

# The Way of Truth

Vol. 77

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

No. 11

November  
2019

**Are You Breaking the First  
and Great Commandment?**

Message begins on page 15

**“What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?”—Psalm 116:12.**



AS WE APPROACH the Thanksgiving holiday, I would like to consider the thought expressed in the verse above.

The word *render* means, in part: “to do or perform: to render a service. To return; to make a payment in money, kind, or service as by a tenant to a superior.”

God has been so good to everyone of us every day. No matter who you are or what your circumstance may be, you, Dear Reader, should be thankful and appreciative to the Almighty. Yet, the multitudes go about never giving the Lord a thought, just taking Him for granted. The human race needs to realize that without Christ we can do nothing. We are dependent on Him. As one songwriter put it: “I can’t even walk without you holding my hand!” In the Bible we read, “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (James 1:17).

Not just the fourth Thursday of November, but every day, there should arise from our souls a desire to express our thanksgiving, not only in word, but in rendering unto God appreciation in action. We ought to fellowship the Psalmist as he expressed in Psalm 103:1-5, “Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle’s.” And again, “Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation” (Psalm 68:19).

It would be an impossible task to innumerate all the benefits with which our loving heavenly Father loads us. But let me name just a few:

I will begin with the ability to rise each day. Acts 17:28 says, “For in him we live, and move, and have our being.” It is true! Every day is a gift from God. The extent of health we enjoy is a gift from God. When we do get sick we have the benefit of healing promised in His Word.

To have food to eat and a roof over our head are benefits from the hand of God. Let us remember that He sends His rain upon all. “That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matthew 5:45).

And what about home? What a benefit! Is there anything sweeter on earth than the warmth of support one receives from his family? There is nothing so comforting as thoughts of home.

The Christian enjoys more benefits than anyone else on earth. It is a privilege to know God the Father—John 17:3—“And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”

What a benefit to have access to the Bible which tells us of God’s love!

If you have been saved, you have experienced the benefit of deliverance—Colossians 1:12, 13—“Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.” There is also the benefit of forgiveness. This benefit produces a clear conscience, which in turn is a benefit. We, like Paul can say, “And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men” (Acts 24:16).

The entire human race can experience the grace of God, which produces the abundant life—John 10:10—“The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”

Another benefit is that God provides help in time of need—Hebrews 4:16—“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”

Salvation brings the benefit of joy—I Peter 1:8—“Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”

And I must mention the powerful benefit of love—Romans 5:5—“And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.” Love for all men everywhere, which also produces peace—Philippians 4:7—“And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

Knowing the truth is of greater benefit—John 8:31, 32—“Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

All these things lead to the greatest benefit—eternal life—Romans 6:23—“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Knowing all these benefits—and many, many more—we are made to wonder what can we possibly render to the Lord in return? We should desire to render something to God out of a heart of gratitude. Let’s go back to Psalm 116 to glean some knowledge: “What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people” (verses 12-14).

First, we must render unto the Lord our affection. Everyone of us should call upon the name of the Lord and receive His wonderful salvation! Accept His proffered grace. We render unto

### ABOUT THE COVER

Our photo on the front is of the Snake River at Grand Teton National Park in northwestern Wyoming. At approximately 310,000 acres, the park includes the major peaks of the 40-mile-long Teton Range as well as most of the northern sections of the valley known as Jackson Hole. In autumn, it is beauty to behold from the creative hand of God.

# THE WAY OF TRUTH

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Vol. 77 November 2019 No. 11

*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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the fat of rams.” A heart of gratitude will produce a life of obedience to Christ; not because it is required, but because that thankful individual desires to please Him and render that which is due Him.

We must render to the Lord our heartfelt praise and worship—Hebrews 13:15—“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”—Psalm 29:2—“Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.”

Render to Christ our time. We wasted it in sin. But now we who are redeemed ought to render the rest of our time to do His will—I Peter 4:1, 2—“Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.” We render to God our future—the rest of our time.

May the dear Lord continue to bless us and prosper our nation. I trust our readers will spend this Thanksgiving season rendering to the Lord for all His benefits toward you. †

Him our love. After all, the Bible says in I John 4:19, “We love him, because he first loved us.”

Also, we ought to render our all to Him—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.” He deserves our all! This is how we can prove our thankfulness to Him.

Now, I am going to mention something here that some people might not appreciate—we ought to render unto God a portion of our finances—Malachi 3:8-10—“Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.” We owe God a great debt for all He has done! Even this humble magazine costs thousands of dollars a year to produce and mail. Yet there is no subscription cost to receive it. We rely on our readers who are willing to render to God offerings that the gospel will continue to go out into the world through the printed page. An individual ought to tithe where he gets his soul fed. If this magazine is where you receive your spiritual food, then render your tithe toward its publication.

Another way to render to the Lord is through obedience to His Word—I Samuel 15:22—“And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than

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# THE POETRY PAGE

## THANKSGIVING

Frances Hodnett

Thank you for life and what it can mean,  
Harvests of plenty and a time to glean.  
Another day and many thoughts add a year  
Neighbors, friends and those we hold dear.  
Kneeling humbly in prayer to Thee above,  
Son of God—our Father's gift of pure love.  
Grant us pardon, mercy and peace  
In our hearts to cause the turmoil to cease.  
Visions of miracles—Thy wondrous treasure  
In Thy footsteps we walk with pleasure.  
Nearer and closer our journey will be,  
God, because we're glad to give ourselves to Thee.

## HOW THANKFUL WE SHOULD BE

F. W. Davis

How thankful we should ever be  
For all God's love and grace,  
For salvation, full and free,  
Which we can all embrace.  
Our lives, our health, our very all  
Through mercy He has given.  
No evil shall our peace enthrall,  
Nor blast our hope of heaven.

Why should we fret or even pine  
When we are faced with strife  
With such a power as His divine  
To conquer in this life?  
Let's lift our hearts to Him in praise  
For His eternal love,  
And serve Him all our pilgrim days,  
Till we are safe above.

## IN THANKFULNESS

Maurice V. Bochicchio

So much I sought in toil and prayer  
Beyond the surge of thirst and hunger,  
I had no thought you would provide  
Most human needs when I was younger.

I lacked the faith the dawn would bring  
A second chance in stony blindness.

How could I know that you would send  
The miracle of love and kindness?

Thank you, dear Lord, for daily blessings.  
The rain-filled clouds that nourish birth,  
Promised sunrise, abundant harvest  
Born in the bosom of the earth.

Give me a thankful heart to share all  
Your gifts sublime and commonplace,  
And may those passing see your presence,  
Your living image on my face.

## THANKSGIVING

Ruth Williams

We thank Thee for quiet fields,  
For garnered sheaves of grain,  
For loveliness of autumn woods,  
For peace that eases pain.

We thank Thee, God, for little things—  
A rug, a rocking chair,  
A home, a motto on the wall  
And sweet relief from care.

But most of all, we thank Thee, God,  
For Jesus, Thy dear Son.  
His love that flows from Calvary  
Unites our hearts in one.

And so, in all humility,  
On this Thanksgiving Day  
We bow our heads, our hearts cry out  
The words we cannot say.

But we will live for Thee each hour  
That all the world may see  
We've been in touch with Sharon's Rose,  
The Man of Galilee. †

## REMINDER TO OUR READERS

We **DO NOT** publish, produce nor send out the following:

The Holy Bible (Old and New Testaments)  
Bible concordances, dictionaries, atlases, commentaries, pictures, calendars etc., nor offer correspondence courses

Hymnals nor other religious songs  
Names of persons for pen pal correspondence  
Scholarships for the training of students in the United States or any other country

Financial support for individuals  
Tracts to foreign countries due to high postage rates

***We want to hear from you but keep this in mind.***

# THANKSGIVING

Radio Message by the late

Bro. Alvin A. Craig

(aired 11/19/95)



**T**HE COLD winter had already set in when the Pilgrims landed at what became known as Provincetown, Massachusetts, November 21, 1620. A month later, they arrived at a place they called Plymouth, named in honor of Plymouth, England, the harbor from which they had set sail on the Mayflower fourteen weeks earlier.

There were more than one hundred of them that landed at Provincetown. Before the winter was over, more than half had died, including their first governor, John Carver. William Bradford became governor of the little group.

A tribe of Indians had lived in the area of Plymouth, but disease had wiped them out four years before. However, they had left some cleared land, and some friendly Indians supplied the Pilgrims with seed to plant corn from which they gathered a harvest. They also caught some fish and gathered provisions from other sources.

Now, I'd like to quote this from Sula Benet of Hunter College: "After the survival of their first colony through the bitter winter, and the gathering of the harvest, Governor William Bradford of Plymouth Colony issued a Thanksgiving proclamation in the autumn of 1621. This first Thanksgiving lasted three days, during which the Pilgrims feasted on wild turkey and venison with their Indian guests."

After this, Thanksgiving Days were not held every year, but from time to time until November 26, 1789, President George Washington issued a proclamation of a nationwide day of Thanksgiving. This was the first "National" Thanksgiving Day. He made it clear that the day should be one of prayer and giving thanks to God.

Sarah J. Hale, of Boston, wrote articles and letters to a number of presidents trying to get them to establish an annual National day of Thanksgiving, but it was not until 1863 that President Abraham Lincoln gave a proclamation designating the last Thursday in November as the day of Thanksgiving.

Not directly related to this, President Lincoln made another proclamation, which might be of interest to our listeners. It was issued on April 30, 1863, while the war between the states was raging. It was called, "Proclamation for a National Day of Fasting, Humiliation and Prayer," and this is what it said: "We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of heaven. We have been preserved, these many years, in peace and prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth and power, as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace and multiplied and enriched and

strengthened us; and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us! It behooves us then, to humble ourselves before the offended Power, to confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness."

What would Mr. Lincoln say today about our nation if he were living and saw the sin, the debauchery, the spirit of ingratitude, the lack of thankfulness, and the lack of respect to almighty God that is so prevalent in our land today? "Intoxicated with unbroken success," Lincoln said, "we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us! It behooves us then, to humble ourselves before the offended Power, to confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness." Surely, if it was necessary in 1863, it is even more so in the day and age in which we live today.

The Pilgrims left England to find religious freedom, the very thing many in this country today seem determined to destroy! The founding fathers said nothing about "separation of church and state." What they did seek to guard against was the federal government choosing one "Church" as a state supported church, where others would be deprived of their religious freedom, and in this they acted wisely, but they, doubtless, would be appalled at some of the decisions of the courts in more recent years.

