

The Way of Truth

Vol. 78

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

No. 2



"In the
Strength of
the Lord We
Stand"

Theme of the 2019
Cayman Convention



**FEBRUARY
2020**



THE RIGHT HANDS OF FELLOWSHIP

“And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision” (Galatians 2:9).

IN THE PAST three years, there has been a spiritual move among some of God’s people to break down walls of divisions which have separated saints of God for years. A dialogue has been produced through which fellowship has been extended to saints of God formerly unknown to each other. There has been a definite presence of the Spirit of God felt by those so engaged and an unmistakable witness of God’s approval upon the present effort toward unity. Some have suffered persecution and rejection because they have dared to reach a hand of fellowship toward individuals and congregations which certain ministers refuse to sanction. In many cases, the animosity which exists has been passed down from former generations who had personality conflicts or misunderstandings. It is a shame that this condition has existed so long. It should be obvious to discern that the progress of the Church of God has been hindered by such. Some ministers preach unity but practice division, often having never met those whom they condemn.

The easiest thing to do is to let the status quo continue. I am plenty busy working within the fellowship of congregations with whom we have labored for decades. But there are other saints of God across this great country and around the world which I cannot ignore. As the late Charles W. Naylor penned in 1928 in his song, “The Church’s Jubilee”—

We reach our hands in fellowship to every blood-washed one,

While love entwines about each heart in which God’s will is done.

I cannot sing that song and withhold my fellowship from redeemed saints of God! That would be hypocritical. Jesus was burdened in His prayer as recorded in St. John 17:21, “That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.” I can’t get away from Christ’s desire for His church. Neither do I want to get away from it. But, to be sure, this mission of unifying the true Church of God is a daunting task. It could never be the work of one man—or a group of men and women for that matter—it can only be accomplished by the Holy Ghost. But the human agency does play a part. For God to be able to accomplish His will, people must be *willing* for Him to do what He wants to do—even if it goes contrary to our thinking—*especially* if it goes against our human reasoning.

The early church was convinced that the gospel was for the Jews alone. Peter had to be taught that salvation was for all men. We read in Acts 10:1, 2, “There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band, A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which

gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.” Peter had no knowledge of Cornelius. He did not believe a Gentile’s prayer could be heard in heaven, but God was going to show Peter something. Cornelius did not need Peter’s approval to be right in the sight of God. Every person needs a personal relationship with the Lord. An individual does not need my approval to be saved! He needs God’s approval. It doesn’t really matter if I approve or not. “Who art thou that judgest another man’s servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand” (Romans 14:4).

To take the position that the only way a soul can be saved is to repent at our local altar is foolishness! Whenever and wherever a soul meets God’s conditions, he or she is approved of God. The Lord meets with us and blesses us in our services, but He is not limited to one locality. For one group of men to think they have a “corner” on God is the depth of ignorance.

Back to Peter. He went to his housetop and fell into a trance. Acts 10:11-15, “And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth: Wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean. And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.”

The Spirit was also dealing with Cornelius to send for Peter. Peter went to visit Cornelius and proclaimed, “Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him (Acts 10:34, 35). A revelation from heaven! Peter was willing to change his thinking to line up with God’s thinking.

Now I want to state here that I do not believe we should necessarily fellowship everyone who professes to be saved. We cannot fellowship those who are living a life of sin, whether they claim to be Christians or not. “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them” (Ephesians 5:11). Neither can we fellowship those who have departed from the cardinal doctrines of the Bible.

That having been said, the basis for fellowship is the Spirit of God. “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God” (Romans 8:16). In 2017, when we met the saints from Mississippi for the first time, there was a definite witness that we had the same Holy Spirit and we enjoyed immediate fellowship. Our mode of worship was different, the order of service was different, but we had the same Spirit. We did not haggle over whatever we differed in. We were far more alike than we were different. We had a mind to work together. And so we did! Since then we have built a beautiful

ABOUT THE COVER

On our front is a collage of pictures taken during the 2019 Cayman Convention. A large group of young people attended and were blessed. Throughout this issue are testimonies from some who attended. The report begins on page 5. Thank the Lord for all the good that was done!

THE WAY OF TRUTH

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Vol. 78 February 2020 No. 2

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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—Gregory E. Tyler, Editor

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relationship, not only with the saints in Mississippi, but with others with the same vision and commitment.

To maintain fellowship, we understand there needs to be forbearance, desire for unity, charity, and a willingness to allow for diversity. We read in I Corinthians 12:4-7, "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal."

We don't have to be carbon copies of each other in order to get along. The emphasis is on *the same Spirit*. As we get to know each other better and develop greater confidence in each other, we give more credence to the thoughts and convictions of each other. Thus, with time we become more unified in areas of conflicting opinions. This is why Ephesians 4 places the unity of the Spirit before the unity of the faith (doctrine). We can't put the cart before the horse. We cannot demand total agreement in positions we take on every given topic before we have fellowship with each other. We first must endeavor "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3). This is possible only as we are able to meet the requirements of verse 2, "With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love."

Let us as the Church of God provide a united front to an unbelieving world. Let us forbear one another in love. Let us keep the lines of communication open. Let us endeavor to so live that the world may see that Church of God saints can "love one another with a pure heart fervently" (I Peter 1:22). †

TESTIMONIES OF THE CAYMAN CONVENTION

I would like to thank the Lord for the opportunity to be in the Cayman convention. I gained so much from being there. It was a blessing to have so many of the young people being able to travel together. We were able to grow closer to the Lord and each other. The Lord met with us in such a special way in each and every service. The singing was inspiring. Every message had a gold nugget, which challenged me in my Christian experience. One of the messages that stood out to me was spoken by Bro. Tim Crooks. His thoughts were taken from Ephesians 6:13, 14 ... "having done all to stand, stand therefore." God blessed his message in such a powerful way. He stirred my heart, in that there may be times I feel like I am struggling to move forward, but in these times I must stand still and know that God is with me. He mentioned the thought of "digging in"; and no matter how hard things seem, we never want to go back. We want to continue facing forward and dig in deep to the things of God. Through these times we are established and grow closer to Him. I can still hear Bro. Tim's words echo, "Stand, No Matter What, Stand!" I could mention many blessings I received from being in Grand Cayman. However, I'll finish by saying my life has been enriched because of this experience and I am truly on higher ground!—Sis. Valerie Shenberger

I'm so thankful for the opportunity I had to go to Grand Cayman to be in the convention. It was amazing to be able to make a trip that felt like a vacation, yet such a spiritual blessing. It was also a blessing to go with some of our local church family and create new bonds and see each other grow in our relationships with God. Every part of my experience was special. We stayed with a sweet couple we had never met before, but left feeling like we'd known them for years. It is wonderful to be a part of God's worldwide family.—Sis. Laina Martin †

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WINNING A CROWN

By the late C. W. Naylor



Part XVIII

When Sin is Imputed

SIN IS imputed only when there is involved the active or passive consent of the will to do wrong. In the last analysis, sin is always rebellion against God. It is choosing and willing that which we believe to be wrong, to be contrary to God's will or law. Nothing else is sin or can be sin under the New Testament definition. Sin always involves intentionality. It is always a choice of that which is believed to be wrong, and always discloses a wrong attitude of heart toward the right. The choosing of the evil may be done without consideration, or it may be done after consideration, but in either case the act is the result of choosing evil. Sometimes we do things with a good intent, and they do not turn out as we expect them to do. Sometimes we feel bad over the outcome, but we should not condemn ourselves as having sinned. God does not look at the outcome; He looks at the purpose. It is only when choice rebels against what we believe to be the will of God that we become sinners.

Sometimes there is a twofold intent in action—an immediate intent and one more remote. We may desire to see something accomplished that would be very good, and we purpose to do that good thing, but in choosing means to the end, we may choose that which is evil. This involves two choices—the choice of the end (remote choice) and the choice of the means by which that end is to be attained (immediate choice). Sometimes it is held that the end justifies the use of wrong means, or that it is lawful to attain the end by the use of any means. This is untrue. Both the immediate and the remote choice must be good, or sin is involved. Speaking on this point, Paul says, “For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner? And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come?” (Romans 3:7, 8). Here he plainly teaches that even though the object aimed at is good, if the means used are improper, a person is judged as a sinner. To do evil that good may come is evil in the sight of the Lord. All intent, therefore, that enters into action must be pure.

Effects of Sin

Sin affects moral relation and conscience, both or either. When moral relations are affected, these relations must be restored; and when conscience is affected, it must be satisfied. Acts sometimes involve the conscience when they do not change the moral relation nor violate any principle of righteousness; that is, a person may do certain things in good faith, not questioning their moral quality, either before or at the time of acting, but supposing them to be right, and *afterward* may come to consider them wrong. In such a case God does not impute the acts as sin, though the person may

sometimes feel as though he had sinned. To restore the spiritual repose under such circumstances, it is necessary only to satisfy the conscience. When moral relations are disturbed by transgressions, there must be such repentance and reconciliation as will fully restore these relations, at least so far as the transgressor and God are concerned. If fellow men are involved, they may refuse to be reconciled, but in such a case the sinner is clear when he has done his part to effect such reconciliation.

Three Ways to Sin

Under the New Testament there are three ways, and only three, to commit sin. These include everything that God counts sin. The first way is by the wilful transgression of a known divine law. John says, “Who-soever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law” (I John 3:4). When we give the consent of our will to do that which we know to be wrong, we sin. As already pointed out, things done by accident, under compulsion, or in any way except where the will is involved, where the will chooses to do that which it knows to be wrong, are not now imputed as sin.

The second way to sin is thus expressed by James: “Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin” (James 4:17). This implies a refusal to do what we know we ought to do. Such refusal involves the will. Things left undone through lack of knowledge of duty are not sin; things omitted because there is not power to do them is not sin. It is implied that we could do if we would, but that we refuse to do, that the not doing is because of choosing not to do, and not from any other cause.

The third way of sinning is by violating the conscience or by doing that which we believe to be wrong, outside of the things commanded in the Bible. Paul lays down the principle covering this when he says, “I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing unclean, to him it is unclean” (Romans 14:14). Again, he says, “All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence” (verse 20). “Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. And he that doubteth is damned [condemned] if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin” (verses 22, 23). According to the principle already laid down, an act is right or wrong according as the choice involved is right or wrong, and not according to the intrinsic value of the act itself. If we believe a thing to be wrong morally, no matter whether the Bible says anything about it or not, and we choose that thing, our choice is involved in a wrong way and becomes evil; and therefore the deed, since it gets its quality from choice, becomes evil.

These are the only three ways in which a person can sin according to the New Testament. In every case where sin is imputed, the act must be wilful; that is, a wrong or supposed wrong must be deliberately chosen. Nothing else is sin or can be. All conduct must be judged by this rule; it is the only true standard. It is an accurate and true standard, and never varies in its application.

