

The Way of Truth

Vol. 79

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

No. 7



2021 HAGERSTOWN CONVENTION

August 2021

THE POWER OF TESTIMONY

I WANT TO bring to your attention John 4:27-30: “And upon this came his disciples, and marvelled that he talked with the woman: yet no man said, What seekest thou? or, Why talkest thou with her? The woman then left her water pot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ? Then they went out of the city, and came unto him.”

The first thing I'd like to call your attention to is the fact that Jesus Himself took time to share the truth with this ill-famed woman. Notice in verse 27 that even His disciples marveled that He would talk with the woman. Oftentimes, professing Christians don't have time to share the gospel with those whom they don't feel worthy, and oftentimes it is because of some physical reason or through the appearance of another that the professed Christian judges them to be unfit to receive the Word. But, Beloved, I want you to know that sometimes appearances are deceiving. Sometimes we can't go by what we see on the outside because every human being has an eternity-bound soul. Sometimes a person—a man perhaps with long hair—on a motorcycle, with tattoos over his body, would seem from the outside to be some hardened person who would never listen to the beautiful truth of the gospel, but we don't know what is behind that mask. We don't know what drives that individual. We don't know how much God has been working with that soul. Therefore, as Christians, we must sow beside all waters. Thank God that Jesus spent time with this Samaritan woman. Though she was ill-famed, yet Jesus was able to penetrate her heart and she received the gospel and was saved. She left her waterpot and went her way. She came seeking something material, something physical. Certainly water is essential to human life. She was thinking in the material realm, but she received something in the spiritual realm. She was no longer interested in the physical or material; it was the spirit that was fulfilled. She left her waterpot. Though she came to get it filled with literal water, her soul was blessed with that living water. So she emphasized that experience that she had received and de-emphasized the material.

It reminds me of when Peter and John went up to the gate Beautiful. There was a lame man there clanging his cup, wanting some alms, and Peter said unto him, “Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.” That man received more than money, He received more than a few mites. He received more than what all the money in the world could buy him. He received his health, and his legs were made whole by the power of God. It is the spirit of man that is important. This material world is going to pass away but the spirit of man shall return to God who gave it and shall spend eternity either with God in heaven or

in punishment with the demons in eternal hellfire. That is why our job is so important. That is why we must not hide our experience under a bushel as it were, but we should let our light so shine that men may see our good works and glorify our Father which is in heaven.

The ill-famed woman went her way and came to the people and said unto them, “Come, see a man. Is not this the Christ?” When a person gets saved, what they have received is the greatest thing on Earth and they can't help but share it with all they come in contact with. There is power in testimony, Beloved. She went and told the people to come and see this man who she believed was the Christ and they went out of the city and came unto Him.

I remember how some of the disciples of John the Baptizer were moved when they met the Master, and Philip went to find his brother Nathaniel and tell him about the Messiah. Philip told him to come for he had found the Messiah. Nathaniel asked, “Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?” At first he was an unbeliever, but when he met the Master himself, he truly believed that this was the Son of God. He would not have possibly known had Philip not told him what he had found. Many in the city of Samaria would not have known the Messiah if this woman would not have gone in and told them what she had experienced. Verse 39 of St. John, chapter four, says, “And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did. So when the Samaritans were come unto him, they besought him that he would tarry with them: and he abode there two days. And many more believed because of his own word; And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.”

Now I must remind you, not every individual to whom this woman witnessed received Christ. The Scriptures say many of the Samaritans believed in Christ, but many did not. Many rejected Him. We're not responsible for what other people do with the message, but we are responsible to share the beautiful truth of the gospel with all we come in contact. We are the messengers and ambassadors for the kingdom of God. The Lord works through the human agent, and thank God He is able through the human agent to bring others to Himself. The Scriptures tell us to sow beside all waters. We need to do as Jesus did, and not judge a person whether they're fit to listen or not, but we must share the gospel with whomever we come in contact. Who knows if God has prepared a heart for the very reason that we have met them and God has given us an opportunity to share our experience with that individual. I'm so glad God didn't give up on me. I was



ABOUT THE COVER

The 2021 convention in Hagerstown was a glorious meeting. Heaven came down and glory filled our souls. We are sharing a few pictures on the front. There were souls saved and baptized and each one was blessed. A full report is given on page 2.

THE WAY OF TRUTH

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Vol. 79

August 2021

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

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a terrible looking thing. I was a hardened man, it seemed from the outside appearance, a young man who loved to gamble, who loved to drink, who loved to smoke, who loved to commit sin. Sin was all that I ever knew. I had never come in contact with Christ, but thank God I met someone who knew the Master and she invited me to the services of God. At first I rejected the Word and I fought against it, but eventually the power of God's gospel penetrated my heart and I was saved, translated, born again, and I became a new creature in Christ. If that person that I met had not witnessed to or invited me, perhaps I never would have known the Lord. So we see there is power in the testimony of the gospel.

In the book of Revelation we read, "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony." Let us not hide our lights under a bushel. If we are truly saved let us have a burden for the lost souls of humanity and do our very best to share the truth of the gospel and the experience of salvation with all that we come in contact with. When a person that we witness to receives Christ, we have gained an eternal reward, a star in our crown as it were. I'm telling you, living for Jesus Christ is the greatest life that a human being could live; and witnessing to others and winning others to the wonderful gospel of Christ, even as the woman at the well did, will bring its reward. †

NEW RADIO STATION VIA THE INTERNET

We are happy to announce that we now have a site streaming Church of God music and messages 24/7 recorded during our services. It can be found by going to wayoftruth.org and clicking on:

Way of Truth Internet Radio

GOD'S MIRACLE BOOK

The Bible is referred to in many different ways. We speak of it as God's Word, the Good Book, the Holy Scriptures, and the Sword of the Spirit. It is also known as the Book of books and the Living Word. Some call it simply THE Book, for nothing else seems necessary.

It stands alone, towering above all other writings.

Of the many titles given to the Bible, however, the one that is most appropriate is God's Miracle Book.

This is true for a number of reasons:

1. It is miraculous in its origin—coming to us by Divine inspiration.

2. It is miraculous in its durability—outlasting the opposition of its critics and surviving the attempts of its enemies to exterminate it.

3. It is miraculous in its results—transforming the lives of those who read and believe it.

4. It is miraculous in its harmony—agreeing in all its parts, even though written over a period of 1600 years by about 40 different authors.

5. It is miraculous in its message—telling of many occasions when God supernaturally intervened in the affairs of men to accomplish His redemptive purposes.

6. It is miraculous in its preservation—maintaining its accuracy and reliability down through the centuries.

Yes, the Bible is God's Miracle Book! †

IN THIS ISSUE:

Hagerstown Convention Report Page 2
God truly blessed this year's meeting!

Why It Is Needful to Renew Our Strength Page 3
Full-length sermon by Doug Shenberger

Winning a Crown Page 8
Part XXXV of the book by the late C. W. Naylor

The Children's Corner Page 10
"Always True," by Rebecca Bland

The Question Box Page 11
Our monthly feature

Young People's Page Page 12
"Time"

The Joy of the Lord Is Our Strength Page 14
Full-length sermon by Harley McClung

Bible Lesson of the Month Page 17
"When the Christian Marries"

Without Faith It Is Impossible to Please God Page 19
Radio message by the late A. A. Craig

The Poetry Page Page 21
Truth in rhythmic form



HAGERSTOWN CONVENTION REPORT

June 29-July 4, 2021

WE ARE indeed thankful to the Lord for making it possible for us to have our convention this year. He met with us in every service. The saints were very happy to be together once again.

There were visitors from various states and internationally.

Our service schedule was 7:00 and 10:30 A.M., 2:30 and 6:00 P.M. The young people were in charge of all the afternoon services. We were so impressed and blessed seeing their devotion and love for the Lord's work. Every service during the week was truly blessed of God.

Through the coming months, we will be sharing messages with our readers in the issues of *The Way of Truth*.

Below is a synopsis of the general services:

Tuesday—7:00 A.M. Prayer Meeting—Led by Bro. Gary Alwell.

10:30 A.M.—Speaker: Bro. Doug Shenberger. Title: "Why It Is Needful to Renew Our Strength." Text: Isaiah 40:31. This message begins on page 3.

2:30 P. M.—Speaker: Bro. Brian Richards. Title: "Deciding To Follow Christ." Several scriptures were quoted. "Faith must go deep. Nothing wavering—James 1:5-8; Our commitment to the Lord must be real—John 21:15-17; Be an example of the believers—I Timothy 4:12; Receive manifold—more peace, contentment, love, and life everlasting—Luke 18:24-30."

6:00 P.M.—Speaker: Bro. Harley McClung (Craigs-ville, West Virginia). Title: "The Joy of the Lord Is Our Strength." Text: Nehemiah 8:10. This message can be found on page 14.

Wednesday—7:00 A.M. Prayer Meeting—Led by Sis. Dorette Clarke.

10:30 A.M.—Speaker: Bro. David Goble (Carmichael, California). Title: "Let It Finish." Text: Genesis 32:1-7. "Joy will help us to recover our strength. Saints have stuff in their buckets. Stuff in the bucket can crowd out God's blessings. He wants to fill our buckets until there is too much and we can't hold it. Overflowing with joy so that the world can see it. Our vision of

what the church can be needs to be enlarged. Because we have a Savior, we have a hope. God is a very present help in trouble. As we go through the Christian life, God continues to perfect us."

2:30 P.M.—Several of the young people brought some thoughts in regard to "I'm not About to Quit." That's a title of a song that the service was based on. Each young speaker blessed us with some very inspiring thoughts.

6:00 P.M.—Speaker: Bro. Mick Akers (Patton, Pennsylvania). Title: "What Is Your Response to Sin?" Text: Ezekiel 18:2. "Sin has an influence on us. People's sinful actions affect us. Manasseh was an evil king and caused Judah and Jerusalem to sin. He put idols in the temple. He had an impact on others. The Babylonians came and humbled him. He was led to Babylon. There he found repentance, but after his conversion and death, his sinful consequences lived on. His son, Ammon, did wickedness in God's eyes. The next generation was impacted. At age 8, Josiah was right in God's eyes. He cleaned up the evil that was in the land. People get treated poorly because of sin, but what is your response to sin? There is no excuse to sin. Your response to sin affects more than you can comprehend."

