

The Way of Truth

Vol. 75

"Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature."

No. 3

"WHO IS GOD?"

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Philippine Convention Report

March
2017

EXAMPLES OF SACRIFICE

THE APOSTLE Paul, in writing to the saints in Rome, said, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:1, 2).

What is a sacrifice? There are different meanings of the word *sacrifice*. (1) "the act of killing an animal as an act of worship. The Greek word is used 28 times in the New Testament, and it refers directly to Old Testament worship 23 times." (2) *Cruden's Concordance* says: "An offering of any sort to a deity, with the idea of procuring favor or avoiding disaster. The idea of sacrifice is deeply rooted in the instincts of humanity, for it is found among every race of the earliest known period of history."

In the Old Testament, we read of a number of sacrifices: the burnt offering, the trespass offering [A ram was the only animal to be offered for this.], and the sin offering dealt with atonement to God. The Passover and Unleavened Bread, Feast of First-fruit, and Pentecost, Feast of Tabernacles seem to deal more with worship. This is not a complete list of all the holy days and seasons.

The most noble offering was when God tested Abraham. Abraham had waited 25 years for God to fulfill His promise to give him a son by his wife Sarah. When he was 100 and Sarah was 90, the promise was fulfilled. Isaac was born. It was some years later when God tested Abraham: "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of" (Genesis 22:2). Abraham rose early in the morning, took two of his servants, along with Isaac, and set out for Moriah. Then on the third day the Lord showed him the mountain on which he was to offer his son. Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and laid it upon Isaac, and he took the fire and the knife, and up the mountain they went! On the way up, Isaac said to his father, "Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" Abraham answered, "God will provide himself a lamb." So they went on up to the top, and there Abraham built an altar and laid the wood in order. Then he informed Isaac that he was to be the sacrifice. Isaac did not run away, nor did he oppose his father. He was bound and laid on the wood. As Abraham stretched forth his hand with the knife, suddenly he was told to do his son no harm. They made the offering with the animal God provided, and they returned to the two young men just as Abraham told them they would! Abraham had enough faith to believe that God would raise his son from the dead. God knew by this act that Abraham loved Him more than anyone and more than anything.

Another definition of sacrifice: "an offering made to God; the act of giving up something that you want to keep, especially in order to get or do something else to help someone."—*Webster's Dictionary*.

You notice in our text for this editorial that Paul said "a living sacrifice," not a dead one. Jesus said, "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:33). I understand from these words that Jesus is saying that all we have must be placed on the altar—dedicated to Him—not that we must leave our companion and our house and live like a bum. Jesus did tell a man who came running to Him asking what he must do to have eternal life, that he was to sell what he had and give to the poor, and come, take up the cross, and follow Him. The young man went away grieved, for he had great possessions. He had his heart set on his riches and was not willing to give them up. That is why Jesus told him what He did.

A living sacrifice means you surrender all to the Lord; and remember, this is "your reasonable service." Part of being a "living sacrifice" is our financial support of the gospel. The rich man went away because his heart was set on his riches. "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mark 8:36, 37). The rich man sold his soul for his riches. What a price to pay for your soul! What would it profit if you gained the whole world?

The Church of God at Philippi seemed to have been the most faithful of all in supporting the apostle Paul. "Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity" (Philippians 4:15, 16). As to the support of a full-time gospel worker: "Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written" (I Corinthians 9:9, 10).

God gives us all our blessings. What can we give Him? The "sacrifice of praise." "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name. But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (Hebrew 13:15, 16). On verse 16 Adam Clarke says, "No reliance, even on the infinitely meritorious sacrifice of Christ, can be acceptable in the sight of God if a man have not love and charity towards his neighbor. Praise, prayer, and thanksgiving to God, with works of charity and mercy to man, are sacrifices which every genuine follower of Christ must offer."

Sacrifice is a part of Christian living. †

ABOUT THE COVER

The shot on our cover strikes the viewer with the vastness of the universe which God has created. To find out who God is, one must turn to the Word of God. There we find His attributes described. It is our hope that by perusing the pages of this magazine your understanding of the nature of God will be expanded and His truth will shine forth into every reader's heart.

THE WAY OF TRUTH

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Devoted to the gospel of our loving Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave freely His life-blood, to save us from our many sins, to sanctify our fallen nature and to bring into one body all true believers, by whose stripes we are healed.

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—Alvin A. Craig, Editor

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IN LOVING MEMORY

Emma Book Trisler



Emma Book Trisler passed away on Monday, January 2, 2017. She was born in Book, Louisiana, September 12, 1927. She married Marion Trisler, Jr., on July 11, 1945. She held a great many jobs in her life, including selling Avon and a clerk at Carpenters Department Store, but her greatest achievement was a mother of three, grandmother to eight, great-grandmother to twenty one, and great-great-grandmother to four.

In April 1972, she became a pastor's wife and worked diligently and tirelessly in the Church of God at Jonesville. She never passed judgment, never met a stranger and saw the good in every person. She was loved and cherished by everyone. Her caregivers exclaimed how sweet she was, even though her voice had been taken from her. She never complained and kept her faith in God to the very end, whispering a soft conversation to Jesus.

The family of Emma Book Trisler would like to thank you for your sympathy during this difficult time. We want to express our sincere gratitude for your kind words, your presence, generous gifts, cards, and most of all, your prayers. They have been a great comfort to us. It's during a time like this that we learn how much our friends, far and near, really mean to us. We continue to covet your prayers, and we pray God's blessings upon each and every one of you. ☩

OUT OF BOX 88

Dear Church of God,

I am truly blessed and so thankful for the Internet Services which I am able to attend on Sundays and Wednesday evenings, as well as receiving the Sunday school material and *The Way of Truth* paper. Thank you so much for these provided services.

—S. P., West Virginia

Dear Brethren,

Just a short note to say thank you for your faithful service and labor for the Lord. ... I appreciate the magazine. Please be encouraged in the Lord!

—S. S., Canada

Write us this month!

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WHO IS GOD?

2016 Cayman Convention Message by Bro. Alvin A. Craig



WE ARE thankful for the Lord's presence, and we are thankful that you are here. There would be no reason for us to be here if you weren't here.

Before I get in to the message, I would like to express my thanksgiving to the Lord for His touch. I woke up this morning in a considerable amount of pain. After the Minister's Meeting was ended, I had the brethren to anoint me and to pray for me, and thank the Lord, He healed me. He took away the pain.

I will have a two-part message. I will be speaking first on the last word of the theme, which is *God*. I've entitled my thoughts, "Who Is God?" We read in Isaiah 46:9, "I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me."

Those who wrote the Bible did not try to prove there was a God. They wrote with the knowledge that there was a God, but I want you to think with me tonight, Who is God?

First of all, God is the Creator of all things by Jesus Christ. I do not believe in evolution. I believe God, by Christ, created all things that are created. "Thus saith the Lord, thy redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I am the Lord that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself" (Isaiah 44:24).

I believe I read in the Scriptures about the heavens, especially the stars: "There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard." Did you know that stars could talk? They talk German, Portugese, Spanish, and they even speak English. They speak to every heart that tells us there is a God.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF GOD?

What is the nature of God? "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). Jesus spoke those words to a woman at the well in Samaria. There's a lot of worship going on in the world that is not acceptable in God's sight. She said, "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain." There were two mountains in Samaria: Mount Gerizim and Mount Ephraim. One of those was known as *the mount of blessing*; the other, *the mount of cursing*. Joshua had gathered the children of Israel in the valley between those mountains, and he read to them the Law of God. The Samaritans went up on the mount, which was considered *the mount of blessing*, and worshiped once a year. They made animal sacrifices. As Jesus spoke to this woman at the well, she said, "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; but you Jews say that Jerusalem is the place to worship." Jesus said, "The time is come, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship Him, not in this mountain, not in Jerusalem, but in spirit and in truth." He also told that woman, "You don't know what you worship." That's what Jesus told her. There are a lot of people who are

worshiping and they don't know what they're worshiping. I have more to say about that a little later on.

Does God have a material body? No. God is a Spirit. He's not a material being nor a literal being. He doesn't have bones and skin. He is a Spirit. Can we see God with the natural eye? No. No one has ever looked on the face of God and lived. Now, God did allow Elijah to see His hinder part when he ran from Jezebel, but He did not allow him to see His face. The fact that God is a Spirit, and He is not material nor literal doesn't mean that He isn't real. I'll tell you one thing, even though man cannot see Him, man can feel Him. We have felt His presence here today, and it is a wonderful feeling if you have God in your heart; but if you don't, you're liable to say what Jacob said. He saw a ladder with angels ascending and descending, but when he awoke he realized it was God's presence. Jacob said, "This is a terrible place." I dare say that a lot of sinners feel the same way, but conviction is one of the greatest blessings that a sinner can ever have. I know you might take the wrong meaning of this, but please do not: What we as saints of God need to do is to pray to God to make some people miserable in their sins, and to make them so miserable that they'll want to get out of them.

HOW OLD IS GOD?

How long has there been a God? Bro. James mentioned this morning about some people asking him about God's beginning. I have a simple answer for you: God didn't have a beginning. People ask that question thinking that God had a beginning, but He did not have a beginning. You know, I let myself think sometimes about that very fact. How could it be that God has always been? That boggles the mind. I don't let myself think about it too long. Do you know if I could explain to you about God not having any beginning, I'd be God? I know some people try to make themselves God, but there is only one true God. Has God always been? Yes. "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God" (Psalm 90:2). God made the mountains. So God has always been.

Is God eternal? Yes. "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." That's found in Deuteronomy 33:27. I think Bro. James referred to that this morning. Well, should we think as God as a person? Yes. Just because He is a Spirit doesn't mean He isn't a person. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds" (Hebrews 1:1, 2). Then God, who is a Spirit, must be the true and the

living God. I say, yes. The Lord is the true God. He is the living God, and an everlasting God. "But the Lord is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting king: at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation" (Jeremiah 10:10).

WHERE DOES GOD DWELL?

Where does God dwell? He dwells in heaven. Old Nebuchadnezzar had a dream one time. He supposedly didn't remember it, and he asked his soothsayers, his astrologers, etc., to not only tell him the meaning of the dream, but he asked them to tell him the dream first. "It's gone from me," so he said. They said to him, "No one has ever made such a request as that of a man." "Well, you either tell me or your heads will come off."

