

THE GOSPEL TRUMPETER



SOUNDING FORTH THE SEVENTH AND LAST TRUMPET

Vol. 54 January 2024 No. 1

**"The LORD hath set apart him that
is godly for himself: the LORD
will hear when I call unto him."**



Psalm 4:3

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

THE GOSPEL TRUMPETER

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

Brother Roger L. Decker Editor
Workers Too Numerous to Mention

THE CHURCH OF GOD BELIEVES IN

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

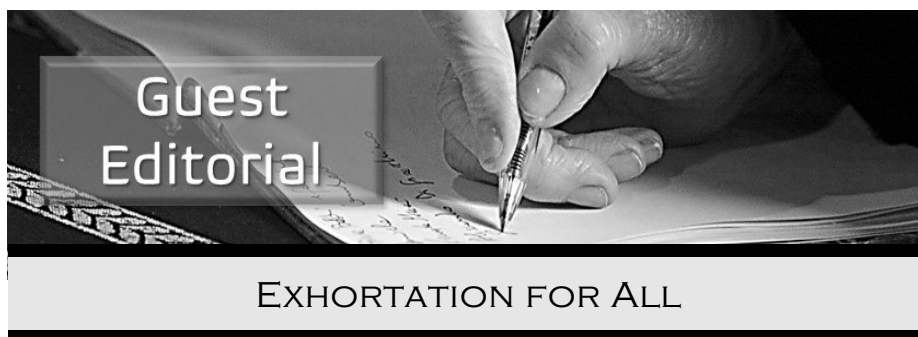
SOME SPIRITUAL FACTS PERTAINING TO THE CHURCH

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

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A single word, "exhortation," comes to mind when summarizing this issue. *Exhort* means "to strongly urge or encourage someone to do something." The Apostle Paul strongly emphasized in 1 Timothy 2:1-4: "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for *all* men; For kings, and for *all* that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have *all* men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."

Brother Roger L. Decker's message, "David's Tabernacle—The Church of God," gives us a closer look at the early church when understanding about who could be included in God's church was unclear. Brother Decker points out this truth: "If he [the devil] cannot work from the outside, he will work from the inside. He continues to do what he was created to do." Attention is drawn to the time when David filled the office of the high priest and brought the Ark of the Covenant back from the house of Obbedom. He placed it in the midst of the tabernacle so *all* could partake.

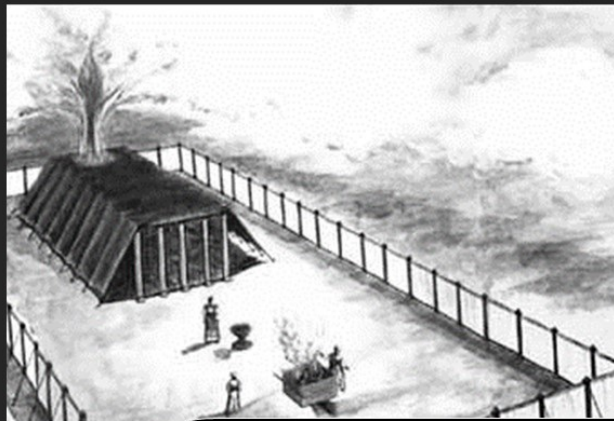
David, a type of Christ, depicted a time when *all* could become one in Jesus Christ. "The Mosaic Law was suspended for a short time, but now it has been suspended forever. Everything is better under the New Testament dispensation." There is hope for the one who may question

whether or not they can obtain salvation. Brother Decker gives a short testimony of how the Gospel came to him, and he said: "Why did God do that for me? God saw my heart and desire. When God sees those who will serve Him if they have the opportunity, He makes a way for them." Praise God!

Brother Mike Wilks' message on "The Second Coming of Jesus Christ" is another example of God's faithfulness. There are many false doctrines concerning this subject. The enemy of our souls would love to bind us with confusion and get us encumbered by the world. Brother Wilks brought this to light when he said: "This world will be extinguished. The only thing that matters is our soul's well-being." Are you ready to meet Jesus Christ? The exhortation is to not be ignorant of God's warnings. "But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that *all* should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:8-9). We can find security in obedience to the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

Sister Victoria Miller presents a thought-provoking question, "Who Am I?" in the "Especially for Young People" section. Jesus Christ came to us in human form and "was in all points tempted like as we are" (Hebrews 4:15). Christ gave everything He had so we could have salvation. Who are we? Can we give more of

[continued on page 14]



DAVID'S TABERNACLE—THE CHURCH OF GOD

Brother Roger L. Decker

Acts 15:12 Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them.

13 And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me:

14 Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name.

15 And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written,

16 After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up:

17 That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things.

18 Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.

There was a controversy in this chapter of Acts. Verses 1-2 say: "And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them [they had a discussion, and things became heated], they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question." They could not settle their disagreement.

"Certain men" were Jews who had converted to Christianity. They wanted to bring in circumcision as an added requirement for being saved. They did not want to give up the Law entirely, which was how they were willing to accept the Gentiles into the church. We know these men were Christians because they went to the Apostles and elders for a decision.

Many things were happening in the church at Antioch. The extreme persecution they had been in was easing, but the devil never stopped working. If he cannot work from the outside, he will work from the inside. He continues to do what he was created to do. The Gospel was being preached to Jews and Gentiles alike. They were together as brethren should be, but there were certain Jews who were not ready to forget the position the Jews held as God's chosen people. They were willing for the Gentiles to come into the church, but only on the condition they first became Jews through circumcision.

The discussion between Paul, Barnabas, and the Jewish brethren was heated, and neither side was about to give in. They had to bring others into the discussion. Acts 15:5-10 states: "But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to

keep the law of Moses.

"And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter. And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?"

David Brought Up the Ark of God

It is a well-established fact that King David was a type of Jesus Christ. He was a prophet, a priest, and a king. Acts 2:30, speaking of David, says, "Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne." It was a throne of mercy. First Kings 1:31 reads, "Then Bathsheba bowed with her face to the earth, and did reverence to the king, and said, Let my lord king David live for ever."

David also filled the office of a high priest. Second Samuel 6:12-19, speaking of the Ark being brought back into the camp, states: "And it was told king David, saying, The LORD hath blessed the house of Obededom, and all that pertaineth unto him, because of the ark of God. So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obededom into the city of David with gladness. And it was so, that when they that bare the ark of the LORD had gone six paces, he sacrificed oxen and fatlings.

And David danced before the LORD with all his might; and David was girded with a linen ephod.

"So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet. And as the ark of the LORD came into the city of David, Michal Saul's daughter looked through a window, and saw king David leaping and dancing before the LORD;



and she despised him in her heart. And they brought in the ark of the LORD, and set it in his place, in the midst of the tabernacle that David had pitched for it: and David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD.

"And as soon as David had made an end of offering burnt offerings and peace offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD of hosts. And he dealt among all the people, even among the whole multitude of Israel, as well to the women as men, to every one a cake of bread, and a good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine. So all the people departed every one to his house."

David got word that the Ark of the Covenant was in the house of Obededom, which caused his house to be blessed. Everything Obededom had was under the blessings of God. It is still true

today. Any home with the presence of God is blessed. The Scripture says there were sacrifices and joy, and David danced before the Lord.

David Served All the House of Israel

"David was girded with a linen ephod," a garment worn by the priesthood, especially the high priest. Exodus 28:3-4 says: "And thou shalt speak unto all that are wise hearted, whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom, that they may make Aaron's garments to consecrate him, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office. And these are the garments which they shall make; a breastplate, and an ephod, and a robe, and a broidered coat, a mitre, and a girdle: and they shall make holy garments for Aaron thy brother, and his sons, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office."

The linen ephod was originally worn by the high priest, but later was worn by the regular priests. First Samuel 22:18 reads: "And the king said to Doeg, Turn thou, and fall upon the priests. And Doeg the Edomite turned, and he fell upon the priests, and slew on that day fourscore and five persons that did wear a linen ephod."

Samuel wore a linen ephod. It was made of fine linen consisting of two pieces that hung from the neck, covering both the back and the front above the tunic and outer garment. It was embroidered with divers colors. The two pieces were joined over the shoulder by clamps or buckles of gold. It fastened around the waist by a girdle of gold, blue, purple, and fine twined linen.

David performed the duties of the high priest. He brought up the Ark of God from the house of Obededom with gladness. He was glad to have the presence of God back in the camp. Michal,

Saul's daughter, saw him dancing before the Lord, and "she despised him in her heart" (2 Samuel 6:16).

Second Samuel 6:20-21 states: "Then David returned to bless his household. And Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David, and said, How glorious was the king of Israel to day, who uncovered himself to day in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovereth himself! And David said unto Michal, It was before the LORD, which chose me before thy father, and before all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the LORD, over Israel: therefore will I walk before the LORD."

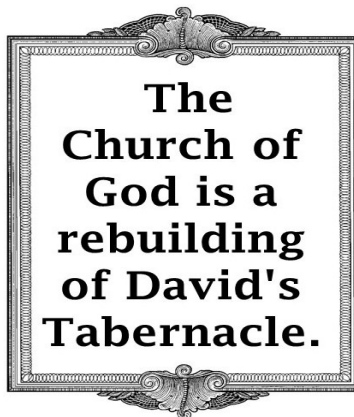
Wherever there is rejoicing, there will always be a critic. King David performed all the duties that generally pertained to the priesthood. He offered burnt offerings and peace offerings and then blessed the people. When the Ark of the Covenant was returned, it was not placed in the Holy of Holies, but in the midst of the Tabernacle or tent. When David finished the offerings, "He blessed the people in the name of the LORD of hosts." He served *all* the house of Israel. Mosaic worship was suspended for a time. The Ark was set in the midst of the tent, and all Israel had a part in the worship. There was no separation between men, women, and children.

A Better Covenant

Jesus said in Matthew 18:20, "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." The Church of God is a rebuilding of David's Tabernacle. The Mosaic Law was suspended for a short time, but now it has been suspended forever. Everything is better under the New Testament dispensation. Hebrews 7:22 says, "By so much was Jesus made a

surety of a better testament."

We have a better covenant and better promises. Hebrews 8:6 reads, "But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises." Hebrews 9:23 says, "It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these."



When David passed away, his son, Solomon, succeeded him on the throne. A great temple was erected, and the Ark was taken from the Tabernacle of David and placed in the Holy of Holies in the temple. The Tabernacle of David had ended; it was no longer used in worship. God moved upon the prophet Amos who prophesied of a time when the Tabernacle would be rebuilt. Amos 9:11 reads, "In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old."