Thursday—7:00 A.M. Prayer Meeting—Led by Bro. Pervon Paul.

10:30 A.M.—Speaker: Bro. John Romero (Escondido, California). Title: "Are We Still Preaching the Gospel?" Text: Galatians 1:1-12. "Paul knew the enemy comes to counteract God's working. He marveled that the Galatians were soon removed to another gospel. From the beginning of church history, false messages have gone out. Jesus said, 'Take heed.' There is liberty in serving God, however, Paul warned the Galatians that false teaching would cause them to lose their liberty. Not everyone who opens up the Word is preaching the gospel. The true gospel reveals some things to us. It will reveal the righteousness of God. It also teaches the wrath of God. The gospel is for every soul, every race. Paul told Timothy to preach the Word, because people will try to get you to change the gospel."

2:30 P.M.—Speaker: Sis. Rebecca Bland. Title: "Hating the Garment." Text: Jude 1:21-23. This was an outstanding message to the young people. "Things Satan uses: you have to try sin, accept everything. You have to experience things to know how to reach them. Peer pressure. Our determination: though none go with me, still I will follow Christ. Keep your robe pure and spotless."

6:00 P.M.—Speaker: Bro. Terry Deville (Deville, Louisiana). Title: "Prepare to Meet Thy God." Text: Amos 4:12. "How many people even consider this thought? Even Christians—our lives are a continual preparation. God will bring every work into judgment. It's all recorded—good or bad. Every knee shall bow down and confess and give an account of himself to God. Repent and believe the gospel. That will prepare you to meet God. Repent and forsake. There's some enduring and fighting. Demas left Paul at a critical time in the church. He will be at the judgment. At the judgment, there will be no excuses. People need to face things now before judgment comes. We have an enemy—self. Rectify our wrongs now."

Friday—7:00 A.M. Prayer Meeting—Led by Bro. Jim Storts.

10:30 A.M.—Divine Healing Service. Speaker: Bro. Tim Crooks (Jonesville, Louisiana). Title: “Faith, Hope, and Love.” Text: John 15:5, 7. “Without hope, there is no faith. Do you believe you can have anything you ask for? Sometimes we wait until we get to the end of our rope before we come with boldness. God wants to help us, but He is waiting for us to ask. What activates faith? ‘Faith which worketh by love’ (Galatians 5:6). Have faith in God. *Faith* is positive striving and achievement. Our Father will give good things to them that ask Him.”

2:30 P.M.—Songs and Testimonies by the young people.

6:00 P.M.—Speaker: Bro. Doug Koerner (Essex, Maryland). Title: “Renewing Our Strength.” Text: Isaiah 40:28-31; 41:1. “The Creator of the earth is not weary. We shall reap if we faint not. Job said, ‘He knoweth the way that I take.’ The disciples waited in the upper room until the sound from heaven came. Don’t give up! You’re on the brink of a miracle.”

Saturday—7:00 A.M. Prayer Meeting—Led by Bro. Lowell McClung.

10:30 A.M.—Speaker: Bro. Raymond Martin (Shawsville, Virginia). Title: “Renewing Our Strength to be an Overcomer.” Text: I John 4:4; 5:5. Isaiah 40:28-31. “Our strength is renewed by testimonies and by remembering what God has done. God will see us through. We have to go back to God for more strength. Don’t give up when people falsely accuse you or lie about you. God gave Joseph strength when he was in prison. God will use young people if they will stay true to Him. There will be battles, but the Lord will renew our strength. We can stand in our own power. God has always made a way out. Learn to wait.”

2:30 P.M.—Speaker: Bro. Thomas Harris. Title: “The Fruits of Righteousness.” Several scriptures were used. He gave his testimony and exhorted on the chosen scriptures. His words were blessed by the Lord.

6:00 P.M.—Speaker: Bro. David Goble. Title: “Am I a Profitable Servant?” Text: Matthew 25:31-40. Before the message, Bro. Goble gave his testimony.

“What is the Lord’s business? We are not to pass by someone who is suffering. That is the gospel in action. The Lord is in the salvage and regeneration business to save us from ourselves. He makes the broken ‘boat’ brand new again. If God is in that business, I need to be in that business. He salvages us for His glory. What is the cost of this enterprise? Isaiah 53:2-7. There was a great cost paid for us that we might be redeemed. He makes us something out of nothing. A profit produces joy. Joy will renew our strength. If we don’t appreciate that the Lord deserves a profit, we’ll make excuses. He doesn’t save us to put us on the shelf. We all need to be in the field of labor. Each of us must know our profitable opportunity or we’ll just stay on the shelf.”

Sunday—7:00 A.M. Prayer Meeting—Led by Bro. Paul Wilson.

10:30 A.M.—Speaker: Bro. Richard Lehman (Car-michael, California). Title: “Following the Holy Ghost’s Lead and not Ours.” Text: Genesis 6:3. “Every soul has heard the voice of God in some way. What matters the

most? What God wants us to say to them or what God has already been speaking to them? The latter. You have to connect where God has already been speaking and working. Listen and understand opportunities when people are going through a difficulty. Those are the times God speaks to us. What is God saying to you? What God says to the soul is what we need to tap into. God’s timing is important.”

2:30 P.M.—Baptismal Service. An exhortation was given by Bro. Brian Richards. Those baptized were, Sisters Emma Roseberry, Evelyn Crooks, and Angelica Tesoro; Brothers Ryan Shenberger and Daniel Swain.

6:00 P.M.—Speaker: Bro. Gary Alwell (Deville, Louisiana). Title: “The Work and Effect of Righteousness.” Text: Isaiah 41:10; 32:17, 18. “Righteousness is required to make it to heaven. The effect of righteousness is peace. The people of the world are full of trouble. It is up to us to show them a better way. Sometimes people are reluctant to leave sin because that’s all they know. When you confess your sins to God and He forgives you, He puts on you the robe of righteousness. He puts you on a rock, the solid Rock. He gives you a purpose in life. To be prepared to meet God, you must have on the robe of righteousness.”

We sincerely thank each one who had a part in the success of our convention. Everyone worked so hard and diligently.

We trust souls have been helped in some way, whatever the needs may have been. We’re looking forward to our 2022 convention with much anticipation. †

Why It Is Needful to Renew Our Strength

2021 Hagerstown Convnetion Message

by Bro. Doug Shenberger



I WOULD LIKE to extend a very warm welcome to each and to every one of you that are here this morning, whether you’ve been here many times or this is your first visit. You have a special place in our hearts. I’d like to extend that welcome on behalf of Bro. Greg and the local congregation.

There are many more capable ministers here than me. I feel keenly my need of the Lord’s help to endeavor to speak to you. Perhaps this will be an introduction to our theme that the other ministers can expound on in greater and more powerful ways. But it is a beautiful theme. I believe the Lord led Bro. Greg in choosing this theme. It’s an inspiring theme. It’s a needful thing. If you think you don’t need this theme, I trust you will embrace it by the end of the convention. If you do realize the need now, I trust that the Lord will meet that need for each and for every one of us as we go through this convention.

I was thinking of the diversity of people that are represented here from different congregations, cultures, and backgrounds. There are some that may think if a minister speaks more than thirty minutes, he's kinda long-winded. There are some people who think that the first thirty minutes is just the introduction. I'll endeavor to fall somewhere in between there this morning, but I would encourage all of us to expand our thinking and realize the benefits of the different ways of thinking.

As we join together in a convention like this, it is a tremendous opportunity to learn to know people and to gain benefits from their experiences, their knowledge, their understanding, and the way the Lord works in their lives and ministry. So may the Lord help us to do that this week and truly be able to gain all that He has for us.

We are going to endeavor to speak from the theme "Renewing Our Strength." It might be good to think about it in a more personal way. We can think about it in "renewing *my* strength." It is easy to sit here and think, "Well, there are some people here that really need their strength renewed. I hope that the Lord really blesses this congregation. I hope that the Lord really blesses someone in my family or a friend of mine that has some needs." But it's a little different thing to sit here and think, "I need to renew my strength."

Generally speaking, strength is admired. It might be physical strength or strength of body. There are some people here who are very strong in body. There is also strength of mind, strength of character. There are a lot of different areas in which there is strength in human existence. We've learned through the ages how we can attain strength in different areas. If we want to get stronger, it's not that hard. It's not a great mystery in how we can achieve more strength of body or strength of mind. We can exercise. We can study and practice. We have people who have practiced many years to be able to play the piano so beautifully. There's a strength there that they've been able to attain. Even in these different physical areas, we know there are advantages in maybe health, maybe wealth, and different advantages for gaining knowledge. There are so many areas of life where there are advantages in being strong. Even though we know how to obtain strength, we often find that we are still unwilling to pay the price to get it. Maybe it's not really worth it to us. That's not necessarily a serious problem. We all have things that we focus on in life or that we choose to follow. Paul even said that bodily exercise profiteth little. So you have an excuse even if you know you need to exercise, but there's little profit in bodily exercise. It might extend your life a few years. You might have a little better quality of life. In the overall sense, that's a very fleeting thing. It's actually not vitally important, because as the Bible says, our life is even as a vapor that appeareth for a little while and then vanisheth away.

But there are some things that are vitally important when we think about strength. Whenever we think about spiritual strength, that is vitally important. Whether your body is strong or your mind is strong or whatever way you want to look at life, if your spirit is weak, that is a serious thing. How do you compare that level of physical strength? How do you value it in comparison to the eternal results of spiritual strength?

In thinking about the subject of "Renewing Our Spiritual Strength," I'd like to start this morning about some thoughts of why it is needful to renew our strength. Is there anyone here who thinks they are strong enough? It's easy to say no to that; it's another thing to live like we believe that. Maybe we'll get into that a little bit more. But the question is: Why is it needful to renew our strength?

The first and maybe most significant reason is that we're human. We are human. The Bible says God knows our frame and that we are but dust. He understands our humanity. Because we are human, strength gets used up. We're very familiar with that in the physical realm. No matter how strong you are, no matter how tough you are, you still have to rest, you still have to recover, you still have to renew your strength and energy. But in the spiritual realm, strength also gets used up.

