

SOUNDING FORTH THE SEVENTH AND LAST TRUMPET

Vol. 45 February 2015 No. 2



Church of God Tabernacle in Newark, Ohio

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

Psalm 122:1

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

Guest Editorial

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PRAYER: If you need prayer, please phone or write:

Roger L. Decker, Pastor
83 Decrow Ave.
Newark, OH 43055

Email: pastor@church-of-god-online.com
Phone: 740-344-2543
Fax: 740-344-4737
Print Shop Phone: 740-345-1312

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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"Behold, there went out a sower to sow: And it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the way side, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up. And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth. . . . And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it. . . . And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit. . . . He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

Mark 4:3-9

JESUS' PARABLE OF THE SOWER

Jesus was speaking to the multitudes in a parable. It is a story-like illustration, or comparison, using natural or human elements to portray a spiritual lesson. In Matthew 13:37 we read, "He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man [or Christ]." He was showing us that the sower sows the seed (the Word of God) and the Word sown in the ground represents man's heart.

First, in this parable we find a heart likened to wayside ground. Wayside ground is the soil that lays beside an area plowed and made ready for seed to be planted. This ground has a very hard surface, which was caused by people walking over it and tramping it down. Therefore, the seed is unable to penetrate the crusty surface. This portrays a heart that hears the Gospel but does not allow it to take root. A wayside heart has no regard for spiritual matters. The lost condition of a person's soul is of little or no concern to the person whose heart is in this condition. Hearing the Word of God at a funeral service or an occasional visit to the house of worship makes no lasting impression. This dear one has heard the Word, but it is to no avail, because as Jeremiah 12:11 states, "No man layeth it to heart."

Multitudes have had their

hearts hardened to the Gospel through careless living and constantly rejecting the Word sent to help bring them to repentance. It is sad, because refusal leaves one in a state of being beyond help. This is the reason Jesus said, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear" (Mark 4:9). The seed can be sown today by godly ministers or demonstrated through the lives of very spiritual individuals. However, when it makes no impression, one's heart then becomes hardened.

Then there is the one who trods the seed under his feet and considers it as nothing of lasting benefit. He not only refuses the Word but also oftentimes speaks evil of the Gospel. He might even mock those who faithfully sow the seed. Many people do not realize there is an enemy who opposes the Word of God and stands ready to take the seed away from anyone who desires to allow the Word to take root in his heart, just as the literal fowls of the air swoop down to pick up the natural seed on the ground, the enemy of souls is ready to snatch away any truth that is sown.

Next is the one whose heart is likened to the stony ground, which has no depth. This ground is very shallow, and the seed lacks sufficient nutrients and moisture needed to produce. This

[continued on page 26]

Isaiah 11:1 And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots:

2 And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD;

3 And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears:

4 But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity

for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.

5 And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins.

6 The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.

7 And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like

the ox.

8 And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den.

9 They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

10 And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious.

The Change That Took Place When Christ Came



Brother Roger L. Decker

The First Advent of Jesus Christ

First, we need to establish that in the Scriptures the Prophet Isaiah was talking about none other than Jesus Christ. He said in verse 1 that He is called "a rod out of the stem of Jesse." In verse 10 He is called "a root of Jesse." This means that He

who was spoken of should be of the family of Jesse, or David. Though Jesse had died and though the ancient family of David would fall into decay, yet there would rise from that family an illustrious descendant. We have a picture before us of the First Advent of Jesus Christ and the attributes of His kingdom. Again,

Isaiah called him "a rod out of the stem of Jesse."

Isaiah 53:2 says, "For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him." Away with these

pictures painted of Jesus Christ with the long, flowing, brown hair; that is contrary to the Word of God.

We read in Jeremiah 23:5 "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth." Revelation 22:16 states, "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star." The Scriptures here verify whom the Prophet Isaiah was talking about—none other than Jesus Christ.

A change was going to take place in God's kingdom that was never before witnessed by any man. This change happened because of the coming of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is also known as the Word of God. John 1:1-5 reads: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not."

When Jesus Christ came into this world, He came as an example of how you and I should live, of how we should conduct ourselves in all manner of our living. In our Scripture text the Prophet Isaiah put before us the change that happens when a man gives his heart to Jesus Christ.

Verses 6-8 of our Scripture text read: "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den."

This is not something that is

going to happen out in the future in a millennium, but it takes place when someone accepts Jesus Christ into his life. Away with the false doctrine that teaches of a time of peace and prosperity, stating that you will see a lion and a lamb together. Some people paint quite a picture. If they should come knocking on your door to hand out pamphlets, do not bid them Godspeed, and do not accept their trash.

A Change of Nature

This prophecy in the Book of Isaiah is not something out in the future in a millennium. What was the Prophet Isaiah talking about? He mentioned the nature of animals and the change that takes place when men put on righteousness. He spoke of the wolf, the lamb, the leopard, the kid, the calf, the young lion, the fatling, the cow, the bear, the lion, the ox, the asp (or viper), and the cockatrice. Why did Isaiah mention all these different animals? Surely God is not interested in changing the nature of animals. We have already learned how to dwell with these animals on the earth. There is no salvation for animals.

Look at the nature of some of these creatures that Isaiah mentioned. He mentioned the wolf; let us look at its nature. Ezekiel 22:27 states, "Her princes in the midst thereof are like wolves ravening the prey, to shed blood, and to destroy souls, to get dishonest gain." Habakkuk 1:8 tells us, "Their horses also are swifter than the leopards, and are more fierce than the evening wolves: and their horsemen shall spread themselves, and their horsemen shall come from far; they shall fly as the eagle that hasteth to eat."

Matthew 7:15 says, "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves." Acts 20:29 reads, "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock."

You just read four Scriptures

that more than explain the nature of wolves. They are ravenous and grievous. Habakkuk described them as evening wolves, because they like to hunt in darkness. Paul said after his departure, grievous wolves were going to attack the Church of God.

Another translation says this: "The time will come when some men from your own group will tell lies to lead the believers away after them." Look at the nature of these spiritual wolves. They are grievous, or dreadful, and they like to work in darkness. We know that literal wolves would love to have lamb meat. That would be a real specialty to them. They would not have to work very hard to catch one if there was no protection around.

Isaiah mentioned the leopard. The leopard can run at very high rates of speed, approaching fifty-eight kilometers per hour, which is thirty-six miles an hour. He can climb trees even when carrying a dead carcass. One of his great assets is the ability to be sneaky. The Prophet Isaiah said the leopard would lay down with the kid, or the young goat.

Why would God change literal animals? Is that really what needs to be changed? Is this what the prophet was talking about, changing literal animals? Animals are not causing any problems. Animals are not committing sin; they are not corrupting morals. We could go on and on about the animals he mentioned, but I am going to make a statement. The Prophet Isaiah was talking about the various natures of people. With salvation there is going to be a change in a person's nature.

Spiritual Meaning Portrayed Through Allegories

Using animals to describe the natures, or the characteristics, of men is not unusual. Let us get some examples. In one Scripture that I used earlier, Paul said grievous wolves would enter in among the people. Then, in Matthew, another one that I used earlier, warns you to

beware of false prophets that come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. We know that Paul and Jesus were using allegories. What were they doing? They were portraying evil men. John used the word viper to describe the Sadducees and the Pharisees. In Matthew 3:7 we read, "But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"

In Luke 13:32 Jesus said, "Go ye, and tell that fox. [He was not talking about a literal fox. You are not going to get close enough to a literal fox to tell him anything.] Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to day and to morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected." Animals are used as allegories throughout the Word of God to describe the natures, or the characteristics, of men. Their natures were like the animals that they were called.

Isaiah, Chapter 11, is often misused. Most commentators put that in a millennium. Commentators twist it to fit into a millennial theory, which is far from the truth. There are reasons that it will not fit into a millennium. Some in false religion publish a pamphlet that talks about peace on earth. The prophet was not talking about peace on earth.

Verse 9 of our Scripture text states, "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea." The prophet was talking about what makes up God's kingdom, or His church.

The Scripture says "my holy mountain." What is God's holy mountain? Isaiah 2:1-4 tells us: "The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye,

and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

The Prophet Isaiah was not talking about the world; he was talking about the Church of the Living God. God hates to see brethren going to war against brethren. That is out in the world. This prophecy is dealing with the Church of God, where warring spirits come against it. Verse 4 says He shall judge among the nations.

God's Holy Mountain

We read in verses 3-4 of our Scripture text: "And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked."

The Lord said He will judge and reprove, which means "to rebuke." Where is all of this to take place? It takes place in the Lord's holy mountain. False prophets hand out pamphlets, showing this peaceful setting that is going on with the wolf and the lamb. That only happens in the church, not a worldly setting in a millennium.

Joel 3:17 says, "So shall ye know that I am the LORD your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more." Jerusalem and Zion are dual symbols of the Church of God; one is out of the Old Testament and

one is out of the Old and the New Testaments.

Zechariah 8:3, "Thus saith the LORD; I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth; and the mountain of the LORD of hosts the holy mountain."

I encourage people to take the Word of God to the house of God. Do not just take verbatim everything the preacher says. He should be able to back it up with the Word of God. If you do not take your Bible to the house of God, where do you take it? Do you want the Truth? Some people toss the Bible on the coffee table, and there it stays until next Sunday. We have access to the Word of God probably more than any other book in this world. It is purchased the most but read the least.

The Book of Hebrews will verify what I have been telling you. Hebrews 12:22-23 reads: "But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels. To the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect."

In Isaiah, Chapter 11, the prophet was not talking about peace and righteousness in the world, but rather in the church. Again, animals do not have souls. There is no salvation for animals. Jesus did not die for animals; He died for you and me. There is no doggy heaven or doggy hereafter. If you have a pet, I know you might love that little creature exceedingly well; but when he dies, he dies just like the groundhog out in the field. He has no soul. He is just an animal. You do not hold a wake for a pet as you do for a human being. Animals do not know anything about the plan of salvation.

The Kingdom of God

Isaiah 35:8-10 says: "And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass

over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein: No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there: And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

Let us go back to Isaiah, Chapter 11. If the Prophet Isaiah was not talking about changing the natures of animals, what was he talking about? It certainly sounds as though he was talking about changing animals' natures, especially if you do not have the Spirit of God and do not understand what you are reading. These prophets spoke under the inspiration of God, and they spoke of the First Advent of Jesus Christ.

What was going to happen? A change was going to take place when Jesus came, and people would receive the righteous judgment that Jesus brought. Isaiah 2:4 says, "And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

All warring spirits are to be left behind the door. The door is Jesus Christ. When an individual comes through the door, all the warring spirits that he has in his life need to be left on the other side of the door. There is a big difference between a sword and spear and a plowshare and pruning hook. Spears and swords are for wars, and pruning hooks and plowshares are for working in the Kingdom of God.

