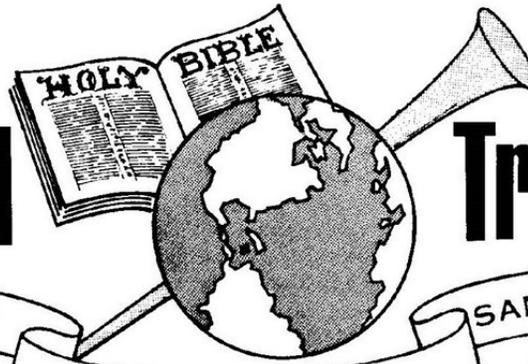


# The Gospel



# Trumpeter

JUSTIFICATION

"So will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day."

Ezekiel 34:12  
Jeremiah 32:39

SANCTIFICATION

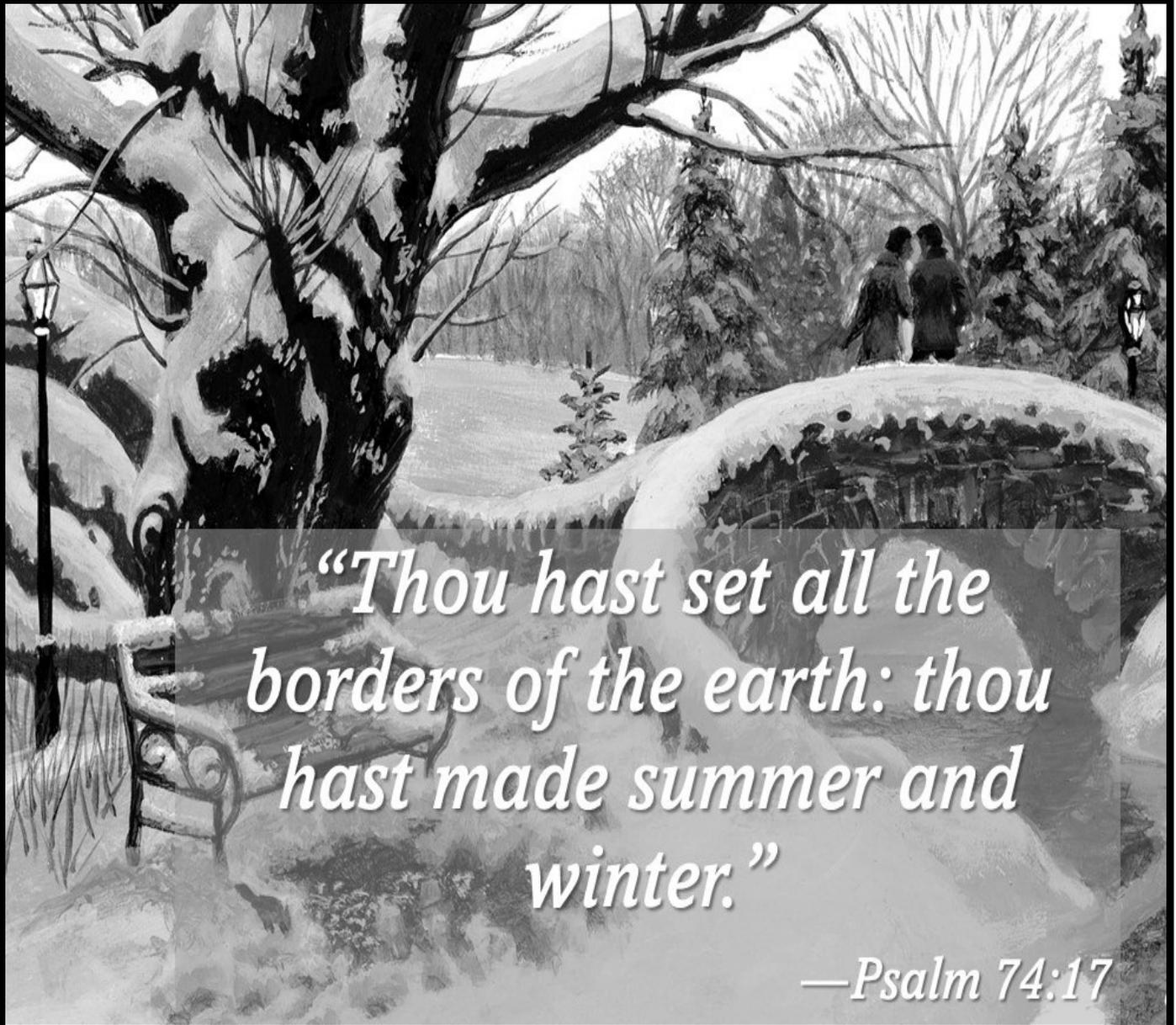
"But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished."

Revelation 10:7  
Matthew 24:31

UNITY & TRUTH

SOUNDING FORTH THE SEVENTH AND LAST TRUMPET

Vol. 53 January 2023 No. 1



*"Thou hast set all the borders of the earth: thou hast made summer and winter."*

*—Psalm 74:17*

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

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

Brother Roger L. Decker . . . . . Editor  
Workers Too Numerous to Mention

**THE CHURCH OF GOD BELIEVES IN**

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

**SOME SPIRITUAL FACTS  
PERTAINING TO THE CHURCH**

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

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Vol. 53 January 2023 No. 1



**BEWARE OF SEDUCERS**

We read in 1 Timothy 4:1, "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils." Then 2 Timothy 3:13 says, "But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived."

The Apostle Paul warned Timothy, a young minister, of perilous times ahead. The church faced devilish conditions then, and they still exist today. False teachers were enticing Christians with erroneous doctrines and ideas to lead them away from the truth. A *seducer* is one who "leads astray, lures away, or persuades to disobedience."

In 1 Timothy 4:3, the Apostle Paul spoke of the teaching, "forbidding to marry." Ones were disregarding the sanctity of marriage. Hebrews 13:4 reads, "Marriage is honorable in all." Paul then refuted the refusal of eating meat, saying it was "to be received with thanksgiving" (1 Timothy 4:4). Christ came to set mankind free from the legalistic bondage imposed on them.

Times have not changed. Although Satan uses different methods today than he did during the early church age, his prime purpose is still to divert

saints from the highway of holiness by whatever means he can. God's people must be alert to those who attempt to seduce them with false ideas. Christians can overcome if we diligently draw closer to God. It is only through Him we have the victory over the subtle tricks of the enemy.

Sin and wickedness are still on the loose in our world today. Satan is out to overrule and conquer every one of us. Who would have ever thought we would see things being allowed in our society that we see today? Unregenerate men are endeavoring to convince people God does not feel the same way about sin as He once did. They try to convince people some of these issues are not really as bad as they appear to be. Isaiah 5:20 prophesies about a time when men would "call evil good, and good evil." They work to force their rebellious acts against the Word of God on the hearts of the people. It behooves us all to be prayerful and watchful of these seducing schemes designed to destroy Christian principles.

Satan will use one of his deceivers in a congregation to lead souls away from the truth. Ungodly men who possess devilish

[continued on page 11]

*Ephesians 4:1 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,*

*2 With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;*

*3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

*4 There is one body, and one*

*Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;*

*5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism,*

*6 One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*

*7 But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.*

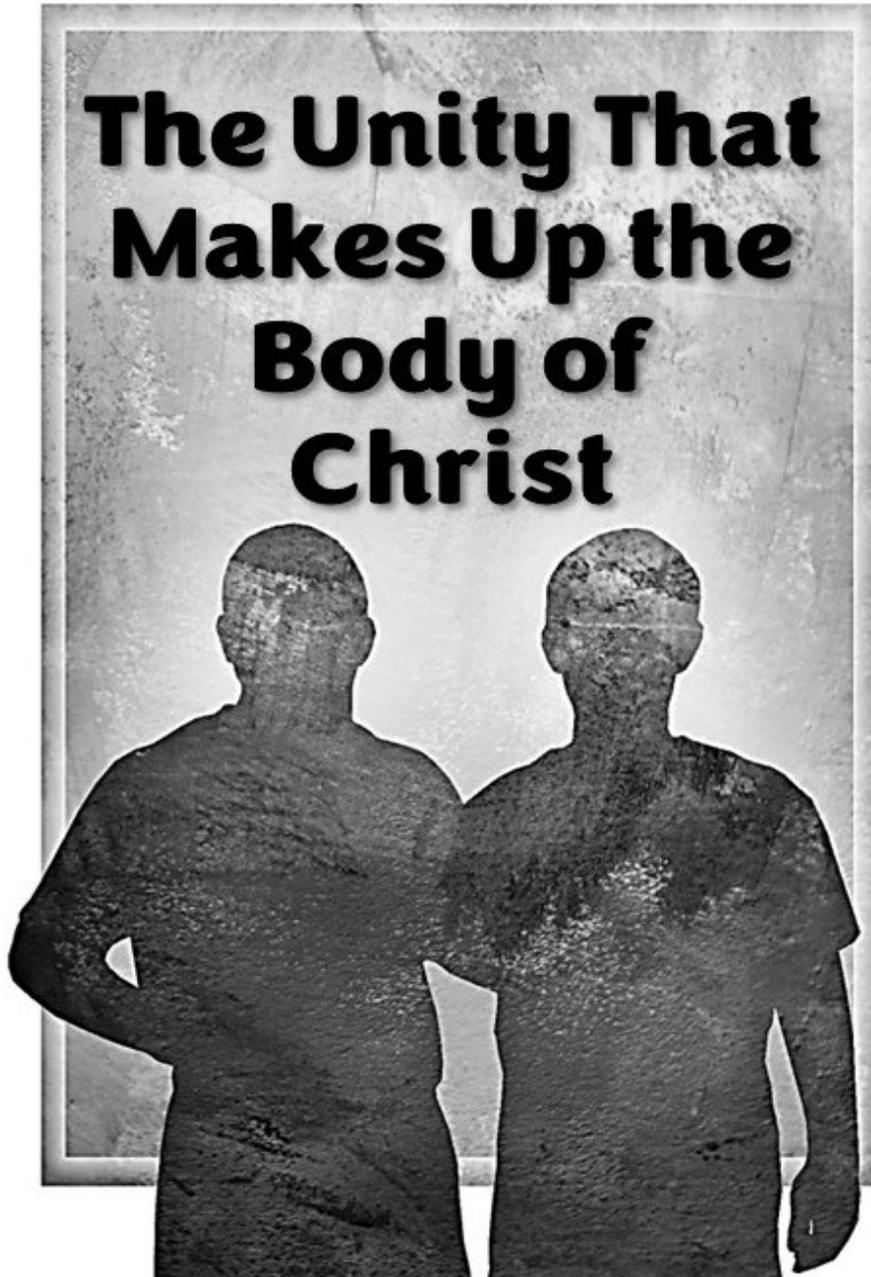
## **True Bible Unity**

Unity comes into your life the moment you are saved. It is one of the most, if not *the* most, attacked by Satan of all the cardinal teachings in the Word of God. The psalmist said in Psalm 133:1, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" Unity is good and pleasant according to the Scriptures, especially among brethren. We are members of the same family, with many brothers and sisters. On the other hand, disunity is bad and hateful. Real unity is from Heaven, and disunity is from Satan.

We stand on the Word of God, and we must use the Word of God as the final authority on all spiritual matters. When speaking of the Church of God, we are talking about the body of Christ. The Church of God is not Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, a sect, or a denomination, but rather she is the body of Christ. This truth on unity is precious and belongs only to the one church in the Bible – the Church of God.

Let us consider Bible unity in the light of the Word of God. Bible unity flows through its members because it is a product of the Holy Spirit. You cannot have true Bible unity without the Holy Spirit and with sin in your life. Our Scripture text says, "Keep the unity of the Spirit." The "S" on Spirit is capitalized, representing the Holy Spirit. This unity is not something we started, but it is a product of salvation. Each individual must have unity with God before they can have unity with the body of Christ.