The testimony of those who say that they are Christians, but that they sin more or less every day, implies one of two things—either that they are willingly and wilfully disobedient, and could obey if they would but do not do so from choice, or that God demands of them what they are unable to do even with the grace that He gives. Either is a serious charge, reflecting severely on man or God. If man can do right and will not, he becomes exceedingly sinful. He is an outright rebel, setting up his will before the will of God. If he says that God demands too much of him and that try as he will, using all the grace that God gives, he is still unable to be obedient, then he charges God foolishly. He charges God with being unjust; for God would be highly unjust if He should require of us that which we could not do. The man who says that he is a Christian and then admits that he sins more or less every day, must take one or the other of the horns of this dilemma. Let him look this subject squarely in the face; let him consider it in all its bearings; and then let him look up into the face of God and say whether he can be a Christian and sin in view of these facts, that is, whether he can continue sinning and at the same time continue to be a Christian.

When Christians Sin

The normal Christian life has already been illustrated from the Scriptures. It is not needful to repeat that here. I will, however, call attention to the picture drawn by Paul in the sixth chapter of Romans: “Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those who are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life” (verses 11-14, 18, 22). This is positive and explicit, and needs only to be read with care.

It is true that in this world we are surrounded by temptations and may sin at any time; but if we do sin, we are at once brought under condemnation. There is but one way to be absolved, and that is by repentance and confession. If we sin, God will never forget it; the record will not fade out of His book of remembrance; time will neither condone it nor remove its guilt. God’s “mercy endureth forever,” but mercy ripens into forgiveness only when there is penitence and confession. Impenitence greatly aggravates sin. It causes the heart to be hardened and finally to be set in an attitude of stubbornness and rebellion. Many times people sin and think that they will repent in some revival meeting some time later, and be restored to God. This is utterly folly. Repentance should be immediate. Neglect is always a form of rebellion. When a Christian sins, the Spirit immediately tries to bring him to repentance. If he refuses or neglects to repent, he is holding himself in a sinful attitude and may thus greatly increase his

sin. God is kind and merciful. He desires a reconciliation as much and even more than is possible for us to desire it. When one has sinned, the thing to do is to come to God in open-hearted confession. Form a habit of being open-hearted with God, of being on familiar terms with Him. Treat Him as you would your very dearest friend. He will always have mercy on our sins if we will be truly penitent and seek Him with all our hearts. He has said, “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 2:1, 2). †

BIBLE LESSON OF THE MONTH

SANCTIFICATION IN THE ATONEMENT

Scriptures: Exodus 29:20, 21; Hebrews 10:10, 14; John 17:19; Hebrews 13:12; Romans 8:29, 30, 32.

Exodus 29:20 Then shalt thou kill the ram, and take of his blood, and put it upon the tip of the right ear of Aaron, and upon the tip of the right ear of his sons, and upon the thumb of their right hand, and upon the great toe of their right foot, and sprinkle the blood upon the altar round about.

21 And thou shalt take of the blood that is upon the altar, and of the anointing oil, and sprinkle it upon Aaron, and upon his garments, and upon his sons, and upon the garments of his sons with him: and he shall be hallowed, and his garments, and his sons, and his sons’ garments with him.

Hebrews 10:10 By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

14 For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

John 17:19 And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.

Hebrews 13:12 Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.

Romans 8:29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

32 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

Memory Verse: Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.—Hebrews 13:12.

Aim: To show that it is by the blood of Christ shed on the cross that a person is sanctified.

INTRODUCTION

THE WORD of God reveals that the experience of sanctification was made possible to man by the death of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary. This being true, it is a matter which should engage the most serious attention of every soul, for anything that has connection with the blood of Christ is always of the greatest of importance and can never, with impunity, be treated lightly. This subject is offensive to the carnal man, but it is God’s plan, and He is not of a mind to change His plan. Man must change his if he desires to

live forever. But, oh, how hard it is for the unregenerated man to humble his heart and acknowledge the wisdom of God in all His doings! Heaven is a realm of beauty, purity, and peace. The elements of war, carnality and selfish aggrandizement cannot enter heaven; therefore, the human soul who makes it into heaven will have been changed from these things.

MEDITATIONS

SANCTIFICATION FORESHADOWED—Exodus 29:20—Take of his blood—After the fall in the Garden of Eden, God made the promise of Christ to the hopeless pair. However, He was not to be manifested until the end of time. But God instituted the practice of the sacrifice of animals, whose blood was shed as a symbol of the blood of Christ. He who believed the promises of God and carried out His commands had the approval of God upon him.

Exodus 29:21—Shall be hallowed—It was not the blood of the ram that hallowed Aaron and his sons. It was obedience to the will and Word of God. Again, the blood was a symbol of the blood of Christ, the perfect sacrifice that was to come.

SACRIFICE OF CHRIST SANCTIFIES—Hebrews 10:10—Offering of the body—Maliciously, the Jews sought to destroy Christ, but from God's standpoint, on His part, it was a sacrifice of the body of His Son, given in behalf of even those who crucified Him. No man receives the experience as an involuntary act, but rather as a result of faith. The doctrine of sanctification is greatly neglected, and thus the religious world is denied the blessings that flow from it.

THE POWER OF CHRIST'S SACRIFICE—Hebrews 10:14—Perfected forever—The sacrifice of Christ was of such magnitude that it never needs to be repeated, and those who are benefitted by it (if they continue in faith) are eternally perfect. Thus, sanctification fits the soul for its eternal home in heaven.

CHRIST'S EXAMPLE—John 17:19—Sanctify myself—Jesus said He sanctified Himself. He gave Himself. He gave His all freely. The purpose was not for His own benefit, but for us that we might be sanctified through the truth. Whoever fights sanctification is fighting the truth. Though we may not understand it perfectly, we can accept it as Bible and trust God who does understand. We can comprehend enough to get the experience to please God, and to satisfy our own soul. Then as more is revealed to us, it only enriches our souls.

THE BLOOD SANCTIFIES—Hebrews 13:12—With his own blood—How sacred this is, and how every man should praise and reverence God for His matchless gift of His Son! The experience of sanctification becomes of the greatest of importance in the light of this scripture. The great need of the people is sanctification, and the greatest price was paid to obtain it for them. This being true, it is for this life and should be sought and valued by every believer.

LIKE UNTO CHRIST—Romans 8:29—Image of His Son—The sanctified soul is in the image of Jesus Christ—a very high calling, indeed—even pursuing the work that He did while on earth; for we are told (John

14:12) that the believer will do the works of Christ and even do greater works than He did. Oh, how far short the religious world today falls in attaining to the plan of God! **Verse 30—Predestinate**—The predestinated is the “whosoever will may come.” Thank God, it is possible for any soul who desires it, to be delivered from the prison house of sin and the bondage of Satan!

NO LACK IN CHRIST—Romans 8:32—All things—Not only did the blood of Christ make the way for us to be delivered from sin and perfected in God, but also it purchased for us everything that the soul and body need in the long journey of life. These “all things” are given freely and abundantly in response to faith.

CONCLUSION

Paul declared in Ephesians 5 that Christ gave His blood to sanctify the church. We gain entrance into the church by the new birth; therefore, sanctification is only for the believer, because it can only follow regeneration. Abundant proof is given in the Scriptures that sanctification is purchased by the blood of Christ; therefore, it is our duty to set this teaching before the people with great earnestness.

R. R. Byrum wrote: “In full accord with Jesus’ prayer that those who are already converted should be sanctified are the words of Paul that sanctification is for the church, which is composed of only those who are regenerated. ... That this sanctification is not a consecration, but a cleansing of the heart, and not a purification of life is clear from the fact ... that the sanctification of men which God effects is always a cleansing of the heart. Men are exhorted to cleanse their own lives, or to be holy.”—*Christian Theology*.

Everyone who knows this truth should further acquaint himself with it and labor to interest others in it.

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

1. Why should we give serious attention to the subject of sanctification?
2. What did the blood of animals signify before Christ's coming?
3. What was it that hallowed Aaron when the blood of the ram was applied?
4. Describe the power of Christ's sacrifice.
5. Why did Christ sanctify Himself?
6. Of what value is sanctification to us?
7. What does it mean to be conformed to the image of His Son?
8. Where does your experience with God stand today? †

SUNDAY SCHOOL LITERATURE

For many years, The Way of Truth publishing work has provided Church of God Sunday school literature for many congregations. If you would like a sample of Bible-based literature and a price list, please request it. We have a six-year series of lessons. Each quarter we print quarterlies for Adults and Young People, Intermediates and Juniors. We also print leaflets for younger children. Write or call and order your sample today.

CAYMAN CONVENTION REPORT

November 26-
December 1, 2019



Theme: "In the Strength of the Lord
We Stand"

Scriptures: I Peter 2:6;
Ephesians 6:13

From notes by
Sis. Desiree Myers



UNITE a number of visiting saints from various congregations attended the convention of the Church of God (Universal) in Grand Cayman. Thank the Lord for the privilege that I had to be able to attend for the very first time.

The services were blessed by the Lord's presence. Thank the Lord for those who were saved and helped spiritually.

We really appreciated the kind hospitality that we were given by the saints of the local congregation. Indeed their kindness will never be forgotten.

Each morning prayer meeting was held at 6:30, with the exception on Sunday at 6:00. Exhortations were given by those in charge before we knelt in prayer in seeking the Lord's help for the day's services.

Below is a synopsis of the general services:

TUESDAY

10:30 A.M.—Speaker: Host Pastor, Bro. James Arch. Title: "Having Done All, to Stand." He used several scriptures, including those that went along with the theme. This full-length message begins on page 6.

7:00 P.M.—Speaker: Bro. Harley McClung from Craigsville, West Virginia. Title: "Behold, Jesus Is Precious." Scripture texts: I Peter 2:6-8; Matthew 7:24-29; John 3:16-21; Revelation 7:12. Excerpts: "Stand on God's Promises. Only in His strength can we stand. Live every day victoriously. Set your feet on the Rock. Let Him establish your goings. We need to believe even when we don't understand. The Bible is full of warnings. We need to take caution. If Jesus is precious to you, allow Him to be the Master of your life. We need to draw close to Jesus and keep His commandments. He will show us how to live the beautiful abundant life."

WEDNESDAY

10:30 A.M.—Speaker: Bro. Ray Hydes, minister of the local congregation. Title: "During Life's Storm, Jesus Is Our Refuge and Foundation." Lord willing, this full-length message will be printed in an upcoming issue.

7:00 P.M.—Speaker: Bro. Doug Shenberger from Hagerstown, Maryland. Title: "The Rich Young Ruler." Scripture text: Mark 10:17-27. Excerpts: "The rich young ruler ran to Jesus. There was a sense of urgency. Kneeling shows humility; worship. He was expecting to have to do something, but giving up his wealth seemed too big. He weighed the cost. He had hope, but then it was

taken away. Christ presented to him a message of hope, life, and abundance. For some people, there is one thing standing in the way of them and salvation. Christ sees and understands each individual."

THURSDAY

10:30 A.M.—Speaker: Bro. Leston Mann from Honduras. Title: "A Vigilant Soldier." Lord willing, this full-length message will be printed in a future issue.

7:00 P.M.—Bro. Harley McClung. Title: "Why Did Jesus' Suffering Please God?" This full-length message, Lord willing, will be printed in an upcoming issue.

FRIDAY

10:30 A.M.—Speaker: Bro. Timothy Crooks from Louisiana. Title: "Stand Therefore!" Lord willing, this full-length message will be printed in a future issue.

