

THE GOSPEL TRUMPETER

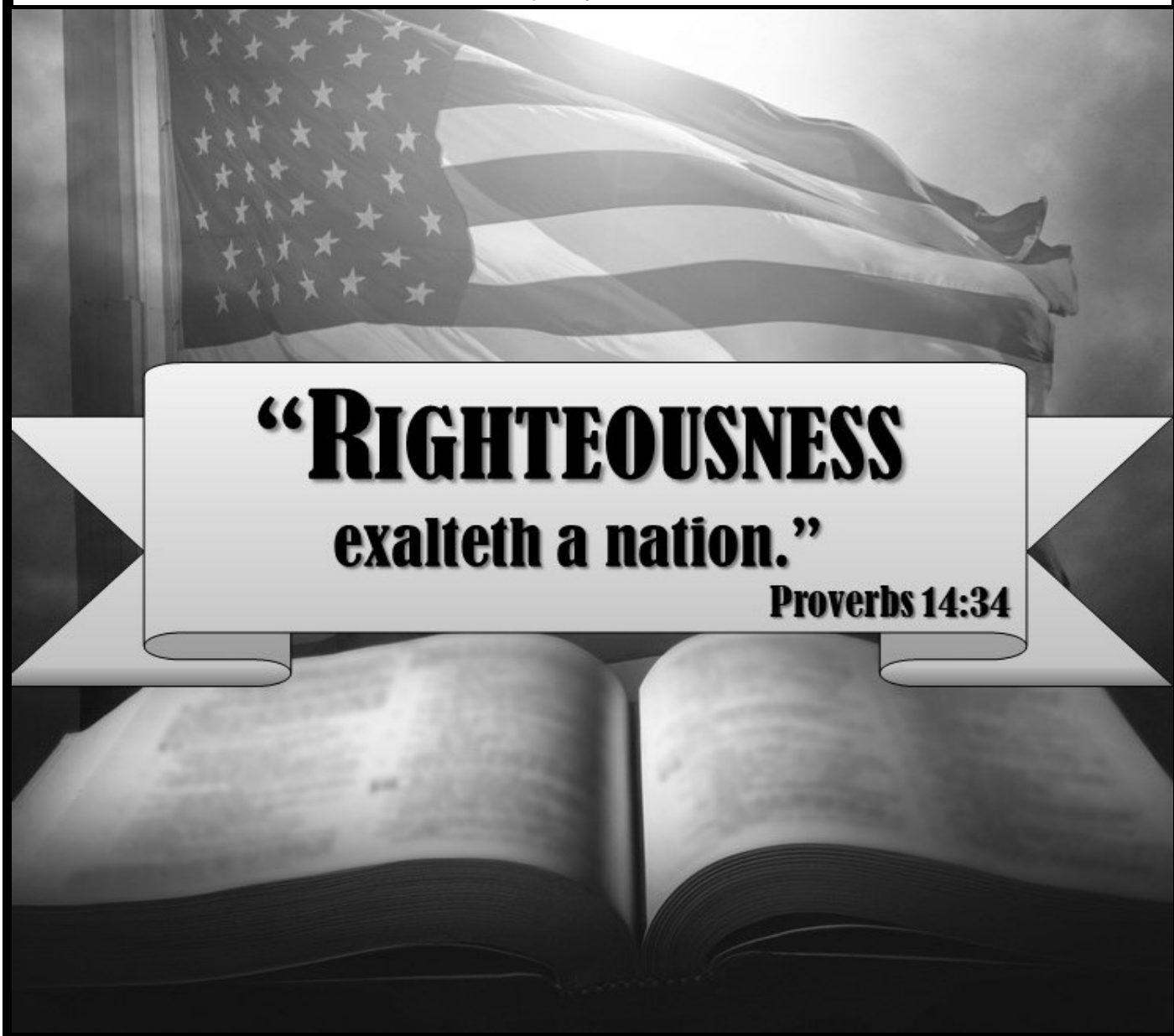


SOUNDING FORTH THE SEVENTH AND LAST TRUMPET

Vol. 53 July 2023 No. 7

**“RIGHTEOUSNESS
exalteth a nation.”**

Proverbs 14:34



"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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any reason. We are not responsible for unsolicited materials.

CONTENTS

God's Approval	
Is on Righteousness	3
How Is Your Walk With God?	7
Especially for Young People	11
My Testimony	15
A Functional Unity	16
Thoughts From God's Word	21
The Lord Is My Shepherd	22
Bible Studies	24
Questions & Answers	26
Fall Camp Meeting Ad	27

Vol. 53 July 2023 No. 7



Guest Editorial

WHEN HELP IS DELAYED

*Psalm 102:1 Hear my prayer, O
LORD, and let my cry come unto thee.*

*2 Hide not thy face from me in the
day when I am in trouble; incline
thine ear unto me: in the day when I
call answer me speedily.*

The psalmist was pleading
with God to hear his earnest peti-
tion for help. In desperation, he
poured out his complaint before
the Lord. He pleaded for God to
"hide not" His face from his urgent
request. There are times in life
when God's presence appears to
be hidden. We pray, but it seems
the Lord does not hear or regard
our petition. We feel we cannot
find God anywhere, although we
earnestly search for Him. Many
prayers have been offered up, yet
no answer comes. This leaves our
troubled souls in distress.

Let us be reminded, when
God's face appears to be hidden,
we should not be dismayed for He
has not forsaken us. The writer
said in Hebrews 13:5, "For he hath
said, I will never leave thee, nor
forsake thee." If God does not an-
swer as quickly as we desire, it is
not a witness He has forgotten us
or He is not aware of our situation.

In John, Chapter 11, Jesus' dear
friend Lazarus had taken seriously
ill. His sisters, Mary and Martha,
desired for Jesus to come and at-
tend to their brother. Hearing of
His friend's sickness did not over-
ly alarm Jesus. He deliberately
tarried two more days. When He
was ready to go to where Lazarus
was, He told His disciples He was
going to awaken His friend from
sleep. The disciples did not realize
Lazarus was actually dead and

Jesus was going to restore his life.
His delay was designed to bring
greater glory to the Father and to
Himself. Jesus miraculously re-
stored Lazarus back to life. God is
still in control of everything.

Luke 18:1-8 teaches a valuable
lesson on importuning. Jesus in-
structed us to always pray and not
to faint, or become weary and faint-
hearted. Although the answer to
your prayer may be prolonged in
coming, it is important to be persis-
tent. In this illustration, a weak and
defenseless widow had a serious
problem. The adversary she faced
required intervention from a higher
source.

The widow went to the unjust
judge to seek help. At first, it was to
no avail. This man did not fear God
or regard the needs of others. How-
ever, she was determined to be
avenged of her adversary. The un-
just judge was not concerned about
her problem. He was not going to
do anything about it at first. We do
not know how many times she went
back to plead her case. She kept
knocking on his door, crying aloud,
entreating his help, and offering
strong arguments he was unable to
resist. This judge became weary of
her continual coming. She was trou-
bling him; therefore, he granted her
petition.

It appears the widow's situation
was similar to Job's. He asked the
question in Job 13:24, "Wherefore
hidest thou thy face, and holdest me
for thine enemy?" Jesus was teach-
ing us God will quickly avenge our
needs when we are persistent and
agonizing in prayer. Jesus said in

[continued on page 10]



Brother Roger L. Decker

Proverbs 14:32 The wicked is driven away in his wickedness: but the righteous hath hope in his death.

33 Wisdom resteth in the heart of him that hath understanding: but that which is in the midst of fools is made known.

34 Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.

On July 4, 1776, one of the most historical documents this country has ever known, the Declaration of Independence, was signed in the city of Philadelphia. The United States claimed independence from Great Britain, and democracy had its birth. Three men drew up the article. Thomas Jefferson, the author, had help from John Adams and Benjamin Franklin. It marked the birth of a nation destined for world leadership under the direction and protection of Almighty God.

God has richly blessed this nation because of the righteous principles it was founded on. At

the time of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, there were thirteen colonies represented by the fifty-six men who signed the document. Today, there are four hundred and thirty-five members of the House of Representatives and one hundred Senators, which represent one of three branches of the federal government. With all the government we have, sin keeps growing and manifesting itself. Corruption is among those who make the laws, and with all the laws written, not one can deliver from sin. Sin and corruption have gotten in the government. Some who are openly gay are now writing laws. The signers of the original document pledged their lives, honor, and fortunes to the new country.

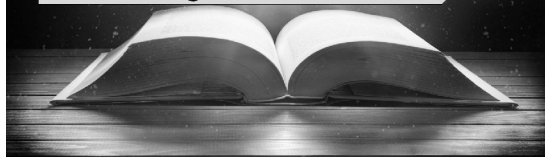
The men who signed the Declaration of Independence knew they were guilty of treason against the Crown of England. Benjamin Franklin was the oldest signer. He was seventy years old. Eighteen of those men were less than forty years of age, and three

were in their twenties. Of the fifty-six signers, twenty-four of them were judges and lawyers, eleven were merchants, nine were landowners, and the remaining twelve were doctors, ministers, and politicians. All except two had families who were of substantial prosperity. They were men of education and in good standing in their communities. They had economic prosperity, as few men in that day did.

The Price of Freedom

This document declared that the United States of America severed ties with England. The colonists had to fight against the British before they were recognized as an independent nation. They knew if this nation failed, they would be tried as traitors and face death by hanging. Their lives, homes, and families were all on the line. Those men were not crooks, pirates, or poor. They were wealthy landowners who were secure, prosperous, and well-respected. The difference

**There are two witnesses.
What may not be covered in the
WORD may be covered
by the SPIRIT.**



righteous man has hope. He rejoices in death and wants to be with Christ. Death is gain to him. Even in the greatest danger, the good man does not lose his trust in Almighty God. Job said in Job 13:15, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."

In Psalm 23:4 we read, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." God's approval is on righteousness. Psalm 33:4-9 tells us: "For the word of the LORD is right; and all his works are done in truth. He loveth righteousness and judgment: the earth is full of the goodness of the LORD. By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap: he layeth up the depth in storehouses. Let all the earth fear the LORD: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast."

Tampering With God's Absolutes

When individuals forsake righteousness and no longer acknowledge the God of creation, there is a drastic turn in their lives. They start rolling downward, traveling away from God, His commandments, His Word, and His holiness. They are turned unto the regions of the lost. Psalm 9:17 reads, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God."

America is a great place to live. I have been to some Third World countries, and nothing compares to America. However, America has turned away from God. He is no longer allowed in sporting events, schools, and government buildings. Ironically,

a New Testament is given to those who enter prison.

Men have begun to tamper with God's absolutes. Atheists are now challenging the Pledge of Allegiance. If they continue challenging these things long enough, there will be a compromise. They will get the attention of activists and judges who will give them their say. People have begun to tolerate what they once would not condone. That which was never right is now sometimes right, based on the situation. The separation of right and wrong has become blurred.