Again, the controversy in Acts, Chapter 15, was with Jewish converts willing to accept the Gentiles on one condition — they keep the Law intact and become circumcised. They said if they were not circumcised, they could not be saved. Their attitude was that the Christian faith was not superior to the Mosaic Law, but

it only perfected it. The Apostles came together to settle the matter.

Let us consider how the brethren handled this situation in the Book of Acts. Many had been converted from Judaism and were dwelling with the other Christians. Certainly, they did not want division or separation, so they sent for the elders. Acts 15:6 says, "And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter." Again, they were disputing or arguing over whether or not the Gentiles should keep the Law. No doubt, Scriptures were brought up that dealt with the separation of the Jews and Gentiles.

Finally, Peter got up and reminded them of how God sent him to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles so they could believe. God gave them the witness, the Holy Ghost, the same as He did the Jews. He put no difference between the Jew and the Gentile, "purifying their hearts by faith" (Acts 15:9). Peter said in verse 10 they should not "put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples." Verse 11 reads, "But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they." The dispute still needed to be settled.

James was considered James the Just. He was the brother of Jesus Christ and was well known among the brethren. He was a leader when it came to the morals of the church. He stood up and defended Peter's response. God used Peter to visit the Gentiles and bring the Gospel to them. James brought up Amos' prophecy. Acts 15:16 states: "After this I [God] will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David."

The Gospel Reaches Every Individual

The Tabernacle of David was a tent in the wilderness; it was

not Solomon's or Herod's temple. David's tabernacle would reach beyond the borders of Israel to all men, to "the residue," or remnant. The Tabernacle of David would be set up for a time until Jesus Christ returns. Provisions are made for the "residue of men" regardless of whether they are near (a Jew) or afar off (a Gentile).

Galatians 3:28 says, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." The Gospel reaches out to every individual. It is to "whosoever will" (Matthew 16:25). There was great joy when the Ark was brought to Jerusalem. David served the entire house of Israel, including all the men, women, and children. The same is true in the Church of God. When the presence of God is in the midst, there is rejoicing, praise, and shouting. God has the table spread for *all* who will come and be saved.

Luke 14:16-24 reads: "Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come."

"So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed,

and the halt, and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper."

One lesson in this parable is that God will not accept excuses. People give many reasons for not serving God. Ones were bidden, and excuses were made. Jesus said those who gave excuses would not taste His supper. Another lesson is that two rooms no

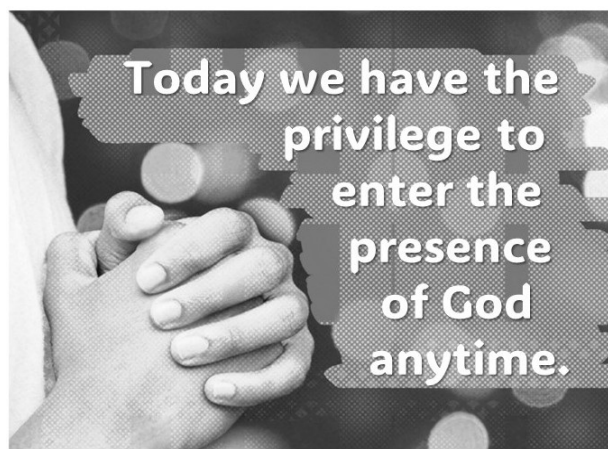
ever, sat down on the right hand of God." There is no need for two rooms.

Whosoever Will May Come

Hebrews 4:15-16 states: "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." We have the privilege to enter the presence of God anytime, not just once a year or only on the Day of Atonement. Hebrews 9:7 says, "But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people." Our High Priest was without sin and a willing sacrifice.

Ephesians 2:13-17 says: "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. [I was once afar off. I was not raised in a Christian home. I was not taught the commandments of God.] For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh."

When Jesus Christ came on the scene, there were all kinds of factions, just as there are today. There were Jews, Orthodox Jews, Samaritans, Gentiles, and publicans. These groups did not get



longer divide the people from worship, as in the Tabernacle of the Old Testament. Thank God, we can go directly into the presence of God. We can call on God and go before His presence anytime.

Speaking of the death of Jesus Christ on the Cross, Luke 23:44-45 says: "And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst." The veil that separated the people from the Holy of Holies was torn. There is no longer a veil between the two rooms. Under the new covenant, there is only one sacrifice. Hebrews 10:12 reads, "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for

along well, and many of those factions were broken up into smaller factions. Jesus did not get the leaders of the factions together to bring unity. He brought all men into one by making them new creatures. Whenever you come to Jesus Christ, you must lay down bitterness and separation. Jesus made "of twain one new man." David was a great man of God, prophet, king, and priest. Jesus Christ, our High Priest, King, and Prophet, is greater!

In this dispensation of time, we all can participate in rebuilding the Tabernacle of David, which is the Church of the Living God. The body of Christ takes in all believers, regardless of race,

culture, language, nationality, or social class. All become one in Jesus Christ. You do not have to stand on the outside and offer a sacrifice. The sacrifice has already been given. The Spirit of God and the Word of God bid you to come.

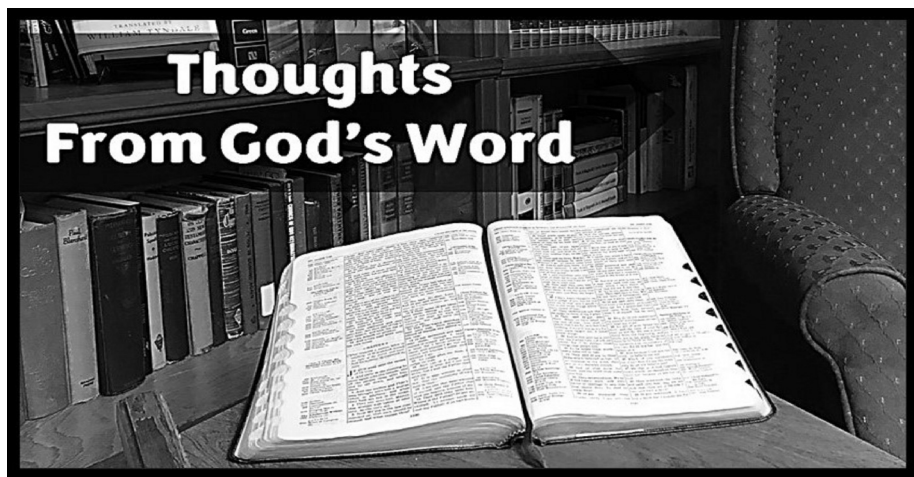
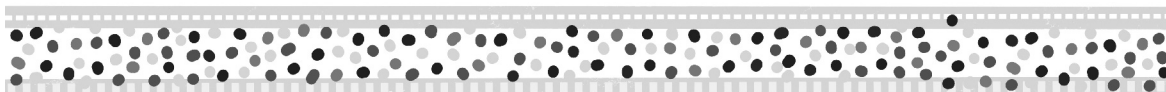
Acts, Chapter 15, lets us know, beyond a shadow of a doubt, what is the true Tabernacle of God. All can come. The two rooms no longer exist. The Mosaic Law was a yoke. We live by faith in Jesus Christ. Revelation 22:17 states: "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Salvation is

free to all.

Out of the millions of people in the state of New York, God brought me out and moved me to Ohio to work at Rockwell International. I met a brother who introduced me to the Church of God, and I am so glad he did. It was the providence of God. Why did God do that for me? God saw my heart and desire. When God sees those who will serve Him if they have the opportunity, He makes a way for them.

(Compact Disc TR-2813)

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



But know that the LORD hath set apart him that is godly for himself: the LORD will hear when I call unto him.

Psalms 4:3

Have you ever called out for someone, and they did not answer you? Why did no one answer? Was it because they were not present or you were in the wrong place or there were ill feelings between you?

Have you heard a parent call for their child, and the child happily comes to them? Or how

about the opposite, when the child hangs his head and does not come? The difference is a clear conscience!

Did you know God will not answer every time someone calls Him? Many people say they will pray for you or they say grace before meals or they cry "Oh God" in times of trouble. However, God is more than just an accessory to make us look good. He is more than a tool to be used in times of trouble. God is real, and He has feelings. He wants to have an every day and every

moment relationship with us!

In Isaiah, Chapter 58, the prophet scolded the people because they fasted and prayed for the wrong reasons. Isaiah gave proper reasons for fasting. Verse 9 says, "Then [after fasting for the Lord's reasons] shalt thou call, and the LORD shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am."

We should not just live right because it is right; we should live right because we see the purpose and the good it brings to others. We need to feel the burden for lost souls behind every word and deed in our lives. "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men" (Colossians 3:23). Then, we can "come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16) and hear our Lord say, "Here I am."

Sister Rachel Fowler

**Sister Rachel Fowler attends
the Church of God in Newark, OH.**



The Second Coming of Jesus Christ

Brother Mike Wilks

In our fleshly state, we know nothing other than this world we live in now. One day, Jesus Christ is coming back. My uncle, a great storyteller, said that when he was a little boy, he heard the Second Coming of Jesus Christ preached so much he believed it was imminent. He told of an event at church in which a loud noise and rumble was suddenly heard. One sister stood on the picnic table and said, "The Lord is coming!" He said it smote his heart when he thought about it. They found out the noise was a jet airliner that flew over them. He was relieved it was not the end.

The Second Coming will be an actual event, and it will happen "in the twinkling of an eye" (1 Corinthians 15:52). We need to be ready. It is troubling to many people. False religion tries to smooth over it by teaching false doctrines, such as the millennium. They teach Jesus is coming back to Jerusalem and establishing His kingdom. They are attempting to take the edge off the

Second Coming of Jesus Christ and remove the urgency of getting right with God. Jesus wants us to be ready when He comes. There will be no second chance to live this life over again. We get one opportunity.

Every time I see a helium balloon slowly going up into the air, I cannot help but think of the Ascension. Acts 1:9-11 reads: "And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."

Is there a future in this world? Absolutely not! We must think soberly because everything we are involved in here is temporary. Looking up at the stars through my telescope, I cannot

help but think, "What if Jesus comes back now?" I remember being invited to someone's house for an event. It started out fun. The children were playing and having a good time. Suddenly, the music cranked up, and they started drinking. I will never forget my thoughts: "What if Jesus comes back now? I do not want to be standing here." We gathered the children and left.

Sentinels for the World

Have you ever thought about where you will be when Jesus comes back? Will you be involved with questionable things? I can remember when I was in my early twenties, living ungodly, far away from God, and having a series of dreams. One of them was the end of the world. That was a powerful moment in my life. God was trying to awaken me to my true condition. I never shared that dream with anyone until I got saved. God has ways of dealing with people. It may not be through a dream, but

**Christians are
SENTINELS
FOR THE
WORLD.**

**We are
to watch
and warn others of this
great day that is coming.**



He has ways of getting your attention.