Daniel and his friends heard about Nebuchadnezzar's dream. Daniel said, "What's the hurry? Just give me a little time." So, he and his friends got together and began to pray, and God told Daniel the dream and the meaning of it. Some fellow went in and told the king, "I've found a man." He wanted to get some credit for himself. Anyway, Daniel went in and he wanted to make a point. He said, "Can't your astrologers, your soothsayers, and your magicians tell you the dream and the meaning of it?" Nebuchadnezzar had to say "no." Daniel said, "There is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets." I believe whenever Stephen was being stoned to death, he looked into heaven and saw Jesus Christ standing at the right hand of the Father. So God dwells in heaven. He lives in heaven.

Doesn't God dwell on the earth? Yes, He does. "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones" (Isaiah 57:15). So God dwelt with us today. Yes, God's in heaven and He dwelt with us. Can you go anywhere where God is not?

Is there more than one God? No! "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord" (Deuteronomy 6:4). A lawyer had asked Jesus about the first and great commandment. Jesus said to him, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." The Pharisees and scribes said to Jesus, "Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he" (Mark 12:32).

Are there many idols that are called "gods"? Many! "As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one. For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him" (I Corinthians 8:4-6).

The apostle Paul went into Athens, Greece, and he saw altars to a bunch of gods. Paul came to one that was "TO THE UNKNOWN GOD." He scratched his head, as it were. Do you know what he did? He told them who the unknown God was. The pitiful thing

about it was, they didn't know who the unknown God was. "The unknown God," Paul said, "is the one who gives you life and breath, and all things; for it is in Him that you live, and move, and have your being."

WORSHIPING FALSE GODS

Is it all right then to make an image to God? No. God is much holier and greater than natural man. Anything that man can make would not be worthy. It is a sin to make and worship an image of God. "Thou shalt have none other gods before me. Thou shalt not make thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the waters beneath the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments" (Deuteronomy 5:7-10). "Little children, keep yourselves from idols" (I John 5:21).

Let me read to you of how some people started worshiping idols. Listen to this. Reading from Romans 1: "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because [Notice this:] that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator." They turned away from the true and the living God and started worshiping bugs (creatures), the fowls of the air, and the fish of the sea. They were worshiping those instead of the true God. Therefore, God said, "They are without excuse."

Let me say something tonight, and don't you get offended at me for saying it: Anything that you put ahead of God is your god, and you are an idol worshiper. *Anything that you put ahead of God is your god, and you are an idol worshiper.* Some people worship money, some worship their homes. Some men may worship their wives, and a wife may worship the husband.

Believe it or not, I met a woman and stayed in her home, as a matter of fact. Her husband got saved, and she fought him because she was jealous of God. She wanted him to love her more than he loved God. She was actually jealous of God. Any woman who has a godly husband ought to be thankful, and any man who has a godly wife ought to be thankful.

IS GOD EVERYWHERE?

Is God everywhere? Yes. "Oh, He is a spiritual being." True enough, but He can be everywhere. "Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord" (Jeremiah 23:24). "That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring." That's a part of what Paul said in Acts 17. Sometimes we get requests from Africa and other parts of the world. I try to remember the requests and pray over them. I say to the Lord, "Lord, you don't have to go there. You're already there." God is everywhere!

Does God see everything we do? Yes, He does. "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good" (Proverbs 15:3). Some people think they can do something secretly. You can't do anything that God doesn't see you do. Listen to me, Beloved, if you don't repent of your sins and get saved, you're going to meet that very same thing at the judgment, because God is going to have a record of it. I know they have computers today and those little things no bigger than your fingernail that can hold books and other information, but God has a mind that can hold everything.

GOD'S ATTITUDE TOWARD MAN

Now, what is God's attitude toward evil? God is grieved at the wickedness of man. "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart" (Genesis 6:5, 6).

We're also told that God is angry with the sinner every day. No one ever commits sin with God's approval. These religious people who say that we sin more or less every day in word, deed, and thought need salvation, for Jesus Christ came into this world, according to the angel's message to Joseph, to save us, *not in, but from* our sins. Jesus "gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a [separate] people, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14). "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" (Titus 2:11, 12). "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Romans 6:1, 2). Church members who are sinning are still alive to sin and dead to righteousness. You have to die to sin to be made alive to righteousness.

Does God not love all whom He has created? Yes. He loves all. "In this was manifested the love of God toward

us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (I John 4:9, 10). I will close the first part of the message by asking this: Do you know God as your heavenly Father?

GOD IS THERE IN ALL TIMES

The second part of the message tonight: "In Tough Times, In All Times, God." I believe Bro. James had in mind, whenever he decided to use this as a theme for this convention, to put that word *God* there by itself to tell us that we are going to have tough times. We're going to have problems, we're going to have trials, we're going to have tests. Everything is not going to go the way we want it to go, but there is a God! Cast your burdens on the Lord and leave them there. God is a loving God, a faithful God.

Bear with me and I'll give you a few scriptures to back up what the theme says. First of all, we read in Malachi 3:6. God changes not. "For I am the Lord, I change not."

God cannot lie. "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" (Numbers 23:19). "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began" (Titus 1:2).

When Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, God didn't have to rush around and come up with a plan to redeem man. That was decided before God ever made the world or formed man. It was determined that the one we know as Jesus Christ would come into this world, born of a virgin, and be the Redeemer of mankind. God wasn't caught by surprise. He knew what was going to happen, but because He knew it doesn't mean He ordained it to be so. "That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us" (Hebrews 6:18). "This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (I John 1:5).

There is no other God. "Thus saith the Lord of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God. ... Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God" (Isaiah 44:6, 8). "I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me" (Isaiah 45:5).

God is faithful. "Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations" (Deuteronomy 7:9). "Thy testimonies that thou hast commanded are righteous and very faithful" (Psalm 119:138). "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (I Corinthians 10:13). So there's no reason for anyone to backslide. God has promised, "I'll not let you be tempted above that you are able to bear, but I will with every temptation make a way of escape

for you.” Someone has said: “If we can stand the pulling, God will pull us through if we’ll let Him.”

Now the word *faithfulness*, of course, goes along with faithful. “I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation” (Psalm 40:10). “I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations” (Psalm 89:1). “Thy faithfulness is unto all generations [that’s ours]: thou hast established the earth, and it abideth” (Psalm 119:90).

CONCLUSION

I want to close the verses with one that I want every unsaved heart here to listen to carefully, for this is a promise from God. I read three different verses which said that God could not lie. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (I John 1:9). We have a song in our hymn book which says: “If then you’re lost and forgotten, Writhing in flames of despair, You will remember you’ve chosen to be there.”

Joshua challenged Israel to choose whom they would serve. Every one of us, who are saved tonight, made a choice; and every one, who is here unsaved, are also making a choice. You’re in sin because of your choice. Jesus tasted death for every man. “And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Revelation 22:17).

In tough times, and in all times, you need God. ✠

2016 CAYMAN CONVENTION CD’S

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Please fill in the blanks for those you wish to order. Send check or money order to: The Way of Truth CD Ministry, P.O. Box 88, Hagerstown, MD 21741-0088.

- ___ CD #722 In Tough Times, In All Times—God *J. Arch*
- ___ CD #723 In Tough Times, In All Times—God *D. Shaw*
- ___ CD #724 Who Is God? *A. A. Craig*
- ___ CD #725 Serving God in Sincerity *Rupert Shippy*
- ___ CD #726 Dealing with Change *Harley McClung*
- ___ CD #727 The Church in these Tough Times *D. Darby*
- ___ CD #728 God Remains the Same *Hezekiah Lamey*
- ___ CD #729 Press Through the Crowd *Paul Wilson*
- ___ CD #730 God Is the Answer - Trust Him! *Leston Mann*
- ___ CD #731 The Unlimited Power of God *Duane Jeffries*
- ___ CD #732 Divine Healing Service *David Shaw*
- ___ CD #733 In Tough Times, In All Times—God *J. Arch*
- ___ CD #734 Passport to Heaven *Young People’s Service*
- ___ CD #735 Weightier Matters *Harley McClung*

“And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”

Revelation 22:17

BIBLE LESSON OF THE MONTH

GEMS FROM THE BOOK OF ROMANS

A LIVING SACRIFICE

Scriptures: Romans 12:1-3; Galatians 2:20; 5:24; 6:14; II Timothy 2:19-21; I Chronicles 29:5.

Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

3 For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

Galatians 2:20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

Galatians 5:24 And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

Galatians 6:14 But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

II Timothy 2:19 Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

20 But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour.

21 If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use, and prepared unto every good work.

I Chronicles 29:5 The gold for things of gold, and the silver for things of silver, and for all manner of work to be made by the hands of artificers. And who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?

Memory Verse: I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.—Romans 12:1.

Aim: To challenge the student to make a full surrender to God.

INTRODUCTION

WE READ in Jeremiah 17:9, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” We read in Romans 3:23, “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” We read in Galatians 3:22, “But the scripture hath concluded all under sin.” So, before we can be a living sacrifice, there must be a definite change take place in our hearts and lives. First, a sinner must come to Christ with a broken and a contrite heart, repent of his sins, and then believe that the Lord has forgiven him. We read in the Scriptures about justification. This is what happens when one is forgiven. Then we read about regeneration,

or being born again. This is the second phase of the first work of grace. When a person is justified-regenerated, he becomes a member of the Church of God and is in a position to begin living a holy life. However, there are additional things that must follow, which are dealt with in this lesson.

MEDITATIONS

SOMETHING TO DO—Romans 12:1, 2—Present your bodies—Paul is instructing “brethren,” and he is telling them to present their bodies a living sacrifice, holy unto God, which is only a reasonable thing to do. This is a requirement that must be met to receive the Holy Spirit in the experience of sanctification. Paul told the church at Corinth that their bodies were to be the temple of the Holy Ghost. **Verse 2—Not conformed to this world**—The word *conform* means “pattern after.” There is no way one can be a true Christian, let alone a living sacrifice, while conforming to the world. One must be transformed, changed, receive the mind of Christ, and prove in his life what is the will of God. God has a will for everyone.

