

THE GOSPEL TRUMPETER



SOUNDING FORTH THE SEVENTH AND LAST TRUMPET

Vol. 53 May 2023 No. 5



**True
Christian Mothers**

PAGE 3

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

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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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Guest Editorial

LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE

*Matthew 5:16 Let your light so
shine before men, that they may see
your good works, and glorify your
Father which is in heaven.*

We live in a world full of spiritual darkness. Multitudes are groping aimlessly in a lost condition. They do not know God or how to please Him. It is important for the light of the Gospel to shine as never before. Saints of God need to live godly lives and dispel the darkness. Men and women need to see the plan of salvation. Jesus said in Matthew 5:14, "Ye are the light of the world." As Christians, we point the lost to Christ. When honest hearts see the light of Christ shining in our lives, it draws them to Him. John 12:32 says, "And I [Jesus], if I be lifted up from the earth [through our lives], will draw all men unto me."

It would be well if all who profess Christianity examined themselves to be sure they are living as God expects us to live. It is easy to profess and fail to actually live as a Christian. The Lord wants our lights to shine so others can see Christ in us. Our lives should demonstrate God's grace, goodness, and power. It is Christ's Spirit dwelling within that radiates out and makes the difference. The things we say and the way we conduct ourselves should have a positive effect on others.

Men cannot see your heart, but they can see your deeds. If your heart is truly right with God, His goodness will shine forth. Your life may be the only Bible some people will ever read. Paul gave sound advice to Titus, saying: "This is a

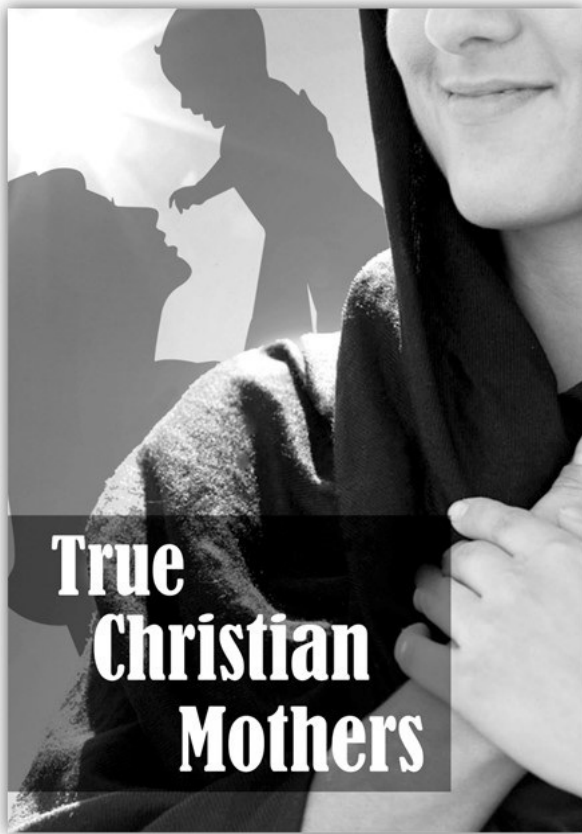
faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men" (Titus 3:8).

Manifesting real love is a wonderful way for our light to shine. There is a great need for genuine love for God and our brothers and sisters in the Lord. Jesus informed us in John 13:34-35: "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

We are to love those who do not know God. We do not love the sin, but we love the sinner. In Matthew 5:44 Jesus said, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you." Dear one, the Lord wants you to be a vessel He can work through to help others. Christ's presence shining in your life through consistent, godly living will affect others. One statement says, "I would rather see a sermon lived than to hear one preached." Our lives have an influence on ones we come in contact with every day.

Be careful not to allow discouragement to overtake you when ones seemingly are paying no attention. Some people will never admit your life is having an effect on them. They may not appear to notice, but they are watching. Be encouraged. God has placed you where He wants you.

Selected



Brother Roger L. Decker

2 Timothy 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus,

2 To Timothy, my dearly beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

3 I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day;

4 Greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy;

5 When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also.

The second Sunday in May has been set aside to honor the mothers in our nation, and rightly so. Honoring mothers is a worthy

cause. Today, there is a need for true Christian mothers. Mothers are the first attachment a child has when entering this world. A baby cleaves to his mother. She is his first love. I would like you to consider a true Christian mother. Sadly, not every mother is a good mother.

Most mothers in the world are not pleasing God. There is more to being a good mother than just bringing a child into the world. Napoleon Bonaparte once said, "The future destiny of a child is always the work of the mother." Mothers have a great affect on their children. They can influence them toward good or set them on the path of evil.

A good mother, according to the Bible, pleases God first; she is a Christian. A woman will not find fulfillment as a mother until she first finds fulfillment in Jesus Christ. She cannot be the mother God wants her to be until she has a personal relationship with God. When speaking of good mothers, we are not measuring by the world's standards, but rather by what the Word of God says.

Moses Had a Faithful Mother

Let us look into the Word of God at some mothers who, by their actions, influenced their children. There are only a few verses in the Bible about this mother. We read in Exodus 6:20, "And Amram took him Jochebed his father's sister to wife; and she bare him Aaron and Moses: and the years of the life of Amram were an hundred and thirty and seven years." Numbers 26:59 says, "And the name of Amram's

wife was Jochebed, the daughter of Levi, whom her mother bare to Levi in Egypt: and she bare unto Amram Aaron and Moses, and Miriam their sister."

Jochebed is mentioned once again in the New Testament not by name, but by position. Hebrews 11:23 states, "By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment." What was the king's commandment?

Exodus 1:15-17 says: "And the king of Egypt spake to the Hebrew midwives, of which the name of the one was Shiprah, and the name of the other Puah: And he said, When ye do the office of a midwife to the Hebrew women, and see them upon the stools; if it be a son, then ye shall kill him: but if it be a daughter, then she shall live. But the midwives feared God, and did not as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the men children alive."

Why was the king so fearful, and why did he want to kill the boy babies? Exodus 1:8-14 tells us: "Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph. And he said unto his people, Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we: Come on, let us deal wisely with them; lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that, when there falleth out any war, they join also unto our enemies, and fight against us, and so get them up out of the land.

"Therefore they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh treasure cities, Pithom and Raamses. But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were grieved because of the children of Israel. And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigour: And

they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field: all their service, wherein they made them serve, was with rigour."

The Bible says the king "knew not Joseph." He was fearful of Israel expanding. As the Israelite boys grew into men, the king was afraid they might overtake the Egyptians by force, or at least join with another army to overthrow the Egyptians. He ordered the midwives to abort the male babies. The midwives were not like some doctors today. They actually feared God more than the king of Egypt, and they allowed the baby boys to live.

Again, Hebrews 11:23 says, "By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment." Jochebed feared God more than she did the king of Egypt. What an example she is to all mothers of how to truly love their children. She was willing to risk her own life to protect her son. God honored her faith. Because of her faithfulness, He raised a deliverer for the children of Israel.

Hannah's Prayer

Hannah was the mother of Samuel. Let us look at the situation in which Samuel was born. First Samuel 1:1-8 reads: "Now there was a certain man of Ramathaimzophim, of mount Ephraim, and his name was Elkanah, the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephrathite: And he had two wives; the name of the one was Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah: and Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children.

"And this man went up out of his city yearly to worship and to sacrifice unto the LORD of hosts

in Shiloh. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, the priests of the LORD, were there. And when the time was that Elkanah offered, he gave to Peninnah his wife, and to all her sons and her daughters, portions: But unto Hannah he gave a worthy portion; for he loved Hannah: but the LORD had shut up her womb. And her adversary also provoked her sore, for to make her fret, because the LORD had shut up her womb.

"And as he did so year by year, when she went up to the house of the LORD, so she provoked her; therefore she wept, and did not eat. Then said Elkanah her husband to her, Hannah, why weepest thou? and why eatest thou not? and why is thy heart grieved? am not I better to thee than ten sons?"

Peninnah was blessed with children. Hannah was barren, which caused her to feel depressed and discouraged. Elkanah could not understand why Hannah was so upset. He gave her a double portion to show his love for her. He felt his love was worth more than being a mother of ten sons. Hannah was in bitterness of soul because of the persecution she received from Peninnah, who was haughty and boastful. This was the family atmosphere when they went to worship.

Hannah prayed this prayer in 1 Samuel 1:11, "And she vowed a vow, and said, O LORD of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the LORD all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head."

Most women want a child of their own if at all possible. Hannah not only wanted a child, but she already had plans to raise him in the temple of God. Verse

13 says, "Now Hannah, she spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard." However, God heard and answered her prayer. She gave birth to Samuel, who was one of the greatest high priests in the Old Testament. God blessed Hannah because of her faith and obedience.

First Samuel 2:19-21 says: "Moreover his mother made him a little coat, and brought it to him from year to year, when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. And Eli blessed Elkanah and his wife, and said, The LORD give thee seed of this woman for the loan which is lent to the LORD. And they went unto their own home. And the LORD visited Hannah, so that she conceived, and bare three sons and two daughters. And the child Samuel grew before the LORD."

Samuel "grew before the LORD." Where did Hannah want her son Samuel raised? In the house of God! Oh, what a lesson that is for mothers today. Mothers have a great influence.

The Mother of Jesus

Consider some mothers mentioned in the New Testament. Luke 2:43-52 reads: "And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not of it. But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance. And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him.

"And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers. And when they

saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.

"And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business? And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them. And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man."

Jesus needed a mother to care for, nurse, and raise Him. He also needed a father to provide for Him. God chose Mary and Joseph, who raised Him in the things of God. Luke 2:31 says He "was subject unto them." That simply means He was obedient unto them.

Timothy's Unfeigned Faith

Timothy had a godly mother and grandmother. Our Scripture text reads in 2 Timothy 1:5, "When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee [they instilled faith in Timothy], which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also." Lois and Eunice left a godly influence on Timothy. We do not read anything in the Scriptures about his father except that he was a Greek. The godly influence came from his mother and grandmother.

Acts 16:1 says, "Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek."

Paul, when writing to Timothy, mentions himself as being his father (1 Timothy 1:2), giving the impression Timothy's father

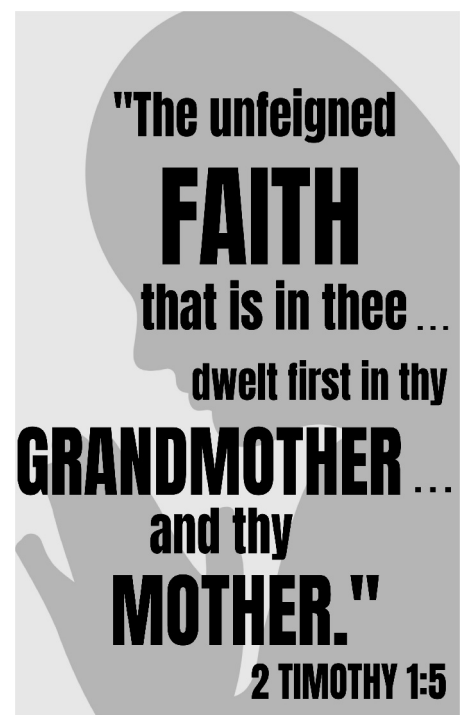
was either dead or still unconverted. These Scriptures reveal Timothy's mother may not have had much help in raising Timothy, yet she was able to instill godly teachings in him. His grandmother and mother taught him faith, and when Timothy heard the Gospel, he eagerly took hold of it. He was a product of his mother and grandmother.

Timothy's faith was *unfeigned*, which means "sincere without hypocrisy." Paul mentioned his mother and grandmother indicating they had done a good job in raising young Timothy. What was one thing Timothy's mother taught him? Second Timothy 3:15 reads, "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." The Holy Scriptures were the Old Testament.