There are some different things that do that to us. The trials and temptations of life come upon us and can cause us to lose strength in some areas. They are a weight to us. The Bible says about laying aside every weight. There are things that become a weight to us and they steal strength; they sap our energy. They cause us to feel weak. Each of us faces the trials of life, the attacks of the devil. I'm not talking about just the attacks he brings on us himself directly, but he uses other people who endeavor to sap our strength, our energy, and our enthusiasm. It might be by finding fault with us. We all have faults; we just don't always want somebody to point them out. We just don't always want somebody to embellish them or blow them up to be bigger than anything else. People find fault by saying, "You don't love me. You don't care about me. You don't accept me as I am. You're not a very good Christian; you don't really show an example of love." When those attacks and influences come upon us, it damages our strength.

We also have to deal with failure. We try to do something good, but it doesn't work out like we planned. We make a mistake. Maybe it's not a sin, but it still doesn't work out like we planned. We prayed for something, we asked God for something and it didn't happen, and we feel like a failure. We endeavor to stand up and do something for the Lord, and we feel like we really didn't accomplish much. We struggle with failure and discouragement that comes from that. We might witness, we might preach, and we might not see the results we want, and we feel like a failure. It saps a little more of our strength. We do make mistakes. The enemy of our soul is always there to try to pounce on us. He'll say, "Look at that. Look what you did. You're of no use. It's safer just to not do anything. You really should just keep your mouth shut. Let the Lord use somebody that can actually do something for Him." There's an agenda that seeks to sap our strength. There's a goal of the devil to steal our strength and to cause us to feel weak.

Disappointment also can often sap our strength and energy. Someone that we know, someone that we love, someone that we worked with to endeavor to help, and they turn and go the other way. It's a heartbreak. It might be a child or a spouse or a sibling or a loved one that can cause disappointments in life. There are plans

that don't go as we wanted and we're disappointed. We can be disappointed in people or in ourselves or in whatever it might be.

There are times of sickness that come along. We had these wonderful plans. We had a direction we were going to go in life, and all of a sudden we're dealing with sickness. We didn't plan for that, we didn't expect it. We're disappointed that we have to be dealing with it. There's loss. There are accidents. There are all these things that come upon us in life that affect us, and they can sap our spiritual strength.

Discouragement is one of the things the devil uses almost more than anything else to steal our strength away. Sometimes we don't even know why we feel discouraged. We wake up and we just feel discouraged today. A lot of times there might be a good reason why we feel that way. But discouragement saps our strength. Nehemiah said, "The joy of the Lord is your strength" (Nehemiah 8:10). When we're discouraged, it steals our strength.

We can also lose strength in the classic way that works in both the physical and the spiritual—through a lack of activity. I talked about a lot of things that come upon us from the outside, influences that can steal our strength. But we can also lose strength from lack of activity in the spiritual realm. Bad habits, using our time for things that are not profitable steal our time away. It causes us to have a lack of activity in spiritual things, and we end up feeling weak because our strength has been taken from us, it's been lost.

There's a lot of Bible instruction that mentions people losing strength. One verse says, "And let us not be weary in well doing" (Galatians 6:9). It's possible to become weary even in well doing. It's possible to lose the strength we need. John challenged the churches with these words: "Thou hast left thy first love" (Revelation 2:4). What does that mean? They lost their strength. Their spiritual strength had been sapped away, and it caused them to lose that first love for God. John also mentioned about being "lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot" (Revelation 3:16). The loss of spiritual strength has a price to it. There's a result to it. Paul himself said, "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away" (1 Corinthians 9:27). The reality that it's possible to lose spiritual strength was on his mind. He needed to make sure that he didn't allow the things of his body, his physical, to interfere with his spiritual strength.

I thought of the parable of the man with the talents and the one that buried his talent. We might not think about that in a sense of losing his spiritual strength when he buried his talent, but that's what happened, because it didn't grow. It didn't become something more. It stayed stagnant. It was safe, but he still lost it. The reality is you don't need to worry about protecting your strength by burying it. "I'm just going to guard my strength. I'm going to hide it. Nothing's going to come along and take my strength." That's not how it works.

To overcome new challenges is another reason why it is useful to renew our strength. Sometimes we think we've faced everything that we're going to have to face. "I don't have to worry about anything else. I have enough

strength to do what I'm doing," but that's not God's plan for us. There are going to be new challenges. There are going to be new problems. We need to grow. We need to get bigger. We need to get stronger to deal with the world that we live in today. We need to be able to be more and to do more. There are going to be new opportunities that come along. It's going to take more strength to take advantage of those new opportunities. We need to renew our strength. Strength leads to growth. We cannot safely rest on our past successes and our past achievements.

Do you really believe everyone needs to grow? If you're alive, you need to grow. You might not need to grow physically, but you need to grow spiritually. Do you think you're too old to grow? Sometimes when we get older, it is easier to live like we're too old to grow. Some days when you wake up, you might not feel like you're able to grow. But we're not too old to grow. One of the most inspiring persons that you can read about in the Old Testament is Caleb. He was one of the ones who spied out the land. He was one of those in his youth who said, "We can do this." He went through all the trials and problems and saw the loss of all the people that were unable to share in that vision. There's a mountain there in that land. It's one of the hardest places in the whole land to conquer, but what did he say? He said, "Give that to me. That's the place I want." What a vision! He wasn't too old. "I'll do the hard work. I'll accomplish something. I'll do something that I won't be able to be around to enjoy that long, but I'm going to do it for my children and my children's children. I'm going to overcome. I'm going to grow. I'm going to be more now because I see the future and have a vision for what's needed."

I'd like to ask you a question this morning. Do you really want to renew your strength? This is a serious question. You might think that's a rhetorical question. It's not a rhetorical question. It's a serious question. Do you really want to renew your strength? Maybe I can talk you out of it. A lot of people want to be stronger spiritually the same way they want to be stronger physically in theory. Maybe no one else relates to that. I'm just having a real moment of relating to that.

We humans often are very slow in embracing change. Whenever I asked you the question—do you really want to renew your strength?—I'm asking you more than whether you just want to take a pill that makes you stronger. I'm asking you more than whether you just want to say "yes" and it happens. That's what makes it such a serious question.

A lot of us are naturally somewhat lazy. In the human family, I think that's a fairly common trait. A lot of us have a trait of laziness in a sense one way or another. We avoid change and avoid putting forth effort a lot of times. So when I asked that question about whether you really want to renew your strength, I'm not asking you if you mentally want to renew your strength. I'm not asking you if you'd like someone to force you to renew your strength. I'm asking you—do you really, really want to renew your strength?

Renewing strength often hurts. You don't really think about that. As you read the theme, I don't think the first thing that came to your mind was "that's going

to be painful.” Renewing strength often hurts; it’s uncomfortable. It’s going to cause some discomfort in different ways, because it’s going to cause you to have to do some things. You might have to give up some things, things you enjoy. You might have to give up some of your own pleasure. It might damage some relationships. It might humble you. It might cause you to go and tell someone you’re sorry for something. It might cause you to give up some bitterness that you’re holding in your heart. It might cause you to reject self in a greater way. It might make you surrender some things if you really want to renew your spiritual strength.

Did I talk you out of it yet? You see why I asked the question? Just think about it. Do we really want to renew our spiritual strength? It’s going to cost us something. We’re going to have to *do* something more, we’re going to have to *give* something more, we’re going to have to *be* something more. We might have to be more vulnerable. We might have to take some risks. Do we really want to renew our spiritual strength?

How do we renew our spiritual strength? Our passage of scripture for our theme says, “But they that wait upon the Lord.” I’d like to point what it doesn’t say. It doesn’t say *they that wait for the Lord*. I think that there are some people who have been waiting for the Lord for the last ten years to renew their strength. They just want Him to do it. My understanding of it is this wait doesn’t mean that you sit down and wait and say, “Yes, I’m waiting on the Lord.” There are times when we need to wait on the Lord to tell us what to do, but in the sense that we’re talking about, I don’t think that this verse is talking about or stressing some degree of inactivity. I think that it means that we need to attend to the Lord. We need to pay attention to Him. We need to listen to His Word. Through His Word, through the ministry, we need to listen to Him speak to us directly. We need to be attentive, listening to His Word. We need to think His thoughts.

One of the things that you hear people say is, “Well, I don’t think that’s necessary. I don’t think that’s the way it has to be. I don’t think that’s required.” I was thinking about that and I think there’s too much *I think*. There’s too much *my* understanding. There’s not enough thinking and speaking about this: What does the Lord think? What does God think? How does God see this? How does God see people? You know, He’s made it possible for us to get to know Him, to really study the Word of God and get to know Him. Not just the words, but to get to know the Spirit, the thinking of almighty God. He doesn’t hide His mind from us. He doesn’t hide His ways from us. He’s brought them forth; He wants us to get to know Him, to know His thoughts. When we start waiting upon the Lord, we need to hear His words, we need to know His thoughts. We need to receive those thoughts, we need to internalize them. They need to become ours. We can think His thoughts.

We need to watch Him work. We can see God working in people’s lives. We can see God working in our own lives. We can see and learn about God by seeing what He does and how He does it and how He cares about people. We can see it through the words of the Bible and build a picture of the way God works by the

way Jesus dealt with people, of how He cared about people, about what He was willing to do for people, about what He asked of people. We can get a true picture. Not just “I think” or “I want” or “this suits me” or “this is my interpretation.”

Another part of waiting on the Lord is being available. We can have all the best intentions in the world, but if we are not available, if we are not there, we’re not going to be able to do it. We need to wrap our lives around Him more. “That’s not easy to do,” you say. No, it’s not. We need to make sure we’re not scheduling God out of our lives by accident. We can’t wait upon the Lord while we’re doing other things, while our minds are fully engaged in what’s on our phone and what’s happening around us. We have to arrange our lives around Him. We have to spend some time to wait on the Lord. You can’t always just talk to the Lord in five minutes. It takes some time to talk to the Lord, to listen to Him, to feel what He’s trying to tell you, to get a sense of His mind and His thoughts toward you, and to feel His approval and blessing upon your life.