We read in Isaiah 5:20, "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" Blurriness can affect the church when ones question certain doctrines, looking for loopholes so they can be more like the world. The Bible tells us in 1 Peter 2:11, "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." There are some things the Word of God may not pinpoint as wrong, but always keep in mind, there are two witnesses. What may not be covered in the Word may be covered by the Spirit.

America has searched for loopholes, and the court systems have found them. Many abominable sins have been loosed upon our nation. Babies can be murdered under the protection of the law. Exodus 20:13 still reads, "Thou shalt not kill." America's judgment of right from wrong has been distorted. Approximately one million babies yearly have their lives taken from them.

Judges 17:6 states, "In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes." Some people do not want a pastor. They do their best to find something wrong with the pastor

between those men and the average citizen was they considered liberty more important than the security they enjoyed.

Five of the fifty-six signers were captured by the British and tortured before they died; one lost thirteen children; twelve had their homes ransacked, looted, burned, or occupied by the enemy; two lost their sons in the army; one had two sons captured; nine died in the war from hardship or the enemy's bullets; and all were victims of manhunts and driven from their homes. They paid a tremendous price for the freedom we enjoy and take for granted today. Thomas Jefferson said: "My God! How little do my countrymen know what precious blessings they are in possession of, and which no other people on earth enjoy."

We are privileged to live in a nation established on God-given principles. We owe a great honor to Almighty God and the men and women who freely gave their lives for what we are enjoying today. Those men stood against the onslaught of rage and threats. They lost their families, homes, and wealth, and suffered imprisonment so we could enjoy the privileges of freedom.

Our Scripture text says in Proverbs 14:34, "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people [not just to a nation]." Verse 32 reads, "The wicked is driven away in his wickedness," or in other words, he does not leave life cheerfully. He has no hope for the next world, and he leaves the present world with much regret. The

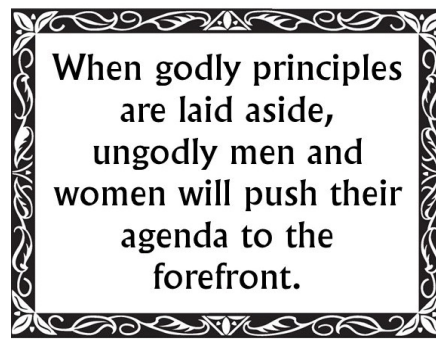
or his family, but you need a pastor. When the absolutes start slipping away, the eyes become accustomed to the darkness. The Bible tells us in Proverbs 4:19, "The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble." Romans 1:21 says, "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened."

Laying Aside Godly Principles

When godly principles set by the King of kings are laid aside, ungodly men and women will push their agenda to the forefront. When the righteous back away, the ungodly rise up. Luke 6:39 states, "And he spake a parable unto them, Can the blind lead the blind? shall they not both fall into the ditch?" Regardless of who passes laws and condones mass murder, it will never get by the judgment seat of God. Millions of dollars have been spent on AIDS. It began as a behavioral problem because of spiritual darkness weaving its way through the high places of our country.

America has laid aside the principles of God's Word. Obedience to the truth of God's Word brings freedom. John 8:31-32 tells us: "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

There has been a gradual decay in moral and family values. Marriage has been discredited. Many couples live together before marriage, and that is sin. You cannot be right with God and live with someone you are not married to. Young person, be careful not to get too familiar with your boyfriend or girlfriend and overlook things. Young lady,



if you are going out with a boy and he cannot keep his hands to himself, you need to get away from him. Do not put up with that type of behavior.

The Bible says in Hebrews 13:4, "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." Engaging in sexual relations before marriage is sin. If you are involved in it, you are a sinner. It is that simple. Some have the spirit of lust. God sees everything that goes on. If you sow fleshly lusts and desires, you will reap them. You can continually overstep and pray for forgiveness, but God knows if it is godly sorrow or worldly sorrow. In other words, you feel bad, but you intend to keep up the ungodly behavior.

Many times, children are out of control while the parents sit back and wish they would act better. Young children do not need access to the Internet. The Internet is not guarded; you can pick up any ungodly thing on there. There are ones who sit in the services, playing games and sending text messages. God is watching the entire time. Some may sneak around people, but God sees what you are doing. Some spend too much time talking on a cell phone, and they do not monitor their conversation. After a while, they run out of things to talk about and they get into things that are not right. Ones will send things in a text they would never say to someone's face.

The feminist movement is in

opposition to a wife's submission to her husband. They feel a woman should go to college and become career minded. Some go to college in a state where there is no Church of God congregation. If you are contemplating making such a move, be careful! You need to live where it is convenient to go to church, not hard to go to church.

"If the Foundations Be Destroyed"

Titus 2:1-5 states: "But speak thou the things which become sound [wholesome] doctrine: That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience. The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed." Young women should be taught to love their husbands and to be keepers *at home* not of the home.

There are exceptions to the rule, but this is what the Bible says. I understand there are circumstances where the husband could get sick or be out of work and the wife may need to get a job to avoid bankruptcy. Make sure if the wife gets a job, it is for a need, not greed. The god of money can take people beyond their common sense. They buy things they cannot afford, and the work of God suffers. A woman who is continually gone neglects something in the home. Her home may be a mess or her children are left to themselves. If you have young children, they are your responsibility.

The Apostle Paul said, "That the word of God be not

blasphemed." Enemies of the Gospel are quick to spot any imperfections in those who profess. If the world sees a Christian living an irregular life, they will be quick to point it out. The world knows how a Christian ought to live.

Our country's foundation is being destroyed today because it has not followed the Apostle's advice. Children are not supposed to be raised in daycare centers. The home is to be a haven for children. One of the greatest responsibilities a mother has is raising her children for God. I realize they have to make their own decisions, but mothers were not meant to be career minded.

We read in Psalm 11:1-7: "In the LORD put I my trust: how say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain? For, lo, the wicked bend their bow, they make ready their arrow upon the string, that they may privily shoot at the upright in heart. If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do? The LORD is in his holy temple, the LORD'S throne is in heaven: his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men. The LORD trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth. Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup. For the righteous LORD loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright."

What can the righteous do if the foundations are destroyed? We can still find the Lord where He will always be: in His holy temple. God will remain the same. He still loves righteousness. This country is still the best country to live in, but morally speaking, it has dropped below what it was founded on. If God is the same and He still loves righteousness, what is the problem? Revelation 8:1 tells us, "And

when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour." There has been a real letup in the pulpits across the land. Sin is no longer considered sin. When there is silence in the pulpit, there is silence in the pew, and the fear of God gets lifted.

A Holy Nation

Psalm 119:11 reads, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." The church has always been a buffer against wrong, but when the church mixes with the world, there is nothing to withstand evil. The Word of God must not be taken lightly.

If you are a Christian, you can celebrate the day you were given freedom from sin. Jesus said in John 8:32, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." You can have the freedom to say no to the enemy of your soul. You can be free and happy in the Savior, no longer a slave to the devil. God demands complete obedience. You cannot be a child of God and continually live in disobedience.

The Fourth of July, Independence Day, is an outstanding date to remember for Americans. However, there is another nation we need to remember. Isaiah 66:8 reads: "Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children." This took place on the Day of Pentecost. A peculiar people and a holy nation were brought into existence. There have been battles ever since to try and slay this holy nation.

The Bible says in 1 Peter 2:9, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of

him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." It is wonderful to live in a holy nation, the Church of God, within one of the most blessed nations in the world.

Dear Christian, just as the men who founded this great nation, you must never give up. Keep pressing forward and upward to your final reward. God will be for us if we uphold that which is right. It is not a time to go astray or grow weak in faith, rather it is a time to get real close to the Lord. It is great to get on your knees and tell God things you cannot tell anyone else. You can pray to Someone who understands you and wants to help you more than anyone else.

God will still exalt a righteous nation. Our text says, "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people." As many have let down from the righteous principles this nation was founded on, many in the church are leaving the path of righteousness and seeking another way. Instead of finding happiness, peace, and contentment, they will find sadness, misery, and despair. When you leave the confines of the church, you may feel good for a while, but remember, things will not stay that way. They will change and you will have nowhere to turn. Remember the Lord. "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up" (James 4:10).

(Compact Disc TR-1922)

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

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pulpit, there is silence in the
pew, and the fear of God
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HOW IS YOUR WALK WITH GOD?

Brother Mike Miller

Colossians 1:9 For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;

10 That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;

11 Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.

It has been more than twenty years since I gave my heart to God, and I have never stopped learning. God wants us to continue in knowledge and wisdom and to "walk worthy of the Lord." To do that, we must be obedient and bring ourselves into submission to God. The bed can be comfortable on Sunday morning, but if you want to increase in knowledge and wisdom, you need to hear God's Word. Someone once told

me: "The Word of God is not that important. The Bible is just fiction." Yet when you start to read it, many distractions start coming your way. The devil does not want you to advance in your walk with God. He will throw every bit of the world at you to pull you away from God.

God wants us to be about our Father's business. To "walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing," we must know what His will is and increase our knowledge in God. Many times, I have walked into the sanctuary thinking I was perfectly fine with God. As the message started speaking to my heart, God put His finger on something in my life He was not happy with, and I increased in knowledge. There was something I needed to change so I could walk more pleasing to God.

Are you seeking more knowledge to understand God's will? Do you desire more wisdom and spiritual understanding? Do you come to the services to hear from God? Are you asking God to show you things in your life you

may need to clear up so you can walk pleasing in His sight? Verse 11 of our Scripture text reads, "Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness." God wants to teach us.

Walking in the Light

God is our Heavenly Father, and He requires us to be perfect with Him. Matthew 5:48 states, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." I will never be perfect with man, but I can be perfect with God. How can we be perfect with God? By walking in the knowledge of His truths. I am thankful God does not hold me accountable for another's knowledge and vice versa. What God shows me, what I know, I had better walk in to be pure and holy. You may say, "Brother Mike, So-and-So gets away with it." If God shows you something, you had better obey God. If you know better, do not even think

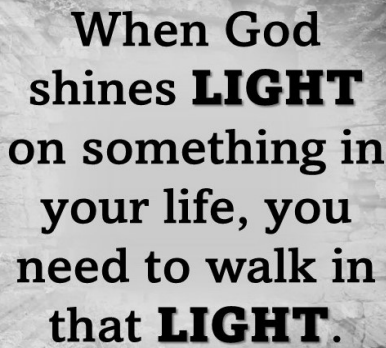
about doing it. If you do, God will hold you accountable, and you will no longer walk pleasing to God.