It is wise for parents to teach their children the Scriptures at a very young age. A Jewish rabbi once said as soon as a boy is five years old, he ought to be applied to the Holy Scriptures. As soon as a child begins to talk, he should be conversing in the Word of God. The Old Testament teachings were a foundation for Timothy to receive the Gospel.

A mother has a tremendous responsibility, and she needs the Spirit of God to help her. She faces a great deal of pressure, and it takes wisdom, knowledge, and patience to be a true mother and raise children for the Lord. It is also a position of tremendous influence. Being a mother is a high calling. The word *mother* is used 245 times in 226 verses in the Bible. It is the name given to the New Jerusalem, which the Scripture says "is free, which is the mother of us all" (Galatians 4:26). The church is the mother to new converts.

There are many mothers in this world, but not all mothers are pleasing God. A mother who



pleases God will live her life serving the Lord. She will be a good role model for her children. She will be careful of her conduct and motives. She will back the preached messages with her words and her daily life. This is what influenced young Timothy to live for the Lord and dedicate his life to God.

The Need for Praying Mothers

One of the greatest powers in this world is a praying mother. A true mother will pray for her children as they are growing up and continue to pray for them after they are grown and leave the nest. She prays for God to keep His hand upon them. If they should wander astray, it becomes a burden to a true godly mother.

Susanna Wesley had nineteen children. Two of her children were well-known in the 1700s. From what I have read about her life, she was good at giving counsel. Before John Wesley was ordained a deacon in the Methodist Church, he had a heart-searching talk with his mother. Her life, as well as his father's, had a great bearing on his faith in God. John



Wesley lost his earnings, friends, and reputation because he placed a higher value on a clean heart, single eye, and soul filled with God. When John and his three brothers were summoned to the bedside of their dying father, he whispered, "The inward witness is the strongest proof of Christianity."

A mother's prayers and godly counsel are still needed today. Praying mothers can help mold the lives of their children. Mother, you are either influencing your children toward or away from God. Proverbs 22:6 says, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it [the training he received as a child]."

It is in the home we learn to live with other people, forgive others when they are wrong, and ask forgiveness when we are wrong. Mothers have their own little congregation at home. A true mother trains her children in the Word of God and by example. Mothers are really what makes the home a home. When I would return home to upstate New York for a visit, my desire was to see my mother. I wanted to see my dad too, but my mother was the hub of the home.

A real mother puts the welfare of her children first. A godly mother would never consider the thought of having an abortion. All who are protesting, wanting the right to have abortions, what if their parents believed in abortion? Many of them might not be here.

Which way do you want your children to go? Do you want them to have an education, good marriage, beautiful home, good job, and nice family? All these desires are good, but above all you should want them to be Christians. If you want your child to be spiritual, then you need to direct him in spiritual things.

"Who Can Find a Virtuous Woman?"

A godly mother teaches her children the importance of discipline and punishment for offenses. Proverbs 29:15 says, "The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame." A child who has not been restrained by his parents, who has been left to his own will and pleasure, will cause his parents shame and embarrassment. If you want your child to be rebellious and worldly, turn him loose with no restraints. Which way do you want your child to go?

I believe in discipline. I raised my family with discipline. Someone may say, "I do not want to discipline my little Johnnie or Susie." If it is necessary, get beyond their crying and take care of the problem. You will help them. You will not turn them away, but rather you will turn them toward you. It all depends on what you want for your children in this life. If you want your children to be spiritual, become great men or women for God, then you need to raise them in spiritual things. Teach them to be in Sunday school and be involved in the services by being there yourself. Do not just tell them to go; bring them to the house of God with you.

Proverbs 31:10 says, "Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies." The word *virtuous* means "a force." She is a force of strength and

courage, and she is noble. It says a virtuous woman is far above the price of some of the rarest gems. This description is found in the Old Testament, but it suits every age and time.

A virtuous woman can be trusted. She will do her husband "good and not evil all the days of her life" (Proverbs 31:12). She provides well for her house. Her children and her husband will bless and praise her. Above all, she fears God. She does not praise herself, but her good works will praise her. Where did the Proverb writer get his wisdom? Proverbs 31:1 says, "The words of king Lemuel, the prophecy that his mother taught him."

The Word of God covers every mother, young and old. First Timothy 5:14 says, "I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully." Titus 2:3-4 reads: "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."

A Mother's Influence

There are some in the Word of God who influenced their children the wrong way. First Kings 22:51-53 states: "Ahaziah the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in Samaria the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned two years over Israel. And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the way of his father, and in the way of his mother, and in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin: For he served Baal, and worshipped him, and provoked to anger the LORD God of Israel, according to

all that his father had done."

Ahaziah was an evil king. He reigned for only two years. In those two years, he did evil because he was influenced by his father and mother, Ahab and Jezebel. Godly parental guidance is necessary when raising children.

Teach your children good things. Teach them to have good manners, to pray, and how to work. Teach the young women how to keep a clean house. Teach the young men how to work a job and save their income. Teach your children how to tithe and live for God. Teach them to be obedient. Let there be structure and stability in the home. Do not allow your children to do whatever they want to do.

Check your child's cell phone if he has one. Young children are advanced on cell phones. Someone may say: "My little Johnnie would never get in trouble with his cell phone. He is a good boy." Good boys are tempted the same as bad boys are tempted.

Teach your children to pray. Prayer is needed in the home. Get out the Bible and teach them the Scriptures. When you strive to have family worship, things are going to happen to disrupt it. The phone will ring, someone will come to the house, or something will happen, but stay right in there and keep at it. Do not give up! Teach your children obedience and respect.

Matthew 14:3-8 says: "For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife. For John said unto him, It is not lawful for thee to have her. And when he would have put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet. But when Herod's birthday was kept, the daughter of Herodias danced before them, and pleased

Godly motherhood is not something you learn at the feet of a college professor, but rather at the feet of Jesus.

Herod. Whereupon he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she would ask. And she, being before instructed of her mother, said, Give me here John Baptist's head in a charger."

In this Scripture, we read of a mother who was stirred against the truth. She actually counseled her daughter to have John the Baptist killed. The daughter was instructed by her mother to ask for "John Baptist's head in a charger." This mother's influence took out a man of God.

A Great and High Calling

A true mother is giving and wants the best for her family. I once read this story: "A teacher asked a boy this question: 'Suppose your mother baked a pie, and there were seven of you, your parents plus five children. What percent of the pie would you get?'

"The boy answered, 'A sixth.'

"I am afraid you do not know your fractions,' said the teacher. 'Remember, there are seven of you.'

"Yes teacher,' said the boy. 'But you do not know my mother. Mother would say she did not want any pie.'"

Of all the careers a woman can become involved in, there is nothing more challenging than being a mother. It is a great and high calling. It is rewarding, and the responsibility is great. Godly motherhood is not something you learn at the feet of a college professor, but rather at the feet of Jesus. Mother, your responsibility is surpassed by none, and to fulfill it right, you need to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

What type of mother does your family see? Are you doing your best to please God? If not, you should turn your life completely over to Jesus Christ. If you have failed in your responsibility as a mother, you need to pray to the Lord. He will help you. Do not continue in that condition. Your children's souls are at stake.

There is a poem entitled "The Little One Who Follows Me." It says:

*A careful mother I ought to be;
A little one follows me.
I do not dare to go astray,
For fear she'll go the self-same way.*

*I cannot once escape her eyes;
Whatever she sees me do, she tries.
Like me, she says, she's going to be,
That little one who follows me.*

*She thinks that I am good and fine;
Believes in every word of mine.
The base in me she must not see;
That little one who follows me.*

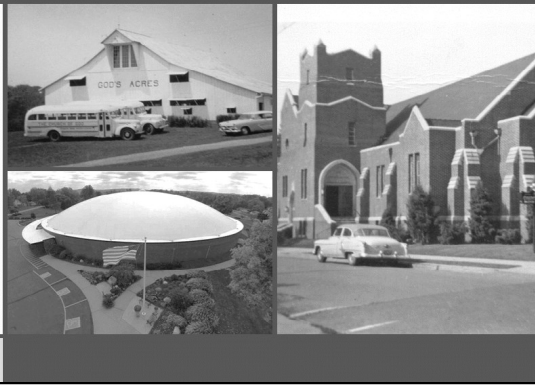
*I must remember, as I go,
Through summer's sun and winter's snow,
I'm building for the years to be,
For that little one who follows me.*

Thank God for every mother. However, a mother who really pleases God must be saved and filled with the Holy Spirit. A mother's work is an awesome task. Even the best mother looks back and wonders what she could have done differently. Maybe she wishes she had done this or that. One thing to remember is a good mother does her best. Only by the grace of God can a woman be the mother she needs to be.

(Compact Disc TR-2812)

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

REFLECTING ON WHAT GOD HAS DONE AND IS DOING



Brother Leamon Whitehead

Through the providence of God, Christ gave Himself on the Cross for the great Church of the Living God. He takes good care of His people. The Apostle Paul gathered the brethren together, and in Acts 20:27, he said, "For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." Paul was saying, "I have not held back anything." In Acts 20:29, he said, "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock." Those grievous wolves are still out there, but thank God, we have a refuge in the Lord Jesus Christ.

One songwriter penned, "*I have a good home in the fold of my Lord.*" I am glad we have a good home. I want to reflect on what God has done and is doing. Through His great providence, God has always made a way for His people, and He takes good care of them.

The church has faced many obstacles and problems through the seven periods of time. After the first period of time, when that old dragon was growling, blowing smoke and fire, and doing all he could against the church, the Bible says the woman was given two wings of a great eagle.

Revelation 12:14 says, "And to the woman were given two

wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent." We are unable to care for ourselves. We need God to care for and look out for us. Our greatest job is to follow Him in all He leads us to do.

The Lord took care of the true people of God through every period of time, and He is still caring for the church today. In 1880, the sixth seal was opened, and that time period ran until about 1930, which was fifty years. It was the shortest of any of the seven periods of time. Today, we are living in the seventh seal.

The devil has worked in every age of time, and he is still working. He has not gotten tired, and He will not give up. He is still laboring against the people of God. I want to reflect on something I feel God definitely has had a hand in. He has always looked upon the people of God, even when they were persecuted.

God's Care for His People

In the Old Testament, Israel cried out to God while they were in Egyptian bondage, and God heard their cry. God's people desired a place where they could

freely worship and serve Him. God had a hand in their deliverance. He sent Moses to lead them out of Egypt. God loves His people, and He will take care of them. All we have to do is follow God and God's man, and He will take us through whatever might come our way.

This great country, known as the United States of America, is called the land of freedom. We can enjoy the freedom to worship God. This country came about through the great providence of God. We are frail, but we have a great Captain, the mighty God. He can lead, guide, and direct us through every battle.

At the end of the sixth-seal period, the saints enjoyed tremendous glory and the blessings of God. God worked in a mighty way. Do you think the devil said: "Well, I might as well quit. I'm not going to defeat these people"? No! He laid the groundwork for compromise. The dragon began facing the woman (the church) in the morning time, but his tail reaches all the way out to the evening time. Revelation 12:4 says, "And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven [the ministry], and did cast them to the earth." There have been some troubling times, but God never forgets His people.

I want to bring some thoughts about the work of God in Newark, Ohio. The sixth-seal movement of the Church of God was going down, and God's people needed a place to get in out of the storm, a place of shelter. Do not misunderstand me. I am not implying the Church of God in Newark, Ohio, is a headquarters, but I do thank God for that place. I believe it came about because God wanted it to be. There were good, godly leaders and people who followed God. Whenever God finds people who are willing to follow Him, He can always do a work.

Revelation 11:3 says, "And I

will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth." Verse 8 reads, "And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified." At the time of the opening of the sixth seal, verse 12 states: "And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them." You cannot kill the Spirit of God, but you can kill His influence and effect. That is happening in sectism, or false religion.