7:00 P.M.—Speaker: Bro. Duane Jeffries, minister of the local congregation. Title: "Jesus, the Ark of Safety." Scripture texts: Hebrews 11:7; I Peter 3:18-20; II Peter 2:4, 5. Excerpts: "Safety is protection from being injured. We care for our physical safety, but do we care for our soul? We're only safe with Jesus Christ. Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. The ark was a place of peace, security, rest, and hope. The ark only had one door. Jesus Christ is the Door to repentance. There is power in the blood. Jesus will never disappoint. He understands. All we have is an eternity-bound soul. When you no longer feel conviction, it is dangerous." Truly, this was an outstanding service.

SATURDAY

10:30 A.M.—A Diving Healing Service. Speaker: Bro. David Shaw from Jamaica. Title: "Jesus, the Great Healer." Scripture text: Psalm 103:3. Excerpts: "David made two comments in this passage: '*forgiveth* all thine iniquities; *healeth* all thy diseases.' Why did he mention iniquity in the first statement? It was all because iniquity will avoid God from hearing us. The Bible says, 'If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.' Sin separates God from us, so when we come to God, we must realize that we must first seek to be in His will, and then we can make our request known unto Him. We need to know in whom we believe and be persuaded that He is able to do whatsoever we ask of Him."

7:00 P.M.—Speaker: Bro. Doug Shenberger. Title: "It's Not too Late to Turn Around." This full-length message, Lord willing, will be printed in an upcoming issue.

SUNDAY

9:30 A.M.—Sunday school period was held.

10:40 A.M.—Speaker: Bro. James Arch. Title: "Can a Man's Mind and Troubled Heart Find Rest?" Various scriptures were used throughout the message. Excerpts: "Jesus Christ is the greatest role model we could ever have. He never sinned. He was humble, clean, loving, kind, and compassionate. His heart went out to people. He loves every one of us. The devil offers destruction. Jesus said, '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.' How many of us are really living the abundant life? We need to think about it sometimes. It's a blessing to have the

favor of God on us. God is here to help us. What a mighty God we serve!"

2:30 P.M.—A Young People's Service took place under the direction of Sis. Desiree Ebanks. Title: "Christian Men on the Battlefield for the Lord." A few young men spoke and a few testimonies were given.

7:00 P.M.—Speaker: Bro. Harley McClung. Title: "Persuaded." Scripture text: II Corinthians 5:10, 11. Excerpts: "One way we can let God down is not to be persuaded by His Word. Jesus came to persuade men that they're living against His will. They're on the road of destruction and it's not His will that they perish. We are in a battle and He has given us the armor to put on; not only the armor, but the artillery. He has given us His grace and power. There is no excuse to be led by the Word of God and be persuaded to it. *Persuade* means 'to convince with fervent reasoning.' Never a man spoke like Jesus Christ. He dealt with people on their terms so they would simply understand. There are some things that stand in the way of people being persuaded. Look at your soul; look at its value. Your soul is the most valuable thing you have. What Jesus did on Calvary's cross was so that He could win your heart." †

TESTIMONIES OF THE CAYMAN CONVENTION

I want to thank the Lord so much for the opportunity to go to the convention in Grand Cayman! The Lord was present in a very real way in every service. This wasn't the term of the meeting, but while I was there, the Lord reminded me to really pray for my friends and family that don't know the truth. My prayer is that they become unsatisfied with just a surface knowledge of Christ and desire to go deeper into the Word of God to find truth. Being in Grand Cayman was amazing! I met so many wonderful people that have such an inspiring love for the Lord. I'll never forget this trip!—Sis. Shanda Harris

One of the many things that made the Cayman Convention so enjoyable for me was the warm welcome the congregation there showed all of us. I had never met anyone there, but they treated us like family. From picking us up and the airport and dropping us off for the flight home, they were always so ready and willing to help us with anything we needed. This was so special to me that they took the time to really take amazing care of us and make us feel wanted at one of their busiest times of the year. There was not one time where I felt unwanted or out of place. It just goes to show that though God's children may be separated physically, we are still one in spirit through Him.

—Sis. Cassandra Gossard †

In the Strength of the Lord We Stand

2019 Cayman Convention Message by Bro. James Arch

I AM VERY thankful to be back here this morning and to see those of you who are here. I don't know whether I'll be preaching or not, but I'll just try my best to explain the theme of the convention. I wonder sometimes whether we should have a theme, but it's not a bad idea, I suppose, to concentrate on one main thought.

One verse of scripture of the theme is Ephesians 6:13. I would like to focus on the part of that verse, which says *and having done all, to stand*. "Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."

To really talk about "standing today" I guess it would take a long time in this service. Actually, the general thought behind this theme is to simply impress upon the people of God to stand true and loyal to Him and to hold up the standards of Christianity.

Before I go into the message, I'd like for us to approach this convention a little differently. This is the first day of our convention, and those of you who are from the local congregation here in Cayman will be able to verify what I'm going to say now—

I have been focusing toward worship and the presence of God in this congregation here. The congregation here is very vibrant at this time, and strong, if I would have to say so. We focus on the presence of God and a deep spiritual life. In spite of all that's circulating around in the world today, I've been able to keep this congregation that way. I told those in prayer meeting this morning that nothing here has changed, and you will be

able to notice what I have said. In fact, we have a number of young Christians in this congregation. I've baptized 17 since the last convention. So, I'll just like us all to think for a little while and reflect, shut out, the problems that we hear about in this old world today.

Reflect on God's goodness to us. Forget about our shortcomings and our faults. We all have some of them. Take our minds off our physical problems because they are many, too. No shortage of them. Just reflect on God and who we are, where He took us from, where we could have been if it wasn't for His mercy and goodness, and the blessings of His presence.

Think about Ephesians 6:13. As far as I am concerned, every Christian should have on the whole armor. Soldiers must have on the armor. What we have to focus on in that verse is the latter part of it: "... that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." Refresh your mind this morning and see yourself as a winner. Christians now have to stand strong. I tell this church here all the time: stand strong, not aggressively, but bold enough to tell your friends, your loved ones, your co-workers, your associates that "I'm a child of the King."

Ephesians 6:13 refers to "the evil day." Well, I don't suppose it could be more evil than it is today, but it's a lot more to it than that. It could mean some red seas in our lives. It might be some river you think is uncrossable.

The song says—

Got any rivers you think are uncrossable?

Got any mountains, you can't tunnel through?



*God specializes in things thought impossible,
He does the things others cannot do.*

It might be some financial problems you are going through, and they look like a giant. You can't see your way out. Those things happen, you know. It's a red sea. It could be the loss of faith in a spouse that you've been married to for years and years and years. Broken relationship! it hurts. How many of us will stand through these things? It could be a breach of trust in a friend. It could be a strong temptation to turn back. The devil is very real. We must focus on God and who we serve and what He can do. There are some things in life we can't do anything about. Only God can do it. We have to put God first if we're going to stand. "... and having done all, to stand."

Do you know that the young man Joseph had to run in order to stand, but he ran? He was put in jail, but Joseph stood loyal to his God. Thank God, this theme is not intended to hammer the church, but the very opposite: to thank the church. Listen to me very closely to what I'm saying. We need to commend the church for their stand, for their effort to take a stand for the Lord Jesus Christ in today's world. When you see a young person, or a middle-aged person, or an older person giving themselves to the Lord today, take good care of them. Love them; appreciate them. Sometimes I wonder if we appreciate the church enough and our leaders. Those who take care of your souls. We have to appreciate what God is doing. All of us could be mixed up out there and confused. God will see us through if we'll stand for Him.

Our theme, "In the Strength of the Lord We Stand," is to motivate and to encourage the church, to edify the body of Christ, and to continue to focus on the spiritual side of our lives. When we live a good spiritual, strong life, and come together, it's a blessing. We come prepared. You know, when I was growing up here, some of the old people used to go to church an hour and a half before time. I don't know if anybody is left here to remember them, but I remember some of them. They would go and sit down on the benches for two hours before church started. It's hardly done like that any more. Everybody is busy and going these days; but let me tell you something, when they had it, they had it. When you get a dose of salvation, it will hold you. It's going to hold you! Nothing in this old world is going to turn you back. No demon on earth can turn you back if you'll hold on to the Lord and stand for Him.

It is to remind ourselves that we don't have anything to be ashamed of. I tell this church here all the time to hold your head up high. You have the best thing in the world. You have the Lord. You have what millions and millions need and what they don't know anything about. Some of them haven't heard anything about what you have.

It is also to remind us that the race is between us and God. Doing the right thing is bound to end in victory. The other scripture of the theme (1 Peter 2:6) says that we shall not be confounded (confused). There's a lot of confusion in the world today. There are people who have turned their backs on religion because of what they have seen and experienced. Let me tell you, Christianity is a clean life. It doesn't have anything to hide.

It's a good life; it's a wonderful life. Jesus said He came that we might have life, and that we might have it more abundantly. How many of us are aspiring to that? We're all human beings, you know, and we all need to get as close to the Lord as we can. We'll never be God; we'll never be Jesus Christ. Some people think they are God in the world today, but that's not the case. There's only one God, but we can follow after Him and get as close to Him as we can. Paul said, "I follow after." God has so much for us.

I was telling my wife that I left here around 7:30 this morning after prayer meeting and I got caught in the traffic. I'm not accustomed to that in the mornings. What a thing it was! It held me up for a long time, too. I said to her, "Tomorrow morning, I'm going to take a different route." Oh, the pressure and stress that people are under in today's fast-paced world! I live two miles from here and it takes sometimes 45 minutes to get home. We have to do things to help us and to help ourselves to be able to stand, "and having done all, to stand." Yes, that's what we have to do.

This convention should serve to remind every one of us of the importance of the church to the world. You must not feel intimidated by the world. Hold your head up high! Thank God, you're a child of the King. You might not have a dollar in your pocket, but you're a child of the King.

*My Father is rich in houses and lands,
He holdeth the wealth of the world in his hands;
Of rubies and diamonds, of silver and gold,
His coffers are full, he has riches untold.*

*I'm a child of the King,
A child of the King;
With Jesus my Savior,
I'm a child of the King.*

It is our duty to defend the cause. Contend for it. That's what the Bible tells us to do. The world has become very alluring and very demanding. There are over seven billion people in this world who are vying for a little spot here. Did you hear what I said?

Let me tell you something, not everybody's mind is toward that which is spiritual. We're still very blessed here. We better hold the cause firm and strong so it won't get away from us. It can happen.

This convention should also serve to remind us that many are wrapped up in the secular and material things of life to the point where the spiritual receives little priority. I know it's easy to preach that, but it's another thing to try to carry it out. I still believe we can live for the Lord. If you're a child of the King, you can live the Christian life.

*I once was an outcast stranger on earth,
A sinner by choice, and an alien by birth;
But I've been adopted, my name's written down,
An heir to a mansion, a robe, and a crown.*

*A tent or a cottage, why should I care?
They're building a palace for me over there;
Tho' exiled from home, yet, still I may sing:
All glory to God, I'm a child of the King!*

The apostle Paul was a great man. I like to preach about him. Paul has been a role model for me. In all my young Christian years, I studied about Paul. I read a lot about him, and I still do. He was a great man. Paul lived a life, and when he turned his back on the world, he turned it. He never looked back. Nothing moved him. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? [He used the word *who*, and then went on to talk about the things.] shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" (Romans 8:35). Verse 37: "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." He also said, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (II Timothy 1:12). No one had to tell him. He knew on whom he believed. We must know.