Living for God is serious! This is not a joke. There are souls at stake. Our actions either can win souls or cause them to be lost. There is power in walking in the knowledge God has shown us. John 12:35-36 says: "Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light. These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them."

God has always given light to His people. When He shines light on something in your life, you need to walk in that light "lest darkness come upon you." You make choices every day. You make a great choice if you choose to serve God. There are others who have had the same opportunity and choose differently.

God has light He wants to show us, and it is dangerous to reject His light. I want to walk with God in the light because then I can see things around me. If I let the world pull me back, suddenly things I would not normally trip over will become stumbling blocks. Some things that normally would not upset me will irritate me. God wants us to walk worthy of our calling and position. The devil wants to rob us of our light.

First John 1:1-4 reads: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; [This is a very important Scripture. We need to remember the things we have been taught, seen, and handled; in other words, remember the



When God
shines **LIGHT**
on something in
your life, you
need to walk in
that **LIGHT**.

basics.]

"(For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full." How can your joy be full? Remember the things you have been taught and what you have seen.

Warnings Are a Benefit

Too many times, people are negative. The devil wants you to look at all the things you think God should have done and did not do. People can get themselves out of place. Whenever you start thinking you know more than God, you are out of place. Whenever you think you can handle situations better than God, you are out of line and not walking where you need to walk. It is important to remember the things you have heard and the truth God has shown you.

Samson was one of the strongest people in the world, yet he let a woman rob him of his strength because he thought he could overcome. There are many today who think they can do whatever they want, but they are sadly mistaken. Do not let the

devil get the best of you and say: "You are stronger and better now. You can handle it." If God says "do not," then do not! All the strength in Samson left him when he disobeyed. All the wisdom and knowledge Solomon had left when his heart was no longer perfect before God. If you think you are better than Solomon's wisdom or Samson's strength, you are sadly mistaken. You need God!

We can have joy when we remember the messages and the warnings we have been taught. Warnings are for our benefit. The preachers bring warnings—"stay away from this" or "do not do that"—to help you. God is saying, "Watch out for these stumbling blocks."

Verses 5-7 say: "This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." We cannot walk in darkness and say we are of God.

We must walk in the light and the truth God has given us. We should not live one way today and another way the next day. Some walk well on Sunday while they are around the saints, but on Monday, they live a completely different life. People will see it, and more importantly, God sees it.

I remember, years ago when I was in the military, doing some work with a mechanic who knew I was a godly man. He started talking to me about the things of God, telling me how great God is. A few minutes later, another mechanic came over, and this same man began to curse. It seemed every other word out of his mouth was a swear word. I

am glad when God saved me, my mouth became clean.

James 3:11 says, "Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter?" Bitter and sweet do not go together. Many people talk one way, but when they get around other people, they change. We should never change. You need to be the same person around sinners as you are in the pew. If you are changing, you are not walking the way you need to walk. God wants you to keep your conversations holy and your walk pure, even in the world.

Walking Worthy of Your Calling

Wherever you walk, you are taking Jesus with you. First Corinthians 3:16 states, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" This is more than just going to church; you *are* the church. The Lord commanded Joshua, "Be strong and of a good courage" (Joshua 1:6). Verse 3 says, "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you." Everywhere you go, God will bring you victory. You are a representative of God. People see how you live, whether it is good or bad.

When I visit people, go to the stores, or out into the public, I pray: "Lord, let me be a beacon of light for You in this community. Let me bring hope to others. Let me be an ambassador for You and represent the Medina, Ohio, congregation worthily." This should be your attitude when you go out and talk with your friends or family. This should be your prayer: "Lord, let others see Your greatness through me. Let me not be an embarrassment to You or my fellow saints." Others are watching you.

Ephesians 4:1 says, "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord,

beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called." Are you walking worthy of your calling? Are you living to the full potential God wants you to? Or are you trying to ease your way through on an easy street, so to speak? These are serious questions I continually examine myself with.

Verses 2-3 say: "With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Are you keeping the peace? We are to endeavor to keep the Spirit of peace with those around us. Are you endeavoring to keep the Spirit of peace with God? Is God happy with your walk?

Is your walk troubling to others? As a pastor, there are times I am troubled by how ones walk. If you are obedient to God and live a holy life, you will relieve a burden off your pastor. I never wanted to burden or upset my pastor. I wanted him to be happy and pleased with me. There are many who started well in their walk with God, but things crept in and robbed them of the vocation to which God called them.

The Danger of Getting Tripped Up

In Matthew, Chapter 14, Peter saw Jesus walking on water. He said to the Lord, in so many words: "Can I walk on the water with You? I would rather be out on the sea with You than in the comfort and safety of this ship. Can I come to You?"

Jesus said, "Come."

Peter stepped out of the boat and walked on the water. He was walking with the ability of Christ who was in front of him. As long as he kept his eyes on Christ, he walked perfectly and worthy of his calling. Something happened along the way to trip up his walk with the Lord. Doubt and confu-

sion came in. Suddenly, his walk was not as pure as it once was. He started to sink, and he cried out, "Lord, save me!"

Jesus reached down and immediately helped Peter. That tells me Peter was literally only an arm's length away from the Lord when he started to sink. It does not matter how close you get to God, you can still fail. You may be getting older, and maybe you have served God for many years, but that does not mean your walk is over. You have to keep pressing, stepping, and walking by faith.

Peter's walk was perfect in the midst of the storm. When he stepped out of the boat, he was walking in the storm, and it never changed. The storm was still there. The change came when he took his eyes off the Lord and started looking around. We are no different today. We can still walk with God in the storm.

We are living in a time we have never seen before and dealing with things we have never dealt with before, but God has. Ecclesiastes 1:9 tells us, "There is no new thing under the sun." There have always been wars, viruses, pestilence, and violence. The Word of God tells us God brought these things on people because of their disobedience. There are serious consequences for not walking with God.

Romans 8:4-6 reads: "That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." How is your walk with God? Are you walking more toward the flesh or the Spirit? God's ministers put out warnings, but it is up to you to heed those warnings.

I was at a place one time

where the bottom step of some stairs was loose. We told everyone to be careful when walking on that step. Many people carefully walked on that step, and it never moved, but one person almost fell. Some may be able to go right on by something and it does not seem to phase them, but others can get tripped up because they did not heed the warning. Be careful. The danger is, your soul is at stake.

I have invested many years in serving the Lord. I have come too far to turn back now. God has been too good in my life to allow something to trip me up. That is why I must guard myself, put myself into subjection, and walk in the knowledge God has given me. If God shows me something, I need to change my life to what God is revealing to me because I do not want to go back into darkness again. I have been there, and it was no fun. I have seen the dangers of the flesh. It brings you into captivity.

Friend, be careful of a path that looks like a great place to walk but will cause you pain. Guard yourself. If someone else is walking the wrong way, you stay away. If you care about them, you will try to direct them in the right way with the spirit of meekness and love.

Stepping Out for God

Walking with God is serious because others are watching you. They may look for you to fail. May God help us not to give anyone a reason to doubt God. Some men tried to find fault with Daniel. When they could not find anything on Daniel, they used his service to God against him. We are no different today. We may face similar situations as Daniel.

At the age of twelve, our Lord turned to His mom and dad

When Daniel's enemies could find no fault with him, they used his **SERVICE TO GOD** against him.

and said, "I must be about my Father's business" (Luke 2:49). As Jesus grew in the wisdom and knowledge of God, He always represented God's will and not His own will. He knew He was going to die on the Cross. He knew He would be persecuted, mocked, and crucified. He had to carry His Cross until He could no longer carry it, and someone helped Him. Knowing all these things were in His future, He still prayed, "Not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42).

Are you walking worthy of the Lord? If you knew all these things were coming your way, would you still say, "Not my will, but thine, be done"? The moment Jesus felt God was forsaking Him, He still looked at the thief on the cross next to Him and saved his soul. In the midst of your problems, are you still dedicated to seeing souls saved? That is walking worthy of your calling.

Are you willing to sacrifice everything for God? God requires us to be "doers of the word" (James 1:22). Walking is an action, something people can see. It is moving away from comfortable things and stepping out for God. When my children were learning to walk, they would hold on to the end table and take a few steps. My wife or I would be a couple of feet away, encouraging them to let go and take some steps on their own. They had to give up the comfort of holding on to the end table to take those first steps. Saint, sometimes you have to step away from your comfort zones, trust God, and walk with Him.

Are you willing to step out? Or are you letting the things of this earth keep you from truly walking the way God wants you to walk? A small child may use an end table to stand up, and

the parent's voice is calling for him to let go, but he has to make a choice: "Do I continue to hold on to this or do I walk?" Will you step out and walk fully for God? You may say, "I might fall." As parents, we were right there to pick up our child when he fell, and we encouraged him to try again. We said, "You can do this." You can walk in new life with God.

Is God happy with your walk today? Or are you still holding on to things you need to let go of? Galatians 5:25 says, "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit."

(Compact Disc TR-2829)

Brother Mike Miller is the pastor of the Church of God in Medina, OH.

[Guest Editorial continued from pg. 2]

Luke 18:8, "Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" In other words, will He find those who will trust and believe He can supply all their needs, whether they are spiritual, physical, or financial?

God wants to do more for us. Many times, our problem is we do not believe what He has promised, or our prayers are hindered because we lack obedience. Friend, if you refuse to do what He asks, then He can and will delay His answer for you. We are encouraged and challenged in Hebrews 10:35. It says, "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward."

Selected



Christian young people are blessed, especially if they have been raised in the truth. Many do not have a choice of whether they come to church or not. Young person, the devil, who is a liar, can use that against you. He will say, "You never had an opportunity to do otherwise." Be careful not to listen to the enemy. The world does not have good examples for you to follow. You are truly blessed if you have good Christian leaders who are wonderful examples.

Many people say they are a Christian, but do their lives back it up? We are surrounded by false doctrine. In the flesh, you could get involved in a conversation where you just want to be right. You can say, "This is the way it is because I know the truth." We are not supposed to answer in that way. We are to respond humbly, with meekness and fear. We are not to use the Sword of Truth as a weapon to hurt people.

I remember a street preacher in Charlotte, North Carolina. He was having a huge controversy with some people who had gathered there. He was screaming at them, telling them they were all going to hell. No doubt, he injured many people. Deep down, people in sin know they are not right, but they do not want someone to yell at them and degrade them. It is better to reason with them.

False doctrine is difficult to

deal with. Remember, many of these individuals have been raised in a church and have been taught the doctrines of their church, just as you have been taught. You hold on to what you know, so what do you think they are going to do? They are not going to give it up that easily and say: "Wow, you have convinced me with a couple of sentences. I am going to your church now." It does not work that way. It takes daily living.

