

# THE GOSPEL TRUMPETER



SOUNDING FORTH THE SEVENTH AND LAST TRUMPET

Vol. 53    October 2023    No. 10

*"And thine ears  
shall hear a  
word behind  
thee, saying,  
This is the way,  
walk ye in it."*

*Isaiah 30:21*

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

## THE GOSPEL TRUMPETER USPS #871620

Periodicals postage paid at the post office in  
Newark, Ohio 43055.

POSTMAN, send form 3579 to the printer:

THE GOSPEL TRUMPETER  
675 N. Cedar Street  
Newark, Ohio 43055

This periodical carries no subscription price; however,  
it is partially maintained through the gifts and offerings  
of its readers, with the balance of the expenses being  
paid by the local congregation.

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

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

### THE CHURCH OF GOD BELIEVES IN

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

### SOME SPIRITUAL FACTS PERTAINING TO THE CHURCH

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

We reserve the right to edit and/or decline materials for any  
reason. We are not responsible for unsolicited materials.

### CONTENTS

The Name "Sinner" . . . . .	3
Silencing the Voice of God . . . . .	8
Especially for Young People . . . . .	12
My Testimony . . . . .	15
The Strait Gate and Narrow Way . . . . .	18
Thoughts From God's Word . . . . .	22
Bible Studies . . . . .	23
Questions & Answers . . . . .	25
Fall Camp Meeting Recordings . . . . .	26
Upcoming Meetings . . . . .	27

Vol. 53 October 2023 No. 10



## OUR CUPS OVERFLOWED

*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 sor-  
row and sighing shall flee away.*

Once again, the redeemed of  
the Lord returned to worship in  
the beauty of holiness with  
great joy and songs of praise.  
We want to offer thanksgiving  
to God for His wonderful good-  
ness and mercy. For eight days,  
the saints feasted on the living  
bread. Our souls were enriched  
with the refreshing the Lord  
provided for His people. Our  
glad hearts were in a heavenly  
atmosphere.

Another wonderful camp  
meeting began on the camp-  
ground at God's Acres on Sun-  
day, July 30, 2023. It was an-  
other great week with the Lord  
and His saints. Our pastor,  
Brother Roger Decker, wel-  
comed the saints and visitors to  
the meeting and prayed for the  
Lord to be the Honored Guest  
and bless our gathering. God  
answered prayer, and many  
ministerial brethren joined us,  
including Brother David Steg-  
meier who put forth great ef-  
fort. It was a delight to see him  
able to be in the services.

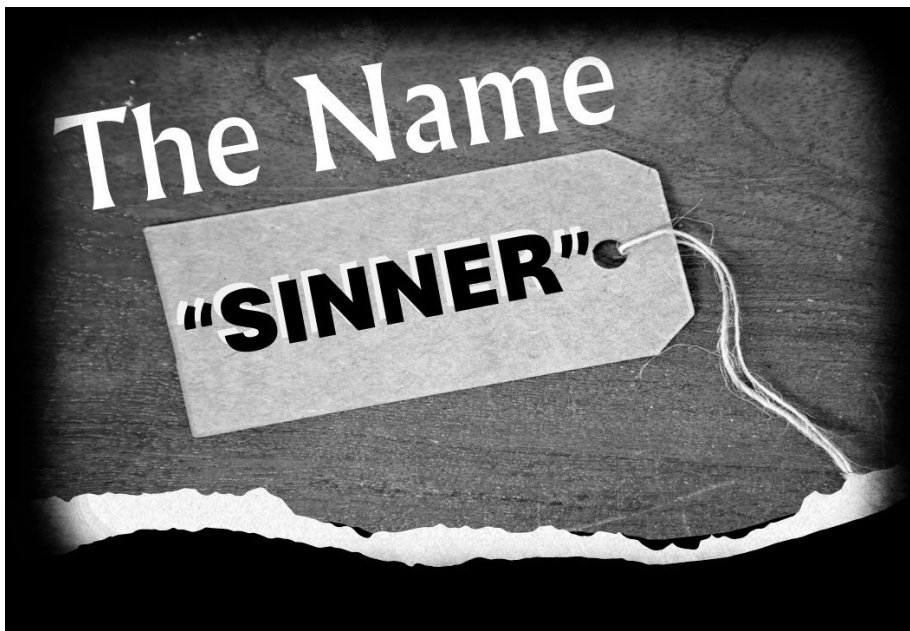
Brother Decker brought the  
opening sermon entitled "What  
Makes Salvation So Great?" His

text was Hebrews 2:3. He ex-  
pounded on the many attributes  
of our great salvation and the  
awfulness of neglecting God's  
offered gift. Other brethren  
brought solid messages found-  
ed on the Word of God. Brother  
Earl Borders preached the first  
three nights on true disciple-  
ship. Other messages of truth  
inspired by God were on faith,  
our foundation, making your-  
self ready, the better things, and  
neglecting your salvation.

Brother Abraham Burton be-  
gan on Wednesday evening as  
the night evangelist, and the  
topics of his messages were:  
"God Knows Your Sorrows";  
"Helpless but Not Hopeless";  
"Turn Ye From Your Evil Ways";  
and "Do You Know the Power  
of God?" Each afternoon, Broth-  
er Reggie Stegmeier taught a  
series of lessons on "The Pre-  
dominant Spirits of the Seven  
Churches of Asia." On Thursday  
morning, Brother Decker con-  
ducted an ordination service for  
Brother Dale Snyder, a minister  
in Brother Leamon Whitehead's  
congregation in Minerva, Ohio.

Sister Karen Wilks held a  
morning service for all the  
young children in the old barn.  
She taught vital Bible Stories on  
Bible heroes to influence those  
little hearts and minds toward  
the things of God. Her helpers

[continued on page 7]



Brother Roger L. Decker

*Matthew 9:9 And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him.*

*10 And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples.*

*11 And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?*

*12 But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.*

*13 But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.*

*Mark 2:14 And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the receipt of custom, and said unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed him.*

*15 And it came to pass, that, as Jesus sat at meat in his house, many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and his disciples: for there were many,*

*and they followed him.*

*16 And when the scribes and Pharisees saw him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto his disciples, How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?*

*17 When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.*

Today, seemingly, no one wants to be called a sinner, even if they are one. Matthew's job drew criticism and caused him to be hated and cut off from the religious people of his day. His friends were also outcasts, just like him. The sinners did not keep company with the scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees (or the Orthodox Jew). A sinner was a person of contempt, inferiority, and scorn. Matthew was naturally excited about his friends meeting his new Friend, Jesus. No doubt, those gathered at his house were vile sinners who did not believe in the traditions and regulations of the scribes and Pharisees.

There was no hope for the

sinner as far as the Jews of that day were concerned. They looked upon the sinner with condemnation and inferiority. The Jews felt an arrogant superiority over the sinner. There is always a temptation for those whom God uses to preach or hold a position to become swelled up with pride instead of staying humble. Romans 2:11 says, "For there is no respect of persons with God." It makes no difference to God whether you have a high-paying job or if you work at a fast-food restaurant. Having two cents or a hundred-dollar bill in your pocket does not impress God.

Luke 18:10-14 states: "Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee [the religion of that day], and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

### Recognizing Your Need

The devout Jew observed prayer three times daily — at nine o'clock, twelve o'clock, and three o'clock. They considered their prayers to be more effective when offered in the temple. During these hours of prayer, many went to the temple courts. Jesus told a parable of two men who went to the temple to pray. One was a Pharisee who did not have an attitude of prayer. He informed God of how good he was. A proud man cannot pray.

You will get nowhere with God if you have pride in your heart. One has well said, "The gate to Heaven is so low that none can enter except upon his knees." No man who despises his fellow man or who has ought in his heart can gain an audience with God. We should not lift ourselves above our fellow man. Remember, as Christians, we were once among the great army of sinners. True prayer comes from setting our lives before the life of God. We should not compare ourselves to another brother but to Jesus Christ.

No doubt, all the Pharisee said was true. He fasted, gave tithes, and was not as other men were. The question is not, am I as good as my fellow man, but am I as good as God? It all depends on what we compare ourselves with. When we set our lives beside the life of Jesus and the holiness of God, all we can say is, "God be merciful to me." Ones must recognize their need for God. Jesus is not opposed to good morals, but when an individual is so good he needs no help, the outstretched hands of Jesus Christ are to no avail. God cannot help you if you feel you have no need.

It makes no difference how much God's Spirit reaches out to those who think they have it fixed because they continually harden their hearts. God plagued Pharaoh time after time, but his heart was hard. Pharaoh did not recognize the mercy of God reaching out to him. After witnessing the power of God through the plagues, he was still unmoved. Jesus cannot help anyone who feels he needs no help. Jesus said those who are whole need no physician.

A physician is for the sick. Jesus said He "came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Ones call a doctor to minister to the sick, which is true physically. Spiritually, Jesus goes



to those who have a need. He does not come to call the righteous (those who are whole) but sinners to repentance. God cannot help the one who does not have a need.

God can heal those who are sick, but sin is deceptive. It caused the religious people in Jesus' day to have a "holier-than-thou" attitude, which cut them off from receiving help. Sin is like poison when it enters the body. It travels through the bloodstream to all the members of the body. Once sin enters your soul, it spreads to the whole man and defiles every member. Sin caused blindness to come over the religious men in Jesus' day, and they could not see their own needs. They were sitting with Jesus Christ in the same house. He was speaking to them, but they missed their opportunity to receive help.

### Sin Is a Destroyer

You will not read about sinners on social media. You read about them in the Bible. The Bible speaks about adultery, but social media does not say, "This individual is an adulterer, and they need help." No, they dress it up by saying, "They are having

an affair." The "sin label" has been removed and replaced with words that are not offensive. Some places have removed the Bible from their shelves because it offends them. Others would like the Ten Commandments removed from public places because it offends their lifestyle.

Paul said in Romans 7:11, "For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me." *Slew* means "it killed me." Paul said sin killed him and drained him of all spiritual life. There is no spiritual life in sin. Verse 13 reads: "Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment [or by the law] might become exceeding sinful." Sin destroys all who touch it or who are exposed to it. It kills the love between a husband and wife. Homes are to be a place of contentment. Many times, they are a battleground because of sin. Sin separates brothers and sisters, family members, and friends.

Sin caused Cain to kill his brother, Abel. Genesis 4:1-8 says: "And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD. And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.

"And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not



well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him. And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him."

The first literal murder recorded in the Bible was not committed between strangers. Two brothers were in the process of bringing offerings to the Lord, but anger grew into murder as sin gained strength. Cain's rejection did not cause him to look at himself, but it caused jealousy to rise within him, and he took out his anger on his brother. This Scripture text is a picture of two types of worshipers—one who worships his own way and one who pleases God.

### Rejecting the Mercy of God

Hebrews 11:4 states: "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh." Cain brought his offering "in process of time," and Abel "brought of the firstlings." One came by faith and obedience, the other because he had envy in his heart. Instead of protecting his younger brother, he turned on him with envy and jealousy.

Dear one, there is not one angry, envious, or malicious look that escapes the all-seeing eye of God. Malice in the heart of Cain resulted in murder. God dealt with Cain's rebellion when He asked him: "Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?" Cain's pride caused him to reject the mercy of the Lord. He even denied the crime and cast off all fear of God from his life. Sin took complete control of Cain's life, conscience, mind, and everything

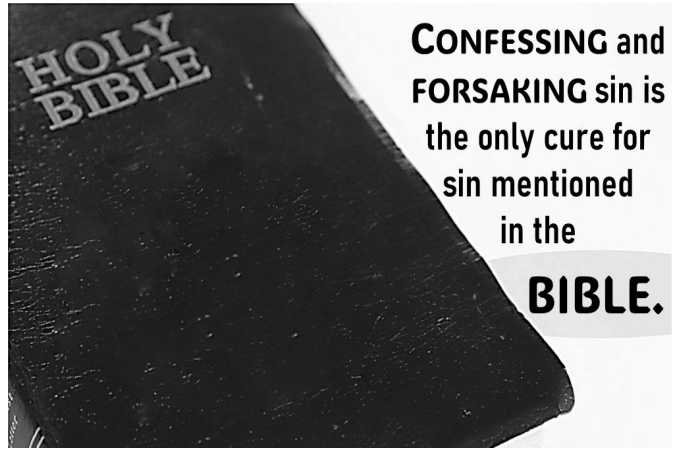
about him. He turned to rage and could not control his wrath.