True Christianity cannot be confined to a four-walled building called a church. Christianity is an experience you obtain through Jesus Christ, and it is a life that you live every day through His grace. If you have the experience, you'll live it in the White House, you'll live it in the halls of Congress, you'll live it in your business, in your home, and you'll live it every day and everywhere. If you do not live it, it's because you do not have the experience. Again I say, *true Christianity cannot be confined to a four-walled building called a church.* It is not something that you confine to an hour's worship service on Sunday. Christianity is an experience that you obtain by coming to Jesus Christ, repenting of your sins, forsaking your sins, and then having received Christ, it is a life that you live. It's Christ living His life in you. The apostle Paul said, "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." So, Christianity is an experience and a life that we live day by day in our work, in our home, wherever we go, and in whatever we do; for the apostle Paul said, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

It is sad that among so many today, Thanksgiving Day has lost its original significance. Yes, the Pilgrims feasted, and I'm not saying that there's anything wrong with families getting together and having a turkey dinner and enjoying the food, no! that was a part of the Pilgrims' thanksgiving. They had come through such a terrible experience when more than half of their number had died; doubtless, some of them by starvation and disease because of their weakened bodies, and now they had received the blessings of God in harvesting a

## JUSTIFICATION

## REWARDS FOR THE JUSTIFIED

**Scriptures:** Romans 5:1, 2; Ephesians 2:1; I John 3:14; John 1:11-13; Matthew 25:31-34; Matthew 5:12; II Corinthians 5:1.

Romans 5:1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

2 By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Ephesians 2:1 And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.

I John 3:14 We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.

John 1:11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:

13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Matthew 25:31 When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:

32 And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats:

33 And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

Matthew 5:12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

II Corinthians 5:1 For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

**Memory Verse:** Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

—II Timothy 4:8.

**Aim:** To point out the rewards that are for those who are justified.

## INTRODUCTION

**T**HERE IS no man but who shall receive a reward for the life that he has lived. We need to impress this upon the minds of the people with the greatest emphasis. He who has followed righteousness shall be rewarded not only with life, but also with some blessings that God alone knows, for no man can give even a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple without receiving a reward. To the man who has devoted his energies and time to the service of the devil shall be a reward of great disappointment, suffering beyond

crop and in gathering provisions in some other way. I suppose when they were so thankful and so grateful for what they had, it was so small in comparison of what we have today. Nevertheless, they were thankful for it.

Yes, the Pilgrims did gather together and feasted with their Indian friends, but they also had divine worship services. It was not just feasting. They gathered to worship and to give thanks to almighty God for His remembrance of them. So, they had thanksgiving, not for one day, but for three days. They not only feasted, but they also gave thanks to almighty God, the One who had made it possible for them to feast.

We read in Psalm 100 of how we should give thanks and praise unto God: "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands. Serve the Lord with gladness: come before his presence with singing. Know ye that the Lord he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name. For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations."

We need to be aware of the fact that it is God who blesses our fields and causes them to bring forth such bountiful harvests. It's not something we do ourselves. We plant the grain in the soil, yes, but we don't make it grow. We can't make it grow. It is the blessings of almighty God. God sends His sunshine, His rain, and blesses our fields and we harvest bountiful crops. We go into our grocery stores today and we find them lined on shelf after shelf with good things.

We are exhorted by the psalmist David not to forget all of the Lord's blessings: "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things" (Psalm 103:1-5a).

It is in God that "we live, and move, and have our being." He is the One who gives "to all life, and breath, and all things," according to the apostle Paul speaking to the Athenians as recorded in Acts 17.

It is in order to have a National Day of Thanksgiving, but our thanksgiving should not be limited to one day. The Lord is worthy of our praise and expressions of thanks every day. The way all of us need to show our appreciation to the eternal God is by living for Him. God is not pleased with people living self-centered lives throughout the year, cursing and swearing and doing sinful deeds, and then one day out of the year try to remember and be thankful. That is not acceptable to almighty God. God is worthy of our praise and thanksgiving every day.

To really and truly show our appreciation to God as we should, we need to give our hearts and lives over to Him. We need to live for Him every day, and by our lips and by our lives give thanks and praise to almighty God. Again, "In him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28). Without Him, we can do nothing. †

anything the mind can comprehend. But no true Christian labors for the reward alone that is promised. He desires to serve in this time world, giving little consideration to the future rewards. There are times, however, when the pressure of trial and temptation may so darken the spiritual horizon that survival may hinge on the comfort derived from the promise of reward.

### MEDITATIONS

**THE REWARD OF PEACE—Romans 5:1—Peace with God**—A sinner is a rebel against God, against His government, against His will. When a sinner is convicted of his sins and comes to Christ with true godly sorrow, repenting of and forsaking his sins, God forgives him, and peace is the result. This peace with God is not alone for time but for eternity, if the one saved keeps his experience with God. **Verse 2—Stand**—When a person is justified, he not only has peace with God, but also the door of “standing grace” is open to him. This is the experience of sanctification which we will study, Lord willing, in our next quarterly.

**MADE ALIVE—Ephesians 2:1—Quickened**—The word *quickened* means “to resurrect, or to make alive.” A sinner is dead in trespasses and sins; he is following the flesh, obeying his father the devil. When he comes to Christ and is justified, he is rewarded with life! No one knows what true living is until he finds life in Christ. You must have this life to dwell with Christ eternally.

**KNOWING WE ARE SAVED—I John 3:14—We know**—Millions today belong to church. They hope they are saved, they hope they will go to heaven when they die, but they really don’t know! How sad! for Jesus died to purchase for us a “know-so” salvation. When we are saved, we are spiritually resurrected, we pass from death to life. The reward of the justified is a knowledge that he is saved. This brings peace. Another reward is that the love of God is shed abroad in his heart and he hates no one.

**IT TAKES POWER—John 1:11-13—The sons of God**—Jesus Christ made the world, yet when He came to it, His own people (the Jews) rejected Him. However a few did receive Him and to them He gave power to become the sons of God. It still takes God’s power to be a son of God, for salvation is not of works. Everyone who seeks God with all his heart will be rewarded with power to become a son of God, and He will give power to continue in the Christian race.

**TIME WILL RUN OUT—Matthew 25:31—When the Son of man shall come**—Jesus Christ is coming again! This does not depend upon whether people believe it, or whether they act as if, or live as if He is coming, but upon the words of the Master Himself. Why is He coming? To set up a literal kingdom? No! **Verse 32—Separate**—When Jesus comes, He will come as a judge. Before Him will be gathered all nations. From Africa, India, America, and from the kingdoms of the past shall come all people of all nations, and Christ the Judge “shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats.” **Verse 33—The sheep**—The Christians will be placed on the

right-hand side. **Verse 34—Come**—Then the Christians will hear some of the most blessed words ever spoken! “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” Just what all the eternal reward of the justified will be, we are not able to say, but to be with the Master, to be in the very presence of God eternally will be worth everything!

**THE REWARD OF HEAVEN GREAT—Matthew 5:12—Great is your reward**—We are told by the Word of God that we are to expect things in the next world that far surpass anything we have known in this world. To get to heaven will be a marvelous achievement; but besides getting to heaven there will be rewards, for he who has given a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple shall not lose his reward. He who sacrifices much for the gospel shall have a great reward, for all men shall be rewarded as their works shall be.

**A PLACE PREPARED BY GOD—II Corinthians 5:1—Not made with hands**—In this world, men for the most part have only those things that have been fashioned by their own hands. God has furnished an abundance of material things to work with. In the next world we will not have material things, but spiritual, and such cannot be fashioned with physical hands, but by the Spirit. Only those who have entered the spiritual warfare in this world can inherit the spiritual realm of peace in the world to come.

### CONCLUSION

It is very important that we constantly bear in mind that material things are only for the duration of time, and at the end of time they shall vanish, never to appear again. Consequently, he who places his hope in them is certain to be eternally disappointed. No one can afford such a disappointment; but, even so, as in the days of Saint John, “The whole world lieth in wickedness,” charmed by the forbidden fruits of worldly pleasure. The great work of Christianity is to deliver these blinded and careless souls from the error of their way.

### FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

1. Do you think a Christian should keep in mind the hope of reward as he labors in God’s kingdom?
2. What determines what our reward shall be in heaven?
3. Name differences between our home here and our heavenly home.
4. If we dwell with Christ in eternity, what must be the soul’s state?
5. What are some of the blessings we can expect in heaven?
6. What is excluded from heaven?
7. Are you ready for the second coming of Christ?†

### OUT OF BOX 88

Dear Ones in the name of Jesus,  
Thank you for *The Way of Truth*. I appreciate it very much. Just a few lines in sending you an offering of thanks. The Lord bless your work.  
—J. B. N., Indiana

# WHAT THE LORD HAS RESTORED

2019 Hagerstown Convention Message by Bro. David Goble



**W**E ARE going to begin speaking from Joel, chapter 1: “The word of the Lord that came to Joel the son of Pethuel. Hear this, ye old men, and give ear, all ye inhabitants of the land. Hath this been in your days, or even in the days of your fathers? Tell ye your children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children another generation. That which the palmerworm hath left hath the locust eaten; and that which the locust hath left hath the cankerworm eaten; and that which the cankerworm hath left hath the caterpillar eaten.”

I believe we are the other generation. Or, at least we are another generation.

Now, I can truthfully say, this was my testimony before I was saved. My life was consumed by sin. I can recall back to the time that the Lord was leading me to salvation. How desperate and lost I was! But I can still recall how faithful God was to me. I can see the stepping stones that He put in my path to get over the slough of despond that I had been wandering through and falling into.

Later, when the Lord saved me, I could look back and say, “All those wasted years in sin were wasted for nothing; an investment in sin that produced nothing.” But this is not a message of despair this morning. I want to encourage you if you can relate to years of wasted living, if you can relate to years that the cankerworm has eaten, the locusts have eaten and the caterpillar has eaten. I want you to understand that God has a plan to give you back the years that have been wasted in sin. I believe also that this is a message for the church.

## MY VISION

I would like to share with you a few words about our vision, because I think it parallels the vision of being free from sin.

We begin with the prophet as he explained to Israel that they were in serious trouble, that they had gone through a period of time when, if they ever had anything, it was being consumed. So this is a picture of Israel in distress, but it's also a picture of anybody who finds himself in sin. This consumption of sin takes away everything good. Maybe one begins with something good but sin takes it away. It's a picture of a nation in distress. Israel is not completely destroyed but nearly so.

There is something left and that's why the Lord is speaking to her. There was something to redeem, something to save. It has always been that way. Even if Israel was ever in distress, and we're speaking now of spiritual Israel, the church, she was never completely destroyed. I'm so grateful for that. That's the reason why we're here. If it weren't so, we wouldn't be here. Somebody before us was faithful. Even if at a time it was in a place where there was only one man or one

woman, the gospel survived, and I'm grateful for that.