God found a people who would obey and follow the Spirit of God. Glory be to God! I was down in sectism and did not know anything about the truth of God's Word or the true Church of God. I am a recipient of those who committed themselves to God. If you have the Spirit of God in you, it will excite you and others. Revelation 18:4 reads, "Come out of her, my people." People came out of false religion, and they are still coming out today. Praise God forever!

The Blessings of Fellowship

In 2016, the Church of God congregation in Newark, Ohio, celebrated one hundred years. That is wonderful. I am not exalting the congregation. However, in Romans 13:7 Paul said, "Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour." From its early beginning, God has had His hand on the Newark congregation. As I already mentioned, the movement was on its way down because they had compromised on God. Some people came out of that, but they needed a place to worship God, a place to go for

camp meetings and to enjoy the good things of God. Jesus never fails.

The church needs good, solid leadership to keep her on course, and God has given the congregation in Newark good leaders. The church is not standing still. She is sailing right along on the sea of life, heading to the other side. Satan is out to wreck our boat all along the journey. The church cannot rise high without good, godly leaders.

We are in the seventh period of time, according to Scripture. Now is not the time to go into rest mode or to let down because we are in one of the most deceptive times. It is the period of the eighth beast, and he is working hard against the church. I am glad God has people with whom we can fellowship. I thank God for a place we can go and be encouraged. It would be a lonely road if we had to travel it alone.

You may be walking along and thinking, "God, I would like to find someone to fellowship with and get some encouragement from." Thank God, we have brothers and sisters in the Lord with whom we can fellowship. We are not alone in this battle for God. I am glad for a place to go for an old-fashioned camp meeting in Newark, Ohio. I am thankful for the faithfulness of the Newark congregation and for the pastors who have faithfully followed God.

We are blessed abundantly because of those who have been faithful to God. I do not attend this congregation on a weekly basis, but thank God, I have a place to go to enjoy the camp meetings. God was working, and I am bragging about God. D. S. Warner wrote a song that says, "*The prophet's keen vision, transpiercing the ages, Beheld us to Zion return.*" Praise God forever!

Again, do not misunderstand me. This is not a headquarters for the Church of God to rule over

**We are not
alone in this
battle for God.**

**Thank God for saints
with whom we can
fellowship!**

others. I just want to remind you of how God is looking out for us.

I cannot express how I felt when I first came to the Church of God in Newark, Ohio. I had never seen that many people of God gathered together in one place, and there was such a sweet fellowship! It was almost as if I had died and gone to Heaven. This congregation did not just happen. God gave good, godly leaders who feared God, sowed the seed of the Gospel, and preached the Word. They blew the trumpet. There were people who desired to serve God. They worked together and brought all this about.

The Faithfulness of God

Who gets the glory for all this? In 1 Corinthians 15:10 Paul said, "But by the grace of God I am what I am." Paul followed God, and the grace of God helped him, took care of him, and made him a great man for God. If someone holds you up and then turns you loose, what happens? You fall. Do not ever forget the heavenly places we enjoy today are because God is lifted up. God lifts us up when we serve Him. He is our Master.

My burden and intention are only to reflect upon what God has done and is doing. We are blessed because of God's faithfulness. I have never seen a Church of God congregation more willing to reach out and help others than the Newark congregation. It is a work of God. Brother Decker is my pastor while I attend camp meeting.

God's work is done decently and in order. I never want to be one who says, "No one will ever show me a better way."

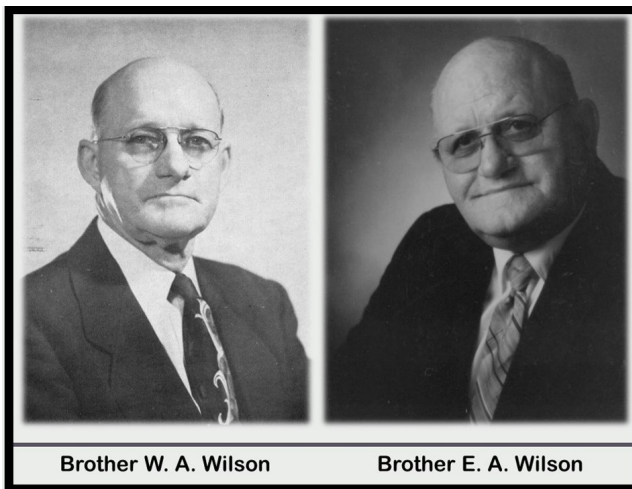
In 1925, God called Brother W. A. Wilson to pastor the work at Newark. He was the pastor for twenty-nine years until he passed away on October 2, 1954. The light of truth began shining in the city of Newark, Ohio. I never met Brother W. A. Wilson, but from what I have heard

about him, he was a true man of God. He loved the truth, preached the truth, and God honored him. The congregation grew, and God was working to give us a place where we could meet together for camp meetings.

Some ministers who once held the truth slipped away, but God had His eye on His people. While God was working with the Newark congregation, He had all His people in mind from around the world. The church has an outreach in the community because the Gospel light is shining, but the devil is always out to separate us.

A farm was purchased by the local congregation to build a campground on, and it became known as "God's Acres." One of the outstanding attributes, or characteristics, of the congregation as it came up was to invest in others. The camp meetings are not held to make money. The camp meetings are investing in the Kingdom of God, reaching out to win souls for God. What the congregation has done, and is doing, is because they love God. God knew His people needed a shelter from the storm.

Brother W. A. Wilson had a vision. He and some of the brethren gathered to look over the grounds in Newark, Ohio. He said, "They will come in from the east, west, north, and south, but I will not be here for the first



meeting." Shortly after his death, his son, Brother E. A. Wilson, became the pastor, and through him, God brought his vision to pass.

Brother E. A. Wilson was the pastor from 1954 to 1987. I am not bragging about people, but I am bragging about what God has done. Building the campground took much effort. God moved on the hearts of the saints of God and helped them. Someone said the definition of *joy* is, "Jesus first, others second, and yourself last." I believe we have seen this motto at work in the Newark congregation in years past and even now.

A Willingness to "Spend and Be Spent"

As I mentioned previously, one of the outstanding characteristics of this congregation is their unselfish love and desire to help others. Did you know that characteristic comes from God? God was looking out for His people. He saw fellows, such as you and me, who were raised in sectism, not knowing anything about the truth or living free from sin, and He knew we would need a place to go. I was not just passing by; God knew I would be here one day. We are reaping blessings because of the Newark congregation's faithfulness to God. God always needs vessels He can

work through.

The facilities at God's Acres were built to accommodate others. The congregation did not need all the dormitories and buildings for themselves. The local members have their own houses to live in, but they built accommodations and a dining hall for the saints to come from other places to worship and enjoy fellowship. They were willing to "spend and be spent."

Paul spoke in 2 Corinthians 12:15 about his willingness to "spend and be spent" for the cause of the Gospel. I want to convey how blessed we are, how much God loves us, and how His people love us. The great blessings we enjoy are because of what God has done.

Another outreach of the Newark congregation is *The Gospel Trumpeter*. It reaches all over this country and many foreign countries. I have never received a letter saying the work is too much of a burden and they want to discontinue the publication. Month after month, they keep publishing it.

Praise God for people who will not quit laboring for God. Do you think they may get tired? Do you think their labors may cut into their personal time? Do you know what keeps them going? The love of God constrains them to "spend and be spent." God's people put themselves out for God. No one will ever impress God by giving Him the leftovers that fall to the floor. God blesses us when we sacrifice, dig down deep, and give God our all, not just in finances, but in the time and dedication of our lives.

I believe the Newark congregation should be commended for their tireless efforts in working for God. The cost of publishing and mailing *The Gospel Trumpeter* is tremendous. You may ask,

"Why are they doing it?" They do it for others, so the Gospel can reach out through the printed word. Only Heaven knows how many souls have been reached through *The Gospel Trumpeter*.

Do not try to keep track of your good deeds and what you are giving and doing for God. You will not be effective if you attempt to keep track of all you do for God. He has the record.

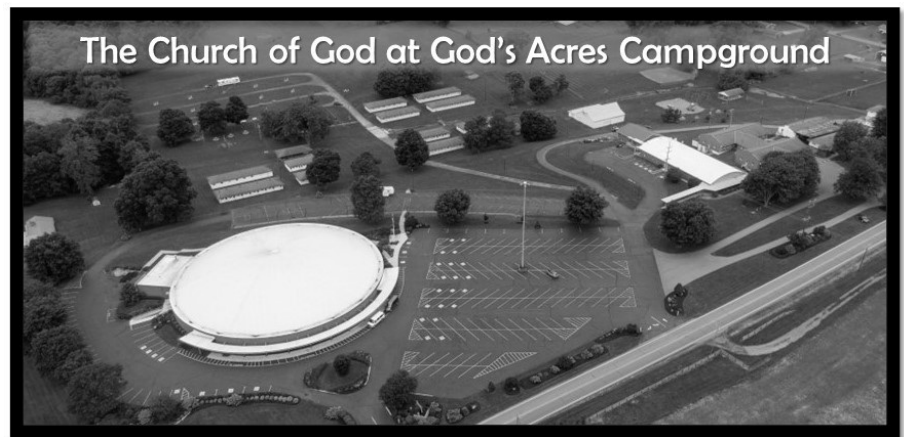
Spreading the Gospel

We need to be reminded of what God has done. Thank God for the Church of God. I never knew I could live free from sin, have victory in my life, and enjoy the things of God until I came to the Church of God and the trumpet began to blow. Some things I heard scorched my hide, so to speak, but there was such a sweet ring about it. Psalm 89:15 says, "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound." There is something beautiful about the truth being preached.

We really do not know how many eyes have looked at *The Gospel Trumpeter*, all because of a little congregation God blessed. It started small, but God caused it to grow into a large congregation. While they are sending *The Gospel Trumpeter* out to the world, they are laying up treasures on the other side. What a blessing!

It takes good, strong leaders to keep the truth in one place. In my short time on earth, I have seen people whom I thought were really eating the Word and obeying it, but they had other ideas working, and they no longer stand for the truth. It is sad. It is unusual for one congregation to enjoy more than one hundred years of God-called pastors in the same work and the truth going forward with God working and sanctioning it. It is not something that happens every day.

The Newark congregation



"They will come from the east, west, north, and south."

—Brother W. A. Wilson

has faithfully worked in the mission fields. Money has been given to win souls throughout the world. God's people do not have the attitude, "If it is not for me and mine, then I do not want anything to do with it." When you are working for God, laboring tirelessly, you are laying up treasures in Heaven.

Many have been jealous of the work in Newark, Ohio. I do not believe the godly men who built this place thought: "We need to build something to impress the world and be the talk of the town. We want to build a name for ourselves." God is not in any work that attempts to build something so they can make a name for themselves. Some have wanted to build their own work to make God's Acres look small. The ones who had a part in the building of the work at God's Acres set out to follow God.

In the mission fields, the Newark congregation stands out because of their love and concern for others. This is an attribute God has blessed them with. Giving has to come from the heart. Those who give recognize it comes from what God has given to them. The Newark congregation has worked to help others by reaching out and spreading the Gospel. The pastor, Brother Decker, talks about giving, not

only to the foreign missions, but also to local missions.

"This Is the Lord's Doing"

God laid a burden on my heart to bring this message so we, as the people of God, can see how blessed we are. God looks out for His people. Again, Brother W. A. Wilson had a vision of a campground, a place where the people of God could come together and sinners could be saved. He did not live to see it. Through Holy Ghost leadership, his son, Brother E. A. Wilson, became the pastor, and his vision was materialized. During this time, the Anderson movement was falling away.

In 1987, God called Brother Roger L. Decker to be the pastor in Newark, Ohio. He has been the pastor for thirty-six years. God has blessed the congregation with great leaders, but along with leadership, it takes great followers with commitment. God is working anywhere He can work. He has blessed the Newark congregation, not so they could keep it all for themselves, but so they could invest it in the things of God. They have done that over and over, and they are still doing it. Praise God for His goodness! The providence of God looked down through the ages and saw all this would take

place. We ought to recognize what God has done and is doing. We serve a mighty God!