Luke 9:62 reads, "And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." I used to do some plowing when I was growing up. We used a single plow with a team of horses. My dad did not believe in using tractors, and we were blessed with horses. We

had a team of work horses, and we had riding horses. We plowed the field with a single, walking plow and a team of horses. I was young, but I did learn some things. One thing I learned was, you cannot plow a straight furrow and look backwards. You have to look straight ahead. Another thing I learned was, you had better hang on to that plow, because you are going to hit a root or a rock somewhere, and the handle of that plow will tear you up if you do not watch what you are doing. It was a really rough job.

The Prophet Isaiah was referring to the work of the kingdom. When a man puts his hand to the plow, or the work of the kingdom, and looks back, like Lot's wife looked back to Sodom, he is not fit for the Kingdom of God. Why? When you look back, it shows a desire to go back.

Partakers of a Divine Nature

Micah 4:1-7 reads: "But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

"But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken it. For all people will walk every one in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the LORD our God for ever

and ever. In that day, saith the LORD, will I assemble her that halteth, and I will gather her that is driven out, and her that I have afflicted; And I will make her that halted a remnant, and her that was cast far off a strong nation: and the LORD shall reign over them in mount Zion from henceforth, even for ever."

In God's kingdom, or church, fleshly natures are put away. We become partakers of the divine nature. The things that went on at Corinth, spoken of in 1 Corinthians, Chapters 1, 2, and 3, were nothing but a display of carnality. That is not something that you get rid of in a second work of grace. If you are saved, you have everything that you need in your flesh to go back into sin. You do not need a carnal nature— you have a human nature.

Adam and Eve were holy when they were put on this earth, but they still got into trouble. How? Through the members of the body: the mind, the feet, the hands—the members that we are to keep under and bring into the servitude of Jesus Christ. There was a lot of flesh at Corinth. Brethren were warring against brethren, and sisters were warring against sisters. Wrong attitudes, jealousy, and envy were working.

David said in Psalm 73 that he was envious of the wicked. Why? It seemed as though the wicked were getting by with everything. It seemed as if they had everything in life and that the Christians had to go without, so he was envious. God does not want warring factions and warring spirits in His holy mountain. We all are as one people.

We should have one desire and one goal, and that is to please Christ and to win souls to the Kingdom of God. We do not have time to battle one another. God has given His people many gifts and many talents. There are many preachers, but not every preacher preaches alike. There is diversity in the Church of God. There are different singers; not all singers sing alike. Likewise, not all piano players play alike, but there is

room for everyone in God's kingdom. Again, warring spirits are to be left behind the door. What do you need to do? You need to really crouch up close to Christ, and God will help you to keep the flesh where it needs to be. Fleshly natures are to be put away.

We become partakers of His divine nature. Second Peter 1:4 states, "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." Second Corinthians 10:3 says, "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war [or fight] after the flesh." Warring spirits are fleshly attitudes, or works of the flesh. Galatians 5:24 tells us, "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts."

Peace and tranquility sound good to those who witness trouble

and chaos in their lives. Before I got saved, I lived with warring spirits brought on by sin. That is a terrible life. When you come into the Church of God, you come into peace and tranquility. I was so glad to lay down the warring spirit. It wore me out.

Some people live in drama every single day. I like the peace and tranquility that is among the Church of God. I am talking about soul peace, not the peace that Palestine and Israel are trying to work out. Often they have a twenty-four-hour peace agreement, but they no more than sign a treaty than a missile comes flying in the other one's boundaries. The peace that God is talking about is the peace that passes all understanding.

When an individual gets saved and gets the peace of God in his heart, the peace of God passes all understanding. Romans 14:17 says, "For the kingdom of God is not meat

and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." I like righteousness, and I certainly have a lot of joy in my soul. How did I get it? I got it from the Holy Ghost. This is the peace that you can have right now. It follows repentance, and it is a product of the Holy Ghost. You may ask, "Do you believe that one receives the Holy Spirit when he gets saved?" I know one does. If a person did not receive the Holy Spirit, he would not have this righteousness, peace, and joy. That is what makes up the Kingdom of God, and I got all three of them when I got saved.

If you are lacking spiritually, won't you seek the Lord? We love souls and want to see each one receive help. There is no need to continue to be troubled in your soul. If you have a need, listen to what God tells you.

(Compact Disc TR-1385)

The Influence of Life

*"Not many lives, but only one, have we,
One, only one;
How sacred should that one life ever be,
That narrow span!"*

Have you ever thought on the influence of a life? If not, try to realize the marvelous power which by our lives we exert either for good or for evil on those around us. It has been said that "every word man's tongue hath uttered echoes in God's skies." In like manner the influence of our lives reaches onward to eternity. Ah, yes! to live for God is our work; and no human being can say he has no influence.

*"Wherever in the world I am,
In whatsoever estate,
I have a fellowship with hearts
To keep and cultivate,
And a work of lowly love to do
For the Lord, on whom I wait."*

Dear reader, this necessary element of power belongs to you. Your sphere may be contracted; your influence

may be small, but a sphere and influence you surely have. No man can live unto himself. The meshes of a net are not more surely knit together than man to man. We may forget this secret, silent influence; but we are exerting it by our deeds, by our words, and by our very thoughts. He is wise with a wisdom more than that of earth who seeks to put forth the highest power for good, be his home a hut or a hall, a cabin or a palace.

Here let me say, if you wish to be a blessing to others, ask God to bless and direct you. Only feel that without Him you can do nothing, and success will attend your efforts to do whatever is your duty. God loves to have us tell Him every want and care.

*"Now in thy youth beseech of Him
Who giveth and upbraideth not,
That His light in thy heart become not dim
And His love be unforget,
And thy God, in the darkest of days, will be
Greenness and beauty and strength to thee."*

Selected

Matthew 5:13 Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

14 Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

15 Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a

candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

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

Mark 9:49 For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt.

50 Salt is good: but if the salt have

lost his saltness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another.

Luke 14:34 Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned?

35 It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; but men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SALT



Brother Larry Dishman

"The Salt of the Earth"

Jesus is the Master Teacher, and He used many illustrations and parables to explain and to clarify His teachings. One illustration that He used is salt. All the people of the whole world were acquainted with salt. Our table salt is sodium chloride, and it is virtually 100 percent pure. The salt in Palestine was mixed with many impurities from the shore, the Dead Sea, and other places. In New Testament times, salt was much more expensive than it is

in our day. Back then, people were sometimes paid with salt. The expression "He is not worth his salt" is from an ancient practice where people got paid for their day's labor with salt.

I want you to consider eight characteristics of salt and look at some spiritual applications. To understand what it means to be salt, we need to know what salt is like. What does salt do? Why did Jesus call His followers salt? When God created smells, He made about fourteen thousand different ones. How-

ever, when He created taste, He did not make very many. When you describe how something tastes, you may say, "It is bitter," "It is sweet," "It is sour," "It is spicy," or "It is salty." That explains all the flavors that God has given us.

God did not say that the Christian is the bitter of the earth, the sweet of the earth, or the sour of the earth. God called the Christian "the salt of the earth." As Christians, that means we need to pay close attention to the attributes and the characteristics of salt. When we

find the answer, then we will know the reason that Jesus called us "the salt of the earth." Friend, this is not merely a suggestion; it is a command in God's Word.

The first characteristic of salt is that it heals. Salt draws poison out of the body. It will cleanse a wound and help it to heal. Some people lie in a bath of salty water, with Epsom salt. There is something about Epsom salt that soothes aching muscles. The second characteristic of salt is that it is an antiseptic. Dissolved in a glass of water, it helps to kill germs. It will help a sore throat. You do not gargle with salt water to stay healthy; you gargle with salt water because it will kill the germs.

The third characteristic of salt is that it deices. That layer of ice on the sidewalk on a winter morning is much like an ice-bound heart. It is as hard as a rock from the impact of bitter experiences, but both melt beneath an application of salt. Lots of people have become hardened. Situations that have taken place in their lives have left them bitter and hard. It seems there is no way to get through to them. Jesus said, "Ye are the salt of the earth." We can put "salt" on those individuals and see a change in their hearts and lives.

The fourth characteristic of salt is that it preserves. This reveals something about the condition of the world. First, we need to understand what Jesus knew about the world before we can understand why we are "the salt of the earth." Jesus clearly stated that the world is full of decay and of things that lead to illness and death. The world has something called sin, and it is loose and on the rampage. The tendency of the world is toward evil. The tendency of this world is to go from bad to worse. This world is corrupt, offensive, polluted, decaying, and dying.

I want you to notice some verses that will give a biblical concept of why Jesus calls us "the salt of the earth." Psalm 14:1-3 says: "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have

done abominable works, there is none that doeth good. The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one." That is the condition of the lost world.

Jeremiah said in Jeremiah 17:9, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" Friend, that portrays the heart of an individual without God. The Bible says in Genesis 6:5-6: "And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart." We are living in a day that is parallel to Noah's day. If you understand the implication about the world in Jesus' statement, His intentions for us to become the salt of the earth become much clearer.

A Preserving Force in the World

Salt works because it is fundamentally different from that in which it is used. The Beatitudes teach that as the salt of the earth, we are to be different from the world. Only when we are different from the world can we really have the effect that Jesus had in mind for us. That statement about our being the salt of the earth reveals something about God's people because salt is a preservative. Rubbed into meat, salt prevents meat from decaying and keeps it preserved, so that it is good to eat.

I was raised in Winchester, Indiana, and my father had a custom butchering plant. People would bring their cattle, hogs, sheep, and goats there for butchering. We would butcher them, cut them up, and wrap them. When they brought hogs, we normally cut them up the very next day after we slaughtered them. When people brought in beef,

we would hang it in the cooler for seven to ten days, but you cannot allow pork to hang in the cooler for that long. If we had, the pork would have turned green, and no one could have eaten the meat. After we butchered the hogs, my dad would take me back to the curing room. We would put them on a stainless steel table and salt them down, rubbing the salt in every direction on both sides and on the ends. Then we would put them in a stainless steel tank. We would do the jowls the same way. We had stainless steel scales, and we would put the ham and the shoulder on the scales and weigh them.

We had a pump that had a needle on the end of the hose and a trigger. We would put that needle in the ham and pull the trigger. That salty water would go throughout the ham. Then we would stick the needle in some place else and just keep pumping that salty water through the ham and the shoulder. Then we would put the hams and the shoulders in the stainless steel tank on top of the sides and the jowls. We would leave the pork in the tank for two weeks. Then we would get it out and put it in the smokehouse with some hickory wood.