Many do not realize how awful sin really is. They have the attitude: "I messed up, so what? Everybody messes up." Dear one, sin is a destroyer. If one seemingly small sin gets into your life, watch out because sin always wants more. Sin caused God to remove Adam and Eve from the garden. Sin is terrible and destructive, hurting its victims, wounding hearts, and causing sorrow. Sin promises what it cannot fulfill.

In our Scripture text, there were problems with the religious people and sinners. The Jews despised the common man, but Jesus loved them. The religious folks stood aloof and looked down on sinners, but Jesus came and sat with them. He was there to help if they had a need. The religious folks were fearful they might become infected with sin if they got too close, like a doctor who refuses to treat an infected person because of fear he might contract the disease himself. C. T. Studd was a missionary who loved to quote, "Some want to live within the sound of church or chapel bell; I want to run a rescue shop within a yard of hell." The man who has fear and contempt in his heart can never be a fisher of men.

### Are You Sick of Sin?

Jesus said, "They that are whole," speaking of those who feel strong and well, have no need of a physician. As a physician ministers to the sick, Jesus ministers to sinners and those with needs. A physician makes a sick person well, and Jesus makes the sin-sick soul well.



Many have been around the Church of God for years, but it seems they never have a need; they are always well. They never ask for prayer. Some know the doctrine and have a form of godliness, but they have never repented of sin. Romans 3:23 says, "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." If you want freedom from sin, you must come to God and repent. Everyone needs repentance.

Confessing and forsaking sin is the only cure for sin mentioned in the Bible. You cannot join a church and get delivered from sin. The Pharisees and Sadducees of Jesus' day were strict, but it never helped their attitude or pride. They looked down on the sinner because he did not have religion.

Is there anyone who will admit he is a sinner and sick of his terrible condition? Is there anyone who does not have an excuse for the way he is living? Is there anyone who is dissatisfied with life? If so, Jesus specializes in deliverance. He is the only One who can deliver a man or woman from sin. Some have been in difficult bondage, but God delivered them. Some have difficult habits to break, and Jesus can help them if they allow Him. Can the Lord find a sinner who will admit he is lost?

You cannot go to Heaven with sin in your life. Do not wait until your deathbed to call on God for deliverance from sin.

You can go out into eternity in an instant of time. Jesus came to call sinners to repentance. One problem is many people do not want others to think they are sinners because that word is hated. They would prefer to call their sin a "mistake." You can despise the word "sin," but if there is sin in your life, then you are a sinner. If you are a sinner, you are not fit for the Kingdom of God until you get saved.

The Church of God teaches what the Bible says. Living a life of holiness is the only way to make it to Heaven. If you knowingly are in division, you are a sinner. You are in division if you have been slandering another brother or sister. The Bible talks about the tongue in James, Chapter 3. For some, their opinion is they can do contrary to the Bible and get by. Revelation 20:15 reads, "And whosoever was not found written in the book of life [not the book of a church] was cast into the lake of fire." Sin must be completely eradicated, or your name will not be written in the Book of Life.

### "I Never Knew You"

The Scriptures tell us ones will be charged at the Judgment if they still have sin in their lives. One charge is God does not know them, and another is they have not departed from iniquity. When you die, your soul will leave your body and go into Hades or Paradise. When you die, you will know whether you are going to Heaven or hell.

Let us read the words of Jesus in Matthew 7:21-23: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many

wonderful works [those deeds were good, but notice that God did not point them out]? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity [transgression or sin]."

The writer of the Gospel of Matthew did not write his thoughts, but they are the words of Jesus. God knows all people, but in this Scripture, Jesus said, "I never knew you." In other words, He was saying: "You are not My child. You have not lived a life of holiness."

Judgment, or the day of reckoning, is coming. Ones may

thoughts."

You would be foolish, ignorant, and selfish to take your sin to the Judgment and stand before a holy God. Jesus said He does not know the sinner. Our Scripture text tells of religious men justifying their condition with works. They assumed their works would override their iniquity, but Jesus countered with this statement, "I never knew you." God does not know, spiritually speaking, those who live in sin. Many religious works are going on today. However, if ones do not quit sinning, it will be to no avail.



### Satan's Sorcery

There were sorcerers in the Old Testament and the New Testament. Acts 8:9-11 reads: "But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one: To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God. And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries." There was a sorcerer in Samaria, and "they all gave heed." Simon had a large audience, including dignitaries. Many folks were under his sorcery.

Something happened, and a revival broke out. Acts 8:7-8 says: "For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. And there was great joy in that city." Wherever the truth is, Satan will be there too, doing his best to rob ones of victory. After a message has been preached, Satan will start conversing with the one who needs help. He will agree he needs help, but not now. He knows every rejection leads

succeed in putting on pretenses and disguises now, but one day, all pretenses and disguises will be stripped away. You may deceive men with your words, but no one can deceive God. Psalm 139:2 says, "Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising [this is the God we serve], thou understandest my thought afar off." God knows your thoughts as they travel to your mind from afar off before they become a thought. God knows everything about you. He knows when you sit down, stand up, and what you are thinking right now. No man can deceive the One who sees the heart.

Isaiah 55:8-9 reads: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your



to more hardening of the heart. He will say: "You need to be saved, but first you need to work this or that out. Then you can serve God."

Satan will always talk to souls. Sadly, ones are listening. When you listen to Satan, he will convince you like he convinced Eve. Satan actually told Eve that God was lying, and she believed him. Sorcerers were common in the early days of the church and are common today. Can you imagine Jesus being in these healing campaigns, hitting someone in the forehead, and they fall down? The deception is unbelievable. We need to be careful. If someone has a gift in the Church of God, their life will back it up.

Who are the ones Jesus knows? John 10:14 tells us, "I am the good shepherd, and [I] know my sheep, and am known of mine." How does Jesus know His sheep? He made it very plain in John 10:4, saying, "And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice." Dear one, you must discern the difference between God talking and the devil talking. The devil is a depressor and an accuser. God is a lifter and encourager. God tells you the truth. If

God reveals a problem in your life, you will know it is true. The devil will say you have a problem when you do not. The Bible calls him "the accuser of our brethren" (Revelation 12:10).

### Deliverance From Sin

Jesus "putteth forth his own sheep," or He brings His people out of sin, Babylon, and confusion. He goes before us and leads us through temptation. Hebrews 4:15 says He was tempted in all points, "yet without sin." Jesus helps us avoid pitfalls, temptations, and the snares of the enemy. His sheep (His people) follow Him, for they know His voice. His voice comes through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God.

We want to emphasize the need of getting rid of sin. If you have sin in your life, you will not mature or grow out of it. You need deliverance from it. Do not continue in sin, wishing it will leave you alone because it will not go away on its own. The only way to rid yourself of sin is through faith in the blood of Jesus Christ.

Ones become miserable trying to deal with sin in their own strength. I tried many times to quit smoking cigarettes. I hated the fact they had me in bondage. I would throw those cigarettes away and struggle for a day, but then the urge would overtake me. Without Jesus Christ, I had no power.

If you are in sin, the good news is, Jesus is calling you to repent. He can heal your sinful condition if you let Him. There has to be an admission on your part of your true condition. Matthew mentioned in our Scripture text that Jesus said, "I will have mercy." Mercy and Jesus go together. You will find mercy at the feet of Jesus. I encourage you to take God's mercy while it is available. Do not wait until you

come under judgment, and mercy is no longer at hand.

It saddens the heart of God when people die unprepared for the Judgment. The Prophet Ezekiel told how God feels about the death of a sinner. Ezekiel 18:23 says, "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord GOD: and not that he should return from his ways, and live?" It is God's desire for everyone to be His child. In verse 32, God said, "For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye."

God sent Jesus Christ to heal the sinner, the man or woman who admits they need help. If you have a need, if you are not saved, God wants to help you. He desires for you to be saved. If you have a profession without salvation, you will never make it to Heaven. You need deliverance from sin; you need to be born again. Christian friend, if you see sin budding in your life, take care of it now. Get rid of it before it gets any bigger.

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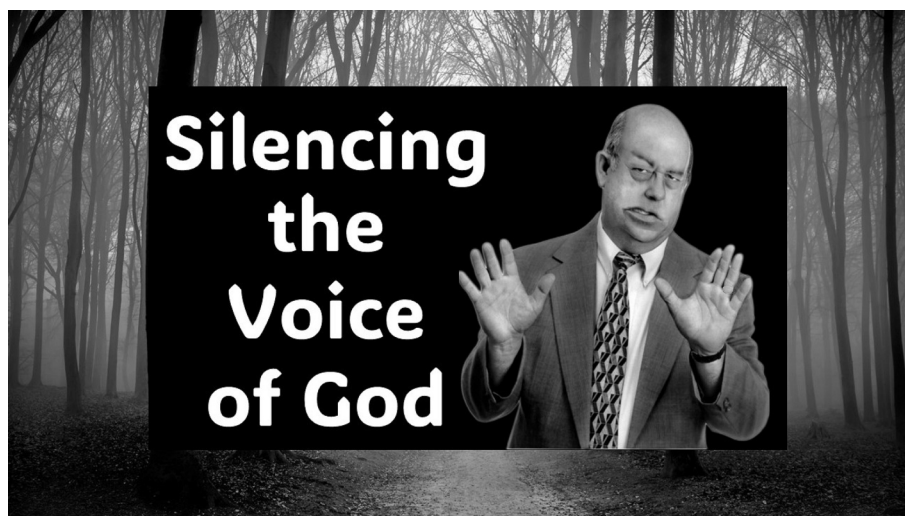
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**Brother Roger L. Decker is the  
pastor of the Church of God in  
Newark, OH.**



[Camp Meeting Report continued from pg. 2] worked with the children to help them memorize the Scriptures and sing the songs of Zion. On Saturday morning, the children sang in the main service in the tabernacle. It was a great blessing to our hearts.

All the wonderful singing was a blessing during the meeting. Our cups overflowed as the Lord poured out His blessings upon us. Information on how to obtain the messages and songs can be found on page 26.



*Brother Aurelius Raines*

*Ephesians 4:30 And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.*

The Apostle Paul wrote this Scripture text amid several instructions to the saints at Ephesus. Some may feel it was an unnecessary piece of instruction. However, the Spirit of God inspired him to say, in so many words, "Do not make me sad." There is only one group of people who can silence the voice of God — the ones who profess to be God's people. Sinners can hear the voice of God, resist, and rebel, but that is typical of sinners. Eventually, God may win them with His love and longsuffering. Those who profess to know God can easily sadden Him.

We live in a day and age where many people do not care about how other people feel. They have the attitude: "It is all about how *I* think and *I* feel. *Me, myself, and I* are number one. Do not make *me* sad, and everything will be all right." The Scripture says not to make the Holy Spirit of God sad. The Holy Spirit is how God has sealed us "unto the day of redemption." I need the Holy Spirit to make Heaven my home, so the last thing I want to do is make Him sad. I do not

want to grieve the Holy Spirit.

I am a Christian by the grace of God, but I am also unapologetically Church of God. I love the saints of God. I will not let anyone turn me against God's people. Some people want to separate into different groups. If your spirit and my spirit are in touch with God, we will possess the same spirit.