False religion offers many programs to gain disciples. When God is in something, He will build it. God is still the Head of His church. False prophets have no regard for the Word of God. They use it for selfish purposes. The Word of God is trademarked, patented, and protected. Some false preachers actually think they are doing the will of God. They do not consider God.

There are two congregations of people: the saints and the sinners. It is that simple. Anyone who is living a sin-free life is a member of the Church of God. One false doctrine says, "We cannot help but sin." Friend, that is not in God's Word. The majority believe this because it is easy. Some preachers are afraid to tell people they cannot live in sin because they are worried about empty seats and a paycheck. There is good money to be made in false religion, and many like to make a career out of it. Some churches are social clubs. They

are more interested in social activities than in the Word of God.

Kentucky Fried Chicken supposedly has a secret recipe for fried chicken. Many restaurants try to copy the recipe. Their chicken may look the same, but it does not taste the same. It is the same with the Church of God. Some have a building with the name, Church of God, but they do not have the Spirit of God.

Living right before people who are involved in false churches is the only way you can make a good impression on them. A salesman needs to make a connection with his customer. It is the same way with witnessing. You must make a connection. You cannot stand afar off, point your finger, and say, "You are wrong!" You have to be a friend and prove yourself to people; that takes time and work.

If you have plans on a Friday night and your friend calls to say, "I really need your help," would you drop your plans to help your friend? One way to prove yourself is through sacrifice. First Peter 3:15 says, "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear."

People are attracted to Christians with a purpose and passion. Someone may be watching your life. You can make a great impression on them by inviting them into your home or to the

activities you are involved in. Spend time with them. Invite them to church or out to eat. When they see how you live and what is important to you, they can have great confidence in you. It takes work to win souls. Your friends in false religion have family and friends; those connections are strong. God is patient, and we need to be patient. If someone believes a certain way, we have to give them time.

I am amazed at how many people incorporate their own thoughts into what they believe is sin. They throw up smoke screens on all sides. God is fair with everyone. He does not set the bar so high we cannot attain it. We all have areas we need to move up in. When you deal with false religion, you are going to fight spirits. Parents have an influence on their children. If Mom or Dad has been running down the Church of God, what kind of attitude do you think the children will have?

Some may have the attitude, "You are just a salesman," and they will put up a wall. When you cannot make a connection with someone, all you can really do is pray. It is difficult to get through to individuals who put up a wall. Only through the avenue of prayer can you reach them. It is going to take God to change their hearts. There is no other way to win them.

First Timothy 4:1-2 tells us: "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; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron." When you approach someone, or someone approaches you, and they are involved in false religion, it is as if you are facing Jericho. You have a big task ahead of you. There are big walls you cannot conquer on your own without God. It would be nice if

you could walk around and convince the multitudes, but it does not work that way. God gave explicit instructions on how to take down the walls of Jericho. Similarly, He will give you detailed instructions on how to win a soul for Him.

Everyone, no matter how hardhearted they are, has a soft point. Only God knows what it is. It may take sacrifice, or it could be they need to be around you to watch your conduct. God will give you direction. One of the best things you could ever be is a good listener. Most people like to talk about themselves. You may need to sit down, shut yourself off, and listen to what others have to say. That makes a big impression. When making friends, listen to them, and they

How can carnal people give spiritual advice?

will enjoy your company.

We must pray for others and carry a burden. If you know what someone believes in, you can carry a burden for them. Study the Scriptures and establish a knowledge base. You do not have to memorize or know the entire Bible to convince others. God will show you what to say, how to say it, and when to say it. Timing is everything. Do not try to be a hero; be a friend.

Winning someone in false doctrine takes more than just knowing the Bible. You certainly need to know some Scriptures to back up the truth, but then you need to leave it with God and pray for them. It makes a difference in how you approach people. Some hold to a doctrine so strongly they offend people. You will have a hard time converting someone for Christ if you offend them. Instead, you will push them away. Love them! Some-

times, words can get us into trouble. It does not take great discernment to figure out how people live and what is important to them. People love to talk about certain issues. Having a "holier-than-thou" attitude is not going to win people.

Live what you believe. Some people try to live what others believe, but that will not work. You must have a knowledge of Bible truths and believe them for yourself because if you doubt, others will sense that. When people ask me about a product I am unsure about or I think is junk, I know they can sense the hesitation in my voice. They will not be convinced to buy that product. When someone asks you questions about your faith, you should say: "The Christian life is amazing! It will change your life!"

Sinners are waxing worse and worse, and there is a tremendous pull for your soul. The world wants you. It has plenty of products to throw your way, but remember, what will you do in the end?

It is easy for me to give advice and tell a young person to wait on God. I do not know how long the waiting will be. You have heard ones say, "Wait for the right one, young person." That is easy to say, but not easy to perform. The only way you can wait is through help from God. I have great confidence in prayer. When you get restless, it is difficult to wait on God. When I set my mind on buying something, such as a new phone, I have a hard time turning that off in my mind if the finances are not there. We must have discipline in our lives or we will botch our decisions.

Sadly, many young people in false religion are surrounded by ones giving bad advice. How can carnal people give spiritual advice? It cannot happen. If you know the truth, you need to be

thankful for it.

It takes effort to be a Christian and have the Spirit of Holiness at work in your life. Jesus, Paul, and Peter were not bums, and we should not be bums either. No matter what is going on around us, we must work. Christian young people represent Christ at school. You may not like school, but you need to apply yourself and do your best. God will help you find your place in life.

The Bible speaks about false witnesses. First John 4:1 states, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world." You are not going to win people with doctrine alone. You have to be careful not to say something to hurt someone. Some will argue doctrine, but what about where they are living? Sometimes, you may need to be bold. That is not to say you should hurt or injure others with your words. Do not get in the wrong spirit. This is truly about where we are living not necessarily about expounding on Scriptures.


Someone I work with believes in predestination. That doctrine teaches some are destined for Heaven and others are damned to hell. It is foolishness! It does not make good sense. If I were to let him talk, he could be convincing. It is important for you to know where you stand because someone may pull you aside and cause you to doubt the truth.

You do not need to worry too much about doctrines. How you are living says everything. Many false preachers get up and preach, but no one knows how they are living. Our pastor lives before us, and we know how he lives and what he stands for. If you attend school, the other students know how you live. Some know about the Church of God

and what she stands for. Be confident in what you stand for.

Again, there are just two camps—saints and sinners. Can you imagine going to a football game with four teams playing on the field at the same time? That would be confusion, but that is exactly what false religion is doing. All these teams are doing the same thing on their supposed field, but it is a mess. God has rules for worship.

For someone caught up in false religion, a true child of God may be the only example of



**Young person,
get established
in your
relationship
with God.**

something different. You may be the only chance they have in life to see the truth. You should want to make a strong impression on them. Let them know you care. Invite them to revival services. One day, we are all going to stand before God. An individual you witnessed to will stand before God on Judgment Day and remember you invited him to revival. Sometimes, all you can do is pray and invite. Another great opportunity you have is to invite individuals to youth activities. You can encourage someone in false religion, "Come, see for yourself how we proclaim the Gospel." I love the Church of God!

If you get into a conversation with someone in false religion, many times they quickly fall back on what they believe in. Do you back off and say, "Well, I do not have the same light as you"? Or, do you tell them the truth in the right spirit? That will make an

impression. You have a great opportunity to witness because there are not many young people living for God in this day and age. Many people are wrapped up in false religion, and they think serving God is all roses, so to speak. They believe you can live any way you want and Jesus' blood will cover it all. We, who know better than that, want to do our part to proclaim the truth.

Young person, my admonition for you is to get established in your relationship with God. Big decisions are coming your way, and you do not want to mess up. The church is praying for you. You have a long road ahead of you, but God will help you and give you the right companion and the right job if you ask Him. You may not be rich. This life requires sacrifice. We need to be in church services. Certain professions require ones to travel all over the United States, and they miss church. I do not care how much money it offers, serving God is too important for me to miss worship services.

One day we are all going to be old men and women if the Lord wills. When the time comes for you to pass over to the other side, you will be so glad you served God. Would you want to approach death not knowing if you were going to make it into Heaven? If you run out of gas, you cannot hope for the tank to fill on its own. I do not care how hard you *hope* on the side of the road if there is no gas in the tank. You need to be ready.

Church of God young people have a great support system. Remember, souls are won by the life we live. Some people are searching for God and hungry for the truth. They may come to you secretly. That will be your chance to witness. Make sure you have an answer for them. Some people are like Nicodemus—they will come to you at night or in

some secret place. They do not want their friends to know they are talking to a Christian. No matter how bad or tough some people are, when they come into the worship services, God will show them where they stand. Some may not like that. Light and understanding are important.

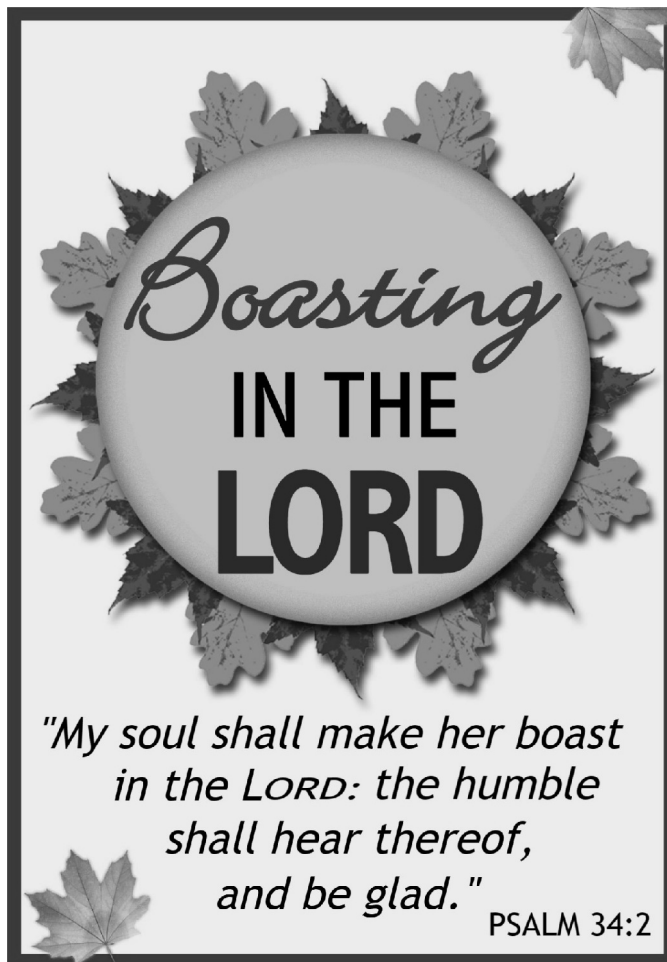
We are not dealing with a

social club; we are dealing with life or death. You do not know how much time you have in this life. Be busy and support the work of God. Support your leaders, and do not cause them any trouble. When you get older, you will not want to reap that. You do not want any extra problems in your life because life is hard enough. By the time you work

and pay your bills, the last thing you want is a broken home. You want your life to run as smoothly as possible. You can have a great foundation in Jesus Christ. May the Lord bless you.