None of that could happen without salt. Salt keeps food from becoming bad. Years ago, people did not have refrigerators or freezers. Meat, fish, and vegetables were preserved by rubbing salt into them or by packing them in salt. Jesus was saying that what salt is to food, the Christian is to other people. As the church, we ought to be a saving, preserving force in the world. The world is lost in sin, and we are the ones who carry the Gospel, the saving force to this lost and dying world. The world without godly people is doomed.

Salt Restrains Corruption

The Bible says in Psalm 9:17, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." Proverbs 14:34 reads, "Righ-

teousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people." God spared the world for some time because of righteous Noah and his family. Had the Lord found only ten righteous people in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, He would have spared them, but he could not even find ten righteous people in Sodom and Gomorrah. Our Christian influence works in a similar way by restraining the corruption of the world, which if left unchecked, multiplies as quickly as bacteria on a piece of meat.

When Jesus called the church "the salt of the earth," He made a strong judgment about the state of society and a lofty claim about what His church could do about it. You do not salt something that is alive. You salt something that is dead to keep it from rotting. Jesus was saying that society without His influence, without our being the salt of the earth, is a carcass that is rotting and perishing. The world is dead; the sinner is dead in trespasses and sins. He is already in the process of perishing. That is the reason the song says, "*Rescue the perishing, Care for the dying, Jesus is merciful, Jesus will save.*"

I believe that somewhere along the way, we have come to believe that our involvement will tempt us beyond our ability to stick with God or His ability to keep us. We are to function as a preservative in the world. This applies simply to the tendencies of the world toward the rottenness of sin. We do this by being different from the world. If you are like the world, then you cannot be "the salt of the earth." To be the salt of the earth, you have to come out from among the world and false religion and be separate. I think you see this effect when a godly man or a godly woman makes his or her presence known in the world. Often the fact that a godly person is present stops the trend toward sin or toward worse sin.

The child of God is to function as the salt of the earth. You can do this by living faithfully for God. I

think you can see the effect when your involvement in life not only stops the trend toward sin but also turns the trend back toward God. You do this when you have the opportunity to set the pace and the agenda by which the world lives.

There is something about this salt, friend. I have noticed that when a dear mother, who is the salt of the home, is called home to God, the salt is no longer there, and the family goes from bad to worse. Sometimes that is the way it is when a godly father who was the salt of the family passes away. He held the family together to some degree, but once he was gone, the family seemingly went from bad to worse. I believe it has happened in congregations where there were godly pastors who pastored a few folks in the congregation who still wanted the Truth. They still loved the old paths, but when that pastor was gone and the older saints passed on and left the scene of action, corruption set in.

Are You a Salty Christian?

How do you become the salt of the earth? When you became a Christian, God had more in mind than just getting you saved. He wants you to influence people. He did not say that you are the salt of the church. He did not say you are the salt of your Sunday school class. He did not say you are the salt of your fellowship. God said you are the salt of the earth.

When God calls you to go anywhere, He wants you to operate with integrity, purity, honesty, and fairness. You are salt not only because you are the bearer of Truth, but because of the godly influence of your conduct and your character. You should conduct yourself so that evil is ashamed to show its face before you. The world around you is in desperate need. Their answers are not working, but God has an answer for every possible situation, and His answers still work. Just a few grains of salt can make a whole glass of water salty.

Fifty to seventy-five years ago, people were ashamed if anyone found out they were sleeping with a boyfriend or a girlfriend. Today it is a sad thing that young women are ashamed to admit that they are virgins. Young lady, you should have the attitude (not a self-righteous attitude), "I can become like you anytime I desire, but you can never be like me again." A few years ago the Sodomites were ashamed to show their faces openly. We need to be the salt of the earth.

I have known people who worked in factories, and because of their Christian conduct, it held back some evil in that factory. People would say, "Oh, here he comes; he is a Christian." They knew he was salty. On the other hand, if the Christian had lived as they did, they would not have respected him. If the Christian were to tell the same kinds of jokes that they told, they would not have respected him. The Christian is salt when he takes a stand for what is right. The believer should speak out and not be ashamed to speak the Truth in love. He should not be ashamed to say: "I am against abortion. I am against murdering little babies. I am against Sodomy. I am against people shacking up. These things are not right."

Through temptation, saltiness is tested. A salty Christian will not compromise under pressure. He will not be silent when God wants him to speak or to take action. Like Esther in the Old Testament, he will take risks and make bold moves even in uncharted waters, if God asks him to. Society is decaying all around us, from individual lives to whole nations. It is time to get out our "salt shakers." We need to be the salt of the earth. As a Christian, you have a unique destiny to fulfill. You have a window of opportunity.

Many people have sat in churches for ten, fifteen, or twenty years getting rooted and grounded in the Truth, and that is good. You must continue in those things, but it is time to put all that you have learned into practical use. As the salt

of the earth, God wants you to purify, to heal, to preserve, and to season this world. You need to rise to the occasion, and do it with all your heart. Just thinking salty thoughts will not cause you to be the salt of the earth. Salt only works when it comes in direct contact with something.

My dad never did say, "Now, son, you set some salt near the hams." No, I had to rub the salt into the hams. As Christ's disciple, you are to be rubbed into that rotting mass to season it. The world is perishing, so this is your job as a Christian. I believe one reason we have many problems in critical areas of society is that we have either abandoned or lost contact with people. Sometimes we have retreated in fear of being ineffective instead of obeying God and doing our part to restrain the corruption.

Having the Right Amount of Saltiness

How do you salt your eggs? Do you move the salt shaker close to your eggs? No, you have to sprinkle salt on the eggs. That is what you have to do with people, spiritually speaking. It is important that God called us "the salt of the earth," because He wants us to be in direct contact with people who need to be salted.

Notice the prayer of Jesus in John 17:15, which reads, "I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil." God wants us to be the salt of the earth. He did not pray that we would be taken away from the sinners. He prayed that we would be kept from the corruption that is in the world. Getting comfortable among our Christian friends and forgetting about being in direct contact with the world that needs Jesus Christ is easy. Having a relationship with a local congregation is important for every Christian. Everybody needs a pastor and a relationship with the local congregation. The local church

is where the Christian is nurtured, challenged, taught, corrected, and encouraged. The church is where he grows and finds fellowship.

Our vision has to be much bigger than just going to church. The church should be the launching pad for reaching the world for Jesus. It should be the home base, not a retirement village. Until the sheep and the shepherd understand this, we will not be able to rise to the occasion of God's call for this generation. We are not to withdraw ourselves from contact with sinners. The only way we can be the salt of the earth is to be rubbed into that corrupting thing.

There is a salt balance in our bodies, and it is delicate. If you have too much salt in your body, you will hold extra fluids, which results in swelling, and that puts stress on every organ in the body. This is especially true of the heart, because it has to pump those extra fluids. This causes heart problems, resulting in a need for a reduced salt diet. It cannot be a totally salt-free diet, because without enough salt, your body would not retain enough water; then your blood pressure would drop, and you would go into shock and die. Too little salt is just as bad as none at all.

As the salt of the earth, God wants you to be in the right place at the right time with the right amount of salt. We can put too much "salt" on a situation. Have you ever been cooking and salting the food and the lid came off the salt shaker? You would not be able to eat that food unless you add a lot more ingredients to it. So we could put too much "salt" on a situation. That is the reason it takes wisdom. We need to have the right amount of "salt." God knows how much is needed.

I have been told that salt is one of the few common compounds that dissolves easily in both cold and hot water. Jesus has equipped us to administer to people who are both cold and hot for God. God wants us to be salty ambassadors for Him.

There is another problem with

salt. Sometimes I have picked up a salt shaker that had plenty of salt in it, but no salt would come out. When a clump of salt blocks the holes in your salt shaker, you must break it up so it can be shook out. We cannot be used in a rock form either. Often God lets us go through a breaking process so that we can be used a few grains at a time. Jesus was broken for us, and we remember His brokenness when we partake of Communion. We must be broken before bread can be made, and we must be broken before we can administer to a broken world. If we, as the people of God, are not broken, we are probably creating a log jam somewhere in God's will.

God in His faithfulness wants us to flow freely as "the salt of the earth." Getting broken is never pleasant. Sometimes in the process, we feel as though we are being crushed. I have been told that if you grind salt down to powder and look at it under a microscope, it will still be shaped in little square crystals, no matter how finely the salt is ground. So even when we are broken, we can be sure that we will not lose the unique and distinctive mark of Jesus Christ. Maybe this is a part of the shaking that God is allowing us to experience as His people. He knows if we settle and clump together, we will not be of any use to Him. A little can be a lot in God's kingdom.

The Irritating Quality of Salt

The fifth characteristic of salt is that it will irritate. If salt comes in contact with a cut, a sore, or a wound, it will irritate and burn. The salt did not make the wound, but it emphasizes the fact that there is a wound. If the Word of God irritates you, it is doing its work on you. Hebrews 4:12 reads, "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discern-er of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

If a child of God says something to you that irritates, perhaps you need to look down deep and change your life according to Truth. Sometimes all you have to do is be "the salt of the earth" and live right. The fact that you live right often irritates people. That is the reason the disciples were persecuted for the Word of God. The life they lived, the Gospel they preached, and the words they spoke irritated people. Christians are not the cause of the irritation, but like the salt, they only emphasize the sore or the wound that is already there.

The Christian's life emphasizes the fact that a change must be made in the sinner's life. Sometimes salt can sting. When you get sick, pain is often a part of the healing process. In order to be healed, a sin-sick person must experience the sting of Truth. Someone once said, "Thank God, the Truth will set you free, but it will sting you first." As you walk in the reality of who you are and who God is, only then can you truly be healed.

It is interesting that Jesus did not say that we are the sugar or the honey of the earth. He did not say that we are the sweetness of the earth, but I believe that God wants us to be sweet. Today many emphasize love. Their religion consists of a lot of "sugar," and certainly we need love, but to emphasize love all the time is not the way of Christ. Jesus did not just emphasize love in Matthew 23:25-26 when he said: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also." That was not a lot of sugar, and that irritated people.

John the Baptist was not a sugary fellow when he rebuked Herod and said, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." In so many words, Stephen told the Jews: "You are just like your fathers

who killed the prophets. You always resist the Holy Ghost." Paul was an irritating force wherever he went.

The Purifying and Savory Qualities of Salt

The sixth characteristic of salt is that it purifies. God told the Prophet Elisha to put salt in a poison spring of water. Second Kings 2:21 tells us, "And he went forth unto the spring of the waters, and cast the salt in there, and said, Thus saith the LORD, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land." Elisha did not throw the jar of salt into a poison spring, but he poured in some salt. We cannot throw our church buildings at the world's problems. We have to sprinkle out some salt. It is not a church building that is really valuable to God. It is what is in the building that is valuable to God.