BE HUMBLE—Romans 12:3—Think soberly—Pride is one thing that seems to be a problem to many, and it is one thing that God hates. Paul did not say you could not think anything of yourself, but not to think “more highly” of yourself than you ought. You must think soberly and realize that God has given every child of God a measure of faith.

A DEATH TO DIE—Galatians 2:20—I am crucified—Paul said that he was crucified with Christ. Crucifixion was one of the most cruel ways the Romans had to put a person to death. It was usually reserved for the most notable criminals, so Paul was making himself a living sacrifice, for he went on to say: “Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.” The reason Paul was able to say what he did was because Christ gave His life for him, and not for him only. Jesus tasted death for every man.

A CHANGED LIFE—Galatians 5:24—They that are Christ’s—Why is it that the doctrine of sin-you-must is so widely taught and accepted? How can it be that he who has died to “the flesh” (which means he has died to sin) continue therein? The Scriptures clearly teach, “For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live” (Romans 8:13).

NOT IN MAN—Galatians 6:14—God forbid—Living the Christian life—A living sacrifice is not something one can do in himself, and it is not something to boast about. Jesus gave a parable about a certain one who trusted in his own righteousness: “Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men ... I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.” Our own righteousness is as filthy rags in His sight.

ASURE FOUNDATION—II Timothy 2:19—The foundation of God—Paul spoke not only of a founda-

tion, but an entire building, for he said that the Lord knows those who are His. His redeemed make up the house of God, the Church of God, which is built on the prophets and apostles, Jesus Christ being the Chief cornerstone. **Verse 20**—In the Church of God, there are some who are pastors, teachers, and deacons. Some hold no office, yet are faithful members who are living the Christian life. According to this verse, there are some who are not really in the church, but profess to be. Hymeneus and Philetus and their followers were examples.

HE THAT TAKES HEED—II Timothy 2:21—Purge himself—“He who takes heed to his ways and to his doctrines, and walks with God will separate himself, not only from all false doctrine, but from all wicked men, and thus be sanctified and proper to be employed by the Master in every good word and work.”—Clarke.

DAVID WANTED A HOUSE FOR ALMIGHTY GOD—I Chronicles 29:5—Gold for gold—The Lord did not permit David to build the temple, but he did all he could in gathering material for his son, Solomon, to use: “Now I have prepared with all my might for the house of my God ... Moreover, because I have set my affection to the house of my God, I have of mine own proper good, of gold and silver, which I have given to the house of my God, over and above all that I have prepared for the holy house.” Since David had gathered all he could and had given of his own personal goods, he was in a position to challenge Israel to give: “And who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?” Have you consecrated yourself “a living sacrifice” to the Lord?

CONCLUSION

Paul said in the first verse of this lesson, “Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.” Also, Solomon said, “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man” (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

1. Did Jesus Christ give His all for us?
2. Can one conform to the world and be a living sacrifice for God?
3. Where and what is God’s temple today?
4. What does sanctification have to do with being a living sacrifice?
5. Have you given your all to the Lord? †

SUNDAY SCHOOL LITERATURE

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THE POETRY PAGE

"And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock [Christ] I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."—Matthew 16:18.

WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

A. H. Smith

What is the Church to the world today,
Is it a place where we go to play?
Some seem to think that we need not go,
For what they tell us we don't want to know.
What is the Church in the world today?
It's really a place where faith can say,
What's on its mind without fear or doubt,
The Church is the place where we keep sin out.

THE CHURCH OF GOD

Anonymous

I've found at last the Church of God,
It is not built with hands,
It has no worldly name or creed,
Not organized by man.
The Church is founded on the Rock,
Christ is the cornerstone,
And tho' the gates of hell assail
It can't be overthrown.

I find we do not join this Church,
The truth to me is plain,
And if a member you would be,
"Ye must be born again."
The Bible says Christ is the door,
In Him we find relief,
All who climb up another way
He says "the same's a thief.

God sets the members, every one,
Just as it pleases Him,
And gives each one a work to do,
And keeps him free from sin.
His Spirit guides into all truth,
Discerns the wrong from right,
The members all have fellowship
By walking in the light.

The Church of God has but one faith,
One hope in which we're called,
And by one Spirit we're baptized
Into one body all.
So we are one in Christ, the head,
By Him we're heaven's heirs,
And all the members strong or weak,
Each for the other cares.

So like a city on the hill,
This holy Church doth shine,
And all the members bear much fruit
Abiding in the vine.

They manifest the Spirit, love,
They're gentle, meek and kind,
They live the life the Word demands,
And thus their life doth shine.

Christ gave Himself upon the cross,
This Church to purify,
To wash and cleanse it by His Word,
And wholly sanctify.
And take her then unto Himself,
All glory to His name,
This holy Church is Christ's own Bride,
None other will He claim.

CHURCH OF GOD, BELOVED AND CHOSEN

Frances R. Havergal

Church of God, beloved and chosen,
Church of Christ for whom He died,
Claim thy gifts and praise the Giver,
Ye are washed and sanctified.
Sanctified by God the Father,
And by Jesus Christ His Son,
And by God the Holy Spirit,
Holy, Holy, Three in One.

By His will He sanctifieth,
By the Spirit's power within;
By the loving hand that chasteneth
Fruits of righteousness to win;
By His truth and by His promise,
By the Word, His gift unpriced,
By His own blood, and by union
With the risen life of Christ.

NOT OUR OWN

E. E. Nichols

We're not our own, we've been redeemed,
The cost, God's own dear Son;
Who gave Himself that we might live,
To Him we now belong.

He claims us, have we owned His claim,
No longer slaves of sin;
Our spirits, souls, and bodies too,
Surrendered unto Him?

To be for Him where He is not,
His holy features bear;
To shine as lights in this dark world,
And for His honor care?

Not living for the lusts of men,
Or seeking self to please;
Nor living like the world around,
In self-indulgent ease.

Our walk, our ways, our actions too,
Becoming Christ our Lord;
Then we shall be while here below,
Well-pleasing unto God. ✠

THE CHURCH NEEDS TO BE SANCTIFIED

By the late Milburn H. Miller



It is hard to see how a Christian can have any lasting buoyancy in his life without attaining the experience of sanctification.

THE TERM *sanctification* has been greatly misunderstood. There are those who hold that one grows into the experience of sanctification very much as bush grows into a tree, by walking in the light, one finally attains the quality of being sanctified. And there is a belief that a sanctified state is not attainable in this life, it is a goal that is accomplished through death. Another view is that one attains sanctification through the initial experience of conversion with the idea that when one confesses his sins to God, God not only forgives him but removes the depravity from within him. Many hold to the concept that sanctification is not a definite experience but an adjective to describe a phase of the Christian life.

On the other extreme, sanctification has been abused. Many have held that the proof of one's being sanctified is the noise that he can make during religious services. Then, too, we have been prone to define sanctification as the second trip to the altar, not considering the state of the heart. Perhaps we have held so tenaciously to the doctrines that by the formality of the procedure we have missed the experience.

But sanctification, understood in the proper light and experienced by the sincere believer, is a glorious endowment of God. There should be no mystery about this experience since the Bible sheds so much pure light upon the subject.

First of all, what is sanctification? The word *sanctify* means to "separate or to set apart, especially for religious purposes." In John 17:19 Jesus states that he sanctified himself—that is, he set himself aside for a specific religious task, that of giving himself as the atonement for the sins of man.

Christ prayed in John 17:17 for the sanctification of the disciples that they also might be separated and consecrated for the specific purpose of taking the gospel to the world. But while the disciples might present themselves unto God for sanctification, they could not perform the work themselves, for we are told in Romans 15:16 that we are "sanctified by the Holy Ghost." Jesus said to his disciples, "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you" (Acts 1:8), and on the Day of Pentecost "they were all filled with the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:4). [All the 120 that were in the upper room.] They received the Holy Ghost a few weeks after Jesus had prayed for their sanctification—that is, they were "sanctified by the Holy Ghost." On the Day of Pentecost, they were set apart for the purpose of preaching the gospel of Christ, and their active ministries date from that day. Not only did the Holy Ghost sanctify the disciples, but he took up his abode with them according to the

promise of the Lord: "For he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you" (John 14:17).

While sanctification constitutes consecrating oneself to the service of God, it is also a cleansing of the heart. Peter stood up before the apostles and elders at the council of Jerusalem and said of the Gentiles: "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" (Acts 15:8, 9).

We are born with a depraved nature. David expressed it thus: "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity: and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psalm 51:5). [David was speaking of his state, not his mother.] This is an inherited sin which has come to us through the sin of Adam. As we learn to know right from wrong and choose the wrong, we commit sin against God. We willfully transgress the laws of God. But "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

In the act of repentance, God forgives us of those sins that we have committed, and that places us back where we were as children with a depraved nature. God cannot forgive that, and we cannot confess it since it is not guilt of our own. But, thank God, he can remove it from our hearts. Jesus said, "Every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit" (John 15:2). In other words, we are "sanctified by the Holy Ghost." Sanctification is the experience, and the Holy Ghost the agent. Sanctification and the baptism of the Holy Ghost, then, are not separate experiences but two phases, one experience.

As to the order of time, sanctification follows conversion and is a distinct experience. Jesus prayed for the sanctification of the disciples after he had assured them that their names were written in heaven, and we know that they were filled with the Holy Ghost on the Day of Pentecost. Paul received the Holy Ghost in Damascus after his conversion on the Damascus road.

Before Pentecost the disciples of the Lord were incapable and fearful of preaching Christ to the people. When Jesus was taken in Gethsemane, all the disciples fled, and Peter followed afar off. It was not that they were not followers of Jesus and did not believe, but they did not have the courage to carry out their convictions. Since the Lord knew their weakness, he told them to "tarry ... in Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). After Pentecost they displayed great bravery in preaching the gospel of the crucified Christ even in the presence of those who had crucified the Lord. Although haled before kings and magistrates, they did not hesitate to proclaim the good news of salvation until life was taken from them. The difference before Pentecost and after was the difference between not being filled and being filled with the Holy Ghost.