John wrote it this way in 1 John 1:3-4: "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full." John said our fellowship is with God and His Son, Jesus Christ. Instead of trying to create a spirit of "feller-ship," where we go along with this or that "feller," as long as we can agree, we need true fellowship, found only in Jesus Christ.

The Church of God is not just a name with a set of doctrines, although the doctrines are important. Paul told Timothy to stay in Ephesus so he could tell the others to "teach no other doctrine" (1 Timothy 1:3). Some people say they would rather have the right doctrine than the right spirit, but I prefer to have the right spirit. If you have the

right spirit, it will let you know when you have the wrong or the right doctrine.

### **Are You Making the Holy Spirit Sad?**

The Church of God is the Church of God because of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. The Scriptures let us know that when God saves you from sin, He puts His Word and His Spirit within you. You cannot go wrong if you have both the Word and the Spirit. However, if you grieve half of God's system that makes up the Church of God, you will fall short. If you make the Holy Spirit sad, He will become silent.

Isaiah received a vision, and he said God would place teachers behind us who would whisper in our ears, "This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left" (Isaiah 30:21). If you make the Holy Spirit sad by going whichever way you choose, He will become silent. Some have said, "I can do this or that because I am not convicted." You can get to where the Holy Spirit will stop talking to you. You may feel free to do whatever you want and feel no conviction, but that does not mean you are right. If anything, it is evident you have become a reprobate. Do not grieve the Spirit of God.

Deuteronomy 18:18-19 reads: "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him." Moses was faithful over his house. God gave him the Law to give to the people. God said He would "raise them up a Prophet," just like Moses, who would be faithful over His house too. That house is



called the house of God, the Church of the Living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

The Word of God and the Spirit of God work in conjunction. God promised in His Word from the Old Testament that He would send His people a Prophet. God is not ignorant of people. He knows some will not hearken to His words. Some are determined to find something God said but did not really mean. God said we must have holiness of heart, life, and spirit. Many will agree, as long as it does not cross anything they want to do.

The Gospel is personal. A preacher can preach to many different people, but the Holy Spirit personalizes the message to each individual. If you hear something or someone say, "You can live short of the glory of God and still make Heaven your home," you are listening to the wrong spirit. Maybe you have grieved the One you should be listening to.

The Holy Spirit has feelings, and if you do not let the Holy Spirit lead and guide you in the way of holiness, He will become sad and silent. Why do some people put the silent treatment on someone? Is it because they are happy or sad about something? God told Moses He was going to speak through His Prophet. God will require an answer one day if you do not listen to Him. Are you silencing God?

### **God's People Will Not Lie**

The Bible tells us in Isaiah 63:7, "I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the LORD, and the praises of the LORD, according to all that the LORD hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which he hath bestowed on them according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his lovingkindnesses." I can identify with this verse. God has blessed me. He pulled me out of a horri-



ble pit and set my feet upon the Rock. He put a new song in my heart and sent me on my way rejoicing! Those whom the Lord blesses will give praise to Him.

Verse 8 reads, "For he said, Surely they are my people, children that will not lie: so he was their Saviour." The Church of God is God's people! They will not lie to get government benefits, beat someone out of something, get an advantage, or build up their own business. Jesus is their Savior. Some folks believe once you are saved, you are always saved, and it does not matter what you do after you get saved. They need to look at the Scriptures. God said, "They are my people," and they "will not lie."

Verse 9 says, "In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old." When you are afflicted, if you are one of God's people, He is afflicted with you. You are not alone. When you feel no one is going through your trial with you, there is One who will go with you. God loves His people.

Job testified in Job 23:8-10: "Behold, I go forward, but he is

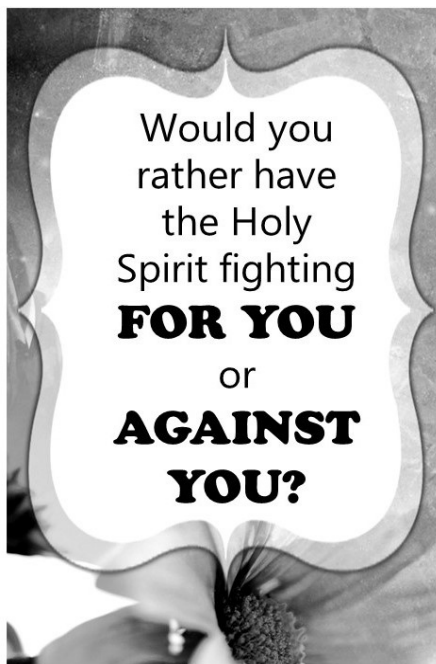
not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: On the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him: But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." You may not feel God, but you can know your Savior lives! Job also said worms would cover this body of flesh, but one day, you will see Him if you stay true.

When the children of Israel came out of Egypt, God gave them special protection—"the angel of his presence." God warned His people to be careful to obey Him. Instead of trying to find the reasons you do not have to do this or that, take the Book for what it says, even if you do not understand it. If you want to understand the concepts of holiness, stop doing what is wrong. A true man of God will tell you what is wrong because he has sat at Jesus' feet.

Jeremiah 35:15 states, "I have sent also unto you all my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them, saying, Return ye now every man from his evil way, and amend your doings, and go not after other gods to serve them, and ye shall dwell in the land which I have given to you and to your fathers: but ye have not inclined your ear, nor hearkened unto me." False preachers will figure out a way to find something right with everything you do, but God does not change. If a man of God does not tell the truth, God will raise up someone who will.

### **"He Was Turned to Be Their Enemy"**

If you are a Christian, God in His love and pity has redeemed, or saved, you. Think about what God has done for you. If the money was short, you still had plenty to eat and a roof over your head. If things were not



going right on the job, maybe you suffered verbal abuse, but you kept going because you needed that paycheck. God looks upon us with pity.

On one occasion, God used the Prophet Isaiah to ask this question, "What could have been done more?" (Isaiah 5:4). What more could God have done? That is a dangerous question to ask. Some people are never satisfied. No matter what you do for them, they always want more. And God forbid if they think someone else has more than they do!

"But they rebelled, and vexed [grieved] his holy Spirit: therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them" (Isaiah 63:10). "Vexed" carries the thought of making the Holy Spirit sad. Someone may say: "God knows and understands me. If I make Him sad, I will ask Him to forgive me." If every time you walked past, you stepped on my toe and said, "Oh, I am sorry," after a while, I would get smart and move out of your way. Your remorse would no longer ring true if you continued to step on my toe. God said, "He was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them" because they made Him sad.

Would you rather have the Holy Spirit fighting for you or against you? Isaiah 59:19 reads: "So shall they fear the name of the LORD from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun. When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him." You can conduct yourself in a way that you lose God's blessings. Many do not want to make the Lord mad, but you also do not want to make Him sad.

### **Are You Casting the Word Behind You?**

Psalms 50:16 states, "But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?" If you are unsaved, you have no business telling people what God said or what they need to do to straighten up their lives. In other words, do not tell me how to be holy—show me! You cannot show someone how to be holy unless you have accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior.

Some go to church, hear the message, then pick and choose what they want to believe or live by. The devil may say, "You do not know what other folks are doing behind closed doors." Do not worry about what other people are doing or not doing. If you hear the Word of God, take it in and let it change *you*, and you will not make the Holy Spirit sad. The Holy Spirit will tell you everything you need to know to have victory over sin, the devil, and your flesh. He will tell you over and over again until He sees you do not mean business, and then He will become silent.

Verse 17 states, "Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee." How many times have you heard a message and thought it was good for someone else? The wise man said

in Ecclesiastes 5:10, "He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver." Do you love the Word of God? Some congregations have various programs to keep people excited and coming back. What happened to getting excited about the Word of God?

Some people go to church with the attitude of receiving a spiritual beating. Why not go before God and repent so you can be blessed going to church instead of feeling beat down? If you conform to His will, you will not make the Holy Spirit sad. The Bible says they hated instruction. How do you know someone hates instruction? They cast the Word behind them.

Many listen to a message, then throw it behind them. Someone may say, "You are judging." No, I am reporting. There is a difference between judging and reporting. Some judge a situation, knowing nothing about it, and make conclusions without evidence. The same Jesus who said in Matthew 7:1, "Judge not, that ye be not judged," also said in John 7:24 to "judge righteous judgment." The devil cannot preach God's Word. He told Jesus in Matthew 4:6 to "cast thyself down," God will protect You. However, the devil always leaves something out. God will only protect in *His* way.

Psalms 50:18 says, "When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him, and hast been partaker with adulterers." Some preachers see sin running rampant, but they let it go. They do not have an opinion, as if it is "none of their business." If an adulterer or a thief testifies that he is a child of God, it reflects poorly on the ministry who will not cry out against sin. If you consent with a thief, you think there is nothing wrong with him. Some have the attitude: "Why not steal from the government? They are corrupt and wasting taxpayer money." It is still sin.

## Are You Bringing God Down to Your Level?

Verses 19-20 read: "Thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit. Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother; thou slanderest thine own mother's son." Christians do not live this way. They do not speak evil of folks, and they are not liars. Someone may say, "These folks do not believe the same way I believe." Does the way they believe affect or interfere with your ability to demonstrate holiness of heart, body, and spirit? Be careful how you treat others.

Verse 21 states, "These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes." Many times, ones do things contrary to the will of God, and God is silent. They do not feel conviction, so they think all is right when, in reality, all is wrong. Someone may say: "Why does the pastor always preach on that subject? Can he not find something else to preach against?" If the pastor is preaching against something that makes you sore, you will want him to stop.

You are saying God is just like you if you are doing wrong without feeling any conviction. If you think you are a good person because there are certain things you do not do, but you have not accepted Jesus Christ for the deliverance of your soul from sin, then you are saying God is okay with you. You have a double standard.

Our world has become so evil. Two people of the same sex are not married in the sight of God. Also, there is no such thing as an open marriage, sleeping with whomever you want and then going home to your partner. Both are wrong in the eyes of God. God destroyed Sodom and

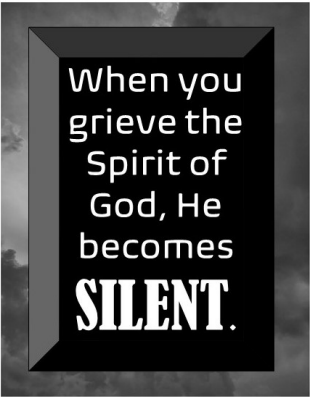
Gomorrah because of homosexuality and the entire world with the Flood because of unfaithfulness and fornication. We need to cry out against all sin.

Some people question how God can be against two people who love one another. God is not against two people who love each other. However, the Bible teaches that a man with a man and a woman with a woman is "leaving the natural use" and burning "in their lust one toward another" (Romans 1:27). Many people are trying to bring God down to their level. They may think there is nothing wrong with it as long as they are two consenting adults. They are trying to make God like them.

### Will You Meet God's Mercy or God's Wrath?

Some parents tell their children Santa Claus and the Easter Bunny are real. The Scripture still says in Revelation 21:8 that "all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone." It makes no difference what adjective you use to describe yourself. The Scriptures are plain; when you grieve the Spirit of God, He becomes silent.

Do not let the Holy Spirit's silence fool you into thinking you are right. If you do not accept Jesus Christ as your Savior, remember you are breathing His air and using the health and strength He gives you to live contrary to the will of God. God cannot see the good things you do because He cannot see past your sin. He continues to allow you to breathe, giving you another day and another opportunity to make things right. One day, He will stop contending, and that is when you will have



When you  
grieve the  
Spirit of  
God, He  
becomes  
**SILENT.**

silenced the voice of God forever.