The seventh characteristic of salt is that it will create thirst. One reason I got saved was that I got thirsty, spiritually speaking. The reason I got thirsty was that some Christian folks were salty, and they made me "thirsty." Being in my mom and dad's home, listening to them talk, and seeing other saints of God caused me to get thirsty. Salt creates thirst. It will cause others to want to have peace of mind. If you are salty in the way you live, it will cause others to want to have the peace of mind that you have. It will cause others to want to have a hope beyond the grave like you have.

There was a certain man whose wife went to church. He would not take her to church, but he did far worse. When he saw she was getting ready for church, he would run out and get in the car and leave, but she kept a good spirit. She walked to church, sometimes in the rain and sometimes in the snow. Instead of giving him a rough time when she got home, she just put a little salt on the situation. For years, she just salted him down. It was not long until he started going to church with her, and he got saved soon after-

ward. Now he is a preacher of the Gospel.

I heard once about a wicked man who went to church. It scared the people in the church because they thought that he was bound to be up to mischief. However, during the first verse of the song of invitation, he got up out of his seat, went to the altar, and God gloriously saved him. That pastor felt so good that he said, "I just want to know what I said in my message that made you want to get saved." The man answered: "You did not say anything to make me want to get saved. That little lady sitting in the back is my neighbor. I have been watching her life. She made me thirsty by being the salt of the earth."

The eighth characteristic of salt is that it seasons. Colossians 4:6 says, "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man." If your speech is not in line with the Spirit of God, it is going to be flat, empty, and unprofitable. If your speech is seasoned with salt, it is going to be useful, agreeable, and beneficial to mankind.

Salt enhances what is good about food. It causes something to be acceptable that might not have been otherwise. Job said thousands of years ago in Job 6:6, "Can that which is unsavoury be eaten without salt? or is there any taste in the white of an egg?" There is not much taste in the white of an egg. That is the reason you have to put some salt on it. Salt has the power to flavor; it is a seasoning agent. By itself, it does not taste good. I enjoy having salt on my food, but I would never eat a spoonful of it. However, the right amount of salt causes food to taste better.

Are You a Faithful Steward?

How is it in your life? You are never going to be the light of the world except on the condition of being "the salt of the earth." There are two ways by which you equalize

the temperature of a hot or a cold body. The one is by getting the hot one cold, and the other one is by getting the cold one hot. If you are not warming the world, the world is freezing you. What effect are you having? Men must be either hammers or anvils; either they must give blows or they must take blows.

I am afraid that too many get a great deal more harm *from* the world than they ever dream of doing *to* the world. You should be the salt of the earth, and if you do not salt the world, the world will spoil you. You must have salt in you, because if you are not salty, the world will cause you to rot. I am 100 percent convinced that a Christian should marry only a Christian, and a Christian should date only a Christian. I know of young people who have said, "I'm going to win him or her to the Lord," but most of the time the non-Christian spoils the Christian. You may know of some cases where the non-Christian was won, but I know of more cases where they were not. Instead of the salt having its effect, often when someone dates an unbeliever, the believer ends up being the one corrupted. The Bible says to marry only in the Lord. There is no exception to that rule!

What fellowship does light have with darkness? None. What fellowship does righteousness have with unrighteousness? None whatsoever. You can be a light to a person without dating that individual. I want you to think about this: Is the salt being infected by the carcass or is the salt purifying the corruption?

In three cases Jesus talked about the danger of losing our saltiness. Twice He said, "If the salt have lost his savour. . . ." One time He said, "If the salt have lost his saltiness. . . ." In the Middle East, salt was stored in buildings with dirt floors. The salt on the bottom would lose its saltiness, or its savor. Once that happened, they could not do anything to fix it. Jesus said it was not fit for the land or the dunghill, or the manure pile. It would damage the

garden. The only thing they could do was put it on the streets.

Saltless Christians are an easy prey for the devil. They give the enemy access not only to their own lives but also to the areas of influence that God wants them to be faith stewards. God Himself has sent us forth with a message to be the salt of the earth. What has happened? Too many have lost their savor, or their saltiness. This is something that does not happen overnight. In the Middle East, salt was stored on the floors. They did not just go in one day and suddenly find that the saltiness was gone. Over a period of time, the salt lost its saltiness. Likewise, over a period of time, many Christians lose their saltiness. Jesus made it clear that when one has lost his saltiness, then he is failing in the job that God has called him to do.

The salt in ancient times lacked purity and could easily lose its savor by careless storage. This allowed moisture to intrude. Dear one, there are many ways that the Christian can lose his saltiness. He can lose his saltiness by becoming spotted by the world, and he can lose his saltiness by becoming lukewarm. Jesus talked about lukewarmness in Revelation 3:15-16 when He said: "I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." In other words, He said a person is useless, or ineffective, this way. Friend, that is the way it is. If you become lukewarm, you have lost your saltiness.

Only people who are filled with the Holy Ghost are salty Christians. Paul wrote in Ephesians 5:18, "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit." You may say, "I thought a person just automatically stayed full of the Holy Ghost." That is not so, or He would not say "be filled." Being filled with the Holy Ghost does not come automatically. If you need to be filled with the Holy Ghost, that means you do not have enough salt. A person loses his saltiness when he becomes just as the world is. If this

happens, he can no longer preserve, purify, season, or cause people to become thirsty. You can go to church and never miss a service and still not be salty. A song says: "*What the world needs is love, sweet love.*" I believe that, but I believe something else the world needs is salt, pure salt.

Have You Lost Your Savor?

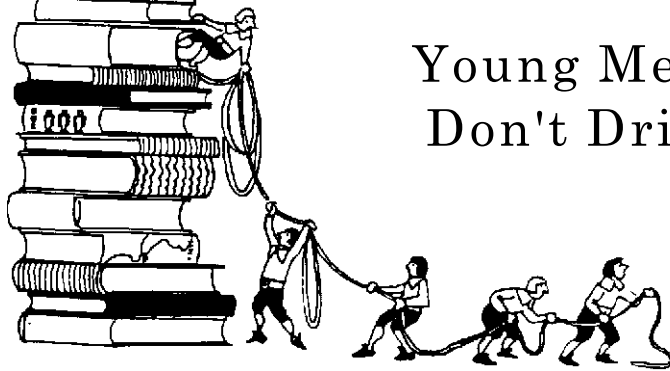
Whenever I sit down to a meal, one of the first things that I say is "Pass the salt, please." It is time to start passing the salt, spiritually speaking. However, if the salt has lost its saltiness, it is ineffective. Let us not bury this treasure, but let us pass it along to others. No imitation salt is going to get the job done. Babylon has imitation salt; they have other ways to try to draw people in. If we do not draw people in with salt, then it is an imitation, and it is not going to get the job done.

What can you do if you have lost your saltiness? You can return to the Source. The first thing that you have to do if you lose your saltiness is to seek the Lord at an altar of prayer and say: "Lord, empty me of the salt that has lost its saltiness and fill me with fresh salt. I want to be on fire for You. I want to be filled with the Holy Ghost. I want to cause others to become thirsty." Unless you get close to the Lord, you are going to go further away. Then your deadness is going to deepen, and you are going to become colder and colder. Someone may ask, "How can I stay filled with salt?" You must stay filled with the Holy Ghost, pray, stay in the Word of God, and be faithful to the house of God.

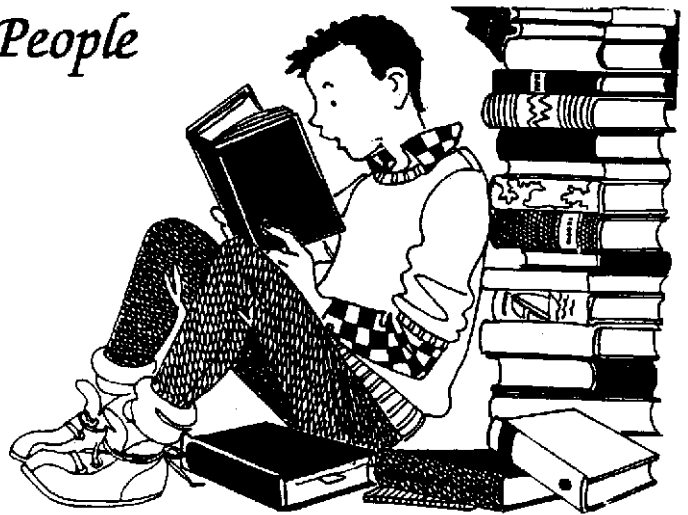
Does the lack of harmony threaten your Christian witness? You need to reach for the salt and turn again to the Word and ask the Spirit of God to fill your soul. You may say, "I am salty." There is a test that you can take to see if you are salty. If you are salty, you will show evidence of it. What is the evidence? Are you healing the brokenhearted?

[continued on page 25]

Especially for Young People



Young Men, Don't Drift



Yes, it is the drifting that is most to be feared. Men do not become atheists and swindlers at a leap. For every one who resolutely sets his face against God, there are hundreds who drift from Him. Young men come to our great centers of population from holy and blessed homes where they have been born and bred. They are nice, amiable, well-meaning fellows with no intention of going wrong, though perhaps with no very strong resolution to go right. The last words of advice from father or mother ring in their ears, urging them to keep up good habits, in which they have been trained since childhood, and they intend to conform to these. If such a young man falls in company with those who have good influence, it is very likely that he will turn out well; but if he goes into an establishment or a house where there is a fast, gay set, where the Lord's day is unkept, where filthy allusions pollute the talk and gambling fills the leisure hours, after the first momentary shock is over, he is apt to give himself up to the strong prevailing current and begin insensibly but swiftly to drift. It is not necessary at first that he should commit some flagrant sins. It is enough that he ceases to resist the insidious influence around.

Young man, is this a true picture of your condition? If so, heed the advice of one who is older,

one who is interested in your welfare. Don't drift into loose companionship. A man is made or marred by his friends. Beware of the man who talks slightly of his mother, father, home, or of women generally. Many men ridicule any allusion to the purity and tenderness of the home circle, and apparently have no belief that women can be other than the toy or victim of man—never his equal and confidant and friend. Beware of such men.

Beware of the man who professes himself too deeply versed in science of the day to believe in the Bible and who ridicules those who do. A man has no more right to steal away or spoil your faith than he has to deprive you of your eyesight or rob you of your purse. If he attempts it, he betrays a dangerous character of which you will do well to beware.

Don't drift into extravagant expenditure. It would be better to live on oatmeal porridge and brown bread than to spend more than you can afford or to drift into debt. The pleasure of a day's outing or of an evening's gaiety has a nasty after-taste when for weeks or months you have to avoid certain people because you owe them money that you cannot repay. A young man sometimes spends in a single evening money enough to fill his heart with anxiety for many a weary day and is perhaps tempted to take

money which does not belong to him in order to stay pressing demands and in hope of the opportunity of repayment, which never comes. Young man, take warning.