Israel had been weakened. The plague that consumed their crops and their sustenance weakened them to the point that they were on life-support. In that weakness, in came an enemy. At times it was Syria, or it was Egypt or some other empire. Israel is in a strategic place on the Mediterranean. She finds herself on a road which is well traveled and the favorite target of nations that would come in to occupy her, govern her, or seek to destroy her. This is such a time, a season when Israel found herself in that place again. But the prophet is telling her that this is not her destiny. He was telling her that there would be a time that would be coming when the Lord would restore the years that the palmerworm had taken, that the cankerworm had eaten, and the caterpillar had destroyed. There would be a time coming when once again God would save His people, even from perhaps you might say their own foolishness, through their own carelessness.

The church has also found herself in periods of distress, in periods of what you might even say “consumption”—periods where her strength has been consumed. For 2,000 years there have been cycles. There have been cycles when the church had been in distress but never destroyed, never conquered. She's gone through these periods of distress when the palmerworm perhaps had threatened her.

My view is that we have come to such a time. Having said that, the rest of the message is going to explain what I mean so that I'll leave you encouraged, because I don't want to leave you discouraged. I don't believe that this is our destiny. If we've ever had trouble, the destiny of the church, brethren, is not to stay in trouble. The destiny of the church is victory! I'll say this more than once. Our destiny is victory! The bad guy loses.

## MY ENEMY IS NOT MY BROTHER

My enemy is not my brother. My enemy is not my sister. My enemy is not another Christian whom I don't even know. The Lord said He had 7,000 that did not bow their knees to Baal. I'm hoping that there are more people that I don't know. I'm hoping that there are more than what is in this room. If not, I would be very discouraged if it is just what is in this room, or in another room, or in another room. I'm hoping that there are many that I don't know. That's who I want to know. That's who God wants to bring together. It was not Israel's destiny that she should be consumed. All of her destiny is fulfilled in Christ, and we are fulfilled in Christ. That's why, as the brother said, “We're happy when we sing these songs.” They touch a chord. They strum a note. We can relate.

When we follow the Bridegroom and when our discussion is on the Bridegroom, we avoid the palmerworm,



the cankerworm and the caterpillar. It's by His power that we're saved. It's hard for the Bride to be in peril if she's following the Bridegroom. So one of the reasons that Israel found herself in trouble here in the book of Joel is that she had lost her focus on God. Now, good people can find themselves having a little too much space between themselves and Christ. The world threatens, life threatens. There are a lot of stresses, discouragement, doubts, and sickness. Sometimes these create a little space between us and Christ. God wants us to get close. He wants us to move back to touch Him. That's where we get our benefit, our strength, and our power. I wonder sometimes if God's church finds herself in such a space. Not willingly perhaps, not without good intent, but losing close connection with the Son. Things get so much better when we're close.

### **THE VALUE OF CHARITY**

Israel created such a space between herself and the Lord. In our way of thinking, they created a substitute perhaps, for Jesus, for God. People create substitutes today for Christ. Another important thing that I believe happened to Israel is that they devalued charity. We know charity is gospel love. They devalued it. They thought less of it. It was not as important as anything else. These three things—what are they? Faith, hope, charity. Which did the apostle say is the greatest? Charity. Saints, we cannot devalue charity. It used to be that preachers were counted as weak when they preached on love. That's wrong. The love of God is our strength.

The love of God holds us together. It knits us together. When we lose the charity of God, we start to unravel. It's a truism. It's happening in our nation today. When people lose the love for each other, the nation starts to unravel. The glue of God cannot hold us together without the charity of God. The reason the palmerworm had its way is that Israel began to lose charity even within herself. God told her that the stranger in Israel was entitled to the same protection under the law as the people of Israel. These people started to lose the charity of God and started to unravel.

This happens even among good people. However, in my judgment there is a transition, even in this country, that's happening now in what we know as the Church of God. There's a transition happening where men and women of good will are recognizing the years that the palmerworm and the cankerworm and the locusts have eaten, and they're saying, "That's enough. We no longer can live with this." That's why I said it's not our destiny to end up like this. People of good will are understanding this. This is the vision that we have. What does the Bible say when the people lose their vision? "The people perish." We need a vision, a shared vision. That's how I want to finish this message.

Let's read Joel 1:12. This is perhaps one of the steps in recovering the years, and I believe this is going on right now, "The vine is dried up, and the fig tree languisheth; the pomegranate tree, the palm tree also, and the apple tree, even all the trees of the field, are withered: because joy is withered away from the sons of men. Gird yourselves, and lament."

### **WHO ARE MY PEOPLE?**

Let me pause here for a minute. You may say, "Well, brother, this is not the condition that I see in my congregation. This is not the condition that I see in my congregations with whom I fellowship. Brother, you're speaking about something that I don't think is present among us." Daniel lamented a condition that existed among his people that found them, in a sense, in captivity. So even though Daniel might have said, "This is not particularly my problem," he owned it. He took it upon himself. He said, "These are my people."

You might say, "Brother, you're speaking about things because of the security and the goodness of our ministry and the way people have treated us. Brother, we just don't know the things that you're talking about." Count yourself blessed, but there are others that have been consumed by the palmerworm and the cankerworm. Even if you find yourself blessed, and you say, "Brother, it just has not happened to me," then I would ask, "Who are your people?" I'm your people. People you don't know are your people. All Christians are your people. Saints, we need to get our vision bigger than just what we are. All of these are my people. You are my people. I've never met you before, but you're my people. What blesses you, blesses me; what helps you, helps me. If I spend myself for you (and I've spent a certain amount of our treasure and our time to get here), it's all worth it. What I spend for you eventually comes back to me. It's not a zero sum game. When I invest in you, the whole enterprise moves up. We don't have to apologize for something that we haven't done wrong, but perhaps for the condition that we find ourselves in. We are not meant to end our days this way.

### **HUMILITY LEADS TO VULNERABILITY**

If there's a weeping going on, there's also meant to be a joy that follows. That's our hope. That's what we're looking forward to. This is also part of our vision. Another thing I just love: humility leads to vulnerability. Humility is a desire to be vulnerable. If I'm humble enough to make myself vulnerable to you, what that means is I'm willing for you to correct me. I'm willing to be wrong. Saints, for too long we have said that we can only be right, but we need to say to ourselves at some point, "I need to be wrong." Not because "I need to disobey God" but when we're wrong we need to admit it.

Repentance is not our enemy. Repentance is our friend. Repentance is not only for the sinner, but for the saints. Perhaps it is more important for the saints than it is for the sinner. There are things that we're just not going to get quite right. It might not even result in sin, but we still need to repent. If we get to the place as a church where we just cannot have a humility about us, a vulnerability that leads to repentance, we have a big problem. Then how is the Lord going to change us if we're not willing to repent? Vulnerability is critical. Israel, the people I'm speaking about here, had gotten to the place where they were no longer vulnerable before God. They had lost their humility and their vulnerability. They became too wise in their own eyes.

I wrote something down here: when you have doubts and fears, you need to allow them to collapse into your vulnerability. I want to tell you, I've had some doubts

## LABOR DAY MEETING REPORT

Hattiesburg, Mississippi

By Bro. Darrell Sanford

since I've been here. One of my doubts is: I'm not worthy to be here. I'm not worthy to sit up here. It's hard, because you have to stand up and preach and be intelligent, and tell everybody that you feel you're not worthy. You need to allow your doubts and fears to collapse into your vulnerability. Allow it to happen. If you're not willing to acknowledge your doubts and your fears, and allow them to collapse into your vulnerability, God can't help you. More than that, He can't use you. I'm not suggesting necessarily that we should live in doubts and fears, no! no! but all of us have doubts and fears.

We don't want to be the church that says, "I'm fine and lifted up. I have need of nothing." I think there's a church like that in Revelation 3 that I know about. We don't want to be that church. It's not just about "me" and "mine," but Christianity, the church. I'm talking about God's saints, His people, His church, and she has a need. That need needs to be addressed. We can't walk away and say, "She's fine. It's okay. It's all good." Otherwise we become like the emperor who has no clothes.

The first step is to acknowledge the environment that we're in, and not to suggest that that's the end of the story. I believe what's happening in the day that we live in is that men and women of good will are recognizing where we are and are taking the right steps to see God's church thrive. I don't want to just survive, I want to thrive!

Let's go to Acts, chapter 1, verse 6: "When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" They were concerned about timing. Verses 7 and 8: "And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." I pray we are living in this time.

### CONCLUSION

The last verses are in Joel, where we started. Joel 2:25, 26: "And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you. And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you: and my people shall never be ashamed." I believe this is our destiny the Lord wants us to fulfill, even in our time.

I'm so grateful that the Lord found me as a sinner, and with the years that I wasted. Since then He has restored those years one hundred fold to me. I do not regret that decision. I tell people that there are different ways you can go in life. Certainly, there is the broad way and there is the narrow way. The narrow way is still the best way. I recommend this way.

It's God's privilege and our destiny. I believe the Lord is restoring His people. If there have been any years lost the Lord will restore them to His people. He loves us. He loves His church. You say, "Brother, I haven't suffered. I've been blessed." I've been blessed as well, but again, who are my people? Who do I grieve for?

The Lord bless you. †

**W**E WOULD like to take this opportunity to thank God for meeting with us during our Labor Day Revival/Fellowship Meeting for the year 2019, at the Church of God at Bellevue in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. The Lord truly blessed in every way, from the preaching to the singing and, of course, in the wonderful spirit of true godly love and fellowship experienced among the saints. As the old saying goes, "You would just have to had been there!" But we desire to do our best to recount the highlights of this glorious meeting.

Bro. Mick Akers, pastor of the Church of God in Patton, Pennsylvania, was our revival evangelist, preaching the services from Wednesday evening through Saturday morning. It was Bro. Mick's first trip to Hattiesburg and we pray it will not be his last. God richly blessed him in every message, edifying the saints and calling the lost to a life in Christ. All of Bro. Mick's messages, "The Deceitful Heart," "Hating Life," "Had They Known," and, "This Is That," are available to view on our YouTube channel, The Church of God at Bellevue, as are all the services held during the meeting. His Saturday morning message, "This Is That," was particularly powerful and bore the anointing of the Spirit of God in a mighty way. All Church of God people need to hear this message.

Saturday evening, Bro. Davell Lloyd, pastor of the Church of God in Sharon, Tennessee, preached on the subject of "Spiritual Ambition." God's people must be ambitious for the work of the Lord and for an increase in our own souls. Ambition of this type translates to holy zeal—may God help us all to be more ambitious. It was delivered as only Bro. Lloyd could!

On Sunday morning, our dear Bro. Greg Tyler, pastor of the Hagerstown, Maryland, congregation of the Church of God, brought the message, "The Spirit of the Gospel," which called us to examine what spirit we are of! I have had many saints and ministers tell me how blessed and stirred they were by this message. There is a Spirit of the gospel. Are we bearing that same Spirit, being motivated by it, and showing it to the church and to the world? It is the Spirit of love, the Spirit of sacrifice, the Spirit of liberty! May God help us all to walk in the Spirit of the gospel!