Brother Mike Wilks

*Brother Mike Wilks attends
the Church of God in Newark, OH.*



Psalm 34 tells of boasting in the Lord. I have tried that a few times, sometimes on the job, and it is amazing how well it will lift you up. The more you do it, the more you like to do it. It is worthwhile when you think about all the things God has done. People will brag about their baseball teams, sports heroes, and movie stars, but there is nothing like boasting in the Lord.

I personally do not like to be around people who brag and boast, but this kind of boasting is perfectly all right. You can do it all the time, and it never gets old. You cannot overdo it either. About the time you might think you have overdone it, then you think about God and how awesome He is! His ability goes way beyond us.

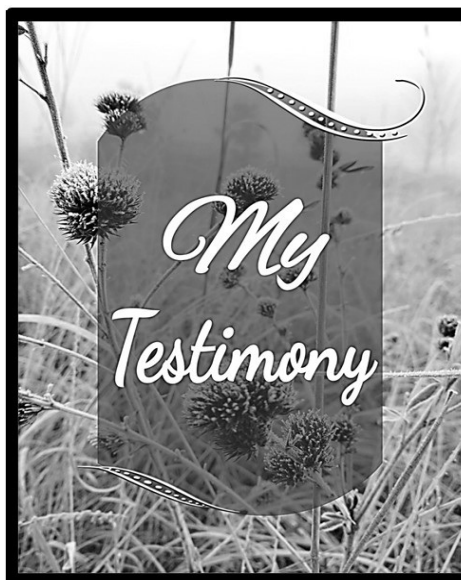
I am so thankful for the day He picked me up out of sin. He has kept me these many years. If it was not for Him, it is hard to say where I could be. I could have been in a reckless business operation, in jail, or bound with many sinful habits. How precious is the Word that we hear preached! Taking heed of it will save us a lot of scars and a lot of misery. The preaching of God's Word is not miserable but wonderful! It is the Word of Life. The Word of God is not stale. It is always good.

Years ago, I lived in New York City, and how I ever found the Church of God is absolutely beyond me. It had to be the hand of God because I could not tell a bad church from a good one. I did not know who was right and who was wrong. God has been faithful to me. He has kept me down through the years.

For many years, I drove from Columbus, Ohio, to Newark, Ohio, to attend worship services. I had cars that broke down. I even went off the road a few times, especially when the roads looked like a piece of glass. There were times when I was going down the road sideways, and there was nothing I could do but pray. I thank God, He has been merciful to me time and time again. I want to boast about Him because He is worth lifting up and boasting over.

Brother Walter Bergunthun

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the Church of God in Newark, OH.*



My Search for the Right Church

Sister Annette Hupp

Proverbs 3:5 Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

6 In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

I have great parents who love each other and love me. They raised my brother and me in a loving environment. I have good memories of my childhood. My brother may disagree with this statement because I gave him a rough time when we were little, but I always had a desire to do what was right.

I was not raised in the Church of God, but my family are faithful members of a Presbyterian church. When I got older, I began to feel something was not right. It was hard to explain. I thought, "I could stay at home, read my Bible, and be closer to God than when I am at church." The services were boring, dead, and stiff to me. I was not getting anything out of them.

One summer I went to church camp with a friend. I believe I really gave my heart to God, and I was baptized in a river. It was an amazing experience. I asked God to forgive me of my sins, and I knew what I had to do from that day on—pray, read my Bible, and stop doing the bad things I was doing. My experi-

ence did not last very long.

Someone made this statement: "Babies are being born in Third World countries, but they are starving to death because they have no food. People are being born spiritually in false churches, but they are starving to death spiritually." That is exactly what happened to me. I had no spiritual food and no encouragement. I really was not satisfied with the church I was attending.

I began praying for God to show me the right church. During high school, I began to visit different churches with different friends I knew, but I was still not satisfied. I met one of my best friends in the eighth grade, Sheri Conger (Sister Strelecky). She lived a Christian life in front of me. She always prayed over her lunch, never cheated on her schoolwork, and never treated anyone wrong. Without any doubt, everyone who knew her could see she was truly devoted to living for God. She respected her parents and was a true witness of how a Christian ought to live. She was different from any

of my other friends. I looked up to her.

One night I remember praying: "Lord, show me what church You want me to go to. Send someone to help me." It seemed like the Lord was pointing me in her direction. So I said, "If it is Sheri, then let it be Sheri." Praise God! He is so faithful! It is so important you live right in school. Do not be ashamed to do the right thing. Only God knows whose life you are touching by the way you live. God can use you. It makes no difference how young you are.

I had some major obstacles to overcome. If you are young and have a desire to live for God, be encouraged. If you truly want to live right, God will make a way. He is the Waymaker. I was a cheerleader in high school, and I knew by the life Sheri was living what I would need to give up. I waited until I was out of school before I made a real commitment to God. God understands everything about us. He knows what it will take for each one of us.

I struggled for a while, but when I finally settled down to the fact I wanted God more than anything else, that is when I really hit the Rock and became "spiritual." There is a difference between saying you want God more than anything and truly meaning it. God will test you. He will bring things up, and you will have to make a definite choice. God truly will not take any other place in your heart except the first place.

Sister Annette Hupp

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the Church of God in Newark, OH.*

"This is what the past is for! Every experience God gives us, every person He puts in our lives, is the perfect preparation for the future that only He can see." —Corrie ten Boom



A FUNCTIONAL UNITY

Brother E. David Stegmeier

John 17:1 These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee:

2 As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.

3 And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

4 I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.

5 And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.

6 I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.

7 Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee.

8 For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me;

and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.

9 I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.

10 And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them.

11 And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.

12 While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled.

13 And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.

14 I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated

them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

15 I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.

16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

18 As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.

19 And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.

20 Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

21 That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

22 And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:

*23 I in them, and thou in me,
that they may be made perfect in
one; and that the world may
know that thou hast sent me, and
hast loved them, as thou hast
loved me.*

*24 Father, I will that they
also, whom thou hast given me,
be with me where I am; that they
may behold my glory, which thou
hast given me: for thou lovedst
me before the foundation of the
world.*

*25 O righteous Father, the
world hath not known thee: but
I have known thee, and these
have known that thou hast sent
me.*

*26 And I have declared unto
them thy name, and will declare
it: that the love wherewith thou
hast loved me may be in them,
and I in them.*

It is a real quandary to me how people can leave the ranks of the Church of God, go down into Babylon, and feel satisfied there. They have been deluded and given over to a reprobate mind. I do not ever want to be torn apart from the family of God and go astray.

D. S. Warner wrote the song entitled "The Bond of Perfectness." It reads:

*How sweet this bond of perfectness,
The wondrous love of Jesus;
A pure foretaste of heaven's bliss,
Oh, fellowship so precious!*

*The bond that circles heaven's pure
Oh, wondrous, wondrous story!
Has dropped around the holy here,
And fills us all with glory.*

*Oh, praise the Lord for love divine
That binds us all together;
A thousand chords our hearts
entwine,
Forever and forever.*

*"God over all and in us all,"
And through each holy brother;
No pow'r of earth or hell, withal,
Can rend us from each other.*

*Oh, mystery of heaven's peace!
Oh, bond of heaven's union!
Our souls in fellowship embrace,
And live in sweet communion.*

*Oh, brethren, how this perfect love
Unites us all in Jesus!
One heart, and soul, and mind we
prove
The union heaven gave us.*

The Prayer of Jesus

The prayer in John, Chapter 17, often referred to as the High Priestly Prayer of Jesus Christ, is labeled that way because it is an antitype, or something that was foreshadowed under the Old Testament. Under the Old Testament, the high priest would enter into the most holy place, the second room of the Tabernacle, once every year with a basin of blood and some incense.

This was the Day of Atonement. It is known as Yom Kippur to the present-day Jews. It was the most solemn of all their feasts and festivals. On this day, the high priest performed many rituals to atone for the sins of the people. It was his responsibility to intercede and pray for the children of God. Under the New Covenant, Jesus offered the sacrifice of Himself, and He intercedes on behalf of His people.

Jesus prayed for Himself, His Apostles, and the church, or the body of Christ. Christ revealed His priorities in His prayer: bringing glory to the Father, unity to the church, the separateness of His people, sanctification, and the winning of the lost. Certainly, these priorities ought to be our priorities. Our lives should bring honor and glory to God. The church believes in sanctification and unity. We are separate and distinct from the world in word, thought, deed, how we dress, where we go, and how we act. The body of Christ is sanctified people who want to win the lost.

In John 17:1 Jesus said, "Glorify thy Son." I believe Jesus was asking God to assist Him in gaining victory over what laid ahead of Him. Crucifixion is the cruellest death anyone could ever experience. I believe He was praying, "Please, God, stand with Me so I will not fail, become discouraged, or give up, and I will bring glory to You in return!"

This is the longest prayer of Jesus recorded in any of the Gospels. It is known as His farewell prayer. The main themes are bringing glory to God and the need for unity among God's people. God's will is for us to be in agreement with each other and be one. Jesus prayed for oneness among His followers. He said in John 17:11: "And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are." The word *unity* means "oneness, harmony, agreement, and being united." Functional unity means being capable of operating or functioning as one, working together, or a practical unity.

God's Plan for Unity

Ephesians 4:1-6 says: "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." Galatians 3:26 reads, "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."

One reason Church of God people know the doctrines of the

The close relationship
between the Father and
the Son is
THE EXAMPLE
of how we are to work to
HAVE UNITY
with God and others.

Word of God so well is because they are in many of our songs. Our songs are full of doctrine. Charles W. Naylor wrote the song called "The Reformation Glory." The last verse says, "Christians all should dwell together in the bonds of peace, All the clashing of opinions, all the strife should cease; Let divisions be forsaken, all the holy join in one, And the will of God in all be done."

God has a plan concerning a working, practical, or functional unity. A number of years ago, a minister came out of the Nazarene church and worshiped with us before becoming a chaplain at a hospital. His wife asked me, "How does the Church of God operate?" I told her it is operated according to the Word and Spirit. The ministers get their directions from God, and Heaven is our headquarters.

She said, "Isn't that too idealistic?" I told her to stick around, and she would see how it operates.

Jesus and God have an ideal fellowship. Jesus is the ultimate ideal, and we are striving to be more like Him. Sometimes we have to work at keeping unity. Every marriage does not run smoothly every day. We have to work at marriage. My wife likes healthy food every day. I like to have sweets once in a while. We have to work to get along. It is the same with the church. God worked with the early church the way He wants to work with us.