Don't drift into habits of gambling. There is plenty of it all around us, and a man feels rather lonely when he refuses to join in. It is better to feel lonely than to join in. How much better to put the foot down and refuse the first invitation! You mean to refuse the second; but if you are going to refuse at all, it will be unspeakably easier to refuse at first than afterward. Betting is a bad thing and should be avoided. Love and home are sacrificed to the companions of the betting-ring. Business is neglected because they live in the feverish hope of coming in for a windfall and of getting money without giving an equivalent of any sort.

Don't drift into habits of drinking. Nothing is easier than to do this. No man means to be a drunkard when he starts drinking. Those who are now in the agony of delirium were once as pure and true as you are; but they were carried down an almost insensible gradient. Beware of their fate and do not follow their earlier steps, lest you acquire a momentum you cannot arrest and go down to hell. There is no better safeguard to a young man in life than to beware of the first drink.

They say that smoking leads to

drinking. If so, it would be well to avoid the first cigarette. Is it wise to begin a habit for which you cannot plead any good reason except that others do it, and which may lead you into drinking, bad companionship, and other detrimental things?

Do not drift into habits of impurity. In all of us there are appetites and desires which are beautiful and innocent enough when kept in their right place; but they are very reluctant to be kept there and are ever chafing to ascend the throne of the being and assume the master-

ship of the life. But who shall depict the horrors of the wreckage of all that is bright and beautiful and happy in the life of the miserable victim who has yielded to their first suggestion? Beware of the society of those who are familiar with the ways of darkness and impurity. Beware of spectacles and pictures, of amusements and books that excite the passions. Never go to a place to which you could not take your mother or your sister. Never become familiar with a girl whom you could not introduce to the pur-

est woman you know. Never treat a girl another way than you would like a man to treat your own sister.

It is not necessary to yield to temptation. Ask Jesus to help you to be an overcomer. This He will gladly do. One earnest, believing cry for help will bring Him near, and when He enters the soul, impurity can no more stand against His indwelling than straw before fire or darkness before day. I wish you a pure and noble life.

Selected

The Master's Touch



Acts 4:13 They took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.

In the Ocean Grove Auditorium there was once advertised a concert by a master violinist to be played on a five-thousand-dollar violin, accompanied by the pipe organ—one of the finest in the land. At the appointed time a great audience had assembled with high anticipations. The violinist appeared on the stage. The organ pealed forth a prelude; the musician put the violin to his shoulder, drew the bow across the strings, and sweet, pure melody floated out upon the air. Louder and more brilliant became the music until the violinist brought the selection to a brilliant climax. There was a moment of tense silence—then a burst of applause. The audience cheered and cheered, rising to its feet in enthusiasm.

Right in the midst of the applause the master stepped unexpectedly to the front of the platform, and bringing the violin down upon the table, smashed it into a thousand pieces. The audience, amazed, and all but dazed, sat down aghast. What could it mean? Had the master taken leave of his senses? Quickly he walked to the other side of the platform, opened another violin case and took out the instrument. Then he came to the center of the platform, and holding up the violin, said with a smile, "The violin upon which I have just been playing,

the one now in splinters, cost me \$2.50. This instrument"—holding up the violin in his hand—"is the five-thousand-dollar violin."

It was not the instrument that had produced the music which so thrilled the audience. It was the master's touch upon the \$2.50 violin.

Just as the touch of the master violinist upon the humble instrument produced unexpected and startling beauty, so the touch of the Master, Jesus Christ, upon fallen, depraved human lives produces unexpected and marvelous results. In London some years ago, there lived a drunken, tattered, habit-bound man who wandered as driftwood up and down the shipping docks among the dregs of humanity. By some turn of events, this outcast of society one night found himself in a mission. There he came face to face with Christ and yielded all to Him. Now this individual, once an outcast, is a respected, useful citizen, and one of the most capable dock-yard missionaries in London. The Master's touch transformed him.

The Touch of the Master's Hand

*"Twas battered and scarred and the auctioneer
Thought it scarcely worth his while*

[continued on page 27]

Luke 18:18 And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

19 And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? none is good, save one, that is, God.

20 Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother.

21 And he said, All these have I kept from my youth up.

22 Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me.

23 And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich.

24 And when Jesus saw that he was

very sorrowful, he said, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!

25 For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

26 And they that heard it said, Who then can be saved?

27 And he said, The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.

The Most Vital Missing Piece



Brother Irwin Seshier

Making Good Spiritual Choices

In reading these Scripture verses, my mind was not drawn to the day back then, but to the day in which we live. As a nation, we have an abundance offered to us, but we also have lots of things that we lack. Today we have many choices. One can think of varieties of just about everything. For example, if you want to buy a computer, you have many choices. Whether you want to buy a car, clothing, or food, many varieties are available. When I was growing up, the choices were very few when it came to buying something quick to eat. We did not have all the fast food restaurants and all the dine-in restaurants that we have today.

The most important choice that

we have in this life is our spiritual choice. Too many people are seeking more of this world's choices. It does not have to be riches that they are looking for. The Lord mentioned riches in our Scripture text, but people could choose lots of other things, such as going to a ball game instead of going to the house of God. Do you want to be in church or do you want to be in a worldly atmosphere? You have a choice. Do you want to go to the mall or to attend a revival meeting? The pleasures of this old world can draw you away from making the right spiritual choice.

The draw of this old world is strong. You have to be right on top of things if you expect to live for the Lord. As a child of God, the devil knows that you do not want to go out and commit vile sins. He knows

that you are not going to use drugs. He knows that you are not going to go bar hopping or seek adult entertainment. On the other hand, he will draw your mind and affections to things that really may not be sin and make you think that being in the house of God is not important. Friend, it is important. The world will draw you to more worldly things, not spiritual things. What does your soul crave? It craves spiritual things. A battle is going on between the world and your soul. The devil wants your soul, and he will go to any extreme to get it.

We face battles every day. We are never going to get away from that, but we need to be able to combat that. The flesh does not want to be in church. The flesh would rather be out doing its own thing, so to

speak, but you have to bring the flesh into subjection. You should desire to be around the people of God and to hear the Word of God preached as straight as men of God can preach it. Why? That is what is going to get you to Heaven one of these days. None of this soft-pedal or sugar-coated stuff, so to speak, will benefit you. The only way you are going to make it is to hear the straight preaching of the Word of God. Being in church is important, and there is no option regarding whether or not you should be there.

The Importance of Training Your Children

When I was growing up, I did not have an option of whether or not I wanted to get into the car with my parents and drive three hours to church Sunday morning. I had an early paper route, so I had to get up at four o'clock in the morning to deliver the newspaper, be home by a certain time, get a shower, and get into the car to go to church.

I had parents who wanted Truth. They really put themselves out to be where Truth was preached. I was living in the home, and I had to obey the rules of our home. I was too young to go out and fend for myself. I did not have any money, and I dared not go against my parents or I would have had to face the consequences. I did not call it abuse; I called it discipline. That is lacking in many homes today.

Often Dad would ask me, "Do you have any homework that needs to be done?" I would reply, "Well, yes, I have homework to get done."

My dad would say: "Get it done before the weekend. We are going to church in Newark." The pressure was on. Did I argue with my dad? No, I did what my parents told me to do.

Parental responsibility to the children is what is really important in life. It is important to the children. Those are the things that they are going to remember as they grow up. I remember those things. I knew that

if I got out of line, I was going to be disciplined. I knew exactly what the consequences were going to be.

Proverbs 22:6 says, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." It does not say anything in that Scripture about letting the child grow up by himself. When you train children, there is work to do. As a parent, you have to make sure that the child is doing the things that he needs to do in order to grow up the right way. You should not back away from your responsibility and let the child grow up as he pleases. Do you think that child wants to do what needs to be done the right way? No! You have to train him in the way he should go and show him what he needs to do.

When you train a child, there are some things that need to be done, and there are some things that you need to watch. What is your child feasting on? That is part of the training experience. Is it healthy? Is it wholesome? Is it something that is going to make him a better child of God? Surely a good education is important, and a good job is equally important. Seeking a good companion is vitally important, but my question is, What about a good, wholesome, and productive spiritual upbringing? How does that stack up to everything else? The spiritual upbringing is the most important part of the training. God will take care of the rest if you put Him first in your life.

You should not go out and start making decisions on your own without the leadership of the Holy Spirit. That is what is truly missing in many homes today. Just bringing children to church is one thing, but that does not take care of the rest of your responsibility. There is much more to training up a child than that. I am a firm believer in not giving children everything they want. I was an only child, but I did not get everything that I wanted. It is not wrong for parents to say no to their children. I heard that a lot as I was growing up. "Dad, Mom, may I go

there?"

"No," and that was the end of the discussion. I dared not work on Mom and then go work on Dad or vice versa. Had I done that, I would have probably received a no answer for the next six months.

The Draw of the World

Today people are seeking too much personal prestige, trying to see how high they can go on life's ladder. People want the world in one hand and a religious affiliation in the other. You cannot effectively serve God with a churchy attitude. The draw of the world will be too strong. You have to get it settled that you are not going to play church. You need to get deeply rooted and settled in your Christian experience. Too many things out in the world can draw you away. That is what the enemy wants to do. Deep down in too many people's lives, they have no true desire to rid themselves of the materialism of this old world.

Materialism is what is drawing the majority of people away from God. They want to hang on to the material things of this world. Friend, if you want complete victory, your love for the things of this old world will have to go. Worldly friendships that pull you down must go. Worldly hangouts and worldly habits have to go. You have to get rid of hindrances to have complete victory. Complete victory will be achieved at an altar of prayer when you have it settled that you are going to follow Jesus Christ.

Too many people do not get it completely settled that they are going to follow Jesus Christ. Instead, they have a shallow experience that causes them to be drawn away. The winds of this old world are strong, and they will blow you away.

Friend, the Lord knows what your true treasures are. He truly knows what gets your attention and what your affections are set upon. You may try to fool the pastor and other members of your congregation, but the Lord knows your true

affections. I ask you, Do you truly enjoy going this holy way? The Lord sees your heart. Do you rely on worldly entertainment to satisfy you? Friend, the worldly scene takes time and money. When people spend too much money, they go out and borrow more money to keep up with their worldly pleasures. You had better be careful of those cash advance places. They are a money-making scheme, charging interest on top of interest, until you get to the point that it becomes very difficult to pay back.

Why are people not satisfied with what the Lord has given them? They have not completely settled things in their hearts and lives. Friend, Jesus Christ satisfies. Your satisfaction is guaranteed. If you do not have that complete satisfaction down deep in your heart and soul, you lack something in your experience. You can know exactly what you lack in your life if you do not have complete satisfaction. The Holy Spirit will reveal what it is.

"Love One Another"

In order to gain any spiritual ground, you need to ask the Lord to captivate your mind and actions and to be completely in charge of your every move and thought. What should matter most in your life? What does the Lord want you to get out of your life? The Lord wants His family to be known for its love more than anything else. We are the family of God, and we care for one another. We do not want to see any harm come to any brother or sister.