God uses His church to reveal His will to people. God has selected people who have given themselves to a life of holiness, people who willingly serve Him, and He uses them to awaken sinners. He wants you to know

you cannot continue in sin, die, go into eternity, and meet God in peace. All have an appointment with death. When that appointment comes, we cannot cancel it or put it off. We will meet that appointment.

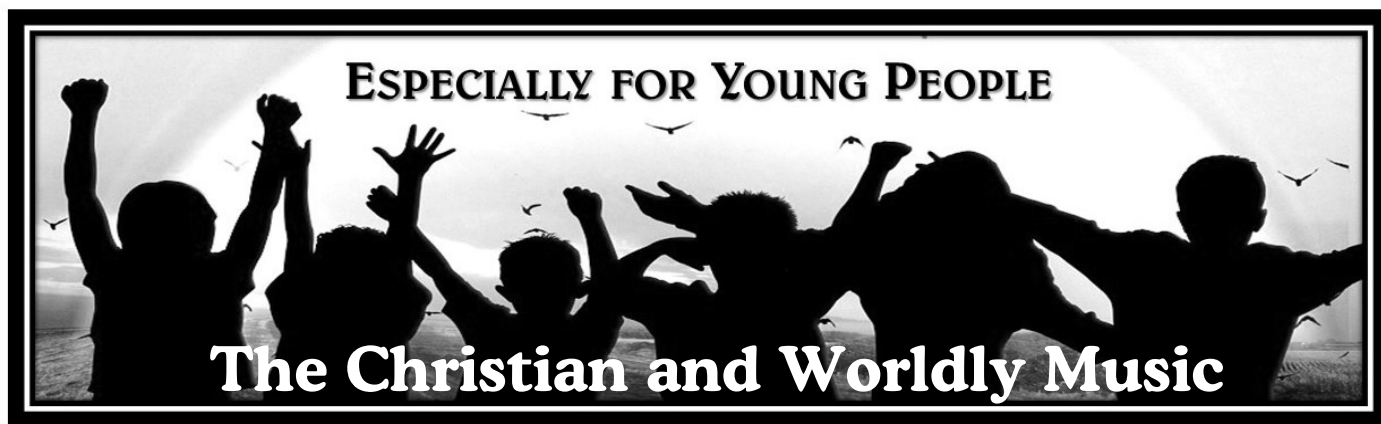
Psalms 50:22 says, "Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver." Someone may say, "I would be saved if I knew of someone who was living right." There is no excuse you can give for not living your life for Jesus Christ, who was nailed to the Cross for your sins. You have no excuse for making the Holy Spirit sad. Jesus said the Holy Spirit "will reprove [or convict] the world of sin" (John 16:8). Even before you get saved, the Holy Spirit is working on you. Do not make Him sad until He gives up on you. God is merciful and kind, but you can go past the day of grace. Instead of meeting His mercy, you will meet His wrath.

Psalms 50:23 reads, "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God." The same Holy Spirit that punishes those who make Him sad will show grace and glory to the ones who make Him glad.

(Compact Disc TR-2656)

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pastor of the Church of God in  
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Can a Christian listen to worldly music? How does music affect your mood and perception? Does it affect your witness? Can you glorify God by listening to worldly music?

Some Scriptures in the Bible deal with music, and many psalms refer to musical instruments and singing. Psalm 105:2 says, "Sing unto him [God], sing psalms unto him." Psalm 104:33 states, "I will sing praise to my God." Ephesians 5:19 reads, "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." These three Scriptures deal with singing praises to God.

The Christian life is an individual walk. If the Holy Spirit is talking to you along certain areas, it is your job to listen and be obedient. Let us consider a few thoughts about listening to music. Philippians 4:8 says, "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

The *Amplified Bible* reads, "Finally, believers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable and worthy of respect, whatever is right and confirmed by God's word, whatever is pure and wholesome, whatever is lovely

and brings peace, whatever is admirable and of good repute; if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think continually on these things [center your mind on them, and implant them in your heart]."

After reading this Scripture, can you say the music you listen to causes you to think about what Paul mentioned? Is what you listen to true, honorable, and worthy of respect? Is it right and confirmed by God's Word? Is it pure and wholesome? Can you listen and keep a pure mind and heart?

What does worldly music cause you to think about? Some worldly songs sing about getting drunk. People do things that are not honorable when they are drunk. Songs about violence are prevalent in rap music. Some lyrics do not speak well of women. Many album labels for rap groups say "explicit" because of the lyrics. The majority of lyrics to worldly songs will cause you to think about things a Christian should not be thinking about. Music affects your attitude. If you find yourself humming or singing along with a song, ask yourself, "Is what I am singing or listening to honorable?"

If your life is full of turmoil, do the songs you listen to bring peace? Worldly music can add to the confusion and turmoil in your life. Paul said to think on "whatever is lovely and brings peace, whatever is admirable and

of good repute." Paul also talked about excellence. Does what you listen to bring out the best in you? Does the music you listen to cause you to be in an attitude of praise for God?

Worldly music is quite contrary to praising God. Paul said we should continually think on wholesome things. Some lyrics have sexual content, profanity, and violence (especially against women). If you continually think about those things, is your mind focused on God? If what you are listening to is contrary to what Paul said we need to think on, then you need to eliminate it by choosing not to listen to it.

The lyrics of a song by Bon Jovi say: "It's my life, It's now or never, I ain't gonna live forever. I just want to live while I'm alive. It's my life." Is it really your life? First Corinthians 6:19 says we are not our own; we belong to God.

Think about the lyrics to a song that comes to your mind. It may be one of your favorite songs. Do the lyrics make you blush? Do they fit into the things Paul said we should think on? If you want to be all you can be for God, you should choose not to listen to those things contrary to what Paul said, or it will hinder your walk with God.

If you want a pure relationship with your girlfriend or boyfriend, the music you choose will affect you, especially songs with sexual themes. Some country songs by Dierks Bentley, Chris

Young, and Josh Turner have sexual content in the lyrics. Your mind cannot be completely focused on the things of God if you are listening and singing along with those songs. Some rap songs are filled with profanity and promote violence against women. Why would you want to listen to and think about those things?

Some worldly songs have lyrics that promote rising up against authority. Riots have broken out in the streets after Guns N' Roses concerts. Their fans burned things and overturned and set cars on fire. The lyrics in their songs promote sex, drugs, fights, and riots. I bring this to your attention because what you listen to could hinder your walk with God.

The question is, can you live a successful life for God and listen to worldly music? What is the Holy Spirit telling you? Are you listening to questionable things? You may need to consider going through your playlist and asking yourself, "Does this meet the criteria Paul wrote about in Philippians 4:8?" You may need to delete some songs and add others in their place.

Young person, God wants you to be successful. The Bible says to put off those things that hinder you. If you are not careful, you will think the music you listen to is a small thing. Is it really a small thing as far as your Christian walk is concerned? It can become a really big thing because what you listen to and fill your mind with affects your attitude and how you treat your parents, other people, and the things of God. It affects every aspect of your life, including



your outlook on life.

Consider what you implant in your heart. Is it good, honorable, and worthy of praise? How many times do you wake up with a song you frequently listen to on your mind? If you want a closer experience with God, then

you need to consider what you put in your mind. If the music you listen to talks about drinking, sex, cheating, or drugs, you are filling your mind with things that will hinder you from drawing closer to God.

I remember going to a hockey game, and during a break in the action, they started playing the song by AC/DC called "Highway to Hell." People were standing and singing along. I thought to myself, "Do these people realize what they are singing?" The lyrics read:

*Livin' easy  
Lovin' free  
Season ticket on a one-way ride  
Askin' nothin'  
Leave me be  
Takin' everythin' in my stride  
Don't need reason  
Don't need rhyme  
Ain't nothin' I'd rather do  
Goin' down  
Party time  
My friends are gonna be there too*

*No stop signs  
Speed limit  
Nobody's gonna slow me down  
Like a wheel  
Gonna spin it  
Nobody's gonna mess me around  
Hey Satan  
Payin' my dues*

*Playin' in a rockin' band  
Hey momma  
Look at me  
I'm on my way to the Promised Land,*

*I'm on the highway to hell  
Highway to hell  
I'm on the highway to hell  
Highway to hell  
Don't stop me*

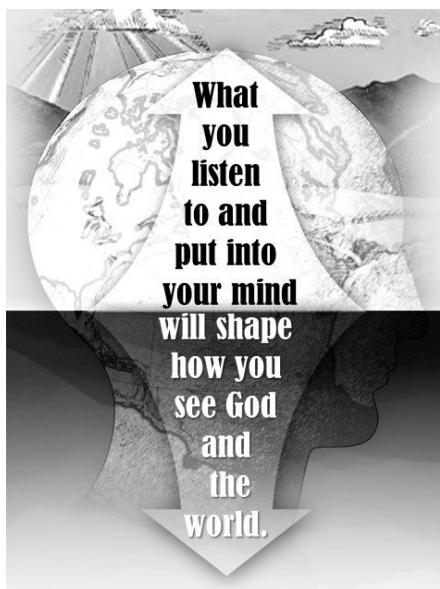
Some songs have catchy tunes, but what is the message behind them? What are the songs promoting? If you want to live a victorious life, you need to fill your mind with the things of God. Some Christian songs talk about leaving the world behind. One song says, "This world has nothing to offer me, I'll cling to Him." Are you living the message promoted in these songs? You should be.

Spiritual songs lift your spirit and make you feel thankful and appreciative of what God has done. They will bless, encourage, and put you in a better mood. Sometimes when you do not feel well, a song will lift you by filling your mind with the things of God. Christian songs have a message in them that will uplift you.

One article in *Science Daily* says, "Music is not only able to affect your mood—listening to particularly happy or sad music can even change the way we perceive the world, according to researchers from the University of Groningen." They studied how music can change your mood and your perception of things. Subjects who listened to happy music saw happy faces. When they listened to sad music, they saw sad faces. These studies prove our brain continuously compares the information coming in through our eyes and what it expects based on what we know about the world. Songs build a perception of how we see the world.

If you listen to music that





does not lift God up, how will you perceive God? While listening to songs in church services, God can seem bigger and closer to you. When you go back into the world and listen to music that does not promote God, He will seem smaller and further away. When you go through a trial or temptation, if you do not see God big in your life, how successful will you be in overcoming temptation and not giving in to the flesh? If you see God as He truly is, you will have more power to resist temptations. What you listen to and put into your mind will shape how you see God and the world. The brain builds up expectations based not only on your experience but on your mood. The music you listen to affects how you see reality.

God spoke to Samuel after He had rejected Saul in 1 Samuel 16:1, saying, "How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? fill thine horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite: for I have provided me a king among his sons." God told Samuel to stop mourning for Saul, go, and anoint David as the new king. Verses 14-15 state: "But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, [Young person, you never want to get to

a place where God's Spirit departs from you. How sad!] and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him. And Saul's servants said unto him, Behold now, an evil spirit from God troubleth thee."

Saul's servants sought someone who could play skillfully on the harp to calm Saul when the evil spirit came upon him. Verse 23 says, "And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him." In this particular situation, David played the harp, and it soothed Saul. It caused the evil spirit that troubled him to leave. When it came back, David played his harp again. It is a Biblical account of what to do when you become troubled in your spirit. You can fill your mind with uplifting music that will not add to your troubles when you need God to move in.

It is very important to listen to wholesome music that lifts God up. If the music you listen to puts living for God in a negative light, it will affect your life. You may not look to God for help if you fill your heart and mind with unwholesome thoughts. What you fill your mind with goes a

long way toward maintaining victory. All music has a message, whether you listen to Taylor Swift, Meghan Trainor, Adele, Josh Groban, the Gaither Vocal Band, or The Collingsworth Family. What message are you receiving into your heart?

You have a choice. You can choose to fill your mind with godly things or the things of this world. If you wonder why you have no victory in your life, it may be because of the music you listen to. The messages in the songs you hear ultimately affect whether you are victorious for God or fail of the grace of God.