Let us read the words of the Prophet Amos in Amos 3:3, which state, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" God is not talking about two brethren walking together. He is talking about man agreeing with God. God was asking old Israel a question, and it is good for us



*Brother Roger L. Decker*

today. We cannot walk with God unless we agree with Him, not Him with us, but us with Him.

God will not change His mind or His Word to suit you or me. Psalm 119:89 tells us, "For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven." For example, you may buck up against the standard, but God will not change the standard around to fit your beliefs. You will either agree with God or become conformed to this world.

During the days of Jesus, there was a banding together from every faction. The Sadducees, Pharisees, and scribes did not get along with each other, but they laid aside their differences long enough to put Jesus on the Cross. Today, there is banding together from the ranks of religion. Most people know it as the World Council of Churches. It is not composed of true Bible unity. Some members of this group do not believe in being born again.

### Unity Begins at the Cross

The Apostle Paul asked some questions in 1 Corinthians 1:10-13, saying: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?"

There was division working in the congregation at Corinth caused by brethren not speaking the same thing. Paul told us in verse 13 what was causing the division. Christ was portrayed as



## UNITY BEGINS AT THE CROSS

being divided. Sectism says Christ is divided, but to have unity, ones need to be born again and live free from sin.

When writing to the Corinthians, Paul twice addressed them as "brethren." All must unite for the same purpose and be a member of the family of God. There can be no substitutions for salvation when it comes to unity. Good personalities, good works, self-righteousness, and friendship will not produce unity. Unity begins with God.

All who have unity live a holy life because sin destroys unity. Sin in the heart of Cain caused him to slay his brother. Covetousness got hold of Judas, and he became a traitor to his brethren, the disciples, and to Jesus Christ. Sin will destroy what the psalmist said is good and pleasant. Darkness will destroy unity. It will cause ones to work against those who are helping the work of God to prosper.

When unity prevails in a congregation, all have the same purpose in mind: to build up the Kingdom of God. The Bible states in Nehemiah 4:6, "So built we the

wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work." The people had a mind that did not want to see the work of God suffer or be hindered on their account. They put the work of God ahead of their feelings, desires, thoughts, and plans.

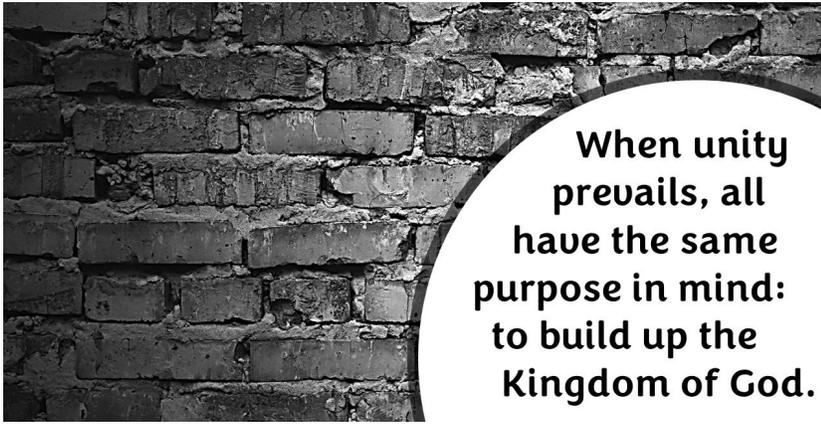
Revelation 12:11 reads, "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death." Second Corinthians 13:11 reads: "Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you."

### The Oneness of the Church

All who have unity are working in their local congregation, helping to pull the load. They are thankful to have a small part to labor in the Kingdom of God and to sit under the truth. They rejoice in the truth and care for each other. When one suffers, they all suffer, and when one rejoices, they all rejoice. Romans 12:15 says, "Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep."

Ephesians 4:3 reads, "Endeavouring to keep [hang on to, possess, have it stay there] the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." *Endeavor* means "to give diligence; to labor." There will be some endeavoring on our part to get along and maintain unity. God's Holy Spirit can help us.

Verse 4 of our Scripture text lets us know why we need unity. "There is one body, and one [Holy] Spirit." Through the next few verses, Paul brought up the word "one." A brain cannot work through a body broken into fragments. The oneness of the church is essential for the work of Christ. Paul also said there is "one hope of your calling." We are all heading toward the same goal. The



**When unity  
prevails, all  
have the same  
purpose in mind:  
to build up the  
Kingdom of God.**

Holy Spirit only produces one kind of unity, and that is oneness with its believers. We will not always see things alike, but we will endeavor to stay where the Spirit puts us unless there is obvious sin.

I will use myself as an example. When I got saved, I knew very little about God's Word, but I knew I needed to repent. I was accepted into the family of God as if I had been there for years. I was not given a position because I was unskilled in the things of God. First Timothy 3:6 says, "Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil."

*Novice* means "a trainee, a beginner, or a learner." He is someone newly coming to the faith. The Greek word for novice is *neophutos*. It does not occur anywhere else in the New Testament. It means "that which is newly planted; a plant not strong or fit enough to bear the severity of storms." It describes a plant whose roots are not deep and cannot resist the fierceness of a cold blast. A new convert is one who has had little opportunity to test his own faith. There is not enough evidence given to others of his faithfulness to the trust committed to him. It does not necessarily mean one who is young in years, but one who is young in the faith.

The Scripture also says, "Lest being lifted up with pride," meaning one would likely be

elated by being entrusted at once with the highest office in the church and by the accommodations of flattery that he might receive. No one is completely kept from this temptation, but a novice is more likely to be injured by this than one who has had more experience and time in the faith. The rest of that verse reads, "Lest . . . he fall into the condemnation of the devil [because of pride]."

### **A Settled Ministry**

First Timothy 4:12-16 states: "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. [The Apostle Paul told Timothy, a much younger man, to let no man despise his youth. Commentators say Timothy had been converted fifteen years prior to this letter, but there were some who would come against him because he was much younger. The Apostle Paul put forth some things for him to do to show his calling.] Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.

"Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save

thyself, and them that hear thee."

The Christian leader must remember he is a man set apart for a special task in the church. He cannot be separated from the church. His commission came from it, his work is within the fellowship, and his duty is to build others into it. This is why the important work of the Christian church is never done by an evangelist, but always by a settled ministry.

Paul told Timothy to be an example of the believers. It is natural for the flock to follow the shepherd; if he goes wrong, they will go wrong as well. He said "in word," or in doctrine. Teach the truth of God because nothing else but the truth will save souls. In "conversation," or in the whole of your conduct and in every department, in all your domestic as well as public relations, behave yourself well. "In charity," or let your love for God and man show this is the principle motive of all your conduct. "In spirit," or in the manner and disposition in which you do all things. "In faith," be faithful to your trust, the flock, the public, and God; and "in purity," or in holiness of the body and mind.

### **Hindrances to Unity**

The devil would like nothing more than to separate brothers and sisters. Satan's goal is to get people divided. He wants a church on this corner and a church on that corner, making it a multiple choice. Real Bible unity is a product of holiness and the Holy Spirit.

One hindrance to unity is jealousy. The Bible says in Proverbs 6:34, "For jealousy is the rage of a man: therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance." We read in Song of Solomon 8:6, "Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the

coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame." Jealousy will work among the ministers, players on the instruments, and singers, such as the quartets and trios.

John 21:21-22 reads: "Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me."

Another hindrance to unity is family and friends. Jesus said in Matthew 10:34-37: "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me."

We do not come to Christ on a family plan, but rather we come to Him individually. The Bible teaches we should honor mother and father, but that does not mean we should follow after them if they are headed in the wrong direction.

Micah 7:5-7 tells us: "Trust ye not in a friend, put ye not confidence in a guide: keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom. For the son dishonoureth the father, the daughter riseth up against her mother, the daughter in law against her mother in law; a man's enemies are the men of his own house. Therefore I will look unto the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me."

There are many children who have been scattered in every direction in Babylon and are sitting under false teachings. Many times, it is because of the wanderings of their parents and the ones whom they married. Micah

said not to trust in a friend. There are ones who have come out of Babylon, but they have never cut ties with Babylon. They never truly got Babylon out of them. They still go to their parties to eat, receive their text messages and phone calls, and they are still affected by the same Babylonian spirit. When you come out of Babylon, you need to cut ties with Babylon! Some may say, "Well, I have good friends there." Why did you leave? You left because the teachings are wrong, and the Spirit is not there.

### Maintaining Unity

Ephesians 4:29 reads, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers." Are you involved with corrupt communication? I am not referring to cursing or swearing, but talk that tears down the church and does not edify or strengthen the body of Christ.

Job 4:4 states, "Thy words have upholden him that was falling, and thou hast strengthened the feeble knees." When you carry on a conversation with Babylon, are you strengthened? No, because all you hear is the church being run down. You need to stay away from people who constantly tear down the church, the pastor, and the Sunday school teachers.

We preach, teach, and counsel to marry in the Lord. Long-distance relationships do not always work because you need to see how someone lives every Sunday, not just once in a while when you visit them. Do not marry someone who you know will cause friction. Marry someone who is living the truth, being consistent and faithful. We are living in a most deceptive age. Some leave a congregation and never tell the pastor. Whenever I

went somewhere on vacation, to preach, or if I was sick, the pastor knew about it.

Unity is wonderful when started by the Holy Spirit. We have to work hard to keep it. Some things may happen that will offend or upset you, but do not pack up and leave. Be mature about it. Pray for the one who ran you down. God did not put me in as a pastor to win a popularity contest and be a good fellow among the saints. He called me to be a watchman on the wall, and that is exactly what I am endeavoring to do.

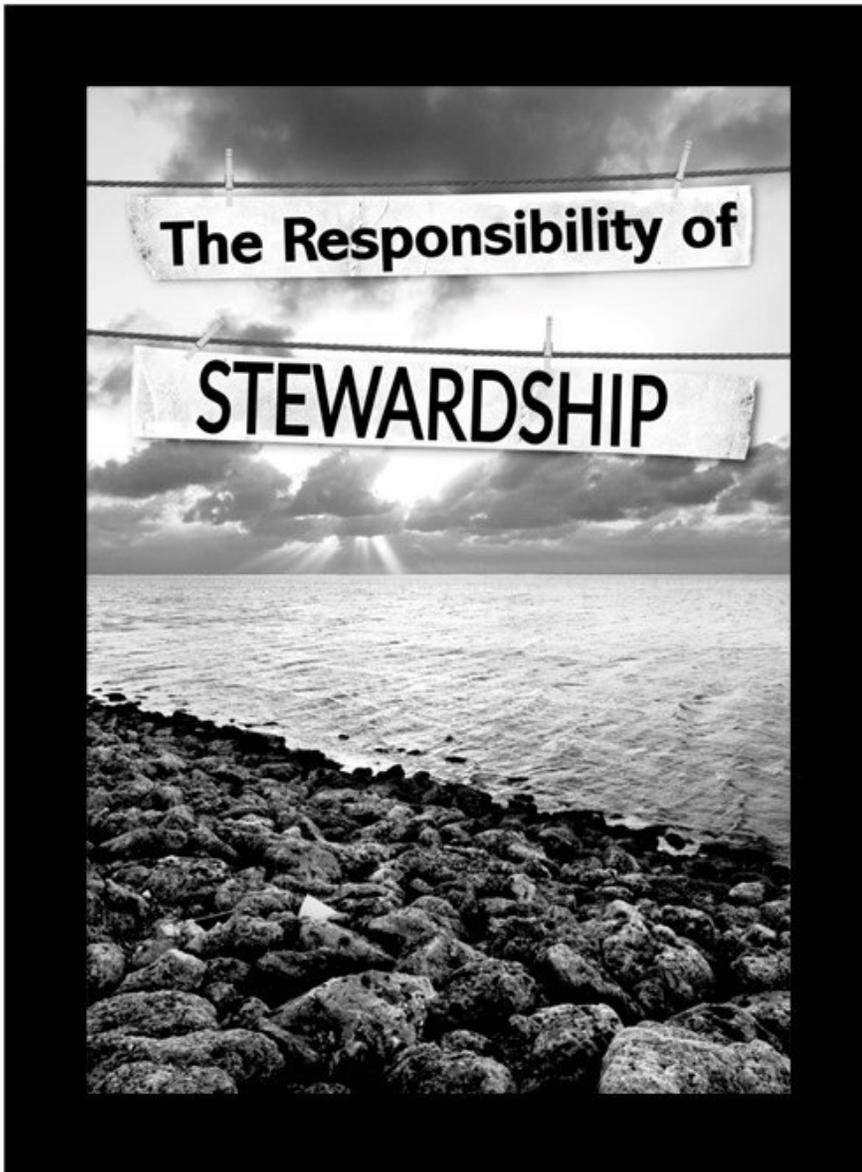
The way to avoid getting caught up in destructive works is to stay spiritual, walk in all the light God has revealed to you, and seek the good of the congregation. Ask yourself, "Will my actions hurt or cause a breach in the body of Christ?" If you leave a Church of God congregation, will you take someone else down with you? Seek for the good and the welfare of the congregation. Stop being selfish! Church of God, we have to work as never before to maintain and keep unity. May God help us! He gave us all the tools we need.