We also have to develop some faith. Do you already know your strength? In the physical realm you can measure your strength against other people, against how much you can lift or how much you can do or how far you can run or how fast you can run. Do you already know your spiritual strength? That’s something totally different. That doesn’t compare, because sometimes we think we know what our spiritual strength is but we’re looking through a lens that is determined by our own viewpoint of the possible. We are looking through a lens of what is humanly achievable. We’re saying, “Yes, I know that I can achieve this for the Lord.” Is that what the Lord believes? Is that how the Lord sees us? Do we see ourselves as He sees us? It takes some faith to believe that we could have more spiritual strength than we have today.

We need some vision if we’re going to wait on the Lord in a way that allows us to renew our strength. We need some vision to think about what that’s going to look like. That doesn’t necessarily mean that I’m going to recover some strength that I’ve lost or I’m going to get back to where I was last year. What if the Lord has a much bigger picture of what you’re spiritually capable of or of what you can do or what God could do through you? Someone once said that the world has yet to discover what God could do with someone that was fully committed to Him. There’s some truth to that most likely.

We have some examples of what God has done through just ordinary human beings. It’s an amazing thing. Do you have the faith to believe or accept or allow God to enlarge your vision of what’s possible? Of what your strength could be? Of what you could do? Of what He wants to use you to do and to accomplish in His kingdom? Developing faith will allow us to see greater possibilities. It will help us to make ourselves more available. Once we’ve decided our capabilities from our own viewpoint, why do I need to make myself available to do more? I’m available for God to use to do this. That’s what I’m capable of. That limits the possibilities because we’re limiting our availability. I believe that Sis. Judith from the Philippines is the one that first told me this thought: “It’s not our ability that matters to God; it’s

our availability.” That’s a beautiful truth. It can be hard to have the faith to really grasp that sometimes because we know ourselves well enough to know that we’re not that great. We don’t have some of the abilities we might need. We might be very insecure about our incapacabilities. I would never have believed when I was a young person that I would stand here and endeavor to speak to you this morning. But God had a different viewpoint. No matter how old you are today or how young you are or how knowledgeable you are or how educated you are, God sees possibilities. He wants to renew our strength.

Another way to renew our strength is that we really have to have that actual desire. We have to desire it. We have to want it. We have to get a vision of it. We have to see it as a better place. We have to see it as a better way. But even though there’s a price to be paid, it’s worth it. Is our desire really strong enough to cause us to want to pay that price, to really be willing to wait upon the Lord? The Bible tells us that “where there is no vision, the people perish” (Proverbs 29:18). We need that vision to be able to see or believe that God can truly renew our strength in a greater way.

I’d also like to mention something else in thinking about that desire and that’s the love for God that we have. I preached recently about the story of Peter and how Jesus asked him, “Lovest thou me?” I know you’re familiar with it. But that was a traumatic experience Peter went through—denying Christ and then repenting so bitterly with tears. Then he went fishing and Jesus showed up and asked him that question: “Lovest thou me more than these?” When we think about attending to Jesus and waiting upon God, do we really want to do that? It’s going to come down to whether that love is really, truly there. Jesus asked Peter something: “If you really love me, then there’s something to do. You need to feed my sheep.” We know that Peter’s strength was renewed. He went out and he accomplished more, he was more, he did more than he had ever done before because his strength was renewed.

I like to talk about some of the results and benefits of renewing our strength. This verse says “they shall mount up with wings as eagles” (Isaiah 40:31). There’s something about flying that captures the human imagination. It’s no wonder that human beings invented airplanes. You see the birds fly and it seems like they’re so much above, so free. The thought of mounting up with wings as eagles gives us a different perspective. If you mount up with wings as eagles, your problems will seem smaller. The difficulties of life won’t seem so overwhelming. You’ll be above some of the beggarly elements of the world. You’ll be closer to God.

It also says we will “run, and not be weary.” I talked about some things at the beginning that would sap your strength. They are real things. They are things all of us face. They are things that come upon all of us and they do sap our strength. But when our strength is renewed, we can do something unnatural. In the human, whenever we think about running we know that it’s for a limited time, depending upon the shape you’re in. Maybe you can run a marathon, but it’s still for a limited time. It’s going to use up your strength; you’re not

going to be able to continue. But this verse says you can run and not be weary. All those troubles of life, all those problems that you have to face aren’t going to be able to wear you down. You’re going to have this renewed strength from God. You’re going to have this spiritual strength that is going to give you the ability to do more, to run and not be weary, to face those problems of life, to face those trials, to face those persecutions and overcome them. Renewed spiritual strength is something special from the effects of the attacks of our enemy. It enables us to draw water from the wells of salvation—joy. The joy of the Lord is our strength.

Isaiah 40:31 also says that we can walk and not faint. When you think about walking, a lot of times you think that is something you can do a lot longer than running. I was thinking about walking and not fainting. The Bible talks about the highway of holiness. Somebody is going to walk there. With our renewed spiritual strength, we can walk on that highway of holiness and not faint, not quit, and not go back. Though the road might get rough sometimes, we don’t have to faint, because we’ve renewed our strength.

Renewed strength changes me. When I change, other people change. Do you believe that? It makes an impact. When I change, other people change around me. We all have an impact on someone else. When we grow spiritually, when we grow in knowledge and in character, in holiness, in enthusiasm, in usefulness, in favor with God and man, the people around us that we care about and want to help, they change, too. It’s very important that we renew our spiritual strength.

Let me come back and ask you the question I asked earlier: Do you want to renew your strength? Are you too old? Too tired? Too worn? Too discouraged? Too young? Too insufficient? Just not willing? Can you get just a little glimpse of that vision Caleb had in his old age when he said, “Give me that mountain”? Can you say, “Lord, I’m going to get close to you, I’m going to wait on you, I’m going to be near to you, I’m going to touch you, I’m going to have you renew my strength”? There are battles to be won. There are victories ahead. There’s something that needs to be done and there’s a price to be paid. As we draw near to the Lord and wait upon Him, He’s going to ask us something. I want you to know that. He’s going to ask you something. Often, it’s what He asked Peter: “Lovest Thou me more than these?” It might be something in our lives—it might not be something that’s evil or bad in itself. There might be something in our lives where He will say, “Do you love me more than this?” Whatever our *these* is. More than ourselves. More than our pride. More than our hurts. More than our bitterness. More than our loss. More than our own way. If we can honestly look in His face and say yes when He asks us that question, He’s going to give us something to do. He’s going to say, “Feed my sheep. Do my work. Give on my behalf. Go conquer that mountain that you don’t have strength to conquer. Testify of me in your words, in your attitudes, in your actions. Wait on me. Attend to my words, my instructions, my thoughts, my ways, my holiness, my mercy, and my love.” If we are willing, if we’ll do that, as sure as night follows day our strength will be renewed. †

WINNING A CROWN

By the late C. W. Naylor



Part XXXV

Living by Faith

“The just shall live by faith” (Romans 1:17). The Christian graces flourish only in the soil of faith. Under the influence of doubt they droop and die. As already stated, we should never try to trust in works in order to maintain our righteousness. “We walk by faith, not by sight” (II Corinthians 5:7). That inward, conscious, satisfying knowledge of being right with God can come only by faith. Some people are always questioning their experiences. They remind me of a man hiring out to work for another man through harvest. All goes well the first day, but the second morning when he rises he feels tired and sore from the work and probably does not feel at all inclined to begin another day’s labor. So he walks off to the field and sits down upon a stump while the rest of the laborers go to work. Presently one comes up to him and says, “What is the matter, John?” He looks gloomy and says: “Oh, I don’t feel well this morning. I think I’ve lost my job.” He is finally convinced that he has not lost his job, and is persuaded to go to work, and he gets along pretty well during the day. The next morning it is cloudy, and he walks out to the field again and sits down. Again he is asked what is the matter, and his reply is: “Oh, it’s so cloudy and threatening this morning. I think I have lost my job.” What do you suppose his employer would say? Would it be, “I am sorry for you; I think you had better go home”? No, it would be, “Get busy there. We need your help.”

Some Christians are all the time troubling themselves about having lost their job of serving the Lord. Whenever things are not just as favorable as such Christians think they ought to be, they begin to question themselves. The Scripture says, “Know ye not ... that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?” (II Corinthians 13:5). He will not cast you off unless you turn away from Him. You will not lose your job of serving Him, unless you want to lose it. If you do something that causes Him to discharge you, He will tell you plainly what it is. He will not leave you to guess and wonder. Obey Him and trust Him, and you will be His.

He who has faith has both arms and armor. It is a defensive armor to shield us against our foe. In I Thessalonians 5:8 Paul calls it a breastplate. In Ephesians 6:16 he says, “Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.” By this he means that faith is our principal protection. With his shield the ancient soldier stopped the arrows of his adversary, and with the shield of faith we may quench all the fiery darts that are shot at our souls and turn aside all the other things that would wound us. This is how we should use it for defense: Disbelieve all that contradicts God—circumstances, people, feeling, or whatever it may be. God is true no matter who or what may testify to the contrary nor how strong that testimony. If God is true, that which is

contrary to that which He says is false, and we should treat it as being false. It is by faith that we stand (Romans 11:20). We may be sure of one thing; that is, that we shall never fall by faith. We may fall by unbelief, but never by faith. No soul ever went down trusting. Take God at His Word. You need not worry about falling. Just believe. God has promised to protect you. If you will build a form about you with your faith, God will pour in the concrete until He has made a solid, impenetrable wall all around you.

Faith is not only our armor, but also our weapons of offense. John said, “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?” (I John 5:4, 5). In the eleventh chapter of Hebrews we find a list of some of the wonderful things wrought through faith. Through it armies were put to flight, the dead brought to life, and great obstacles overcome. It is our surest weapon. Let us arm ourselves with it and go forward to victory.

There is one foundation upon which we can build which will never yield. Jude speaks of it thus: “But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith” (verse 20). All other virtues must be built upon this foundation. It is the only foundation for Christian character or Christian attainment. There is no solid foundation but this. It alone will stand the tests of life’s storms. Do you want to live a victorious life? Faith is the victory. As long as you have faith, you have victory, and you will keep the victory until you surrender your faith. Therefore, hold fast your faith and confidence in God and in yourself.