I challenge you to go through your music playlist. You may need to remove a station from your Pandora or Spotify because it is not uplifting. Ask yourself, "Is what I listen to drawing me closer to God or pushing me further away?" The messages in the songs you listen to can determine whether you have victory in your life. You may need to reevaluate what you listen to if it does not meet the criteria Paul wrote about in Philippians 4:8.

Brother Steve Strelecky

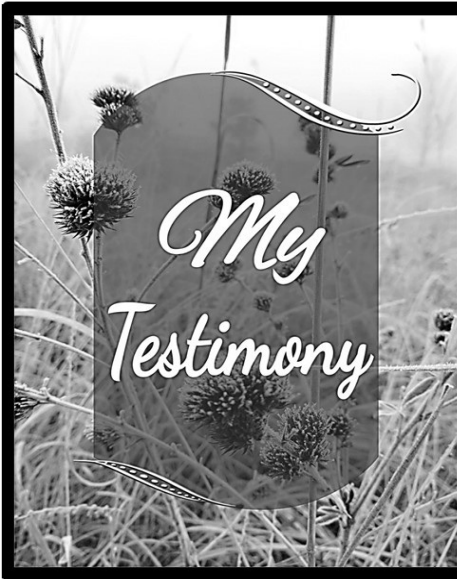
*Brother Steve and his wife, Sister Sheri, are the youth leaders at the Church of God in Newark, OH.*

## A CHRISTIAN IS

**A MIND** through which Christ thinks  
**A HEART** through which Christ loves  
**A VOICE** through which Christ speaks  
**A HAND** through which Christ helps

Florence Ruth McClain





# Anchored Memories

Sister Debi Borders

I was privileged to be introduced to the Church of God at three years old. My parents were active in the things of God. They sang in the choir, worked in the lunch stand and dining hall during camp meetings at God's Acres, and did what they could for the Lord. I have many wonderful memories of the camp meetings—listening to stories and singing songs in the old barn, the peanut hunts, buying penny candy at the candy store, visiting the bookstore, and gathering at the snack stand after the evening services. It was so much fun! God burned these childhood memories into my soul.

I had only a few years of what I would consider a long-term memory of God's Acres. I stored memory verses and songs in my mind. The song "Jesus Loves Me" has always stuck with me. Growing up, I was afraid of the dark, and every time I had that fear, even as an adult, the words "*Jesus loves me, this I know*" would come to my mind. I sometimes sang it out loud, and my fears would go away.

When my parents were first saved, we lived in Columbus, Ohio. (When you live further away from the church, it is easier to come home from work and say: "I'm so tired. I don't feel like

driving to church tonight," and stay home.) My parents moved closer to the congregation at Newark because they were falling into a pattern of missing church. Then, when I was seven years old, my parents backslid. Although these events happened when I was young, God kept these anchored memories in my mind.

Backsliding is a choice, and it is a gradual process. You do not wake up one day and decide to quit serving God because this way is too hard. There is a let-down, a slacking off in different areas of your life. It may start small, such as, "I forgot to pray this morning." Then at night, you think: "I'm too tired. I'm sorry, God. I'll pray in the morning," and you go to bed. I am not sure what happened with my parents, but I have learned that the choices we make as parents will affect the paths our children take. Whether our children will be saved and make it to Heaven or go to hell can be influenced by our decisions. As parents, we are greatly responsible! If we make decisions without God, we will fail every time.

One day, in particular, has been deeply embedded in my mind. When I was seven years old, my dad came home from

work with what I thought was a six-pack of pop. Later in life, I realized it was a six-pack of beer. He also bought a pack of cigarettes but had not smoked in years. He gave his will over to something other than God's will. I remember thinking something was weird. My seven-year-old mind could not even fathom what was happening with my parents. Church was all I knew.

Once, my parents loaded us into a 1970s model station wagon and took us to a drive-in movie theater. They had taken a stand against the drive-in my whole life, but that night it was okay. It made no sense to me. As I was lying in the back of the car, staring up at the ceiling, I thought something was wrong, but I could not put my finger on it. I did not understand. (Young person, you are blessed if your parents are saved. No doubt, it has spared you from much heartache.)

Shortly after that night at the drive-in, my dad moved our family to Irving, Texas, which was 1800 miles away from the beautiful Church of God at Newark, Ohio! He said we no longer needed our "hot clothes" (speaking of our modest apparel). My parents had a yard sale and sold everything. Then they loaded our family of six into the car, and down the road we went.

I want to digress for a moment. One person, a pillar in the church, talked to my mom before we left. She was so burdened for our family that she had offered to give God her life if we stayed in the church. Have you ever carried a burden for someone? Not too many are willing to give up all for a family to stay in the church. I believe her commitment to pray for us (and others who prayed) brought us back to the truth.

When we moved to Texas, the first thing my mom did was cut my hair. I hid from her and

cried because I did not want her to cut my hair. I pleaded with her not to cut my hair, but she did. At that point, she was not serving God, and she did what she wanted to do. She dressed me in pants, shorts, and swimsuits, things she once taught us were wrong. It has been said that sin will take you further than you want to go and keep you much longer than you want to stay. That is true!

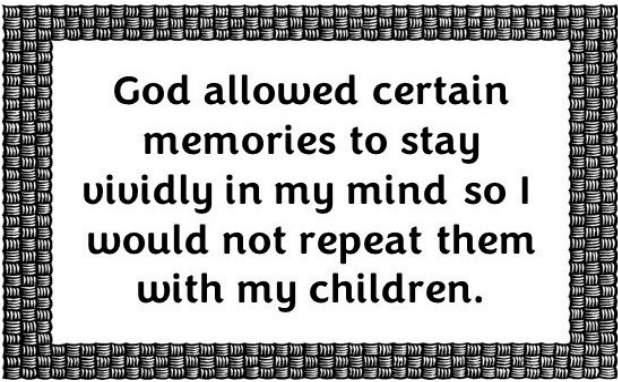
I believe God worked on my mom and dad at different times. Before we moved to Texas, my mom purchased a record made in the mid-seventies by the Church of God choir at God's Acres. She would sit at the dining room table and listen to it. When I was home alone, I would get it out and listen to it. I would grab my little hairbrush (my pretend microphone), stand in the living room, raise my hand, and pretend to be in church. I missed church! I realized something was terribly wrong with where I was. God used that experience to continue to deal with me.

All the memories we create, as an adult or a child, become anchored in our minds. All God allows us to go through, good or bad, and what we do with them will determine where we go down the road. I believe God allowed specific memories to stay vividly in my mind so I would not repeat them with my children.

I do not think my parents intended to hurt us. I know they loved us, but they went astray. They started slacking in their prayer lives. They stopped reading and studying the Bible. We are all accountable to study the Word of God. We can get busy, especially moms, but how will we get understanding if we never sit down and study the Bible for ourselves? God can bring Scriptures back to our

minds, but we must put them there first. They can take us through the difficult times.

My parents would have continued living for the Lord had they settled it in their hearts. They let up somewhere in their spiritual lives because God was able to keep them. I was seven, and my baby brother, Brother Gary Wilson, was only three. The fact he made it back to the Lord is a miracle because his experience was completely different from mine. God was not able to use memories of the church to draw him.



**God allowed certain memories to stay vividly in my mind so I would not repeat them with my children.**

After about a year in Texas, my parents moved back to Ohio but did not return to church. Sadly, as all backslidden souls, my family went deeper into sin. Because of my exposure to this lifestyle, I also went out into deep sin. From age seven to thirteen, I did not go to church. Then, when I was thirteen years old, we moved to Lancaster, Ohio, which is not far from Newark. I met a friend in high school who attended the Newark congregation but lived in Lancaster. We became friends, and she invited me to church.

In 1984, my mom took us to the Church of God in Lancaster, Ohio. After two visits, she was gloriously saved! I also gave my heart to the Lord. We continued attending church there for a little while, but soon the habits of life drew us back into sin. This time, we fell faster and deeper than before. (If you do not ground

yourself in the Word, the world will pull you right back, as a rip-tide pulls you out into the deep waters. There are certain things you must do to stay saved — pray, seek God's face, read and study the Word, and stay active. My in-laws kept their children actively involved in the things of God, the youth group, and singing. Staying active is important. It helps you stay where you need to be. You become accountable to your group of friends.) We did not stay active, and we got pulled back out.

God did not deal with my soul again until I was twenty-two years old. Many times, when God spoke to my heart, I responded, but I attended a man-made church that did not teach living a life free from sin. (It is important where you attend church. Be sure you go to a Holy Spirit-led Church of God! Your soul must be fed with the truth of God's Word to succeed.) I would seem to do okay for a while, but soon I was back to my sinful ways. It was a struggle to serve God, and I continued to fail. That is not how God intends our walk with Him to be. He promised to give the grace to withstand any trial or temptation.

When I was twenty-four, I moved back to Texas, hoping to find happiness there. God was faithful to me. Several times, I tried to do what I knew was right, but because I was not fed the truth, I did not remain saved. God always brought back those anchored memories of the many times we stayed on the campground at God's Acres. God knew what it would take to bring me back to Him.

During this time, I was doing things I was not supposed to do. Thank God, I did not die in my sins. I was not a bad moral person, but it does not take a bad

moral person to end up in hell. If I had died, I would have gone to hell. I remember praying one night when I was twenty-seven: "God, please do not take me. I do not want to go to hell." That is a scary place to be, knowing if God takes you right now, you will not make it to Heaven.

At the age of twenty-eight, I came to a turning point in my life, and God paid me a special visit. As I drove down the road one day, I was listening to a Gospel song called "Take My Hand, Precious Lord" by Thomas A. Dorsey. The chorus says: "*Precious Lord, take my hand, Lead me on, help me stand; I am tired, I am weak, I am worn.*"

A life of sin will cause you to become tired and worn. I was drudging through life with the baggage of sin on my back, knowing there was no way out unless God helped me. I told God right then, "God, I want to serve You, but I cannot do it here." Too many influences would pull me back into the habits of life, and I no longer wanted to live that way.

I told God I was willing to move back home to Newark, Ohio, if that was what it would take for me to stay saved. (My advice to young people is to stay in the church. Do not move anywhere unless God moves you and there is a true Church of God there for you to get your soul fed.)

I remember making a phone call to a Church of God while I was living in Texas. I called my mom, who had been gloriously saved, and told her I had found a Church of God there. She asked me, "Where is their headquarters, Deb?" I did not know, so I called to ask them. A lady called me back because I had to leave a message. I told her I was looking for a church, and I asked her, "Where is your headquarters?"

She said: "Cleveland, Tennessee. Where is yours?"

I said, "Heaven." She was speechless, to say the least.

When I hung up the phone, I called my mom and told her I was moving home, but I would need a month and a half to pack my stuff. I gave my supervisor my two-week resignation, but I felt God was impressing me to make it home in two weeks. So, I called my mom again and said, "Mom, can you come and help me pack my stuff in two weeks?" You would have thought I handed her the moon! She was so excited! She came to Texas, we loaded up the U-Haul, and my



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brother and I left for Ohio.

I may not be living today if God had not brought my childhood memories back to my mind. Anchored memories can be good or bad. Parents teach their children at a very young age, "This is good, and this is bad." We have a choice to go one path or the other. Take the path of the good. Make good memories.

God gave me a beautiful analogy. Just as ants travel in a column and follow each other, it is important we walk in the right direction so the person behind us can follow. When the queen lays her eggs, the colony of ants carries those babies on their backs. When you get saved, you are a baby in Christ. I was once a baby

in Christ. It is important for adult Christians to carry new converts and include them in as many spiritual activities as possible. If they are a young person, involve them in everything the youth group does because a riptide can pull them back into the world.