John 13:34-35 says: "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." As children of God, we cannot pick and choose who we want to love. There is too much of that going on today. As a child of God, you must love everyone, even your enemies. This love is needed in the world in which we are living.

There is too much hatred and too much tearing down. That should not be around the Church of God. The Lord wants you to be in close fellowship with other believers.

As I was growing up, we discussed lots of things around the dinner table. As a school teacher, I asked the students one time, "How many of you eat dinner with your family around the table?" Very few hands went up. Today people are busy going here and going there. Often the parents take no time to talk to the children about their day. The children cannot talk to Mom and Dad, so in many instances, they go to the computer and join a chat room and talk to others. Then parents wonder why so many people are out there preying on young people and why a lot of young people end up missing. They need to take a look at the number of missing young people in this nation. No doubt, many missing children are from homes where the parents did not listen and did not pay attention to what their children were doing. You may think, "That could not happen to my family." Sin does not care whose family it overtakes. It would love to prey on your home.

Love cannot be learned by being away from the church. We need to be around God's people. God's Spirit wants to do so much for people, but some put the brakes on. It is vitally important that you follow the Holy Spirit. If you are saved, having love for others should be one of your greatest desires in order to win people to the Lord. You need to let people know that you truly care. It is vitally important to be able to give yourself to others. First Corinthians 13:3 states, "And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." You need to give of yourself.

The Important Things in Life

The devil is using everything in his arsenal to get people to become

discouraged, disappointed, and down-and-out. Why is he using all these tactics? He does not have much time left. He knows that, so he is using everything he can to work from within. If you become overloaded with the things of this old world, you will scale back on spiritual things, the things that are truly important in life. The devil does not want you to see that. You need to prioritize what is important in your life. God has given you reasoning and thinking skills so that you can think about what is important and what is not important.

The devil wants you to get entangled with the cares of life, and he says, "You know you have to get this and that done." Is that truly important in the light of what God wants you to do? There might be somebody that you need to call to have prayer with over the phone. There might be someone that you need to visit. Those are the things that will make you grow spiritually, but if you become overloaded, you will not be able to give your efforts to help others. You can become too busy. We are living in a busy society. People have become overloaded with their jobs, working around the home, grocery shopping, paying bills, and staying in their own little world, so to speak. However, the point of life is learning to love and to get along with others, God and people.

Our Scripture reading in verse 18 says, "And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus told him about obeying what we call the basics of being a child of God. Jesus already knew what this man's hang-up was. Likewise, Jesus knows what your hang-up is. Jesus did not have to go down through a list, just as He did not have to spell out to Nicodemus what he needed to do. Nicodemus should have known what he needed to do, but Jesus hammered the point, "Ye must be born again."

Nicodemus said, in so many words, "How can I enter my

mother's womb and be born again, Jesus?" Jesus said, "Ye must be born again." When He said that, I am sure the Holy Spirit was working on Nicodemus.

A Personal Experience of Salvation

You may ask the question, "What do I have to do to stay a little spiritual?" A true child of God does not want to be just a little spiritual. Friend, you do not serve the Lord by doing the least you can. That is the reason some people get knocked out of the race. You should want to do a lot for Jesus. You should desire to do the will of God in your life. In verse 20 of our Scripture text, Jesus told the rich, young ruler, "Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother."

I am sure that young ruler could not wait until Jesus was finished with that last word to say, in essence, "Ok, I already know all of that." No doubt, the young ruler probably thought: "Well, all those things are easy enough; I can handle that. I have not transgressed on any of those." Today many people think: "I don't really do bad sins. I don't carouse around. I don't drink. I don't smoke. I pay my bills on time. I give to the poor and needy. I'm a morally good person." You might be a morally good person, but if you lack salvation, you will go to the same hell as the murderer, the rapist, and the adulterer.

You cannot go to Heaven by merely being morally good. You must have your own personal experience of salvation. You are not exempt regarding that. You must be born again. Many people are in church every time the doors are open, but going to church is not going to save you. I believe that is a trick of the enemy. You must be born again. You have to confess and forsake your sins. You can be around the saints of God, but if you do not have salvation, you are lost.

You will be eternally lost if you do not get your heart right. Then you will be in eternity thinking, "If I had only given my heart to God!" That will haunt you throughout the ceaseless age of eternity, knowing that you did not have to go to hell. If you reject God, that brings a hardening of the heart. It would be sad to miss Heaven, dear one.

The Lord knows you, and He knows exactly what your hang-up is and why you are not following Him. With the young ruler it was his riches. With some it is their name. With others it is the positions they hold. You may ask people, "Are you saved?" and many would reply, "I belong to a church." The majority of people do not even know what it means to be born again. Sometimes friends or family members hinder people from getting saved.

Combating Pride

Pride stands in the way of some people getting help. Pride builds walls around people. It prevents them from having sensible conversations. It destroys relationships, and it also hinders fellowship. Pride builds walls between people; humility builds bridges. If you want to get somewhere with somebody, but that person will not humble himself, you need to. Pride is something that the devil uses. Humility is the oil that smooths and soothes relationships. If you have never tried it, you should try it.

First Peter 5:5-6 tells us: "Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. 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. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time."

If the Lord is to be lifted up, it is the saints of God that need to lift Him up. We need to lift Him up in our services. We need to enter the services with a prayerful attitude and lift up Jesus Christ. We should

never want to exalt ourselves. When a man is puffed up in pride, the Lord will not and cannot work effectively. Pride blocks God's grace in people's lives. Living in pride is in complete opposition to what God expects from your life.

You can develop humility in practical ways. How? One way is to admit when you are wrong. Have you ever run into people who are never wrong? You should admit when you are wrong. If the Lord shows me that I have done wrong to someone, I want to make it right. I do not want to coat it over or ignore it. I want to be man enough to let people know, "I am sorry for what I did and for what I said." You should not ignore that or put it off. A lot of people think time will take care of it, but God does not look at time the way that you look at time. To God it is just like it happened yesterday. If you feel that you have wronged someone, you should be man or woman enough to say, "I'm sorry; I don't want to be the reason that you die lost."

To combat the pride issue, you ought to be open to correction. If not, what is going to happen? You are going to develop pride. Not only will pride develop on the outside but also on the inside. You should be patient and compassionate with others. Who is your example? Christ is your example, and He was patient with you. Did you run to Christ the first time you heard the knock at your heart's door? Perhaps you resisted the pleading of the Holy Spirit. When you first heard the Lord call you to come to Him and you ignored Him, He was faithful to you. He did not have to come back to you. God was patient with you. He came back and He knocked at your heart's door again. Thank God, He kept knocking! I thank God that He did not give up on me! When people might have given up on you, Christ did not. Where would you be today if Christ had given up on you? You could be in a lost eternity! Christ can see further down the road than you can. He sees there is a

work for you to do. Others need Christ, and He can work through you.

The Love of God

Romans 12:16 states, "Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits." We read in Philippians 2:3-5: "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." You should never take the credit for anything you do for the Lord. If people say, "That was a good message," I would never say, "I know it." but I say, "Thank the Lord." That is where the credit needs to go. To God be the glory for all He has done! We need to give God more credit than what He receives.

You need to watch the things that hinder your walk with God, such as wrong attitudes, envy, and jealousy. The world is waxing worse and worse. The devil wants to separate the people of God from the love of God. He wants to destroy the unity of God's people. He does not want us to get along. God has a beautiful plan for His family, and the enemy knows that and wants to divide the people of God.

Do you feel that you are missing a vital piece from your life? Have you ever put a puzzle together and gotten close to the end and realized that a piece was missing? I used to put model airplanes together. I took the time to glue this and glue that. Sometimes when I got down to the very end, the one piece that I needed to make that plane look great was not in the box. It was missing a piece.

Friend, when you do not have Jesus Christ in your life, you are missing the most vital piece that you can receive. He wants to be in your life. He wants to have that close

association with you. He wants to be your personal friend and confidant. He wants to be the One to Whom you can go when you have trouble. We all have trouble from time to time. I thank God there is One to whom we can go, Someone we can call upon Who can direct our lives. The world does not have that. All many can say is, "Pour me another drink, bartender." What good is drinking going to do? It will get you deeper in debt.

Spiritual Growth

When you have a garden, you have to weed it constantly. If not, the weeds will eventually choke out the things that you want to grow. You want the vegetables to grow, but if you do not take care of the garden, the weeds will overtake the corn, the beans, or whatever you are growing. The enemy wants to put things in your spiritual garden to choke out your spiritual growth.

The things of this old world can be a hindrance to your spiritual growth. You might think a certain thing is important, but how is it in the light of what God sees? God may say, "You need to get that out of your garden." If you do not get rid of that, you will not be able to grow spiritually. If you are really following Christ, you will say, "Thank You, Lord, I will get rid of it." I do not want to have anything in my garden that will choke out the spiritual influence that I have. There is enough out in the world that will try to choke you spiritually and hinder your spiritual growth.

Cultivating is vitally important in the natural garden, and the same is true when it comes to your spiritual garden. The Lord may send a message that you will not like to hear, but it will be good for cultivation. Sometimes you need to be dug around really close. Why? You do not want to have weeds growing in your spiritual garden. You should not get angry with the messenger for pointing things out that need to be taken out of your garden. You

should thank God for the Holy Spirit, that He sent a message your way to warn you to get those things out.

Are you seeking the Lord with your whole heart? What is in your heart that is preventing the Lord from taking up complete residency? Is it your wants and desires? Is it your expectations? Is it your future plans? What are you living for if you do not have Christ in your life? You are living life in vain. You need to surrender to Jesus. Many people do not like to hear the word *surrender*, because to them it means defeat. I do not know of a better One to surrender to than Jesus Christ. You need to surrender your wants, your desires, and your expectations to Him.

Paul's moment of surrender occurred on the Damascus Road after he was blinded by the light from above. God knew how to get hold of Paul's heart. Living a surrendered life will be a test; it will not be easy. You will be tried, and sometimes it could be costly. Did you know that you could even be ridiculed?

As a child of God, your life is on display each and every day out in the world. As children of God, our rights are being slowly taken away day by day. We will be ridiculed and made fun of, but you must stand for Jesus. The martyrs did. Some of them hung on a cross, and some were cut in half. Did they recant? No! You may ask, "Do you think we will ever come to those times?" I do not know; only God knows. We do not know what we might have to go through, but remember, Christ will always be there for you. Second Timothy 1:7 says, "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." Do you want to have that vital link in your life? If it is missing, I do not know of a better way that you can find that vital, missing link in your heart and life than to find it in Jesus Christ.