*(Compact Disc TR-2535)*

*Brother Roger L. Decker is the pastor of the Church of God in Newark, OH.*



## A Faithful Steward



The goal of this message is to define stewardship, give examples of stewardship, and outline the basic principles and requirements of stewardship. *Stewardship* is "the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care." God has given us many temporal things, and He has put them in our care. He has put this earth in our care. I have a wife and children in my care. God has entrusted my wife and me to be the leaders of the young people in our congregation.

The Bible definition of *stewardship* is "using and managing all the resources God provides for the glory of God." A steward manages the possessions of someone else. A steward in the Bible was usually a servant who had earned the respect and trust of the master of the house. Often, the trust was so complete, the steward was entrusted with all the affairs of the household. He may have taken care of the money and many other things just as if the master himself was taking care of them. This relationship was unique in that the steward assumed the power and influence of his master, lived a similar lifestyle, and could continue this special privilege as long as the steward remained faithful. Are you a faithful steward in what God has given you?

### Brother Steve Strelecky

*Luke 16:1 And he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods.*

*2 And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward.*

*Luke 16:10 He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.*

*11 If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?*

*12 And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?*

*13 No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.*

**Stewardship:**  
the careful and  
responsible management  
of something entrusted to  
one's care

**Biblical Stewardship:**  
Using and managing all the  
resources God provides for  
the glory of God

I am employed by the public as a welding teacher, and I have been given a large budget to work with because welding is one of the most expensive professions to teach. I have been entrusted with the public's money, so I do my best to spend it wisely and try not to waste material. There are ones overseeing me, and I must give a careful account of the money I spend and the resources I use.

The pastor is the steward over a congregation. He has been entrusted with the care of the people and to preach and rightly divide the Word of Truth. He will give an account to God for what he has been entrusted with.

Adam was the first steward mentioned in the Bible. Genesis 2:15 says, "And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it." Adam was entrusted with the care of the garden. He was to manage it, prune the trees, and take care of the animals.

Eliezer of Damascus was Abraham's steward. If Abraham had no children, Eliezer would have been his heir. He was given great responsibilities as the steward over Abraham's household, including finding a wife for Isaac, Abraham's son.

Joseph was Potiphar's steward. We read in Genesis 39:8, "But he refused, and said unto his master's wife, Behold, my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand." Potiphar trusted Joseph to take care of all the affairs of his household.

### God Owns Everything

Each one of us is a steward over the resources God has given us. We are blessed with the truth of God's Word. You cannot put a

price on that. Truth is becoming more scarce in our world today. We are responsible for cherishing the truth and preserving it. Jesus said in Luke 12:48, "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required." We have been given the ultimate truth. With all these blessings, there are great responsibilities.

In my teaching profession, I have observations and performance reviews by those who are

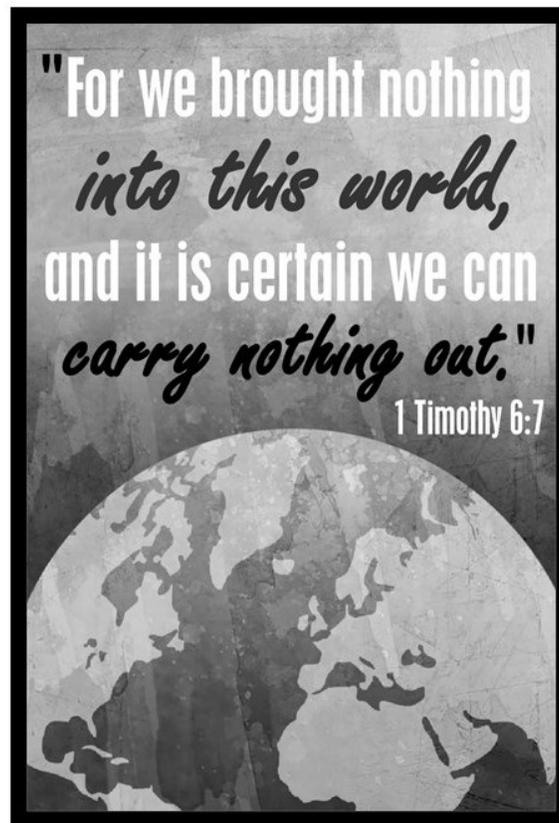
ter's goods. He mismanaged them, and basically, he was fired from his position. If you were called to give an account for all the things you are given to manage by God, would you get a raise or a promotion? Or would you get fired? How well are you taking care of God's resources?

The first principle of stewardship to consider is God owns everything; we own nothing. That is sometimes hard to comprehend. We say we own a house or a car; we own this, and we own that; but in reality, it all belongs to God. He provides a way for us to make the money to actually buy the things we have. Psalm 24:1 states, "The earth is the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein."

God owns the silver and the gold. Haggai 2:8 reads, "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the LORD of hosts." God owns the animals. Psalm 50:10 tells us, "For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills."

God owns our bodies. We read in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20: "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." How well are you taking care of your body?

The Bible tells us in 1 Timothy 6:7, "For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out." Have you ever seen a U-Haul following a hearse? Consider the Egyptian pyramids. Thousands of years after all the Pharaohs died, archeologists have dug into those pyramids and found everything they thought they were taking with them. They did not



over me. They measure how I perform as a teacher throughout the year. They want to know if my students met the mark on all their testing. They fill out a rubric that tells where I stand, whether I am proficient or accomplished. I get a rating at the end of the review. If you were called in for a performance review and asked to give an account for everything God has entrusted you with, how would you fare?

The steward in our Scripture text did not do well with his mas-

take anything with them; it was all left behind in the pyramids.

### **Managers of God's Resources**

God is the owner and we are the managers is the second Biblical principle of stewardship. Are you taking care of God's property? *Manage* means "to make something happen, to accomplish something in spite of great difficulty or hardship." Maybe you have heard some of these sayings: "I do not know how they *manage* to do that" or "I do not know how I will do this, but I will *manage*."

I have been charged with teaching forty-two students how to weld and fabricate things out of metal. It can be difficult to get the students to achieve at the level they should because of their abilities, the things going on in their lives, and the influences on them both inside and outside of school. I have to give an account for their performance regardless of the circumstances.

*Manage* also means "to take charge of." We are all given responsibilities at different levels. A pastor has the responsibility for the care of his congregation. Sunday school teachers have the responsibility of teaching Sunday school on Sunday mornings. The choir director has the responsibility of leading the choir. The janitors have a responsibility to clean the church building. Are you taking charge of what you are responsible for?

We will all answer for the responsibilities we have been given, not just to the pastor, but to God. As youth leaders, we have to give an account of what is going on in the youth group. If you are a parent, you have a great responsibility. Children can be challenging at times, but parents need to take charge to raise their children. Are you taking charge, or can God charge you for neglecting your duties?

Another definition of *manage* is "to influence." We are influencing people. We can either help or hinder someone by our management. Management requires direct participation. We cannot sit on the sidelines and watch. In every stewardship relationship, there are two parties involved. There is the master who hands out the resources and will one day ask for an account, and there is the steward who is entrusted with the resources and will eventually answer for how they invested.

We must live as if everything belongs to God. Every decision concerning God's property is a spiritual decision. The questions we should be asking are: "Am I using what God has given me in a way to glorify Him?"; "Am I managing everything in such a way that God is pleased?"; "Would God be pleased with how I manage His resources?"

### **God Holds Us Accountable**

The third principle of stewardship to consider is, we only have one master. Jesus said in Matthew 6:24: "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Our decisions in managing resources will tell whom we serve. A good steward will be faithful and loyal to one master.

One song reads: "*I'm going to be true and faithful to the end. I'm going to be one on whom God can depend. Though others leave the path the saints have trod, I'll keep my eyes on truth and follow God.*" God is looking for people who will be true and faithful to what He has given them to manage.

The fourth principle of stewardship is, God will hold us accountable. Luke 19:15 reads, "And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received

the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading." God expects an increase from what He has given us. We were called to be the youth leaders, and God is expecting the young people to prosper. If we fail to do our due diligence, then we will give an account for that.

God will call us to give an account of how we handle the things He has placed in our trust. Jesus said in Matthew 24:46, "Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing." God wants to find His people working and taking care of the things He has entrusted to them. There is no time to sit still. In the *International Children's Bible*, Luke 16:2 reads: "So he called the manager in and said to him, 'I have heard bad things about you. Give me a report of what you have done with my money. You can't be my manager any longer!'"

The fifth principle of stewardship is, if we manage these resources as God intends, we will be rewarded. Matthew 25:21 from the *International Children's Bible* reads: "The Master answered, 'You did well. You are a good servant who can be trusted. You did well with the small things. So I will let you care for much greater things. Come and share my happiness with me.'" I am looking forward to the day when all my labor is over. When all the toils and cares come to an end, if I have managed what God has given me as a faithful and honorable steward, I will be rewarded.

### **Qualifications of a Steward**

God has requirements for His stewards. First, we must be faithful. We read in 1 Corinthians 4:2,

"Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful." The same Scripture from the *International Children's Bible* reads, "A person who is trusted with something must show that he is worthy of that trust." Are you worthy of the trust God is placing in you? I tell my students and my children: "If you want privileges, you need to show you are worthy of those privileges." Maybe I asked one child to take out the trash.

If that was one of his chores, he would be rewarded for doing those chores. How well are you taking care of what God has put into your care? Can God trust and depend on you to care for what He owns?

If I borrow a tool from someone, I need to take care it gets back to the owner in as good or better condition than it was before I borrowed it. The owner will probably complain to others or not let me borrow anything again if I do not. If you borrow something from someone and it gets broken, you need to fix it or replace it. Are you treating what you have as if God owns it? You are using, borrowing, and managing it. Are you giving it back to Him in as good or in better condition than what He gave it to you? Remember our Scripture text. Our stewardship can be taken away just as quickly as it was given to us.

Another requirement of a steward is to be blameless. Titus 1:7 tells us, "For a bishop must be blameless." You must be saved, above reproach, and morally pure in the sight of God to be a steward.

There are some qualifications you do *not* need to be a steward. You do not need to have a certain level of talent. God will give you responsibilities that suit you. He will not give you something to

<b>Requirements for Stewards</b>	
<b>Faithfulness</b>	<b>Blameless</b>
<p><i>"Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful"</i> (1 Corinthians 4:2).</p>	<p><i>"For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God"</i> (Titus 1:7).</p>

do above your talent level. God would be unfair to set something on someone they could not handle.

You do not need status or a certain amount of money in the bank to be a faithful steward of God's resources. You do not have to be well known or have a minimum of five hundred Facebook friends. You do not need charm or good looks either. God is looking for faithful men and women who want to loyally serve Him.

### **Are You a Faithful Steward?**

Some people like to give numerous excuses why they are poor stewards of God's resources. They say, "I am not talented enough." God gives us all unique talents and abilities. Everyone has a gift that needs to be cultivated and used in the Kingdom of God. In the Parable of the Talents, some were given more than others, but all were given at least one talent to cultivate. If you are using your talent to the best of your ability, then you are being a faithful steward of what God has given you.