*Below are some ministers present in the meeting.*



Sunday night, Bro. Howard Moncrief, pastor of the Church of God in Greenville, Mississippi, titled his message, "Fighting the Spirit of Backsliding." It was a strong warning and a needful exhortation to all in these perilous and lukewarm days in which we live. Let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall! May God help us all to fight against the spirit of backsliding.

We thank the Lord for each one who came to support the meeting and partake in the joy, fellowship, and ministering of the Word of God. "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" And indeed it was. Of particular note was the spontaneous show of true love, joy, and the reigning peace of God's presence among us as the saints poured out into the aisles during congregational singing, shaking hands, hugging necks, and greeting one another with pure Christian love. Many of the saints in attendance had never met one another before this meeting, simply due to the walls of division which have so long separated us. I thank God that this was yet another opportunity to tear down the false walls, and, as in Nehemiah's day, continue to build up the true walls of Jerusalem which encircle us all in the one city!

*Christians all should dwell together in the bonds of peace,*

*All the clashing of opinions, all the strife should cease;*

*Let divisions be forsaken, all the holy join in one,  
And the will of God in all be done!*

Saints of God, be encouraged, we are going forth conquering and to conquer! "If God be for us, [and I truly believe He is], who can be against us?" The light is shining brighter on the darkness of division within the precious body of Christ. Such schisms as have operated among or around us cannot long continue to hide behind a facade of unity. The great hand of God is sweeping away the clouds of obscurity and shining the truth on the scourge of group-ism. It is as when the Lord showed Peter the vision of the great sheet knit at the four corners and filled with all manner of beasts (Acts 10:11-16). Though Peter at first resisted, for this was something new and strange to him, he became convinced as the vision was continually repeated before his eyes, and the voice of the Lord plainly spake, "Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. ... What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common."

Now, Saints, the Lord has prevailed upon us to accept those who He has cleansed. What right have we to call that polluted which God has cleansed? I praise God for the vision of unity as Jesus planned and instituted it! We are seeing the fruit of it. He continues to let the sheet down before our eyes! In this last meeting, as in the previous meetings we have been in since this endeavor was begun only a little over two years ago, we have witnessed the common salvation—the faith once delivered to the saints—being celebrated together by saints from different "fellowships." As children separated at birth, we have found ourselves part of the same family—for we are born of the same Spirit; and we fit with one another spiritually, even though reared somewhat differently. I know one thing, the saints love to be with the saints. We are made richer by the diversity in the manner of preaching, praise, and singing,

for the Spirit of holiness is evident in each one. It is a beautiful thing to behold, and I praise God that I have lived to see it, and pray I will see it more and more. I will never go back to that which we called unity, wherein God's people were fenced off from one another!

*The church that was built when Pentecost came,  
The church that is kept in one faith and one name  
Shall shine on resplendent, forever the same,  
I'll never go back, I'll never go back!*

*I'll never go back to division and strife,  
Where hatred and envy and malice are rife.*

*I'll walk in the truth all the days of my life,  
I'll never go back again!*

May the liberty bell of truth—the Word of God—continue to ring loudly, calling all to true unity within the body of Christ. May we never settle for less than that which Jesus designed. May all His sheep hear His voice and follow Him, that we "may be made perfect in one"!

God bless you all! †

## LABOR DAY MEETING REPORT

Carmichael, California

By Bro. David Goble

**T**HE Carmichael, California, congregation hosted its annual 2019 Labor Day meeting at the end of August. Present were many guests and saints from nine states and Mexico. Pastors present were: Bro. David Goble (Carmichael), Bro. Ismael Yepez (Tijuana, Mexico), Bro. Sergio Reyes (Banning, California), Bro. David Chancellor (Moore, Oklahoma), Bro. Karl Wilson (Birmingham, Alabama), Bro. John Romero (Escondido, California), and Bro. Ricky Dukes (Chicago, Illinois). Also attending for the first time was assistant pastor, Bro. Douglas Shenberger (Hagerstown, Maryland), and Sis. Diana Barret represented Pastor Anna Figueroa (Tampa, Florida). We were especially blessed by a large group of young people from the congregations at Tampa and Banning. The messages included themes around the Christ-centered church and its banner of holiness, caring for all the needs of the lost and our own children, the high calling of the ministry, and the power of the abundance of God to comfort the broken heart. We were all challenged once again to serve our neighbors and the kingdom of God! †

## VIEW OUR WORSHIP SERVICES LIVE!

As many of our readers know, we can be found on the internet at [www.wayoftruth.org](http://www.wayoftruth.org) where in addition to reading past issues and other information, you can view our general services every Sunday LIVE at 10:40 A.M. and 6:00 P.M. E.S.T. Enjoy Spirit-filled singing and preaching. Also, our mid-week service at 7:00 P.M. Wednesdays is aired live. There is a chatroom where you can interact with us and share your prayer requests. Tune in and worship with us!

# WINNING A CROWN

By the late C. W. Naylor



## Part XV

### Sin

**S**IN IS a subject upon which there are widespread misunderstandings. There is a great variation in the teaching of religious men upon it. Preachers say very contradictory things about it. The greatest cause of this is the lack of a definite standard. The absence of such a standard leads to endless confusion and contradiction. There can be no agreement unless there is first an invariable definition. I have seen men who agreed in principle, but who, because of a lack of definite, invariable definitions of the terms they were using, would argue for hours and could reach no common understanding. One of my present tasks, therefore, will be to supply such an invariable definition. The Scriptures speak upon the subject in no uncertain tone, and if we will but 'rightly divide the Word of truth,' we may proceed with certainty to our conclusion.

There are many who teach a life free from sin. They say that the Christian is not a sinner; that instead of working evil, he works righteousness. Those who have a different standard of sin condemn them for thus teaching, and say that they are raising an impossible standard and are making Pharisees of the people. There are others who teach that we sin more or less every day in word, thought, and deed, and that there can be no higher standard of Christian life or Christian attainment. As an example of this teaching, I quote from a book published by the American Tract Society. The quotations below are from "Prayers for Family Worship." I quote only the prayer for sin.

#### MORNING FAMILY PRAYER

"Hear thou us, ... forgiving our sins ... guard us through this day and keep us from evil."

#### EVENING FAMILY PRAYER

"We beseech thee to forgive the sins we have committed this day, and wherein we have omitted duties or have failed in any way, do thou mercifully pardon ... take from us all love of sinning."

#### SUNDAY MORNING PRAYER

"We confess, O Lord, our many sins and transgressions. We have left undone those things which we ought to have done and we have done those things which we ought not to have done. Amid the affairs of this world we have forgotten thee. Give unto us true repentance. Forgive our sins."

#### SUNDAY EVENING PRAYER

"Pardon in thy mercy the sins that mingle with all our worship and service."

It would be utterly astonishing to think of anyone's making this the standard of Christian life did we not know that it comes from the lack of a biblical definition of sin. If a man who knows what sin really is should use that formula of prayer, he would deliberately insult God and his own reason. What sinner could do worse

than indulge in the sins therein mentioned? What sinner's life is more culpable?

The Bible says, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin" (I John 3:9). According to its teaching, Christians are not sinners, and sinners are not Christians. We are therefore brought face to face with the question, What is sin?

### Evil and Moral Evil

We need to make a clear distinction between evil and moral evil. Animals can do evil, but not moral evil. Animals can destroy property or even human life, and that is a great evil, but for them it is not a moral evil. Only moral beings can do moral acts, either good or bad. The feelings, desires, and acts of animals cannot possess a moral quality, inasmuch as they possess no moral nature. Their acts, however evil in their nature, cannot be sin. All their activities are unmoral, that is, they have no moral quality whatever and cannot be judged by any moral standard. Man, however, is a moral being; therefore, his acts are either moral or immoral; that is, if they involve the question of morality at all. In the common acts of life, the question of morality does not ordinarily enter, our acts being on the same plane as those of the animal; that is, when we eat, drink, walk, run, play, laugh, etc., no moral principle is involved, and therefore the acts are not moral in their nature, but unmoral. Being only the natural and lawful functioning of our being, they have no moral quality. They are neither good or bad, considered alone. Let us hold in mind throughout the further consideration of this subject the distinction here drawn between evil and moral evil.

### Two Standards of Sin

There are two standards of sin, or two standards from which moral action is considered and judged. One is the absolute standard. Judged by it, whatever contains moral evil of any sort is sin. Any violation of the principles of the moral law, no matter how slight and no matter under what circumstances, is sin. Whether the person has any knowledge of the right and wrong of the act, whether he does it willfully or accidentally, whether consciously or in unconsciousness, matters not; it is a violation of moral principle and is therefore sin. The other standard is that of imputed sin. Paul tells us that sin is not imputed where there is no law. This standard takes into consideration all the circumstances surrounding the case and having to do with it, no matter how slight their bearing upon it. The state of the individual, his knowledge, his intentions, and all other accidents of the case have their bearing under this standard and must be taken into consideration in determining the guilt. These thoughts will be further enlarged later on.

### Four Laws for Man as Standards of Sin

There are two kinds of moral law. One is the subjective, or that primitive knowledge of right and wrong which God has implanted in mankind and which is the basis of the action of conscience in those who have no revelation and possibly to some extent is operative in those who have a revelation. The other is objective law, or the direct revelation of God's will.

There are, or have been, four different laws by which God has judged sin. Someone of these has made man

responsible to his Creator in each age of the world. There is, first, that subjective law which the heathens are under—sometimes called “the law of conscience.” Contrasting it with the law which was given by revelation, Paul says, “For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law; For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the works of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another” (Romans 2:12, 14, 15). This primitive subjective law, supplemented by their reason, was a sufficient law to establish in their minds the standard of righteousness. It is the law that the heathen are under. They have no direct revelation of God, but they are not excusable in doing evil. That “inner light” of reason and conscience gives them a standard. Imperfect it may be, yet it is real. Judged by that standard, their conduct is either right or wrong so far as moral quality is involved in action.

Another law is the revealed law under which people lived from Adam to Moses. At various times God has revealed Himself to the race or to members of the race in various ways, and these revelations, so far as they were known, became to men laws under which they were to live. To Adam and his posterity, God revealed the true principles of righteousness. Of the limits of this law we know very little at the present time. It was, however, sufficient to make them morally responsible to God, and by it they will be judged in the last day.

To Moses God gave a whole code of laws for the governing of Israel and those strangers who might abide with them. It was a more complete law than any that had preceded it; it revealed more broadly and more fully the principles of righteousness. It was, however, only temporary in its nature, leading up to the gospel.