I know that the Christian stand is seriously challenged today. The apostle Paul saw it coming. He told the young man, Timothy, to whom he wrote, "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables."

The sixth chapter of Ephesians is a lovely chapter. In fact, the whole book of Ephesians is a lovely book. It's the most doctrinal among Paul's 13 Epistles. It is a comprehensive summary of the Christian calling, doctrine, and the reason for his commitment. It seemed to have in mind a more general audience than the church at Ephesus, for it has a few references to that, although Paul spent about three years there. Chapter 6 is called, *The Young Convert Chapter or Section*. Let me tell you, Friends, this part of Ephesians—"for we wrestle not"—is not simple.

Paul used the word *finally* in verse 10 of Ephesians 6. He was closing out the chapter, but he might have been trying to say, too, that what "I'm going to say is just as important, or maybe more important than what I've already said." He said, "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." Verses 11 and 12: "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." There are those who are trying to bring down righteousness and Christianity. Those verses here spell out the Christian warrior's power. God's people are equipped. You must use your armor. We're equipped. We're soldiers on the battlefield.

Those verses also spell out the armor and the foes, of course, and the resources. In other words, the victories described earlier in the Epistle are worthy of the struggles outlined in that part of Ephesians. Hold on to it! In other words, maintain your ground, having done all we possibly can to stand. Sometimes the devil comes and makes you feel like you're not doing anything. He tries to tell you that you're not a Christian. All you

have done has failed and nobody cares. Nobody worries about what you say, etc. Let me tell you something, somebody is watching. Your life will affect somebody; and the Christian life is having a bearing on other people. One of the greatest ways of witnessing today is by testimony. Testimony, to me, is more stronger today than peaching.

To appreciate the call to stand, we must be aware of the atmosphere we are living in and the trend. Do you know what the word *trend* means? "The general direction of which something tends to move." Do you see where the world is going? Who wants to go back out there? Thank God for getting out. I see less of the world today than I have ever seen, and I've been out of it for over 50 years. When I was in sin, the world never even bothered me. It had no appeal to me. Thank God, I was raised up in a Church of God home by my father and mother. Let me tell you, what they taught me stayed with me. You must tell your children about the Lord and how to serve Him. The children need God. We live in a world today where anything goes looks like. Just anything goes! This is true. That's not what Christianity is about. Thank God for the old way of the cross.

*On a hill far away stood an old rugged cross,
The emblem of suffering and shame;
And I love that old Cross where the dearest and best
For a world of lost sinners was slain.*

*So I'll cherish the old rugged cross,
Till my trophies at last I lay down;
I will cling to the old rugged cross,
And exchange it some day for a crown.*

People these days can shack up and live with one another and still be church members. Excuse me for bringing these things in. This is not what the way of the cross is about. The human body has become an idol. Near nudity is now accepted as the norm around us. Don't be ashamed of the gospel of Christ. It's a beautiful picture to see people, especially young people today, who will stand up for the Lord and for the cause of Christ. Yes, modesty in dress is mocked by many today in the world. Pornography is bringing down Christians all over the world. Let me tell you something, Friends, God is greater than us. He is greater than our sins.

The grace of God is like a river. "Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved." Read Psalm 46 when you go home. It's a beautiful Psalm.

Music has become a god. People are trying to substitute the Holy Spirit with music. This is happening. Let us focus on God and what He can do for us. There is a decline in submitting to authority today. It's hard to lead in today's world.

Should the church go with the flow? The Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit sets the ground work from which our standing springs. If you'll look at the words of Paul from the fifth chapter of Romans, you will see in verse 1, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." This

is where the power comes from, Friends. Jesus Himself said, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." There is power in a Christian's life to combat the forces of wrong. God gives Christians power to combat these things. "Therefore being justified by faith, ..." In other words, being born again, being forgiven, being acquitted of your committed sins, you will then have peace with God. It's a peace that passeth all understanding. Paul goes on to say in verse 2, "By whom also we have access by faith into this grace [The old people called it 'standing grace.'] wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Get the power of God in your life. It's by faith.

Where does the Christian stand today? The Christian stands forgiven and blessed. "Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile" (Psalm 32:2). Paul went on to say in the eighth chapter of Romans, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." So the Christian stands at peace with God and at peace with his fellow man. What a pleasure it is to have the Lord in your life that you don't have to be bogged down with these basket loads of stuff in your heart! You can get them off. That's what the Bible says. "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses [those who made it through], let us lay aside every weight [every hindrance], and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith." The Christian stands out in the world. Thank God!

Do you know because of Paul and Silas' stand the jailer of that old jail was saved? Paul and Silas didn't run away when the prison door was opened. In fact, no one did, which would normally be the case; but you see, God was there. He opened that old prison. No one left. At midnight, Paul and Silas were awake and were singing praises unto God. What happened was, the guard saw something in Paul and Silas that he hadn't seen before. He knew something was on the scene. The guard said, "I want what you have. What must I do to have what you have?" You know the answer: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."

The Bible says that King Agrippa was almost persuaded to be a Christian because Paul stood his ground. I tell people all the time, this is not a talk show nor a stage show on the platform for four or five hours. This is a life.

Felix stood before the governor and he was convicted because Paul stood his ground. Felix said, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." But Paul didn't move. He held his ground. "Must Jesus bear the cross alone, And all the world go free? No, there's a cross for every one, And there's a cross for me."

David stood before Goliath the giant. He called David "a little stripling"; but David said, "Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied." David stood his ground.

It took strength and courage for Caleb and Joshua to say to those people, "We are well able to possess this land." I think twelve men went, but only Caleb and Joshua said, "We are well able to possess this land." Let me tell you something, we serve a mighty God this morning.

What a lovely and worshipful song!—

*O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder,
Consider all the works Thy hands have made;
I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder,
Thy power throughout the universe displayed.*

*Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee,
How great Thou art! How great Thou art!
Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee,
How great Thou art! How great Thou art!*

Think about who we are—little puny humans—but we can have audience with God. We can talk with God; we can commune with God. We can ask Him for what we need. If you make a mistake, you know it, but you can come right back to Him again like a child to his father, and say, "Lord, help me; forgive me." That's what the Bible says you can do.

The gospel is designed to help us to live a better life and to enjoy the trip. I do not believe that living for the Lord is a drudgery. It's an enjoyable life. What we need to do is to relax ourselves in the Lord.

Do you remember the little story I told you before? *A man came into a church at noon every day. He stood at the altar and said, "Jesus, this is Jim," and then left.* Ninety-nine percent of Christianity is sincerity.

You must not think that you're serving the Lord for your pastor, for your friends, or for your parents. You're serving the Lord for your own good. You're trying to make it through. You're trying to show the world that there is something better to have. If material things were the answer, many people here would be happy. Material things do not bring happiness. Nothing wrong with material things, but the soul of man is satisfied with the Lord. Only the Lord can satisfy the soul.

Jesus said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." "Must Jesus bear the cross alone, And all the world go free? No, there's a cross for every one, And there's a cross for me." Mark 8:36, "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

We're going to sing a closing song. If anybody needs help from the Lord, we'll be glad to help you. There are plenty ministers on the platform this morning. Remember what the Lord has done for you. Remember what He continues to do, and put your whole heart into His service. †

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THE POETRY PAGE

GOD'S WILL FOR US

Anonymous

Just to be tender, just to be true;
Just to be glad the whole day through;
Just to be merciful, just to be mild;
Just to be trustful as a child;
Just to be gentle and kind and sweet;
Just to be helpful with willing feet;
Just to be cheery when things go wrong;
Just to drive sadness away with a song,
Whether the hour is dark or bright;
Just to be loyal to God and right;
Just to believe that God knows best;
Just in His promise ever to rest;
Just to let love be our daily key;
This is God's will, for you and me.

REDEEMING THE TIME

G. D. Oldham

A minute spent in secret prayer
Is not a minute lost;
A moment spent in idleness
Will quickly prove its cost.

An hour you pass in righteousness
Is better, yea, by far,
Than many days in sinfulness,
No matter how they are.

A year that's spent in holiness
Will lasting treasures bring;
A lifetime of unrighteousness
Can yield you but a sting.

Oh, spend the years, and moments too,
For God, and faithful be!
Then you shall rise and be with Christ
To spend eternity.

THE BLESSING OF SONG

Anonymous

"What a friend we have in Jesus,"
Sang a little child one day;
And a weary woman listened
To the darling's happy lay.

All her life seemed dark and gloomy,
All her heart was sad with care;
Sweetly rang out baby's treble—
"All our sins and griefs to bear."

She was pointed out the Savior,
Who would carry every woe,
And the one who sadly listened
Needed that dear Helper so!

Sin and grief were heavy burdens
For a fainting soul to bear;
But the baby, singing, bade her,
"Take it to the Lord in prayer."

With a simple, trusting spirit,
Weak and worn she turned to God,
Asking Christ to take her burden,
As He was the sinner's Lord.

Jesus was the only refuge,
He could take her sin and care,
And He blessed the weary woman
When she came to Him in prayer.

And the happy child, still singing,
Little knew she had a part
In God's wondrous work of bringing
Peace unto a troubled heart.

ALL IN ALL TO ME

Daniel S. Warner

Who is my life but Christ alone?
I seek no joy beside;
His love and peace flow in my soul,
An everlasting tide.

What is my hope but Christ in me,
The hope of glory bright?
No one but Jesus set me free;
He only is my light.

Who is the church but Christ alone?
No other fold I need.
I live in Him, the living Vine,
His Word my only creed.

Who but my Savior died for me?
He only did atone
For all my sins upon the tree;
He drank the cup alone.

Who purchased me when lost in sin?
O Christ, Thy love I own;
O Lamb of God, my all is Thine,
I am no more my own! ✠

THE CHILDREN'S CORNER



THROWN AWAY

A Bible Lesson by Sis. Rebecca Bland

"Something smells good, Grandma!" I said as I walked into her kitchen one Saturday afternoon. "What is it?"

"I'm making potato soup," Grandma said. "What you smell is the onion I cooked in butter to start off with."

"Are we going to have the soup for supper?" I asked.

"Of course!" said Grandma with a smile. "It will be the perfect thing to have on a chilly day like this!"

"Everything you make is so good!" I said, giving Grandma a hug. "Did you learn to cook when you were a little girl like me?"

Grandma smiled. "Yes," she said, "I learned to cook when I was quite young. We had a large family, and we children all had to help out as much as we could."

"Did your mother teach you to make potato soup?" I asked.

"Yes, she did," said Grandma. "My mother was a wonderful cook. We were quite poor, but she could make a tasty meal even when the pantry was almost bare."

My grandmother paused, a faraway look in her eyes. I knew she was thinking about the long ago days of her childhood. Suddenly, she began to laugh.

"What are you laughing about?" I asked her.

"Let me tell you a funny story about a time when my mother made soup," Grandma said. I ran to pull a stool up to the stove so I could hear every word.