Some may give this excuse: "I do not have time to do that." I get a notification every week on my cell phone about how much screen time I have used. It even breaks it down into different categories, such as reading refer-

ence, social networking, and entertainment, and tells me if my screen time was more or less than the week before. It is shocking how much time is spent looking at a hand-held device. Saying you do not have time is not a good excuse. Whatever you prioritize in this life is what you will make time for. Are serving God and managing God's resources a priority in your life?

Some may say, "It is mine; I worked for it." However, if God did not give you the strength and ability to do what you do, you would have nothing. My mind goes back to a time when I was flat on my back after I had a stroke. It rendered me helpless. God could have easily left me in that condition. Thank God, He raised me from the bed of affliction. I want to do what I can in the work of God. I want to be the best helper I can be in the Kingdom of God.

Someone may say, "I am not organized enough to manage the resources God has given me." If you looked at my office, you would question how I can find anything. Regardless of whether I am organized, I have a job to do. Do not let excuses stand in the way of being a loyal steward of God's resources. One day, we will all be called to give an account of how we managed what God entrusted to our care.

Again, verse 2 of our Scripture text from another translation says: "So, he called him and said unto him, What is this I hear about you? Give an accounting of your management of my affairs, for you can no longer be my manager." I never want to hear God say, "You can no longer be My manager." I want to do everything I can to be the steward God wants me to be.

Again, to be a wise steward

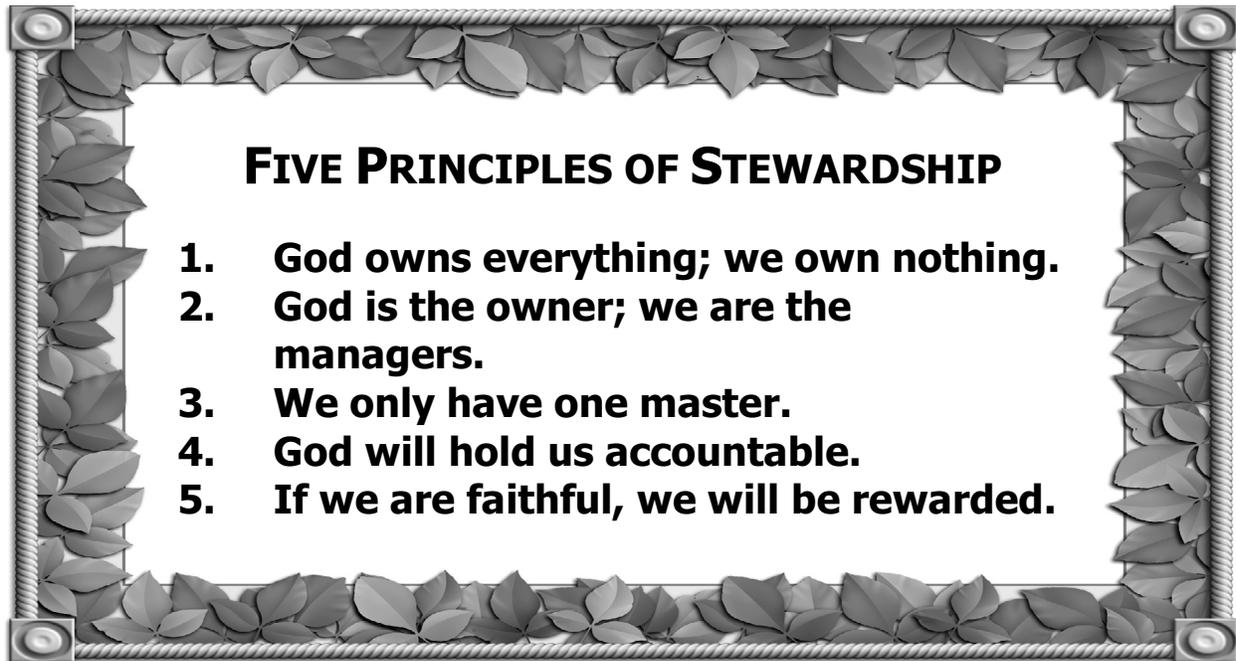
of God's resources, you need to be blameless. Is there something keeping you from being fit for stewardship in the Kingdom of God? Is something standing in your way? Are you faithfully managing what God has entrusted to you? If you are not

being faithful with what you have now, God will not give you any more. Does God have a reason to fire you from being one of His stewards? You are a steward of your soul. Are you doing everything you can to guard your soul? If you are not taking care of

your soul's well-being, then you are not being a faithful steward of God.

*(Compact Disc TR-2406)*

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*[Guest Editorial continued from pg. 2]*  
spirits operate in the most deceitful ways. They are disgruntled, balking and finding fault with God's Word, His way, and His minister. Jude 4 says, "For there are certain men crept in unawares, . . . ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness [loose living], and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ."

These individuals look and talk like a saint. They have the appearance of a Christian. However, behind their false faces and conversations, they are harboring things that are not Christ-like. They are discontented individuals who sneak around, working undercover to pull an unsuspecting soul away from what is right. They have much in common with Balaam, who refused to obey God's command. They could also

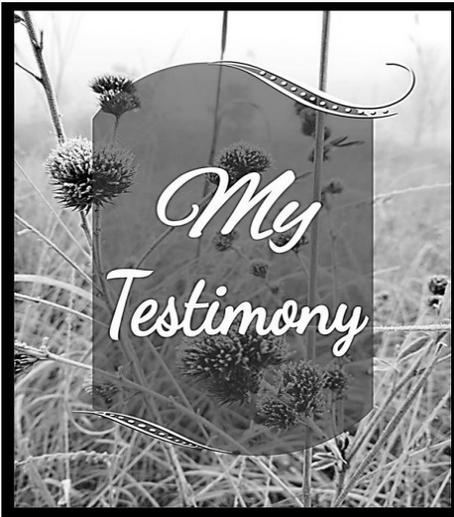
be likened to Diotrephes, who loved and desired to have the preeminence over others.

Saint of God, beware of anyone who tries to impose some new idea or thought contrary to sound Bible truth. Some things may look and sound good, but they lead to shame, disgrace, defeat, and the loss of your soul. Beware of anyone who begins in some subtle way to discredit or degrade a proven man of God. There have been some who have entered a congregation and begun divisive works. Their seductive schemes have led or swayed many into error, and they have brought destruction upon themselves. God is not pleased with those who think they know more about how to direct the affairs of a congregation than anyone else does.

What about you, dear reader?

Have you been keeping company with ones whom God would rather you not associate with? Is there an individual who is discontented with God's way or His leaders influencing your life? Are there things in God's Word you question? Do you feel your spirituality is strong enough to handle life's situations on your own? If this is the case, then you need to realize you are moving closer to a place of being overtaken by a seducing spirit. When you fall under a seducing spirit, the devil will deceive you into thinking and believing all is well and right between you and the Lord. Beware of these seducing spirits. The best way to overcome seducing spirits is to continue in those things you have learned and have been assured of.

Selected



# Precious Memories

Brother Sam Fowler

One Sunday afternoon, as I was walking on the grounds of God's Acres, I reminisced about the camp meetings and the experiences I had while growing up in this congregation. God blessed me with the opportunity and privilege to be raised in the Newark, Ohio, Church of God congregation where we have three camp meetings a year. There is a lot of work involved, but there is also joy, especially seeing ones coming in from all over the world, enjoying themselves, and taking memories home with them. There is a reward in seeing ones get saved, the church grow, and the saints unite together.

Some of my early memories of camp meeting were of the candy stand. It used to be where the print shop is now. I remember my dad being a worker in the candy stand, along with the late Brother Steve Lewis. My dad would freeze ice cream for me in a little Styrofoam cup. It was a special treat. I always enjoyed running down there and getting ice cream. I can remember when the old barn was on top of the hill, before the "new dorm," or dorm eighteen, was built. The children's services were held there in the afternoons. There was a drinking fountain where the gazebo is now, and the kids loved to play in it and get wet.

My dad was a printer of *The*

*Gospel Trumpeter*. I remember going to the corner of Sixth and Locust Streets where *The Gospel Trumpeter* was printed. I spent my summer days helping my dad and running around the old sanctuary. Those are precious memories I have of my early days and of camp meetings.

Many people attended the camp meetings. I remember the choir staying in the choir loft because there were not enough seats in the sanctuary. Chairs were brought in for people to sit on the left side of the pulpit area, and the balcony was full.

Another early childhood memory I have is I got arthritis in my thumb and in my big toe. It was very painful, especially in the wintertime. I remember my mom taking me down to the altar to get prayed for, and I never had that pain again! If you were to look at my joints, they are really weird looking, but I think God left the joints the same to remind me how He healed me.

In my teenage years, the young people would travel to nearby revivals. The elderly saints would be on one bus, and the young people would fill up another bus. Those were fun trips. Young person, if you have the opportunity, take advantage and go to revivals. There are a lot of good memories you can make. I sang in a quartet, and we would

sing at revivals. We always had a good time getting together and practicing songs, using the talent God gave us for the Lord's service.

I was fifteen years old when Brother Emerson Wilson passed away. I remember the shock the congregation went through. I also remember the faithful saints praying in prayer services for God to send a new pastor. I can vividly remember the service when Brother Roger Decker stood up and announced God had called him to be the pastor. There was rejoicing and testimonies during that service. It was an awesome experience I will never forget.

My sophomore year of high school was one of the hardest years of my life. My dad got really sick and ended up in Grant Hospital, where my mom spent almost every day with him. I am not sure how long he was in the hospital, but he was there for quite a while. My mom basically lived in Columbus, and I had to stay at my sister's house because I was still in high school. It was hard being separated from my parents.

During this same year, I started having some physical issues. I would go to walk through a doorway, and in my eyes I saw myself go through the middle of the door, but instead I would brush the left side of the door. I would go between two people and always bump the one person on my left. I also started having headaches and other problems. I told my mom, and she ended up taking me to a doctor.

I had to go through many tests. The doctors told my mom they thought something was there, but they needed to do a CT scan to find out exactly what it was. I remember my mom bringing me down to the altar to get prayed for the night before my CT scan. The next day, I had to lie on a hard bed. They put me in

this tube after they gave me an IV to enhance the images. It was freezing cold. I had to lie very still. I remember being scared and nervous. When my mom got the results, they told her they had seen something was there, but it was gone. I know in my mind, whatever it was, God healed it and took it away. I do not know if it was a tumor or what it was, but I do know it was gone!

God gave me all these blessings, and I walked away from them and spent a little over ten years of my life in sin, wasting what He had given me. I have all these precious memories God gave me, and I could have had a whole lot more if I had stayed true to Him. One of the biggest mistakes I made in my later teenage years was not staying as close to God as I should have. I took things for granted. It is easy to do when you have the privilege and opportunity of being raised in the Church of God.

I did not seek God's face for decisions about my life. One bad decision I made was to join the Army. I signed up for the reserves at eighteen years of age and left for basic training when I was nineteen. The devil set me up to be away from home, my family, and church, and I lost out with the Lord.

I went through basic training and AIT in Georgia. When I came home, I was backslidden away from God, and I did not want to go to church. I lived with my mom and dad for a while, but it was not long before I moved out on my own and did my own thing.

I was nineteen years old, and my girlfriend was younger than eighteen years old; so I got arrested. To this day, I still have a felony on my record from when I was nineteen years old. I can never get it expunged off my record. It will be there until the day I die. One evening, one bad decision, and it has affected my

career, my family, and my entire life.

I cannot get good-paying jobs because I have a felony. Many employers will not even talk to me. A few years ago, I paid to go back to school to become an EMT and a paramedic. I went through the first phase of the schooling, passed the state test, and almost wasted all that money because I had a felony. This is just an example of how the devil can get you entwined in things rapidly, and it will affect your whole life. You will not know it at the time. You will think you can get by, that it is no big deal, but it is!