Since the coming of our Lord and His sacrifice on Calvary, the gospel has been the standard for all men, so far as they have been brought under its teaching and influence. It is the highest and most perfect revelation of moral principles that has ever been given to man or that will be given to him in his earthly state. By it all who hear it will be judged in the last day. †

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## REPORT FROM KENYA, EAST AFRICA

*Ed. Note: Recently, I made a trip to Carmichael, California, to fellowship with Pastor David Goble and the saints there. I found out that one of their ministers was planning a trip to Kenya. Having made three trips there myself, I have a continuing interest in the work of God in that part of the world. Therefore, I asked Bro. Richard for a brief report of his August trip there.*

Hello, Bro. Tyler,

I'm waiting for my next connection flight home, so I'm taking advantage of the time to write you as you requested. Once I get back home, things will get busy very quickly, so it is best I send this to you now.

I had the best missionary trip ever! It seems that there is a definite start of a turn around going on there.

And in addition, some new ministers being discovered who are hungering for the full truth. While there, we had numerous minister's meetings in three areas, and numerous services and two baptisms. I never preached so much in a concentrated way before (22 times, two messages a day when we were not traveling or doing a baptism. We also had 8 minister meetings.) But the Lord gave a special grace and I never felt tired while doing it.

I first went to the Mt. Kenya area to a remote congregation in the Meru area. (There are actually two there, but I only visited one.) Then next we went to the original Mufu church building for a number of days/services. On the final day, they had a baptism in the river near there (about 12 were baptized).

Next, we took a long drive back through Nairobi, and down the Mombosa highway to Makindu. This is where we labored nine years ago when I first visited Kenya. But the congregation suffered since then, more recently due to a local minister taking charge that really was not qualified and drove everyone away. And then that minister left. But miraculously, another minister (sincere, but did not know full truth of Church of God) inquired about the church there and brought many of the people back. He ended up contacting Bro. Lawrence, and when he was provided the full gospel truth, he was thrilled and also told another minister about it. Now both of these ministers are taking their stand for truth. And the other one has another congregation he pastors in Mathayoni, not far from Makindu. These two ministers both traveled with the rest of us, and as I preached in various places, they were vigorously taking notes and rejoicing in what they were hearing.

Next, we went to the Mathayoni congregation and were very blessed as they also rejoiced in the truth, and eight souls were saved in one service. This same service also included a very strong message against false preachers and false tongues.

Finally, we went to the coast to the town Malindi. There are two congregations near there, and one in Malindi. Again, a strong response to the messages as a good number were saved, and the last day we had a baptism in the ocean (around 25 people). Again, in Malindi a few years back, there was a woman who is a school principal (and very educated) who heard the truth and embraced it. She has now raised up there the largest congregation of the three and is very nurturing to those who are getting saved.

It is obvious that a lot of labor had been done through the efforts of these different ministers, prior to this trip. Additionally, Bro. Lawrence had been involved with helping establish truth with every one of these ministers. So because of all the labors of this Kenyan ministry, when we all pulled together before the Lord during this series of services, there was a special movement of God's Spirit and a number were saved. With the other ministers' help (the ones who knew the people), we tried to identify the total number that got saved amongst all whom the brothers were aware of, and the number came to about 36 for all the meetings. ...

May the Lord continue to bless!

—Bro. Richard Lehman †

# THE CHILDREN'S CORNER



## THE MEDDLER

A Bible Lesson by Sis. Rebecca Bland

(\*not their real names)

**T**HE LONG rays of the afternoon sun slanted across the front yard as my two little sisters and I played a game of tag. Our father had come home from work just a short while before and was busy with chores in the barn. Soon our mother would come out onto the front porch of our house and call us to supper.

I had just run around the mock orange bush in hot pursuit of my younger sister, Wilma, when an old pickup truck pulled into our driveway. I came to a sudden stop and stared at the truck in surprise. The few visitors we had were usually people I knew. The white-haired man who slowly got out of the truck was a stranger to me.

"Who is that?" my six-year-old sister, Twila, asked in a whisper.

"I don't know," I said. "I'm going to tell Mommy someone is here." I was eight years old, and felt responsible to let my parents know if something unusual happened.

I ran into the house, my sisters close at my heels.

"Mommy, someone is here," I announced.

My mother walked to the kitchen window and looked out. "Oh, that is Mr. Thomas\*," she said. "He lives on the road down below our hill."

I peeked through the curtains that hung at the window of the front door. I could see that my father had left the barn and was coming to greet the visitor. The two of them walked toward the front porch, and I ran to get out of their way.

"Come sit for awhile," my father said with a smile as he led the way into the house. He pulled a kitchen chair out from the table for our visitor.

"I won't stay long," said Mr. Thomas. "I just came to ask you a couple of questions."

"How can I help you?" asked my father.

"I wondered if you know what is going on with Mr. Carson\*," said Mr. Thomas. He shook his head. "I heard that some people are upset with him. Have you heard anything about it?"

We little girls knew Mr. Carson. He was another neighbor of ours. We had not heard that he was in any trouble.

My dad was quiet for a few moments. "Well, sir," he said finally. "I really try not to get into other people's business."

Mr. Thomas nodded. "I know you don't like to talk about other people," he said, "but I just wondered if you knew anything about the situation."

"Well," said my father, "like I said, I don't like to meddle in things that don't concern me."

"Now, I don't want to pump you," said Mr. Thomas. He looked sideways at my dad. "I don't want to pump you," he repeated, "but I thought if you knew something, maybe you would tell me because we're neighbors."

"I'd really rather not repeat what I've heard," my father said firmly. "I'd rather not talk about Mr. Carson."

"Well, all right then," said Mr. Thomas. The old farmer rose slowly from the table. He was obviously disappointed. He shook my dad's hand and told him to have a good evening. Then he walked out of the house, got in his truck, and drove away.

My mother turned to me. "Would you set the table, please?" she asked. "Supper's about ready."

I went to the cupboard to get the dishes and silverware. My father sat down at his place at the table. He seemed to be deep in thought.

"Daddy," I said, "what is 'pumping'?" My father looked up. He pulled back his chair to give me room to set the table. "Mr. Thomas said he didn't want to pump you," I said. "What did he mean by that? How could he pump you?"

"Well," said my dad, "you know what a pump is, don't you?"

"Yes," I answered. I had seen the old red pump at the big farm where my father worked. It stood next to a metal trough, and it had a long handle. I often watched my dad move the handle up and down, up and down until finally water came out.

"It takes work to pump water," my dad said. "You have to move that handle up and down, fast and hard, to get the water to start flowing."

"When you 'pump' a person," he continued, "you try hard to get information out of them."

"Mr. Thomas was trying to get information out of you, wasn't he?" I asked.

"Yes," said my dad. "I would say he was."

"But he said he didn't want to 'pump' you," I said.

"Maybe he didn't want to, but he did," said my dad with a smile. "He pumped me."

"But he didn't get any information," said my mother as she brought a plate of pork chops to the table. "And that's all that matters." She handed me a potholder. "Go get the fried potatoes," she said. "It's time to eat."

No more was said about Mr. Thomas' 'pumping' visit, but I never forgot the lesson I learned from my father that evening.

This month's wise saying comes from Proverbs 26:17, which says, "He that passeth by, and meddleth with strife belonging not to him, is like one that taketh a dog by the ears."

From this verse we learn that a meddler (someone who gets into other people's business) is a troublemaker. Not only is he a troublemaker, but he is asking for trouble for himself, as well. The verse says that meddling is like taking a dog by the ears. What would happen if you took a dog by the ears? The dog would be annoyed and would most likely bite you. That is how

it makes people feel when meddlers pry into their business. They feel like biting back.

The Bible tells us that we should study to be quiet and to do our own business. Let us ask the Lord to help us stay focused on the work He would have us do, and not upset others by getting into their business.

### Activity

Can you find the scripture that tells us we should study to be quiet and to do our own business?

### Answer to Last Month's Activity

Did you recall the parable Jesus told about a man who was proud and a man who was humble? Jesus told about a Pharisee and a publican who went up to the temple to pray. In his prayer, the Pharisee bragged to God about all the good deeds he had done. In contrast, the publican bowed his head and humbly asked God to forgive his sins. Jesus said that the publican was forgiven, but that God did not regard the prayer of the Pharisee. The Bible tells us that God hates a proud look, but gives grace to the lowly in heart. †



**Editor's Note:** These questions and answers in this issue are taken from *The Way of Truth Question and Answer Book*, 1946-2001.



**QUESTION:** Please explain Psalm 6:5, "For in death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?"

**ANSWER:** This verse simply states a fact. In death (physical) the body is laid beneath the earth. There is no life in it, no understanding of anything. So there is no remembrance of God or of anything else and of course, a dead physical body cannot offer praise in the dust of the earth and must await the general resurrection at the last day when it shall be brought forth and changed.

**QUESTION:** What does it mean to be overtaken in a fault as stated in Galatians 6:1?

**ANSWER:** Almost all of us have faults. By our association together and working together, God is helping us to overcome them. When we see a brother or sister doing something they shouldn't do, we are to go to them in the spirit of love and meekness and tell them of it. If they are honest and sincere at heart, they will be thankful to have the fault brought to their attention so they can overcome it. "Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head" (Psalm 141:5).

I am afraid too many of us tell our brother's faults to someone else instead of the brother himself. This is

not pleasing to the Lord, and we should not listen to those talking about our brother, but rebuke them, showing them the Bible way.

**QUESTION:** What is the difference between dream vision, and revelation?

**ANSWER:** There is some overlapping there, and yet there are differences. A vision can be given through a dream, or it can be given while one is awake. A dream can be a natural physical happening without any spiritual import at all. And let me add, just because someone has a dream, that does not mean he has sinned, even though he dreamed of doing some sinful thing.

A revelation does not have to involve a dream or a vision, yet God could reveal truth to a person by a dream or a vision. A revelation is something being made known to you; you see it, you understand it, by whatever means the knowledge comes to you.

**QUESTION:** Explain John 20:23. What type of sin is that?

**ANSWER:** One of the many things the Jews found fault with Jesus over was His statement to a man, "Thy sins be forgiven thee." They said that only God could forgive sins. Of course, Jesus Christ is God the Word, and He had power to forgive sins. However, we are not to understand from this verse that God's ministers can forgive sins that are committed against God, as Christ did. Taking Matthew 16:19 and 18:18, along with the verse you have asked about, we understand that Jesus gave the apostles the doctrine of reconciliation and condemnation. They who believed the preaching of the gospel and obeyed it had their sins remitted; those who did not, remained bound. When God's true ministers preach the gospel, the Spirit of God bears witness to the truth, and all heaven backs it up.