My dream was lucid, and it brought fear to me. I still remember exactly how it happened. In my dream, I stood on my aunt's back porch, looking at the sky. There were oak trees where my grandma used to feed the squirrels. As I looked up at the oak trees, I suddenly heard a noise. Two things struck me hard. One was that I was lost, and the other was that I had no hope. It scared me so much I came up out of my bed and thanked God I was still alive.

I often think about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ and the people who will not be ready. This great day is coming. I love the Word of God because it is not filled with fables, and this event is not a fable. Jesus Christ is coming back one day, and it will be the day of all days. The United States and Canada share the largest undefended border in the world. In either country, no troops guard the border because there is no animosity between the two countries. In other areas of the world, there are spy satellites monitoring everything, watching for foreign troops to invade their borders.

Our duty as Christians is to warn people to prepare for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. I wonder how close He is to coming again? Romans 9:28 says, "A short work will the Lord make

upon the earth." We are two thousand years into this, so how close is He to coming back? Vigilance can be difficult to keep. After I had a bicycle stolen from me, I installed cameras because I wanted to be vigilant in monitoring my property. Those cameras are like a sentinel standing guard, watching and alerting my phone to every movement.

We are sentinels for the world. We are to watch and warn others of this great day that is coming. We hear of thunderstorms or tornado watches, which means conditions are ripe for a storm, a severe thunderstorm, or a tornado. Then, it may become a warning, which means the storm is imminent. The weatherman will tell you to take cover and do whatever you can to protect yourself. We are in a warning right now. We need to be ready for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. When we live with the closeness of Christ's coming, others will pick up on that, and it will serve as a warning.

Are You Laboring for Temporal Things?

Second Peter 3:11 states, "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness." Second Corinthians 4:18 says, "While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." Consider how powerful the word *dissolved* is. I enjoy eating jawbreakers. They are hard as rocks, but they dissolve when you work on them. Everything in this world will dissolve one day.

Matthew 7:26-27 reads, "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: 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." If you want to be wise, adhere to the Word of God. I love the Word of God. No matter what your level of understanding is, obey it.

We often hear about the apocalypse of climate change. Certainly, we must be good stewards of the earth and our environment. People should not dump trash on the side of the road. We want a clean place to live. However, this thought of climate change has become so powerful that many people live to save the planet. This world will be extinguished. The only thing that matters is our soul's well-being. You need to worry about "the climate" of your soul. Is it holy? Is it pure? Are you clean? Are you ready to meet Jesus Christ?

Many people get tied up in uncertain riches. Jesus will stand at the door of your heart and knock. He comes to every one of us in many ways. When I was lost, Jesus came and presented His truth to me. The Second Coming will be different. Jesus is sitting on the throne of mercy now, and He is holding back all the wrath of God. One day, God will tell Him it is finished, and the wrath of God will be unleashed on a world that does not believe in Him. Do you who hear the Word of God take the Second Coming of Jesus Christ seriously? A day is coming, and many people put it out of their minds because they have heard it repeatedly and time still goes on. May God help us not to be scoffers of the Word. We must believe wholeheartedly.

Luke 12:17-20 is a sad passage. It reads: "And he thought within himself, saying, What

shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?"

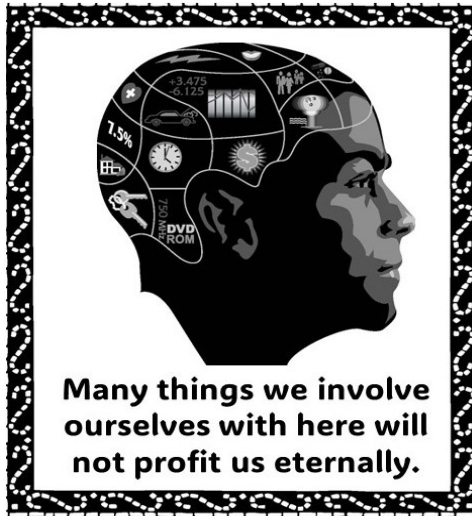
Many are laboring today for things that do not matter when put up against the great day of God Almighty. There is a great divide between Christ's coming and what we spend our time on here. You cannot mix the two, as oil and water cannot be mixed. Many things we involve ourselves with here will not profit us eternally. We can amass money, items, houses, and land, but it will all be dissolved one day. Everything we have here is like the jawbreaker. It seems concrete and real now, but it will all be dissolved one day.

Are You Ready for the Great Day Coming?

There is comfort in the Scriptures. Living your life with a purpose and knowing what is to come is amazing. Many people dread the thought of death because they are uncertain of what comes afterward. What a comfort and privilege it is to pray with someone who is ready for what is coming after death. There may be some uncertainty because they have never experienced death, but when the grace of God comes in, you can see it. God wants us to know we are ready.

The Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17: "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have

no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive [not just physically, but alive unto God] and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.



"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air [not in Jerusalem or on the earth, but in the air]: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

Jesus Christ hung on the Cross and was mocked. He did not come down because He knew about this great day coming. Mark 15:32 says: "Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe. And they that were crucified with him reviled him." They mocked Him and said, "Why do You not come down?" One day, Jesus will descend, and all will see Him as He truly is. We have work to do for God while we are here. May God help us be ready for this great day of God Almighty. The Second Coming is a promise to us. It is not

something to be afraid of; it is something to prepare for.

The Apostle Paul had to clarify himself in his first letter to the Thessalonians. The people there were not going to work. They thought the Second Coming was so imminent that they were sitting and waiting for it. We need to be about our Father's business, but we must also be ready for this great day. One day, we will all hear a shout, and the Lord will descend from Heaven. When Jesus was on the Cross, He shouted, "It is finished" (John 19:30). He will shout again on that great day when He will reveal Himself.

As the Days of Noah

The Prophet Jeremiah prophesied and warned Jerusalem with all he had. The false prophets of his day said, "Peace, peace; when there is no peace" (Jeremiah 6:14). The same situation is happening today. False preachers are proclaiming: "Look for the millennium. Christ is coming back to bind the devil for a thousand years. Then, He will set up His kingdom in Jerusalem and give you another chance to serve Him." You cannot find any of that in the Bible.

Jeremiah 6:22-23 reads: "Thus saith the LORD, Behold, a people cometh from the north country [talking about Babylon], and a great nation shall be raised from the sides of the earth. They shall lay hold on bow and spear; they are cruel, and have no mercy; their voice roareth like the sea; and they ride upon horses, set in array as men for war against thee, O daughter of Zion."

Jeremiah 8:7 says, "Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the LORD." What a sad commentary! These verses

are not about the world but about God's people. The birds and animals know their appointed time. God has given us this great Book to warn us of the great day coming.

Jesus said in Matthew 24:36-39: "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."

Noah preached his heart out to his community. Think about everything those people were involved in. They were building, eating, drinking, and being merry. A great Flood was coming to destroy the whole world. When Noah entered the ark, everything everyone had been so feverishly working for would soon be destroyed. What a sobering thought! Perhaps someone was working on their house when Noah invited them to a service, but they were too busy to attend. It is no different in our world today. We invite people to the services, and they often respond, "I am too busy." The things they are laboring for will be destroyed one day.

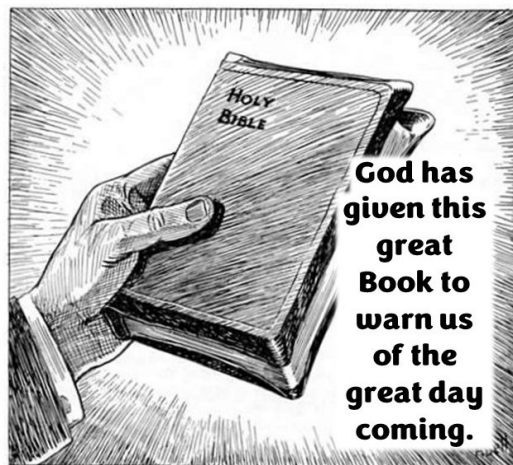
The Long-Suffering of God

Peter had an insight on this great day. Second Peter 3:2-9 states: "That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour: Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the prom-

ise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.

"For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

"But, beloved, be not ignorant



of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." People are scoffing at the things of God, and the reason the Lord is holding off on coming again is because He is long-suffering. The saints of God are praying: "Oh God, save my friends and family! Give us more time to work with souls." They realize that if Jesus came back now, many people would be lost. Therefore, we cry for mercy and for God to give us more time.

Verses 10-12 read: "But the day of the Lord will come as a

thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?"

Are you ready for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ? Or are you living in such a way that you have forgotten Jesus could come at any time? Are you living so close to God that He could speak to you wherever you are and say, "This is not a good place for you to be"? It will affect your conduct if you truly believe Christ is coming again. There is an eye watching you and me. I am thankful for God's guidance and correction. We should not be worried about what people say, but what God says. Allow God to search your heart so you can be where you need to be. You should desire to step up and draw closer to God for your spiritual health and for those around you.

Consider how a virus moved the world. People were in quarantine, away from society for weeks, because of the fear of the COVID-19 virus. What about the fear of Jesus Christ and His Second Coming? God wants His people to be ready. According to Mark 13:34, Jesus went on a "far journey," and we are His "servants." We must be good stewards for God and be ready for this great day.

(Compact Disc TR-2536)

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In Mark, Chapter 14, Jesus was preparing for the Passover and knew what was coming. He knew His mission. Remember that He was human and in the flesh, as we are. Before He entered the Garden of Gethsemane, He knew His disciples would betray and desert Him. Peter was adamant that he would stand with Jesus even in death. In verse 31, Peter said, "If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise." Jesus told Peter he would deny Him, not once, but three times.

Jesus was exceedingly sorrowful in His soul. He asked Peter, James, and John to watch with Him while He went to pray. Jesus prayed so hard that His sweat turned to blood. We may have prayed hard about some things in our lives, but I do not know anyone who has prayed so hard that their sweat turned into blood. After He prayed, He came back and found His disciples asleep. Suppose you had a heavy burden and asked someone to pray with you, and they fell asleep while you were praying. That would be discouraging, but this happened to Jesus three times. Jesus said in verse 37, "Couldst not thou watch one hour?"

Mark 14:50 reads, "All forsook him, and fled." Verse 57 says, "And there arose certain, and bare false witness against him." Then we read in verse 61, "But he [Jesus] held his peace, and answered nothing." Verse 65 tells us they spat on Him, covered His face, mocked Him, and struck Him with their palms. His own people were accusing Him and wanted Him crucified. Barabbas, a known

criminal and murderer, was released instead.