"It was summer time," began Grandma, "and there was a lot of traffic in our small kitchen. The door was constantly opening and closing, letting in flies and other insects."

I nodded in understanding. Since I lived on a farm, I was familiar with the constant battle to keep flies out of the house.

"My mother was at the stove, making soup," continued my grandmother.

"What kind of soup was it?" I wanted to know.

"It was beef and vegetable soup," said Grandma, "and it smelled so good! But do you know what? We never got one bite of it!"

"What happened?" I asked.

"Well," said Grandma, "a bug flew right into that good soup and buried itself among the vegetables."

"Couldn't you just take the bug out and still eat the soup?" I asked.

Grandma laughed. "Of course," she said. "And that's what my mother intended to do. First, she took her big spoon and fished around for the bug. After a few min-

utes, she realized she wouldn't find it that way, and so she grabbed a big strainer and asked me to hold it over the trash can while she poured the soup through it.

"As the soup broth ran through the strainer, my mother searched through the vegetables for the bug. Suddenly, she saw it and grabbed it with her spoon. 'Aha!' she exclaimed. 'I found it!'"

"But she was happy for only a moment until it dawned upon her what she had done. In searching for the bug, she had poured the soup into the trash can. All that was left was the bug and a few soggy vegetables."

Grandma and I laughed as she finished her story. It was a funny mistake—throwing out the soup to save a bug.

But the sad reality is that people do something much worse than this every day. They throw away what is good in search of things that will end up hurting them. They throw away their parents' good advice in their search for excitement. They throw away the commandments of God in their search for satisfaction. After their search is over, they are left with regrets that are much uglier than any bug.

Our wise saying this month comes from Proverbs 4:13, which says, "Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go: keep her; for she is thy life." By the word "instruction" the writer of Proverbs means the godly teachings we find in the Bible. We must take hold of those godly teachings and keep them close to our hearts. We must never trade them for anything the world has to offer. God's Word will never lead us down the path to disappointment. It will bring us happiness in this life and eternal blessings in heaven.

Activity

Some of the best instruction you can find in the Bible comes from Jesus' "Sermon on the Mount." How much do you know about this sermon? See how many of the following questions you can answer.

1. Where in the Bible do we find the "Sermon on the Mount"?
2. Where was the "mount" from which Jesus gave this sermon?
3. The first part of the sermon begins with a series of statements that begin with "Blessed are ..." What is this section of the sermon often called?
4. In this sermon, Jesus talked about salt. What did He say about it?
5. In this sermon, Jesus talked about birds and flowers. What did He say about them?
6. In this sermon, Jesus told a story. What was it about?

Answer to Last Month's Activity

1. "Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also" (Matthew 5:39).
2. "Do good to them that hate you, and pray for them ..." (Matthew 5:44).
3. "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them" (Matthew 7:12).
4. "If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat ..." (Romans 12:20). †



Greetings, dear Young People!

I am amazed how God can take something that is little, use it, and turn it into something of better value. Sometimes we can say or do something very simple and basic, and God can use these words or actions to change someone's life. That is what a

Christian is called to do, isn't it? To do good works; to speak words that edify. Too many people in the religious world think that their standard is what makes them godly. Don't misunderstand what I am saying; standards have their place in the life of a Christian, but they do not make us more like God. Our hearts, words, and actions make us more like God. The Bible says, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." Let us try to do our little part in spreading God's light in this dark world. People in the world need to experience God's love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, etc. Until they give their hearts to God, we (God's people) can be the channel through which they can see God more clearly. May the Lord help us!

This month, we have a sermonette written by a godly young man in our congregation, Bro. David Martin. He and his wife, Sis. Laina, are always busy helping others. I have a lot of respect for this couple. May the Lord richly bless them in all they do!

May the Lord guide your steps.

With love,
Sis. Crystal Gossard

WHAT ARE WE SAYING?

By Bro. David Martin



FEW MONTHS ago, back in December, I was doing some renovations at my house. At that time I was working on the mantle above the fireplace, and I was struggling to find the right piece of wood to go across it. I mentioned it to my uncle and he said, "You know what? I think I have some wood for you in my basement that might work!" and sure enough, it did! So I got it, put it together, and mounted it up, and I asked him if he and my aunt would come over some Saturday and see how it turned out. They came over and we were sitting there talking about it, among other things, and Aunt Becky said, "Oh, by the way, tomorrow I have the children's lesson, and being as it's so close to Christmas, my plan was to ask the children, 'What would you say to baby Jesus if you were given the chance?' I thought maybe I'd ask some adults also to see what they would say, and I'll read it to the children. So, if you wouldn't mind, just jot something down."

At first, I thought it would be easy. I have so much I'd love to tell Jesus. Then I started to realize the actual magnitude of speaking to baby Jesus in person! To kneel



down at His manger, to look into His eyes, to reach out and feel Him squeeze my finger. To know those hands would later have nails through them to hold Him to a cross to pay for my sins. What could I say? I would feel so unworthy to even look on His face. What could I say to Him?

After much thought, I decided I would say, "It's my desire to be by your side, baby Jesus, every chance that I get, because you have always been by mine." Then I had another realization. Jesus is always by my side. He's always watching, always listening. I had just been struggling to figure out what I could say to Him, what was worthy of me to say to Him, but I am telling Him things all the time! My attitude on situations, my outlook on life, the places I go, the way I talk to people, things I spend my time on—these are all ways I am talking to Jesus! This understanding has really drawn me closer to God, because I have become aware of the messages I have sent Him in the past.

For example, I was at work a few months ago. It was the end of the day and I clocked out, started for my car, and a thought crossed my mind. A little while before that, I had pneumonia and one of my co-workers did also. On this certain day, I walked right by him on my way out and headed towards the door to leave. I thought, "You know, I should ask him how he's doing, because I remembered he had pneumonia, too. Maybe I should see if he's better completely." Then I thought, "No ... it's late, and I've already clocked out." I don't know how some of you are, but after I clock out I'm ready to get home. Then I thought, "What am I saying to Jesus? I pray in the morning, 'Lord, let me be a shining light for you, let me be an example to others.' How am I shining my light if I would just rather go home than talk to this man and show him I care?" So I went back in there and said, "How are you doing? I heard you had pneumonia." And, wouldn't you know, he sat down right there on a skid, and we had a really good talk together. And I walked away with a blessing! He poured his heart out to me. If I hadn't gone back in, I would have missed that blessing! Like it, or not, I was going to say something to Jesus that day, whether it was good or bad.

We have many examples of what people said to Jesus through their actions—things that made Him smile—things that grieved Him.

Acts 16:19-34: "And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the marketplace unto the rulers, And brought them to the magistrates, saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, And teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans. And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them. And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely: Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks. And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and imme-

diately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed. And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled. But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here. Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house."

Paul and Silas were in quite a situation weren't they? Beaten, thrown in prison, and sitting with their feet in stocks making them very uncomfortable. I'd say they had a huge load on their shoulders, wouldn't you? They had a heavy burden trying to crush them and their spirits. How long would they be there? Would they catch diseases? Would their wounds get infected? Would they be killed? We have burdens, too, don't we? Some bigger than others. Some for healing, some financial, some for situations that we fear what the outcome may be, some for souls. I remember a burden I used to have for a lost loved one of mine to be saved. Thank God, He lifted that burden!

But sometimes our burdens are oh, so heavy! We know God said He'd help us, but we just don't know if we can make it. We feel so down, we start feeling like we don't even have the strength to even go on. Maybe we start missing a little work ... Maybe we even start missing a little church ... we feel so down that we can hardly stand it. But do you know how we could also handle the situation? We can get up. We can start reminding God of His promises:

Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

Romans 8:37, "We are more than conquerors through him that loved us."

Psalms 55:22, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee."

Psalms 23:4, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me."

That's what Paul and Silas did, isn't it? At midnight they sang praises to God. They told God, "We are not afraid. We are trusting in you because we know you have promised that you'll never fail us! We know you'll deliver us out of this situation!"

Saints, we must be like Paul and Silas! Yes, we may have a big burden. We may be robbed of our hunger, even. We may start to get weak physically, but spiritually, we can be strong! Ephesians 6:13, "Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." We must stand! Stand firm! Jesus liked what He heard from Paul and Silas, and He smiled on them, didn't He? In answer, He used a mighty earthquake to shake that jail and set them free. The very jailer that

was keeping them in there, ended up feeding them, tending to their wounds, and had Paul and Silas baptize him and his family! What a great God we serve!

What are we saying to God about our burdens? Are we standing on His promises and trusting Him to see us through? Or, are we letting them get the best of us? May the Lord help us to believe His promises and show Him that we believe, so that we may have victory over our burdens and see our prayers answered.

Let's turn to Luke 10:38-42: "Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

There are two examples here. We have Mary, who is all about Jesus. She didn't care what else she had planned for the day. She was content just sitting at His feet, listening and learning. That told Jesus, "This person cares about you. You are most important to her." Then there's Martha. Now I'm sure she was happy. I'm sure she was excited that Jesus had come to visit, but she got caught up in her work, didn't she? She got nervous that the food preparations wouldn't be ready and she decided that her work was a little bit more important than listening to Jesus. The thought: it makes me shudder to even think about saying something like that to Jesus after all He's done! But sadly, I'm afraid it's happened before.

A few years ago, I worked at Freightliner. I was on day shift, but a co-worker abruptly quit. My boss came to me and told me he needed me to cover this shift for him, if I didn't mind. I said, "Sure, what shift is it?" He said, "Sunday to Wednesday, 7:00 a.m.-5:30 p.m." I thought, "You know, I've gone to church every chance I could get my whole life. I'm strong. God knows I love Him. I can take this shift for a while. I mean, God wouldn't want me to not move up in my job, would He? He wants us to make something of ourselves to succeed in life." So I took the position. But as time went on, I found myself slowly losing some of my fire for God; my candle started getting a little bit dimmer. I almost lost my desire to be at my watch post, to come to church every time I possibly could. I still remember kneeling at the altar one Sunday, and Bro. Greg came to pray with me. I told him, "I don't understand why my shift hasn't changed. I've been praying and asking God to change it, but it just hasn't happened!" Bro. Greg said, "Well, maybe you need to change your job." That thought had never even crossed my mind. I never thought that I would actually need to change my job for God, but that was the case, and I didn't realize it. I thank God that He was able to open a door for me, and I was able to switch jobs, making it possible to come to church more. Since that's happened, I've grown so much closer to God. Why had my relationship with Him gotten so much weaker? It was because, through my actions, I

was telling Jesus I loved Him, but I just wasn't going to be able to give Him all of my time on Sundays, and that work was just a little more important. In reply, I feel He told me, "I really love you, too, but I'm not going to allow you to be as near to me as you could have been." What are we saying to Jesus? Does He smile when He looks down on our lives, or do we sometimes cause Him grief?