According to the Word of God, there is only one church. All born-again individuals become members of the Church of God. Acts 2:47 says, "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." I want to use five metaphors to show you God wants unity. A metaphor is "a thing regarded as representative, or symbolic, of something else."

The Family of God

First of all, we are all children in one family under the care of one Father. In John 20:17, after His Resurrection, Jesus spoke the following words to Mary Magdalene who stood at His empty tomb: "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God."

The father ought to set the tenor of the home. He is the one who should call the children together for family worship. He is the one who makes sure the family is in the car, ready to go to church on time. Abraham commanded his children (Genesis 18:19). Our children never had a choice when it came to attending church services.

We are under one mother, the church. Galatians 4:26 says, "But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all." The church takes care of one another. We cherish new converts and encourage, help, support, and guide them along.

There is a song we sing written by Gloria Gaither called "The Family of God," which says:

*You will notice we say brother
And sister 'round here,
It's because we're a family*

*And these folks are so near;
When one has a heartache,
We all share the tears,
And rejoice in each victory
In this family so dear.*

*From the door of an orphanage
To the house of the King,
No longer an outcast,
A new song I sing;
From rags unto riches,
From the weak to the strong,
I'm not worthy to be here,
But, praise God, I belong!*

*I'm so glad I'm a part
Of the family of God.
I've been washed in the fountain,
Cleansed by His blood!
Joint heirs with Jesus
As we travel this sod,
For I'm part of the family,
The family of God.*

The ideal unity exists between the Father (God) and the Son (Jesus Christ). We are to work to have that close relationship with God and with each other.

"The Sheep of His Pasture"

Secondly, we are all disciples enrolled in one school, under the instruction of one Teacher. We have one ultimate Teacher, and we are under His tutelage and instruction. Nicodemus came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God" (John 3:2) The term *rabbi* is a title of respect the Jews gave their teachers. We all have one Teacher, and we are still learning.

Mark 6:34 states, "And Jesus, when he came out [of the ship], saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things." John 14:26 reads, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach

you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

The Holy Ghost and the written Word of God will always agree. Isaiah 8:20 says, "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

Thirdly, we are all sheep of one flock, under the guidance of one Shepherd. Jesus had much to say about this relationship in John 10:14-16, which states: "I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd." Psalm 100:3 says, "Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture."

In Acts 20:28, Paul wrote to the brethren at Ephesus. He mentioned the leaders first by saying, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves." My greatest concern in life is keeping myself under. Paul addressed the leaders first because we have an awesome responsibility. You may not agree, but I feel a minister of the Church of God has a greater responsibility than anyone on earth. Airplane pilots and doctors have awesome responsibilities, but a pastor of the Church of God has the greatest responsibility of anyone in the world.

Acts 20:28 reads, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." The wolves are howling and threatening the safety of the flock. Sheep need a

Sheep are PRONE TO WANDER and need a shepherd (pastor).



shepherd because they are easily led astray. There is a song written by Robert Robinson that uses the words "prone to wander." *Prone* means "likely to or liable to or inclined to." One line in the song says: "*Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, Prone to leave the God I love; Here's my heart, O take and seal it; Seal it for Thy courts above.*" You need your pastor more than you need anybody else in this world.

Working Together for the Lord

Fourthly, we are all members of one body, under the direction of one Head. The Apostle Paul gave the church in Ephesus good instructions when he exhorted them concerning the need for unity. We read in Ephesians 4:11, "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers." Verse 15 says, "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ." My head directs the movement of my body. My head tells my hands what to do, my mouth what to speak, and so forth.

Fifthly, we are all stones in one building, built upon one foundation. Peter said in 1 Peter 2:5, we are "lively stones." Paul said in 1 Corinthians 3:9-11, "For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye

are God's building. According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

The Bible says we are to strive to keep the unity of the Spirit until we all come into the unity of the faith. It takes striving and work. We are joined together in peace through the Spirit, so we need to make every effort to continue to work together for the Lord. We must not hold out for our own way. We should avoid quarreling and bickering. God's plan is we come together in unity.

There is a song in the *Evening Light Songs* hymnal called "Thy Children Are Gathering Home" by C. W. Naylor. It reads:

*Long scattered thy children, O Zion,
have been,
But now they are gathering home:
The Spirit is calling, they gladly
obey,
With songs of rejoicing they come.*

*False shepherds divided and
scattered the flock,
And hirelings ruled o'er them for
gain,
But back to their fold on mount
Zion's fair height
They come to forever remain.*

*To unity, glorious, rich and
complete,
One faith and one body, one Lord,
One way and one Spirit, one hope
and one God,
They come at the call of his word.*

*Sectarian walls shall no longer
divide,
False teachers shall lead them no
more;
True pastors shall feed them on
heavenly food,
Their sorrows and sighings are o'er.*

*Thy children are gathering home,
With joy they are gathering home;
From all the divisions in which they
were scattered,
Thy children are gathering home.*

There Is Only One Church

In Psalm 119:63, we read the sentiments of King David. They are my sentiments as well. It states, "I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts." David was the king, yet he enjoyed the fellowship of those who had "like precious faith" (2 Peter 1:1). King David was not concerned about what race they were or how high their educational, financial, or social standing in life was. It should not matter to us either. His desire was for the people who love God and obey His eternal Word to enjoy one another and dwell together in a functional unity.

Christian unity is not seeing everything alike, or uniformity. God likes variety. We are all different; there are no two individuals alike. We do not have to wear the same clothing, although we should all dress modestly. We do not have to only wear a certain color; yet we are not trying to be flashy and draw people's attention to us rather than God.

Christian unity is not unanimity. We are all on different levels of learning. On essential, explicit Bible teachings, we should be in agreement. However, we may see other things differently. For example, some may prefer to drive Ford cars, others may like Chevys or Volkswagens. There is nothing wrong with liking different cars or living in different types of homes. We eat different types of food. We all have our preferences, so unity does not have to be to that degree.

I like a quote from "An Exposition of Psalm 119" by Charles Bridges, which says, "Determin-

ing in those things, in which all the people of God are agreed, to spend my zeal; and as for other things about which they differ, to walk according to the light God hath given me, and charitably to believe others to do so too."

There is only one church. Unity is not something we create; it is a work of God. We must maintain unity. Sometimes, our unity can be tried. We demonstrate unity by showing love, kindness, and longsuffering toward others. The leaders of the congregations (pastors) need to work to keep unity between their members and with members of other congregations.

If I do not live as I ought and maintain my relationship with God, my congregation could be estranged from other congregations. It is contingent on me. Pastors need to be careful. We all have different ways of conducting our services, but we should all do our best to please God.

Acts 2:46 reads, "And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart." Practical or functional unity comes by listening and yielding to the Holy Spirit. It comes by being keen and cognizant to the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God leads, guides, and teaches us as we walk on the highway of holiness.

Every congregation of the Church of God is a part of the

universal Church of God. Sadly, some congregations look only to themselves. The Church of God has members all over the world. What we do can hinder another person's progress. We are workers together no matter where we are. The church is composed of all the redeemed the world over. Brother Emerson Wilson said to me years ago: "Only discuss that which you agree on, and talk about other issues as the Spirit of God leads. Listen to the Holy Spirit."

We Need Each Other

Brother C. W. Naylor said, "We reach our hands in fellowship to every blood-washed one." Many young people have gone astray because they saw strife and divisions between congregations and ministers warring with one another. If we fuss and fight, our children will be disillusioned with the church.

Why did Jesus say it is necessary we have a functional unity? So the world will see we are the people of God. Psalm 133:1-3 says: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD

"Truth, crushed to the earth, shall rise again"
(William Cullen Bryant).

The teaching on inbred sin is a fallacy. A child is not born with a sinful nature. Why do they go astray? They need to be born again, and they need a force within them to say no to sin. All they have is flesh, and the flesh is weak. If ones are walking in all the light they know, then God will bring them on.

commanded the blessing, even life for evermore." There are four main points in that chapter: (1) unity is good and pleasant; (2) it smells good; (3) it is refreshing; and (4) it is assured of the blessings of God.

The Bible says when David was hiding in the field from King

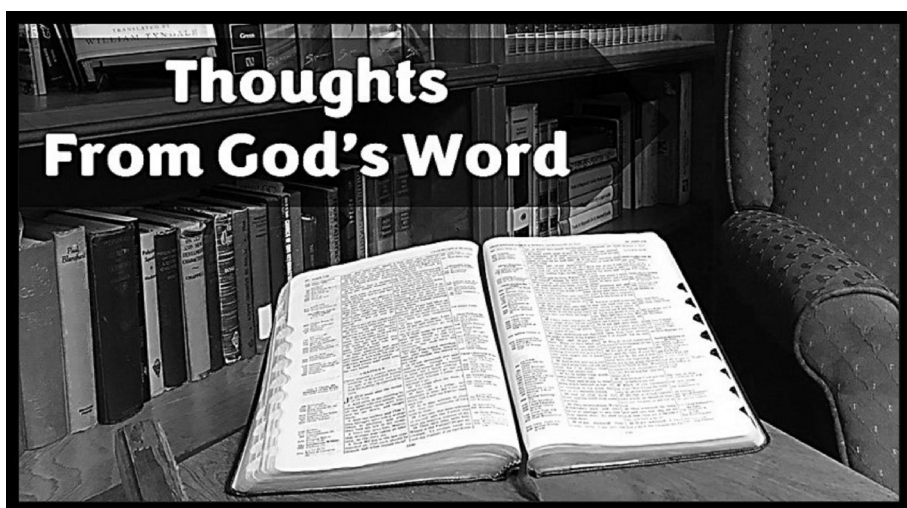
Saul, Jonathan went up to David and "strengthened his hand in God" (1 Samuel 23:16). That is a beautiful picture of unity. We are here to strengthen each other's hand in God.

Functional unity is something we must continually work at. We love and appreciate every one.

Angela Gellenbeck expressed it well when she wrote, "We Need Each Other, Brethren!"

(Compact Disc TR-1369)

Brother E. David Stegmeier is the pastor of the Church of God in Canby, OR.



For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?

Esther 4:14

Two books in the Bible tell of the lives of two women. In the Book of Ruth, Elimelech (an Israelite) moved his family to Moab because of a famine. While there, he and his two sons died, leaving his wife (Naomi) with her two Moabite daughters-in-law (Ruth and Orpah).

Naomi entreated Ruth and Orpah to return to their families in Moab. Orpah returned, but Ruth refused to leave her

mother-in-law. She told Naomi, "Whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God" (Ruth 1:16).

God knows where to put His people for honest souls to be added to His kingdom. If Elimelech had never moved his family to Moab, Ruth may have never been saved. Are you available for God to use you to reach an honest soul? If you are living for God, you are an influence on others. Your life is important to God.