Mark 15:5 states, "But Jesus yet answered nothing; so that Pilate marvelled." If you are on trial for something, the natural thing to do is plead your case, defend your innocence, or at least give strong opinions in your favor. Jesus "answered nothing," even when mocked, spat upon, beaten, and humiliated. If that was not enough, He was forced to carry His own Cross.

Jesus knew He would be crucified, but insult was added to injury when He had to carry His Cross even though He could barely stand up. Commentators say Jesus carried His Cross for two thousand feet before Simon of Cyrene helped Him carry it up the hill to Golgotha. During His most excruciating moment, ones were still mocking Him. They basically said: "If You are the Messiah, then call down angels to save You! You said You could build the temple in three days after destroying it. Why not come down from the Cross?" Verse 24 says, "They parted his garments, casting lots upon them." The only possessions He had left were His clothes, and the soldiers gambled for them.

Jesus cried out in verse 34, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" He had to bear the sins of the world—past, present, and future. Our minds cannot grasp the concept of the load placed on Him. Matthew 26:53 says Jesus could have called "more than twelve legions of angels," or eighty thousand angels, to help Him. He did not have

to suffer as He did.

The Bible does not always go into much detail, but the people we read about were human, just like we are. I often wonder: "What was running through Mary's mind when the angel appeared and told her she would carry the Son of God? What was running through David's mind when he determined to take on the giant Goliath with a slingshot and a little stone? What did Esther think when she was taken captive away from her people and became the queen? What was going through Moses' mind when he saw the Red Sea with Pharaoh's army behind him?" Moses prayed and had faith something would happen, and the Israelites walked through the Red Sea on dry ground. All these individuals were human. They had anxieties, nervousness, and fears. Jesus came to us in human form, and "was in all points tempted like as we are" (Hebrews 4:15).

Consider all the things going on in the world today. There is corruption, and many people are filled with hate. The coronavirus came, and it seemed impossible to return to normal life. Our generation had never been in a pandemic before. Students had to learn through e-learning and stay home instead of going to school. We could not attend church services for several months and had to worship online. We were isolated from others, wore masks, and did all we could to keep the virus from spreading. It was a difficult time.

Social media can be discouraging. We went through a divisive election year. There were racial disputes,

and some people were riled up. A social media platform that began as a way to share things has now become a platform for rants, heated discussions, and strong opinions. It can be upsetting to view comments from some people you thought had good morals, but now they lash out at others because of a difference in opinion. You may want to go through your social media and block, delete, or purge them from your feed.

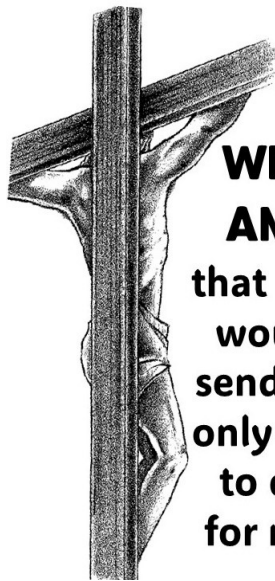
Think about Christ and all that happened to Him. He could not block, delete, or purge anyone. He could not unfollow someone because they hurt His feelings. We may get upset with bad things happening around us, but we must put them into perspective. Reading some of these events in the Bible should cause us to ask, "Who am I to think when bad things happen to me, my life is falling apart?"

Some people are passionate about different causes, such as saving whales or protecting babies. Many are good causes, but they become so driven by a particular cause that they get involved in fundraisers, research, and travel. Some are moved to the point that they make you feel bad because you are not as invested in their cause as they are or do not see things the same way they do. They may unfollow or block you from social media because you do not share their opinions.

We need to recognize the hatred fueled by the world and how easy it is to get caught up in it. You may have an opinion, and your flesh may get riled up. We have never been able to conquer in our flesh. Some people think they can take care of things on their own. "If people are going to say something about me or act like that, I will show them they will not treat me that way." Be careful of the comments you post on social media. Others are reading what you post.

Many people on social media are intentionally waiting for the comments to come, and they come. Some cannot refrain from posting

their opinions. There were accusations against Christ that were untrue, leading to His death. He did not defend Himself. He knew He was God's Son. If someone came to me and said, "Sister Cummings is not your mother," I would probably engage in a conversation to convince them I have proof she is my mother. Some said to Jesus, "You are blaspheming; You are not the Son of God." He could have said, "I am the Son of God; I know who my Father is." But He said nothing.



**WHO
AM I
that God
would
send His
only Son
to die
for me?**

Emails and text messages can get you in trouble because the reader cannot read the tone of what you say. My workplace would hold meetings and tell us: "Know your audience. When you send an email, consider how the reader will perceive what you wrote." Christ knew His audience. He knew they would not receive what He said, so He did not converse with them.

Jesus knew what was in His future. That knowledge in itself would be hard. It brought the sweat and blood from His tears. We do not know what we will face in the future. We have gone through troubles, trials, and situations that, if we had known about them before, we would have done everything possible to avoid them. Jesus knew He would be humiliated, beaten, taken to the Cross, and deserted by everyone who labored in the work of God with

Him. Even though He was the Son of God, He was still human. He uttered no word at the accusations, lies, and horrible things said about Him.

Pilate asked Jesus, in so many words: "Are You going to plead Your case? Here is Your opportunity." Jesus said nothing. Even when He was nailed to the Cross, which was terrible pain to endure, He still uttered not a word. If you read about how crucifixions took place, it will bring into perspective what He endured. We hear the story about Jesus, who was nailed to the Cross, but the details of it are so intense. What a sacrifice! We should not take it for granted and fail to appreciate what Christ did for us.

Why did Jesus not speak up and defend Himself? It was not because He was guilty or deserving of anything He went through. Even when people are guilty, they defend themselves until they are proven to be guilty. Jesus said nothing because what He went through was for the plan of salvation. He suffered for you and me. It was not for political gain. He gave us the gift of eternal life. The only thing Christ gained was to create a way for you and me to make it to Heaven. The entire time He endured all that suffering, He knew He could have called eighty thousand angels to deliver Him.

We could never have endured what Christ did. In our flesh, we probably would have said: "These people hurt my feelings, made me mad, and called me names. I am done suffering for people who do not appreciate it." Jesus took the sins of the whole world, and many do not appreciate it. When we do things for others, we want them to be thankful. If you keep giving someone gifts, and they spit on you, will you want to continue giving to them? People did this to Jesus, and He still gave His life.

Our human minds cannot fathom or comprehend the love of God, or *agape* love. This is more than loving your neighbor as yourself or having compassion for people. We read heroic stories of people who gave their

lives for a friend or for their children. The love of God goes beyond the furthest testing point any mankind could put on it.

Who am I? I am just a speck. We are grains of sand compared to the vastness of the universe. Earth is a small planet in our solar system. We are one of billions of people on earth. Most of us do not have a royal bloodline nor are we wealthy heirs to billions of dollars or in line to become a king or queen. Who am I that God would send His only Son to die for me? God has no favorites. He did it for the one with royal bloodlines as well as you and me. What if I had to give my son to be sacrificed for a world that would not appreciate the gift? That is hard to imagine.

We live in a world where everyone wants their voices and opinions heard. Many believe what they have to say will change things. Christ said nothing, bringing the current world situations to a new perspective. He was God in the flesh. He is above all we are dealing with. He is still in control when we think things have spiraled out of control. He gave us the ultimate example of how to show love. Christ's refusal to defend Himself was an act of love. We should follow His example and have more love for people. Instead of automatically assuming the worst and becoming irritable, we should be more compassionate with others.

Could you keep from giving a word of defense for yourself or your opinions? That is a hard one, especially if you are right. We definitely want people to know when we are right about something. How can we show love in a world filled with wickedness and hatred? One song written by Rusty Goodman entitled "Who Am I?" says:

*When I think of how He came so far
from glory,
Came and dwelt among the lowly
such as I,
To suffer shame and such disgrace
On Mount Calvary take my place,
Then I ask myself the question,
Who am I?*

*Then I'm reminded of His words
"I'll leave thee never,
Just be true, I'll give to you a life
forever."*

*I wonder what I could have done
To deserve God's only Son
Fight my battles 'til they're won
Who am I?*

*Who am I, that a King would
bleed and die for?
Who am I that He would pray not
my will, Thine for?
The answer I may never know,
Why He ever loved me so,
That to an old, rugged Cross He'd
go
For who am I?*

The early Christians were persecuted and put to death. We may face persecution and have to take a stand. Some are raised in horrible home situations. Can we be more grateful and not take for granted the things we have? Some have never heard Bible stories. I have been blessed with many Bibles in my home. There was a time spoken of in the Book of Revelation when people could not own a Bible unless they were highly educated. We are so blessed! Christ gave everything He had so we could have salvation. Who are we? Can we give more of our time and talents to God?

I do not want to become so privileged or spoiled that I automatically expect a blessing. It is hard to give to a child who continually says, "Give me, give me." What happened to "please" and "thank you"? Too many Christians think: "I am God's child. I deserve wonderful roses, sunshine, and rainbows." As God's children, we have siblings. Some of God's children are sick or heavily burdened. We are to help them carry the load. God may want us to show love, empathy, and concern by reaching out, sending a card or text, and praying for them. Someday, we may need help from others to carry our burdens.

Who am I? I am a child of God, a lowly servant and vessel to be used by Him. We are living in this world,

working jobs or going to school, but we are not of this world. We are passing through. May God help us not to become too absorbed by the world and its problems. As in the fairy tale "Chicken Little," let us not be so consumed with "the sky is falling" and not see those nearby who are in need.

No one is more powerful than God. That may be difficult for some to understand because some people, such as a king or the President, have power here. Always remember, no one is in a higher position in the world than God. No one is smarter or stronger than God. Who am I that I should worry over things? I cannot change people, but I can work on myself. With God's help, we can show more love and kindness. We can keep in perspective the ultimate gift God gave us.

Sister Victoria Miller

***Sister Victoria Miller attends the
Church of God in Newark, OH.***

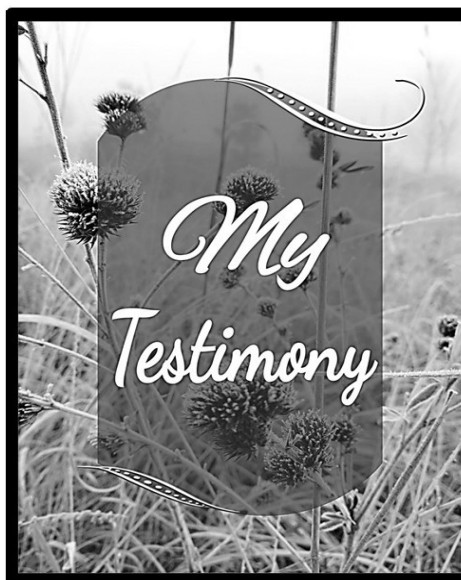


[Guest Editorial continued from pg. 2]
our time and talents to God?