Down through the dark night, God knew His people needed to be nourished. They needed a place to eat and enjoy the things of God. He gave them the wings of a great eagle to fly into a place where they could be nourished. In Matthew 21:42 Jesus quoted Psalm 118:23 and said, "This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes." No one can take the glory because if he did, it would be a flop.

Each one has a place to work in. If God blesses, he gets to stay in his place. No one should square his shoulders back, swell his chest out, and get the attitude, "I am the man." The work would not last long that way. If the saints stay humble, there is no telling where the work will go.

I tell people, almost everything I know I was taught. Some like to think they are a smart fellow. It is bad to lie to others, but it is especially bad to lie to yourself. Since I was taught by others, I have nothing to swell up with pride about. When a man of God is preaching, I want to tune my ear in and hear all I can. I have heard a lot of preaching, but I need to hear more and more.

I believe the Newark congregation has been, and still is, a lighthouse for God. Many folks were uprooted by the fall of the movement. People were looking, wanting to get a glimpse of light from individuals who were on fire for God. There were preachers, pastors, and sometimes entire congregations searching for a place where the truth was still being held. Can you imagine what that meant to people who were out on the sea of life, becoming discouraged or cast down?

Imagine looking for a place to go where you can hear the truth and get saved but finding nothing. Are you not glad there is a

place where you can come and kneel at an altar of prayer, have people pray with you, counsel with you, and birth you into the body of Christ?

A Spiritual Oasis

The Bible says in Isaiah 35:10, "And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." What if there was no Zion to return to? Thank God, there is a Zion to come to, a place where there is shouting, singing, and praising God. I am excited about this place! When people come, they leave telling others about it, trying to get people to come with them.

The devil likes to get individuals away from the fold and into a corner all by themselves. He will try to convince you: "There is no one really living right. No one wants the truth anymore." God brought about the Newark congregation so we would have a place to gather. This place has been a good influence and has kept ones from wandering around as they sail on the sea of life. Again, I am not trying to puff up the congregation. God needs vessels to work through. I am bragging about God.

God's Acres has been a lighthouse sending out a beacon to weary travelers. God's people in this evening time needed a place to go for camp meetings and fellowship. God found a people in Newark, Ohio, willing to walk in the old paths and proclaim the glorious truths that brought us out of Babylon and will keep us out. God is so good.

I came out of sectism, and I did not embrace the truth right away. Something in me wanted to resist it because I thought I knew something. Thank God, He kept working on me. God's Acres

has served as a spiritual oasis in this evening time. Praise God! People come here from all over to get their souls fed. By the time a camp meeting is over, we are ready to go on for God. I have been to many smorgasbords, places where people can eat all they want, and I have never left one hungry. Likewise, I have never left a camp meeting at God's Acres feeling spiritually hungry.

I have seen a picture of an oasis in a desert, a dry, barren, dusty land. In the Middle East, people ride camels in the desert. When they see a clump of trees, they head for them, knowing they will find water and shade. The camels drink the water. An oasis is a place of refuge and refreshing. God's Acres is a spiritual oasis. It reaches out to encourage God's people and to call out those who are in Babylonian captivity.

Revelation 18:4 says the call is, "Come out of her, my people." Come home to Zion, the Church of God, and come home to the truth. I heard the call to come out, and I came out. I was raised in sectism, but praise God, I heard the trumpet sounding and fled for my life, spiritually speaking.

In the early seventies, I started attending camp meetings at God's Acres regularly, except for a few years I regretfully stayed away. I have never met more loving, forgiving, and caring people than at God's Acres. Praise God, we have been blessed with real blessings! May God bless you. I want to encourage every child of God to stay true to God. We need each other.

(Compact Disc TR-1218)

**Brother Leamon Whitehead is the
pastor of the Church of God in
Minerva, OH.**



There is a children's song entitled "His Banner Over Me Is Love." Toddlers love to sing this song because it has lots of hand motions and clapping, but what do those words mean? It is often good to consider the meanings of the songs we sing. Song of Solomon 2:4 says, "He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love."

A banner is a standard, flag, ensign, or pennant. Early banners were often made from pieces of wood or metal placed on a pole. Some were painted with words or pictures (for instance, a family crest). The symbols on these banners represented something important to those carrying them. Consider the flag of the United States of America. It has fifty stars representing the fifty states of the union and thirteen stripes representing the thirteen original states. Many in our country treat the flag with great respect, considering it a symbol of pride and patriotism.

Numbers, Chapter 2, tells how the people of Israel set up camp during their forty years of wandering through the wilderness. Verse 34 says: "Thus did the people of Israel. According to all that the LORD commanded Moses, so they encamped by their standards, and so they set out, every one in his family, according to his fathers' house" (*Revised Standard Version*).

The tabernacle (God's dwelling place) was set up in the mid-

dle of the camp, and the twelve tribes encamped around it, three tribes on each side. The twelve tribes were divided into four camps, with three tribes in each camp. There were four separate banners, or standards, representing each camp. Those standards were: (1) a man, (2) a lion, (3) an ox, and (4) an eagle.

Numbers 2:2 says the Israelites were to "pitch [camp] by his own standard." It was a large encampment. Some might have had trouble finding where their tribes were. The banners, placed on poles, identified each camp, making it clear where every tribe was to pitch their tents. The banners helped the people to know where they belonged.

In Bible times, banners were also used to let soldiers know where to assemble during a battle. Certain banners were used to let the soldiers know it was time to go to war or to alert them that the enemy was coming. For people who lived in the countryside, a banner would alert them when danger was coming and to flee to the city. On the battlefield, a banner left unattended was a sign of defeat. More than likely, the enemy had captured or killed the standard bearer (the one who carried the flag).

The Civil War may have been the last time flags were used for communication. During World War I and World War II, soldiers used radios and electronic transmissions to communicate instead

of flags. Consider times of the past when flags were used. Great reverence was shown for these flags. In the United States army, there were flags for each regiment. Often, the regiments were created by the individual states. Men sacrificed their lives to protect their flags. They were considered very important! During a parade or ceremony, the flags were held high, and the soldiers marched behind them. Parading the flags in front of the soldiers reinforced what their regiment's flag looked like. They belonged to the army, but they also belonged to a particular regiment.

Flags were critical during the Civil War. They marked the regiment's position on the battlefield. If a soldier became separated from his regiment and cannons were being fired, the smoke made it difficult to see. The cannons were also loud, making it hard to hear the commander's orders. Even a bugle call could be hard to hear over the extreme noise in a battle of great magnitude. The soldiers were trained to look for and follow their regiment's flag. A song was written during the Civil War called "Rally Round the Flag." Part of the chorus says, "While we rally round the flag, boys, we rally once again, Shouting the battle cry of freedom!" There was greater safety and fighting power in being together with the regiment. They were taught to "rally round the flag!"

Designated soldiers who

carried the flag were in the Color Guard. Every regiment had two flags: the flag for the cause and the flag of the regiment. Flag bearers were usually unarmed, so soldiers were assigned to protect them. Carrying a flag that showed where the soldiers were made them a target for the enemy. They were conspicuous. To be a flag bearer was a prestigious position and high honor, but it was very dangerous. Many in the Color Guard during the Civil War lost their lives.

If a flag bearer lost the flag through neglect or carelessness, the entire regiment was shamed. It was considered a victory if soldiers caught the enemy's flag, but it was a great disgrace to lose their own flag. Great pride, prestige, and importance were placed on these flags. If the flag bearer was killed in action, another soldier would pick up the flag (getting it off the ground and lifting it up) and go forward.

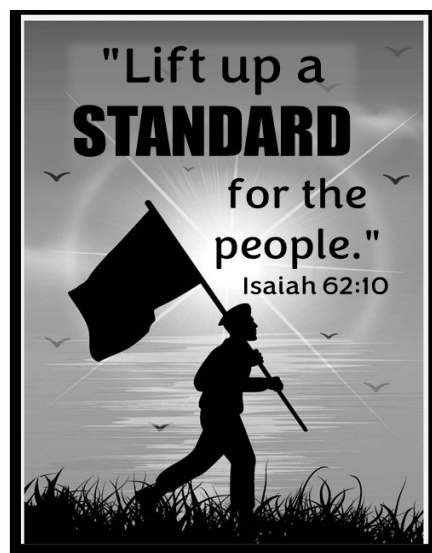
Considering how these flags were used can bring an understanding of the banner we read about in the Bible. What is "His banner"? Psalm 60:4 says, "Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth." Again, Song of Solomon 2:4 says, "His banner over me was love." A banner represents the cause of a family, beliefs, freedoms, or unity. The theme of the Christian's banner is "love."

First John 4:8 says, "God is love," and John 3:16 tells us, "For God so loved . . ." First John 3:1 reads, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us." God created us, and He loves us. He sent His Son to die so He could have a personal relationship with us. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). That is what Jesus did for us.

God is calling us to be in the Color Guard, or to be standard

bearers. A banner without someone to carry it will either be on display somewhere or laying down. God needs people to carry His banner, to lift it up. Isaiah 62:10 says, "Lift up a standard for the people." People need to see God's banner lifted up. Isaiah 13:2 states, "Lift ye up a banner upon the high mountain." People need to know this is the best way to live and that this is the way to salvation.

It is a great honor and privilege to carry God's banner. You will need courage because you will be conspicuous, a target for



the enemy. When you dress and act differently from the world, you will draw the enemy's fire through criticism or ridicule. People may make fun of you for carrying His banner.

If you lay down the flag and flee, you will not be the only one lost. In a literal battle, the flag showed the troops where to go and where to gather. What if the flag was moving in the wrong direction? More lives than the standard bearer's would be lost. We are called to carry the flag for Christ, but if we get discouraged because the battle is hot and life gets hard, we can be tempted to lay down the flag and let the enemy have it. Who would be affected if that happened? If the enemy captures your flag, he will

use your influence and the fact you turned your back on the Lord to hinder other people.

There are codes and rules for how we are to display, carry, respect, and take care of the American flag. Likewise, God has given a guidebook for His standard bearers—the Bible. Let us read a few Scriptures about how to carry God's banner, which is love. John 13:35 says, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." If we carry a banner that says "love," but we cannot tolerate some people and we let them know it, we should take that flag down because we are carrying something we do not believe in.

We need to love each other, and Matthew 5:44 says we need to love our enemies. It is easy to love people who love us, but much harder to love people who do not love us. God knew that, so He put that guideline in His Book. Matthew 19:19 says, "Love thy neighbour as thyself." If we carry His banner of love, we need to love our neighbors. Mark 12:30 states, "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." John 14:15 tells us, "If ye love me [God], keep my commandments."

Romans 12:9 reads, "Let love be without dissimulation [or pretending]." In God's guidebook for being a standard bearer, He says: "Do not pretend. Love everybody without dissimulation." Romans 13:10 says, "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour." Galatians 5:13 says, "By love serve one another." Proverbs 10:12 states, "Love covereth all sins." If someone does us wrong or treats us wrong, it is hard to ignore. Human nature wants to tell other people how aggravated we are. However, love covers "all sins," or wrongs.

Our dog often leaves dead

possums in our yard or on our sidewalk, and we have to bury them. If not, those dead, smelly remains would be there for all to see. What if every time someone hurt us, we left the remains on the sidewalk, so to speak, for us to look at, think about, and show to people? Love chooses not to think about it or talk about it. Love will cover it (just as we buried the dead possums). Love will not give life to hurt feelings by continually thinking about what happened.

If we are standard bearers, His banner over us is love. We need to portray that love, not just on a pole we are holding up (our words, actions, and Christian

dress standard), but because we truly believe what the banner says. Our lives must represent the love the banner stands for.