It's only been in the past year that I've been really able to have a strong relationship with God in my devotions. This is a result of my realization of our actions being a way of speaking to God. I pictured myself getting up in the morning before going to work. As I came down the hallway, I pictured Jesus sitting there on the couch waiting for me, waiting for me to talk with Him and pour my heart out to Him and tell Him how much I loved Him. I walked right by Him and started my coffee brewing. He still sat there, hopefully and patiently, waiting for me. While waiting for my coffee, I pulled my phone out and browsed the notifications I got the past night. Jesus was still waiting on me to talk with Him. I grabbed my coffee, put in some creamer and down the stairs and out the door to work I went. I pictured tears running down the face of the One who gave His life for me. All He wanted was for me to talk to Him for just a few moments. He wanted to bless me. He wanted to let me know He'd be with me all day, and that He'd protect me from harm or trials that would come my way that day. *If I'd only ask Him*: this thought has given me a firm desire to never let a morning go by without first and foremost kneeling before my heavenly Father. In doing so, I am saying to Him that He's important enough for me to take time out of my morning to pray to Him and how I don't want to go through my day without talking with Him first in the morning ... How rewarding it is!

In conclusion, I'd like to thank you, Aunt Becky, for asking me to help do a little part in your children's lesson, not because you needed my answer, but because I needed your question. God knows what we need, and I have grown immensely from this stepping stone.

May God help us, in every aspect of our lives, to tell Jesus what He wants to hear so we may be more victorious and be able to have a closer walk with Him.†

TESTIMONY OF THE CAYMAN CONVENTION

I am thrilled that I had the opportunity to travel to Cayman! The whole trip was full of wonderful experiences, but one thing that stood out to me in the services was Bro. Leston's message. He used this verse: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8). I don't remember all of what he said, but he gave some striking descriptions of the Christian soldier that really inspired me: "Watchful—a valiant soldier is alert and cautious, guarding against danger from temptation and a lack of enthusiasm for God's kingdom. Heedful—a valiant soldier listens to warnings and advice from those who are wiser than he, and seeks to walk circumspectly in the path of God." Finally, "Careful—a valiant soldier is careful to treat his parents with reverence and respect. He is careful not to say anything that is hurtful or unkind about others. The valiant soldier is also careful to show courtesy and friendliness to others, especially those who seem uncomfortable or shy ..." With the Lord's help, I am determined to be a loyal soldier as long as I live. —Sis. Lauren Swain

A Great Work in the Day of Small Things

2019 Hagerstown Convention Message
by Bro. Darrell Sanford



WE ARE going to look at some things from the church as it came out of Babylonian captivity, and take about three points here, if we have time, and take what we can get from these three points.

The title of our message today is, "A Great Work in the Day of Small things." I will be referring to the entire fourth chapter of the book of Zechariah in this message. For now, the Lord is saying in verse six of Zechariah, chapter 4, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."

We need the Spirit of God if we're going to accomplish the work of God. I believe, Brethren, we're in a building time. I believe we're in a reconciling time. I don't believe it's just any time, I don't think it's just a bunch of people getting excited, I don't think it's a bunch of people trying to read something into something, because I see the hand of God moving. We saw Bro. Goble standing in the pulpit and preaching this morning. He wasn't doing that a couple years ago. I preached here a couple years ago. Bro. Moncrief preached here last year. People are coming together. They have a desire to come together, not with just anything, but with the true church of the living God. God is going to have it. It must be a "striving together for the faith of the gospel."

What are we striving together for? *The faith of the gospel*. As the brother said, "We're not striving together to be unified; we ought to be unified." But the devil has done a work. He has caused some separations and has worked hard at it. He's worked for over 100 years trying to tear people apart, trying to bring in divisions, and trying to set landmines on us. We ought to be working for souls. The church is here to work for souls. The church is here to see the lost saved. That's what we're here to do. We're not here to strive to be one. The works of grace make us one. We are one, but we're not one.

God's church is great. God's church is one. The Church of God is going on. She's not destroyed. She's not going to be destroyed, but she goes through some battles sometimes. Just a few years ago, I was kept from you, and you were kept from me, and it's not that way any more. I'm not going back to being kept away. I'm never going back to that. As a matter of fact, we're going on to more and better. We've had good things, but God has good things for us. So we're looking forward to it.

Now, we're going to come back to Zechariah, chapter 4, a little later, but let's just lay a little ground work here for where we're going. We're going to look at these three waves of return to Jerusalem out of Babylon. So here's a little history in setting the stage up to where

we just read. In Zechariah 4, God was trying to give them a boost to get them going again. They had made a good start, but they had not finished the work, and that's what Zechariah 4 is about to get them to do, so we're going to do a little background to bring us up to that.

The Jews were carried away into Babylon in three waves. We'll describe them briefly. These dates may be a little off and a little different:

The first wave, 605 B.C., would have been the captivity in which Daniel was carried into Babylon.

Some years later, around 597, there was another carrying away of them, in which Ezekiel was caught up in, so you kind of see the timeline here.

Then, around 586 B.C. (I believe that date is firm.), was the last one in which the temple was destroyed and the rest of the people were carried away into Babylon.

THE WAVES OF RETURN

Now, they also returned in three waves:

The first wave, around 536 B.C., was the one that was led by Zerubbabel, which is what we're dealing with right here.

The second wave, around 457-458 B.C., was led by Ezra. Ezra came to teach the law, to reaffirm the law. At that point, that was about 60 years after Zerubbabel.

Then, the third wave, which was about 13 years after Ezra, was led by Nehemiah. That's when he came back to build the walls as we know about. We hope to be able to look at all of these.

This first wave, in 536 B.C., was led by Zerubbabel. Zerubbabel was the governor. Joshua was the high priest. It's estimated that somewhere between 42,000-50,000 people returned out of Babylon at that time. That was the first wave that came out and they began building. They came back to build the temple. That story is told in Ezra, chapters 1-6. Obviously, we're not going to look at all of that.

The result of their return was that the temple was completed in 516, which was 70 years after it was destroyed. Most of you are familiar with that time period, etc., so 70 years after the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, Zerubbabel and these brethren returned and built it. It's amazing to me that there were around 50,000 people that came out of Babylon. Do you know everybody didn't come out? I think probably around 10% of the people actually returned to Jerusalem. The rest got comfortable in Babylon. They had good living. They had built houses and settled down. They were comfortable where they were at. They were making good money and enjoying life. They didn't want to go back to that old dusty place out there and do all that work to have to set things up again. But, thank God, the 10% or so that we know as *the remnant* returned. Everyone did not want to go. Some were quite comfortable, but the remnant kept their vision that Jerusalem and the temple were more than a place to worship. It was *the* place to worship. It was God's anointed place to worship. It was designated by God for His people to be at Jerusalem.

Let's look at Ezra 3. We're just going to try to come up to this point to lay the background work to where they're at in Zechariah 4. So we're just going to be

catching a few thoughts here concerning their return from Babylon. Ezra 3:1, "And when the seventh month was come, and the children of Israel were in the cities, the people gathered themselves together as one man to Jerusalem." Thank God! You can't miss it, can you? They "gathered themselves together as one man." Verses 2 and 3: "Then stood up Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and his brethren the priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and his brethren, and builded the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings thereon, as it is written in the law of Moses the man of God. And they set the altar upon his bases; for fear was upon them because of the people of those countries: and they offered burnt offerings thereon unto the Lord, even burnt offerings morning and evening." So we see that they have come here, they have returned, and now they're setting up this altar to offer offerings to God.

Ezra 3:4-6: "They kept also the feast of tabernacles [They're trying to re-establish some things here.], as it is written, and offered the daily burnt offerings by number, according to the custom, as the duty of every day required; And afterward offered the continual burnt offering, both of the new moons, and of all the set feasts [What's going on here? They're trying to re-establish proper worship in Jerusalem.] of the Lord that were consecrated, and of every one that willingly offered a freewill offering unto the Lord. From the first day of the seventh month began they to offer burnt offerings unto the Lord. But the foundation of the temple of the Lord was not yet laid." That's what they returned to do. They wanted to rebuild the temple, so they made it back. Joshua the priest and Zerubbabel have built the altar back, and they're offering sacrifices. They're starting to keep the feasts, but the foundation has not been laid for the temple. It's important that the temple be rebuilt, is it not?

Ezra 3:10, 11: "And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites the sons of Asaph with cymbals, to praise the Lord, after the ordinance of David king of Israel. And they sang together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the Lord; because he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid." This is the place of worship, Saints. We don't have temple worship, so we have to get our minds wrapped around what this is. This is where they came and communicated with God. This is where they came and had their sins taken care of.

Let's look at verses 12 and 13: "But many of the priests and Levites and chief of the fathers, who were ancient men, that had seen the first house [Solomon's temple], when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice; and many shouted aloud for joy: So that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people: for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off." What's going on here? What a situation we have! We have people shouting, we have people crying, we have people remembering what's going on, and people having joy.

What were they crying for? They looked at this temple and it wasn't near the scale as Solomon's temple was. It was smaller than Solomon's temple, so that's why these people were weeping because they saw it and remembered the grandeur of Solomon's temple. They were weeping, but the other people were rejoicing in it. So we have this cacophony of weeping and rejoicing all going on at the same time. It's a smaller situation as what we have. We're going to see that, even though it was not as grand as Solomon's temple, there was something very special about this temple that really placed it heads and shoulders above Solomon's temple. We will get to that in a moment.

The foundation of the temple has now been laid, and now it's just, gun it and go, right? We would think so; but there was an enemy, wasn't there? Everybody didn't want to see the temple rebuilt. Ezra 4:1-3: "Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the children of the captivity builded the temple unto the Lord God of Israel; Then they came to Zerubbabel, and to the chief of the fathers, and said unto them, Let us build with you: for we seek your God, as ye do; and we do sacrifice unto him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assur, which brought us up hither. But Zerubbabel, and Jeshua, and the rest of the chief of the fathers of Israel, said unto them, Ye have nothing to do with us to build an house unto our God; but we ourselves together will build unto the Lord God of Israel, as king Cyrus the king of Persia hath commanded us."

What do we see here? What were they doing? They were bringing heathens into the country with their false gods. Well, that's what these people were doing. They were coming in and saying, "We want to be a part. We want to help build." Sounds kinda of cruel, right? "No, Sir, you're not having anything to do with us." This thing has to be kept pure. Just anybody can't participate in this work. You have to have the true religion to build the true Church of God. It can't be built on falsehood. You can't build it with the wrong doctrine and the wrong spirit. You have to have the Word and the Spirit right in your life if you're going to build this thing. Truth and error do not mix, Saints of God. We cannot build the house of God with falsehood. There are lines that you have to draw. People can be in error and be wrong and have the right spirit. They can overcome their wrongs. People can be in error on all sorts of things. We can say that we're wrong about something and admit some things. If we can't admit being wrong when we're wrong, we're never going to get any help. So people can be in error on something, but the thing is, are they willing to change their error when they find out that it's error? To make a long story short: they got their work shut down. Basically, they used the government to shut down the temple building.