Great truth and knowledge are again found in the continued series on "Understanding Sanctification" by Brother Earl R. Borders. He states that God "desires for the eyes of our understanding to be enlightened," and "the more knowledge we have, the more sanctified, or set apart, we become." We pray God will fill each precious soul with the Holy Spirit's exhortation (strong urging or encouragement). Second Peter 1:10 says, "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall." May God bless you!

Sister Gerri Lynn Bremer

***Sister Gerri Lynn Bremer attends the
Church of God in Newark, OH.***



An Interesting Journey

Brother Alan Vossler

I hope someone gets help and instruction from my testimony. I was raised on a ranch in Western Canada. How did I get from a ranch in Western Canada to a small town in Ohio? When you live for God, it is an interesting journey. Let God plan your life. You may not know what will happen next or how it will happen, but if you trust God, He will lead you through.

My wife is from Ohio, but I was raised in a community largely made up of German immigrants. My great-grandfather homesteaded, which means the government gave him 160 acres of land, and he had to make something of himself. There were no houses to move into or barns or fences built. When the people moved there, they had to do it all—build their own homes and barns—which created a hard-working, hardy people. Do not be afraid of hard work. You can accomplish something in life. Do not try to make it on the backs of others, but do your best physically, mentally, and spiritually to make something of yourself.

God has a plan for you. He wants to use you in His kingdom. I suggest you give Him your best, which is your all. It is a journey that will take you from point A to point B and point B to

point C. It is interesting to see what God has next for you. He rarely show us more than the next step ahead, but it is an interesting journey.

My pastor was Brother Farmer. He was an evangelist during the 1970s and the early years of camp meetings at God's Acres. I heard the voice of God speak to me at a very young age. I was eleven when I yielded my heart to the Lord, but the influences I faced at school destroyed my faith and experience with God. The term we used back then was, "I got into bad company." Bad company is not good for you.

I want to digress here. We are in total control of the influences we allow in our lives. We can reject or accept good counsel. We can reject or accept bad influences and bad counsel. We all make decisions. Some things sound good, but they are not good for us. We live and work in a world where we need other people. For example, if you are a business owner, you may not understand the tax code well enough to file your own tax return. You will need an accountant to help you.

There are accountants, doctors, and others who influence us regularly. Sometimes, we get good advice; other times, it is not

good. I have had the privilege of knowing two accountants who have helped me financially. A good accountant can be a tremendous asset and give good, sound advice on purchases and managing money.

I remember when I was grinding metal, and a piece of metal flew into my eye. I had to go to a doctor and get it taken out. Another time I had to see a doctor, a lady doctor served me. She had good luck charms wrapped around her neck. You could hear her rattle when she walked. I could feel a resistance from her spirit. She helped me medically, but I was cautious about how far I would allow her to influence me. You will meet all kinds of people along life's way. We are all influenced one way or another, good or bad.

I remember someone commenting to me on what Oprah Winfrey said. When he finished telling me her philosophy, it was exactly word for word what I had heard from a leader in a Church of God congregation. That Church of God congregation has disintegrated. The Church of God is not built on the philosophies of people like Oprah Winfrey. She is into the New Age movement. God will never build His kingdom on the opinions and philosophies of men. It is built on the Word of God.

President Ronald Reagan quoted Winston Churchill three times more than any other president because he admired him. Winston Churchill was a tremendous figure in the uniting of the Allied forces in World War 2, which may not have ended the way it did without him. He was one of the greatest civil leaders our world has ever seen, and he admired and was influenced by President Theodore Roosevelt. Saddam Hussein admired and was influenced by Adolf Hitler.

We are all influenced by

someone. There are people we admire; therefore, we model their behavior, and they help shape our lives. We are a composite of what and who we allow to influence us. Who we allow to influence us impacts the direction we take in life. I fell away from the Lord because I did not stand against bad influences.

I became sick of sin at the age of twenty-four. I tried to free myself, but I was bound by sin and could not get free. God is faithful. He put a tremendous burden on the heart of Brother and Sister Farmer to fast and pray for one week, for a reason unknown to them. At the end of that week, I got saved.

We must be engaged in God's plan to break the power of sin. Souls are depending on the church to intercede on their behalf. There is a lesson in that for us. We need to be in tune with what God is doing. Thank God, Brother and Sister Farmer were, and the power of sin was broken in my life.

I cannot remember the date, but I remember exactly what I was doing when God called me to preach. I was in a field swathing wheat at the time. I had spent

much of my life in the cab of a tractor, so that was nothing new. I did not understand what God was doing, but I had a tremendous burden on my heart. I felt I had to get free from this burden. In those days, I always carried my lunch with me and ate as I sat behind the steering wheel of the tractor. This time, I decided to fast and pray. I had such a burden that I shut off the tractor, climbed out of the cab, and had a season of prayer and fasting, and God called me to preach.

Months later, a sister in the congregation said to me, "I think God is calling you to preach." I looked around and thought, "Who told her?" Brother Farmer overheard the conversation and said, "I do not *think* you are called to preach; I *know* you are called to preach." If God calls you, and God will call you to do certain things, you need to respond to the call, and the saints will know because they have the same Spirit. If God calls someone to preach, He will confirm it to others.

God will confirm all callings. Do not be presumptuous, nor lag behind when God asks you to do something, or you will miss out

on a tremendous blessing. Be in tune or in step with what God is doing. My calling has been tested in different ways, but God has always been faithful, and He will continue to be faithful; He cannot fail. He said in Hebrews 13:5, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." He will not abandon His children amid any trial at any time. John 10:28 says, "Neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." We can only get out of that security and comfort if we decide to get out of God's will.

I want to encourage you. God is real, and He has a plan for your life. God can make something of you. Allow Him to have His will and way in your life. It is an interesting journey full of surprises. You never know what is next, but God will prove Himself faithful through everything, whether you are on the mountaintop or in the valley. I trust God will add His blessing to what I have said. May God bless you.

Brother Alan Vossler

Brother Alan Vossler attends the Church of God in Newark, OH.

Said a precious little laddie
To his father one bright day,
"May I give myself to Jesus,
Let Him wash my sins away?"

"Oh, my son, but you're too little
Wait until you older grow,
Bigger folks, 'tis true, do need Him,
But little folks are safe you know."

Said a father to his laddie,
As a storm was coming on,
"Are the sheep all safely sheltered,
Safe within the fold, my son?"

TOO LATE!

"All the big ones are, my father,
But the lambs, I let them go.
For I didn't think it mattered.
Little ones are safe you know."

Oh, my brother! Oh, my sister!
Have you, too, made this mistake?
Little hearts that now are yielding,
May be hardened then—too late!



E'er the evil days come nigh them,
"Let the children come to Me.
And forbid them not," said Jesus,
"For of such My kingdom be."

Author Unknown

UNDERSTANDING SANCTIFICATION

The Positional Nature of Sanctification

Brother Earl R. Borders

2 Thessalonians 2:13 But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:

14 Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 6:9 Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,

10 Nor thieves, nor covetous,

nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

11 And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

1 Thessalonians 5:23 And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

One misconception concerning sanctification is that it is an immediate, singular experience. With the

help of God, we want to consider what the Scriptures teach concerning the real nature of sanctification. The Scriptures substantiate it has a three-fold nature. Several truths are portrayed in our Scripture text in 2 Thessalonians 2:13. First, the predominant object is salvation. Another truth depicted is the involvement of the entire Trinity. Jesus said in John 14:6, "I am . . . the truth." Prior to His Ascension, Jesus gave instructions concerning water baptism in Matthew 28:19. He said, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Each member of the triune Godhead plays an integral role in our experience of salvation.

Many misunderstand the role of the Spirit in this process of salvation. There are only three verses that speak of the Spirit regarding sanctification in the New Testament. One is our text (2 Thessalonians 2:13), which uses the expression "sanctification of the Spirit." Romans 15:16 states, "That I [Paul] should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost." Finally, 1 Peter 1:2 reads, "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied."

I trust the Spirit of God will clear away any confusion. "For God is not the author of confusion" (1 Corinthians 14:33). He desires that "the eyes of your understanding" be "enlightened" (Ephesians 1:17-18). These verses speak of sanctification that occurs pre-conversion. When you begin to understand the positional nature of sanctification, you will see that it has a three-fold nature regarding the varying

positions that man occupies.

Sanctification works pre-conversion (prior to conversion), at conversion, and post-conversion (in a progressive manner after salvation). The Scriptures do not teach sanctification is an instantaneous, singular experience, although that is a common teaching. As we continue our study, we trust you can lay aside preconceived notions or ideas and allow the Scriptures to speak. A portion of one stanza in the song "The Church's Jubilee" says, "*The Bible is our rule of faith.*" Let us examine what the Bible says. We are in the seventh-seal period of this Gospel Day of the Christian dispensation, and God is giving understanding to enhance, not hinder our experience.

Christ Sent the Comforter

Second Thessalonians 2:13 clearly indicates sanctification precedes salvation. God chose "salvation *through* sanctification of the Spirit." It helps bring an individual to salvation. It has been commonly taught that salvation comes first, and sanctification is subsequent. This Scripture teaches the opposite. Notice verse 13 ends in a colon, indicating the sentence is incomplete. Verse 14 is a continuation of the same sentence. The Apostle Paul was referring to the call to salvation. He said, "Whereunto he called you by our gospel."

According to *Strong's Expanded Dictionary of Bible Words*, the Greek word for "sanctification" here is *hagiasmos*, which means "separation to God." It is the same word used in 1 Corinthians 1:30, which says, "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." Our text reveals it is a working of the Spirit pre-conversion.

Jesus gave His disciples vital truths concerning what would

occur after His death, burial, and resurrection. He said in John 16:7, "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you."

John 7:37-39 states: "In the last day, that great day of the feast [the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles], Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly [or his inward parts] shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)" He was "not yet glorified" because He had not yet paid the ransom's cost to institute the plan of redemption.

Hebrews 9:16-17 states: "For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth." I have a last will, and you should have one too. As long as I am alive, I can change it anytime; it is revocable. My will is of no force because all the things I plan on giving away are still mine. However, when I die, it becomes irrevocable and in power. The New Testament dispensation officially commenced when Christ died. He told His disciples, "It is expedient for you that I go away." They could not receive the benefits of His testament, or will, as long as He was still with them. Christ had to die first and be glorified. Then, He ascended into Heaven.