All Christians need to be sanctified. It is part of the atonement since "Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate" (Hebrews 13:12). "This is the will of God, even your sanctification" (1 Thessalonians 4:3).

THE DIOTREPES SYNDROME

By G. E. Tyler

***"I wrote unto the church: but Diotrepes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church."**—III John 1:9-10.*

I WAS SAVED in May 1971, in a Church of God service at the age of 18. Although I attended other Sunday schools growing up and had no Church of God background, I was saved to the Church of God and it is all I have known in my Christian life. I believe in her message. I see her as the bride of Christ. As the songwriter says,

*O Church of God! I love thy courts,
Thou mother of the free;
Thou blessed home of all the saved,
I dwell content in thee.*

That having been said, I have been troubled at times about the animosity that exists between various organizations who call themselves Church of God. It is obvious there is more to being Church of God than the name. Some have a name that they live and are dead (Revelation 3:1). Furthermore, there are plenty who use the name who are charismatic tongues people, and other independents who have no conception of the reformation movement of 130 years ago and have a sectarian spirit. That there is no fellowship with these is no struggle, rather it is scriptural (Ephesians 5:11). But, I am convinced that there are many children of God who have been forbidden fellowship with other children of God because of something which I term, the *Diotrepes Syndrome*.

For years I have felt that the modern Church of God suffered with a unique set of problems stemming from "power struggles." There have been divisions and splits over a myriad of issues, some justified by a departing from the faith, but many unjustified using insignificant differences as excuses. More times than not, these have resulted because someone or ones have wanted the preeminence. When these breaks have occurred, someone has divided God's flock, for it is not the sheep who have separated themselves from each other, but rather the pastors. Jeremiah 23:2, "Therefore thus saith the Lord God of Israel against the pastors that feed my people; Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them: behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the Lord." Many times 99% of the doctrine is identical, the standards are very similar, and most importantly the saints who were scattered were each genuinely saved and sanctified. But, because of the *Diotrepes Syndrome*, the progress of God's church is hindered to this day.

I consider it somewhat interesting that John the apostle faced the same type of problem in his day. Interesting because this "disease" is not unique to our

One needs only to observe the impotency of professed Christians who do not have the experience to be assured of the need of it. In James Gilchrist Lawson's book, *Deeper Experiences of Famous Christians*, we find that the great prophets and evangelists of God have invariably been Spirit-filled and Spirit-led men.

Countless numbers of people have received the forgiveness of sins, and their hearts have been warmed and gladdened by the presence of Christ only to succumb to the temptation of the devil in the hour of weakness. Christians need not stagger, falter, be up and down in their salvation. They may be stabilized through the experience of sanctification.

Although sanctification is an instantaneous experience, it is the inevitable result of walking in all the light that comes to us as Christians. "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (I John 1:7). This experience will come only to those who "hunger and thirst after righteousness." If we "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (II Peter 3:18), we will be led to the place where we will present our "bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God" (Romans 12:1).

Sanctification is an entrance into the deeper things of God—a more consecrated service to him and a more intimate fellowship with him. It is a joy to know God in the forgiveness of sin, but it is a deeper and richer joy to serve him faithfully and sacrificially.

The sanctification of the believer is essential for an effective Christian life. *It is hard to see how a Christian can have any lasting buoyancy in his life without attaining this experience.* Because we know that the forces of Satan are strong, that he relentlessly attacks those who are trying to serve the Lord, we need special reinforcements from heaven to be victorious.

Not only does sanctification fortify the soul, but it gives one a spirit of concern for the cause of the Lord, a concern that expresses itself through faithful service. A sanctified person is no idler. He is lost in the great task of using his gifts for the glory of God. The work of God becomes his work, and he finds himself by losing himself in Kingdom work.

God is calling for a sanctified people—his church. There is no room for unconcern and complacency in God's church. We must care enough about the lost of the world that we are fully enlisted in the work of the church. Should not we be concerned enough to attend the house of God, to give liberally, and to serve where we can? Let us identify ourselves with the church. Sanctification is not an ornament but the robe of righteousness.

"Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it" (Ephesians 5:25, 26). Have you, dear friend, been sanctified? It is the gift of God to all those who have been born again. Are you fully submitted to God, with the Holy Spirit controlling your life? Can you sing, "My all, O Lord, to thee I give"? If not, there is a deeper experience and a greater joy awaiting you. †

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generation. Neither is it incurable. As I reflect on it now, this syndrome has manifested itself across generational lines, and through all human relationships. I'm sure the Church of God is not alone in its suffering because of the self-exaltation and pride of a few. But, the shame is in the fact that of all places and of all relationships where one could expect to see the absence of such manifestation, it should be where people are saved, sanctified, and consecrated to do God's will. Unity, oneness, humility, in honor preferring one another—as the songwriter said, “No power of earth or hell, withal, can rend us from each other.” Really?

So what is this *Diotrephes Syndrome*? Let us see in the third epistle of John. The apostle John said his joy was in the fact that his “children walk in truth” (verse 4). So he was no compromiser. Let me point out here that often when someone speaks out concerning the lack of working together, he is accused of advocating “compromise.” Well, this was the great “apostle of love” speaking out on an important matter. He commended the saints for their charity towards brethren and strangers. These strangers could be referring to Gentiles, nonetheless he spoke of receiving such as fellow laborers in the Lord. I don't believe he spoke of giving these strangers the “third degree.” We must know those who labor among us, but biblically, the basis for fellowship is having the same Spirit of God. Romans 8:16 says, “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.” Following that we must walk in the light. I John 1:7, “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” Nowhere in the Bible does it say that in order to have fellowship we must see 100% eye to eye on every given point of consideration. In fact, Ephesians 4 tells us in verse 3, “Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” Then down in verse 13, “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 fulness of Christ.” To ever arrive at the unity of the faith (doctrine), we must first build on the unity of the Spirit! That takes some “endeavoring.” It is easier for some to break apart and build their own little fiefdom than to put forth that great effort to work through difficulties and disagreements to keep the unity of the Spirit.

Let us use the marriage relationship as an example. For the marriage to work there must be a commitment to one another. In practical terms, as wonderful as that woman is, she cannot be 100% exactly what the man would desire in every single circumstance. Neither is that man the wife adores going to always say the right thing or do the right thing in every circumstance. To expect such is not reality. But, in a proper marriage, a commitment exists which overcomes disagreements, bears with each other's shortcomings, and allows the love they have for each other to prevail. The longer they live together, the more they learn what their partner likes and dislikes, and the more they learn to please one another. The first few years may be a little rocky because, though they love one another, they are different individuals who have different ideas about some things, different habits, they have been brought up in

different circumstances and do things differently. But, with the commitment to each other, and a genuine love for one another, they stay together and work out their problems one by one as they arise.

Comparatively, the Church is made up of different individuals with different ideas, etc., who are tied together by the blood of Christ and the experience of salvation. But, without a commitment to unity, without a determination to stand together and work together, without a love that desires to work through any problems that arise, there will undoubtedly come a break in fellowship. In marriage, the commitment is required but from the two individuals. With the Church, the commitment to each other and to God is required by each member of the body. That means that the forbearance required for a successful relationship must be between not just 2, or 3, or 10, or 100—but throughout the body of Christ. This doubtless explains in part why there have been so many “divorces” in the spiritual sense.

Think of it. Several groups of holy people, living holy lives, serving Christ to their best, however, they have nothing whatsoever to do with each other because their leaders can't get along. To add insult to injury, not only is there a lack of working together, but animosity compels certain ones to use their pulpits to degrade and slander other Church of God congregations. Some almost seem obsessed with labeling anyone who is not in their good graces, “Babylon.” What is Babylon? Revelation 18:2, “And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.” To put this accusation in prospective, if one understands what Babylon is—the habitation of devils—he is standing on very dangerous ground if he labels a congregation such and in reality the Holy Ghost is working among that people. Too many have loosely tossed around such accusations without realizing the consequences of such. People labeled Jesus Christ as being “full of devils.” Matthew 12:24-28, “But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils. And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand: And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand? And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges. But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.”

Is division sin? Then who is causing division and why?

Back to Third John. Little is said in the Scriptures about Diotrephes. In fact, our text is the sole reference to him. Yet, in this brief mention we can glean a lot about the man. First of all, he loved the preeminence. In this he was not unique. Self-exaltation has plagued man from the beginning. But in the Church of the living God, *man* is not to rule. Colossians 1:18, “And he [Christ] is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he [Christ] might have the preeminence.” This testi-

mony of Diotrephes alone was enough to condemn him. This attitude drove him to do what he did.

Was this a power struggle? Verse 9 also says that he would not receive John and others. He evidently felt threatened. He thought that he himself was just as good as this “John.” He did not have to play second fiddle to anybody! Nothing is said about a difference in doctrine. Was this a “personality clash”? In what way would he not receive John? Obviously, Diotrephes did not accept John as a brother. It was not a sure thing that John would personally come in contact with Diotrephes, for verse 10 says, “Wherefore, IF I come ...” So “receiveth us not” had to mean Diotrephes did not fellowship them or acknowledge them as brothers in Christ. Sound familiar? Let me ask you, did the fact that Diotrephes did not receive John have a bearing on John’s standing before God? Of course not. Some Church of God ministers today spend more time on condemning other Church of God ministers and works than they do on winning the lost. In fact, the hostility of some professing Church of God people toward other Church of God people supercedes their animosity towards anyone or anything else. It’s amazing! It’s sad! Verse 10 says of Diotrephes, “Prating against us with malicious words.” We have no record of Diotrephes ever meeting John, yet he was using malicious words against him. Perhaps he had heard something. But from the wording we can assume this whole attitude was the result of jealousy—he loved to have the preeminence! This is so applicable to the last 100 years of Church of God history, it’s ironic. The malicious words that have been said—many times by individuals who have never even met the ones they are slandering! Some have behaved themselves in such a rude and despicable manner that the world laughs at the Church of God, professing to represent Christ, professing to be “the” church, yet manifesting a spirit of malice and contempt toward people which are virtually a carbon copy of themselves. The apostle Paul proclaimed the warning to the church centuries ago, “But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another” (Galatians 5:15).