There are hindrances to faith. We may either hinder or help our faith. One way in which it is often hindered is by making the promise mean someone else instead of us. It is often easier to have faith for others than for ourselves, or it seems to be easier. It looks very reasonable that God would answer the prayers of others. The promise means others; of course it does. But it means us just as well. We should not think that it is easier for others to have faith than it is for us. We should not think that God is more likely to answer others than He is to answer us. God wants us to have confidence in our own prayers. He wants us to believe that He will do as much for us as for others, and that His promise means us just as well as anyone else. His promise does mean us. God is no respecter of persons. If our hearts are true to Him, He will hear us just as quickly as He will hear anyone else. Do not let yourself get the idea that your prayers will not be heard as surely as the prayers of others. If you do, it will be a hindrance to your faith. It is not true. God gives the promise to us as well as to anyone else, and He wants us to look upon it that way, and act upon it that way. Your prayers are just as acceptable as the prayers of any other of God’s children. He will be as true to His Word in your case as in theirs. He will do for you what He will do for them, if you believe. God makes no difference between His children. He treats them all alike if they believe Him alike and obey Him alike.

Another hindrance to faith is the idea that some people have, that they must work themselves up to

The Way of Truth

some emotional state or have some particular feeling, in order to be heard. There is a great difference between faith and emotion. It is faith that brings the answer. God's promises are true no matter how we feel about them. They are true absolutely and always, and they will be made effectual for us according to our needs if we will rely upon them. But God fulfils His promises in His own way. We must leave the choosing to Him. But if we ask in a submissive way, He always answers more wisely than we ask. We must remember this one fact: that God will not take dictation from us as to how He shall answer. If we try to dictate to Him, we only put a barrier in the way of His answering us. Therefore, when you pray, pray submissively, "Not my will, but thine be done."

Many people limit God in His answering, because they are so sure just how it ought to be that God must answer their way or not at all. Is our wisdom greater than God's? Do we know what ought to be better than He knows? Sometimes people will accept an answer only in the way that they want it. God sees that they are self-willed, and so He must deny them. We cannot make God work according to our plan; we must work according to His. When we pray without submitting to His will, or give Him the privilege of answering in His own way, we are wasting our time. Not only so, but we are developing rebellion in our hearts against God. He hates self-will and stubbornness. It shows that we have more confidence in ourselves than in Him.

Confidence is the basis of faith. John says: "Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight" (I John 3:21, 22). We cannot have faith over sin in the heart. Sin is a barrier to faith unless there is repentance. The heart must be right or seeking to be right before faith can be effectual. Any unwillingness in our hearts to do all we know of the will of God or any drawing back from His commandments will act as a barrier to our faith. If our hearts bear us witness that we are doing the will of God so far as we know it, this will bring to us confidence. In this confidence we can approach God, knowing that He will hear us. Disobedience, or rebellion against anything that we know to be the will of God, is ruinous to faith, so that she cannot soar upward. Hezekiah could pray to God with faith for his healing, only because of the fact that his heart testified to his uprightness of character and his whole-hearted obedience.

Sometimes there are other things besides sin that hinder our confidence in ourselves before the Lord. Doubt, or anything that makes us question our standing, will hinder our faith. When anything comes up that makes us question ourselves, we ought to have it settled immediately, and not let it drag along to trouble us. It is our privilege to have such things settled without delay. When our good judgment tells us that we have not sinned against the Lord, we ought not to let ourselves be troubled about other things. If God, for our profit, has chastised us, or Satan has brought a feeling of condemnation upon us, or whatever it may be that

troubles us, it is our privilege to look to God through it all and count ourselves victorious. Such things need not be a hindrance to us if we will keep our confidence and our integrity steadfast.

We also must have confidence in God. We may know from a reasonable standpoint that all God's promises are true and true for us, and still we may not have that assurance and that confidence in Him which enables us to lay hold upon His promise and make it ours. Sometimes we cannot bring ourselves to feel the reality of His promises. This does not change them nor render them untrue. The question is not whether we feel that His promises are true, but whether we will believe they are true and appropriate them for ourselves.

Looking at ourselves or our failures is also a great hindrance. There is a reason for every failure, but some things that are called failures are not failures at all. It is only God answering in a different way. There are many failures because people give up too soon. They are too quick to think that if others have failed they also are sure to fail. If you have failed in the past, it is not proof that you will do so now. If you know a reason for failure, get that reason out of the way; if you can find no reason for failure, press right on till you get what you desire.

Another hindrance is trying to force faith. When we try to force it beyond its natural limit, we weaken it. We do not need to nerve ourselves up to the highest pitch in order to have faith. In fact, that has nothing to do with faith. When faith works at all, it works easily and naturally, without any straining or forcing. God is true, He has promised, and we simply take it for granted that He will do as He has promised, and rely upon that. That is faith; that is a natural operation of faith; that is the way faith reaches results. We have to develop faith. Faith is not accidental. The conditions favorable or unfavorable to it are often of our own making. Spirituality is one necessary condition. A careless life is poor soil in which to develop faith. Anything that we can do to develop our spirituality and draw nearer to God will make faith work more naturally and will make it stronger and more effectual. Carelessness in our living, neglect of prayer, and various other means by which we are made less spiritual will react upon our faith. We may build a good foundation for future action of faith by reading the Scriptures and impressing forcibly upon our minds that "this promise is true."

Whenever a doubt comes to your mind, challenge it and overbalance it with the assertion that "God is true and His Word is true." This is the way to cure your doubts. You know that God is true. Meet every doubt with a positive assertion of His trueness. Make this your daily habit. Whenever the Word of God comes to your mind, refresh yourself with the thought of its absolute truthfulness. God is true, and God is true to you. Never give place to a suggestion to the contrary, for it is not, and cannot be, the truth. Follow out this plan of impressing upon your heart and mind that God is true and that His Word is true, and you will find him becoming more and more real to you. †

THE CHILDREN'S CORNER



ALWAYS TRUE

A Bible Lesson by Sis. Rebecca Bland

"Why aren't you asleep yet?" my mother asked as she poked her head around my bedroom door. It was time for my afternoon nap, but I was wide awake.

"I can't go to sleep," I told her. "I'm not sleepy."

My mother sighed, "Well, I certainly could go to sleep," she said, "if I had half a chance. I don't know why you can't."

"Maybe I've gotten too old to take naps," I said hopefully.

"No," replied my mother firmly. "When you turn five years old, then we'll think about whether you have to take naps anymore. For now, you still need them."

"Could you tell me a story?" I asked.

My mother thought for a moment, and then she came into the room. "Maybe a short one," she said.

She lay down on the bed next to me. "What do you want me to tell you a story about?" she asked.

"Tell me about Moses," I said. "Tell me about Moses at the Red Sea."

My mother took a deep breath, cleared her throat, and began. "Moses had led the children of Israel out of Egypt after Pharaoh said they could go."

"Before that, there were a whole bunch of plagues," I offered.

"Yes," said my mother. "There was the plague of flies, the plague of frogs, the plague of lice ..."

"And the water was turned into blood," I added.

"There were ten plagues altogether," said my mother, "but Pharaoh would not let the people of God go free."

"Until the last plague," I said.

"Yes, until the last plague—the one that killed all the firstborn of Egypt," said my mother. "After that, Pharaoh was so upset he told the Israelites to get out of his land, right away!"

"God led the people by a pillar of fire at night, and in the daytime He led them by a pillar of cloud. He led them toward the Promised Land, and they were so happy and excited."

"Until they came to the Red Sea," I said.

"Until they came to the Red Sea," said my mother. "They looked at that water, and they said to each other, 'What are we going to do? How will we get across?' While they were thinking about it, they heard a sound behind them—far in the distance. What do you think it was?"

I shivered. I knew what that noise was. The scary part of the story was coming up. I couldn't wait to hear about it. No matter how many times I heard the story, it always excited me.

"The noise was Pharaoh's chariots. He was coming after the people to take them back to Egypt," I said.

"Pharaoh was coming with his army," agreed my mother. "He had changed his mind. He was coming to capture the Israelites and take them back to Egypt so they could be his slaves again."

My mother paused. During that pause, I pictured the Israelites looking back in fear at the dust cloud miles behind them. It was coming closer and closer. In the midst of that dust cloud were horse-drawn chariots carrying fierce Egyptian soldiers.

I looked over at my mother, wondering why she had not resumed the story. Her eyelids were drooping, and she seemed to be falling asleep. I nudged her. "Tell me the rest of the story," I said. "Tell me what happened next."

With an effort, my mother opened her eyes. "Where was I in the story?" she asked.

"Pharaoh was chasing after the Israelites," I said.

"Pharaoh came closer and closer," said my mother. "The Israelites looked back. They could see he would soon catch up with them." My mother's eyelids drooped, and her voice faltered and died away. I nudged her again. Her eyelids fluttered and she continued sleepily, "Finally, he caught up with them. He captured them and took them back to Egypt."

I sat straight up in bed. This was terrible news! I had never heard of this event, and I wondered what had happened to change the story I knew so well. I grabbed my mother by the shoulder and shook her awake. "Mommy!" I cried. "Did that really happen? Are you sure?"

My mother opened her eyes. "Did what happen?" she asked. "What are you talking about?"

"Did Pharaoh really catch the children of Israel and take them back to Egypt?"

"Of course not!" said my mother in surprise. "Where did you get that idea?"

"You just now said so!" I told her.

"I did?" asked my mother in surprise.

"Yes," I told her. "That's what you said!"

"Well, I must have been talking in my sleep," said my mother. "The Egyptians never caught up with the Israelites. God caused a great wind to blow, and the waters of the Red Sea parted. Moses led the people across on dry land. Pharaoh's soldiers followed them."

"But after all the Israelites had crossed, the Lord allowed the waters of the Red Sea to come back. Pharaoh's army was drowned. The children of Israel were delivered from Egyptian bondage, once and for all."

I gave a sigh of relief. The story had not changed. It still had a glorious ending.

As I grew older, I began to realize that the truth of an event does not change just because someone does not report it accurately. The value of a concept doesn't change just because someone does not explain it correctly.

This is especially true about what we find in the Word of God. Some people interpret the Bible to fit their own ideas. They try to change what God has said because they don't want to obey His commandments.

But we must remember that God's Word is forever settled in heaven. People might try to change the parts

they don't like, but God's Word remains the same. Our wise saying this month comes from Proverbs 30:8a, which says, "Remove far from me vanity and lies." A lie is never good, but the worst lies of all are the ones people tell when they try to change the Word of God.