When Christ ascended into Heaven, He took on the role of the High Priest. Revelation 8:5 says, "And the angel [speaking of Christ, our 'High Priest'; Hebrews 3:1] took the censer [He

had a 'golden censer' and was at 'the golden altar' offering incense; Revelation 8:3], and filled it with fire of the altar [the Spirit of Christ], and cast it into the earth [the earthen vessels assembled in the upper room on the Day of Pentecost]." The Comforter, or the Holy Ghost, came on the Day of Pentecost.

Conviction of Sin

The Holy Spirit worked on every one of us prior to conversion, or we would have never been converted. Jesus said in John 16:8, "And when he [the Comforter] is come, he will reprove the world of sin." The word *reprove* is rendered in *The Emphatic Greek Diaglott* as "convict." When we were lost, we experienced old-time, Holy Ghost conviction. The Greek word for "reprove" is *elegcho*, which means "convicted of his sin." Four times in the Scriptures, this Greek word is rendered as "convince." The Holy Ghost will convict and convince you of your sin or wrongdoing before conversion.

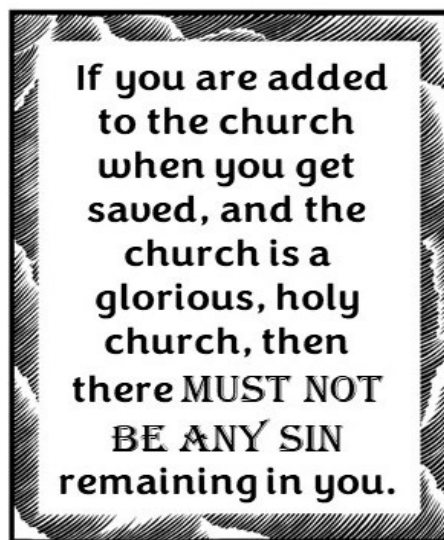
Sanctification begins before salvation. Remember, the word means separation. When you get under old-fashioned, Holy Ghost conviction, some things you may have always been involved in will begin to bother you. You will start to separate yourself from those things before you ever get saved. You will stop doing some things, going to some places, and keeping company with some people. For example, if you were a smoker, every time you lit up a cigarette, the Holy Ghost would say, "You know you should not be living this way." It may have caused you to throw the cigarettes away. You were not saved, but you were getting sanctified, or set apart, from some things.

God desires for everyone to have an experience of salvation. Second Peter 3:9 says, "The Lord is not slack concerning his

promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." What causes a person to come to repentance? Conviction of sin causes you to separate yourself from the activities of a sinful life. You may have always enjoyed going out on a Friday night, drinking, and gambling. If you go to a worship service and get under the influence of the Gospel, it will enlighten you to your true condition. Then, the following Friday night, when you go out, you will no longer enjoy the drinking and the gambling as you once did because the Holy Ghost will say: "You know this is wrong. There is a better way to live." Perhaps you will leave, and your friends will wonder what is happening. You are beginning to separate yourself because of conviction.

The Apostle Paul said in Romans 11:13, "For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office." Paul wrote to this predominantly Gentile congregation and said, "Ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost" (Romans 15:16). He introduced the expression "gospel" in Romans 1:16, writing, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation." He was speaking of the working of the Spirit in conviction in connection with salvation.

Who were the Gentiles? Ephesians 2:11-13 tells us: "Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no



hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." Jesus Christ changed the Gentiles' position. Man is introduced to Jesus Christ through the Gospel that brings him to salvation.

Paul was the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles. He brought the "gospel of God," which brought them to salvation. When the Gentiles hear the Gospel, meet Bible conditions, and humble themselves, they experience salvation. They become acceptable to God because the same Holy Ghost that brought others under conviction brought them under conviction. They were brought to salvation through the sanctification of the Spirit.

Holy and Set Apart for God

In the Roman letter, we read about the Holy Ghost's work regarding initial salvation. The word "sanctified" in Romans 15:16 is the Greek word *hagiazō*, which means "to make holy and to set apart for God." When does one become holy? Is it *when* they get saved or *after* they get saved? Acts 2:47 says: "Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should

be saved." You are added to the church when you get saved.

Ephesians 5:27 reads, "That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." If you are added to the church when you get saved, and the church is a glorious, holy church, then there must not be any sin remaining in you. However, if you hold to the position that you still have inbred sin in your heart after you are saved, then the erroneous conclusion would be that the church is not holy and without blemish.

If the teaching of inherited sin remaining in the heart subsequent to salvation is true, then either God does not add you to the church until you are sanctified, when inbred sin is supposedly removed, or there is sin in the church because you were added before sin was removed from your heart. If both Scriptures (Acts 2:47 and Ephesians 5:27) are true, and we know they are because Jesus said in John 10:35 that "the scripture cannot be broken," then that teaching regarding a subsequent working of grace to remove inbred sin is not Biblically sound. There cannot be sin in the heart after salvation.

Romans 10:13-14 reads: "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" The first step is to hear. Jesus said in Mark 16:15, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." When a person hears the Gospel, the Holy Ghost does His office work and convicts and convinces.

People will not understand their position before God until they are exposed to the Gospel.



Romans 7:13 reads, "That sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful." Once people hear the Gospel, the Holy Ghost can convict and convince an honest heart of his need for God. Romans 10:17 says, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

Ephesians 2:8 states, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves [in other words, you did not produce it]: it is the gift of God." How do you get the gift of God? Through faith, which comes by hearing the Word of God. The Gospel is preached so an individual can know his true condition before God. The Holy Ghost not only convicts and convinces an individual of the guilt of sin, but He also reveals the remedy so he can gain a real experience of salvation.

When faith is inspired, Romans 3:25 says, "Whom [speaking of verse 24, 'Christ Jesus'] God hath set forth to be a propitiation [The Greek says 'mercy seat.' He is our mercy seat, the reality or antitype of the mercy seat designed in the Old Testament Tabernacle. It was a foreshadowing of the work of Jesus Christ.] through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God." Thank God, the work of salvation is wrought. Again, this text in Romans portrays sanctification prior to and leading up to

conversion.

Isaiah 35:8 reads, "And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein." God wants the way to be so clear that a "wayfaring" man would not have trouble finding it.

From Disobedience to Obedience

The last passage of Scripture, speaking of sanctification of the Spirit, is found in 1 Peter 1:2, which speaks of "sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience." This verse talks about what it takes to bring an individual to a place of obedience to God. Can a person be disobedient and be saved while supposedly not yet sanctified? No, my friend. Peter was teaching us that sanctification of the Spirit will work to bring ones to a place where they are ready to obey God. When the redemptive blood of Jesus Christ is applied, it enables you to set yourself apart under obedience.

How do you get into a position where you can obey? Through the "sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ," not through a second application. You must become obedient when you get saved. When you are saved, you become one of the "elect." Again, this verse is speaking of pre-conversion. The Spirit of God begins to sanctify us prior to salvation by convicting and convincing us to get into a position of repentance. In our old life, we were disobedient and lived a sinful lifestyle. Jesus said in John 8:44, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." When the Spirit of God moves in, after you hear the Gospel, you see your need to move from a position of sinfulness to being saved, from disobedience to obedience. You must

apply for this salvation and take faith in His blood for the remission of your sins.

Consider our companion text in 1 Corinthians, Chapter 6. The word "sanctified" in verse 11 is in conjunction with the words "washed" and "justified." This verse speaks of the Spirit of God doing a sanctifying work. The Greek word is *hagiasmos*, which *The Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* defines as "to separate from things profane and dedicate to God." If you view this verse in context, you can clearly see that one must separate from these things mentioned.

When does one separate from these things? At conversion. The Apostle wrote about fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, abusers of themselves with mankind, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, and extortioners. He said, "Such *were* some of you," denoting past tense. There has been a change because now you are washed, sanctified, and justified. The second aspect of the nature of sanctification is the work wrought by sanctification at conversion.

When true conversion takes place in your life, you will separate yourself from the way you lived before getting saved. The Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 6:6, "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." The old man is destroyed at conversion when you stop participating in sin.

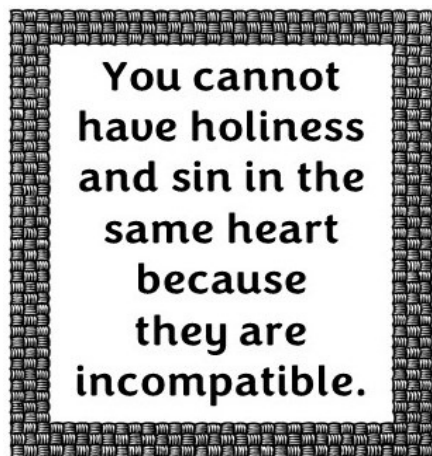
Remember, as we continue our study that we are not disparaging or disrespecting any individual. Ephesians 6:12 says, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood." We are not against any dear brethren with opposing views of these texts of Scripture. Our intention is to defend the Gospel and clear away the confusion.

Putting on the "New Man"

Ephesians 4:22 states, "That ye put off concerning the former conversation [or the Greek says 'conduct'] the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts." When you get saved, your conduct changes. You do not act the way you did before. The things you used to love, you now hate, and the things you used to hate, you now love. The old individual, before conversion, was corrupt.

Verses 23-31 states: "And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, [When do you put on the new man? At conversion.] which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness [you cannot have holiness and sin in the same heart because they are incompatible]. Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another. Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil. Let him that stole steal no more: . . . Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, . . . Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice." All that occurs when you put off the old man at conversion.

One songwriter said, *"I'll tell you the best thing I ever did do, I laid off the old coat and put on the new."* This all happens at conversion when we no longer, as Romans 6:6 says, "serve sin." The "new man" is "created in righteousness and true holiness" (Ephesians 4:24), so there cannot be any sin remaining in the heart. If sin would remain in the heart, as some advocate, then man would not have righteousness and true holiness at conversion. The Bible teaches you to put on the new man. You put on the new man as soon as the old man



is put off.

Romans 6:11 reads, "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Verses 17-18 say: "But God be thanked, that ye were [past tense] the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed [again, sanctification of the Spirit moves one from a position of disobedience to obedience] from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness."

It takes more than verbal acknowledgment, mental assent, or compliance. If people only conformed to external standards, the devil could make them think they were all right when they had not been regenerated. God is not interested in conformity, but in conversion. When a person gets a real Holy Ghost conversion, he will conform to the teachings of God's Word. It has to start within the heart first, and then it will work out.