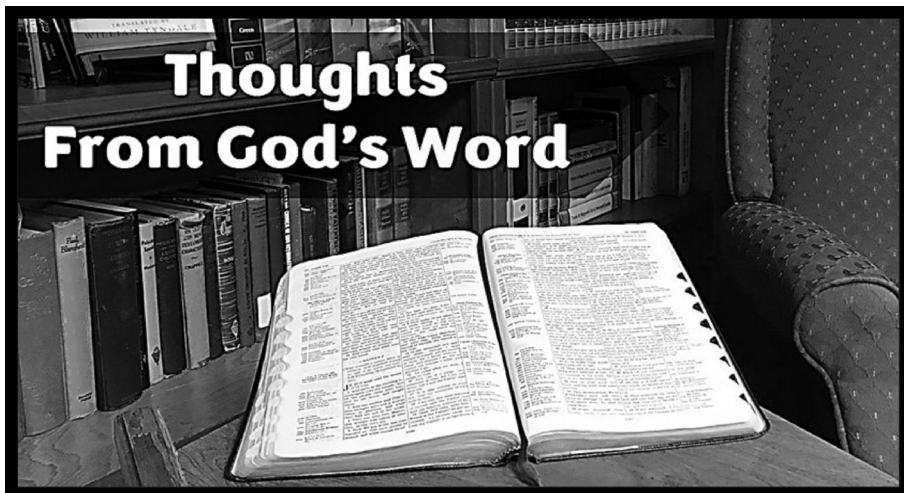
Imagine a Union soldier carrying a Union flag while wearing a Confederate uniform. That would be confusing. Imagine a Christian carrying God's banner, which is love, but not wearing the uniform God has provided. Isaiah 61:10 says our uniform is a "robe of righteousness." Christians wear modest apparel, talk and act godly, and have the right attitudes. They cannot wear the uniform of the opposing army and expect to lead people to God. If someone sees the flag but not the proper uniform, they will be

confused. In reality, the enemy has captured the flag.

People need to see this banner. God wants us to lift it high in our lives through our actions, dress, and attitudes. Hopefully, the next time you hear the song, "His Banner Over Me Is Love," you will remember this lesson. Truly, it is an honor and privilege to be standard bearers and to carry this banner for the Lord.

Sister Sheri Strelecky

Sister Sheri and her husband, Brother Steve, are the youth leaders at the Church of God in Newark, OH.



"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you."

1 Peter 4:12

When you get sick or have an infection, your body may develop a fever. Although it may be painful and not enjoyable, it is the body's natural response. Fever increases the body temperature, making it harder for viruses and bacteria to survive. It triggers the immune system to fight and kill the bacteria.

God allows us to go through trials to help get rid of spiritual bac-

teria. Just as fevers fight infections that are not supposed to be present in the body, through trials, God is working to remove bad qualities in our lives and make us more like Him. God will remove the bad bacteria and infections so we may more clearly reflect His image in our lives.

God knows how much we can take. First Corinthians 10:13 says God "will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." God will be with you in the trial. Isaiah 43:2 says, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with

thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee."

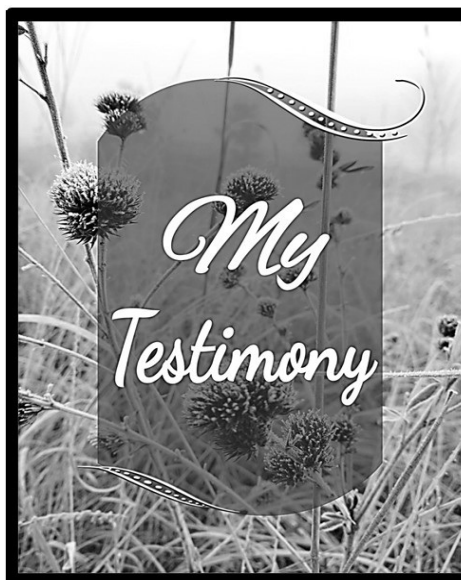
God will give you strength. Second Corinthians 12:9 says: "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." God will be in the fire with you. Daniel 3:25 says, "I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God."

God wants to make you a vessel of honor. Second Timothy 2:21 says, "If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work."

If you are going through a trial, let God's refining do its work so you may be made into a vessel of honor.

Brother Alex Orr

Brother Alex Orr attends the Church of God in Newark, OH.



Ronda's Redemption Story

Sister Ronda Eldreth

I would like to paraphrase the four chapters in the Book of Ruth, which describe Ruth's life. She had married an Israelite, whose mother was Naomi. Ruth had been married to Naomi's son for ten years when he died, and she lost everything. Naomi was also widowed and wanted Ruth to return to her native city and reunite with her family to live and be prosperous.

Ruth refused to leave her mother-in-law. She stated in Ruth 1:16-17, "Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me."

Ruth went with Naomi into Bethlehem. Naomi's husband had kin there, Boaz, who was a wealthy man. Ruth went to work in his fields, and he gave her food to eat. The account goes on to tell how Boaz bought the land and then married Ruth. She became known throughout Bethlehem. Ruth was an important ancestor of King David. Her life had been in shambles, for she had lost her husband and her fortune, but it was brought back full circle because of her devotion to her mother-in-law and to God.

Although Ruth was a victim of circumstances, I also suffered losses in my life, but the losses I experienced were due to my own choices. I encourage you to read the account of Ruth. I refer to it as "Ruth's Redemption Story." I would like to take you on a journey of "Ronda's Redemption Story."

Most stories begin with "Once upon a time" or "In the beginning." I want to start "Ronda's Redemption Story" with the familiar Scripture found in Proverbs 22:6. It says, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." One of my first childhood memories was church. Mom and Dad took me to church when I was five years old. I do not remember much before that age. I was the only child between my parents, and I came later in their lives. I was not raised with my other half-siblings.

As a child, I was what Mom called "unhinged." Today, the proper label would be ADD (attention deficit disorder). I could not sit still. I dreaded going to church because I knew what would happen when I got home. Proverbs 13:24 reads, "He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes." My parents believed in "spare the rod, spoil the child" until I learned how to behave in church.

My dad drove the church bus.

He would take Mom and me home, then finish his bus route. I learned if I could go to bed and be asleep before he got home, sometimes I would get out of the disciplining. He soon caught on to that. Thankfully, Mom and Dad did not quit or give up on me because I was loud or obnoxious in church. I am thankful they kept bringing me until I learned how to behave in the services.

If you have little ones who embarrass you or do things you feel are disturbing the services, stay faithful and keep bringing them. Jesus said in Matthew 19:14, "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven." Your children are the future church. God needs them.

From a young age, the church has been an important part of my life. I grew up attending the Church of God at God's Acres. There was always something to do for the Lord. Mom helped a sister with a story hour for the children who lived in the same apartment building. I am thankful for my childhood heritage. I lived a good life with parents who loved me and loved God.

God's Acres is blessed with a great outreach and many members. This was my life, where I fit in. My friends were at church. I went to public school and made friends, but my meaningful relationships were with my friends at church.

I cannot remember the exact time I gave my heart to the Lord as a young person, but growing up, it was my desire to be in church and live for God. I wanted to go to the Heaven Brother Wilson and Brother Decker preached about. There were things I did not understand, but I cannot remember a time while I was a teenager that I gave my parents any issues about going to church or participating in the services.

Living for the Lord was more difficult for me to do in school. I looked different. Today, the times have evolved. More people are advocating to live what you feel, be free, and express yourself. Looking different may have a different meaning

today. However, in 1986, being the only girl at school who wore skirts and had long hair was the reason to be picked on and made fun of. I am not making excuses. Many have sacrificed for the Gospel and even lost their lives, which is nothing compared to my personal persecution. God helped me, and I made it through high school and graduation.

I believed God's plan for my life was what most Christian families believed. I prayed for a husband and thought I had found the right one. I had dated others, but this particular one seemed right. He was my best friend. When he asked me to marry him, I did. At nineteen years old, I was a new wife with a full-time job, adult bills, and I lived in a new town almost two hours away from home and church. Slowly, bit by bit, God was left out. I was praying less and less. Church attendance was down to once a month. Before I knew it, life had taken over, and God had been forsaken. Backsliding does not happen overnight.

At the beginning of the century, in January 2000, on New Year's Eve, my husband told me he was moving on and ending our marriage. I had no idea he was battling thoughts that our marriage was not working. I was shocked! I did not see it coming.

I was single for twelve days when my dad died suddenly. He was working in the church bus garage and was found dead on the floor in the bathroom. Four months later, on her birthday, my sister committed suicide. She left behind my niece and nephew who were six and eight.

During this time, my mother had allowed someone to move into her home, and she brought her foster children with her. This was Mom's attempt to keep her home and pay her bills. My mother suffered greatly. I cannot describe the hurt, pain, and emotional stress Mom went through. I tried to help Mom the best I could, but I was hurting too. I tried to reach out to God in devastation, but confusion set in. First Corinthians 14:33 says, "For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as

in all churches of the saints."

I became unsettled. Within the next year, my divorce was finalized. I dove into my career while doing my best to help my mother emotionally and with her foster children. Mom's health dwindled, and she was unable to attend church. In July 2002, I found Mom dead in bed.

I still did not hit rock bottom, but I was not far from it. I had befriended a young man who also went to church. He was several years younger, but I knew him and his family. He had recently lost an important person in his life, so we had something in common. It sparked my interest. He understood me, listened to me, and gave me attention. Since he grew up in church and knew the truth (even though I knew he was not a Christian, but then again, neither was I professing to be saved), I thought this was the next chapter in my life. I thought I found where I fit in. We both attended church when we started dating.

This is one of the most important parts of my life I want to share. I married the second time against godly counsel. My pastor specifically advised me against my relationship. Instead of listening, it had the opposite effect. I fled and got married anyway. That was the beginning of my downward slide to the bottom. I will add this: a person who sits in a church pew may not have a desire to be saved or have the same commitment to God as you do if you are saved and living for God. This was my second marriage. Both men were from church. It is important to seek the will of God. Make sure the one you are interested in is grounded in the things of God before you enter into any kind of relationship.

For the next fifteen years, I lived an unimaginable life. Things quickly spiraled downward. I thought I was happy, and I thought I had surely been through enough that God would "give me a break." But I had yet to call on Him. Matthew 6:33 states, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all



these things shall be added unto you." What things? The things of God. Fundamentally, I knew this. I also grew up hearing the song:

*Sin will take you further
than you want to go,
Slowly, but wholly, taking control,
Sin will leave you longer than
you want to stay,
Sin will cost you far more than
you want to pay.*

The devil is a mastermind in his position. He can make the most horrific things look like an amusement park or a vacation. One of the worst pictures he can paint is a way to escape. I quit my job. Depression and anxiety were so bad I could not function. My mental state was all messed up. Some of the problems were from trying different antidepressants to find one that worked. Many of my possessions were sold to pay for the prescription drugs, just so I could escape the reality I had put myself in. I could not drive due to anxiety, so I did not need a car. When I could, I relied on government assistance to eat (if I ate). At one point, the only person I communicated with was my mother-in-law, whom I knew loved and prayed for me. She helped me as much as she could, and I will forever be thankful for that.

I spent days in bed, only getting up to cook or do something for my husband. My diabetes went out of control. Often it was more than 600. I had no medical insurance, so I could not get treatment. I could not afford healthy food, so most of my

diet consisted of potatoes or ramen noodles because they were cheap. The anxiety had me so scared I could not use the restroom or take a shower by myself. I freaked out in the grocery store. So if I could go, and if I had a ride, it would be in the middle of the night. Several times, I remember leaving the cart in the aisle and running out because of the panic I was feeling. I gained lots of weight. The only peace I had was when I was sleeping, so I did this often. I would take medication to make me sleep so I could escape my reality.

Times of clarity and hope were few and far between. I would get a glimpse of a church song, or a memory of my childhood would come across my mind or through a dream. My dog, Emera, was of no value to anyone but me. I give her partial credit for my life today. She was the reason I got up in the morning. She was the reason I lived. She needed me. Who would feed her, love her, or take care of her if I did not?