Esther was raised by Mordecai, her cousin. They were Israelites taken into captivity. Ahasuerus, king of the Medo-Persian Empire, had removed Vashti from being queen because of her

disobedience to him. All the fair maidens throughout the Empire were brought to Shushan for the king to choose a new queen. Esther found favor in King Ahasuerus' eyes, and she was chosen.

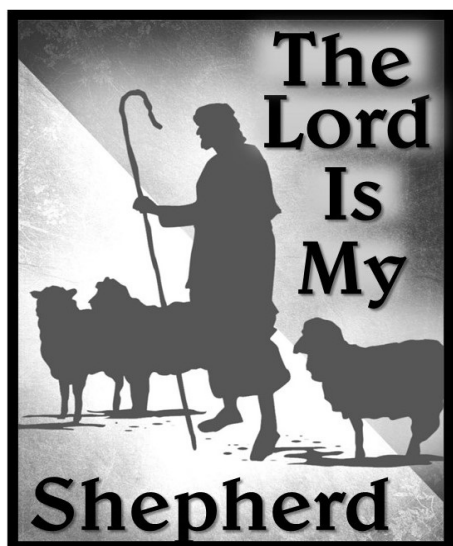
Haman was promoted by King Ahasuerus above the other princes, and Haman hated the Jews. He sought the king's permission to destroy them. King Ahasuerus gave Haman his ring to carry out his plan to destroy the Jews.

When Mordecai learned of his plot, he sent word to Esther, saying, "Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Esther replied, "So will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish" (verse 16).

Are you willing to give yourself for God's use to save others? The enemy will bring fear to keep you from doing what God needs you to do. God's Word says, "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:7). Do not let the enemy hinder you. You are alive now "for such a time as this." Be where God can use you.

Sister Susan Hogan

Sister Susan Hogan attends the Church of God in Newark, OH.



Psalm 23:1 The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

3 He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

5 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

"The LORD is my shepherd." That is personal! He is *my* shepherd. "I shall not want." If I know the Lord is my shepherd, I do not need anything else. This world glorifies things, places, and people, but if the Lord is your shepherd, He is all you need.

Sometimes we get worried about certain circumstances, thinking: "What are we going to do? What is going to happen?" We worry and fret, but the Lord knows what we need. There are times when He brings a revival to the church. In those times, God speaks to His people, bringing exactly what is needed for that hour.

"He maketh me to lie down in green pastures." He does not force us. The word *maketh* means he "levels things, compels us, makes a nice plain, reckons with us, and shows the profitability of the situation." That is what God is doing. He is making the way very attractive.

God does not make me to lie down on a bunch of rocks but "in green pastures." That is beautiful. I am talking about the Good Shepherd. He is not leading us into a field full of thistles and thorns but into "green pastures."

If you have done any farming, you know that having "green pastures" is a chore. The weeds are prevalent. It is difficult to keep the multiflora rosebushes out. It is hard to find a good place to pasture your livestock, but the Lord knows how to do it.

"He leadeth me beside the still waters." Still waters are deep waters. We have a creek behind our house, and in some places, there are lots of rapids, but in other places, it is smooth. That is where the deep water is. It is still; it is calm. "Still waters" is a quiet place.

First Kings 19:11-12 says: "And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD. And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake: And after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice."

God is bringing His people to a green pasture. That is what the Church of God is—a green pasture where you can get the nutrients you need to be successful and grow. God leads you beside those "still waters" so you can hear what He has to say. That is beautiful! Thank God for the day He led me beside the still waters so I could hear Him speaking to me. He told me, "You need to change your ways."

The world today is full of dis-

tractions—earthquakes, wind, and fire—anything to distract us from the Lord passing by. It is important to be in the church services, in these green pastures where we can be fed what we need to be fed, so we can hear that still, small voice speaking to us.

"He restoreth my soul." That is the result of being in the green pasture and listening to the still, small voice. Thank God for the day He restored me to His church. He is full of mercy and love! He wants everyone to make it. Praise God for a place of restoration! John 4:14 says, "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." Thank God, we can drink from those waters and never thirst again.

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death." This valley is a fearful place. It is not the place of death, but the "shadow" that is fearful. The thoughts of death can be very difficult. "I will fear no evil" sounds like a bold statement. How is that even possible? It is because God is with us.

"Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." The rod and the staff are two different things with two different purposes. The rod is used to beat back the enemy, to beat (clear) a path forward. It was used as a weapon. When David fought the lion and the bear, he beat them with the rod. The rod is the Word of God. We use the Word to beat back danger, to clear the path where we need to walk.

Sometimes we wonder: "How am I going to get from here to there? How am I going to make it?" The Word of God will tell us how to get there. It will show us how to avoid the pitfalls and will help us beat back the enemy. The Word of God is our sword. Ephesians 6:17 says, "The sword of the Spirit" is "the word of God." It is our weapon. It is how we battle, how we get through.

Have you ever walked through a thicket where it is very thorny? It

is nice to have a rod where you can beat back the briars and clear a path. If you just try to raise your arms and walk out of there, it tears you up. You have thorns sticking to you everywhere, and it is hard to move.

When we try to do things on our own in our Christian walk, that is exactly what happens. We get all tangled up in thorns and briars. Soon we are crying about how painful this is, but if we would just use the "rod" (the Word of God) to beat out a nice path where God wants us to go, we could avoid all that.

The "staff" has a hook on it (a Shepherd's Hook). That represents the Spirit of God. Most of the time, if there is a good shepherd, the sheep will follow him, but there are times when sheep wander out of the way. The Bible tells us about the one who wandered away from the flock. The shepherd goes after that sheep and uses the staff to hook him, pulling him out of the briar patch. He might have to use the staff to lead the sheep away from the cliff or to deep waters. Can you hear that still, small voice saying, "Step back from that dangerous ledge?"

When you are going through "the valley of the shadow of death" and there are steep mountains and boulders on every side that look like they are going to fall in on you, the Shepherd takes His staff and leads you through those dark places. He guides you, saying, "Come over this

way a little bit."

Often God uses the pastor to do this. You might not like what the pastor says, but there might be a cliff ahead you cannot see. The Lord tells the pastor, "Bring a message to lead them away from that." The Spirit of God works through the pastor too. He has divinely ordered under-shepherds to help guide the flock. This is a beautifully ordained system God has set up. God's people have the benefit of a lot of help! That is wonderful.

The Spirit of God can speak to me and use the man of God to bring a message that makes it a little easier to hear. Sometimes the waves get like rapids, and it is hard to hear anything. The pastor will bring a message to quiet down this world that is raging against us so we can hear what God wants us to hear. It is so important to be able to hear.

"Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies." The best place for sheep is on a plateau, an elevated place on a mountain that is flat on the top. It is green, lush, elevated, and easily watered. That is the table God has prepared for us right in the midst of our enemies. The Church of God is an elevated place to feed. We are not eating off the floor. There has been a table prepared, an elevated place for the sheep of His fold to feed.

The beauty of being in an elevated place is the shepherd can see

where the enemy is trying to come up around the edges. He is in a position of defense where he can beat the enemy back. While we are feeding on the Word of God, the Lord is beating back our enemies. We are in a feasting place, an elevated place. The highway of holiness is an elevated place where we can feed, live, and dwell.

At a feast, it was customary for Jews to anoint the head of the most important guest with oil. (Read Luke 7:46.) This psalm lets us know, God anoints "my head" with oil. God thinks highly of us. We are the bride of Christ. We are honored guests at His table.

"My cup runneth over." This is what happens when we think of what God is doing for us.

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever." Oh, the mercy of God! What a blessing to have it follow me "all the days of my life," not just here in this life, but in the life to come. That life does not stop when my body is put in the grave. Thank God, when the Lord is our Shepherd, we can live "for ever"!

Brother Jeremy Hupp

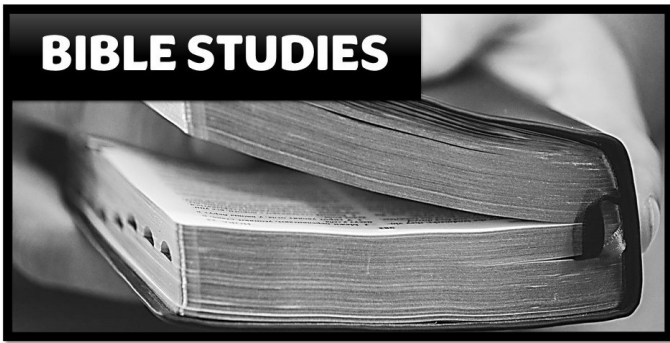
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It cannot be emphasized too strongly or too often that this great nation was founded, not by religionists, but by Christians; not on religions, but on the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Patrick Henry
(One of the Founding Fathers of the USA)

BIBLE STUDIES



AN OVERVIEW EXPOSITION OF MATTHEW, CHAPTER 24

To properly understand the host of truths being conveyed in this chapter, it is necessary to understand the premise upon which they are based. Verse 1 relates that "his disciples" were so awed by "the buildings of the temple" that they "came to him for to shew him." It is no wonder these common Galileans were awestruck by the majesty and grandeur of "the temple."

This magnificent structure was "forty and six years . . . in building" (John 2:20). This was Herod's Temple, and it covered thirty to thirty-five acres. Some of the stones were thirty feet long by six feet wide. They were white marble plated with gold. The temple was so bright in the sunlight that its appearance was almost dazzling.

Matthew 24:2 And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

3 And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?

Because the disciples were so impressed, imagine their shock and dismay at this pronouncement. Then, they did as many do today. They thought they were asking a singular, simple question, but in reality, they posed three distinct and complex questions: (1) "When shall these things be?" (2) "What shall be the sign of thy coming?" and (3) "And of the end of the world?"

By the structure of the verse, the disciples obviously felt they were asking one question concerning one event, but the wording they employed ("these things be," "sign of thy coming," and "the end of the world") in reality is speaking of three different events.

Notice how Jesus responded to the questions. He dealt with the last question first: "the end of the world" (verse 3). He spoke of "the end" in verses 6,

13, and 14. When the New Testament speaks of "the end of the world," to what is it referring? Hebrews 9:26, speaking of "the sacrifice of himself" (Christ's "sacrifice" in A.D. 33), says, "Now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin." Therefore, Biblically "the end of the world" commenced in A.D. 33.

First Corinthians (penned in the proximity of A.D. 54-57) tells us in Chapter 10, verse 11, that Old Testament events were penned and preserved "for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world ARE COME" (present tense). So, "the end of the world" is this Christian dispensation, or the Gospel Day. It is referred to as "the end" because it is the final dispensation of human history.

VERSES 4-14

These verses take us through the various portions of "the end of the world," or the Gospel Day. While there is much more in these verses to validate this truth, let us look at a few examples.