The one who prayed for my mom and offered to give her life for our family to stay in the church essentially carried us on her back. My mom and dad were in their thirties when they first got saved, and they were babes in Christ. Keep on the lookout for young Christians and help them along. You cannot go wrong when you make good choices. It will keep your anchored memories intact.

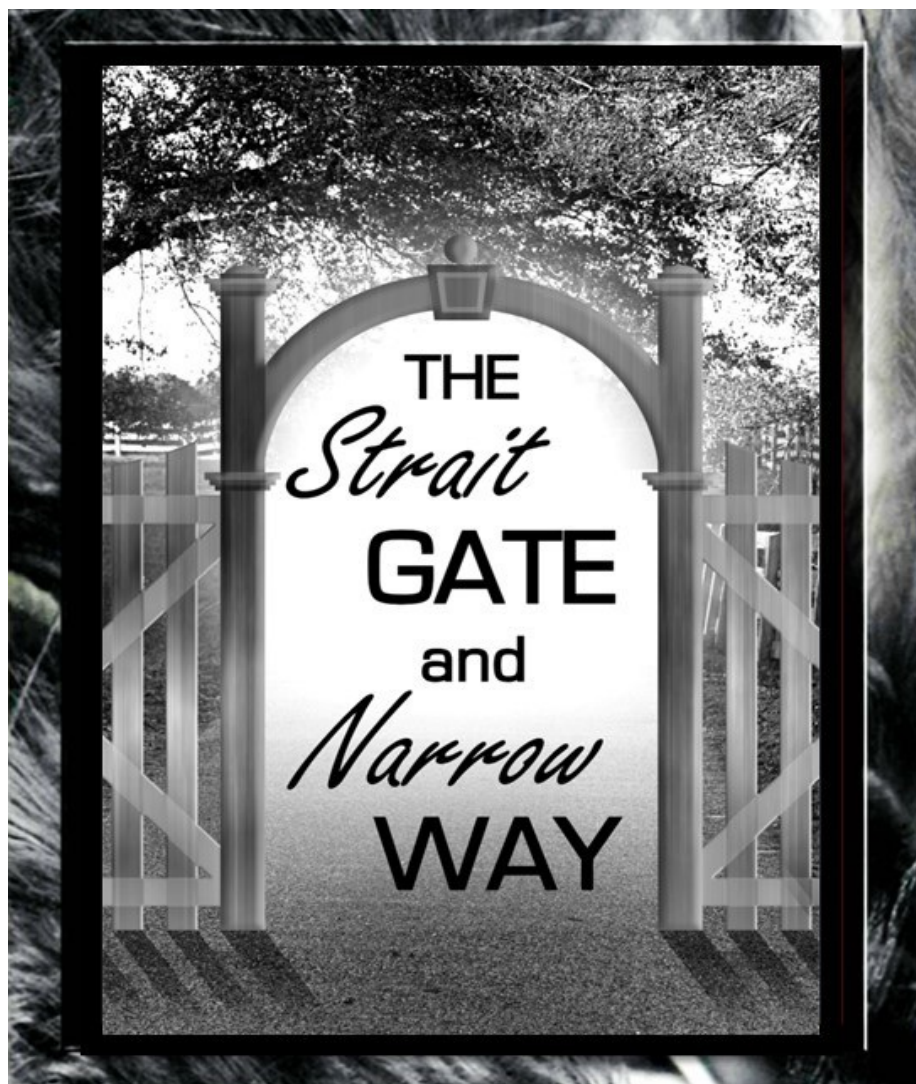
Turning your back on God and leaving His true church can destroy a family. The memories we sow in the minds of our children can determine where they will spend eternity. As a parent, I see the need for children to stay involved with church-related activities. Teaching our children God's Word and how to pray is important! When we carefully do this, we create anchored memories from which they will not escape. I trust my testimony can serve as a warning. It is dangerous to leave the truth.

It has now been several years since I came back to God. Thankfully, my experience with the Lord is just as real today as it was then. Praise God! God not only miraculously saved my mom and me, but He also saved my little brother and brought us back to the Church of God. God is so good! Thank God for anchored memories of the Church of God! When all hope was gone, God brought back memories of church, not just any church, but the wonderful Church of God!

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***Sister Debi Borders attends the  
Church of God in Warrensville, NC.***





Brother Calvin Foster

*Matthew 7:13 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:*

*14 Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*

*15 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.*

*16 Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?*

*17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.*

*18 A good tree cannot bring*

*forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.*

*19 Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.*

*20 Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.*

*21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.*

*22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?*

*23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*

*24 Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:*

*25 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.*

*26 And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:*

*27 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.*

*28 And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine:*

*29 For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.*

Thank God for the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which gives men and women a choice. It says in John 3:16, "That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." You can choose the strait gate, which leads to life everlasting, or the broad way, which ends in death and "the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:15).

Do not be deceived by false prophets. Listen to God's true prophets. First John 4:1-6 reads: "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world [false prophets tell people





some man called the antichrist is coming, but John said the 'spirit of antichrist' is already in the world].

"Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error."

Thank God for the gift to discern spirits. First Corinthians 12:10 talks about the ability to tell the difference between the "spirit of truth, and the spirit of error." Jesus said, "Beware of false prophets." Pastor David Stegmeier says: "Men of God say what they mean and mean what they say. They live the message." Preachers are to practice what they preach by the grace of God.

### The Way of Salvation

Jesus called it a "strait gate." It is not crooked or bent. It is called the "strait gate" because when you get saved, you get straight. Some older people may tell the younger ones to "straighten up!" When you get straight with God, you get straight with man. It is a blessing to walk through the strait gate.

The Apostle Paul persecuted the Church of God and participated in the death of the saints. But he got straight! In Acts 24:16,

he said, "And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men." Thank God, if you are saved, you can sleep at night with a good conscience toward God and your fellow man. I do not hold

anything against anybody. I am clear with man. Thank God for a good conscience.

When you come through the strait gate, you must come through it alone. You cannot depend on anyone else, and you must deny yourself. Some say, "Well, if my family gets saved, then I will get saved," or "If my wife or husband gets saved, I will get saved." The attitude in your heart should be, "I am going through the strait gate even if I have to go all by myself."

Luke 19:1-10 reads: "And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich. And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature. And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way."

"And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house. And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully. [Thank God, you can receive Jesus joyfully! You do not need to hang your head and look sad. When you get Jesus, you get joy.] And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner."

"And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord: Behold, Lord,

the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. [Zacchaeus got straight! He was a publican, and publicans were known to cheat on the taxes they collected and steal from the people. Zacchaeus said he would pay back what he took by four times!]

"And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man [speaking of Jesus] is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Man is lost without God. Jesus came to save the lost, including you and me. After He saved us, He put us together in the family of God, which is the Church of God. Praise God!

### Your Ability to Choose

The strait gate requires people to crucify the flesh and the lusts of the flesh. When you go through this gate, you no longer live after the flesh and walk in your sinful ways. Galatians 5:24 says, "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." I crucified the flesh and put off the old man when I walked through the strait gate. I am a new creature in Jesus Christ! Ephesians 4:22 states, "That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts [desires]." I put off the old conversations and the former lifestyle.

In Matthew 7:16-20, Jesus spoke of a tree so we would not be confused. God does not want us led astray. A good tree brings forth good fruit, and an evil tree brings forth evil fruit. You can know right from wrong. When God saves an individual, He makes them a good tree. We know them by their fruits. Keep your eyes open and stay close to God. God will keep you from

being deceived if you make the decision to go through the strait gate and stay on the narrow way.

It is a wise decision to walk through the strait gate. God gives you the ability to choose. If you do not stay on the narrow way, you could end up lost and damned for eternity. God does not want anyone to go to hell. The Bible says God would "have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4). Jesus said in Mark 16:15-16: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." God will not change His Word for you or me.

You have a choice—the broad way or the narrow way. Do not look at the crowd. Some ministers may have many people following their ministry, but that does not necessarily mean they are right. Jesus said not to follow the crowd because the crowd is on the broad way. Few places are preaching the truth and teaching how to live holy. They are sugar-coating the Gospel. Some people attend church services for many reasons other than to hear and obey the Word of God.

The Bible says to enter "in at the strait gate" so you will not end up damned. Make up your mind, and keep it made up. One song says, *"My foot's on the Rock, and my mind's made up."* The foolish man built his house on the sand, but the wise man built his house on the Rock. Live right, my dear brother and sister. Stay on the strait and narrow way, and you will not be deceived.

### **The Pleasures of Sin Are for a Season**

True Christians pass up the wide gate and the broad way with all its pleasures and sin. Consider Moses' choice. We read in Hebrews 11:23-24: "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. By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." Moses could have chosen the broad way. He could have gone through the wide gate and had the pleasure of being "called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." Verse 25 says Moses chose "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." Yes, there are pleasures in sin, but only for a season.

Everyone is in a different season of life. Some people would like you to feel *all* pleasures are sinful. There is pleasure in spending time with your family, wife or husband, and children. That is not a sinful pleasure. Sinful pleasures will take you further than you want to go, keep you longer than you want to stay, and cost you more than you want to pay. It is not worth living in sin for a few moments of sinful pleasure.

Consider the illustration of a grasshopper that hops around all summer but does not prepare for the winter. However, you will never see a lazy ant. The Proverb writer said in Proverbs 6:6, "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise." The ant is always busy preparing for the winter. God said to consider the ant and be wise.

Jesus said to beware of a false prophet. A false prophet can be anyone who prophesies something contrary to the Word of God. It could be a family member, friend, or co-worker. Do not listen to false prophecies, no matter where they come from. One song says, *"Dare to be a Daniel."* In Daniel, Chapter 6, the king made the decree that no one could pray to any god except him. Daniel did not obey that decree. He

prayed to the true God as he always did and was cast into the lion's den. God delivered Daniel.

According to 2 Peter 2:5, Noah was a "preacher of righteousness." After God told him to build the Ark, people laughed and tried to discourage him, but he kept hammering and building. You can be like Noah. You may be the only saved person in your family, but keep living and building for God. The Bible speaks of Enoch in Genesis 5:24. He pleased God, and the Lord took him.

### **Obedience Is Better Than Sacrifice**

Someone may say, "The way you live is too narrow." God fixed it just right. It is narrow enough. Do not add to the Word of God to make it more narrow. Stay with God! Do whatever God says. Some people in the religious world are putting things on people, trying to make the way more narrow. They are man's ideas and opinions, and they cause divisions. We need to line up with the Word of God. The true test of a life is the fruit we produce.

Titus 2:11 says, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men." God appears to all men because He does not want anyone to go to hell. Everyone has a choice. God will not force anyone to make a choice against their will. He deals with people. No one can go before God and say, "God, You never told me." Verses 12-13 read: "Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." Jesus is coming back!

When you walk through the strait gate and get on the narrow

way, do not replace good works for obedience. Verse 22 of our Scripture text states, "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?" There are many good people in the world. Thank God for good people who help the poor and the young people in school. Thank God for schoolteachers, doctors, and nurses. Good works will not save you. You cannot go to God thinking He will allow you into Heaven because of your good works.

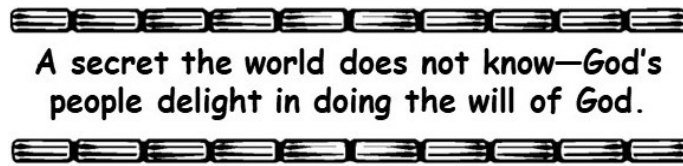
In 1 Samuel, Chapter 15, God told Saul to kill all the Amalekites and everything they had. When the Prophet Samuel asked Saul if he had done everything the Lord commanded, Saul answered in so many words, "Yes, I have done everything the Lord told me to do." However, Samuel heard the bleating of the sheep. He said in verse 22: "Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." Saul listened to the people. Pastor, minister, preach the Word! If the people do not want to hear the Word and you fear you will run them off, leave them with God.