About the middle of the fifteenth year of my marriage, I was approved for some financial assistance. With this came medical insurance. At the time, I recognized God had a hand in it, but it still was not enough for me to wake up and see my true need for Him. This relief was temporary. It ran out, as everything does when you live a sinful life.

My gains soon turned into losses again. I lost my home, my car, and most of my possessions. There were mass amounts of time with no electricity, gas, or water. Honestly, and I say this as humbly as I know how, I would rather be hot than cold. I cannot explain to you how miserable it was to have on three layers of clothing, my shoes, five blankets, and two dogs in bed and still be freezing because there was no heat. It was below zero outside, and that is where I had to use the restroom because I had no toilet or water. I went without any personal care products such as soap, toilet paper, or feminine prod-

ucts. I am ashamed to even admit this, but I went weeks without taking a shower.

Reminiscing, I cannot even fathom how I had allowed myself to get this low in life. Once the small amount of money I received was allotted for a place to stay, some kind of transportation, food, and utilities, there was nothing left. Of course, the most important things in my mind were met, the habits of life. I always seemed to have enough to support my habits.

My adopted sister brought one of the greatest gifts and blessings to my life, her daughter, Rileigh Raeann. She was introduced to me on May 12, 2012. I was once a foster parent in 2009, and my first foster baby was

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placed in my arms at three days old. This was a ray of light for me at that time. I had someone to love and to love me back. My desire to be a mom was fulfilled by him. Those same feelings flooded me when I became an aunt.

God began to deal with me again. My sister started going to church and got saved. She lived the life of a Christian before me, unmoved by my influence. Yet I still rejected God's calling. My sister provided a good escape for me. She would come and pick me up for the weekend. This was so exciting and meant the world to me. Often, it was my chance to take a shower with soap. I got warm at her house and had something good to eat. Sadly, it did not happen often because we lived an hour apart, and the situation I was living in often hindered her from coming.

I am only sharing my feelings and my reality. I am not accountable for the choices made by others. I recognized I messed up. I chose the places I was in. There were times when those who really cared about me would beg me to get help. I did not want to help myself. I felt I deserved everything that was happening to me. I will never blame anyone else for the life I lived.

Rock bottom finally hit in October of 2018. My second husband told me he needed time to figure out his life, and he wanted me to move out. I will forever thank him for that. Finally, I realized I had to do something and either learn how to sink or swim. I was able to obtain a small apartment. The next month I moved out. This was the beginning of my journey of redemption. It did not happen overnight. Actually, it took years.

Sadness came over me after I moved out. I cannot describe the loneliness I felt. Debt was piling up. I was more depressed at this time in my life than through any of my losses. Days and nights ran together. I was stuck in that little apartment, and I had no car. My sister would come when I needed something. It was a relief when my sister allowed me to move in with her in exchange for watching Rileigh while she worked.

My journey back to God was getting closer. Thankfully, I began to get better mentally. I started driving again. Soon I got a car. Once the divorce became finalized, I did better financially. God started dealing with me again. I began watching church services online through Facebook. I listened to Christian songs on YouTube and communicated with church friends on Facebook. My emotions came out through comments I made on Facebook. The question "What's on your mind" became my way of expressing what I felt inside. I began to see there were people who cared about me through their responses to my cries for help.

I realized people were praying for me when I thought no one cared.

Technology, when used right, is a great thing. It was a major tool in my life that helped me get back to the Lord. Many souls are reached by the livestreaming of the worship services. It is a great way to plant the seed of the Gospel. Sister Halene Decker reached out to me through a private message one day, and that was another step in my journey back to God. Her message simply said: "We're praying for you. Revival is with Brother Dishman next week. Come see us."

Sunday came, and I went to the services in Newark, Ohio. It was about a fifty-minute drive from where my sister lived in Coshocton, Ohio. On this day, I may have had a fourth of a tank of gas and no money to add more. Of course, I always seemed to be able to smoke. On that drive, I had no clue it was the last cigarette I would ever put to my lips. I cannot remember the song the group was singing, but I knew I had to get to the altar and pray.

I was sick of the way I was living. I was tired of the tears of sorrow and woe. I was mad at the person I had let myself become. I had no idea how I was going to get home that day or back to church for the next service. Nothing really mattered when God stepped in. I gave it all to Him on my way down the aisle. I wanted to be free from everything that weighed me down.

The love I felt that day and every day since is indescribable. One sister said, "This really is the best life, Ronda." Another sister said, "Welcome home." I finally fit in again. February 21, 2021, started Ronda's redemption. Since that day, my life, like Ruth's, has come full circle. God allowed me to bring back the "old Ronda." I have times of sadness. Memories bring back heartache, but I have a refuge in my Lord! Going through loss and devastation without an outlet is unimaginable to explain. Now I have a hope, and it is in Jesus.

Lamentations 3:17-24 sums up my life. It reads: "And thou hast

removed my soul far off from peace: I forgot prosperity. And I said, My strength and my hope is perished from the LORD: Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the worm-wood and the gall.

"My soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me. This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope. It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him."

A few months after the Lord saved me, I was introduced to a wonderful, godly man who lived about three hundred miles away. He has been the greatest gift God has blessed me with besides salvation. He is a member of the Church of God congregation where my friend, Brother Allen Borders, is the pastor. The most important thing I was searching for in a companion, if God had one in His plan for my life (I was sure I had blown all my chances), was that he is a Christian and would sit beside me in church. I am thankful for my husband, Danny. He has a sense of humor, and we complement each other. Along with Danny came his sister, sweet Carolyn. I sometimes wish Mom could see the way God answered her prayer.

I am so thankful God was not finished with me. Ronda's Redemption Story has brought me the best life, and it still continues today. I want everyone to experience the life I live. I am serious when I say it is perfect. Danny could not be a better match for me. The best thing about our marriage is communication. I can talk to him about anything. Danny is the kindest, most caring, humble, and loving man. He tells me he waited and prayed for me for more than twenty years. I am blessed God put us together.

God has also provided me with a wonderful opportunity for employment. I am overwhelmed by His goodness. I live in North Carolina now, and the congregation here has

accepted me from the very first visit. I am humbled by their kindness. I fit in. As my sweet friend would say, "I am blessed with the best!"

It is my desire to be like Ruth. Ruth 3:11 says, "Now, my daughter [speaking of Ruth], fear not; I will do to thee all that thou requirest: for all the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman." Proverbs 31:10 says, "Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies." Dictionary.com says *virtuous* means "conforming to moral and ethical principles; morally excellent; upright." My moral and ethical principles are now what God desires for my life.

Again, Ruth's circumstances were different from mine, but the main focus is, Ruth received redemption. Her losses were fulfilled by her desire to be faithful. Ronda's redemption has had losses fulfilled by my desire to live for the Lord and be faithful. I am humbled by God's goodness and where He has brought me from.

I share my life with you from a humble heart. I am hopeful I can help someone with my personal testimony. I have been real about my life and personal struggles. Life is difficult. We all go through trials. If you are battling some things I have described, do not leave God out. Living a life of hope and having God to lean on is amazing. He gives grace through loss and hope when all seems hopeless. He brings peace at life's hardest times. I have found He has never left me alone.

I am thankful the Lord never gave up on me and for His goodness and the blessings He has bestowed on my life. It is my desire to live as 1 Chronicles 28:9, which says, "Know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind."

Sister Ronda Rae Eldreth

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Brother Donald Orr

John 21:1 After these things Jesus shewed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and on this wise shewed he himself.

2 There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples.

3 Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing.

4 But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus.

5 Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No.

6 And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.

7 Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea.

8 And the other disciples came in a little ship; (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits,) dragging the net

with fishes.

9 As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread.

10 Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught.

11 Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken.

12 Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine. And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord.

13 Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise.

14 This is now the third time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead.

15 So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.

16 He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

17 He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest

thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

Note the exchange Jesus had with Peter. He said "feed my lambs" once and "feed my sheep" twice. The setting with the fish and the bread was symbolic of the spiritual message to Peter. The disciples were hungry after fishing all night, but the food Peter needed to feed Jesus' lambs and sheep was spiritual. When the Comforter came on the Day of Pentecost, Peter had food to feed the people. He brought a message directly from God. How do we know it was spiritual food? There was a response recorded in Acts 2:37, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

I wonder if what Jesus said came back to Peter, "Feed my sheep; feed my lambs." Jesus had prepared the food by the sea, where the disciples were. It was not in some faraway place. I want to bring some thoughts about the table God has prepared for us to eat spiritually.

The Lord's Table

In Ezekiel 41:22, you can read about the dimensions of the literal table in the Old Testament tabernacle, or temple, that was before the Lord. It reads, "The altar of wood was three cubits high, and the length thereof two cubits; and the corners thereof, and the length thereof, and the walls thereof, were of wood: and he said unto me, This is the table that is before the LORD." Another passage of Scripture in Exodus 25:30 talks about the "shewbread."

There are many tables mentioned in the Old Testament. Psalm 23:5 says, "Thou preparest

a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over." God has a place for each one of us. Even in the midst of our enemies, we can be securely fed and kept at His table.

I would like to paint a picture in your mind. Imagine the King of king's, or the Lord's, table. This table is solid, sturdy, and big enough for all to sit under. All who desire can have a seat. The picture is of the family of God sitting at the Lord's table.

Let us consider some aspects of this table. The utensils on this table are the best; everything matches. The plates all stack together perfectly. Think about a table spread where everything is matching and perfectly fits so that it all works together. There is no imperfection at this table. Everything serves the purpose of the Lord. The pots and the serving plates are the vessels of the Lord. Each one is marked with the seal of the Lord. Are we not vessels for the Lord's use? Christians are willing vessels for the Master's use, and we are marked with a seal as well.

The cups are crystal. Why are they crystal? If you hold a crystal glass or goblet and run your finger around it, it makes a certain ring. That is how you know it is pure crystal. The cups of the Lord have a distinct ring to them. They are instruments of the Lord. Everything on His table is perfectly clean. There are no spots or imperfections in the vessels. There are many tables presented in the world, but there is only one table of the Lord.

Let us look at some other tables. Some tables are broken down. They are not solid, sturdy, or secure. Have you ever sat at a table that was not level? Maybe you put a shim under it, but nothing ever sits right. There are problems with other tables people sit at. The plates are scattered with different patterns and noth-

ing matches. They are just thrown together, bits and pieces of all kinds of utensils. Then, to top it all off, there are spots on the forks. Have you ever been given utensils at a restaurant that were dirty or had water spots on them? These other tables have major problems and issues.

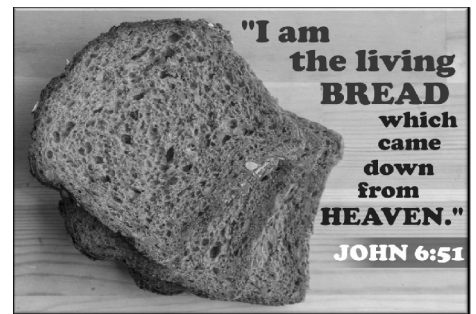
Perhaps you have been to a fancy restaurant. There is a certain level of expectation because of the higher prices. What if the tables had issues or there was grime on the plates? Many are trying to feast on these types of tables, spiritually speaking. May God help us. Our friends and relatives who have turned to one of these other tables need an awakening moment. The charming effects of the snake charmers have blinded their eyes. They cannot see the condition of the tables or the food.

The Bread of Life

The pastor is the waiter. He brings the food to the King's table by presenting the Gospel. The ministers are also servers who wait on the souls at the table of the Lord. They present the Gospel and doctrines of the truth to strengthen, encourage, and improve with all love. There is no stale bread or expired meat on this table. God has the best, and we are to present our best. Everything is to be properly seasoned.