This aspect of sanctification occurs at conversion. If an individual is unwilling to put off the former conversation or conduct, they will never be converted. Some people come to an altar of prayer and leave in worse condition because they did not meet Bible conditions. Romans 6:19-20 reads: "I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have

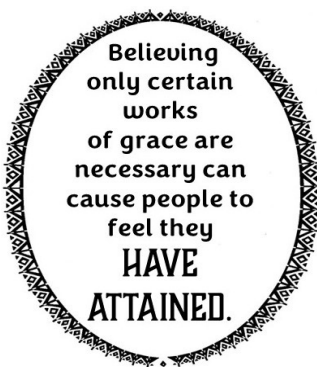
yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness. For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness." Verse 22 says, "But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." When you become a new creature, your new life will start producing holiness.

Many Works of Grace

First Thessalonians 4:3-4 says: "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour." When do you abstain from fornication? Is it after you have had a second, definite work of grace? Certainly not! Titus 2:11 reads, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." The grace of God that brings salvation teaches us to live godly at conversion.

The third aspect of sanctification works in post-conversion, or after salvation, in a progressive manner. One brother proclaimed in a message printed in a publication, "Well, you don't get it all in one work." I agree wholeheartedly with his statement. Many times, we have been inappropriately labeled as "one workers," or that we believe in just one work of grace. That is grossly incorrect because the Bible teaches many works of grace.

Paul said he was put in the ministry by a work of grace. He said in 1 Corinthians 15:9-10: "For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the



church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain." There are as many works of grace as long as grace works.

In 2 Corinthians 12:9, Paul was praying about his thorn in the flesh, and the Lord responded to him by saying, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." Paul received the message and said, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." Here, he tells us grace is strength, or the power of Christ. The Lord informed Paul that as long as there was weakness, there would be grace, and it would be applicable and adequate. It is an ongoing work, not something that only works once or twice.

The words "weakness" and "infirmities" in 2 Corinthians 12:9-10 are the same Greek word, *asthenia*. *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* says "native weakness and frailty." We will all have "native weakness and frailty" throughout our lives. God has made provision for grace to continue to work. The Greek word for "grace" is *charis*, which, according to *Strong's Expansive Dictionary of Bible Words*, means "the divine influence upon the heart and its reflection in the life."

The Apostle Paul said in Philippians 2:12-13: "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence

only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do his good pleasure." God works it in; we work it out. He has the divine influence upon the heart, and we show it in the reflection of our lives.

A Continual Ongoing Work

Our final Scripture text in 1 Thessalonians 5:23 says, "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly [meaning completely or entirely]." The word "wholly" in the Greek is *holoteles*, which means "complete to the end." It means whole, complete, or through and through. Let us consider the surrounding context of this Scripture. Verse 16 says, "Rejoice evermore." Is that something you do once or twice? Or is it ongoing and progressive? Verse 17 states, "Pray without ceasing," which means it is perpetual. Verse 18 reads, "In every thing give thanks," and verse 19 says, "Quench not the Spirit." Then, in verse 22, we read, "Abstain from all appearance of evil." We are instructed to do these things continually, and verse 23 is no different. Sanctification is continual.

When Jesus prayed His High Priestly prayer in the garden, He brought to God what was pressing the most upon His heart. He prayed in John 17:17, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." These words of our Lord let us know there is a post-conversion process of sanctification. The Word of Truth has a sanctifying effect. We are taught in 2 Peter 3:18, "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." One rendering says, "You must steadily come to know more and more," which is why God has a ministry and pastors.

Ephesians 4:11 begins a sen-

tence that does end until verse 16. It is all one sentence or part of the whole. Ephesians 4:11-15 reads: "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors [God promised in Jeremiah 3:15 to give us 'pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.' This verse speaks of the fulfillment.] and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ [it is a progressive process that takes place as the eyes of our understanding are enlightened]: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, . . . But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things."

The word "perfecting" in the Greek means "complete furnishing." It comes from the root word meaning "to render fit, complete." It is an ongoing process. How long does it take a saint to become perfected? How long does God ordain for you to have a pastor? The rest of your life. If in one or two works you were complete, you would not need a pastor, you would not need to be taught, and you would not need a Bible. That is one danger of holding a position that only certain works of grace are necessary. It can cause people to feel they have apprehended, or attained, that they are finished products.

The Apostle Paul stated the attitude and position we should hold when he penned these words in Philippians 3:12-13: "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which

also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before." We must refrain from falling under the erroneous persuasion that we have attained. We will only have attained once Christ shall appear.

How long will you need to be fed from the Word of God? Literally speaking, we all eat every day. We will not stay alive by being fed only once or twice in our lifetime. The same is true spiritually speaking. We must be constantly fed, and this is one purpose for pastors. All these offices mentioned in Ephesians, Chapter 4, are still needful. Romans 11:29 says, "For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." Every gift Christ put in the body is as vital in this twenty-first century as they were when Paul wrote his Epistles in the first century. Without the operation of all these gifts, we will become deficient in our spiritual lives.

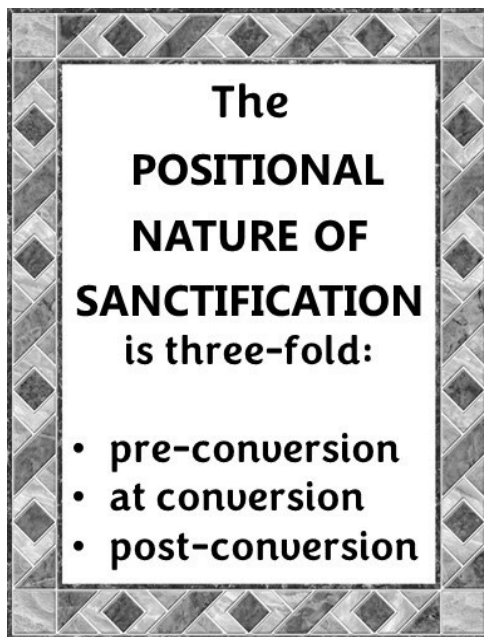
Growing Spiritually

One role of a pastor is to help people grow up, spiritually speaking. Someone may say, "The Bible says we are to be child-like." Yes, we are to be *child-like*, not *childish*. There is a vast difference. If a subsequent single work would accomplish spiritual perfection once and for all, there would be no need for ministerial offices. The fact these offices were ordained indicates our sanctification is ongoing.

The Spirit uses those in the Holy Ghost-called offices to do as 2 Timothy 4:2 instructs, "Preach the word." Ephesians 1:17-18 states, "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The

eyes of your understanding being enlightened." A God-called ministry preaches the Word, the Spirit enlightens the eyes of your understanding, and you can grow spiritually.

Second Corinthians 3:18 reads, "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." When the eyes of our understanding are opened, we can see areas where we need to grow,



and we can measure to what has been revealed to us. We become changed into an image that is more Christ-like. One writer said, "I don't find anywhere in the Scriptures where sanctification is a progressive experience." I humbly beg to differ. Jesus made it expressly clear in John 17:17 when He said, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." Friend, we need to continually grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Word.

The more knowledge we have, the more sanctified, or set apart, we become. There were things I did not know when I first got saved. As I sat under the Word, my understanding was enlightened, and I saw some


things I needed to put away and some things I needed to put on. If God gives you knowledge, He will give you the grace to perform that knowledge. That is how post-conversion, or progressive, sanctification works.

First John 3:2 says, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God [we are the sons of God *now* if we have a born-again experience], and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." This Scripture portrays the progressive work of sanctification. One, two, or even a dozen works will not complete us.

First John 1:7 says, "Walk in the light." A walk is a progression, an advancement, and a movement. Psalm 119:130 reads, "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple." As God gives us understanding, we are to walk, advance, and progress in that understanding. We will set aside things as He shows us and embrace things He says we need to take hold of. We will become more set apart, more sanctified, and more conformed to the image of Christ.

Salvation is an initial, immediate experience wrought in the heart. The sanctification that brought it is an ongoing experience. We must do as Philippians 3:13 says, "reaching forth," which is a constant, continual effort, "unto those things which are before" because the danger is believing you have attained and no longer have any needs. We trust you can see the positional nature of sanctification and that it is three-fold: pre-conversion, at conversion, and post-conversion. We trust the Spirit of God has enabled you to see these Biblical truths.

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Has Your Prayer Life Become a RITUAL?

As Christians, we can become so scrupulous about rituals and time schedules for certain things, such as prayer, that it can become counterproductive. It could become a tool of the enemy to cripple us for yet another day. What we may label "a personal failure" can keep us so preoccupied with guilt that it becomes a detriment to ourselves, and we become unable to help or reach out to others. Being a child of God is a way of life. Christ lives in us, and we are one, continually communing with each other.

Should we take time for a "prayer closet"? Certainly, we must take time to pray! This does not mean we **MUST** pray every day at a certain time, such as 6 o'clock, 12 o'clock, and 9 o'clock. If we feel we should pray at these times, could it be possible prayer has become a ritual? We are simply running on a schedule that falsely makes us feel better for a few hours at the most. Maybe we are choosing to check prayer from our "to-do" list instead of drawing from our loving Heav-

enly Father.

Perhaps we have come to the place we are falling short of praying when we feel the need to pray. These times do not always come at 6 o'clock, 12 o'clock, and 9 o'clock. They come when we hear that still small voice, saying: "Child, come unto Me. Why are you carrying a burden you were not meant to carry on your own? Cast your cares on Me. I will meet you there when you come to Me."

These times of prayer will truly change things. We will find the added strength to go on. Confidence in God will be restored. We can be fueled by His power

and no longer drag along in our own strength. It is needful to pray morning, noon, and night. More importantly, commune with God continually, and steal away for prayer when He calls!

If you are married to Christ, you have become one with Him. In a literal marriage, scheduling an exact time for intimacy is not always feasible. Yet, there is a need for communication between spouses every morning, noon, and night. Couples should continually touch base and get directions from each other, comparing schedules and sharing expectations. This keeps the marriage running smoothly and deters one from "grieving" the other. It shows their love, respect, and care for one another. They can express hopes, dreams, and needs. Then, there are times they can stop what they are doing and share a lingering, personal connection. These are the "alone times." A hymn written by C. Austin Miles says: *"And He walks with me, and He talks with me, And He tells me I am His own. And the*

joy we share as we TARRY there [spending a longer amount of time], None other has ever known. [Why? Because it is personal between the two.]"

Again, these special times in an actual marriage do not always follow a schedule, even though there is a need for special, personal times together. The scheduled times can become less enjoyable and lacking in thought or discussion. As a couple learns to be keen to their spouse's call for intimacy, we must learn to discern God's voice when He calls, drawing us to a richer, more personal time of prayer. It may not be at 6 o'clock, 12 o'clock, or 9 o'clock.