But the *Diotrephes Syndrome* doesn’t stop there. Oh, no. It was not enough to refuse to receive John as a brother personally. It was not even enough to use malicious words against him. The *Diotrephes Syndrome* is much more destructive than that. Let’s read on in verse 10 of III John, “And not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church.” *Not content therewith*. Some people seem driven—not to see sinners saved or to see nominal religion exposed. Rather they seem driven to malign other Church of God groups, often ones they used to associate themselves with, in essence try to prove themselves as wise prophets with ample justification to close forever any possible reconciliation. How about this—Diotrephes not only refused the right hand of fellowship to the brethren himself but, *forbid them that would*. This attitude unfortunately is still at work in our generation. Again, if the ministry would humble themselves and endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, then the general laity undoubtedly would. What could we see done if we would unite our forces together instead

of bickering amongst ourselves? But, alas, someone may lose his preeminence.

One final thought on the *Diotrephes Syndrome*. He “casteth them out of the church.” I don’t believe this is talking about the church building. Diotrephes was so deceived by his own self-importance that he thought he had the power to kick people out of God’s church. I don’t doubt that he condemned some to the regions of the lost because they did not give him his rightful respect. If people—even renowned saints like the apostle John—did not meet Diotrephes’ measured approval then they were not saved, pure and simple. And if anyone dared to express confidence in John or those John worked with, Diotrephes felt he had the authority to excommunicate such an one. Sound familiar? Thank God, no man can put you in the Church and surely no man can kick you out—even if he thinks he can. Salvation makes one a member of God’s church, whether people approve of that individual or not. We don’t vote people in! We don’t vote people out! Only sin can separate a saved soul from God. Therefore, only sin can cause one to lose membership in the Church of God. This is the basis of Bible teaching. Men ought to be extremely hesitant to make public statements—or private statements for that matter—which banish individuals and entire congregations to eternal damnation. This Diotrephes did to his own detriment.

I believe the Bible message is what the world needs at this present hour. Those who know the truth need a vision greater than one which sees its own cliqué as the entirety of God’s work on earth. Every redeemed soul is part of God’s work on the earth. Every congregation that is walking in all the truth it knows is part of God’s work in the earth. It is high time we build and unite rather than divide and separate. I am not saying everything and anything is acceptable. But, “try the spirits whether or not they are of God ...” If two or more individuals or two or more congregations have the same Spirit, there is basis for fellowship and working together. If there is a spirit other than the Spirit of God involved, then it matters not whether the doctrine is alike or contrary, the basis for fellowship is eliminated.

Oh that we see in these last days a moving of the Holy Ghost as in days gone by! May this be the time that finds men less interested in their own preeminence than they are in the progress of the work of Christ. As John the Baptist, our attitude should be, “He [Christ] must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30). Rather than the *Diotrephes Syndrome* rooted here and there, may we see the spirit of Epaphroditus evident, who “for the work of Christ” suffered, not regarding his life, to supply “the lack of service” present in his time (Philippians 2:30). *For the work of Christ*. That is what is at stake. What are we willing to do for the work of Christ? What are we willing to *suffer* for the work of Christ? We as saints of the living God are part of something greater than ourselves. Our local congregation is part of something greater than itself. The congregations we are presently working with are part of something greater than themselves. In the overall scheme of things we are only a part of the greatest work on the face of the earth. My personal likes and dislikes are nothing. My personal position in the church

is nothing. God is everything. Christ is everything. The Holy Ghost is everything. Souls being genuinely converted is everything. The Word of God is everything. Providing a united front to a godless world is everything. Oh, that Jesus' prayer in the seventeenth chapter of St. John be answered, "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."

These few comments about the *Diotrephes Syndrome* may appear rather blunt, but they are shared with the reader in sincerity of motive and with the humble prayer that the future be more fruitful for the Church of God and that all true children of God work together for the advancement of the gospel of Christ. †

—Reprinted from October 2004 issue



Answered by the Editor



QUESTION: What verses in the Bible do preachers use when they preach eternal security?

—J. D., Alabama

ANSWER: Once saved, always saved—that is once persons are truly "born of God" or "regenerated" by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, nothing in heaven or earth shall be able to separate them from the love of God—Romans 8:38. This is sometimes called the "Calvinistic Doctrine." Calvin taught that only those whom God called or chose could be saved, and in no way could they be lost—John 6:44. All the rest would be lost. They ask, "How could it be eternal life if you could lose it?"

As to the verses they use: Romans 8:38, 39, is one of the main verses, but most any verse that refers to eternal life could be used. Romans 11:29, Hebrews 10:14, Ephesians 1:4, Jude 24, and even John 3:16 could be used, along with many others.

QUESTION: Can a Church of God congregation worship at night?—L. H., Africa

ANSWER: If you are asking about what is called a "Watch Night Service," I do not know of any reason why they cannot. The Bible says, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). You can do that at midnight if you so desire.

Note: The following questions are from K. O. A., Nigeria—

QUESTION: Is it right for a Christian in the Church of God to marry a member of a denomination?

ANSWER: I realize we are not living under the Old Covenant, but under it the Lord forbade Israel to marry outside their nation. When Ezra returned from Babylon, he found many Jews, even some of the priests, in mixed marriages. We read in Ezra 10 where they were required to separate, not only from their wives, but their children as well. We read in Exodus 34 why God forbade them to marry into other nations: "And thou take of their daughters unto thy sons, and their daughters go a whoring after their gods, and make thy sons go a whoring after their gods" (Exodus 34:16).

My convictions and teaching have been through the years that Christians should marry Christians.

QUESTION: Is it right for a Church of God congregation to rent a building of a denomination for their services?

ANSWER: How many denominations would rent you their building if they really knew that you believe and teach that Babylon is fallen, and that you need to come out of her? (Revelation 18:1-6).

QUESTION: After a brother marries a sectarian, can he be a leader in the Church of God?

ANSWER: That depends on whether he was unsaved when he got married. It may be that once he is saved and is living a good godly life, the Lord may see fit to call him to work as a leader in some area of the congregation.

QUESTION: Is it right or is it a sin for a member of the Church of God to have a night vigil with a denominational group?

ANSWER: Why would anyone who has a true vision of the Church of God want to? "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?" (II Corinthians 6:14).

QUESTION: How can we reward Babylon? Please explain Psalm 137:7-9.

ANSWER: You can reward Babylon by preaching the truth and endeavoring to get people to come out and take their stand for the truth. "I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" (Revelation 18:4). If you are able to win a true Christian out of Babylon, you will "slay" him to false religion.

QUESTION: Please explain Ezra 2:61, 62.

ANSWER: As I pointed out in an earlier answer, when Ezra returned from Babylon, he found that many Jews, including priests, had married heathen women. There were some who had done so, and they were not found in the record of those who were fully Jewish, so they were put out of the priesthood.

QUESTION: Please explain II Corinthians 6:14-18.

ANSWER: Paul is teaching the church at Corinth that they are not to be "yoked" together with sinners.

The Way of Truth

There is no true fellowship between a Christian and a sinner. Only Christians can have true Christian fellowship.

Under the Old Covenant, the law forbade the people to yoke an ox and a donkey together to plow. They would be unequally yoked! Yoking a Christian and a sinner together in an effort to further the true gospel, would cause them to be unequally yoked. Paul said, "Do not do that."

QUESTION: Please explain: "Come out of Babylon." Is it spiritual or physical?

ANSWER: "Babylon" that saints are to come out of is false religion. †

WHAT ABOUT THIS?

By Alvin A. Craig

SOME FALSE DOCTRINES

SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST

They teach that they are the Evening Time Remnant Church. Among the errors they teach is the thousand year reign; however, they teach it shall take place in heaven, not on this earth.

In a Question and Answer section of their magazine, *Signs of the Times*, a mother wrote: "My baby girl died when she was three months old. In the resurrection, will she be three months old, or will she be an adult?" The answer: "In the resurrection, we will all be raised with the same body we had when we died, except that old age and all diseases and deformities will be healed and our sinful natures will be transformed into godly spiritual natures. [The apostle Paul said, 'In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.'—I Corinthians 15:52, 53.] Therefore, in the resurrection you will receive your three-month-old baby as the child was when she died, and you will have the privilege of raising her in the perfect environment of heaven instead of the morally compromised environment on planet Earth today."

During the time the righteous are in heaven, they will be searching the records of all people and will be able to see why some of their loved ones are not there. At the close of the thousand years, "Christ with his saints and the Holy City will descend from heaven to earth. The unrighteous dead will be resurrected, and with Satan and his angels will surround the city; but fire from God will consume them and cleanse the earth. The universe will thus be freed of sin and sinners forever."

The New Earth:

"On the new earth, in which righteousness dwells, God will provide an eternal home for the redeemed and a perfect environment for everlasting life, joy, and learning in His presence. For here God Himself will

dwell with His people, and suffering and death will have passed away." [Information taken from *Signs of the Times* and from "Seventh-day Adventist Believe."

A lot more could be given, but I will go to some other false teachings.

THE MORMON CHURCH

On April 6, 1830, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery organized the Mormon Church. ... Joseph was to be an apostle and first elder, and Oliver was to be an apostle and second elder. [They baptized and ordained each other.] There were six members in all.

"I give unto you my servant Joseph, to be a presiding elder over all my church, to be translator, a revelator, a seer, and prophet." These are some of the gifts Smith claims the Lord gave him. Among those that appeared to Smith, supposedly, was the angel Moroni, John the Baptist, Peter, James, and John, Moses, Elias, and Elijah.

The true church established by Christ ceased shortly after the days of the apostles. Joseph Smith, acting with divine authority, reestablished the church April 6, 1830. This church is the only true church, and its elders are the only authorized ministers of Christ. They alone have a right to baptize for the remission of sins and to bestow the Holy Ghost. There is no other means of salvation.

If that were true, it would mean no one was saved between the period shortly after the apostles' death and April 6, 1830. The church divided after Smith was slain. Which one is the true church?

"The Book of Mormons":

The angel Moroni told Joseph of some golden plates containing a history of the ancient people of this continent and gave him the gift of translation. When Joseph had finished the translation, the plates were returned to the angel; hence, they are no longer accessible. That is where the Book came from.