(Compact Disc TR-1197)



**THE
DANGER
OF
UNBELIEF**

Brother Allen Borders

Limiting the Power of Christ

Unbelief is something that can work on you. You need to understand what a negative effect it can have on you. The definition of the word *unbelief* is "rejection of belief; the state or quality of not believing; incredulity or skepticism, especially in matters of doctrine or religious faith; a lack of faith."

Jesus has all power. Matthew 28:18 says, "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." However, even His power is limited if one does not believe. Jesus will not force you to believe. He will not force you to have faith, and unbelief can stop even the works of Christ.

In Matthew 13:54-58 we read: "And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their

synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things? And they were offended in him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house. And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief."

Unbelief is such a powerful thing that it can stop the works of Jesus Christ Himself. He is not going to force anyone to believe. Again, verse 58 says, "And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief." He came to His own countrymen, but they looked at Him just

as one of them instead of as the Christ, the Savior of the world.

Mark 6:1-6 reads: "And he went out from thence, and came into his own country; and his disciples follow him. And when the sabbath day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing him were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands?"

"Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Judas, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house. And he could there do no mighty work, save that

he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them. And he marvelled because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages, teaching."

In this Scripture the people were offended because they did not really know who He was. Their unbelief hindered His work. Unbelief can hinder God's work and the things that He would like to do for people. Unbelief is just as powerful or more so than belief. If you believe, many good things that you face in life can happen. However, unbelief can stop many things, not just the things of God but things you face in your normal life.

The Need of Prayer and Fasting

In Matthew, Chapter 17, it tells of a situation where someone came to the disciples for healing, and even the disciples struggled with unbelief. Verses 14-21 read: "And when they were come to the multitude, there came to him a certain man, kneeling down to him, and saying, Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is lunatic, and sore vexed: for oft-times he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water. And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him. Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me.

"And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour. Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting."

The Lord had given power to His disciples, but because of their unbelief, they were unable to help

the man's son. The disciples saw Jesus perform many mighty miracles, and they also had performed miracles. However, when this man came to them with his son who was a lunatic, a serious problem, it caused their faith to waiver. Sometimes we have seen God work miracles. We have seen God take care of things for people. We have seen wonderful things in the past. Then something comes along that seems big, and all of a sudden our faith wanes, just as the disciples' faith did in this case. The disciples knew that God was powerful enough to handle any situation. He had given that same power to them, but when they came upon this situation, even they had unbelief.

Mark 9:23-24 states: "Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." If you believe, the Scripture says all things are possible. Unbelief can affect anyone, even those who walk with Christ every day.

After Jesus was crucified and arose, some of the disciples did not believe the reports of those who had seen Him. These men had walked with Christ and had spent time with Him, yet they had problems with unbelief. Mark 16:14 reads, "Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen."

God's Word Is Unchangeable

Does unbelief change God's Word? Thank the Lord, the answer is no. Whether you believe or not does not change the Word of God. I could tell everyone I meet that I believe that grass grows on trees, and though I might believe that with my whole heart, that would not make it so. I could tell you that I do not believe that leaves grow on

trees, but my unbelief does not change what is reality. Belief in God or unbelief in God does not change God or His Word.

Romans 3:3-4 states: "For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged." Unbelief does not change God's Word, so you ought to have faith and believe in God.

Romans 4:16-22 says: "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all, (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were. Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations; according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be.

"And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness."

Because Abraham believed, God performed the impossible. You would think it was impossible for someone an hundred years of age to father a child, and Sarah was ninety. This seemed to be impossible, but verse 21 says, "And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform."

God gives us many promises in His Word, but it takes faith to believe those promises. As long as you have faith, what does the Scripture

say? You can move mountains. It does not take a lot. The Scripture we read earlier mentioned having faith the size of a grain of mustard seed. That is one of the smallest of seeds, and that is all the faith it takes. Just a little faith can move mountains.

Your Sphere of Influence

Unbelief can cause you to think you are doing the will of God, but what you are really doing is tearing down the work of God. An example of this is Paul, when he thought that he was serving God but was persecuting the Christians. He was not a believer in Christ, so he thought he was doing the right thing. First Timothy 1:12-13 says: "And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief."

Paul was telling Timothy that he was glad the Lord let him enter into the ministry, because in his unbelief he had persecuted the church. Unbelief will affect other people, just as Paul's unbelief did. Paul believed he was doing the right thing. He did not believe in Christ, and his unbelief affected many others. The same thing can happen today. Unbelief affects many people.

Everyone has their own little mission field. Every one of us has a sphere of influence that no one else has influence over, but if you have unbelief in your heart, you may be shutting down that little mission field for which you are responsible.

Another thought that came to me was that bad news spreads. If you have unbelief and you do not trust that God can take care of your situation for whatever it is that you need, your lack of faith will spread. I have seen it happen. You can be down in the dumps, so to speak, and before you know it, everyone in the family will have that same attitude. You can ruin everyone's day by your bad attitude. Unbelief can spread

easily and affect many.

You have to be careful of the things that you say to your family or in your home. If the minister brings a message and it does not quite rub you the right way, you can go home and let unbelief start to take affect. You may start making comments and say, "Oh, I'm just talking to my spouse," and before you know it, your children have lost confidence in the pastor and the saints. That unbelief can spread like a wildfire.

Wandering in the Wilderness

Hebrews 3:7-12 reads: "Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in their heart; and they have not known my ways. So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.) Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God."

This Scripture speaks of "an evil heart of unbelief." This lets you know that if you allow unbelief to move in on you, it can make your heart evil. What does the rest of the verse say? "... in departing from the living God." If you let unbelief come into your heart, it will separate you from Christ.

Verses 13-19 continue: "But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end; While it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation. For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses. But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the

wilderness? And to whom swore he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief."

This text refers to the Israelites and the effect that unbelief had upon them. They were only about three days journey away from Canaan land. It was not a long journey. If you look at a map, you will see that it was a short distance, and they could have gone straight into Canaan land if they had not let unbelief come in and defeat them. They sent spies to check out the land when they could have just quickly entered Canaan, but their unbelief caused them to wander in the wilderness for forty years.

Only two adults of the original Israelites, Caleb and Joshua, who had faith, ever saw Canaan land. The rest of them died in the wilderness because of their unbelief. God has good things for each of us, but you can let unbelief destroy those things. He might have something set right out in front of you that could be the thing you could possibly think of, the best thing that could make your life wonderful. If you let unbelief get in the way, you could ruin it.

The children of Israel let unbelief cause them to wander in the wilderness for forty miserable years. I can imagine that wandering around in the desert for forty years was not easy, but it was because of their unbelief. I often wonder what would have happened if they would not have had that unbelief? What if they would have had faith that God was going to take care of them? I wonder what would have happened. It could have changed the whole course of history.

Harden Not Your Heart

In Hebrews 4:4-11 Paul said: "For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works. And in this place again, If they shall enter into my

rest. Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief: Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day. There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief."

This Scripture lets us know that unbelief can cause you to harden your heart. Once you harden your heart, it can lead to your permanent destruction.

Several times in the Bible, we read of where people hardened their hearts. I do not know a single time where they ever came back and made things right. It can lead to your permanent destruction. It does not have to be something big. It can be unbelief. It can be something that you just do not want to take that is brought over the pulpit. You may think: "Oh, I don't believe it is necessary to do that to be saved. That's just his idea, or his thought, and that's man rule." If a true man of God preaches something, you had better obey it, because not doing so could lead to unbelief, and it could cause a mighty destructive work. Unbelief can grow and grow until your heart becomes hardened.

Unbelief will cause you to do many things. If you let unbelief get into your heart, it can cause you to do things that you thought you would never do. Matthew 26:56 says, "But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled." Some of those disciples said: "Lord, we will follow You no matter what. We will follow You to the grave." However, when Jesus was captured, this Scripture lets you know that all the disciples

forsook Him. If you let unbelief get hold of you, it will cause you to do things that you thought you would not do. A saying sometimes quoted says, "Sin will take you further than you want to go, it will keep you longer than you want to stay, and it will cost you more than you want to pay." Unbelief can be the start of that.

In Matthew, in the latter part of Chapter 26, you can read that Christ had just been arrested, and the same disciples who had previously said they would never leave His side took off in unbelief of what had just happened. They thought Jesus was going to build a literal kingdom, and they had plans built up in their minds, but now all those plans were impossible. Christ had been captured and arrested, unbelief took hold, and they ran. What will you do when you face a test? Will you run? Will you let unbelief take over? When things come to you that overwhelm you, are you going to say, "Oh, no, this is too big for God!" Nothing is too big for God. There is safety in Christ, and the closer you are to Him, the safer you will be.

Unbelief Will Rob You of Your Spiritual Strength

Consider Peter. What happened to him after he fled? He ran away from Jesus because he was afraid. All his plans had fallen through. Luke 22:54-60 reads: "Then took they him, and led him, and brought him into the high priest's house. And Peter followed afar off. And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them. But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with him.

"And he denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not. And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not. And about the space of one hour after another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a

truth this fellow also was with him: for he is a Galilaean. And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew."

Peter yielded to unbelief when he denied Christ openly; that is scary. You can let a little unbelief creep into your life, and as in Peter's case, you may do the same thing. You can let a little unbelief get in, and before you know it, it will take hold and you will deny Christ openly. If a person lets unbelief take hold, even a bold person like Peter, who was very outspoken, could not stand up to a little maid.

Faith can enable you to stand in the hard times. Philippians 4:13 says, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." First Corinthians 10:13 says, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

You can stand on Philippians 4:13 and 1 Corinthians 10:13 no matter what comes your way. No matter how hard the trial, no matter how unmanageable the situation may seem, you can take these two Scriptures and put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ.

A minister in the early 1800's named Horace Brushnell once said: "Anxiety is a word of unbelief or unreasoning dread. You have no right to allow it, and faith in God will put it to rest."

Often unbelief will cause anxiety, and anxiety is fear. It is one of those things that causes worry, and you can become distressed. Your belief in God is shaken, and your lack of faith causes fear to take hold of you.

The famous poet, Ralph Waldo Emerson, once said, "Belief consists in accepting the affirmations of the soul; unbelief is denying them." In your heart something automatically wants to believe, but unbelief denies it. A Scottish historian named

Thomas Carlyle wrote: "The most fearful unbelief is unbelief in yourself. The battle that never ends is the battle of belief against unbelief."

"Help Thou Mine Unbelief"

Have things in your life caused your faith to waver? We each have situations that come our way that are rough, unexpected, and hard. The devil would like to cause your faith to waver. He would like to see you fall. He does not care what age you are in life; he would love to see you fall. He will use any circumstance of life to see if he can topple you. It may not be a big thing; it might be a small thing, but he will take that and cause your faith to waver. Possibly you have prayed for something, and God did not answer the way you thought He should. That can cause your faith to waver. You might have thought that the Lord was going to take care of a situation in a certain way. This is something we all face in this com-

mon salvation. The devil uses the same things on me that he uses on you, to try to cause our faith to waver.