That is why it is important for us to read and to study the Bible. The more we understand what it says, the better prepared we are to resist the lies we hear about it. Satan doesn't want us to believe the Word of God, because he knows that following the Bible will take us to heaven one day.

Activity

1. Some people say that God has chosen only a certain number of people to be saved. What Bible verse lets us know that is not true?

2. Some people say a person is not able to live without committing sin. What Bible verse lets us know that is not true?

Answer to Last Month's Activity

Matthew 6:13a—"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." †



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



QUESTION: First, I will state this verse of scripture from John 14:12, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father." No one has even come near to the great works of Jesus Christ, let alone do greater works than He has done. Just who is going to perform these "greater works" and when will it happen?

ANSWER: Jesus spoke the truth! And, He said they who believe on Him would do greater works. I think it is a mistake to think that there has to be a single case of healing greater than Christ did. I do not believe that is what the Master meant. He did not say one person would do greater works; He spoke of those who "believe on Him." His work and ministry were limited to a small part of the world. It was only for 3½ years. During His ministry He saw very few people saved, He did not lay hands on anyone to receive the Holy Spirit. On the day of Pentecost 3,000 were saved. A short time after that, when the lame man was healed, 5,000 more believed. The shadow of Peter passing over people were healed. His church carried the gospel to the then known world; congregations were established in many countries.

So I think we can say collectively, that they who have believed on Him have done a greater work. At least He said they would, and I am sure He knew whereof He spoke.

QUESTION: In Ephesians 6:12, where does the spiritual wickedness in high places come from when they come to fight a saved person?

ANSWER: I understand the "spiritual wickedness in high places" to refer not directly to the devil but to the leaders of false religion. Of course, false religion is empowered by Satan, but Paul is speaking of leaders in false religion. Many people seem to think all religion is of God, but such is not the case. According to the Scriptures, Babylon is the greatest curse this world faces.

QUESTION: What was Pentecost—Acts 2:1-13?

ANSWER: "The Feast of First-fruits was observed on the sixteenth day of Nisan, which was the second day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, 'the morrow after the Sabbath,' which 'morrow' was the special sabbath of holy convocation. It was kept by waving of a sheaf of barley before the Lord as a special sort of meat-offering, and the sacrificing of a lamb for a burnt offering with a common meat-offering of flour. This sheaf of the first-fruits of the harvest was to be offered before any of the new grain was eaten.

"Pentecost, usually called, in the Old Testament the Feast of Weeks or Harvest, was kept fifty days after the waving of the barley sheaf. Therefore after the translation of the Old Testament into the Greek language, it was called 'Pentecost,' from the Greek word for fifty. It was kept about the last of May or first of June. It was observed by the bringing of two loaves of leavened bread made of the new wheat of the harvest, which was then supposed to be all gathered. These were waved before the Lord as was the sheaf of the first-fruits, and with it they represented the consecration of the entire harvest to God. This was also a special kind of meat-offering and was accompanied with seven lambs, one bullock, and two rams for a burnt offering with their accompanying meat-offerings and a sin-offering." —R. R. Byrum, *Shadows of Good Things*.

So the Feast of First-fruits was observed at what might be called the start of harvest, and 50 days later the harvest being ended, you have what became known as "Pentecost," the Feast of Weeks; the word *Pentecost* meaning 50.

QUESTION: Please explain I Peter 4:17, 18: "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?"

ANSWER: First, let me point out, Peter is not implying God's grace is so limited we can hardly make it. Satan has used such thoughts in an effort to discourage people from serving the Lord. God will keep anyone who will take advantage of His grace.

Adam Clarke says the word translated *judgment*, in this verse, "may mean no more than afflictions and

distress; for it was a Jewish maxim that, when God was about to pour down some general judgment, He began with afflicting His own people in order to correct and amend them, that they might be prepared for the overflowing scourge."

The sixteenth verse seems to bear out this thought, for Peter said, "Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf."

The Christians did suffer before the fall of Jerusalem. However, nothing to compare to what the Jewish people suffered who rejected Christ and remained in the city when the Roman Army destroyed it. All Christians fled from the city, and not one perished in it.

QUESTION: Was Luke 16:19-31 a parable?

ANSWER: Many people try to do away with the truth of these scriptures by saying it was just a parable, but what is a parable? A false story? Certainly not! Christ said there was "a certain rich man." Need we doubt that there was? Every point in this portion of scripture cannot be taken literally. Abraham's bosom was a term used by the Jews to mean heaven. What an awakening the no-hell teachers will have when they open their eyes in torment! †



Greetings,

This month's article is taken from some thoughts given in a young people's service in 2017. It is on Time. Most of us can relate to how swiftly time goes by. As a child, time sometimes seems to stand still. However, it seems like the older we get, the faster it goes. We realize more the truth in

James 4:14, "Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." May you be blessed and encouraged by these thoughts.

Blessings,
Bro. Doug

TIME

Let's imagine there is a bank that credits your account each morning with \$86,400. It carries over no balance from day to day. Every evening deletes whatever part of the balance we failed to use during the day. What would we do? Draw out every cent, of course! Each of us has such a bank. Its name is ... TIME. Every morning, as long as the Lord lends us breath, time credits us with 86,400 seconds. Every night it writes off as lost whatever of this we have failed to invest to good purpose. And it carries over no balance. Time of today is history tomorrow.

Time is a gift from God. All of us are given the same amount. Twelve months in a year, seven days in a week,

twenty-four hours in a day, sixty minutes in an hour, and sixty seconds in a minute. And we have the responsibility to use it wisely. In Psalm 90:12 it says, "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." So how do we know how to wisely use our time? As in all areas of life, let's look at our Great Example.

Have we ever considered when studying the life of Jesus how He never seemed to be in a hurry. Although He was doing the most important job in history, redeeming the world, and although He knew He only had a few years to do it, He never raced. He made time to consider the flowers and the birds of the air. He had time to put His hands on the little children and bless them. Time was His friend. We can see from His life how He used His time here on Earth.

Time with His Father—Mark 1:35, "And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed."

Doing His Father's Will for His Life—John 5:30, "I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me."

Living for Others—Matthew 9:36, "But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd."

In James 4:14 we are told, "Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." We need to live every moment to the very best of our ability, with God's blessings and guidance. Let's use the four letters in the word TIME to help us learn its importance.

T—Treasure: Time is a valuable commodity. Every day is so precious! We should treasure it and number it. We should see our youth as a gift to be given back to the Giver. In Ecclesiastes 12:1 we are exhorted to "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them." Time is a treasure. How can we begin to comprehend its value? To realize the value of ONE YEAR, ask a student who failed a grade. To realize the value of ONE MONTH, ask a mother who gave birth to a premature baby. How valuable is an hour? Ask the businessman whose flight was delayed an hour and he missed an important business deal. How valuable is one minute? Ask the man who had the heart attack in the restaurant and an EMT happened to be sitting at the next table and CPR saved his life. How valuable is a second? Ask the person who barely missed a head on with an oncoming car. How valuable is a millisecond? Ask the Olympic swimmer who missed qualifying by six-tenths. Time really is valuable. Treasure every moment that you have! Yesterday is history. Tomorrow is a mystery. Today is a gift. ... That's why it's called the "present!" A.W. Tozer wrote: "Time is a resource that is non-renewable and non-transferable. You cannot store it, slow it up, hold it up, divide it up or give it up. You can't hoard it up or save it for a rainy day—when it's lost it's unre-

coverable. When you kill time, remember that it has no resurrection.”

I—Invest: We need to invest our time wisely. Thought should be put into how our time is invested. It reminds me of the acrostic JOY—Jesus, Others, and Yourself. So many think first of themselves and spend so much time trying to satisfy their own longings that they miss the true beauty and joy in life. We see in Matthew 22:36-40 that Jesus shares where to invest our time. It says, “Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” So time spent first with God and secondly with others, will be well invested.

We often hear phrases about investing time that aren’t really possible. We can’t buy more time and we can’t really find more time. We speak of making time, but that’s impossible too. So we can’t save time—we can only invest it. Where we invest our time reveals what is most important to us. Have we considered there are 168 golden hours in each week? The average person will spend about 56 of those hours sleeping, about 24 of those hours in eating and personal hygiene, and about 50 of those hours working, school, or traveling to and from. That means there are only about 35 hours a week of “discretionary” time left over. That’s about 5 hours per day. Where are we investing those hours? If someone were to follow us around and observe us for those 5 hours, after about 10 days, they could tell us what is most important in our life. We might not like it, or agree with it, but for some of us, surfing the Internet is most important to us. For others of us, watching entertainment or reading magazines is what’s most important. How much of that discretionary time are we devoting to your Lord? How much are we devoting to others?

M—Manage: God is the Creator of time, and He alone controls it. But He gives us the freewill and responsibility to manage our time. If we acknowledge Him in all our ways, He’ll direct our paths. In Psalm 39:4, 5 it says, “Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is: that I may know how frail I am. Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity.”

A time management expert was teaching a seminar for executives. He placed a large, clear open-mouthed jar in front of the group. Next, he put seven or eight large rocks into the jar until it was full. “Is the jar full?” he asked. Everyone nodded. Then he took pebbles and filled up the jar with the small rocks until they reached the rim. “Is the jar full?” By now, they didn’t answer. So he poured fine sand in. “Is the jar full?” Some nodded. He proceeded to take a pitcher of water and filled up the jar again. “What’s the lesson about time management?” he asked. Hands shot up, and everyone agreed, “No matter how busy you are you can always fit more things into your schedule.” “Wrong,” he replied. “The lesson is: unless you put the big rocks in first, they

never will fit in. You must figure out what the big rocks are for you.” What are the big rocks in your life? Giving time to God? Giving time to others? If you don’t put those big rocks in first, someone else will fill up your jar. There is an entire field of study called “time management.” In almost every business in America, consultants are hired to teach busy executives how to better manage their time. Time management is a hot topic. In his book, *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, Stephen Covey writes: “Time management is a misleading concept. You can’t really manage time. You can’t delay it, speed it up, save it or lose it. No matter what you do, time keeps moving forward at the same rate. The challenge is not to manage time, but to manage ourselves.” The Bible uses another word. Instead of managing your time, it speaks of “redeeming” the time, which is an even better idea. Paul writes: “See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time because the days are evil” (Ephesians 5:15). The phrase “walk circumspectly,” means to be constantly looking around to make the most of every opportunity. We should live prayerfully, looking for every opportunity to manage time wisely. When an opportunity passes, it can’t be reclaimed—it is gone forever. That’s what it means to redeem the time.