Question: Do Mormons teach that the American Indians are descendants of the Jews? Answer: Yes, they do.

Harold B. Lee, the 11th President of the church, stated: "The Indians on the American continent are descendants of Ephraim, Judah, and Manasseh ... Their dark skin was a curse put upon them because of their sins, their descendants will be lifted and they will become white and delightful as they accept the Gospel and turn to the Lord."

There are various errors in their doctrine which I will not go into.

JEHOVAH WITNESSES

They do not believe in the Trinity—Jesus is not almighty God.

The kingdom of God is a real government in heaven, not a condition in the hearts of Christians. It will replace human governments and accomplish God's purpose for the earth. Jesus is the King of God's kingdom in heaven. He began ruling in 1914.

A relative small number of people—144,000—will be resurrected to life in heaven to rule with Jesus in the kingdom. God created the earth to be mankind's eternal home. God will bless obedient people with per-

fect health and everlasting life in an earthly paradise.

People who die, pass out of existence. They do not suffer in fiery hell of torment. God will bring billions back from death by means of resurrection. However, those who refuse to learn God's way after being raised to life will be destroyed forever with no hope of a resurrection.

Again, this is just a small amount of their teachings.

The Literal Kingdom on Earth:

The Millennium is the 1,000 year reign of Jesus after the tribulation [which took place 70 A.D.] and before all people of the world are sent either to heaven or hell. Jesus will reign as King over Israel, as well as all the nations of the world. The world will live in peace. Satan will be bound, and at the beginning everyone will worship God. The purpose of the 1,000 year reign is to fulfill promises God made to the world that cannot be fulfilled while Satan is free and humans have political authority.

According to Revelation 20:4, it was souls [not physical beings] that reigned with Christ this long period of time the Bible calls a thousand years. It does not say how long Christ reigned. He is reigning now and has been for thousands of years.

Revelation 20:4 says nothing about Christ coming to this earth to reign with anyone for a 1,000 years, and it says nothing about a kingdom of a thousand years! The Bible says that the kingdom of God is an everlasting kingdom, and the only King it has, or ever will have, is Jesus Christ.

There are various false teachings connected with this literal kingdom teaching that I will not go into.

Every denomination has some false teaching. If they didn't, they would not be a denomination. †

OUR SERVICES ON CD'S

CD's of our services are available for purchase. These are \$3.00 each; however, orders of 10 or more are only \$2.50 each, postage paid. Please write in the blank how many you would like to receive. Send check or money order to: The Way of Truth CD Ministry, P. O. Box 88, Hagerstown, MD 21741-0088 U.S.A.

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- ___ CD #739 Putting God Between Us and Our Enemy
Mick Akers
- ___ CD #740 Patience A. A. Craig
- ___ CD #741 The Rich Man and Lazarus Doug Shenberger
- ___ CD #742 It Pays to Serve Jesus G. E. Tyler
- ___ CD #743 They that Know Your Name Brian Richards
- ___ CD #744 Why Aren't You a Christian? A. A. Craig
- ___ CD #745 A Servant of Almighty God Rebecca Bland

"THEY THAT WAIT UPON THE LORD"

Radio Message by Bro. James Arch



FOR THE devotional part of our service today, I'll be reading from the book of Isaiah, chapter 40, which happens to be one of my favorite passages of scripture; but for the pilot thought, I'll just be reading verse 31: "But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." Now, that should be encouraging, especially to Christians today who are endeavoring to live for the Lord.

I trust something will be said that will mean something to someone who is listening. We're all in the same world together. We all need the help of God. We need His guiding hand from day to day. I tell the church all the time in my ministry that regardless of what might come in the world, or what might come upon us, I still believe that God's way is the best way. I still believe in Christianity. It's a wonderful life and a wonderful way.

Evangelism is the primary mission of the church, of course, but it is still our duty to encourage one another, and to do our best to see Christians uplifted and encouraged. If you look around in the world today, there is a lot that could discourage you as a Christian. There is a lot that could get you down and really keep you down. But, thank God, you can always look up. Every day is a gift.

There is a song that we sing sometimes. It says—

*Too many miles behind me,
Too many trials are through;
Too many tears help me to remember,
There is too much to gain to lose.*

*Too many sunsets lie behind the mountains,
Too many rivers my feet have walked through,
Too many treasures are waiting over yonder,
There is too much to gain to lose.*

*I crossed the hot burning desert,
Struggling the right road to choose;
Somewhere up ahead there's cool clear water,
And defeat is one word I don't use.*

That's a beautiful song. It's very encouraging to those who are endeavoring to live a Christian life.

I'm here to encourage you, too, and to tell you that you have to keep your eyes on God and keep focused on Him, for not every one will encourage you on in the Lord.

The scripture that I read here says "they that wait upon the Lord." Now, what does it mean to "wait upon the Lord"? We know that the word *wait* generally means

“to remain or rest in expectation.” It also means “to serve the needs of.” In this text, it can be applied as, “to depend on.” *Depend* means “to rely upon, and to place trust or confidence in.” So, it is our business to trust in this great God of heaven who cannot fail, and the One who made the world and all that therein is. God is the Giver of life, the Giver of every good and perfect gift. All that we have, we have from Him. All that we hope to be, we have in God. What a wonderful Friend He is! We can trust in Him.

The psalmist David said in Psalm 27:14, “Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord.” If you will read the entire 27th Psalm, you will see the beauty of the words in that Psalm, which is too long for me to read on this broadcast today. It’s a beautiful Psalm. David started that Psalm with, “The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?” He went on to say, “One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple.” He ended the Psalm off with, “Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord.”

In the 40th chapter of Isaiah, the prophet reproved the people of God for their distrust while in Babylon captivity. You know, we are all human beings. There are times in life when we get down and we don’t trust as we should trust. In the 27th verse, Isaiah said, “Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God?” That’s a question. In other words, they spoke as if God had cast them off, but Isaiah silenced those fears. Back to verses 21 and 22: “Have ye not known? have ye not heard? hath it not been told you from the beginning? have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in.” In other words, Isaiah was asking, “Cannot the Creator of all things preserve His people and keep His church?”

Look at verse 28 of this 40th chapter of Isaiah: “Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding.” That’s who Isaiah was writing about. The Lord was the One he was saying that we should wait on. Even the young and the strong would need to rely upon Him. If you will look at verse 30, it says: “Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall.”

Unfortunately, we are living in an age and in a time where not every one is believing and trusting in what this God can do. Let me tell you something, Friends, if we ever needed the Lord, it is now, and especially those who are trying to walk with God and are trying to hold up a standard of Christianity, or a standard of holiness and purity. Not every one is thinking that way in the world today. We need to be thankful for those who are

holding a standard. We need to be thankful for every one who will leave the devil’s realm and turn to God and serve Him. The world needs more Christians. The world needs more people who will stand up for what is right, stand up for what is true, and stand up for what the Bible teaches. That’s what the world really needs. This is the only way that it is going to work. When we reach a place in life, and many people do, that we need something more than we have, or we need something more than a life of sin, God is there. Let me tell you, He’s an ever-present God.

Jeremiah said in Jeremiah 33:3, “Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.” We do not know what God has in store for us. When you live as close to God as you can live, you’ll find what I’m talking about here. We really can’t get too close to God. The Bible tells us about a man by the name of Jabez. Jabez called on God. This has been quite a popular verse: I Chronicles 4:10, “And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me! And God granted him that which he requested.” Jabez asked God for four things, and He granted him all four things that he asked for. Jeremiah said, “Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.”

Only God can listen to the cries of a suffering soul who is bogged down in the mire and gutters of sin, and deliver him from that life. God can do what others cannot do. Many times in life we turn to other things to try to solve our problems instead of turning to God. We can turn to Him. He will not forsake us nor leave us. He will listen to the cries of His people. What a merciful and kind and loving God we have! It doesn’t matter how far away we get from God, He still hears us. He is still mindful of us. He still listens to us. You know, He first loved us. Thank God for that wonderful love which sent Jesus into this world that we could have life, and have it more abundantly. God has in store for us what no one else has.

After you begin your walk with God, it is then you need His sustaining power. You don’t walk this road alone. You can’t level off on this walk. You can’t get to the place where you believe you have made it and reached the point. We all need God every day. This is a daily walk with God. Every morning when we wake up, it is a gift from God, and we need to live each day to its fullest. We need to ask Him for grace, for courage, and for strength, and for the words to say to someone else about Him.

If you will go back to Isaiah 40, you will see what I’m talking about in verse 29: “He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.” Sometimes we think we’re weak, and we’re not; sometimes we think we can’t make it, and we can. It depends on how we look at this. It depends on how we take this. If you will listen to the devil, he will take you off the path. He will run you right off the path. Let me tell you, the devil doesn’t want anyone walking this path. Thank God for the strait and narrow way that Jesus taught. Thank God for it! Although there are a

few on it, He said, "Broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: [But] strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

If you will look at verse 10 of Isaiah 41, he says: "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." It is one thing to begin this walk with God, but it is another thing to keep going and to finish it. You don't finish this till you're finished. You have to make it through to the end, otherwise, it wouldn't make very much sense. When you feel forsaken and let down, and you feel like all you have done has failed, God is still there, My Beloved Friends. God is there. God hasn't moved.

If you will look at Psalm 91:2-4, you will see what it says: "I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust. Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler." When we feel forsaken and feel like all is gone, My Beloved Friends, God is still there. He answers and assures us. He gives us the power to overcome. Christians are overcomers. If we're not overcomers, we're losers; if we're not overcomers, the devil is getting us. Christians must overcome the obstacles and problems and temptations of life or they will get us down, and get us back into the kingdom of the devil. "But they that wait upon the Lord," what words! In other words, "They that [depend on God] shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

Yes, Christians must overcome obstacles, and there is no shortage of them. There are obstacles and hindrances all the time on the pathway of the Christian. An *obstacle* is "something that opposes progress or stands in the way of." We have to wade through it. Fear of failing can be an obstacle. We have to shake it off. God is there. Don't let the devil get us down and cause us to believe that we're destined to fail. That's not what God says. He gives us the courage and the boldness, thank God! Insurmountable looking financial problems are very common in the world now. We have to pray and hold on. There is a God. "Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not."