I spent many years in sin singing. I would rather sing in front of thousands of people than to speak. I am not good at talking, but I enjoy singing. When I was in the Army, a small group of us would get together and sing. I began to enjoy singing in front of people. I had been singing at church my whole life, but it is a completely different situation when you sing in front of worldly people.

In my twenties, I moved to Columbus and sang in clubs and bars seven nights a week. I was in a band for several years, thinking I was having a great time. The Bible says in Hebrews 11:25 there is pleasure in sin for a season. I thought I was having fun singing and living in sin. I went to Nashville and sang in competitions there and all over Columbus, just wasting my life.

I often think of the song the youth choir from Newark sings about partying and having a great time. Everything is fine and dandy until suddenly you are by yourself. That is when the emptiness hits you. All the fun you may have in sin will not satisfy your soul. You may spend three to five hours a night having a good time, but it is for nothing; it is vain. Your heart is still empty. You may wake up the next day totally regretting what you did

the night before. There is emptiness, nothing to sustain or satisfy you in sin. The devil will keep you going. You will try to find more enjoyment and more pleasure, finding more things to get into. It is a never-ending story. The world is so wrapped up in so many things, such as sports, entertainment, drugs, and alcohol. It is all in an attempt to fill the void within the heart, but those worldly things cannot fill it. When the good times end, there is nothing left, only a void, which can only be filled by God.

As I moved into my thirties, I had been with a girl for several years. I had a faithful, praying Mom, and I am thankful for that. She kept asking me to come to church. I would say, "I will come someday, Mom." My girlfriend and I came to church on a Sunday morning, and we both went down to the altar and got saved.

I was raised in the truth, so I knew the changes I needed to make. The girl I was dating tried, but she ended up losing out with the Lord. I had some hard times getting back into serving the Lord. I had scars on my life from all the bad habits and the things I was involved in. The devil really used that, and I still battle some of those today. There are things I see and hear, and the devil will pop things back into my mind. I have to kick them back out. I would not have to deal with those things today if I had not left God. I would not have all those scars on my life.

In 2002, my dad passed away. Through the death of my father, God brought my wife to me. We had known each other for many years and had been friends. It was through that situation and tragedy in my life that God put us together. It has been eighteen years since we were married. I am very thankful for my wife. She has been the rock I needed in my life. I am also thankful for my son. He is a miracle. My wife was

prayed for so she could have children, and I am very thankful for my son. God has changed my life.

All my early memories I enjoyed when I was young are the reason I knew where to go when I was not saved. I knew where to come back to. God has been faithful to me. He could have taken me out many times. I was in automobile accidents, had close calls several times, and I got hit with a Bobcat Skid-Steer. There were many times God spared my life when I was not saved. I feel unworthy to be here because He could have justifiably taken me out. I am the one who walked away from Him. I made many dumb mistakes in my life. One of the biggest mistakes was not relying on God to help me make the most important decisions of my life when I was young. I have to live with those poor decisions now.

A few years ago, I had a situation where my job drastically changed, and I lost a significant amount of income. I started praying for God to work it out so I could change jobs. Over a period

of several years, I kept praying and doing my best to know God's will for me. I had been at my previous job for a total of twenty-four years, and it was hard to leave a place like that. I had vacation time and many other benefits. I was driving back and forth to Columbus every day, but because of the situation at work, we were struggling financially. It became a hardship for us. God opened a door for me to work in Newark. I walk anywhere from nine to eleven miles a day for my job. When I first started working there, my feet were terrible, and I lived ten hours a day in pain. God has taken that pain completely away. My feet are much better.

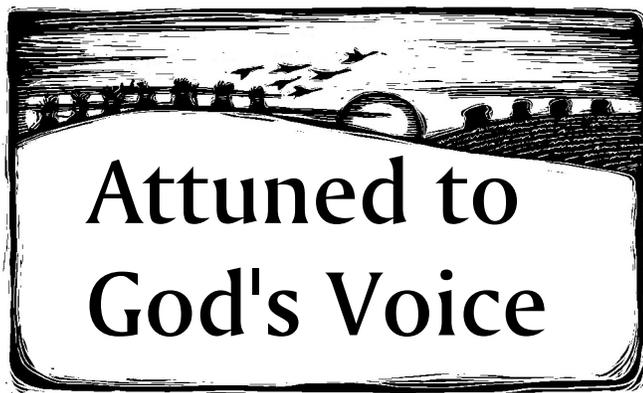
God has done many things for me, and I am gratefully thankful! The biggest thing He did for me was to save me and give me another chance to serve Him. Young person, you need to realize you have the opportunity to get a solid experience with the Lord now. You can save yourself a lot of heartaches. The devil will try to get you any way he can. If he can, he will get you involved

in sports, pornography, drugs, or alcohol. You will think you do not need God and you have plenty of time to make things right. The devil will tell you to have fun, and you do not need to go to church all the time. You may not get wrapped up in all these terrible things, but if the devil has you, you will make bad decisions.

The best decision I ever made was to get saved. Because of that decision, I have a good home. My wife and I never fight. We may have disagreements, which is normal, but we do not yell or scream at each other. We have a peaceful home. My son has never seen me raise my fist or scream at my wife, and by the grace of God, he never will. I am thankful! Young person, stay in there and serve God. The devil will attempt to beat you up as a young person, attack you, and make you think you have time to do this or that. Do not listen to him!

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ears could not hear.

Only the expert, the man who has made himself able to hear it, will distinguish the different instruments in the orchestra and catch a lonely wrong note from the second violin. It is the law of life that we hear what we have trained ourselves to hear. Day by day, we must listen to God, so that day by day God's voice may become, not fainter and fainter until we cannot hear it at all, but clearer and clearer until it becomes the one sound to which, above all, our ears are attuned.

We must so heed God all our days that our sensitivity is never blunted, our awareness never dimmed, and our spiritual hearing never becomes spiritual deafness. It is a law of life that we hear only what we are listening for and only what we have fitted ourselves to hear.

The story is told of a country man who visited his city friend. "Listen," he said to his city friend.

"What is it?"

"A grasshopper," said the country man.

Over the roar of city traffic, he could hear a grasshopper. Years of listening to country sounds had attuned his ears to country sounds, sounds a city man's

Selected



*And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*

*Romans 8:28*

I want to emphasize two words from this Scripture: "work together." Did you know in baking, there is actually a scientific formula? Each ingredient has a specific job to perform. Some ingredients could be left out, but many are important. When cooking, ingredients that are not in the recipe can be added, and it may work out well, but baking is more delicate.

For this lesson, I want to talk about making chocolate chip cookies. As I mention each of the ingredients, consider whether you would enjoy eating them by themselves. There are eggs, butter, baking soda, sugar, flour, salt, chocolate chips, and vanilla.

**THE RECIPE:** First, we need to start with the recipe. The Bible is a recipe book, spiritually speaking, but just not any recipe book. If one of my grandchildren wrote a recipe for me, I would not trust it as they are young and inexperienced. I want a recipe from someone who knows what they are doing. God is the Author of the recipe we are following, spiritually speaking. The ingredients in this lesson are going to be compared to situations and happenings in our lives. The finished product will feed us and others as well.

**FLOUR:** Have you ever tasted flour? It is a tasteless powder. Some might compare it to Bible reading. Have you read your Bible and thought: "I have no idea what I just read. This is not making sense. Why am I reading this?" You need prayer with your Bible reading to help you understand it. An understanding of God's Word holds everything together.

There is a purpose for the flour. We would not want to leave this out of our cookies. Flour actually gives them body, or structure, and it holds the dough together. It holds the eggs together with the sugar. Bible reading holds things together. We need to add prayer to it, and we may also need someone to help us understand it. When the eunuch was reading the Book of Isaiah, Philip came and asked him, "Do you understand what you are reading?" The eunuch said, "How can I, except some man should guide me?" (Acts 8:31).

Sometimes, you may need help from other people, such as a Sunday school teacher. You need to attend Sunday school so you can hear what the teacher has to say. You also need to attend youth services. The youth leader may explain a Scripture for you, and then you will understand it. Do not leave out the flour. Just as our chocolate chip cookies definitely need flour, we need our spiritual daily bread from Bible

reading.

**BAKING SODA:** Baking soda causes a chemical reaction. Perhaps you have made a lava mountain experiment in your science class. When you added the baking soda, it erupted and flowed down the side. That was a chemical reaction. Cookies need baking soda to rise. If your cookies do not rise, it could be that the baking soda was too old. Baking soda creates carbon dioxide as the oven is heating the cookies, and that causes the cookies to rise. I like to think of the baking soda as prayer. We need prayer to give us a lift to get through the day and be able to handle whatever life brings our way.

**SALT:** It may seem odd that something sweet, such as cookies, needs salt, but salt enhances the flavor of sweet things. It actually makes them sweeter. Salt could be likened to good Christian influences. Jesus said in Matthew 5:13, "Ye are the salt of the earth." Young person, you are to be the "salt seasoning" that brings out the "God flavors" on this earth. If you lose your saltiness, how will people taste godliness? One quote says, "You are here to make people more aware of God." You need to be salty, and you need salty people in your life. Good influences bring out the sweetness and goodness of God. Allow spiritually salty people to influence you. If ones have lost their saltiness, be careful of

spending too much time with them. Ask yourself, "What are they adding to my recipe?"

**BUTTER:** This is a binding agent. It holds things together, makes the dough workable, and gives a good flavor to the cookies. It is like working for the Lord. God's kingdom needs workers, and He needs us all to work together. First Corinthians 15:58 says, "Be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." An old saying is, "Many hands make light work."

**SUGAR:** Sugar brings sweetness to the cookies. This could be compared to a cheerful, happy attitude in your life. It helps to find two positives for every negative that happens to you. Proverbs 17:22 tells us, "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine." Sometimes, we have to work on our attitude. Do not leave out the sugar! Can you imagine making cookies without sugar or sweetener, such as honey or molasses? Yet, are there days when your attitude is only negative? Do you get up and complain? "I have to go to school today" or "I did not hear my alarm, and now I do not have time for a shower" or "I forgot to do my homework" or "My car will not start." You may need a better attitude. You may need to add some "sugar," or some positive thoughts to your day. Negative thoughts come without even trying. Just as you have to physically add sugar to the cookie recipe, you have to add positive thoughts to your life.

I had severe migraines for years. They would come frequently, and when I woke up with one, I knew it was going to be a rough day. In recent years, when I wake up, I remind myself: "I do not have a headache today! I feel good!" I am adding "sugar" to my day, and it makes my day so much better. I have to add it intentionally, and so do

you.

**VANILLA:** Vanilla has a wonderful smell, but if you have ever tasted it by itself, you know the smell is deceiving. When I was a child, I took this from my mom's cupboard, thinking it would taste good because it smelled great. I quickly found out it had a horrible taste! Vanilla is usually a dark color, and it reminds me of the dark places in our lives. What is the purpose of vanilla? For one, it reduces the egg taste. Personally, when I eat chocolate chip cookies, I do not want to taste eggs. Eggs go with bacon, not chocolate chips. Vanilla also brings out some of the other flavors.

A few years ago, a sister brought a lesson about painting. She explained how important it is to add in the color black because it gives depth to the painting and makes the other colors stand out. The vanilla is like the dark places in life we go through. The Bible tells us in 1 Peter 4:12, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you." If you leave out the vanilla, it may seem as if your cookies are okay, but they will not be as good as if you had followed the recipe.

**EGGS:** Eggs perform over twenty different functions in this recipe. They make the cookies soft, give richness in taste, and prevent the cookies from crumbling. Have you ever had a cookie fall apart? Eggs are supposed to help with that by binding the ingredients together. I thought about the Church of God, our church family. When we come together for worship services, someone may bring a testimony. Also, we pray for each other and encourage each other. All that prevents ones from falling off. We need each other. A family makes you feel loved. We can reach out to someone and say: "I

understand you have been through a hard trial this week. I want you to know I am praying for you." Perhaps someone comes to church who has not been there for a while because he was sick. You can rejoice with him because he is better.