VERSE 6 speaks "of wars." The church engaged in a "war in heaven" ("heavenly places in Christ Jesus"; Ephesians 2:6) in the morning time against the powers of pagan Rome (Revelation 12:7).

VERSE 7 speaks of "famines." This occurred during the Dark Ages, during the days of papal Rome (Amos 8:9-14). **VERSE 7** speaks of "pestilences" and **VERSE 11** of "false prophets," bringing us up to the age of Protestantism. Revelation 9:3 speaks of "locusts," and Revelation 9:7 says they had "the faces of men." This depicts the worst plague on humanity—false, man-made religion headed up by man, specifically in this context, the religious system of Protestantism. Protestantism is referred to repeatedly as "the false prophet" (Revelation 16:13; 19:20; 20:10).

VERSE 14 says, "This gospel [the pure, unadulterated Gospel, 'that which was from the beginning'; 1 John 1:1] shall be preached." This is a portrayal of the evening time (Zechariah 14:7) portion of the Gospel Day, when as the songwriter penned, "Back to the light of the morning, Jesus our Captain leads." (He had more to say about the evening time in some of the latter verses of this chapter.)

VERSES 15-28

In these verses, Jesus addressed the question, "When shall these things be?" (verse 3), dealing with Christ's words that "there shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." The answer in these verses refers to the Desolation of Jerusalem that occurred in A.D. 70 by the Roman Prince Titus and the Roman army.

In **VERSE 15**, Jesus spoke of "the abomination of

desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet" (Daniel 9:27). Luke made this clearer in Luke 21:20-24, letting us know he was speaking of "the desolation thereof." Luke 21:20 reads, "And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh."

In Deuteronomy 28:48-57, Moses prophesied of how Rome would "besiege thee" during this time of desolation. He spoke of "the eagle" and referred to it as "a nation." He also referred to this "nation" as "a yoke of iron." Daniel 7:7, speaking of the beast with "ten horns" (the Roman Empire), describes that it "had great iron teeth." The "iron" and "the eagle" both let us know it represents Rome. "The carcass" (VERSE 28) represents old, dead Israel. When old Israel was rebellious throughout their history, pronouncements were made by the Lord concerning them, such as:

- "The carcasses of this people shall be meat for the fowls" (Jeremiah 7:33).
- "Even the carcasses of men shall fall as dung upon the open field" (Jeremiah 9:22).
- "I will lay the dead carcasses of the children of Israel" (Ezekiel 6:5).

"The carcass" is old, dead Israel that "because of unbelief" was "broken off" (Romans 11:20), because they knew "not the time of . . . visitation" (Luke 19:44).

VERSES 29-31

In these verses, Jesus reverted to addressing the question about "the sign of . . . the end of the world" (verse 3) by advancing beyond the chronology of "the desolation" (A.D. 70) and speaking of the next prophetic event. (Note: concerning "the desolation," the famous Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus, substantiated in his writings that everything Moses and Jesus prophesied took place in A.D. 70.)

In VERSE 29 Jesus again spoke of the Gospel Day. It reads, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days [the Desolation of Jerusalem] shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light." These expressions are also employed in Revelation 12:1. There, we read of "a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet," a symbolic description of the morning-time church.

Jesus said, "Ye are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14). However, in Matthew 24:29, this light is "darkened." This depicts the morning-time apostasy, which chronologically followed "the desolation." Then, "the stars shall fall," bringing us up to the Protestant era. Revelation 8:10 says, "There fell a great star," and Revelation 9:1 reads, "I saw a star fall." These verses take in the two segments of the

Protestant era — the Lutheran era and the Wesleyan era.

VERSE 29 concludes, speaking of "the powers of the heavens shall be shaken," referring to the "earthquake" that began with the very shaking message of the evening time. (Revelation 6:12).

VERSES 30-31 describe the message and its effects in this evening time. VERSE 30 speaks of "the tribes of the earth," referring to earthen, man-made religion that came "up out of the earth" (Revelation 13:11). It separated and divided men into "tribes," or sects. VERSE 30 speaks of "the sign of the Son of man." What is this "sign"? When the scribes and Pharisees asked Jesus for a "sign," in Matthew 12:39 He told them, "There shall be no sign given . . . but the sign of the prophet Jonas." What was it? "The preaching of Jonas" (Matthew 12:41). The "sign" is the same as it was in Jonah's day. The message!

Then, VERSE 31 depicts what Christ is doing in this portion of the Gospel Day. "His angels" are the ministry (Galatians 4:13-14; Revelation 22:8-9). The "sound of a trumpet" is the sounding forth of the Word of God, the message (Isaiah 58:1). Ezekiel was told to "blow the trumpet, and warn the people" (Ezekiel 33:3), and then Ezekiel 33:7 clarifies what it means to "blow the trumpet," stating, "Hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me."

VERSE 31 tells what Christ is doing in this day: "Gather together his elect," or "my people" (Revelation 18:4). They are being gathered from "the four winds," or "every wind of doctrine" (Ephesians 4:14), from all "four corners of the earth" (Revelation 7:1). The Lord is working to (and is effecting) a greater unity in this day. There is a unity much larger than just local congregations.

VERSES 32-51

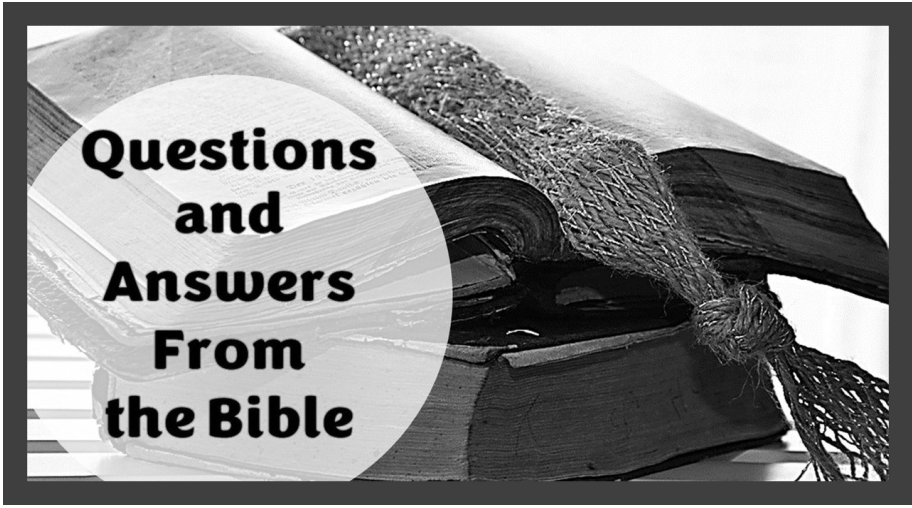
In these verses, Jesus addressed the question concerning "thy coming" (verse 3). We can see that clearly by the verbiage employed in these verses.

- "the coming of the Son of man be" (VERSES 37 and 39)
- "come" (VERSES 42 and 50)
- "cometh" (VERSES 44 and 46)
- "coming" (VERSE 48)

Thus, it is very clear which question these verses were dealing with: "thy coming" (verse 3).

Brother Earl R. Borders

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Questions and Answers From the Bible

IS IT TRUE THAT CHRISTIANS SHOULD NOT JUDGE (MATTHEW 7:1)?

The world says, "You shouldn't judge; Jesus said, 'Don't judge'." What does the Bible truly say on this subject? To be "rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15), we must consider the context of Jesus' words. Matthew 7:1-2 reads: "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." These verses reestablish the timeless moral principle contained in Galatians 6:7, which reads, "God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

When Jesus spoke the words recorded in Matthew 7:1-2, He was addressing a prevalent condition concerning those whose lives constituted of being considered as "Thou hypocrite" (Matthew 7:5). Christ was dealing with a prevailing condition in Judaism that He described in Matthew 23:1-4. In verse 3, He spoke of hypocritical religious leaders: "They say, and do not."

In verse 4, Jesus decried their practice, as "they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers." One principle Jesus wanted to clearly establish was that the life of the one speaking should first be measured to the truth themselves. (See Matthew 7:3-5.)

In Matthew 7:1-2, Jesus reiterated the timeless, moral law of sow-

ing and reaping. In doing so, He proclaimed, "For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged." What will judge us on that final day? Jesus said, "The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48). We are each going to be judged by "the word."

Therefore, to "judge" by "the word" is a fair measurement. However, a saint should be cautious and Holy Ghost directed. Colossians 4:5 admonishes, "Walk in wisdom toward them that are without." We must also recognize that "a brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city" (Proverbs 18:19). We must keep in mind, "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient" (1 Corinthians 6:12). The wise man taught there is "a time to keep silence, and a time to speak" (Ecclesiastes 3:7).

The only way we can determine the appropriate action ("silence" or "speak") is through Holy Ghost leadership. There are times when we will be divinely prompted "to speak" and tell what the Word of God says on a matter. On these occasions, it is both needed and proper. When we do "speak," some may charge us with judging. But if it is in accordance with the Word of God and prompted by the direction of the Holy Ghost, with a measured life behind it, it is totally appropriate and Biblical.

Again, we should be cautious

and "speak . . . as the Spirit" gives "utterance" (Acts 2:4).

ARE SHORTS AND SLEEVELESS SHIRTS MODEST? SHOULD WOMEN WEAR PANTS?

The Scriptures expressly state the proper Biblical adornment standard is "modest apparel" (1 Timothy 2:9). Some may try to advocate this verse solely applies to "women," but it begins with the words, "In like manner," and the previous verse is speaking of "men." *Webster's Twenty-First Century Dictionary* defines "modest" as "avoiding self-exposure." Therefore, modesty for men is as necessary as it is for women. To avoid "self-exposure" would prevent the wearing of shorts, sleeveless shirts, tank tops, or obviously, shirtlessness, as each of these would be unable to meet the standard of "avoiding self-exposure."

The same principle would apply to women. Again, the standard is "modest apparel." This would preclude shorts, short skirts, tops too low, sleeveless shirts, or sleeveless dresses. Tight-fitting clothing is also not appropriate for "women professing godliness" (1 Timothy 2:10).

Concerning women wearing slacks, or pants, these are items of men's apparel and expressly taught by the Bible as an improper manner of dress for women. Deuteronomy 22:5 clearly states, "The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man." Some would attempt to discount this truth by advocating that it was a part of the Mosaic Law, but that is not completely accurate. It is a part of the moral law that was incorporated within the Levitical Law, but this moral principle both preceded the Old Testament Levitical Law and is applicable subsequent to it, or succeeding it. It is a timeless moral law that applies in all ages.

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July 30 – August 6

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10:00 a.m. Morning Service
10:00 a.m. Children's Service (in the old barn)
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6:00 p.m. Youth Service
7:00 p.m. Evening Service

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