The Lord assures us of perpetual sustenance—not just for today—but tomorrow, too. For the entire journey that we're on, He said that we would not faint. This is a journey. In fact, life is a journey. Let us enjoy the trip. Christian, enjoy the trip. If you're not enjoying the trip, go back to God and ask Him for something. Enjoy the trip!

The Psalmist said in 46:3-5: "Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early." Verse 7: "The Lord of

hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge." Could I tell you anything more positive or more comforting than that today?

I trust that the Lord will bless those of you who have listened to this broadcast. If you don't know the Lord, today would be a good time to give God a chance in your life. Ask Him to come into your life and to forgive you. If you're living for the Lord today, let your light shine. Let it shine! Enjoy the trip! It is better further up. †

THE CHILDREN'S CORNER



FINDING JOY

A Bible Lesson by Sis. Rebecca Bland

"Why don't you stay here while I go get the car," Dad said to my mother. It was Sunday night, and our church service had just ended. It was after 9:00, and since the next day was a school day, not many people were lingering to visit. Parents were bundling their children into jackets and sweaters, and shepherding them toward the sanctuary doors. My little three-year-old sister, Wilma, who had fallen asleep during the sermon, had awakened, crying. Mom was trying to settle her down and hold my new baby sister, Esther, at the same time.

"Good idea!" said my mother. She turned to me. "Rebecca, why don't you go with Daddy. Take the diaper bag with you and put it on the front seat. Twila, you stay here with me so you can hold Wilma's hand while we wait. She's still half-asleep."

Dad and I walked down the church steps and started for the car, several blocks away. Because my father worked on two different farms, we were often the last of the congregation members to arrive for services. The church did not yet have a parking lot, and so latecomers found themselves having to walk a considerable distance to the chapel.

When we finally reached the spot where my father had parked the car, we were shocked to find it empty.

"Our car is gone!" my father exclaimed. He looked at me, and then back at the empty parking space. "I know I parked it here," he said.

"I am sure you did, too, Daddy," I said. "Do you think someone stole it?"

"Humph!" said my dad. "I can't imagine who would have wanted that old bucket of bolts!" He thought for a moment. "Well," he said at last. "The car's gone. We'll have to call the police and report it missing. I don't know what else to do."

By the time Dad and I got back to the church with news of what had happened, the other members of the congregation were gone, and there was no one to give our family a ride home. In those days there were no

cell phones. Our only choice was to walk down to the church office and call the police from there.

My dad explained our predicament to the police officer, who told him he would come right away.

When the officer arrived, he asked my dad a lot of questions. "What kind of car do you have?" he asked.

"It's a '51 Plymouth," my dad told him. "It's not in the best shape, but it's all we have for a car right now. I sure would appreciate it if you could help me get it back."

"Now where did you say it was parked?" the officer asked. My dad explained again where he had parked the car.

"You didn't hear anything strange during church, did you?" the policeman asked.

"No," my dad told him. "I had to park pretty far from the church, so I wouldn't have heard anything that was going on with the car."

"Well," said the officer, "we can start by driving around the neighborhood to see if we can spot your car. If we can't, then we'll have to file a report at the station and get other officers involved looking for it."

Dad climbed into the cruiser and rode away with the policeman. The rest of us sat down dejectedly on the steps outside the church office to await his return.

It seemed like a long time before Dad came back. To our surprise, he was driving our car!

"Where did you find the car, Daddy?" we asked.

"Well," he said, "it was sitting along a street about five blocks away in the other direction from where I had parked it."

"How in the world did it get there?" Mom wanted to know.

"Someone hotwired it and went for a joyride," Dad told her. "I guess they didn't want to bring it back to where they had gotten it, in case the owner was there looking for it. They didn't want to risk getting caught."

"What does 'hotwired' mean?" I asked after we had all climbed into the car and were finally on our way home. "How do you 'hotwire' a car?"

"Well," Dad said, "'hotwiring' is a way of starting a car without using the ignition key. You have to know what you're doing, but it can be done. It was probably a bunch of teenagers out to have some fun."

"Is that what a 'joyride' is?" I asked. "Is it taking a ride for fun?"

"I reckon," said my dad. "It must have seemed like fun to them to drive around the neighborhood in a car that didn't belong to them. They must have gotten some kind of thrill from knowing they were doing something wrong and getting away with it ... at least for now."

"What do you mean, 'at least for now'?" I asked.

"Well, if they keep on doing that kind of thing, they'll eventually get caught," he said.

I pictured those teenagers driving around in our car while we sat in church. I thought about the "joy" they'd had at our expense. It certainly was not joyous for us to sit and wait for Dad and the policeman to find our car. It was not joyous for us to worry and wonder how we were going to get home.

This month's wise saying is found in Proverbs 15:21, where we read, "Folly is joy to him that is destitute of wisdom: but a man of understanding walketh up-rightly." "Folly" is another word for "foolishness." This verse tells us that people who find joy in foolishness have no wisdom. The kind of joy they experience is neither real nor lasting.

Boys and girls, be careful where you go to look for joy. You may be pressured by your peers to try things you have been taught are wrong to do. They may tell you that you are missing out on fun by not experimenting with things like alcohol and drugs. But you can be sure that playing with sin never brings true joy. There may be some fleeting excitement, but it is always followed by the heartache that results from disobedience to God.

Activity

There's a little chorus we sometimes sing about how to find joy ... true joy. See if you can fill in the missing words. (HINT: The letters of the word *joy* will help you.)

J - O - Y,

J - O - Y,

This is what it means:

_____ first,

_____ last,

And _____ in between.

Answers to Last Month's Activity

Were you able to match the names of each Bible hero who trusted in the Lord with the event where he or she demonstrated that trust?

1. **Noah** faced persecution for building an ark as God said.

2. **Abraham** obeyed God and traveled to an unknown land.

3. **Jacob** wrestled with an angel to obtain God's blessing.

4. **Moses** rejected Egyptian riches to lead God's people.

5. **Ruth** was kind and loyal to her mother-in-law.

6. **Daniel** faced a den of lions in order to be true to God.

7. **Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego** chose a fiery furnace rather than false worship.

8. **Esther** was willing to disobey a king to save her people.

9. **Peter** was led to freedom from prison by an angel.

10. **Paul** and **Silas** sang after being jailed for preaching about Jesus. †

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Log in and browse our website and let us know what you think at

www.wayoftruth.org.

Our general services are broadcast live on this site.

Sundays 10:40 A.M. & 6:00 P.M.

Wednesdays 7:00 P.M.

MISSIONARY PAGE

2016 PHILIPPINE CONVENTION REPORT

December 26-30, 2016

Theme: *“Keeping the Church Ministry Alive with Enriched Joy and Renewed Strength of the Lord”*

By Bro. Brian Richards

WE THANK the Lord for giving us another opportunity to be in the Church of God convention in the Philippines. I thank Bro. Rey Fabian, the host pastor, for inviting us to attend. The blessings we receive from worshipping with the saints there are rich indeed! Their love and care for us and one another is genuine.

It was the first time Bro. Doug Shenberger and I traveled together, and that, too, was a pleasure. We were blessed with safety during our travel, and the Lord also provided for our families. I thank God for His blessings upon us in every way.

The unity and fellowship of the saints was real, and that provided an environment in which God could work. Not only did the ministry and various other leaders work so well together, but the temporal work was shared by many who attended the convention.

I would also like to commend the saints for their labors in the study of God’s Word. The saints there put a lot of effort into memorizing and learning the location of scripture. All through the week, they had activities in the afternoon related to this work, and it is a joy to see them enjoying themselves while learning scripture.

God’s Spirit met with us during the services, and people responded well during the altar call. There were about 75 people that came for salvation. There were also 18 people that were baptized during the convention. My prayer is that they will become rooted and grounded in the truth of God’s Word. God’s field needs workers in every place, and the Philippines is no different.

It is a precious thing to experience the love and unity of God’s people wherever you meet, and I trust that I will be able to make the long journey there once again to worship with the Filipino brethren. May God bless them each and every one for all of their labor in the convention and for their care of us.

Below is an outline of who spoke in the convention services:

Monday, December 26—6:00 A.M. Devotional Service—Host Pastor, Bro. Reynaldo Fabian of the Paniqui congregation brought the first message.

10:00 A.M. Service—Bro. Brian Richards from Hagerstown, Maryland, was the speaker. Topic: “God Is Still God.”

Afternoon Service—Bro. Ed Cororaton from the Davao congregation brought the message.

Evening Service—Bro. Doug Shenberger from Hagerstown was the speaker. His thoughts were on “The Parable of the Sower.”

Tuesday, December 27—6:00 A.M. Devotional Service—The morning devotional message was brought by Bro. Manny Yangco from the Paniqui congregation.

10:00 A.M. Service—Bro. Antonio Dumrique was the speaker.

Afternoon Service—Bro. Rudy Delos Reyes, pastor from Nipaco was the speaker.

Evening Service—Bro. Brian Richards brought a message on “The Parable of the Prodigal Son.”

Wednesday, December 28—6:00 A.M. Devotional Service—Bro. Frank Palencia from Signal Village, Metro Manila, brought the message.

10:00 A.M. Service—Sis. Meldy Santiago from the Santa Maria congregation brought the message.

Afternoon Service—Sis. Rose Marzan from the Katarugan Village congregation brought the message.

Evening Service—Bro. Doug Shenberger brought a message on “The Rich Young Ruler.”

Thursday, December 29—6:00 A.M. Devotional Service—Bro. Rogelio Eupenia from the Dagupan City congregation was the speaker.

10:00 A.M. Service—Bro. Jesus Batalla Jr., from the Baguio congregation brought the message.

Afternoon Service—Bro. Arnold Ordonio from the Balaoang congregation was the speaker.

Evening Service—Bro. Brian Richards brought a message on “The Mercy of Jesus.”

Friday, December 30—6:00 A.M. Devotional Service—The morning devotional was brought by Bro. Ely Facunla.

10:00 A.M. Service—Bro. Greg Escullar from the Negros congregation brought the message.

Afternoon Service—Bro. Bernard Neri from the Kalilangan, Mindanao, congregation brought the message.

Evening Service—Bro. Doug Shenberger brought a message on “How to Come to Christ.”