Like the function of eggs in this recipe, the Church of God keeps us together and prevents spiritual crumbling. It is a support system and a binder. Isaiah 61:1 talks about binding up the brokenhearted. You may go through a hard place, and then someone says: "I have been there too. God helped me through it, and I am praying for you." That is binding up the brokenhearted, especially when someone has been through a similar situation. We need our "eggs"!

When my dad died in 1987, I felt as though my world had turned upside down. My mom had five children still at home, and my youngest brother was only three years old. I wondered, "How is my family going to make it?" It was a difficult time. The first church service after Dad's death, a dear sister came and hugged me. She knew exactly what I was going through. She understood and reached out to me. She had once been in the same valley, and she knew how to pray for me.

**CHOCOLATE CHIPS:** This last ingredient may be considered something extra. The cookies would probably taste fine without them, but not as good. I like to compare them to the blessings in life. God brings little blessings along the way you may not need, but He gives them anyway.

Once we have all the ingredients, we have to cream the sugar and butter together. As they are beaten together, it actually creates some air. Personally, I dislike going through things in life that seemingly "beat" me. Another word for beat is "buffet." You can read Scriptures about

things that buffet, or try you. Terrible things may happen in your life, things that seem to beat, or buffet you, but these can actually work for your good.

Once the sugar and butter are mixed, we can add all the rest of the ingredients, then drop it by rounded spoonfuls onto a cookie sheet. Isaiah 64:8 reads, "But now, O LORD, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand." All the cookie ingredients by themselves do not taste good, but when they come together, they make something very good. You may not like everything that happens in your life, but God is working something for your good. Instead of resisting, hold still and let God work. He is saying: "You do not know how good this is going to be when I am finished. Hold still and let the flour, baking soda, salt, vanilla, and all the other ingredients do what they are supposed to do."

The recipe says to bake the cookies for nine to eleven minutes. Isaiah 48:10 tells us, "Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction." The song "Fiery Darts" says, "In the heated furnace, Father, let me stay." Furnaces are difficult. We do not want to stay in them. We ask God to get us out! If you have ever taken cookies out of the oven too soon, you know they are gooey and fall apart. There is something God is trying to do in the furnace. The cookie is not finished baking until the time is up. God is working in your life, and He cannot finish if you run from the trial, or the heated furnace.

What if you decided not to follow this recipe? Maybe you have never made cookies before,

but you think: "How hard could it be? I am going to throw some different ingredients together and make cookies." One time I made hot chocolate pudding. The recipe called for cornstarch, which is a thickener, but I accidentally grabbed the baking soda instead. As I was cooking the pudding, I kept thinking, "This is not getting thick, but it is bubbling up!" Finally, I checked all the ingredients and found what I had done. The pudding was no good. I had to throw it away and



start over.

God knows what will work in your life. He knows your spiritual recipe, and He is going to feed, not just you, but others as well. Whatever God is working in your life right now, whatever difficult situation you may go through, whether you are still in the vanilla or baking soda stage, keep in mind, God has a plan to feed someone. He sees past the heated oven. He sees the people who will eat those cookies. This situation will work for good if you keep all the ingredients together as they are supposed to be. Do not switch them out, and let the baking process go the entire time. Your recipe is tailored just for you and for the situation you are in.

What if you were asked to make chocolate chip cookies for school, and you became creative and added peanut butter, but you did not tell anyone? If some-

one at the school had a peanut allergy, there would be a problem. When God gives you a recipe to follow, He knows all about the "allergies" of those around you, and He knows which ingredients will not work.

Do not start adding in extra things and substituting ingredients. Could baby powder be substituted for the flour in a cookie recipe? It may look similar to flour, but it would completely ruin the recipe. What would happen if you put in vegetable oil instead of the butter? There is work in cutting in and creaming the butter, and it needs to be at room temperature. If you are in a hurry, it may seem easier to use vegetable oil. However, you would not get the same result.

Are you substituting other things for Bible reading, prayer, church attendance, or working for the Lord? You are creating something in your spiritual life every day. Begin with Bible reading and prayer. Continue to add more ingredients as the week goes on. At the end of the week, you may feel beaten and discouraged, but do not give up! You are still making something, and it is not finished yet. Next week, you may be in a fiery trial; your "cookies" are almost done, hang in there! When the recipe is followed exactly as God wrote it, it is for you and the people around you. This spiritual food will provide exactly what you need in the weeks to come, and it will give others around you strength to continue on in their walk with God.

Sister Sheri Strelecky

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*Ruth 2:1 And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech; and his name was Boaz.*

*2 And Ruth the Moabitess said*

*unto Naomi, Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall find grace. And she said unto her, Go, my daughter.*

*3 And she went, and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers: and her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech.*



*Brother Garrett Haylock*

### **"All Things Work Together for Good"**

The last statement in verse 3 says it was "her hap," or by chance, Ruth gleaned in the field belonging to Boaz. Something took place that seemingly had no significance. It appeared completely by coincidence. However, the Bible lets us know something about this connection. As I meditated on "her hap," the thought came to me, nothing just happens.

In the first chapter of the Book of Ruth, the Bible brings the account of Elimelech, Naomi, and their two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, to a climax. A famine came upon them, and they left Bethlehem and went to Moab. While they were in Moab, the two sons married wives, Ruth and Orpah. In five short verses,

we read of a family who left their country because of a great famine and went to a completely different country, no doubt to try to better themselves. However, in that period of time, Naomi's husband, Elimelech, died and left her with two sons and their wives. Then the two sons died, and Naomi was left with two daughters-in-law.

After Naomi's husband and two sons died, she wanted to go back to her own land. Apparently, she had heard they were coming out of the famine and there was bread. Naomi lost the three most important men in her life—her husband and her two sons. Even when you are passing through hard times, count your blessings instead of all the things you do not have.

The chapter continues with a dialogue between her and her

two daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth. They decided they would go with their mother-in-law, Naomi. Yet she wanted them to know for sure what they were getting into. She laid it out plainly before them. She did not have any more children, she was not able to have any more, and perhaps if she could have more, they would not want to wait for them to become their husbands. She painted the picture as dark as it really was.

In the course of time, Orpah kissed Naomi and went back. However, the Bible says Ruth clung to her. Ruth 1:16-19 says: "And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: Where thou

diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me. When she saw that she was stedfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her. So they two went until they came to Bethlehem."

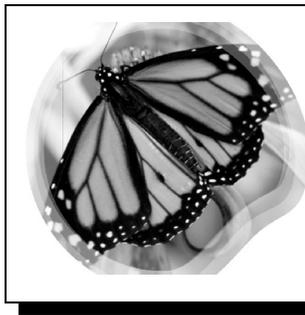
Consider your own life—the good things, the bad things, the not-so bad things, and the not-so good things—and let them truly roll over in your mind. The Bible makes it very clear: nothing just happens. Romans 8:28 says, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God." It does not say we are going to understand or even like everything, but "all things work together for good to them" who love the Lord.

### **Understanding the Need for Trials**

Sometimes, as God's people, we may feel sorry for ourselves because something has happened to us. You may lose a job, a car, or something in your life, and even though it may be replaceable, it still meant something to you. Something may have to go for better things to come. We need to learn to look at life through the eyes of our great big God, who may only show us one small piece of the picture at a time.

Some Christians seem to think God will get us where He wants us to go with no problems, but it does not always work that way. We all want to go to Heaven. Most people want to succeed in life. Very few people have gotten anywhere in life without problems. It is a misconception to think you can make it through life without problems.

If you read the Bible, you will see people became who they were by what they went through.



**We often struggle over things we go through, not realizing we need the struggle to become what God wants us to be.**

We often struggle over things we go through, not realizing we need the struggle to become what God wants us to be. There are times, situations, and places in life that hurt so badly, but God has to take you through them to get you where He wants you to go. We need to learn that as God's people.

The story is told of a person who saw a butterfly struggling to get out of his cocoon, so he helped it out by snipping off the end of the cocoon. However, the butterfly needed the entire struggle so he could have a full set of wings. If you clip the cocoon, you clip the wings. If you help the butterfly come out too early, it will come out insufficient. It will not be ready for what life has to throw at it. A butterfly is supposed to fly, but if it does not have a full set of wings, it cannot fly. We need the struggles God places in our lives to take us to the place He wants us to be.

If you can really understand your need for trials, then it becomes easier to believe God is in control and has allowed them. Sometimes it is hard to believe the hard places God takes you through in life can really be God's will. Have you ever been in a place where you feel you have been treated unfairly? Maybe a certain position opens up on the job, and you feel you are entitled to it. You may have been with the company the longest, worked hard, were faithful, and then someone else got the promotion. If you are not careful, you will forget nothing just hap-

pens.

Every time something happens in your life, it would be good for you to read Romans 8:28 and believe it. First Thessalonians 5:18 says, "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." Those Scriptures can be over-

looked when you are going through a trial. You may not see God in it. All you can see is if the person was fair, or had really liked you as much as the other person, and so on and so forth. That is the talk the devil wants you to listen to, but God has a plan in everything, every area, every facet, and every part of your life. Whatever God brings your way, you can deal with it, with the help of God, if you only remember, nothing just happens.

### **Enduring Hard Places**

Consider the situation with Ruth. The Bible tells us Naomi left with her husband and two sons and went to Moab. Her sons married Moabite women, and when her husband and two sons died, she decided to go back home. Only Ruth had the tenacity, endurance, and mindset of "I am going to stick with this woman." It is fascinating to see joy and happiness in people enduring hard places.

I read a story about missionaries who were celebrating a hundred years of being in a certain part of Africa. An old man stepped forward and said he had something urgent to say. He felt his time to leave this world was coming soon, and he was over one hundred years old. He said: "You may wonder why so many missionaries died as they started the mission among us. The chief and elders of our village did not trust them, so they poisoned the first-comers, but more missionaries kept coming. When you look

around and see the many Christians here, let me tell you how it happened. The way they lived was not really what impressed us. The chief and others were impressed by the way they died. It was the way they handled death and coped with trying times that had an effect on us."

Naomi lost a husband and two sons, but she did not cave in under the hard place. The Bible says Naomi left full and came back empty. Many times, you may think things are bad where you are. She left with a husband and two sons, but she came back without them. Even though the famine was bad, she still had her husband and two sons. Many times, ones complain about what they do not have. They do not have as much bread as they would like. They do not have as much of this or that, so they attempt to go where they can find more. Again, Naomi left full and came back empty. This particular story did not happen by chance.

God promised Abraham in Genesis, Chapter 12, if he would leave behind his hometown, his country, and his kindred, He would bless him. In Genesis 22:18, God reiterated His promise to Abraham. He told him the blessing would be so great it would extend to "all the nations of the earth." There is only One who can bless all the nations of the earth. God had a plan working while Abraham was going up the mountain in obedience to God to offer Isaac as a sacrifice. God was working, following the order of His plan.

### **God's Great Plan**

In Joshua 2:1, Joshua sent two spies into Canaan secretly. The spies went into Jericho, a strong, walled city full of people, and it just happened they found themselves in the house of Rahab. The people of the land came and told the king there were spies in Ra-

hab's house. Rahab said in Joshua 2:9, "I know that the LORD hath given you the land." She decided to hide the spies. But before she hid them, she made them promise when they came in and took the high, walled city, they would "save alive my father, and my mother, and my brethren, and my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death" (verse 13). The spies gave her their word. When Jericho fell, the only survivors were Rahab, the harlot, and her family. Give God a chance to work out His will and purpose in your life.

During the time of Elimelech, when the famine came, he no doubt was one of the first to sense it coming. Rich people have their sensors out for profit, and when they see something happening, they are the first to move because they are affluent enough to do so. Elimelech decided to move out of where the famine was. He felt, as many do, "the grass is greener on the other side." He moved his family, but all of this was part of a plan the great God of Heaven put together. Nothing just happens!