The food at the Lord's table is the best. The water in the glass is crystal clear. There are no impurities in this water. It is 100 percent the water of life. The Bible says in Psalm 34:8, "O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him." The bread is fresh, warm, and ready to eat.

Jesus said in John 6:48-51: "I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from



heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." This was fulfilled on the Cross.

Verses 52-60 state: "The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat? Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.

"As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever. These things said he in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum. Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it?"

They were having a hard time because Jesus was speaking of spiritual food. They did not understand it when He said, "I am the bread of life." For the newborn, this table has the milk of the Word. First Peter 2:2 reads, "As newborn babes, desire the

sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby."

The Meat of the Gospel

Are you starting to get a picture of what is on the table of the Lord? What other kind of food is on the table? There is the meat of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, or the doctrines and teachings that give you strength. The pastor gives us strong meat, and if we eat it, we will be healthy and grow spiritually. It will strengthen us.

I want to list some meat we are being fed. One is the truth about the Trinity. We are taught by the Word of God about the Holy Spirit. Many are confused about the Holy Spirit. We are given the filet of holiness. The meat of the Word is something we can chew on, and if we digest it, it will help us.

How about living free from sin? That is another part of the food. Jesus taught the ordinances. Many in the world observe one or two of them, but they do not observe all three. They have a problem with the ordinance of feet washing because at their table they do not have all the truth. The government of the church is spelled out in the Word of God. We are also fed the filets of forgiveness, restitution, and modesty. Are you going to eat all these truths?

The new birth, salvation, unity, and sanctification are all elements of truth. Many have no concept of what being set apart really means because they are eating at a different table. Divine healing is another truth in the Word of God. The end time, Judgment Day, Heaven, and hell are all doctrines presented at this table. Why would you go to any other table when the best food is found at the Lord's table?

The love of God is so sweet and beautiful. It fills the longing in the soul. One song says, "We possess it right here when He saves

from all sin." The love of God is like a warm cinnamon roll that melts in your mouth. Feeling God's love down in your heart is amazing.

The Lord wants us to eat a balanced diet, good for spiritual growth. Farmers who want their animals properly raised and healthy are very careful about what they feed them. It is their livelihood. They do not feed anything that could make the whole herd of cattle or flock of sheep sick and die. Ones have perfected the science of knowing exactly what a cow needs to produce better milk. The cows are given a balance of minerals and grains to help them produce more milk. They use technology in an ear tag to keep better track of each cow. They know exactly how much each cow eats and how much milk she produces.

A Brazilian Steakhouse is an "all you can eat" restaurant. Unlike a buffet, patrons do not serve themselves. Instead, they are given a token. One side is red, which means: "I do not want any more meat. I am finished eating." The other side is green, which means, "I want more meat." As the waiters walk around with meat on a skewer, they carve off whatever the customer asks for. The guests have the ability to say yes or no to what is being served. When you sit at the Lord's table, does your token say: "I want more meat. Whatever you have, bring it on"?

Are You Ready to Eat?

Are you ready to be fed what the Holy Spirit has prepared and

the waiter is serving? Or are you looking at your phone during the services and not really paying attention to what the pastor has to offer? Are you partaking in the best the Lord has for you? I ask these questions with all love to challenge you.

Some arrive at the table but refuse to eat. When you do not eat, it causes health problems. Remember, we are talking about eating a spiritual meal. Failure to eat suggests you are full, sick, or cannot eat. We should always have an appetite for more of Jesus. You may need to do a self-diagnostic check. Are you ready to eat what God has prepared for you, or is there a problem? If there is a problem, you can take care of it, if you recognize it. Many people do not eat because there is something wrong.

First Corinthians 10:21 says, "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils." Malachi 1:7, 12 reads: "Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the LORD is contemptible. . . . But ye have profaned it, in that ye say, The table of the LORD is polluted; and the fruit thereof, even his meat, is contemptible."

There are many reasons people are not eating, but there is a woe to them who corrupt the food of the Lord by purposely feeding the wrong food. Some ministers try to feed the people of God without the Spirit of God. God has their number, so to speak. Sometimes, people fail to realize it is the King's table. This is the Lord's business and His people. It is not Brother So-and-So's people.

If you are sitting at the Lord's table, you are sitting at the feet of Jesus waiting to be fed the best food. God has the best food and the best table. There is no second class. There





are different qualities of beef in the United States: prime, choice, or select. God's meat is the best. You cannot get any better than the best.

We can anticipate good things from the Lord's table. Our souls can be in communion with God. It is a beautiful place, a picture of the true Church of God. The table of the Lord is full, just as the net was full of "fishes" in verse 11 of our Scripture text.

The table of the Lord is a happy place. There are no sad, forlorn people sitting at His table unless there is something wrong or they are sick. It is a happy, contented place for the saints of God to dwell. I am hoping you can visualize what I am trying to get across.

If you have spiritual eyes to see the vision of the Church of God, no one can take that from you. It establishes a point in your life where you know you belong. Spiritual vision needs to be personal. The call going out to all who are saved is, "Come and dine." As the disciples reached the shore, pulled the net up, and counted the fish, Jesus said, "Come and dine." We can pull up our spiritual chair, sit at the table of the Lord, and be prepared to be fed the best of the best. Compare a lush green pasture for sheep with sitting at the feet of Jesus, eating the best spiritual food.

Much is said about safe spaces today. That is a buzzword in schools and other places. The

ultimate safe place is where God is and where the Word of God is preached, where it is not metered out with man's ideas, but it is preached to its fullest. Thank the Lord, there is a place we can come, be fed well, and grow in the things of the Lord.

A Balanced Spiritual Diet

God-called pastors are doing their best to present the Gospel so we can all grow in the things of the Lord. They are called to present a balanced spiritual diet. God knows what each of us needs. The Shepherd keeps track of His people as the farmer keeps track of his flock. God tells the waiter what to bring our way so we can eat the proper food to help us in our lives.

Consider the other tables I mentioned. They are using utensils, plates, and cups that do not match. They are presenting a Gospel with holes in it. There are problems with the food they are serving. Their doctrine is poisonous.

If we are at our place at the Lord's table, God will provide what we need. In my mind, I see a large table with the saints of God sitting around it, waiting and anticipating being fed the best God has to offer. The pastor, the waiter, serves us what God has prepared. It is your choice to accept it, but if you do not accept it, you will either starve or go somewhere else and be fed polluted food. Ultimately, your spiritual health will suffer if you are not eating what God has prepared for you and getting all the nutrition you need. Remember, it is a balanced, spiritual diet, and everything is prepared for our spiritual nutrition.

There is a call to the lost. Matthew 11:28 says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." If you are lost, you need to be born into the family of God so you can

enjoy the best food in the world. Your appetite changes when you get saved. You will love the things you once hated and hate the things you once loved. The change is found in old-time salvation. You can be a part of God's chosen people and come and dine with the redeemed.

A song entitled "Come and Dine," written by Charles B. Widmeyer, says:

*Jesus has a table spread
Where the saints of God are fed,
He invites His chosen people,
"Come and dine";
With His manna He doth feed
And supplies our every need:
Oh, 'tis sweet to sup with Jesus
all the time!*

*"Come and dine," the Master
calleth, "Come and dine";
You may feast at Jesus' table all
the time;
He Who fed the multitude,
turned the water into wine,
To the hungry calleth now,
"Come and dine."*

*The disciples came to land,
Thus obeying Christ's command,
For the Master called unto them,
"Come and dine";
There they found their heart's
desire,
Bread and fish upon the fire;
Thus He satisfies the hungry
every time.*

*Soon the Lamb will take His bride
To be ever at His side,
All the host of heaven will
assembled be;
Oh, 'twill be a glorious sight,
All the saints in spotless white;
And with Jesus they will feast
eternally.*

The call is for God's people to "come and dine." I am afraid too many people are dining at another table instead of the Lord's table. It is only a matter of time until the results of dining at a different table will be manifest.

They will become sick and spiritually dead. It is serious if you are not dining when Jesus has the table spread.

Are you dining at the Lord's table? Or have you put up your red token that says, "No more"?

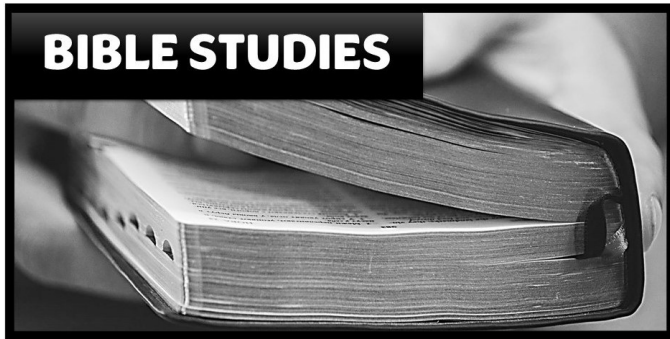
Only you can answer that. It needs to be green: "Bring on the doctrine, the strong meat, the living bread, and the living water! Bring those things I need for my soul to make it to Glory."

You can be blessed because

Jesus has the table spread.

(Compact Disc TR-2405)

Brother Donald Orr attends the Church of God in Newark, OH.



BIBLE CHARACTER STUDY: ONESIMUS

SCRIPTURES: Philemon 1:1-19; Colossians 4:9

CONTEXT:

Onesimus was a slave to Philemon of Colossae. Because slaves in the Roman Empire outnumbered the citizens, harsh punishments were enforced to keep the slaves under control. A runaway slave could be branded on the forehead, have his bones broken, or be sent to the arena to fight wild beasts. Owners were permitted to inflict any punishment, including death. Slaves were valuable property. (In A.D. 79, a slave was recorded as being sold for 625 denarii—the equivalent value is more than \$27,000 in today's dollars.)

Onesimus was a runaway slave who came in contact with the Apostle Paul and was saved. Paul wrote the Epistle of Philemon to Onesimus' owner. "This Epistle stands alone among Paul's letters in being addressed to a private Christian, in being entirely occupied with a small, though very singular private matter" (commentary).

CONSIDER:

Why would a letter, written about one specific incident, be included in the Bible? Why did Christians own slaves? Was Paul supporting slavery by returning Onesimus to Philemon?

Philemon 1:1 Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy our brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellowlabourer.

Paul wrote this letter as a Roman prisoner (described in Acts 28:30-31) while awaiting trial before Caesar. He

was confined to a house and chained to a soldier. Paul preached from this house, and this is possibly how Onesimus came in contact with Paul, heard the Gospel, and was saved. Onesimus became like a son to Paul.

Paul was also responsible for Philemon's conversion. He was a dear friend of Paul ("our dearly beloved"). Notice, in this Epistle, Paul does not identify himself as an Apostle in the salutation (as he did in the majority of his other Epistles). Paul was appealing to Philemon as a friend. He was not *ordering* but *asking*.

In this letter, Paul was endeavoring to reconcile the runaway slave and his master. It was unlikely a slave would voluntarily return to his slavery, given the harsh punishment that might await him. Legally, Philemon was within his rights to exact such punishment. Paul was working to help Onesimus make things right with Philemon, and he was also asking Philemon to be merciful.

Philemon 1:2 And to our beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellowsoldier, and to the church in thy house.

Apphia was believed to have been Philemon's wife. One commentary states, "In the customs of that day, Philemon's wife Apphia was the supervisor of the slaves in the household, so the letter concerned her as well." Paul's affectionate address ("beloved Apphia") shows not only did she hold a physical position as a leader in her home but that she obviously was an integral part involved in the church that was in her house.

Archippus was believed to have been Philemon's son or an important member of the household. The term "our fellowsoldier" appears to denote he was a minister of the Gospel. It was crucial for the entire household to be open to Onesimus' return. (Compare with the anger of the older brother when the prodigal son returned.)

"To the church in thy house": in the early days, Christians met in homes, often called "house churches." The Colossian church met in the home of Philemon.