We must cultivate a keen ear and a deep desire to go when God calls. Do not wait to get that one more item checked off your "to-do" list. He will meet you there. It will be a time of richness! Intimacy in marriage bonds the couple in a special way. Your time alone with God will renew and strengthen you, giving you hope for the future and the will to continue "hand-in-hand" with your heart and mind joined as one with Him!

In marriage, as disappointing as it is, there are times when couples are forced to put each other off for a time. Just as you may not always have time to pray as you should because of a job or other needful responsibilities. God offers us understanding as we should with our earthly companions. As soon as we can, we need to run to the place of intimacy with our Lord! This is a more fruitful, inspired way of life. It makes the heart light and joyful. Matthew 11:30 says, "For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Sister Arlene Orr

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One definition of *slander* is "a false, defamatory statement." We find the word *defamatory* refers to an attack on the reputation of another or the well-being of a person. According to the Bible, slander includes the following:

WHISPERING: Psalm 41:7; Proverbs 16:28; Romans 1:29

BACKBITING: Psalm 15:3; 101:5; Proverbs 25:23; Romans 1:30; 2 Corinthians 12:20

EVIL SURMISING (guessing): 1 Timothy 6:4; 2 Timothy 2:23

TALEBEARING: Leviticus 19:16; Proverbs 11:13; 17:9; 18:8; 20:19; 24:28; 26:20, 22

BABBLING: 1 Timothy 6:20; 2 Timothy 2:16

TATTTLING (telling a secret; chattering; gossiping): 1 Timothy 5:13; 1 Peter 4:15

EVIL SPEAKING: Psalm 5:9; 10:7; 36:3; 55:21; Proverbs 12:18; Ephesians 4:31; Titus 3:2; James 3:6

DEFAMING: 1 Corinthians 4:13

BEARING FALSE WITNESS: Exodus 20:16; 23:1; Proverbs 12:17; 19:9; 25:18; Matthew 19:18

JUDGING UNCHARITABLY: Matthew 7:1-5

RAISING FALSE REPORTS: Job 1:11

REPEATING MATTERS: Deuteronomy 19:16; Psalm 31:13; Proverbs 6:19; 17:27-28; Jeremiah 9:4; Amos 7:10; Romans 1:28-31; 13:9-10

We read in Proverbs 10:18, "He that hideth hatred with lying lips, and he that uttereth a slander, is a fool." Proverbs 11:9 tells us, "An hypocrite with his mouth

destroyeth his neighbour: but through knowledge shall the just be delivered." Jeremiah 9:3 and 8 state: "And they bend their tongues like their bow for lies: but they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth; for they proceed from evil to evil, and they know not me, saith the LORD. . . . Their tongue is as an arrow shot out; it speaketh deceit: one speaketh peaceably to his neighbour with his mouth, but in heart he layeth his wait." Also, Psalm 50:20 states, "Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother; thou slanderest thine own mother's son."

Slander is a common evil among religious people today for three reasons. First, it is not properly classified. Paul classified backbiting and whispering with fornication, murder, and every other evil work. Observe how Romans 1:28-31 reads: "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful."

If people would take to the fact that slander is as great a sin as adultery, it would, to a great extent, disappear from our ranks.

A second reason slander is so common among us is that often those who are found guilty of slander are not held to the same form of confession and restitution as those found guilty of lying, stealing, and committing adultery. If ones are found guilty of these things, they must confess it to God and man, deeply repent, and pray through. The slan-

derer should be held to a similar form of repentance.

The third reason slander is such a common malady among religious people is that they have such a meager conception of the value of reputation. It is my opinion that slander is the greatest of crimes! It is worse than murder; it is worse than theft. Think of it this way: the thief gains something by his theft, but the slanderer gains nothing. Is there or can there be any comparative value between money and reputation? Reputation is the foundation stone of influence and usefulness. It is the door to society. Destroy a man's reputation, and he is cut off from his fellows, cut off from his family, and God's designs are defeated.

Xenophon said that three persons are injured by every slander: the slanderer (by reflex influence), the person who listens to it, and the person slandered. Could the slanderer but realize that he inflicts an incurable wound and sends a fellow being halting to the grave, he would doubtless slander no more. How cruel and inhuman it would be to hinder a struggling, drowning man from rising and swimming to shore. Every slanderer commits a similar offense.

Look at some common ways of slandering a fellow creature. First, we slander one by expressing to others our bad opinion of an absent person, that is, to express what we have thought, suspected, or feared concerning him or her. A few thoughtless words have started the wheel of slander revolving in a thousand minds, placing a feeling of discontent on more than a million good men and women. Be careful what you say, how you say it, and where you say it, lest by a thoughtless expression, you sink a soul to rise no more.

A second way of being guilty of this gross offense is to mention unnecessarily the faults of an

absent person. It may be necessary in some instances to mention the faults of an absent person to rectify a matter or prevent a greater evil, but to do so otherwise is a rank violation of the two following commandments: "speak evil of no man" (Titus 3:2) and "let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you" (Ephesians 4:31).

Another form of slander is when a person unnecessarily creates suspicion in the minds of others regarding the sincerity, honesty, and uprightness of an absent person. The man or woman who does this is guilty of destroying the reputation and influence of his or her neighbor, and thus becomes a violator of the ninth commandment: "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour" (Exodus 20:16).

We slander others when we tell the most objectionable part of anything affecting the reputation of another, yet omit the less objectionable, whereas if both sides

of the matter were clearly explained and set in the proper light, the persons concerned would not be so severely censured. If we should place all the blame upon another, when at the same time we were conscious of being somewhat at fault in the matter, we would be, to that extent, slandering our neighbor.

A slanderer makes a practice of carrying news, repeating rumors, and circulating evil reports. Often a slanderer is one who has backslidden or who is cooling off. Oh, the damage that has been done to the church through slander.

Last, slander is to speak of a person's faults to others before speaking to him or her. How unfair it is to condemn a man before having heard his side of the case, thus giving him a chance to clear himself! Even unsaved judges will not condemn a man until they hear his side of the case.

The Bible says in Matthew 18:15-17: "Moreover if thy broth-

er shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican."

Even to a publican, we owe the Golden Rule: "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you."

No doubt, you will, at one time or another, be tempted by the sin of slandering. I trust you will realize the seriousness and great damage that is caused by slander. I pray that we, as the Church of God, will guard against this.

Sister Madeline Darr

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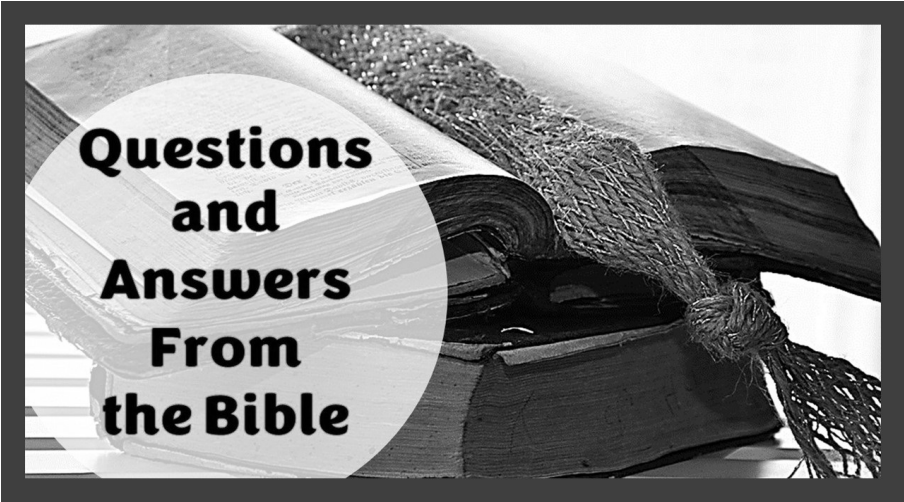
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Questions and Answers From the Bible

WHAT IS THE "SIN UNTO DEATH" (1 JOHN 5:16)?

In the inspired words of the Apostle John, we must recognize this portion of one verse is a very small part of a much larger Epistle. Though 1 John is not a lengthy letter, it still has a larger, surrounding context. Romans 6:23 reads, "The wages of sin is death," but that is not what the sacred writer was dealing with in this verse because he wrote conversely in 1 John 5: 17, "There is a sin not unto death."

What had the Apostle been dealing with in this Epistle? John had just returned from his exile on the Isle of Patmos. He was well over one hundred years old, was the last living of the original Apostles personally chosen by Christ during His earthly ministry, and had seen many of the conditions revealed to him in the Revelation working on the church. The ship of the faith was veering off course because of the winds of apostasy blowing fiercely upon it.

In this letter, the Apostle was working to steer the church back on course. He spoke of those who said they had "fellowship with him, and walk in darkness" (1 John 1:6). He proceeded to address those who "deceive" themselves (1 John 1:8). John even went further and rebuked those who "saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother" (1 John 2:9).

He boldly declared they were "in darkness even until now" (1 John 2:9). In Chapter 2 (this letter was penned in the proximity of A.D. 100), he warned, "Even now are there many antichrists" (1 John 2:18). John sadly stated, "They went out from us" (1 John 2:19).

When viewing the overall tenor of the Epistle, we see John was dealing with spirits that were loose (1 John 4:1) and working and producing apostates and antichrists. The sacred Hebrew writer spoke of those who "it is impossible . . . to renew them" (Hebrews 6:4-6). The Hebrew writer dealt with much the same issue. In the verse in question (1 John 5:16), John was speaking of "death" in this text as a finality. He was speaking of the same sin Jesus spoke of in Matthew 12:31-32 concerning "blasphemy against the Holy Ghost." This text pronounces the sobering words that this "shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come." This chilling warning is recorded in all three synoptic Gospels (Matthew 12:31-32; Mark 3:29; Luke 12:10).

Mark 3:29 states, "He that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation." This is why Jesus repeated seven times in the seven

letters of Revelation (representing the seven periods of the Gospel Day), "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches" (Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22).

First John 5:16 is sadly speaking of a people who, as the songwriter, Brother B. E. Warren penned, *"Slighted, the warnings repeated, Leave you in Satan's control; And with all heaven rejected, Lost your soul."* This verse is addressing the terrible condition of those who have crossed the line, or as 2 Chronicles 36:16 says, they were in a position where "there was no remedy." When this occurs, 1 John 5:16 says, "I do not say that he shall pray for it." The Lord essentially said the same thing to the Prophet Samuel concerning King Saul, saying, "How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him?" (1 Samuel 16:1).

I trust it is plain how the Apostle used the expression "death" in this text. In verse 17, he wrote, "There is a sin not unto death," making it clear that he intended verse 16 as speaking of finality, that sin against the Holy Ghost. May God help each of us that we ever keep an attentive ear and open heart to "hear what the Spirit saith."

Brother Earl R. Borders

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