The servant of the Lord must not strive, but he must be gentle with all men. Preach the Word with gentleness, love, and judgment as the Lord directs. The saints of God will say "amen" to the Word, which encourages the pastor. God wants men of God to rise up and preach His Word in this day and time. Obedience is better than sacrifice. Go home and obey. Treat your wife or husband and your children right. Obeying the Word of God is important.

## Humbling Yourself Before God

Jesus said in verse 13 of our Scripture text, *many* are on the road to destruction. We are trying to stop them by preaching the Gospel. In verse 14, Jesus said *few* will find it. True Christians are few in comparison to the world and the communities in which we live. If you are a part of the *few* that find it, you do not deserve any credit. All credit goes to God. Whenever I see a man or woman living in sin, I think, "That could be me if not for the grace of God." If I had not gotten saved, I could be dead, in jail, or strung out on drugs because that was my lifestyle.

False prophets open their gates and make the way wide. They say: "Come on in. This is 'the church of what's happening



**A secret the world does not know—God's  
people delight in doing the will of God.**



now.' We do not have a standard." Remember, God's ways will cross up man's ideas and opinions. We cannot deal with people in our own strength without the Word of God and His Spirit. Church of God preachers will help you make it to Heaven by showing you love, preaching the Word of God straight, and obeying it themselves. We all must line up with God's protocol, stay humble, and resist the devil. Brother and sister, stay on the straight and narrow road. The church is enjoying salvation. It is more than signing a card or shaking a preacher's hand.

James 4:6-10 states: "But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. Submit yourselves therefore to God [let us pray for one another so we will keep submitting ourselves to God]. Resist the

devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.

"Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up." Are you humbling yourself in the sight of the Lord? Are you drawing closer to God? Paul said in Philippians 2:5, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." Jesus had to obey the Father.

## Delighting Yourself in the Will of God

There is a secret the world does not know. Many are missing out because they think Christians go through the motions of church without having a good time. Psalm 40:6-8 says: "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart."

The secret is God's people delight (take pleasure) in doing the will of God. Some may say, "I feel sorry for the Church of God people." Do not feel sorry for me; I am enjoying myself! The joy of the Lord is our strength. "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning" (Psalm 30:5). There is joy in coming to the house of God and putting your feet under the Father's table. The Prophet Isaiah said, "Eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness" (Isaiah 55:2). There should never be a time when you do not want more of the Word of God. Something is wrong if you do not desire more of God.

Luke 18:10-14 reads: "Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. [The Pharisee had a lot of nerve coming to church and praying that way. He was patting himself on the back. Then he had the audacity to look at someone else in church and say he was thankful he was not like him.] I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess [remember, he was talking to

God].

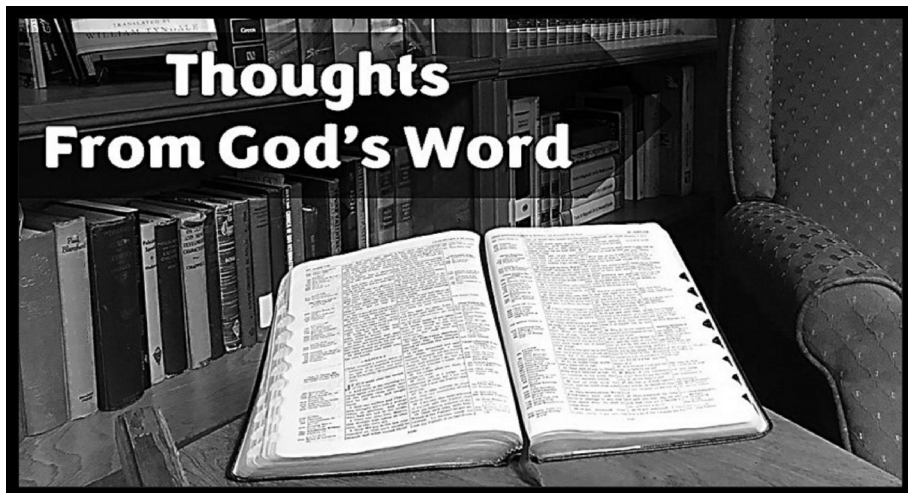
"And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. [It only took seven words. Some people will not admit to being a sinner.] I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: [Justified means he was right in God's sight. God called him a just man for the way he prayed.] for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Stay humble, and God can use

you.

You have a choice to make. You can go through the strait gate or the wide gate. Come to God with faith. Leave your doubts at the door. We do not have a church for you to join, and it does not take a long, formal prayer for God to save you. God sees the attitude of your heart. Dedicate your life to God and have the right spirit. May God bless you is my prayer.

(Compact Disc TR-2688)

**Brother Calvin Foster is the pastor of the Church of God in Kensett, AR.**



*Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.*

*Matthew 7:12*

"Do" the golden rule. This interesting Scripture presents us with an intriguing command. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. The word "do" requires action. Just as we are told to "do" this or "do" that on a job or for chores at home, it requires action. This is actually a very positive verse, but down through time, many have interpreted it in a negative way. "What is hateful to yourself, do to no other"; or "What you do not wish to be done

to you, do not do it to anyone else."

The negative form was the basis of ethical teaching. Only Jesus put it into a positive form. Consider the difference between the negative form and the positive that Jesus taught.

In the negative form, we are told to refrain from doing to others. It creates inaction to where ones are consistently doing nothing; thus they never "break" the rule. The goodness which consists of doing nothing is against everything Christianity stands for. Jesus said to "go" into all the world and share the Gospel message, not sit, do nothing, and be ineffective.

The positive form goes along with what Christians are to do. The fruit of the Spirit is kindness, love, gentleness, goodness, and longsuffering. We take on a whole new principle of action. Do unto everyone as you would want them to do unto you. Godly love comes in and makes this possible.

If we own a vehicle, the law tells us to drive in such a way we are safe and will not hurt anyone. The law does not tell us to stop and help someone, give someone a ride, or help someone change a flat tire. That is paying it forward. This positive attitude is what makes life beautiful.

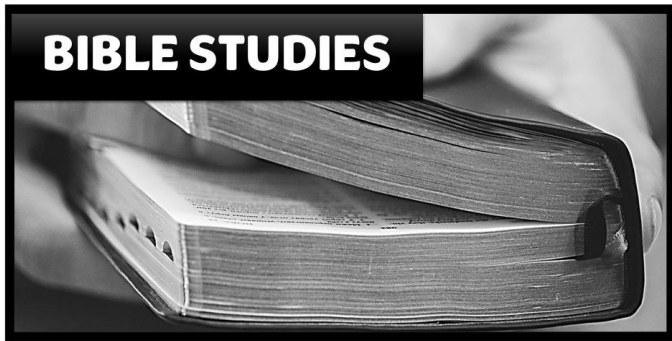
"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren" (1 John 3:14). Do we seek out ways to help and encourage others? This takes us out of our comfort zone, but the joy of seeing someone helped is a great blessing.

Never seek to avoid doing things; rather, restore faith in humanity and look for opportunities to show the love of God.

Brother Joel Barrows

**Brother Joel Barrows attends the Church of God in Newark, OH.**

## BIBLE STUDIES



### EVENT STUDY: ELISHA AND THE SHE BEARS

**SCRIPTURES:** 2 Kings 2:1-15, 23-24

#### CONTEXT:

To properly understand the account of Elisha being mocked, context must be considered. The first fifteen verses give understanding as to why he was told, "Go up, thou bald head." These verses detail how Elijah went up to Heaven in a whirlwind, how Elisha witnessed this event, and how the desired "double portion" was given to Elisha.

#### CONSIDER:

Why did Elisha (a prophet of God) curse little children? Why would God send bears to destroy these children for making fun of an old, bald man? Is it possible there is more to this account or that it has been misunderstood?

#### Verses 1-6

Elijah was nearing the end of his earthly life. Verse 1 tells how this would happen: "The LORD would take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind." As Elijah and Elisha traveled, three times Elijah tried to persuade Elisha to "tarry," but Elisha was determined to stay with Elijah until the end. The "sons of the prophets" at Bethel and Jericho also knew "the LORD" was going to "take away [Elijah] to day." These students, who followed the teachings of the prophets (Samuel, Elijah, and Elisha), were devoted to serving God. After the forced withdrawal of the priests and Levites (2 Chronicles 11:13-14), they were the only true teachers of the Law in the northern kingdom (Israel). Elijah visited the schools of the prophets at Bethel and Jericho one last time.

#### Verses 7-10

Desiring to be eyewitnesses to the event described in verse 1, "Fifty . . . sons of the prophets . . . stood to view afar off." They saw Elijah use his mantle (the prophet's cloak, an outward sign of the

prophet's office) to part the Jordan River, and Elijah and Elisha "went over on dry ground."

Verse 9 tells of Elijah's question ("what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee") and Elisha's request (for "a double portion of thy spirit [to] be upon me"). We read of this same Spirit in Luke 1:17, which says John the Baptizer would go "in the spirit and power of Elias [Elijah]." Elisha realized he needed the same Spirit working through him who had worked through Elijah. He asked for "a double portion."

Deuteronomy 21:17 says the "double portion" is "the right of the firstborn." As Elijah's firstborn spiritual son, Elisha not only needed God's Spirit to fulfill this call, he needed the "sons of the prophets" to recognize his leadership. Elisha was not asking to be greater than Elijah. Notice, it was Elijah who appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration, representing the prophets (Matthew 17:3).

Elijah said, "Thou hast asked a hard thing." He told Elisha "it shall be so" if he saw Elijah "when I am taken from thee." This blessing was left in God's hands.

#### Verses 11-15

Verse 11 explains, "As they still went on, and talked," Elijah and Elisha were separated by "a chariot of fire" and "horses of fire." Then, Elijah was carried up into Heaven in "a whirlwind." Elisha was not distracted by the chariot and horses of fire, for verse 12 says, "And Elisha saw it" (Elijah being carried into Heaven). This fulfilled the requirement of verse 10 ("if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee"). Elisha kept his eyes on Elijah.

Verse 13 says Elisha "took up also the mantle of Elijah that fell from him." The prophet's cloak had fallen from Elijah, but it did not fall *on* Elisha's shoulders. God honored Elisha's request, but Elisha had to pick up the mantle (a symbol of the prophet's office) and put it on.

When Elisha came to the Jordan, he "smote the waters" with the mantle (as Elijah did in verse 8). Elisha did not say, "Where is Elijah?" but "Where is the LORD God of Elijah?" Elijah was gone, but Elisha had the God of Elijah, and the waters "parted hither and thither." When the sons of the prophets saw this, they said, "The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha." Elisha did not need to convince them with words. God made it plain who Elijah's successor was to be.

#### Verse 23

Elisha traveled from Jericho to Bethel. No doubt, he was headed to a school of the prophets to tell them of Elijah's translation. "As he was going up by



the way" (the road leading to Bethel), "there came forth little children out of the city." The city of Bethel was a stronghold of idolatry. Years earlier, King Jeroboam had set up golden calves (one in Bethel and one in Dan) to replace the worship of the true God in Jerusalem (1 Kings 12:28-29).