16 YEARS LATER ...

We are going to fast forward 16 years. After they laid the foundation of the temple, it was left off building for 16 years. Ezra 5:1-3: "Then the prophets, Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied unto the Jews that were in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, even unto them. Then rose up Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and began to build the house of God

which is at Jerusalem: and with them were the prophets of God helping them. At the same time came to them Tatnai, governor on this side the river, and Shethar-boznai and their companions, and said thus unto them, Who hath commanded you to build this house, and to make up this wall?" The point here is: these people that had come and tried to shut them down, there came a time when God raised up Haggai and Zechariah to speak to Zerubbabel and to Joshua, and say, "It's time to get this ball back rolling again." Here's the thing: They said, "Well, what's changed? The government is still involved and they still have their enemies." I'll tell you what changed: God set a time to get things going again. That's what changed. God said, "Now is the time to do it, and don't worry about what these other folks have going on. I'll get to them." That's what we're going to get to with our vision here in just a moment.

What do we see here? We see the work returning. They returned. They've laid the foundation of the temple, and the work stopped on the temple, and now God has said, "It's time to get things going again." So what we've just read in Ezra, we're fixing now to actually pick up in Haggai, basically how it came to past how Zerubbabel said, "OK, it's time to start." Haggai 1:1-6: "In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, in the first day of the month, came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet unto Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, saying, Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not come [Why? Because they had opposition. There were things that were hindering. They had gotten shut down because of opposers.], the time that the Lord's house should be built. Then came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet, saying, Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste? Now therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways. Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes." Haggai is preaching to the people these things. Verses 7 and 8: "Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways. Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the Lord."

Saints of God, let me encourage each one. Are we willing to go up to the mountain? God says, "Do you know what you need to do to get this house finished?" He said, "You need to go up to the mountain? That's where the good material is; that's where the wood is that you need." Saints of God, we have to go up to the mountain. We have to get up in the high place. Bro. Goble termed it this way this morning: "Getting nose-to-nose; getting close to God." That's what I see as *going up to the mountain*. We as the ministers of God, we as the people of God need to go up to that high place. We have to get with God to get the material that we need to build the church that God wants built. It's not about us. It's about God; it's about the saving of souls. "Oneness and unity is not the end of the game," as we say it. That's what we are supposed to be. We can't do the work of God unless we be one. Jesus said, "I in them,

and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know.”

It is important that we be justified. We can't win souls if we're not justified. We can't do the work of God if we're not justified. It's important that we be sanctified, filled with the Spirit. We can't fulfill the work of God like we need to if we're not filled with the Spirit of God.

Is it any less important that we be unified—all the Church of God in one? How can we fulfill everything God wants if we're not one? Who is going to be one? Those who desire to be one. It can't be forced. I cannot force you to have fellowship with me. It takes the Spirit of God. It is the Spirit of God in me that witnesses to Bro. Harley that we are one. It's not by your works, by your power, by this, or by that, or the other. “By my spirit,” saith the Lord.

Haggai 2:1-3: “In the seventh month, in the one and twentieth day of the month, came the word of the Lord by the prophet Haggai, saying, Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and to the residue of the people, saying, Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?” We saw them weeping and everything when they laid the foundation, so here's Haggai coming along to speak to them. They're still looking at the foundation and the temple has not been built yet, so he's trying to get them stirred up to build the temple. Again, verses 2 and 3: “Speak now to Zerubbabel [the governor who was there] the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, [to these people who have the power and authority to do this.] and to the residue [remnant] of the people, saying, Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? [that saw Solomon's temple in its great glory.] and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?”

Do you know we can look back and see that first house (the church in the morning time in her first glory), and look at ourselves now and it may look like it's nothing? Let me tell you, if God is in it, it will be of God, and what goes forth will be of God. Look at what Haggai says now in chapter 2, verse 4: “Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the Lord; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedech, the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the Lord, and work: for I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts.” This is the key: God is with us! and we're engaged in God's great work. That's really all that matters. What we see—the size of it, the oppositions are irrelevant, Saints of God. All that matters is that God is with us and He tells us to “go forth.”

Haggai 2:5, “According to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt [God didn't bring us out of Egypt to abandon us. He brought us out of a dark place. He brought us out of those old sins. A glorious deliverance! Think of the power that it took to deliver that man out of his sins, to clean his soul, to purge his heart, and to fill him with the Holy Spirit. That's the power of God we have! That's the power of God in the church today. It will do that. If a soul comes to this altar this afternoon and desires deliverance, we have a God who can grant it. He will purge his sins and

make him a new creature. We know God is with us because He still does that. That's the greatest work of all. You talk about building the church? That builds the church.], so my spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not.” That same power that delivered you will keep you!

Haggai 2:6, 7, “For thus saith the Lord of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts.” That house the Lord is talking about is the temple and what was going to happen there, to my understanding. Verses 8 and 9: “The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts.”

What was that latter house? I know you have probably heard all sorts of things about the latter house, but just bear with me in this thought about this temple here. Why was the latter house so much greater than the former? In my mind, it is because Jesus Christ came in that second temple. I know technically it was Herod's temple, but it was built on the same foundation as what that temple was. Herod's temple was expanded over this temple, but this is the place where Christ came to, and this is the place where Christ came and turned over the tables and said, “My house is the house of prayer: but ye have made it a den of thieves.” He said, “This is not what my church is about. This stuff is not going to be accepted any more!” He was looking for pure hearts and for something true. Thank God, He gave us something true! Christ walked in that temple one day and He did away with this old ritual religion, this stuff that cannot take away men's sins and change their hearts. He brought something true. Saints of God, that's the same thing we have today. The same thing Christ brought there, we have today. We're supposed to be carrying this out. May God help us.

ZECHARIAH, CHAPTER 4

Let's go through Zechariah 4 very quickly. Zechariah spoke about the candlestick and the olive trees. We see this candlestick there, we see this gold bowl and everything, we see these olive trees that are putting oil into this candlestick causing it to burn, so he asked, “What are these?” The angel answered, “This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel [In other words, ‘in my mind, this vision is God telling you something.’] saying, Not by might [not by our strength, not by our force, not by our efficiency, not by our wealth, not by our ability, not by our vigor], nor by power, but by my spirit.” He's letting you know, “My Spirit is going to do this.” We have the candlestick that is symbolic of the church. In this here, symbolic of the temple and of the restoration of the temple. Remember, this is where He's still trying to get Zerubbabel to get up and start doing this. He's letting him know, “Don't worry about being strong, don't worry about having to take care of your enemies, don't worry about the government and the law, don't worry about all these things they're trying to bind on you. I'll take care of all of this. My Spirit will take care of it all.”

The underlining purpose of this vision is to encourage Zerubbabel to complete the temple which he had begun. It emphasizes that God will supply the power to accomplish this. We know the candlestick is a prominent feature of the sanctuary and it represents here, I believe, the restoration of the temple. This vision is God's way of telling Zerubbabel that this work which is set before him be work of rebuilding the temple that's not going to be accomplished by man's might or power. There's something greater at work and it is the Spirit of God that will do it.

The two olive trees are supplying the oil unaided by man's help. Don't even have a man pouring the oil in there. It's coming right out of the olive trees. This shows it is a divine work. Zerubbabel and the people will supply the labor, but God's power will do the work and guarantee it is finished. God will direct. He will inspire. He will protect. He's letting him know, "They that have hindered you before, shall not hinder you any more. It will not be done by your might or by your force. God will keep your enemies at bay and see that the work is carried out."

Jesus told His disciples, "Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." That power is the Holy Spirit. God's going to do it through the Holy Spirit. Do we still have work to do? Yes, we have much to do. That's what He has us here for, but it's going to be the Holy Spirit working in us. We have to be nose-to-nose with God. That's why we have to be up on the mountain. We have to have that pure heart experience so that we can hear God, perceive Him, work with Him, and with one another. We're striving together for one cause. It's not that we're striving to be together. It's not that we have to put up with each other sometimes. That's not what that is saying. It's not saying, *you all get along now so you can get the gospel out*, no! We're workers together. We're in the harness together, pulling the same thing, which is the saving of souls, evangelizing of the world. We're like oxen. We need to be pulling together for the work of souls. We need the Holy Spirit in our hearts to do so. We must be a sanctified, consecrated, devoted people if we are to complete the work of God in our day.

We have some thoughts on the two olive trees, but we're not going to take time for that, because we have some other things to bring to you. I'll give you some scriptures here: Revelation 11:3, 4—talks about two witnesses, two olive trees; John 5:39—Jesus says, "The Scriptures testify of me"; John 15:26—Jesus said, "But when the Comforter is come, ... he shall testify of me." So we see, the Scriptures and the Spirit of God are both witnesses. They are both witnesses of Christ. We know the need to be sanctified, to be purified—John 17:19—Jesus said, "For their sakes I sanctify myself" [How did He sanctify Himself? He set Himself apart. He consecrated Himself to death so that we could be sanctified.], that they also might be sanctified through the truth." We must be sanctified. We must be a church on fire.

There's one thing about the candlestick. What is it? If it's not on fire, it's just a piece of furniture. It's there to burn, to give light, and to show something. We have to have that oil—the Word and the Spirit filling us so that we can be the light of the world.

Let's go to Zechariah 4:7, "Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: ..." What is God saying here? When He spoke about a mountain, it is symbolic of an obstruction, something that's in the way. Zerubbabel and Joshua had been hindered for 16 years in the building of the temple, but God was going to remove the obstacle. "These people who are hindering you will become a plain before Zerubbabel." Let us dare not get in the way of God's work when He is ready to do something. Do we have faith in God that we are engaged in His work? I believe I'm engaged in His work. I believed that ever since I got saved. I believe we're engaged in a special work now. It is for the purpose that we can do the real work that we're called to do. Are we not doing it? Of course, we're doing what we can with success, but do we want to see more? Do we really need to be one as Christ wants us to be one? Is there a mountain in the way? Well, when God is there to move, mountains don't mean anything.

Saints, what were the walls of Jericho before Joshua when God was ready? He told them what to do. March around, etc. Nothing happened, nothing has changed! but God had a time. Those walls were not going to stand there. What if they had quit on the sixth day? What if they had given up? What if they had given up half way through the seventh day? Obedience; they were following what God said to do.

What were the Midianites before Gideon? Three hundred men, and Gideon did away with that entire army. Why? Because God was involved.

What was the uncircumcised Philistine before David? He was nothing. He was totally irrelevant. When David went out on the field in obedience to God, Goliath and all the entire army behind him became totally irrelevant. David didn't get to where he could walk out there at that moment. He was prepared. He was preparing his whole life to step out on that field.

The great mountain symbolizes difficulty. Jesus said, "If ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done." I believe that's really what His burden was there. We're not going around digging up sycamore trees and moving literal mountains, but God wants us to see if His will is in something, then we can get it done. Let us keep our faith that God will remove every obstacle before us.

Zechariah 4:7, "... and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it." In other words, the one who started it was going to complete it: "Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it; and thou shalt know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto you" (verses 8 and 9). In other words, Jesus is the Author and Finisher of faith. I know the Scriptures says "author and finisher of our faith," but if you read it without the word *our*, it's all right to say that He is the Author and Finisher of faith. Faith is the gospel. Faith is what we believe. Jesus started this system of faith, and He will complete it. We as the Church of God are right in the midst of that. We exist because of faith. We have to keep Jesus as the Head. We have to be one. That is part of it.

