen. I wanted to stay saved just so that she would be happy. What value do you put on your

soul? God values your soul highly, but what value do you put on your soul? What are you going to gain from a few moments of sinful pleasure in this world?

We all enjoy material blessings, but to put them in front of God is idolatry; it is sin. It is all right to enjoy your home and to enjoy the nice things you have in life. God gave them to you, and He wants you to enjoy them. Every automobile that God ever gives me will be sitting in front of the church house. I mean that from the depths of my heart. Some people come to God, and God begins to bless them. Before they were saved, they had nothing; but God blessed them with health, a job, and an automobile, and then they left Him. Just a few blessings and they sell their souls. You need to think about that. I challenge you in the fear of God, because we are heading for the Judgment.

We each have an appointment with death, if Jesus tarries. Some people do not like to hear that, but we each will have that appointment. You may cancel a doctor's appointment, but we all have an appointment to stand before God, and we cannot cancel that one. A wise man and a wise woman will prepare to meet God. Are you prepared to meet Him? I challenge you. You may say: "I have an education, I have money, I have a family, I have my health and strength; so I am going to take a chance. I do not believe that I am going to die soon; I am doing well." You are being risky. You are gambling with your soul. God sees how you act. He sees how you treat others. The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good. God sees how you treat your husband or your wife. He sees how you treat your children. Child, God sees what you are doing behind your parents' backs. God sees the little lies that you tell. You ought to fear the Lord. You do not want to be caught with your life's work undone.

We all have to be careful.

Ministers have to be careful. Do you realize the responsibility that is upon a man of God? As preachers, we have to be careful of what we do and of how we act. We have to realize the magnitude of what it is to be a minister of the Gospel. We need to think about our influence and everything that is involved with being a minister of the Gospel.

Sometimes people say: "Oh, look at him preaching the Gospel. I want to preach the Gospel like that." People encourage them to be a preacher. You had better not let

anyone encourage you to be a preacher unless you get a call from God. You need to understand that when you put your hand to the Gospel plow, you must keep going. In Luke 9:62 Jesus said that no man who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the Kingdom of God. God's Word tells us that we are called to be saints. Do you understand the magnitude of that? Many people are saying, "I am a Christian," but they are acting in ungodly ways.

We sing a song that says "Oh,

when the saints go marching in, Oh, when the saints go marching in; Lord, I want to be in the number, when the saints go marching in." The Bible says, the saints are going to judge the world. Let us give the Lord the praise that is due Him. If you want to, you can go from being a sinner to being a saint. If you confess your sins, turn away from your sins, and live a holy life, you can become a saint.

(Compact Disc TR-452E)

Isn't Jesus Wonderful!

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this."

Isaiah 9:6-7

Everything about Christ is remarkable. Of Him it was said in Luke 23:4, "[He] hath done nothing amiss," "I find no fault in [Him]" (John 7:46), and "Certainly this was a righteous man" (Luke 23:47). God Himself declared from Heaven, "This is my beloved Son; hear him" (Mark 9:7). Yes, Jesus is unique and amazing because He is the only One who is both truly divine and sinlessly human.

An unknown author exclaims with wonder and adoration: "Christ came from the bosom of the Father to the bosom of a woman. He put

on humanity so that we might put on divinity (see 2 Peter 1:4). He became a man so that we might become the sons of God. In infancy He startled a king. In boyhood He ruled the course of nature. In adulthood He walked upon the billows, hushed the sea to sleep, and healed the multitudes without medicine. He never wrote a book, yet the libraries of the world are filled with volumes that have been written about Him. He never penned a musical note, yet He is the theme of more lyrics than any other subject in the world. Great men have come and gone, yet He lives on. Herod could not kill Him, Satan could not seduce Him, death could not destroy Him, and the grave could not hold Him. All others have failed in some way, but not Jesus! This perfect One is 'altogether lovely.'"

Not only is Christ matchless in His person and accomplishments, but He is absolutely thrilling to know as Savior and Friend. With Isaiah and millions of redeemed souls, I can testify that Jesus is truly WONDERFUL!

Selected

[My Personal Testimony – continued from page 13]

with me. I am blessed to have a born-again psychiatrist. When I entered her office and shared what the Lord had done, we both knelt in her office and began to pray for others we knew needed God's healing touch. My primary care doctor was another story. She took all the pain medications, but she wanted me back on the medicine for my diabetes and high blood pressure. So I began taking them and got sick right away. They were changed to medications without such severe side effects, but I just lost energy and became lethargic.

The Lord seemed to quit speaking to me, and my joy slowly went down. The only time I felt the joy was in the company of the church. I finally decided that I would rather die of my diseases, if that is His will, than go against the Lord. So once again, I quit taking the pills. Since then, I have been able to walk three miles on two different days, my mind is clear again, and I am back to work on my house. I just have to do what the Lord tells me, not the doctors. This is the way my dad lived his whole life, trusting totally in Jesus Christ.

Knowing the Voice of the Lord

I was asked today at church, "How do you know if it is the Lord's voice and not a spirit of deception and lies?" All I could answer was that I only have the Holy Spirit and the Word to test it against. If it does not go against Scripture or the Holy Spirit's urging, then I can know it is the Lord.

This whole experience of my trust and total faith in the Lord has given me a platform to witness from. I have been able to share on a daily basis what the Lord has done in my life. I have a lead-in now to sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ with the unsaved. I have been able to give hope to those who have lost hope. God is truly alive and well and still in control of His creation. I meet people daily who want to know where my wheelchair is, and I share how the power of prayer worked in my life. We have had members of our church family bring their family members to church to introduce them to me and let them see for themselves the miracle that God has performed in my life. My prayer now and always has been that I never say anything about the Lord and His Word in my own power and understanding. As stated in 1 Peter 4:11, "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as with the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. "

A year has gone by since I wrote the top part of my testimony as to my healing. I would like to add that sometimes it is a real struggle to maintain my faith. I have had some unusual reactions to my healing from different people with whom I knew and worshiped. Some people were overjoyed, some were angry that the Lord healed me and not them or their loved ones, and others were skeptical that I had even been in the condition that I

was in, thinking that somehow I had been faking my physical condition. I still have three medical problems that present a challenge. One is high blood pressure, another is my diabetes, and the third is my acid indigestion, which was due to my fall. I do fine without the medication, but if I go to the hospital for any reason, they panic and I spend half a day in the emergency room trying to convince them that I am fine. They state that they are bound by law and oath to make sure that I meet the standard of medical health that they must uphold.

Pray for me that I can continue to hold Christ and His healing power before the world. As my wife and I were doing our Sunday school lessons recently, we were studying in the Book of John. One question that people have asked me was due to my past: "Why did the Lord heal you?" John 9:3 came to mind and I, like the blind man, stated I was in this condition, and now I am healed. I give Him the glory! What else can I do? The next verse I found is John 9:31, which says that God does not hear sinners. He answered and heard my prayer, and I am not a sinner.

If you should want an unabridged copy of my healing testimony, you may email me at pastcul@aol.com, and I will send you a copy. If you do not have access to an email account and would like a copy, write me at 300 North C Street, Exeter, CA, 93221-1216.

Brother Stephen T. Cultice


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