Let us consider what transpired. God was looking down from Heaven, and He saw Elimelech and his family move. They could have gone anywhere and married any of the Moabite women, but it happened that one son married Ruth. There was a whole country of women to choose from, but Ruth caught his eye. The story could have been so much different. One of Naomi's sons fell in love with Ruth, married her, and then died. This was part of the big picture God had drawn way back in the beginning.

Things may not be going well for you now, but if you love God, He will work it all out. Again, Romans 8:28 says, "All things work together for good to them that love God." Ruth's husband died, but Naomi had so impacted

her life that when Naomi decided to go back, Ruth said she was going back with her. Naomi said in Ruth 1:12-13: "Turn again, my daughters, go your way; for I am too old to have an husband. If I should say, I have hope, if I should have an husband also to night, and should also bear sons; Would ye tarry for them till they were grown? would ye stay for them from having husbands? nay, my daughters; for it grieveth me much for your sakes that the hand of the LORD is gone out against me."

Again, Ruth answered her in verse 16, "Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." God had a plan for Ruth, even though she did not know it then. God has a plan for your life. He will work good if you allow Him to.

### **"The Steps of a Good Man Are Ordered by the Lord"**

God is a great God, and many times we think things just happen, but they do not just happen. God cares about every sparrow. Matthew 10:29-31 states: "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows." God cares about us and He knows us. You are not here by chance. God has a plan for your life. Stay within His will. The Bible tells us in Psalm 37:23, "The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way."

Esther 6:5-9 reads: "And the king's servants said unto him, Behold, Haman standeth in the court. And the king said, Let him come in. So Haman came in. And the king said unto him, What

shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour? Now Haman thought in his heart, To whom would the king delight to do honour more than to myself? And Haman answered the king, For the man whom the king delighteth to honour, Let the royal apparel be brought which the king useth to wear, and the horse that the king rideth upon, and the crown royal which is set upon his head: And let this apparel and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, that they may array the man withal whom the king delighteth to honour, and bring him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaim before him, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour."

Haman thought, "Who else would the king want to honor but me?" He chose the best way to be honored. He thought he would be on the beautiful horse, ride down the street, and people would bow before him as he rode by. The king said to Haman, "Go do that to Mordecai." What a slap in the face! The Lord delights in His people. "The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD." God wants to do something good and positive for you. Just give Him a chance. God is so good!

Ruth and Naomi left Moab. Naomi knew Ruth had her mind made up. The Bible says in Ruth 2:3 it was by "hap," or by chance, she came to the field of Boaz. Have you ever met someone who made your heart flutter? When God has a person for you, your heart may start fluttering, at least mine did when I met my wife. I got saved on a Saturday night, and my wife got saved on Sunday night. I had never seen her before in my life. It just happened she was from West Bay, Cayman Islands too. We met at a convention where people come from all over the islands, but we

came from the same district. We have been married for over thirty years. Can you see, nothing just happens?

### **Allowing the Will of God to Work in Your Life**

Many times, we may attempt to make things happen. The wise man said not to do that. Proverbs 3:5-6 says: "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding [or the seemingly right way]. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."



Many people and many relationships get into trouble because they follow their eyes and not their heart. They do not wait for the will of God, and they end up out of the will of God. God is a great God. He has a plan for your life. The devil is just hoping you will jump ahead of God and mess up.

Boaz, who was a great, rich, mighty man, seemed to never have eyes for young or old maidens when they greeted him. Ruth 2:4-5 says: "And, behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said unto the reapers, The LORD be with you. And they answered

him, The LORD bless thee. Then said Boaz unto his servant that was set over the reapers, Whose damsel is this?" Suddenly, by chance, Boaz noticed one damsel, Ruth. God had a plan. When God has a plan, you can believe He will work out His plan. Many times, people get in the way. God has a way of working things out, even when it seems nothing is going right for you.

Naomi lost her husband and sons, but she brought back another piece of God's plan to Bethlehem. How was Ruth going to end up in Bethlehem? Three men had to die, and her sister-in-law had to walk away before she found herself in one part of the picture.

There are many other instances in the Bible that can be brought to your attention. The Bible tells about Jonah fleeing from the presence of the Lord. He got on a ship headed to Tarshish instead of going to Nineveh. Jonah went in a completely different direction than where God told him to go. It just happened a storm came up and rocked the boat Jonah was hiding in. After searching the ship and finding the cause of the problem, Jonah said, in so many words: "There is only one way to calm this water again. Throw me overboard." The men rowed harder, and God blew the wind a little more. Finally, they realized they could not resist God's will, so they threw Jonah overboard. It just happened a big fish was following the boat and swallowed Jonah.

This big fish had a "GPS tracking system," and it vomited Jonah out on the beach. Jonah had a three-day journey to get into the city of Nineveh. He was so worked up from being in the belly of the big fish, in the bottom of the sea, with seaweed wrapped all around him, he made the journey in just one day.

Jonah could have been down in the whale any number of days,

but he was there for three days. Why? Our Lord and Savior said in Matthew 12:40, "For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." On that third day, Jesus was going to rise again, and there was nothing the Pharisees or the Romans could do about it. They put Him in the grave, but three days later, He arose from the dead. Hallelujah! That whale could have gotten sick four or five days later, but it was three days. Nothing just happens!

### **God's Plan for Joseph**

In Genesis, Chapter 37, Jacob sent Joseph to Shechem because his brothers were there feeding the sheep. As he was wandering about in the field, a man found him and said in verse 15, "What seekest thou?"

Joseph answered him in verse 16, "I seek my brethren: tell me, I pray thee, where they feed their flocks."

The man told Joseph, "I heard them say, Let us go to Dothan" (verse 17).

Why were those brothers not in Shechem? Why were they in Dothan? In Dothan, there was a deep pit ready for Joseph. In Dothan, the Ishmaelites were passing through on their way to Egypt. When the Ishmaelites got close, the brothers lifted Joseph up out of the pit they had thrown him in and sold him for twenty pieces of silver.

We read in Genesis, Chapter 39, that Joseph ended up in Egypt, at the home of Potiphar. It just happened Potiphar's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph and falsely accused him. He was put into prison, which was the same prison where Pharaoh kept his prisoners. You can read about the dreams Joseph interpreted for the baker and the butler in Genesis, Chapter 40. He told the but-

ler, in so many words, "When you go back to your job, remember me." Chapter 41 lets us know it was two full years later before the butler remembered the man who had interpreted his dream. After thirteen years of suffering, God prepared Joseph for transition. It just happened that Pharaoh had a dream, and Joseph was there to interpret the dream.

What if the butler had told Pharaoh about this man who was unjustly put into prison? Maybe Joseph could have been released and eventually found his way back home. Maybe he would have found another job. But God was there, controlling the narrative all along. Again, can you see nothing just happens?

If you believe Jesus Christ saved you and He is living in your heart as your Lord and Savior, you have someone to depend on. The Scripture says in Hebrews 13:5-6: "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." Ones can lock you up in prison, do their worst to hurt you, but when God is ready, He will do His best. Joseph happened to be in the right place at the right time. I trust you can see this. God is good. This lesson fascinates me.

### **The Prophecies of Christ's Birth**

Luke 2:1-4 says: "And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea,

unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David)."

Jesus was born in Bethlehem. The Prophet Micah said in Micah 5:2, "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." Of all the places where Jesus could have been born, it was to be in Bethlehem. It was a little town, but it would not be the least. Something great was to be accomplished in this place. The Prophet Isaiah also prophesied of Christ's birth seven hundred and forty years before it actually took place.

Mary was nine months into her pregnancy and living in Nazareth. Yet the prophet said Jesus would be born in Bethlehem. It just happened that Caesar Augustus got a notion this would be a good time for a little extra revenue. He made a decree "that all the world should be taxed." Brethren, God is working according to the order of His plan. May God help us not to mess up His plan.

What if Caesar Augustus had made this decree two months or even two weeks earlier? Joseph and Mary could have gotten to Bethlehem, paid their taxes, and made it back to Nazareth. Joseph was a carpenter. He may have had other preparations he wanted to make. There are always preparations made for a new baby as the time of birth draws near. However, all the prophets had prophesied, all God had said, all His plans from the beginning of the ages, came to pass when Jesus was born in Bethlehem. It just happened when they were there, the time for her to deliver her baby came to pass. It is a beautiful thing to see God at work.

Sinner friend, this story alone should be enough to convince

you that you can trust God with your life. This is real. I want a director in my life. Most companies pay big money for directors. God is telling you: "I give My services for free. I will order your steps." He knows where the landmines are. He knows where destruction is. He can take over the wheel of your ship and lead you around the dangerous reefs and corals and bring you back into clear waters. God is so very good. There are so many illustra-

tions in the Bible about how nothing just happens.

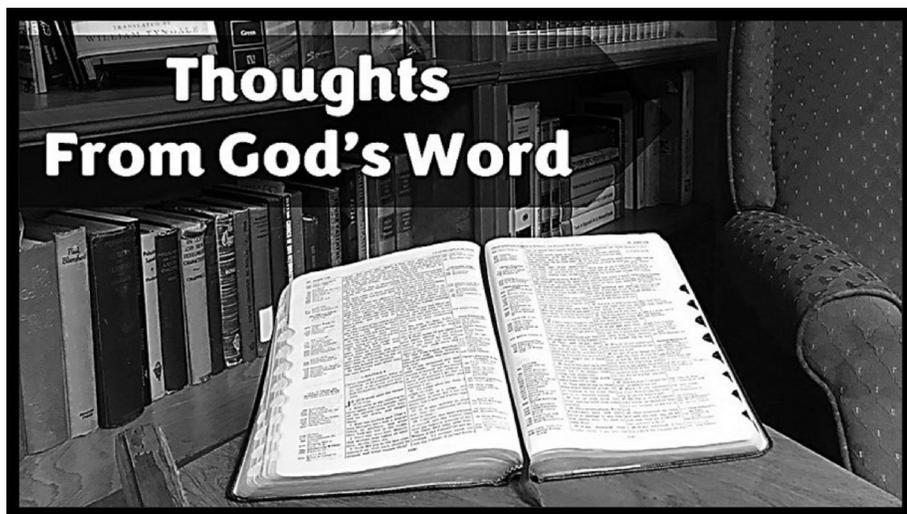
Matthew 1:4-5 states: "And Aram begat Aminadab; and Aminadab begat Naasson; and Naasson begat Salmon; And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth." God had a plan. He crossed up every natural happening and involved some of the most unlikely people who became a part of Christ's family tree, just to show God can take nothing and make some-

thing out of it. Every part of that picture came together with the birth of Christ in Bethlehem. Nothing just happens! May God bless you is my prayer.

(Compact Disc TR-1487)

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*Brother Garrett Haylock is the pastor of the Church of God at West Bay.*



*"Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding."*

*Proverbs 4:7*

We can learn from David's final words to Solomon before he died. He gave Solomon instructions and good admonition. First, he told Solomon to be a man. Be strong and keep the commandments of God. He said if you "keep the charge of the LORD thy God" you will prosper. Then he told Solomon, "You are a wise man, and you know what to do." David encouraged Solomon. You can read all this in 1 Kings 2:1-9.

This had a great impact on Solomon. Second Chronicles

1:1-10 gives some insight on this. Solomon and the people sought the brazen altar, a place where offerings were made to God. Verse 6 tells us Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings on it! This got God's attention.

Then God asked Solomon, "What do you want me to do for you?" Solomon said in verse 10, "Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people: for who can judge this thy people, that is so great?" Solomon did not feel like he was wise enough to handle the job. He knew he needed God to help him, just as God helped his father, David.

What a lesson we can learn from both David and Solomon! We need to encourage one another, as David encouraged Solomon. David had set the example before him. The Bible tells us he was a man after God's own heart. This moved Solomon to seek the Lord with all his heart. If you want to find God, Jeremiah 29:13 says, "And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." When you truly desire God's help, He will come to you as He did to Solomon.