**QUESTION:** Should we dance if the Holy Ghost tells us?

**ANSWER:** We should do whatever the Holy Ghost tells us, but He will never tell us to do anything that is unseemly or improper. So He will never tell us to dance in a Christian meeting. Those who think the Holy Spirit tells them to dance or anything else unseemly in a meeting are mistaken. It was not the voice of the Holy Spirit they heard. Dancing was never a part of the public worship of God either in the Old Testament tabernacle, temple, or synagogue, neither is there a single instance in which dancing is mentioned as any part of Christian worship in New Testament assemblies. Dancing is only one of the many extreme manifestations of religious enthusiasm seen in some modern and extravagant religious movements. Such things are always characteristics of extremism and indicate a want of proper spiritual balance. (*Gospel Trumpet*, April 30, 1931).

**QUESTION:** Does the Bible teach the universal Fatherhood of God, and the universal brotherhood of man?

**ANSWER:** We must rightly divide the Word to get the correct answer to this question, for we could answer yes and no.

First, God is the Father of all spirits. The Hebrew writer tells us this. Therefore, He is the Father of us all in that sense. Second, God made of one blood all nations to dwell on the earth, and in that sense we are all brethren. But now as it is usually meant today or used today, the answer is NO!

There are two families in this world, and they are the family of God, of which God is the Father, and the family of Satan, of which the devil is the father; and of course, I speak from the spiritual standpoint. God is not the Father of sinners in the religious sense as is used by modern sectarian preachers, and sinners are not in the family of God; therefore, they are not brothers to the saints of God. As this idea is expressed and intended today, it is wrong. It is an effort of the devil, and those who are working with him to deceive the people and make them believe that everyone, the Jews, Mohammedans, and all others regardless of their religion are God's people, but not so. God's children today are those who have been born of the Spirit of God, and they are brethren. All the rest are sinners and are in the other family.

All souls were created by God, and thus He is their Father, but when a soul chooses sin he "dies," and thus becomes a child of the devil. We who are truly children of God, born of His Spirit and in His family, need to work and pray and give more so the message of salvation can reach these lost millions.

For those who might be offended with the expression, "children of the devil," I would call your attention to the fact that Jesus is the One who called people children of the devil: "Ye are of your father the devil, and the [desires] of your father ye will do" (John 8:44a). †



Greetings to you, dear Young People, in the name of our precious Lord and Savior!

This month we have an article written by a dear brother in our congregation, Bro. Bob Madison, exhorting us all to help others. He, and his wife, Sis. Georgeanne, are living examples of this.

My thoughts for this month will be simply to remind you of words the apostle Paul wrote to Timothy: "... do good, ... be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; Laying up in store for [yourselves] a good foundation against the time to come, that [you] may lay hold on eternal life."

May the Lord bless you with grace, peace, and strength.

—Sis. Crystal Gossard

## HELP SOMEBODY, AND YOU WILL HELP YOURSELF

By Bro. Bob Madison

Whether you are young, a teenager, or striving through your golden years, everybody desires happiness in their lives.



If you are happy, it's likely those in your family and the ones you come in contact with will also be happy.

How can you be happy ... and then stay happy?

The happiest of people are the ones who think of others, do things for others, pray for others, and serve others.

If you make another person happy, you will find yourself smiling, enthusiastic, and using your time thinking about others. The more you help, the happier you will be.

How does a person move their thoughts from themselves to others?

A good starting point is to follow the Golden Rule, which says, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

Do you want others to be friendly to you? Then be friendly to them. Do you like it when others smile at you and say that it is nice to see you? Then quickly return their smile and genuinely tell them it is nice to see them.

The most important emotion or ingredient in anybody's personality or actions is love. Loving others is the quickest way to true happiness there is. When others see your love in the time you spend with them and the ways you try to make them happy, they have a much better life.

Young Christians should have an abundance of humility. God loves you and wants the best for you. He is the One who has given you health, energy, the ability to love, and the ability to think. You didn't buy yourself a home and all its furnishings. You didn't raise the crops or animals that feed you. Your clothes came from elsewhere. In other words, you are not a self-made person.

Everything good or useful in your life came from God. God is responsible for any successes you enjoy in life. Thank Him for His goodness to you through prayer; and when you are finished talking to God about your blessings, then pray for others and their health, success, and happiness.

If you are in a situation where you are meeting someone for the first time, then set a Christian example by your behavior, your friendly smile, your quiet ways, and willingness to listen to what he or she wants you to hear.

To be happy, your day should be filled with thoughts of others. Finding the ways to serve others is made easier by praying to God for the wisdom or creative methods needed to help others.

Remember, a healthy body and pure mind give us added energy and stamina. And energy and stamina help us to have enthusiasm. An enthusiastic person can change a tired or sad friend into a worker for God.

The list of what God wants you to do often starts with (1) thinking and doing for others, (2) showing love to all God's people and creatures, (3) following the Golden Rule, (4) being humble, and (5) praying to God.

Smiles will come naturally. Happiness will chase after you and catch you and you will be one of God's most useful Christians. †



# Are You Breaking the First and Great Commandment?

2019 Hagerstown Convention Message by Bro. Doug Shenberger

**I**T IS A privilege to be in the house of the Lord again this evening. What a beautiful day we've had in the Lord!

We thank the Lord for the young people. We love to see them serving the Lord and experiencing the joy of salvation. We know that they have a lot to face in life, but the Lord is just as real, no matter what our age may be. He's real to us and He's there to meet our needs. We want to do our best to help our young people to know the true joy and blessedness of serving God and allowing Him to direct their lives.

I would like to draw your attention to the book of Matthew, chapter 22, starting with verse 34: "But when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together. Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment."

Now, the Pharisees weren't gathered together to ask Jesus questions because they thought so highly of Him, or because they wanted to hear His words, or that they believed His words were words of wisdom, understanding, and life. No, they were gathered together, endeavoring to ask questions to try to discredit Him and to find something that they could find fault with in His answers. They wanted to find something to use against Him and something they could use to try to justify their antagonism and their rejection of Jesus Christ. Jesus knew that. The Sadducees and the Pharisees had already asked Him some other questions, but Jesus wasn't threatened by their questions. He wasn't just comforted and wondering what to say. He knew exactly how to answer that question because He made us. He made the world. He understands what's important. He understands what we need. He understands the various thoughts and intents of the human heart.

Jesus knows the future. With His wisdom and understanding of this question, "Master, which is the great commandment in the law?" it was not something hard to answer. He was able to confine them with simple truth. He didn't have to go into some big discourse and show how brilliant He was. Jesus just told them the simple truth and they were left with no answer, no further questions. They had no place left to stand, no further place that they could go to try to confuse Him, because He told them the very essence, the whole basis of true religion, which consists of loving God. Jesus gave them something more than what they asked for. They just asked, "What is the great commandment?" Jesus went on to say, "The second is like unto it, Thou

shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." So the basis of true religion consists of loving God and of loving our fellow-man.

I'd like to look into a little more detail in the answer Jesus gave here. In verse 37, it says, "Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt ..." Don't you love the positive nature of the way Jesus communicated with mankind? There wasn't a lot of maybe's or suggestions, or this could work for you, this has worked for some people, if you try really hard, maybe this will work out. It was definite—"Thou shalt." There's not a lot of confusion there; there's not a lot of room for interpretation; there's not a lot of room to excuse yourself and say, "Well, some people should, but I'm a special case. It doesn't really apply to me." "Thou shalt." The question was, "What is the greatest commandment?" not *what is the greatest suggestion?* They asked what the greatest commandment was, so Jesus answered. He said, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."



## LOVE IS A WONDERFUL THING

How many people here know something about love? Love is a wonderful thing. I'm a big proponent of it. I love my wife very much. You know, love is a powerful emotion. It's the most powerful human emotion. When we love, it changes everything. The things that are difficult become so much easier. We don't get near as tired when we're doing something for someone that we love as we do for someone we don't care about quite as much. Someone that we can love can ask us to do more, to go farther, to stay up later, to work harder, to give more, and we don't think it is unreasonable.

Love strengthens and energizes us. It makes us feel more alive. It occupies our mind. When you love someone, you think about them. If you're in love with somebody, you don't go for weeks and never even think about them. Love is a wonderful, wonderful thing.

Love takes hold of you. Love is also exclusive many times. We love people in different ways. We love everyone, but a great love tends to be exclusive. It puts priority; it emphasizes. When you think about, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God," it is saying that you're going to make an exclusive special place, that He is going to have something special in your heart. When you love God, that is far different from saying, "I respect God; I believe there is a God." The love of God is a life-changing experience.

Jesus didn't say to just love a man. He didn't say to love an idea. He said to love a real Person—"the Lord thy God." Some people struggle with the idea that they may believe there is a God, but they don't think of Him

as *their* God. They don't think of God as being their God. "He's a God out there somewhere. Maybe He knows I exist; maybe He doesn't. Maybe He cares about me; maybe He doesn't," but they don't identify with God. But, Jesus said, "Love the Lord thy God." He's a personal God. He's my God. He's not afar off; He's not removed; He's not beyond me; He's not unaware of me. He knows me; He loves me. He's *my* God! He's your God. It's a personal thing, whether you acknowledge Him, or whether you want to believe in Him or not. That's the reality. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God." What a statement Jesus made there!

With all the personality of God, the love of God, and everything that God is to mankind, we are to love Him in return. It is not to be one-sided. We're not to just receive God's love and sacrifice, His concern, His protection, and His bounty, but we're to love Him back.

### **LOVE THE LORD WITH ALL THY HEART**

Jesus went on to tell them how they were to love God: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." That's a certain way. That's not just casual; that's not something you can just claim. "Yes, I love God. I talk to Him once in a while. If it doesn't interfere with my life too much, I'll even follow some of His teachings." That's not loving God with all your heart.

Have you ever seen somebody do something with all their heart? Sometimes we don't see that enough, but I love to see somebody doing something with all their heart. They're focused on it. They're enjoying it. It's not a burden or a drudgery to them. When you do something with all your heart, it's a delight. Where your heart is, that's where your treasure is. That's what you love to do.

When you love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, what a life-changing experience! It's not just a form of religion. It's not just something you're doing because it's popular. You're doing it between you and God. It's personal. It's between you and God. It's your heart—loving God and experiencing the love of God. It's a powerful thing. The heart involves the center of your affection.

Another thing about loving someone with all your heart is that you're vulnerable. You're exposed. You have to trust that person to a very great extent to truly be able to love with all your heart. If you have some reservations, if you don't know if you can really trust that person, if you don't know if you can really count on them, if you don't know if they're really looking out for your best interest, and that they're going to do what's really right for you, you can't really love them with all your heart. They have to be real to you for you to be able to truly love with all your heart. You have to trust in God. You have to believe in Him. You have to know who He is. You have to believe His Word, His promises.

Jesus went on to say, "With all thy soul." If you want to read something that's really challenging, take a few minutes and read through *Adam Clarke's Commentary* on this passage of scripture: Matthew 22:37. His definition of love and what's involved is a very challenging thing to read. It's real. When you love with all your soul, you're willing to give up everything. You're willing to give your very life. You're not holding anything back.