Zechariah 4:10, “For who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel with those seven; they are the eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro through the whole earth.” We see Zerubbabel here as a type of Christ. Christ started this thing and He’s actually going to finish it. What does “shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel” mean? He’s ready to go to work. That’s what you do with the plumb line. Thank God, we can see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel today. We can see the plummet in the hand of Jesus Christ. He’s ready to repair the walls. “For who hath despised the day of small things?” God can do great things with a little. God takes the smallest of seeds and makes it a mighty tree. He takes a stone and makes it a great mountain that fills the whole earth. He took a remnant and built a temple. He took a smaller remnant and built the walls.

The eyes of God are upon His people. He is watching the work. He sees everything we’re going through. You can apply that also in a personal sense. God knows what’s going on in our lives, Saints of God. God has His eyes upon you as an individual. He knows what’s going on in your life. We need to have faith in that. He cares about us. He’s concerned about us. Yes, He has a great work to do in a broad sense, but He’s concerned about each and every one. Whatever you’re facing, we have a God who is great enough to handle all of it. Thank God through Jesus Christ having experienced the things that we have experienced, He can empathize with us in all our needs. God is watching you.

Very briefly, the second wave which came back 60 years after the temple was finished was brought by Ezra. He returned with 1700 people. (See Ezra 7:6-10).

We know after they had established the temple (got it built), it was some 60 years before this time that we see, and lo and behold, some things had fallen into disarray somewhat. The people were not following the law. They were intermarrying with the heathen nations around them. It seems like they just went right back into some of this stuff, and Ezra had a burden. Ezra had a burden to go back and teach the law and set things back in order. Saints of God, we need to stay with the Word of God. “Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.” God help us! We can’t do this thing without Him. We have to have the Word of God. We have to have things right. The results of that was that the law was more firmly re-established. It cost some people something. We won’t go into all the story, but some of those people had established some things in their lives. The Scriptures let us know. Here are a few scriptures: Proverbs 30:5, 6 says, “Don’t add to His Word”; Deuteronomy 12:32 says, “Don’t add or diminish from His Word.” Jesus said in Matthew 15:13, “Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.” The Word of God is enough. We don’t need to add to it. We certainly don’t need to take away from it. Do you know where a lot of people get into trouble concerning unity? They get off the Word. Stay with the Word.

CONCLUSION

Nehemiah had a burden to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. He heard of the conditions of the city. This is about 13 years after Ezra’s time. Nehemiah went before the king. The king noticed his sad countenance and Nehemiah asked permission to go and build up the walls of the city and the gates. Let’s go now to Nehemiah 2:8: “And a letter unto Asaph the keeper of the king’s forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the palace which appertained to the house, and for the wall of the city, and for the house that I shall enter into. And the king granted me, according to the good hand of my God upon me.” That’s the point we want to get: “the good hand of my God upon me.”

Saints, it is not hard to understand that we just need to have God’s hand in all of His people being one people. Is God’s hand in that? Of course, it is! That’s not hard to figure out. He wants all of His people to be one. God bless you. †

STIRRING UP THE FLAME

By the late Bro. Hoyt Matthews

“I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.” —Matthew 3:11.

THE FLAME serves a number of purposes. In the verse just quoted, it serves as a purifier. The flame we wish to consider in this message can best be defined by the word “zeal.”

Zeal is defined by **Webster’s New World Dictionary of the American Language** as: “intense enthusiasm, as in working for a cause; ardent endeavor or devotion; ardor, fervor.”

Religiously speaking, we may describe a zealous disciple of Christ as “being on fire for God,” or, as the title of the message suggests, those who are “stirring up the flame.”

To make this more vivid to the human mind of this generation, let us draw an analogy from my younger (much younger) boyhood days. I visited frequently the farm home of my grandparents. This home was not blessed by the electrical appliances as are our more modern homes; the reason being, there was no electricity in the house, which meant, in the winter months, the house was heated by the old wood-burning stove.

As we retired for the night, the fire in the stove would be “banked” so that live coals would remain till morning. Upon arising the following morning, someone would take the “stove poker” and stir up the flame, add fuel to the flame, and soon there would be a roaring fire.

This analogy is of the church that has banked up the flame and still has live coals. The need here is, the church needs to stir up the flame and add fuel so that there will soon be a roaring flame, or a zeal for God that brings to the church power from heaven.

Peter and John labored zealously in the infant New Covenant church. Following closely behind the upper

room experience, Peter and John healed the lame man at Gate Beautiful near the temple in Jerusalem. The religious zealots of Jerusalem were none to happy about this, and as they learned of Peter and John teaching Christ in the synagogue, they took them into custody and commanded them not to speak further in the name of Jesus Christ.

In their holy zeal, Peter and John answered and said, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:19, 20).

After being further threatened, Peter and John were released, and returning to their own company they reported to them all that had taken place. "And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hath made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is: ... And now, Lord [stirring up the flame], behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus. And now when they had prayed [added fuel to the flame], the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness. ... And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all" (Acts 4:24; 29-31; 33).

Ere long, the apostle Paul warned of a falling away (a dying out of the flame). The mystery of iniquity was mounting even during Paul's ministry, but let us remember the words of Jesus: "I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18).

From the inauguration day of the New Covenant Church of God, when the day of Pentecost was fully come, till the last day when he and his shall be cast into the lake of fire, Satan shall not cease in his godless efforts to extinguish the heavenly flame that fires the zeal of those who labor for the Master. Though she, the church, was driven into the wilderness of obscurity and little salvation work was being done, yet, the Lord and Savior, who said, "I will build my church," sustained her flame till the day when it once again began burning brightly. However, the enemy invented another plan of attack in his effort to extinguish the holy flame. The denominational system of many religions was an invention of the devil; it was not heaven-born, and though the holy fire began to wane, it was not extinguished.

Satan's invention did not accomplish his intended desire; and once again, God raised up those who began to stir up the flame. The message of holy living and the oneness of God's people began to circle the globe. Can we not hear Satan frantically saying, "This must be stopped! I know what I will do, I will divide and conquer"? It worked. Though Satan was not able to extinguish the flame, he succeeded in dividing God's people. Jesus had said, "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast

sent me" (John 17:21). The message of unity did not die in Christ's prayer to the Father. The message of unity was deep in the heart of the apostle Paul as he penned the following words to the Corinthian church: "Now I beseech you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (I Corinthians 1:10).

There is power in unity! Where unity is lacking, power is lacking; where power is lacking, complacency takes root. Are we too fearful of offending? Are we too fearful of rocking the boat? Are we too careful about stirring up the flame? Of course, we don't want to offend, but truth, many times, is quite offensive to some. I hardly believe that Peter and John were too concerned about offending when they answered their persecutors, saying, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye" (Acts 4:19).

Our flame is being quenched for lack of unity. Power is lacking. The lack of possessing the gifts of the Spirit is great. Are we fearful of failing in our stirring up of the flame? A brother admonished us not so long ago to "get out of the comfort zone!" Is there a tug at our hearts toward the comfort zone? Is the world bidding for our affection?

Jesus said, "Have faith in God" (Mark 11:22). With faith comes power. Let us stir up the flame of faith.

Dear Saints, let the zeal of our hearts stir the holy flame within us, and let us march forward together, conquering and to conquer. †

COMMUNION— THE LORD'S SUPPER

By Bro. Richard Lehman

THE COMMUNION ordinance is known as: "the Lord's Supper" because Christ instituted it (Luke 22:19, 20; Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24) and the apostle Paul also spoke of it this way (I Corinthians 11:20). It is known as the "communion" because of the common participation in it of those that are saved.

"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?"—I Corinthians 10:16.

And it is commonly known in non-biblical terms as the *eucharist* which comes from a Greek word meaning "the giving of thanks."

"And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me."—I Corinthians 11:24.

Throughout history, there have been four distinct doctrinal positions of this particular ordinance. But only one is supported by scripture.

1. Transubstantiation ... the Catholic doctrine that the bread and wine mysteriously change into the actual body and blood of Jesus Christ.

2. Consubstantiation ... Certain protestant bodies believe that while the bread and wine retain their

natural elements, yet the body and blood of Christ are in and with the elements.

3. Mystical presence theory ... This view denies the corporal presence of Christ in the elements, but holds that the communicant partakes of and benefits by the mystical presence of the human nature of Christ.

4. Symbolic ... This is the true biblical view. There is no physical nor mystical presence within the actual bread and wine. The reward for partaking in the Lord's Supper (or communion) comes in obeying God's Word and following the design and purpose of the ordinance, and in doing it in remembrance of what He has done for us.

So what is the scriptural design and purpose of the Lord's Supper? Christ states its design when He instituted it—"This do in remembrance of me."

The Lord's Supper is a memorial whereby we demonstrate to the world and remember for ourselves, the atoning suffering and death of Christ for us. "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come."—I Corinthians 11:26.

The Passover feast looked forward to the vicarious, sacrificial sufferings of Christ. And the Lord's Supper points backward to the Passover. This is because Jesus is the Lamb of God, who was sacrificed to take away the sins of the world. "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."—John 1:29.

The Lord's Supper also symbolizes the unity of God's people. In commemorating it, we are drawn not only closer to God, but closer to one another. In properly remembering the sacrifice Christ gave, we remember the sacrifice He also wants us to give: a personal sacrifice for Christ and for one another.

"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread."—I Corinthians 10:16, 17. "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."—John 15:12, 13.

But we are also instructed that everyone is not qualified to receive the communion. We should be honest with our own souls and examine our own hearts according to the Word of God, to determine if we are worthy to partake of the communion.

"For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body."—I Corinthians 11:26-29.

So then, who is qualified to partake of the Lord's Supper? Those who have been washed in the blood of the Lamb. Those who have repented and forsaken all their sins. We are commanded to not partake of sin and the communion. We must be free from sin first to be a worthy child of God.

"Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother."—I John 3:7-10.

Communion with God and with your brethren means there is no room for that which separates us from one another. Sin separates us from God, and a lack of true communion love will separate you from another brother in Christ.

The communion is also not a regular meal or feast. "When ye come together therefore unto one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper. For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken. What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? what shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not."—I Corinthians 11:20-22.

The notion of communion is a very particular thing with the Lord. There is not to be any mixture with the unbeliever or hypocrite. Neither in the Lord's supper, nor in our worship. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?"—II Corinthians 6:14, 15.

The Lord's Supper was a very special meal that the Lord had long desired to have with His apostles. It was His last meal with them before He was to suffer. And the communion actually represented what He was about to suffer. The communion represented His sacrificial love towards mankind, and His desire that mankind would want this same sacrificial love fulfilled within themselves.

"And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him. And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God."—Luke 22:14-16.

Jesus was looking forward to the days after Pentecost. Because then His Holy Spirit-filled people would also willingly suffer, to be a partaker in Christ's communion and sacrificial love. "And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you."—Luke 22:19, 20.

Jesus wants us to be reminded to remember the great love sacrifice He gave for us! This is so that we would always be willing to do the same for Him and for others. This is the true "Lord's Supper" He wants His true people to continue doing even today—in remembrance of Him. †

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Lapland, Catadupa, St. James
February 25-March 1, Lord willing
Bro. Hezekiah Lamey, Host Pastor

2020 HONDURAS CONVENTION

Sandy Bay, Roatan
March 31-April 5, Lord willing
Sis. Siggie James, Pastor

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