We thank the Lord for that was done, seen and unseen. We thank Him for safety traveling the thousands of miles there and back. To God be all the glory and praise!



There are some very precious saints in the Philippines. Please keep them in your prayers. †



Dear Young People,

I am sharing another chapter from Bro. Naylor's book, "Heart Talks." I hope you are enjoying these articles as much as I do. Remember, I am still waiting for some expressions from young people internationally to be published in this column. This is *your* page. Send

me your testimony, poem or article: The Way of Truth, Young People's Editor, P. O. Box 88, Hagerstown, MD 21741 U.S.A.

Yours in His service,

Bro. Greg Tyler

IT PLEASED THE LORD TO BRUISE HIM

From "Heart Talks," by the late C. W. Naylor

IT IS a mystery in the minds of many why Christian people often have to suffer. With all the promises of physical healing, they still are many times in pain, notwithstanding God's faithfulness and His omnipresence. They also suffer temptations, persecutions, and soul-conflicts. How can we explain these things? How can we harmonize these with the teachings of a loving God? When we read Paul's experience, we find it largely a record of privation and suffering, of sorrow and heaviness. It is true that in it all there is a note of joy and an unquenchable shout of victory, but nevertheless soul, mind, and body often had to endure the lash of pain. Did God love him? Why, then, must such things be?

God loved Christ with a perfect love, but we read that "although he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth, yet it pleased Jehovah to bruise him; he hath put him to grief" (Isaiah 53:9, 10, A.S.V.). What strange language! He had done no evil, He was guilty of nothing, and yet "it pleased the Lord to bruise him." Is it true that love is tender, the tenderest of all things, and yet can bruise and find pleasure in it? But this is just what happened. Jesus, the innocent Lamb of God, was "smitten, stricken of God." When we remember Gethsemane, the crown of thorns, the cruel cross, it does not seem an act of love for God to give His Son over to such suffering; yet it was love, truest love. Why did God thus deal with Him? It was not because the Father-heart did not feel that agony. It was the only means to an end, and love desired that end so much that it pleased it to make the great sacrifice that out of it might come the infinite joy of a world's redemption.

There is nothing that brings Christ so close to men as His sufferings; there is nothing that makes men trust in Him so much as the story of those last days. If that story were taken from the pages of the Bible, what would Christ be to us? Only a great teacher whose morality was high and wonderful, though to us unat-

tainable; but with this record added, He becomes a Savior and makes His righteousness attainable by us all. Had He not suffered, He could not have brought us to God. How much poorer we should be today without the story of Gethsemane and Calvary, without knowing that "it pleased the Lord to bruise him" and that out of His sighs and tears and groans has flowed into our hearts a fountain of joy and love and tenderness whereby we have been enriched and the angels of God have been caused to sing a song for joy!

If God was pleased to bruise His own beloved Son, need we marvel if He is sometimes pleased to bruise us? If we are sometimes bowed down with grief, if anguish takes hold upon us, if the sky grows dark above us, and if God seems to have turned away, is it any proof that He no longer loves us? Is it not only the proof that God sees something to be accomplished that can be accomplished in no other way, and that He is pleased for the sake of that gain to let us suffer? The things that are worthwhile come through pain. Joy does not make us stronger nor bring us nearer God; nor does it refine, ennoble, or enrich us. The pure gold comes from the fire only and the tempered steel also must have passed through the flame. God would have us pure as gold and as strong as steel, and to have us so He can not spare the flame. We must pass through the furnace of affliction. We are told that God "doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men" (Lamentations 3:33). It is only that something may come out of it that will be better and more blessed than could have been without it.

We know in reality only what we know by experience. Those who would be instruments in God's hands to help others must often have a preparatory training-course in the school of suffering; how else could they know how to help others? Brother, sister, has God called you to do a work for Him? If so you need not marvel if He lets the rod of pain be laid upon you. If you have hindrances which seem to shut up the way before you, if you have trials that you cannot understand, if you have disappointments and perplexities, if you have spiritual conflicts that threaten to overwhelm you, do not think it strange. How can you teach others how to bear such things if you have not borne them? How can you know the way out for others if you have never gone that way? How can you teach others to look for the blessings in these things if you have not their fruitage in your own life? Those who have suffered most can enter most into the sufferings of others.

The successful worker will find that the strength and wisdom that bring him success was the gift of pain, and had not pain brought him strength and knowledge, success could not now be his. Likewise sometimes we must suffer for others if we would save them. So if you would be a worker for God and know how to enter truly into the sorrows and needs of others, you must yourself drink the bitter cup and feel the chastening rod.

After the Lord called me to His work, I endured some great soul-conflicts. In them I suffered inexpressibly. I almost despaired at times, but I look back upon those things now as being the things that made me understand the human heart, that gave me a broader sympathy, and that have since enabled me to enter into

the sorrows and needs of others and to minister comfort and help as I could not otherwise have done. Those early sufferings unlocked a thousand mysteries and enriched not only my own life but also the lives of others. Endure these things with patience; for out of them will come to you that which is more precious than gold. If you do not suffer, you can be of little use to those who do suffer. The promise is, "If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him."

Abraham suffered in that one supreme sacrifice, but his example of faithfulness in the test has enriched millions of souls. Job suffered not only physical agony but the keenest and deepest of spiritual agony, yet that suffering was only an opportunity for God to manifest His mercy and kindness. How much Job learned of God by enduring through these dark days and how much the world has learned! If we should take out of the Bible the record of suffering and its results that are written there, we should take out of it all that is best and noblest and most helpful and encouraging. How much poorer we should be if the sacred record told only of joy and peace and comfort, if it spoke only of victory and achievement, and told us nothing of the hard road that leads up to them! If the Lord chastises us, it is "for our profit"; if God smites, it is only to enrich; so bear with patience, endure as seeing Him who is invisible. Be "patient in tribulation," drink the cup of your Gethsemane, wear your thorny crown without complaint, endure your Calvary; for unto you is given both to suffer and to reign with Him. †

THE LAW AND THE GOSPEL

By the late M. H. Craig

Scripture Lesson: (Galatians 4:22-31)

PAUL here, by the leadership of the Holy Spirit, sets forth some great and grand truths concerning the law and the gospel. He uses two sons of Abraham's: one by a bondwoman, and one by his wife, Sarah. He uses these to show the difference between being under the law and being under the gospel. Abraham's first son was Ishmael, by Agar, a bondmaid. She was not Abraham's lawful wife. This child was born while Abraham was in his manhood and natural strength, which Paul uses to prove that the natural birth was after the flesh and did not make people an heir to the covenant God had made with Abraham before the law was given.

But Paul says that the other son, which was Isaac, was born of a freewoman, which was Sarah, his wife, and was by promise. Now he said, "He who was of the bondwoman was after the flesh; but he of the free-woman was by promise. Which things are an allegory [or a figure of]: the two covenants." Then he said that this Agar is mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage. "For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. ... Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise."

Isaac's birth was a supernatural birth. According to nature, Isaac's parents at the time of his birth were

past age. Abraham was around 100 years old and Sarah was 90. Paul uses this supernatural birth to prove that those born of the Spirit are the right and lawful heirs of the promise God made to Abraham, and are not under the first covenant, or law.

Now let us read Galatians 3:16: "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ."

Then in verse 29, he says, "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

This means that the literal Jews have no more promise of God than any other people in the world; but to the Jews and Gentiles, all who will accept Christ as Savior, become an heir by spiritual birth of the Holy Spirit. They are heirs of the covenant and promises that God made to Abraham.

Some people have ridiculed the law and looked upon it as if God had given something very bad and worthless. It is true that the law laid some restrictions on the Jews that were binding, but the main bondage of the law age was spiritual, the bondage of sin. The law was added because of sin, and was a schoolmaster to bring them to Christ. Since Christ has come and has given us a new covenant, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. In Romans 10:4, we read, "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."

Now let us notice why the old law could not continue. First, of course, it was given only for a period of time, for a special purpose, and for one nation, but there are two main reasons. First, Paul said, "For if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law" (Galatians 3:21b). Next, we read in Hebrews 10:1-4: "For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins."

The law could not give life nor take away sins, so it was necessary for the law to come to an end, and so it did when Christ gave Himself for the sins of the world. Christ made a perfect sacrifice for sins, and it was once and for all. He did not need to die again. So, in Christ is life, and *only* in Christ is life! There is no other Savior. Every sacrifice ever made upon the Jewish altar pointed to Christ, and met its fulfillment when Christ died on the cross.

Now we notice that the law came to an end when Christ came and died upon the cross. Naturally the new covenant came into effect when the old one expired. Let us read in Hebrews 9. After speaking of the sacrifices under the law, the writer says in the 14th to the 17th verses, "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this cause he is the mediator

of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. 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.”

Now the foregoing text shows clearly that the new testament or new covenant did not come into effect until Christ died. It was sealed with His blood.

Hebrews 8:7 says, “For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.” No wonder it says that Christ is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. It is a perfect covenant. †

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Alvin A. Craig, Radio Minister

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The cost for sending literature internationally is very expensive, costing us thousands of dollars each year. As of January 22, 2017, the postal service has increased prices again. Therefore, it is very important that we hear from all our foreign readers once every year for you to remain on our mailing list. Thank you for your cooperation.

If there are readers in the United States who would like to assist in postage so that we won't have to cut back, your offerings are gratefully received.

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An eternal God	Psalms 90:2
A divine Christ	John 1:1, 14
An infallibly inspired Bible	II Timothy 3:16
Salvation from sin	Matthew 1:21
The new birth	John 3:1-7
Entire Sanctification	Ephesians 5:25, 26
A holy life	Titus 2:11, 12 Hebrews 12:10-14
Unity of God's people	John 17:21 I Corinthians 12:13
Divine Healing	James 5:14, 15
The ordinances	Matthew 28:19, 20
Eternal life	Matthew 25:46 John 3:15; 6:54; 10:28
Eternal punishment	Mark 9:43-46 Revelation 20:15

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Bro. Alvin A. Craig, Host Pastor



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Bro. Doug Koerner, Pastor



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Bro. Alvin A. Craig, Pastor



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Bro. Terry Deville, Pastor



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