It's all there. You're willing to be used of; you're willing to be inconvenienced; you're willing to be misunderstood; you're willing to be judged wrongly; you're willing to be mistreated. You'll want, with all your being, His highest glory and honor. "Love the Lord with all thy soul."

### **LOVE THE LORD WITH ALL THY MIND**

Next, "Love the Lord with all thy mind." You know, our mind is so powerful. The thoughts that we allow in our mind, the things we meditate on, shape us. They form us and direct us. When you think about loving God with all your mind, there's an intent there. You have to bring that knowledge of God into your mind. You have to know God. The more you know about God, the more you're able to love God. If you don't understand God's Word, His purposes, His ways, and your mind isn't focused on Him, thinking about Him, seeking Him, you're missing something. Yes, we have lots of things we have to think about. We have lots of responsibilities, but our mind needs to have time to focus on God. Love God with all our mind.

This is not in our text of scripture, but it is in Mark. It goes on to say, "Love the Lord thy God with all thy strength." Give Him your very, very best—your strength. You know, a lot of times we sell our strength, our energy, our work, or we use it for ourselves to gain the things that we want and need. We have physical strength. We have emotional strength and energy. There are different ways that we have strength. But, to love God with all your strength means to make yourself available to work for Him, to be used by Him, to be used for His purposes, to be willing sometimes to exhaust ourselves for the sake of the gospel, to not always be weighing what's reasonable. It doesn't always have to be logical. Sometimes we need to do more for God than what makes sense to most people, because if we love God with all our strength, it is available to be used for Him and by Him, and for His good and glory to accomplish something in His behalf; not just saving it up for ourselves, but that it's ready to be poured out and used up for God.

Jesus' answer to the Pharisees was a lot more than they bargained for. I think it was probably just a silence there. At least, that's how I envision it. They were just silent. They didn't have any other questions to ask. They had to be thinking through the import of what He said. It was the wisdom and the power of the very Son of God being there and expressing this great truth. It was so simple, but yet it was so complete. It was also impossible for them to do this in their human strength. We need to realize that, too.

You can't decide to do this just in your own human strength. You can't decide, "You know, I've heard this truth. I've read this in the Bible that God says 'to love Him with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength,' so I'm going to go out and start doing that tomorrow. I'll work real hard and focus on it." You can't do that. It's impossible for a human being to truly do this first and great commandment in his own strength. The reality is, people break this commandment.

I'd like to ask us this question this evening: Why do people break the first and great commandment? Why do we break that commandment? The Bible tells us,

“All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God”; but the reality is, everyone has broken this great commandment of God that He has given to the family of man to live by. He expects us to live by this commandment. Of course, we know that there’s a carnal nature in man. There’s a seed of sin that’s placed in man, and we know and believe that all have sinned. Man has come to the knowledge of right and wrong and has chosen to do that which is wrong. There’s a tendency to sin. There’s a tendency to rebel against God. Within mankind, there are tendencies to want his own way, to not be willing to accept the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

There’s an adversary we have. There’s not a lot of talk in the world today about the devil, our adversary, but we have an adversary. We don’t live in this world just doing whatever seems good to us, and some people choose right and some people choose wrong. There are forces that come into play which work on us. We have God as a force for good, but we have an adversary that’s seeking to destroy and to separate us from God. He uses that tendency towards sin to trip us up, to cause us to rebel against our Maker and Savior.

### **REASONS WHY PEOPLE BREAK THE GREAT COMMANDMENT**

Another reason why people break this great commandment is because of their pride. What does the Bible say about pride? God hates a proud look. Do you know why? Because it tends to separate people from God. The humble are the ones who can find God. How many of the Pharisees found God? Only a few. Those who found God were the common people, the humble people, the people who were willing to see themselves as they were, and to see Jesus Christ as He was. Pride causes people to think too highly of themselves. It causes them to put too much priority on their feelings, beliefs and desires, and to raise those above the plain teachings of Jesus Christ. They can read a verse that says, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength,” and decide it doesn’t really apply to them in that way. They don’t have to obey it. Maybe they can reword it. They might say, “They’re better than that.” The pride of mankind causes people to break this great commandment.

Selfishness is also a great evil that causes people to be unwilling to obey this commandment. If you’ll look at this first and great commandment, it attacks the very definition of selfishness. It’s directly the opposite. A selfish person is never going to be willing to do this. They’re not going to be able to love God with all their heart. They’re too busy loving themselves and their own ways. They’re too busy loving their own enjoyments. They’re not going to give all of that to God because it’s too valuable to them. They’re holding their selfish desires in the place of God. All about *me* fulfilling the desires of the flesh!

Another reason that people break this first and great commandment is because of ignorance. Some people just don’t know. They’ve never been taught. They didn’t have the opportunity from a young child to come in contact with the Word of God. They don’t understand what’s required, what God wants for mankind, His

creation, and they’ve heard conflicting things. They’ve heard messages and teachings that don’t require that you really have to obey the first and great commandment. That’s a sad thing. We’re called to be a light; we’re called to be a witness; we’re called to show people that better way, that great truth, the benefits of it, and the joy that it brings.

Another thing that causes people to break that great commandment is neglect. Just plain neglect. They’ve heard it, but they let it slip away. They’ve neglected to make it a priority. They’ve let down. It says in Proverbs “a little slumber, a little folding of the hands,” then what happens? Before you know it, the roof is falling in. That’s applicable to the Christian experience. Neglect causes people to lose sight of this great commandment. It is something that has to be maintained. It is something that has to be worked on. We need our attention to this. It is something that we have to love to obey.

How do you stop breaking this commandment? If you’re at a place in your life tonight and you realize “I’m breaking the first and greatest commandment that God requires,” how much more basic than that can you get? If you break that commandment, if you refuse to obey the most important thing as expressed by the very Son of God, there’s no other place to stand. If you fail to respect that commandment, there’s no Christianity, no matter what your profession.

A lot of people come to a place in their lives where they have and feel some need to be religious, to be aware of God, to have some contact with God so they endeavor to become religious. They start going to church somewhere. They go to church on Sundays. Maybe they start paying their tithes and make a profession of Christianity. They talk about God. You know, there are a lot of religions and a lot of religious people who like to talk about God. They talk about how God did this for them and how God does that for them. There’s a lot of self-improvement involved. They try to be better people. That doesn’t and isn’t enough to help you to stop breaking the first and great commandment. You need something more than that, because that effort in yourself to do better is not going to be powerful enough to make you love God with all your heart. Loving God with all your heart requires more.

### **YOU MUST BE BORN AGAIN**

The Bible tells us, and Jesus told Nicodemus, “Ye must be born again.” The center teaching of the gospel message is, “Ye must be born again.” What does that mean? You have to be born; you have to be brought to spiritual life. You were born with life, but you died. I said earlier that “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God,” and that brings spiritual death. It brings separation between you and God. There’s guilt on the human soul. You’re carrying a lot of guilt because you’ve broken the great commandment. You failed to love and serve God, and you are responsible for that, no matter how hard you try to get around it. That’s the truth of the gospel message. When you have that guilt on your soul, you’re not in a place to love God with all your heart. The first step is: you have to be born again. You have to find spiritual life from God.

We find spiritual life from God by coming to Him and repenting of our sins, by apologizing for what we’ve

done wrong, of humbly asking for forgiveness for Him to make us a new creature in Christ. That's the promise. He will take out that stony heart. That old stony heart can't truly love God. It can't put God first; but when you become a new creature in Christ, He puts in you a heart of flesh that can love God. Then you are able to do and fulfill the great commandment. You're prepared to love God with all your heart. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." That new heart is alive to God. It's able to be touched by the Spirit of God; it's able to feel God; it's able to know God, to know the joy of salvation and to experience all the wonders that God has to offer.

We're to also be filled with the Spirit of God, to be fully surrendered and consecrated to God in sanctification. Death to self. I talked to you earlier about self and how it keeps you from being able to love God properly. We need that death to self and that infilling of the Spirit of God to be able to truly love God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, and with all our strength. What a beautiful, beautiful plan God has made for us!

### CONSEQUENCES OF THE WRONG CHOICE

I'd like to take a few minutes yet this evening to speak to you about what happens to you when you choose to break the great commandment. Your whole life gets out of balance. God has created you with a

certain plan for your life. God has created you so that there's a way that you can be happy, a way that you can have a purpose, a way that you can have a blessed life, a way that you can go to heaven to be with Him eternally.

There's a plan, a path for all of us to follow. It's a wonderful plan and it leads to a wonderful place, but it is a narrow way. There's only one way to heaven; and if you get off that way, everything gets out of balance, because you're putting your priorities on the wrong things. You've broken the great commandment. You're putting something in your heart in the place that God is supposed to have. That place is reserved for God. God needs to be there. When you put something else in that place, your whole life is out of balance. The focus is wrong. Something is missing; and no matter how hard you try to fill it up, you're going to know and feel that something is missing. There's nothing else that just fits in the place that God has prepared in the human heart for Himself. You can put a lot of other things in there, but they don't fit right.

The Creator made you for a purpose. Living outside of that purpose is painful. You might try to disagree with that and say, "Oh, it's not painful," but I'm telling you, if you're honest with yourself, you'll know that it's painful. There's been a lot of hurt and pain suffered by a lot of people. All down through the ages, all around us today, everywhere you look, it's happening all the time. The unnecessary suffering and woe and guilt and pain that the family of man is living through is because they're breaking the great commandment.

The foundation of your whole life is unstable. You're unstable. You can't make the right decisions, because your heart's not right, your desires aren't right, so you're going to continually make wrong decisions; decisions that lead downward, that lead to separation, to anger, to bitterness, to pain, to separated families, to broken homes, to drugs, to addiction. All of those things that are coming upon the family of man are starting because the foundation is wrong. Something else is in the place where God is intended to be, and you've broken the first commandment.

What happens when you keep the commandment God has made? I like to think about Jesus when He was asked that question by the Pharisees. I think that's a question that He wanted to answer. He was anxious to tell that answer. He had a great answer. He had the answer that all humanity needed: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." When you keep that great commandment, life becomes so different. It's foundational. You've established your foundation for your whole life. It's like digging deep and building a good solid foundation for a building. Something that will withstand the forces of nature and time and everything that might be thrown at it, because it's a good foundation. This is so foundational.

Whenever you're keeping that great commandment, even when things are really bad, they're still good. "You know, that's counterintuitive," some people would say, but even when things are really rough in life, you have that center that holds. You have God in the center of your being. That love for God stands firm in your life and it gives you that foundation to go through whatever

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else you have to face in life. When you have that strong foundation, the storms of life will make you stronger. They'll make you a better person because God has the center of your life, the place that is His. When you grow and you learn, those things, a lot of times, happen through discomfort, through problems, through trials. That doesn't mean that there's something wrong with you. As long as you have that love for God, that heart that is putting God first, you'll be able to benefit from your trials. A lot of times, trials make us fit for service. They give us greater purpose, a greater living, and a greater sense of victory; and of course, we have a hope not only in this life, but a hope for eternity, because we have love for God with all our heart. I have a hope to be with Him forever. If you don't have that hope, the Bible tells us that you are of all men most miserable.