Philemon 1:3 Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

A common Greek greeting was "grace," and the usual Jewish greeting was "peace" (shalom). Paul often combined these two words in his salutation. The early church was composed of Jews and Greeks who had recently converted to Christianity.

Philemon 1:10 I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds:

11 Which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me.

Onesimus means "profitable." Paul stressed the fact that in the past, Onesimus had been "unprofitable" to Philemon, but now (as a Christian), he had become "profitable to thee and to me." "In Christ, the useless person has been made useful" (Barclay).

Philemon 1:12 Whom I have sent again: thou therefore receive him, that is, mine own bowels:

13 Whom I would have retained with me, that in thy stead he might have ministered unto me in the bonds of the gospel:

14 But without thy mind would I do nothing; that thy benefit should not be as it were of necessity, but willingly.

Although Paul could have kept Onesimus with him, where he could have "ministered to me in the bonds of the gospel," by law, Onesimus belonged to Philemon. Due to Philemon's great respect for Paul, it is doubtful he would have demanded Onesimus' return. Yet, this could have caused hard feelings toward the Apostle Paul. Thus, Paul said, "I did not want to do anything without first getting your [Philemon's] consent" (AMP). Paul would not use his great influence to keep Onesimus with him, much as he needed him.

Philemon 1:15 For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever.

"Perhaps" the good from Onesimus running away was that he became a Christian. God used this departing "for a season" to bring about a divine change in Onesimus' life. "In running away from his master, he was running straight into the arms of his Savior" (commentary).

Philemon 1:16 Not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord?

17 If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself.

While Onesimus' position as a slave had not changed legally, Paul encouraged Philemon to receive Onesimus not "as a servant," but as "a brother beloved." Philemon and Onesimus were now brothers in Christ. This portrays that they were "members one of another" (Romans 12:5) and both part of "one body" (Ephesians 4:4).

To treat a "servant" (often considered property under Roman law) as "a brother" (a spiritual equal) would forever change their relationship. Paul did not advise Onesimus to be set free, nor was he putting his approval on the practice of slavery. In asking Onesimus to be regarded as "a brother beloved," Paul was asking him to be received "as myself."

Philemon 1:18 If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account;

19 I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it: albeit I do not say to thee how thou owest unto me even thine own self besides.

It is possible, before running away, that Onesimus robbed Philemon. This would have made returning to his master even more difficult. Or it could be that Paul was speaking of Philemon's loss of his servant's services. Whatever the reason for the debt, Paul offered to take care of it, saying, "Put that on mine account . . . I will repay it."

Colossians 4:9 With Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They shall make known unto you all things which are done here.

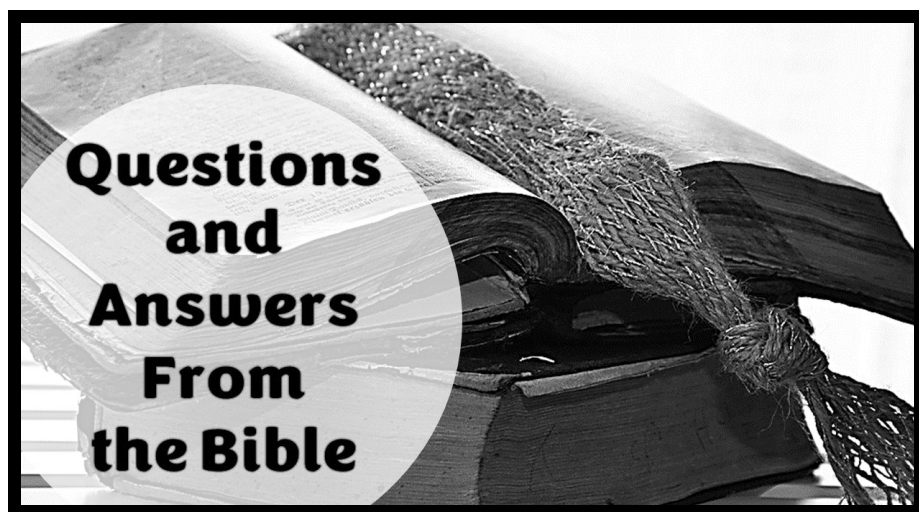
Traveling from Rome to Ephesus and Colossae, Tychicus (one of Paul's faithful ministers; Ephesians 6:21) carried Paul's letters to the Colossians, the Ephesians, and to Philemon. In Tychicus' care was Onesimus, who was returning to Philemon. (This may have been to protect Onesimus from professional slave catchers.) Paul described Onesimus as "a faithful and beloved brother," a brother to Tychicus, to Paul, and to the Colossian church ("one of you").

CONCLUSION:

Sending Onesimus back to his previous owner might appear as though Paul was supporting slavery. The institution of slavery had been an accepted part of the culture for centuries. The Grecian and Roman empires were dependent on it. To attack slavery outright would have brought about political turmoil. While Paul and the early church did not directly denounce slavery, a foundation was being laid in teaching that (when saved) slaves and owners are brothers in Christ. This had a greater effect, establishing the Biblical principle, "All are one in Christ Jesus." In time, the truth exposed the wrongs of slavery. The number of slaves greatly decreased as the Gospel spread throughout the Roman Empire. By the tenth century, slavery was mostly eradicated.

The reformer Martin Luther said: "As Christ does for us with God the Father, so does Paul with Philemon for Onesimus. We are all God's Onesimus!" Like Onesimus, we were slaves to sin and owed a great debt. We were also runaways (running away from God), and we faced the penalty of death (Romans 6:23). Yet, just as Paul promised to pay Onesimus' debt, Christ (through His death on the Cross) has paid our debt as well. Through Him, we (who were unprofitable runaways) become beloved brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus.

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WHAT IS THE PLACEMENT OF THE SEVEN SEALS?

Many have made the wrong assumption that because there are seven seals, seven trumpets, seven vials, etc. each one corresponds with one of the seven periods of time. The seven letters (Revelation, Chapters 2-3) do indeed correspond with each of the seven periods of the Gospel Day. However, many of the other series are not so. The seal series is one of these.

The seal series portrays a depiction of the spirits that ultimately produced religious systems. Thus, the seals had to precede the systems. Therefore, the seal (the Holy Spirit revealing the spirits) is shown in a period before the actual system they produced is shown arising. Bear in mind, each series is not necessarily portraying the exact same truths; they are presenting different aspects of the truth.

When you look at the horses of Revelation, Chapter 6, it is revealed in Zechariah 6:5 that these represent "spirits." These horses and their coloration reveal the type of religious spirits that they are.

THE FIRST AND SECOND SEALS: The Holy Spirit (represented by the white horse) and the spirit of unbelief (represented by the red horse) were both working in the first portion of the

Gospel Day (A.D. 33-270). The Holy Spirit instituted the church on the Day of Pentecost, and the spirit of unbelief gave rise to the pagan Roman Empire as the first opposing force of the church.

THE THIRD SEAL: This seal is portrayed by the black horse (the spirit of apostasy) and his rider. This spirit was working from A.D. 270 to A.D. 530, producing the Dark Ages. The system this spirit produced was Roman Catholicism.

THE FOURTH SEAL: The opening of this seal introduces the pale horse, which represents a mixture of light and darkness, of truth and error. It is the spirit of compromise, and it gave rise to the system of Protestantism. This seal symbolizes the period of time from A.D. 530 to A.D. 1530.

THE FIFTH SEAL: Every one of the predominant spirits in the first four seals was portrayed by a horse. However, the fifth seal is a variation. During this time (A.D. 1730-1880), the predominant message was holiness. Yet, the saints continued to be bound in the Protestant system and

God's true people were divided.

THE SIXTH SEAL: The sixth seal mentioned in Revelation, Chapter 6, does speak of the same time period as the beginning portion of Revelation, Chapter 14. They also correspond with the Philadelphian letter in Revelation, Chapter 3. The time period is A.D. 1880 to A.D. 1930.

THE SEVENTH SEAL: The opening of the seventh seal in Revelation, Chapter 8, lines up with the Laodicean letter of Revelation, Chapter 3. The time period is A.D. 1930 to the end of time (the Consummation).

When Revelation talks about the "seal" being "opened," it is a portrayal, in figurative expressions, of the Spirit of God bringing understanding. When Christ saw the time was right, He loosed the Holy Spirit (the "seal") to bring spiritual understanding. In the opening of every one of these seals, Jesus was actually letting the Holy Spirit help people to see spiritual conditions in their particular day as God saw them.

SHOULD WOMEN WEAR A HEAD COVERING?

In 1 Corinthians 11:15, the Apostle Paul made it clear, the woman's "hair is given her for a covering." Therefore, a woman should have "long hair" because that is the New Testament "covering."

When the Apostle penned, "We have no such custom, neither the churches of God" (1 Corinthians 11:16), he was speaking of the wearing of a veil. Therefore, the veil is not the Biblical "covering."

Brother Earl R. Borders

Brother Earl R. Borders is the pastor of the Church of God in Summersville, WV.

*For further study, read The Book of Revelation Explained, Volume 2.
Available at GodsAcres.org
(Click on "Resources" and "Study Materials")*

UPCOMING MEETINGS

May 1-7 — MT. PLEASANT, PA

REVIVAL: Church of God, 109 Salvation Lane, Mt. Pleasant, PA 15666

Evangelist: Brother Larry Dishman from Hurley, MS

Service times: Mon.-Sat. 7 p.m.; Sun. 10:30 a.m. A meal will be served by the local congregation following the service on Sunday. No service Sunday evening.

For more information, contact: Pastor Paul W. Prinkey @ 724-547-2151

May 8-14 — MINERVA, OH

REVIVAL: Mt. Zion Church of God, 13353 Lincoln St. SE, Minerva, OH 44657

Evangelist: Brother Larry Dishman from Hurley, MS

For more information, contact: Pastor Leamon Whitehead @ 330-868-1016

May 26-28 — KENSETT, AR

FELLOWSHIP MEETING: Kensett Church of God, 409 SE 2nd St., Kensett, AR 72082

Evangelist: Brother Steve Strelecky from Newark, OH

Service times: Fri. 7 p.m.; Sat. 10 a.m. & 7 p.m.; Sun. 11 a.m. & 5 p.m.

Dinner will be served Sat. 4 p.m. and after the Sunday morning service.

For more information, contact: Pastor Calvin Foster @ 501-742-3961 (Church) or 501-593-5105 (Cell)

June 18-25 — NEWARK, OH

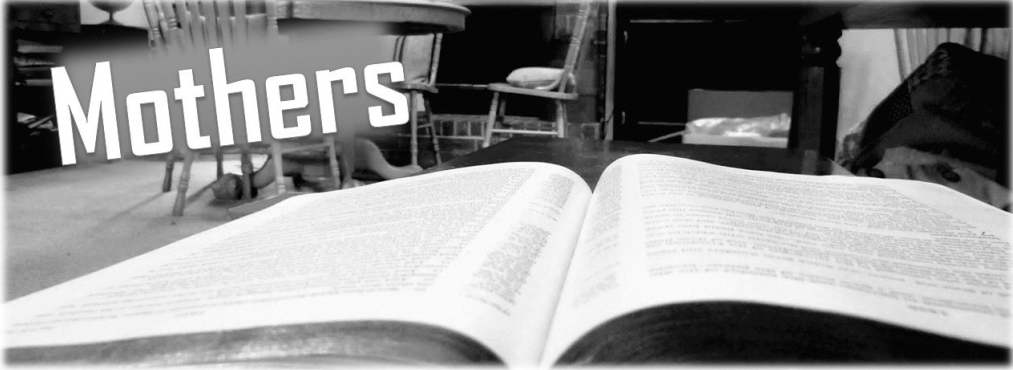
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Mothers

"You are as much serving God in looking after your own children and training them up in God's fear and minding the house and making your household a church for God as you would be if you had been called to lead an army to battle for the Lord of hosts."

Charles Spurgeon

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