E—Enjoy: God wants us to enjoy the time that He gives. He says in the latter part of John 10:10, “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.” He has given us so many blessings. It’s a beautiful life to live for Him! Many believe that they need to go out into the world and live in sin to enjoy life. But we have the testimony of many who have chosen to live for God and receive the richer treasures. We are told in Hebrews 11:24-26, “By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.”

Timothy is another beautiful example. He shares in I Timothy 4:12, “Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.” Satan always wants what God wants. He desperately wants to steal the youthful years. He knows if he can get young people to indulge in sin, they will have regrets, and this will set them up for making wrong choices. In Ecclesiastes 12:1 we are told to “Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.”

May we have the same testimony as the Psalmist in Psalm 71:5, “For thou art my hope, O Lord God: thou art my trust from my youth.” †

"Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away" (James 4:14).

The Joy of the Lord Is Our Strength

2021 Hagerstown Convention Message by Bro. Harley McClung



BY THE HELP of the Lord, I would like to speak on a very familiar passage of scripture—Nehemiah, chapter 8, verse 10: “The joy of the Lord is your strength.” We find that this passage of scripture came from Nehemiah when he returned to Jerusalem to build the wall. God gave him a great burden after he heard the news of what all had happened there in that great city. I believe with all my heart that Nehemiah prayed and God favored him. When he returned to Jerusalem, he became engaged in doing what God had given him a burden to do, and that was to build the wall. Nehemiah gathered the people together and he told them his intentions. We are told in the Bible that the people had a mind to work. They had a mind to serve God. In the work that they were engaged in, God brought great joy to their hearts. There was joy in serving Him.

God has a purpose for all of us. As a matter of fact, God has a purpose for everybody in the world. God didn’t just give us life so that we could get into this world and serve His archenemy, Satan, or sin. No, God created us for a purpose and a reason, and that is to serve Him. In serving God, He has brought a delight to our lives. He has brought a joy to our lives. It’s a joy that’s very difficult to explain to people who have never experienced it. But these people here experienced it; they were delighted to do what God had given them to do. God gave them strength.

I think it’s worth noting here that if you observed Bro. Paul Wilson in his chairmanship here tonight, you observed a man who was really delighted in the job he was given to do. I’m telling you, he was enthusiastic. He was lively. He really was delighted that someone gave him that job, and he was ready and willing to do that job.

Most of you weren’t in ministers’ meeting this morning, but Bro. Greg asked Bro. Lehman to get up and tell about the work that he is doing with some of the people in Africa. Quite interesting. It was so delightful to just listen to this man who was so full of joy in doing what he’s involved in. You could just see it. He was delighted to be there just talking about his activities with the African people. That’s contagious. I really believe that when Bro. Doug spoke this morning and the Lord was helping him and it seemed like the words came so easily, I really believe that he enjoyed that. When I was there listening to him, you know what? I enjoyed it, too.

Nehemiah and the people enjoyed their job. They were delighted in what God had given them to do in building this wall and they had a mind to work. Everybody doesn’t have a mind to work, especially in the things and ways of God, in serving God. Thank God I enjoy it. He has placed this vivacious feeling within me that whenever I have the opportunity to tell someone about the Lord, I’m ready and willing. I really want to

help them know it. I really want to help them see it. But it’s a difficult task. It’s hard. Sometimes I get discouraged with myself because I’m unable to get people to find the joy that I have. I get a little bit discouraged until I think about Jesus. He was the greatest teacher that set foot on the face of the earth. Never a man spake like Jesus Christ. He wasn’t able to get this message over to all the people, so who am I? I need to be engaged in what God has enabled me to do and be happy in doing it. Someone said to me today, “Bro. Harley, get that frown off your face.” We sing the song: “Get that frown off your face, put a smile in its place, let the love of Jesus Christ shine through. Open up, start to sing, you’re a child of the King, now go out and face the world.” Tell the world what you are. Tell the world what God has done for you. There are a lot of people out there living in misery. There are a lot of people troubled in their lives who need this joy of the Lord in their hearts and lives.

Going back to Nehemiah. It’s worth noting that most of the people, even the children, came to the service. They weren’t compelled. They volunteered to come. After all the work was done, Nehemiah had Ezra to bring the books of the Law and he read in there for six hours! I know we’re not living back then. Some people say some ministers preach too long. That’s me. I admit I preach too long sometimes. But they sat there for six hours! They were delighted to hear the Word of God preached. They were happy because what Ezra was giving to them was something that brought joy to their souls. They had a void in their souls. They had something that they were craving, and what Ezra was reading to them gave them that fulfillment, gave them that joy.

God has given us all a vocation. God didn’t give us life just to go about serving sin or serving His archenemy, Satan. No, God gave us life so that we could serve Him. He has made it a very, very joyful vocation. The apostle Paul said to “walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called” (Ephesians 4:1). How do we walk worthy of this great vocation? I’ve meditated on that many, many times. I really believe that to really walk worthy in this vocation is to enjoy everything about it. I don’t really believe that we can do what God wants us to do if we don’t enjoy it. There are people who do this halfheartedly. There’s no joy in halfhearted service. There’s no joy in lukewarm service. As a matter of fact, it’s quite the opposite. It will bring misery. It will bring feelings of such difficulty. We have to enjoy this. I don’t mean to be critical. God forbid. I’m trying by the help of the Lord to bring a vision of the joy God gives to those that love Him.

Love is an action word. *Love* means that we’re going to put it into action and do what God wants us to do, be what God wants us to be. Barney Warren said, “I

love to serve my Jesus, a privilege sublime, My life afresh with beauty bright is sparkling all the time; Mid scenes that are unfading, of rapture and of bliss, Transported I am soaring in my Savior's righteousness." I get from that a life of joy that comes from loving to serve Jesus. People that are in sin, obviously, don't love to serve Jesus; they love to serve sin. That's what they're engaged in. That's what they're spending their lives doing. What they are persuaded by brings joy or delight to their lives. Otherwise, they'd get out of it. Otherwise, they'd give it up. They have found something else that pleases or helps them.

The joy of the Lord is your strength. I was thinking about when I first went to work for the company that I work for and now own. When I first got there, I dreaded every day to go to work. I still went out of obligation. I went because I felt I had to make a living for my family. But every single day it was a chore for me to get out of bed to go. But something happened one day. My boss gave me responsibility. With that responsibility, I took hold of that as something that was very special for me to do. If you are here tonight in sin, God has given you something really, really, really special to do and that is to serve Him. After I got involved in my new duties and responsibilities, there was something within me that gave me enthusiasm, a drive. I was determined to do that job as best as I could possibly do. I couldn't wait to get out of bed each morning to get to work. I went from one position to another position to another position to another position to another position. When we really, really desire to serve God and when we're really blessed from this vocation, this job He has given us, when we're really delighted, God will add to our responsibilities. He will give us more responsibilities. He will help us and give us a joy that's unspeakable, that's full of glory.

As Ezra preached, God helped them to understand. Understanding where joy comes from and how to obtain it is vitally important. It's very important that you and I are able to show the lost and dying world this joy. Sometimes we want to tell them, "Well, you need to do this. You need to do that. You need, you need." We have to get to the place where we get people to want it. We need to make attractive the way of God, or Christianity, because it is attractive. It's the most glorious life that men can live. It brings joy.

Joy is "a blissful feeling abiding in one's heart, soul, and mind." It produces vibrant, uninterrupted optimism, well-being, happiness, success, victory, contentment, and hope. This transcending feeling is indeed unspeakable and full of glory. "Joy," someone said, "is wings lifting God's people to soar freely above a troubled world." But if we're trying to get people to do it because they have to do it, we're sure to fail. People need to want this. We need to help them want it by showing them how beautiful this way is, how glorious this way is.

God gave Nehemiah and the people a great, great victory. He gave them the joy because of that victory. He gave them great success, and this success brought them great joy. But we find people in the world today who, seemingly, just can't grasp it. They just can't really get a hold of what we're trying to tell them. It is a very difficult thing to illustrate this great and wonderful joy.

Someone said, "Perhaps we can illustrate it best by giving the picture of a groom when he stands here at the altar with great anticipation of seeing his bride walking down the aisle." What a joy it is, what a glorious feeling it is for a man to see his bride coming down to meet him! It is said that one man seeing his bride enter the door felt so much joy that tears streamed down his face. The world knows about the joy of many things of life and they can relate to them. We need to help them see that the joy of marrying God—that's really what salvation is—is accepting Him as our husband and He accepting us as His wife, His bride. If we can get that message portrayed to them, then we can help them see this joy, this great benefit of being a Christian.

Maybe salvation can be compared to the bride seeing her groom who is very, very rich. Now she is a commoner, a pauper. She's not someone who has ever had any of the world's riches. But as she enters the aisle and looks down and sees her prince—he's a king. He has wondrous glory—what joy can fill that woman's heart as she sees him waiting down there. It may be like heaven rejoicing over one sinner repenting. As she contemplates what she's about to engage in, she understands that by making this decision she is now going to have power. She's just been a commoner. But now she has power. Now she is going to have things she never even dreamed of before. In John 15:7, it says, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

Bro. Ralph was singing a little while ago about Lord, remind me where you've brought me from. Lord, give me a memory of where I was and how destitute, how miserable, and what a terrible a life I lived. And now I have a life that's sublime. I have a life that is full of glory. Someone sang, "Once I was clothed in the rags of my sins, Wretched and poor, lost and lonely within, But with wondrous compassion, the King of all kings In pity and love, took me under His wings. Oh yes, oh yes, I'm a child of the King, His royal blood now flows in my veins; And I who was wretched and poor now can sing, Praise God, praise God, I'm a child of the King." That sounds like joy to me.