### CONCLUSION

I'd like to ask you a question: Are you breaking this great commandment? This is a serious question. It's not a man-made commandment. It's God-given. This is from the very lips of the Son of God who came into this world to live and to die for each one of us.

When we come to this point in the service, the Spirit of God is faithful in endeavoring to give you an opportunity to seek Him. We speak of that in terms of conviction a lot of times. *Conviction* is a feeling; an acknowledgment that there is something wrong in your life. There's something in your heart that's in the way of you obeying that commandment. It's not forced; it's not something that will pick you up out of your seat; it's not something that will break your heart and make you do what God wants you to do. It's simply an opportunity. It's God speaking to the human heart. It's the Son of God expressing His incredible love to you and asking, "Are you willing to love Me? I've loved you, I've known you, I've watched you, I died for you. Are you willing to fulfill the great commandment and love Me in return?"

It's also an opportunity for you to resist the power of the devil. Very likely you don't realize how much power the devil exercises over those who have something else in their heart where God belongs. Conviction gives you the opportunity to break free of that power. You can't do that in your own strength. You can't do it on your own terms. You need help to be able to break freely from that, but you need to realize that you have to make an active choice. You can't wait till God makes you get saved to become a child of God. Don't wait in thinking that some day God's going to make you obey the great commandment, because He's not. That's not the God that we serve. That's not our Creator, God. He has left that will, that choice in our hands. We have that responsibility. He gives us opportunity, but we have to choose. We have to be willing to do something to rescue ourselves; we have to be willing to seek God; we have to be willing to ask God; we have to be willing to come to God; we have to be willing to take that first step or we'll never be able to keep the great commandment.

You have to be willing to see yourself and acknowledge yourself as you are. You have to be willing to acknowledge your guilt. Acknowledge, "Yes, Lord; I have broken this great commandment that you gave me. You're my God, and I have failed to love you. I have

failed to give you my heart. When you said, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,' I failed to do it."

God not only wants our love, but there's no relationship possible between us and God in the absence of that love. There's no halfway. There's no, "Okay, I'll get better. I'll give Him some love." He won't accept that. That's not what He wants. He wants just what He asked for, just what He said was required. We must obey the first and great commandment. If you're here tonight and you feel the Lord is talking to you, I would encourage you to think of what that entails.

Sometimes I sit in church, I envision Jesus standing; if you do that, it can be a very powerful experience, especially when you see Him looking at you. It can be hard to meet His eyes. He has the power to see right through us, to know us intimately, and to know every detail of our heart. He doesn't have to wonder if we're keeping the first and great commandment. He knows that. He sees what's in the heart. If He's not there, He knows what we've put there in His place. If you feel Him talking to your heart, you have the opportunity. He'll help you. He'll meet you. He'll receive you. You'll find the love that you didn't even know existed. If you'll choose to obey the great commandment, you'll find life worth living on a plane that you didn't even know was possible. He will save us, protect us, and will take us safely home to glory. He will give us a beautiful life here and now.

We'll have a song at this time and give you an opportunity to come if the Lord is speaking to your heart and you feel in any way that there's a need in your heart and life. "Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment." Are you breaking the first and great commandment? †

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## DIFFERENT PHASES OF THE KINGDOM EXPLAINED

By the late H. M. Riggle

(From his book, *Christ's Kingdom and Reign*)

**I**N ORDER to obtain a correct understanding of the teachings of the Bible relative to the kingdom of heaven, it is necessary to understand it as set forth in its different phases. Nearly all Bible truth is set forth by different figures, and if it were not for the direction and guidings of the Holy Spirit, the Scriptures would certainly present a mass of incomprehensible enigmas.

Christ is represented by the figure of a "lamb" and a "lion," two very opposite natures. His mission was to bring "peace on earth," and yet He says, "I am not come to bring peace, but rather division." In Isaiah 2:4 it is said of His kingdom, "They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks." "And neither shall they learn war any more"; while in Joel 3:10, speaking of the same kingdom, it is said, "Beat

your plowshares into swords, and your pruninghooks into spears." "Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near" (verse 9).

These directly opposite statements, when properly understood, simply present different phases in the nature of the Lord's work. So with the general teaching relative to the kingdom of God. When properly understood there is no conflict, but beautiful harmony throughout. For example: In many texts it is said that the kingdom which Christ was to establish would be an "everlasting kingdom." "And he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end." Then in I Corinthians 15 it is said that following the resurrection and general judgment "Christ will deliver up the kingdom to the Father." The first have direct reference to the endless reign of Christ and the saints, which began during Christ's personal ministry on earth in the salvation of men and women from sin in the present kingdom of grace on earth, and will be continued in the eternal kingdom of glory above. For in this sense the kingdom of grace here—present—and the kingdom of glory above—future—form the endless government of Christ and the endless reign of His saints. The latter text has direct reference to that phase of the kingdom which refers exclusively to Christ's redemptive reign for the salvation of a lost world; therefore, there is no conflict of these texts.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is a doctrine. The entire message of the gospel is "preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God" (Acts 8:12). "The kingdom of God is preached and every man presseth into it" (Luke 16:16). "Go thou and preach the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:60). Many other similar texts could be given which show that the kingdom of God is expressed by the gospel in such a manner that the preaching of the gospel is said to be the preaching of the kingdom of God.

The work of salvation in the human heart is in many scriptures called the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven. I will give but a few texts out of many: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness" (Matthew 6:33). "The kingdom of God is preached and every man *presseth into it*" (Luke 16:16). "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation; neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, *the kingdom of God is within you*" (Luke 17:20, 21). It was in this sense that John testified that he was "in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ" (Revelation 1:9). And Paul declared (Colossians 1:13) that the Lord "hath delivered us from the power of darkness and hath translated us *into the kingdom of his dear Son*." And again, "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but *righteousness, and peace, and joy, in the Holy Ghost*" (Romans 14:17).

Of course, this phase of the kingdom is invisible because it is the internal work of the Holy Spirit and "cometh not with observation." But in speaking of that phase of the kingdom which is identical with the church of God as a visible working-force in the world, which was fully organized and established on the day of Pentecost, and there dedicated by a most wonderful outpouring of the Holy Spirit, Christ said to His apostles, "I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here, which

shall not taste of death, till they *see the kingdom of God*" (Luke 9:27). "Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have *seen the kingdom of God come with power*" (Mark 9:1). Here a distinct phase of the kingdom is brought out; namely, its identity with the visible organization of the New Testament church: and when thus understood, it will be easily seen that there is no conflict between those texts which speak of it as invisible and those which speak of it as a visible working-force.

In speaking of Christ's kingdom and reign relative to the work of grace and salvation through the gospel, to be accomplished in the hearts of men during his incarnation on earth; and even from the days of John the Baptist, when the gospel of the kingdom began to be preached; it is said that people *entered in* and enjoyed the blessings and favors of the kingdom of heaven.

But there is another distinct phase that must be understood in order to harmonize all the facts. This is the universal phase. It would appear from Hebrews 2:9 that when Christ ascended into heaven, He was then "crowned with glory and honor." Not only crowned a king to reign in the hearts of His people here on earth, but crowned "King of kings and Lord of lords." "Prince of the kings of the earth." Christ is now universal King—Lord of heaven and earth. Peter in describing this universal phase of Christ's reign and kingdom, says, "Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him" (I Peter 3:22). Paul speaks of this universal phase of the kingdom in the following language: "Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things" (Ephesians 1:20-22).

From this we see that the whole earth and universe is His kingdom. Therefore all sinners and evil men are now in His (universal) kingdom, but they exist as rebels against His throne, dominion, and authority. But this condition of things will not always continue. Christ will not always endure in His universal kingdom those who rebel against His law. Therefore at His second coming, "the Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matthew 13:41-43). This has reference to the final day of judgment, when the wicked will be banished forever from the universe of God's dwelling, and the whole domain of God will be occupied by the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom; and "all dominions shall serve and obey him." Then the righteous shall have an abundant entrance "into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (II Peter 1:11).

It is with reference to this universal phase of Christ's kingdom that Jesus spoke the parable recorded in Luke

19:12-27. Here, “a certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom.” Certain ones hated him saying, “We will not have this man to reign over us.” After a time the nobleman returned, having received the kingdom, and he then rewarded the faithful and punished the rebels. The application of the parable is as follows: Christ ascended into heaven—the far country; there He received the kingdom, or there was given to Him glory and dominion and power over all heaven and earth. His faithful servants on earth are the saved, or the church of God. Those who said “we will not have him to reign over us” are the ungodly who rebel against His authority and throne. His coming will be the second advent and the great day of judgment, at which time He will reward the righteous and punish the wicked.

Thus, we might go through all the different phases of the kingdom as presented in the Scriptures and find that when they are properly understood there is a beautiful harmony throughout, and that the very texts relied upon by millennial teachers for a future literal kingdom simply refer to some distinct phase of the glorious kingdom of Christ, established and in existence during the Christian dispensation. †

—Reprinted from January 1993 issue

## RADIO LOG

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Alvin A. Craig, Radio Minister

(Aired on Sundays unless otherwise noted.)

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83A Walkers Rd.

George Town, Grand Cayman

November 26-December 1, Lord willing

Bro. James Arch, Host Pastor

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Paniqui, Tarlac, Philippines

December 26-30, Lord willing

Bro. Rey Fabian, Host Pastor

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### 2020 JAMAICA CONVENTION

Lapland, Catadupa, St. James

February 25-March 1, Lord willing

Bro. Hezekiah Lamey, Host Pastor

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### 2020 HONDURAS CONVENTION

Sandy Bay, Roatan

March 31-April 5, Lord willing

Sis. Siggie James, Pastor

PLEASE PRAY FOR THE SUCCESS OF THESE MEETINGS!

## THE CHURCH OF GOD STANDS FOR

An eternal God	Psalm 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

## YOU SHOULD KNOW MORE ABOUT THE CHURCH OF GOD

Jesus bought it with His own blood	Acts 20:28
It has a good foundation	Ephesians 2:20
	I Corinthians 3:11
Christ is the Head	Ephesians 1:22; 5:23
	Isaiah 9:6
Christ is the Door	John 10:9
	John 10:1
	Acts 2:47
Only the saved are members	John 15:2-6
	I John 3:8, 9
Membership is offered to all	II Peter 3:9
	Revelation 22:17
Membership is rewarded	John 14:2, 3