While the Hebrew word for "little children" (*na'ar*; Strong's #5288) sometimes describes a young child (Exodus 2:6; 2 Samuel 12:16), it is important to compare it with other Scriptures where this Hebrew word is translated as:

- "the young men" (Genesis 14:24) who helped Abraham rescue Lot from captivity
- "the lad" (Genesis 22:5), describing Isaac when traveling with his father to Mount Moriah; the historian Josephus and several commentators say Isaac's age was between 25 and 33
- "a young man" (Genesis 41:12), speaking of Joseph when he was 30 (Genesis 41:46)
- "servants" (Numbers 22:22)
- "the young man" who was an "armourbearer" (Judges 9:54)
- David's "young men" who were with him in the wilderness (1 Samuel, Chapter 25)
- "Ziba, Saul's servant" (2 Samuel 9:9) who was the father of 15 sons (2 Samuel 9:10)

The Hebrew word for "little" (*qatan* or *qaton*) is also translated as "young" to denote a younger son (Genesis 27:42; 1 Samuel 16:11-12). The term "little children" or "little child" (*qaton na'ar*) describes:

- King Hadad when he fled into Egypt and Pharaoh "gave him to wife the sister of his own wife" (1 Kings 11:17-19)
- King Solomon at the age of 20 when he prayed for wisdom (1 Kings 3:7)

Concerning the term "little children" in the account of Elisha, many translations say "young men" or "young lads." One commentary states, "Little children is an unfortunate translation, raising quite the wrong idea of the tender age of the persons spoken on."

When the young men came out of Bethel and saw Elisha, they said, "Go up, thou bald head." To understand this mockery, consider the following:

- Elisha lived about 50-60 additional years after this event. He was possibly 25-30 years old at this time, possibly the same age as the young men who were mocking him.
- "Bald head" was an epithet of contempt in the East, applied even to a person with a full head of hair.
- The customary clothing of that time included

a head covering; thus, baldness would not have been immediately obvious.

- The words "go up" did not refer to the hill into the city of Bethel but the miraculous event of Elijah going up into Heaven, which it is believed Elisha was coming to share with the sons of the prophets in Bethel.
- The commentator Adam Clarke says the mockery was actually, "Ascend, thou empty skull to Heaven, as it is pretended thy master did."

## Verse 24

Elisha "cursed [the young men] in the name of the LORD." This was not the cursing of today's culture but a pronouncement of judgment, for the mockery was not against Elisha but against the God of Heaven. These idol worshipers were not pagans but children of Israel who had turned from worship of the true God to calf worship.

God's judgment is found in this same verse: "And there came forth two she bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them." The word "tare" means "break open, split open, ripped open" (Strong's Concordance). While forty-two "of them" were attacked by these bears, is it possible that there were more than forty-two? If so, consider how intimidating this group must have seemed. Did this large group coincidentally all leave the city at the same time, or was it a purposeful act to mock the Prophet Elisha?

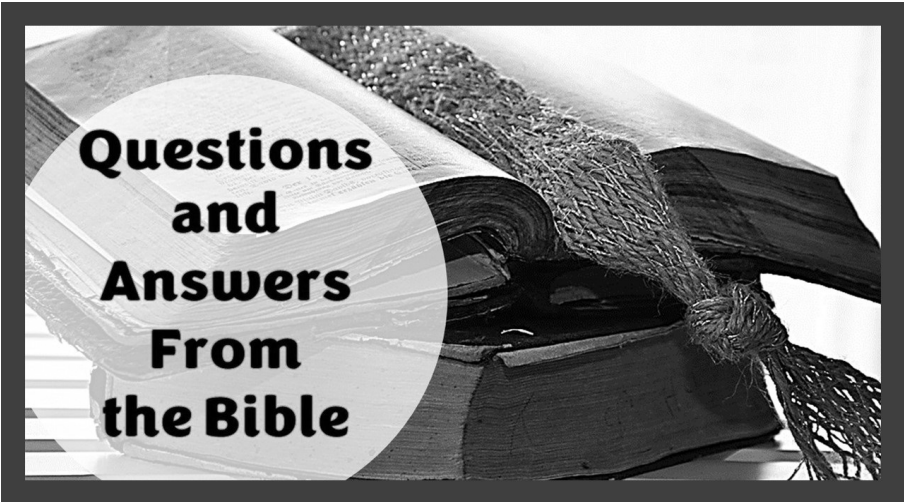
## CONCLUSION:

This is not an account of an old man who got his feelings hurt when little children made fun of his baldness. Careful study of this event reveals the importance of digging deep into the Scriptures. There are many important principles to be learned from this account. A few are:

- It is dangerous to mock God, His work, and His ministry. Galatians 6:7 warns, "God is not mocked."
- God's work will continue. Elijah's ministry was over, but God had a successor, and He still had a people. That is true yet today.
- Elisha realized the importance of the power of God's Holy Spirit on his ministry. He did not allow himself to become distracted by what was going on around him, but he kept his eyes on what God was doing.

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*This Bible Study is part of a series that can be downloaded at [GodsAcres.org](http://GodsAcres.org). ("Youth" - "Bible Studies" - "Bible Characters and Events")*



## Questions and Answers From the Bible

### **WHAT IS THE MEANING OF, "FOR THREE TRANSGRESSIONS . . . AND FOR FOUR, I WILL NOT TURN AWAY THE PUNISHMENT THEREOF" (AMOS 1:3)?**

This expression is used eight times in this prophetic book (Amos 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13; 2:1, 4, 6). It speaks of a point where the six enemies of God's people have reached a point of judgment. It speaks of Damascus (or Syria), Gaza, Tyrus, Edom, Ammon, Moab, and even Judah and Israel. It is not to be taken as a literal number, but rather a figurative expression.

The offenses of the six nations (plus Judah and Israel) could not be identically and precisely the same numerically. It is revealing a people, or a nation, advancing to a position where forgiveness and mercy have been exhausted (at least for the current condition), and judgment is being sent forth.

There is no Scriptural premise establishing such a numerical limitation as set forth in Amos. However, the thought of "three" brings to mind the Trinity of God. This figurative expression represents this sobering truth: once you have moved beyond the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, you have placed yourself *beyond* the dispensation of mercy and *under* the judgments of God.

Based on these verses in Amos, the Jewish rabbinical

teaching held to the erroneous thought that man was only required to forgive an offense three times.

A famous Jewish author wrote, "If he commits an offense . . . the fourth time, they do not forgive." This common Jewish thought was why the Apostle Peter felt he was being so generous in Matthew 18:21 when he questioned extending forgiveness "till seven times?" Although their thought was in error, they did realize it represented man placing himself in a position beyond forgiveness or mercy.

The instruction Jesus gave Peter reveals when it comes to us personally, we should never keep count of the times we may find it necessary to extend forgiveness. Hence the figurative number of "seventy times seven" (Matthew 18:22). This is a multiple of the Biblical number of perfection. However, when it comes to national, or wholesale, apostasy of a people, Romans 12:19 declares the sobering proclamation, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord."

It behooves all to stay in the bounds of mercy and forgiveness provided through the Triune God! He would much rather op-

erate within the bounds of mercy rather than in judgment "because he delighteth in mercy" (Micah 7:18).

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### **WAS THE PHILIP WHO WENT TO HELP THE EUNUCH PHILIP THE APOSTLE?**

The Philip who was called an Apostle is recorded in Matthew 10:2-3; Mark 3:14-19; and Luke 6:13-16. These passages speak of the Apostles as "the twelve." Acts 6:2 speaks of "the twelve [who] called the multitude of the disciples unto them"; verse 3 tells us they said, "Look ye out **AMONG YOU** [not of the twelve] seven men." Verse 5 says one of them was Philip.

We read in Acts, Chapter 8, when the persecution came to the church and many "were scattered abroad" (verse 4), verse 1 says "except the apostles." These "apostles" would have included Philip, who stayed in Jerusalem. Then, verse 5 speaks of a Philip who went down to Samaria and preached. Yet, verse 14 says, "When the apostles **WHICH WERE AT JERUSALEM** heard," indicating that this Philip was not the Apostle. He was the one Acts 21:8 refers to as "Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven."

Also, the *Thompson Chain Reference Bible* refers to Philip the Apostle and Philip the Evangelist under two different reference numbers.

Brother Earl R. Borders

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*Brother Earl R. Borders is the  
pastor of the Church of God  
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Message #	Date	Message Title	Minister
TR-3048 TR-3049	07-30-23	What Makes Salvation So Great? Requirements of Discipleship	Bro. Roger L. Decker Bro. Earl R. Borders
TR-3050 TR-3051 TR-3052	07-31-23	Three Palms The Predominant Spirits of the Seven Churches: Ephesus And Take Up His Cross	Bro. Nathan Harding Bro. Reggie Stegmeier Bro. Earl R. Borders
TR-3053 TR-3054 TR-3055	08-01-23	Faith Is Being Fully Convinced The Predominant Spirits of the Seven Churches: Smyrna Submission	Bro. Calvin Foster Bro. Reggie Stegmeier Bro. Earl R. Borders
TR-3056 TR-3057 TR-3058	08-02-23	If the Foundations Be Destroyed The Predominant Spirits of the Seven Churches: Pergamos and Thyratira God Knows Your Sorrows	Bro. Mickey Mullins Bro. Reggie Stegmeier Bro. Abraham Burton
TR-3059 TR-3060	08-03-23	The Office of Ordination The Predominant Spirits of the Seven Churches: Sardis	Bro. Roger L. Decker Bro. Reggie Stegmeier
TR-3061 TR-3062 TR-3063	08-04-23	Make Yourself Ready The Predominant Spirits of the Seven Churches: Philadelphia Helpless but Not Hopeless	Bro. Josh Thilmony Bro. Reggie Stegmeier Bro. Abraham Burton
TR-3064 TR-3065 TR-3066	08-05-23	New Testament Salvation Is Better Than Old Testament Salvation The Predominant Spirits of the Seven Churches: Laodicea Turn Ye From Your Evil Ways	Bro. Larry Dishman Bro. Reggie Stegmeier Bro. Abraham Burton
TR-3067 TR-3068	08-06-23	Neglecting Your Salvation Do You Know the Power of God?	Bro. Larry Dishman Bro. Abraham Burton

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# Upcoming Meetings

## October 4-8 — CANBY, OR

**REVIVAL:** Church of God, 522 NW 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave, Canby, OR 97013  
Service times: Wed.-Sat. 7 p.m.; Sun. 10:45 a.m. & 6 p.m.  
Evangelist: Brother Earl R. Borders from Summersville, WV  
Brother Borders will be preaching from the Book of Revelation.  
For more information, contact: Pastor E. David Stegmeier @ 503-313-0227

## October 11-15 — WHITE PINE, TN

**CAMP MEETING:** Church of God, 185 Highway 25/32, White Pine, TN 37890  
For more information, contact: Pastor Roger Nethers @ 770-206-0786

## October 16-22 — WARRENSVILLE, NC

**REVIVAL:** Church of God, 2042 Teaberry Rd, Warrensville, NC 28693  
Service times: Mon.-Fri. 7 p.m.; Sat. 6 p.m.; Sun. 10 a.m. & 5 p.m.  
Evangelist: Brother Larry Dishman from Hurley, MS  
For more information, contact: Pastor Allen Borders @ 740-485-8881

## October 23-29 — SUMMERSVILLE, WV

**REVIVAL:** The Church of God, 74 Armstrong Rd, Summersville, WV 26651  
Service times: Mon.-Fri. 7 p.m.; Sat. 6 p.m.; Sun. 10:30 a.m. & 6 p.m.  
Evangelist: Brother Larry Dishman from Hurley, MS  
For more information, contact: Pastor Earl R. Borders @ 304-872-4047

## November 8-12 — STEWARTVILLE, AL

**REVIVAL & FELLOWSHIP MEETING:** The Church of God, 1950 Goodwater Hwy, Sylacauga, AL 35150  
Service times: Wed.-Fri. 7 p.m.; Sat. 10 a.m. & 6 p.m.; Sun. 10 a.m. & 5 p.m.  
Evangelist: Brother Earl R. Borders from Summersville, WV

## November 22-26 — CANBY, OR

**ANNUAL THANKSGIVING & FELLOWSHIP MEETING:** Church of God, 522 NW 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave, Canby, OR 97013  
Evangelist: Brother Mike Wilks from Newark, OH  
Services times: Wed. 7 p.m.; Thur. 10:30 a.m.; Fri. & Sat. 7 p.m.;  
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