As we read earlier in Mark 9:24, the man said, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." We each can say, "I believe in God, and I believe God can take care of things." Nevertheless, the devil will still try to cause unbelief and doubt to come on us. That is when we need to pray. Sometimes we need to seek an altar and pray, "God, I believe; help my unbelief."

Psalm 46:1 says, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." He is a present help. You do not have to pray and hope that He can find time to fit you into His schedule to help you. No, He is a present help. Right now, He is there to help you. You do not have to allow unbelief to pull you down. God is a present help.

Just as unbelief will spread, faith also will spread to others. Faith can spread to family members. People

notice how you handle situations with encouragement. I do not know about you, but pessimistic people can really get me down. Likewise, faith will build people up when they see you trust in God. Let them see you trust in God, and when they come to a situation, they can say: "Do you know what? The Lord worked it out for Brother So-and-So. The Lord worked out Sister So-and-So's problems." He can cause your faith to spread as well.

I brought these thoughts to be an encouragement for you to trust in God. He can take care of every situation. You do not have to let unbelief come in and destroy your faith. That is exactly what the devil would like to do. He would like nothing more than to see unbelief come in and take control of your life and wreck it. We have an anchor in Jesus Christ, and He can help your unbelief. May you be like the man who cried out, "Help thou mine unbelief."

(Compact Disc TR-1202)

Nothing is impossible to a willing soul.

[Characteristics of Salt—contin. from p. 13]
Salt will heal. Are you melting down hard hearts? That is what salt will do. Are you living so that it causes other people to become thirsty for the reality of God that they see in your life? Are you purifying others through the salt in your soul? Are you helping to rescue those who are perishing?

What was so different about Charles Finney, the nineteenth century evangelist? His mere presence caused people to fall on their knees and cry out to God. It was the salt. When he went into a factory and did not say a word, people all over the factory started getting down on their knees and praying that God would have mercy on their souls and save their souls. There is something about

the salt of the earth. Charles Finney was salty.

Are you obeying God? It is not multiple choice. You must have salt in yourself. You may say that you have salt, but has your salt lost its savor? If it has lost its savor, it is of no value. When Jesus said: "Have salt in yourselves," He was talking about salt that is still effective.

I am talking mainly to Christians. If you ever end up in hell, it probably will not be because you are tempted and just go and get drunk. It probably will not be because you are in a store and a pack of cigarettes looks so good to you that you cannot resist the temptation, so you buy a pack and get hooked on smoking. It is probably not going to be because you decide to start smoking

marijuana. If you end up in hell, it will be because you have become lukewarm. It will be because your salt has lost its savor; that is a danger. Lukewarmness is the thing that you have to fight against. Being at ease in Zion and just drifting along is a grave danger to the Christian. Friend, if you are drifting along, if you are at ease in Zion, then you are not salty. I want to be salty for God. If you are not salty for God, you need to pour out your heart to God and say: "God, I want to be empty of all the salt that has lost its savor, and I want to have fresh salt. I want to have salt in my soul."

(Compact Disc TR-1033E)

[Guest Editorial—contin. from p. 2]

heart receives the Word with joy, but he soon finds that he cannot endure or come to a mature state. The heart is only superficially affected. He hears the Word gladly and quickly embraces it, but he fails to realize all that is required of him. His emotions are easily stirred when listening to an inspiring message preached or moved when hearing a Gospel song. He responds quickly, but unfortunately he does not follow through with his decision. When temptation, trials, persecution, or hardships come, he is offended (Mark 4:17).

The soil with this type of heart has little depth. Beneath this shallow layer of earth, there often lurks secret sins. Among these sins that you might find are things such as impure motives, covetousness, immoral attitudes, unjust business dealings, and even envy and malice. When evils such as this lie buried beneath the topsoil, you will find a man or a woman who is unable to be all he or she needs to be for God. The blessed Gospel seed cannot grow in this type of condition. All the stones and debris must be removed completely.

Now we will look at a heart represented as thorny ground. The thorny heart hears and receives the seed (or the Word). This soil is good and has good depth. The seed germinates and begins to grow into a beautiful plant. However, the growth is soon hindered because of surrounding circumstances. Certain unsightly weeds are present, thus preventing any room for growth. Mark 4:19 tells us it is because "the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering

in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful." This heart is anxious over material things. Material possessions take too great a hold in his life. Often this heart is too busy trying to "keep up with the Jones's," so to speak. He neglects the important things of life, such as a deep spiritual relationship with the Lord; instead, he exchanges that for the weak, beggarly elements of this world.

The deceitfulness of riches has ruined many souls. It robs a person of becoming fruitful for Christ and His kingdom. All his time is spent on acquiring more and more. He is never content with what he has, but he is always seeking ways to increase his possessions. The home he lives in is just not big enough or the vehicle he drives does not satisfy him. He desires bigger and better. He believes that his life could be better if he had just a little more. Jesus warned in Luke 12:15, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." Wanting God to bless you with riches is not wrong. However, if you set your heart on financial gain above spiritual prosperity, you will become a prey for Satan. First Timothy 6:9 reads, "But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition."

Finally, Jesus spoke of the seed planted in good ground. The good ground is land that has been plowed and tilled, with all stones, thistles, and thorns removed. The soil is ready for the good seed to be planted. This represents the one who hears the Word and graciously receives it into his life. This heart

is completely honest and open before God. Nothing has been hidden that would prevent it from being developed spiritually, and there is nothing that could choke out growth. A heart such as this is determined to live righteously and is persistent in bringing forth the good fruits of the Spirit. It will strive to live a life according to the pattern that God has designed. The good heart finds delight in living for and serving the Lord. The secret time spent with Him in prayer and meditation is always a highlight of the day. Another mark of the good heart is that it is touched with the feelings of other's infirmities, heartaches, and misfortunes.

My friend, What kind of heart do you have? In which category do you find yourself? Is your heart hard and crusted over to where the Word cannot penetrate it? Are you unwilling to repent and acknowledge your true condition before God? Could it be that stones of deceit are buried under a false pretense of Christianity, things like impurity, envy, or malice? Possibly there are various weeds growing in your life that are constantly choking out godliness and keeping you from blossoming as God would have you to do. Do weeds of desiring material possessions, wanting more riches, or seeking worldly pleasures control your life? Is your heart a good heart? Your heart is what you desire it to be. You have the right of choice. You can choose to hear, understand, and obey or you have the right to reject the pure Truth of God's Word. It is solely in your hands.

Selected

**Kindness is like snow—
it beautifies everything it covers.**

[The Master's Touch— continued from page 15]

To waste much time on the old violin,
But he held it up with a smile.
"What am I bidden, good folk?" he cried,
"Who'll start the bidding for me?
A dollar—a dollar—then two—only two—
Two dollars, and who'll make it three?
Going for three"—but no—
From the room far back, a gray-haired man
Came forward and picked up the bow,
Then, wiping the dust from the old violin,
And tightening the loosened strings,
He played a melody pure and sweet
As a caroling angel sings.

The music ceased, and the auctioneer,
With a voice that was quiet and low,
Said, "Now what am I bid for the old violin?"
And he held it up with the bow.
"A thousand dollars—and who'll make it two?
Two thousand—and who'll make it three?
Three thousand once—three thousand twice—
And going—and gone," cried he.
The people cheered, but some of them cried,
"We do not understand.
What changed its worth?"—Quick came the reply,
"The touch of the master's hand."

And many a man with life out of tune,
And battered and scarred with sin,
Is auctioned cheap to a thoughtless crowd,
Much like the old violin.
A mess of pottage—a glass of wine,
A game—and he travels on;
He is going once—and going twice—
He's going—and almost gone!
But the Master comes, and the foolish crowd
Never can quite understand
The worth of a soul, and the change that's wrought
By the touch of the Master's hand.

The Master's touch transforms character—"makes common people uncommon." It was the Master's touch that transformed Peter. There were many unlovely characteristics about Peter when he first started following Christ. He was often arrogant, intent on thrusting himself forward. "Peter was changed from a fiery, impetuous self-seeker into one of the greatest Christians who ever lived. The development of his soul is an example of what can happen to a man when he is brought under the influence of Jesus Christ."

E. Stanley Jones tells how the Master's touch changed a certain young man: "Among a group of students who came from Burma to India was one young man they called 'The Buffalo.' He was as strong as a buffalo, hence the name. Along with this strength he had a very quick temper—a dangerous combination. The very last thing he did before he was converted was to break with one blow three ribs of a man who

angered him. On a certain evening I sat with this group of students and each told in turn of his happiest moment. When it came to the turn of 'The Buffalo,' he said in a simple, straightforward way: 'One night a student followed us out of the meeting, and as I sat in the motor car, he came deliberately up to me and spat in my face. Now, before this tremendous thing called conversion happened to me, I would not have hesitated a second in knocking him down. The strange thing is that I did not even feel like doing it, and moreover I look back on that as the happiest moment of the whole tour.'

The Master's touch upon our lives will produce surprising results. Many times we feel our littleness and unworthiness to such an extent that we bury our talents and do nothing, but the Master's touch changes all. Great things can happen, even to the most humble, when their lives are under the Master's touch. From a natural viewpoint, no one would have looked for any unusual accomplishments from William Carey. No one, seeing him in his humble cottage, bending over the shoes he was making, would have expected him to launch great and far-reaching enterprises. He was slight and ordinary in appearance. He had received little formal school learning. When only fourteen, he left home to learn to make shoes. He was from a poor, insignificant family. No one would suppose he had any special talents, but when Carey was converted at eighteen, new purpose was given to his life. With a map and globe before him as he made shoes, he thought about the rest of the world, and his heart burned to send them the Gospel. Eventually through his efforts, the first missionary society was formed, and eventually Carey himself went to India. His accomplishments there are wonderful to consider. The first Indian Bible translations, the first printing in native dialects, the first Christian school in North India, the first college, the first medical mission, the first converts and native churches—all these were under his immediate charge.

"The Master's touch is the all-important thing. Without it our greatest efforts fall short of our expectations. With it our lives count far beyond our fondest dreams." "One who dwells with the Savior and catches His spirit is at once seen to be superior to other men. All who see him take knowledge that he has been with Christ."

*In the still air the music lies unheard;
In the rough marble beauty hides unseen;
To make the music and the beauty needs
The master's touch, the sculptor's chisel keen.*

*Great Master, touch us with thy skillful hand;
Let not the music that is in us die!
Great Sculptor, hew and polish us, nor let,
Hidden and lost, thy form within us lie!*

*Spare not the stroke! Do with us as thou wilt!
Let there be naught unfinished, broken, marred;
Complete thy purpose, that we may become
Thy perfect image, O our God and Lord.*

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