Solomon asked for wisdom. He did not ask for wealth, honor, revenge on his enemies, or a long life. What do you want from God? When He comes to you, what will your answer be? God was extremely pleased with Solomon's desire for wisdom. You can read how God blessed Solomon with so much more than what he asked for. He does the same for us.

James 1:5 says, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."

Sister Annette Hupp

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## BIBLE STUDIES



### A BRIEF EXPOSITION OF ZECHARIAH 14:1-9

In this prophetic passage, the Prophet Zechariah was, in essence, picking up the prophetic glass and looking through the "telescope of time" to envision another "day." The prophet takes us through the major portions of that "day" ("the day of salvation"; 2 Corinthians 6:2), commonly called the "Gospel Day" because it is "the gospel" that is "the power of God unto salvation" (Romans 1:16).

***Zechariah 14:1 Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee.***

"The day of the LORD cometh" has prophetic reference to an event that, in Zechariah's day, was yet in the future. He acknowledged that by using the future tense term "cometh." Malachi told us that before "the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD" (Malachi 4:5), "I will send you Elijah the prophet." Jesus let us know that this fulfillment was found in John the Baptizer: "For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if ye will receive it, this is Elias [Greek for the Hebrew Elijah], which was for to come" (Matthew 11:13-14). Luke 1:13-17 substantiates this as well.

Thus, the expression ("the day of the LORD") is a prophetic reference to the First Advent of Christ. It also states what His Advent will accomplish: "Thy spoil shall be divided." This expression is also found in Isaiah 53:12, which reads, "And he [Christ] shall divide the spoil with the strong." This depicts what Christ provides to man through His redemptive work.

***Zechariah 14:2 For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city.***

Verse 2 gives a sad and sobering prophecy of the terrible judgment exacted on those to whom John 1:11 describes as "He came unto his own [the Jewish nation], and his own received him not." Verse 2 describes the terrible Desolation of Jerusalem that occurred in A.D. 70. The horrendous description of verse 2 is similar to the

graphic description found in Deuteronomy 28:48-57. This siege and destruction are also spoken of in Luke 21:20-24. The Jewish historian Flavius Josephus verified in his writings that this sad event occurred under the Roman Prince Titus and the Roman armies in A.D. 70.

***Zechariah 14:3 Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle.***

Verse 3 tells us that in much the same manner as the Lord used Nebuchadnezzar to bring judgment on old Israel and then later punished him and Babylon, so He would do to Rome. Verse 3 speaks of "shall the LORD go forth, and fight." This is depicted in a symbolic description in Revelation 12:7 when "Michael [Christ] and his angels [the morning-time ministry] fought against the dragon [Roman paganism]." Then, Revelation 12:11 tells us, "They overcame him." This occurred in A.D. 270 when pagan Rome declined and divided (Wickersham's *A History of the Church*).

***Zechariah 14:4 And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south.***

In the Hebrew Scriptures, it is not uncommon to have a general summation of major events followed by greater detail. The account of Creation utilizes this style. Genesis, Chapter 1, has a summation of the days of Creation. Then, Genesis, Chapter 2, provides explicit detail about the creation of man and woman and the particulars of the Garden. So it is in Zechariah 14:4, which reverts us back to the Ascension of Christ. The words "his feet shall stand . . . upon the mount of Olives" (contrary to common religious teachings) have no reference to Christ's Second Advent. On that day, His "feet" will not "stand" anywhere on this earth. First Thessalonians 4:17 says we will "meet the Lord in the air." So, the reference concerning "the mount of Olives" is speaking of where Christ ascended. This is expressly clear in Acts 1:9-12.

Verse 4 also tells how this Ascension created a cleaving ("shall cleave") and produced "a very great valley." When this cleaving occurred ("half of the mountain . . . toward the north, and half of it toward the south"), in essence, it made two "mountains" (plural; verse 5). These two mountains remind us of what Zechariah envisioned earlier in his writings. In Zechariah 6:1 he saw "two mountains," representing Mount Sinai (the Old Covenant) and Mount Zion (the New Covenant). Then, he proceeded to see the "four chariots" (verse 1) had four different horses (or four distinct colorations), the same as John saw in Revelation, Chapter 6. Zechariah was told

they are "the four spirits of the heavens" (verse 5), a portrayal of the four dominant religious spirits taking us through the Gospel Day. "White" (verse 3) represents purity and holiness (the Holy Spirit). The "red" (verse 2) represents the spirit that gave rise to "a great red dragon" (Revelation 12:3), which is Roman paganism and the spirit of unbelief. The prophet also envisioned "black horses" (verse 2), representing the spirit that gave rise to the Dark Ages (spirit of apostasy). The "grisled and bay" (verse 3) corresponds with the "pale horse" of Revelation 6:8, symbolizing the spirit that gave rise to the religious system of Protestantism, the spirit of compromise.

Prophetically, this brings us through the Gospel Day. Verse 4 speaks of "a very great valley." Joel 3:14 speaks of "the valley of decision" and wrote that "the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision," equating "the day of the LORD" (the Gospel Day) with "the valley of decision." The Gospel causes all to make a choice. Verse 4 speaks of two positions: "the north" and "the south." These are the same two positions the wise man spoke of in Ecclesiastes 11:3. The only two positions man can die in are "south" or "north," saved or lost, revealing that this Gospel Day presents man with choice.

***Zechariah 14:5 And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee.***

Prophetically, this progresses to that time when the church "fled into the wilderness" (Revelation 12:6). This was the totality of the Dark Ages (1,260 years), the time when the church was in the catacombs and caves during the time of Roman papalism. However, this verse proceeds to declare, "The LORD my God shall come." Jesus spoke similar words to the Pergamene Age (A.D. 530-1530) at the zenith of papalism. Revelation 2:16 says, "Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, [How did He 'come'?] and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth." Papalism did not "repent," and Christ came by turning "the sword" ("the word of God"; Hebrews 4:12) loose and laid a "deadly wound" (Revelation 13:3) "by a sword" (Revelation 13:14) to that papal beast. Thus, the exclusive night of Roman papalism was forever ended. This prophetically brings us to A.D. 1530 when the first Protestant creed was adopted at the Diet of Augsburg in Augsburg, Germany.

***Zechariah 14:6 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark.***

This verse prophetically progresses to the Protestant era, a time that would "not be clear, nor dark." This is what Ezekiel 34:12 describes as "the cloudy and dark day." The Protestant era was a time of a mixture of light

and darkness, of truth and error. Light is understanding (Psalm 119:130), and darkness is a lack of understanding. Psalm 82:5 reads, "Neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness." It was a time when men failed to continue in "light," or understanding. In the Revelation, it is depicted by repeated stars, or ministries falling (Revelation 8:10; 9:1). This era was A.D. 1530-1880.

***Zechariah 14:7 But it shall be one day which shall be known to the LORD, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light.***

This verse proclaims an advancement to a time of "light," or understanding. It pronounces "at evening time it shall be light," bringing us prophetically to the present epoch of this Gospel Day. This "time" commenced in A.D. 1880 when Brother D. S. Warner and other brethren began to herald the truth concerning "the unity of the faith" (Ephesians 4:13), and the Lord used that ministry to "bring again Zion" (Isaiah 52:8).

***Zechariah 14:8-9 And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be. And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one.***

These two verses depict the message that was being sounded out. Verse 8 says, "That living waters [the working of the Holy Spirit; John 7:37-39] shall go out from Jerusalem [the 'church'; Hebrews 12:22-23]; half of them toward the former sea." The Hebrew word for "former" is *quadmoniy*, and it means "they that went before." The message of truth was reaching back to those who were held in the realms of sectism by the message Protestantism had preached "before" the evening-time truth came on the scene. Then, verse 8 speaks of "half of them toward the hinder sea." The Hebrew word for "hinder" is *acharon*, and it means "to come" or "to follow later." This is to be a continual, perpetual message throughout the remainder of the Gospel Day.

Verse 9 reveals the message of the day: "One LORD, and his name one." This is the precious message of oneness—unity. God's people were going back to the light of the morning, back to "that which was from the beginning" (1 John 1:1), back to the truths of Ephesians 4:4-6, where it tells of "one Lord" and "one body."

Certainly, there are greater depths of truths contained within this passage, but I trust the prophetic portrayal of the Gospel Day in this prophetic passage is clear.

Brother Earl R. Borders

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## Questions and Answers From the Bible

### WHAT DOES ROMANS 12:20 MEAN?

*Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.*

To properly understand this verse, we must view it in the greater context. This verse is a quote from Proverbs 25:21-22, which reads: "If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward thee." When you view Romans 12:17-21, you see the tenor of the principles the Apostle Paul was addressing. In verse 19 when he mentioned, "For it is written, Vengeance is mine," in essence he was quoting Deuteronomy 32:35. Paul was setting down long-held moral principles for appropriate behavior when being ill-treated.

Romans 12:21 summarizes much of the discussion with "overcome evil with good." Retaliation never wins the offender; two wrongs never make a right, but kind Christian conduct, as exhibited from the Cross by Christ when He said, "Father forgive them" (Luke 23:34), is as effective as it was on the centurion. In Acts 7:60, read the words of Stephen, when the life was ebbing out of him. He said, "Lay not this sin to their charge," no doubt making a profound impact on young Saul of Tarsus.

### CAN SIN BE INHERITED?

The most basic truth we must understand is spiritual qualities, or conditions, cannot be inherited. Therefore, sin cannot be inherited. Ezekiel 18:20 declares, "The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father." In Ezekiel 18:2 we read, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." In verse 3 the Lord instructed Ezekiel, "Ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel." Ezekiel 18:21 teaches us, "Sins . . . [are] committed." Sin is not something that is able to be inherited.

In Ezekiel 18:4 the Lord informs us, "Behold, all souls are mine." At conception a soul is placed within that newly conceived body. Would the Lord create a soul with sin in it? In Galatians 2:17 the Apostle Paul posed this question: "Is therefore Christ the minister of sin?" Then he answered with a resounding, "God forbid." So in reality, there is not an

Adamic nature, or inbred sin, from which man needs to be cleansed. Some are of the persuasion that since the fall of man, all children enter the world with a depraved nature from which they need cleansed. However, let us consider what the Scriptures teach.

In Ecclesiastes 7:29 (penned approximately in 977 B.C.—many centuries subsequent to the fall of man), we read, "Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright [the Hebrew word is *yashar* meaning 'righteous']; but they have sought out many inventions." Ezekiel 28:15, speaking of "the king of Tyrus" (verse 12) in 588 B.C., says, "Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee."

Biblically, there are not two types of sin—committed and inherited. According to James 4:17, for there to be sin, both knowledge and an act of will are required. "To him that knoweth [knowledge is required] to do good, and [two elements necessary] doeth it not [an act of the will, the exercise of the power of choice], to him it is sin." Thus, there are not two types of sin that require two cleansings.

For further study, read "*The Worshipers Once Purged*," Chapters 1-3. Available at [GodsAcres.org](http://GodsAcres.org) (click on "Resources" and "Study Materials").

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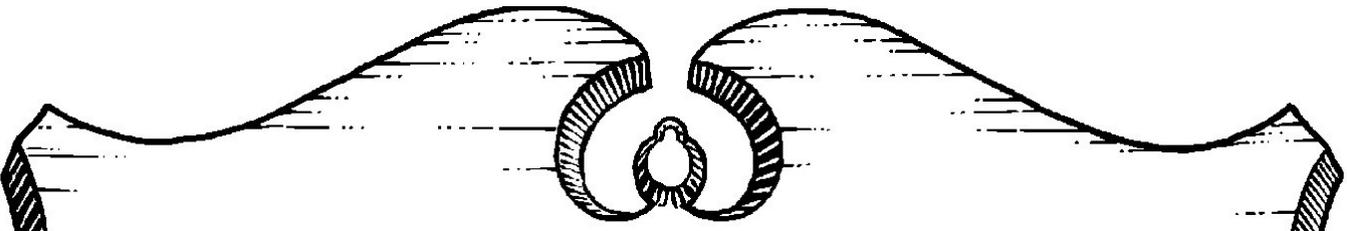


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