Men have pursued joy from every source imaginable. Quite frankly, there are very few people who find the Bible definition of joy. Jesus said that "few there be that find it" (Matthew 7:14). But, Sinner Friend, if you're here tonight, you can find this joy. You can experience it. Jesus has made it available to whosoever will. You can come and drink of the water of life freely. A few have found it, but most do not. Voltaire, an infidel, wrote: "I wish I had never been born." Lord Byron said, "The worm, the canker, and grief are mine alone." Jay Gould, a millionaire, said, "I suppose I am the most miserable man on Earth." Alexander the Great wept, saying, "There are no more worlds to conquer."

Most don't find joy, because they search in the wrong places. They try to find it in the world. People are running to and fro, here and there, after the world. Jesus came into the world to help people find truth, salvation, and this great joy. He met some people and He told them, "You are stiff necked." He didn't really want to offend them, but He did offend them. He wanted them

to get out of their lives of misery and come to the place where they could find joy and have a life of glory. Most find it not, because they search in the wrong places. Sin never offers joy. It'll offer a little fleeting pleasure here and there. Joy supersedes fun. A lot of people are running to and fro to be entertained this way or that way, but joy supersedes fun. *Fun* is "mere excitement, amusement, or pleasure." A man anticipating death penned these last words to a friend: "It's an evil world, an incredibly evil world that we live in. But I have discovered in the midst of a quiet and holy people who found a great secret—joy—which is a thousand times better than all the pleasures of sin or that sin offers. These people of God are despised and persecuted, but they care not. They have Christ as the master of their souls. They serve Him and are delighted to do so. They have overcome the world. They are Christians. Thank God I am one of them."

Tonight if we could only help people understand the glories of being a Christian and the joy that comes to us every day. Every day we can experience the joy of having Jesus Christ as our companion, our guide, our shepherd. He said with promise: "I'll never leave you. I'll never forsake you." We read of Moses, who understood clearly what a life of living in the world would bring to him. He understood what the ultimate results of living in the world would mean to him. He understood that there were consequences. Those consequences of living in sin were troubling to him. Sinner Friend, if you really give thought to the end of your life, it cannot be a source of joy unless you turn your heart and life over to Christ. "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin" or of fun "for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches" or greater joy "than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward" (Hebrews 11:24-26).

Jesus gave us a parable in Matthew 13:44: "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field." If you have ever tasted this joy, you'll get a little taste of its worth. This man in the parable got a glimpse, a little vision. We need a vision, we need an understanding of what God has to offer to us. We need a vision to help us comprehend that God didn't mean for us to live in misery. Whenever He created Adam and Eve, He gave them a beautiful garden to live in so that everything in that garden would bring joy to their hearts and their lives. God has given to us all things to enjoy. He doesn't want us to live in misery. He doesn't want us to live in a lifestyle that brings misery or something less than this glorious joy that He has for our lives and our hearts.

"Again the kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure ..." This joy, I believe with all my heart, is a treasure in my heart that strengthens me. It delights me that no matter what I face, no matter what I encounter in this Christian race, I believe that this joy that He has imparted to me helps me go on, helps me face every situation, gives me that determination that whatever

I face I'm going to have the joy, the grace, the power of God to help me. Jesus came to give us a kingdom, the kingdom of God. He said, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32). Not a literal kingdom of a thousand years. No. People are looking for something material, literal. This is a spiritual kingdom. The apostle Paul said that this kingdom is not meat or drink, but it is a kingdom that yields joy and peace and righteousness in the Holy Ghost. Joy is spiritually a balm that heals the mind, the bodies, and souls of men. Notice that it is a kingdom, it's a realm, it's a domain, it's an estate of joy. All living in this kingdom have joy. Everyone that is saved has joy. Is there more joy that we can have? Bro. Doug said this morning that we can grow. Even old people can grow. We can grow in grace. We can grow in knowledge. As a matter of fact, that is a command. I don't take that as an option. If we grow in grace and we grow in knowledge, we're going to grow in joy. We're going to have more joy today than we had yesterday. We could have more joy in the future than we have today. To me, that is appealing.

When I first was saved there at that altar, when I stood up knowing that I had asked God to forgive me and believing with all my heart that He did forgive me, the burden of those sins was gone. The fear of tomorrow was no more. What He gave me right then and there was a delight in my heart that made me want to keep on keeping on. Yes, I faced trials, many trials, severe trials. When Nehemiah got to Jerusalem to build the walls, he faced many trials. The enemy was not going to allow him to have just an easy way. Many times, sinners look at what they believe is a hard way when it comes to living as a Christian. If you really love this life, it's easy. It's glorious. As a matter of fact, whenever we look at the Christian life only those who really, really want to live it are living it. Only those who really love God are living in this life. Only those that really, really love God obey Him. It's a delight to us to obey Him, to serve Him.

Bro. David and I were talking this morning about obeying God and looking at the Scriptures and the letter. I believe with all my heart tonight that if we try to live by what the Bible teaches it becomes just the letter of the law. But when we love to do what it tells us to do, when we really want to do what it tells us to do, that's freedom. That's when we really are doing what we want to do. We're doing it because we love God, we love our Savior, we love this truth, we love this way, because this way yields joy for us.

All living in this kingdom have joy. Who are they? Those walking in faith. Paul said they are filled with all joy in believing. All who serve God. Isaiah 65:14 says, "My servants shall sing for joy of heart." There was great joy in that city from those who were freed from great bondage. John 15:11, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." Jesus was speaking about keeping His commandments, doing what He tells us to do, indeed. Let me tell you something, if we love Jesus with all of our hearts, we're not going to find it difficult to obey Him or serve Him. We're going to love it. We're going to be delighted that we're engaged in it.

Sinner Friend, won't you, at least, try Jesus? David said, "O taste and see that the Lord is good." Those that really have the joy are those that love and worship Him as His disciples did. They really, really loved worshiping the Lord, because they loved Him. Those that are suffering in tribulation for the cause and the service of God are filled with joy and they are living in the Spirit.

A fruit of the Spirit is joy. I know that there are others that are mentioned—love, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance—against such there is no law. You can have all the joy you want, because there is no law against it, as long as it comes from God. But to obtain this kingdom of peace and joy, Jesus told Nicodemus, "Ye must be born again." You need to have a change of heart. Whenever you have that change of heart, then you have that new heart where you love God. Loving God and loving the things of God bring a delight that supercedes everything that this world has to offer. God has given us the freedom to choose a life of blessing and cursing. God help us to choose the life of joy.

I have something here I'd like to read—

It was a long, weary road my Savior walked when He carried that cross for me. It was a painful crown He wore climbing the hill of Calvary that day. They nailed Him to the cross He bore for all of my guilt, all of my sin, all of my stained life. They beat Him. They scorned Him. They spat in His face. As the crowd cried, "Crucify, crucify, crucify Him! oh, the agony He must have felt inside! but still He thought of me so lost. Oh, the pain and shame He felt when it should have been me on that cross! The clouds turned black and light to darkness as His blood came streaming down. That very same blood that washed my stain grew stronger as it fell to the ground. As His precious Spirit parted to leave His body so bruised and so broken, He lifted His head and I could hear Him cry, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

I know that I can never repay the debt of love that I owe to my precious Savior who suffered on the cross such a long, long time ago. Often I ask, "How can I repay Him for answering this one lost sinner's plea? He said, "Just pick up your cross and follow me."

But it is not enough to just pick up our cross and follow Him. We need to pick up our cross and follow Him joyfully. God wants people that love Him to follow Him. Those that truly, truly love Him will follow Him joyfully, not because they have to. They follow Him because it's a delight to do so. It's a joy for them to do so. But many times we try to tell people of the goodness of God, and we find that they are rebellious. Rebellious people are not a happy people.

Tonight, if Jesus is tugging at your heart, if He is showing you somehow, somehow that you can live a life of joy and peace and contentment, don't be stubborn about it. Have a heart where you're willing to receive with meekness the engrafted Word to the saving of your soul that you might experience this glorious joy and freedom.

Next to the gospel of love, the gospel of joy and hope is perhaps the most blest story of life. It makes us optimistic for tomorrow, and we look for bright skies, August 2021

good health, congenial work, true friends, and joy in a secure, happy future. When God gives us His great salvation, He gives us a life of hope. He gives us an opportunity to know beyond any shadow of a doubt that if we leave this world today all is well between our souls and our Maker.

I would like for us to sing "I'll Live for Him." †

BIBLE LESSON OF THE MONTH

PRACTICAL CHRISTIAN LIVING WHEN THE CHRISTIAN MARRIES

Scriptures: Genesis 2:18, 24; 24:26, 27, 40, 50, 57, 58, 60, 67.

Genesis 2:18 And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.

24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

Genesis 24:26 And the man bowed down his head, and worshipped the Lord.

27 And he said, Blessed be the Lord God of my master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of his mercy and his truth: I being in the way, the Lord led me to the house of my master's brethren.

40 And he said unto me, The Lord, before whom I walk, will send his angel with thee, and prosper thy way; and thou shalt take a wife for my son of my kindred, and of my father's house.

50 Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said, The thing proceedeth from the Lord: we cannot speak unto thee bad or good.

57 And they said, We will call the damsel, and inquire at her mouth.

58 And they called Rebekah, and said unto her, Wilt thou go with this man? And she said, I will go.

60 And they blessed Rebekah, and said unto her, Thou art our sister, be thou the mother of thousands of millions, and let thy seed possess the gate of those which hate them.

67 And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.

Memory Verse: Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.—Matthew 19:6.

Aim: To teach that God is interested in our happiness and has a plan for our lives.

INTRODUCTION

MAN frequently has to make important decisions, and his life is influenced much by those decisions. The most important decision he makes is in regard to his relationship with God, and the second most important decision is in his choosing of a life's companion. In making this choice he certainly needs assistance that only God is able to give. But how few people seek the help of God in this matter! With many, marriage is only an adventure and, thus, is as easily forsaken as it was taken up. God holds man responsible for his marriage contract, and since marriage is His institution, man will answer to Him for the things that

he does in regard to it. Companionship is beautiful indeed, if the Lord is in it; therefore, we should earnestly seek His guidance, and take Him into consideration in our quest for a companion.

God made the world and all that is in it. Man and woman are the crown of His creation. Since He placed man above everything else, it is only reasonable to think that He gave the greatest care to make all things that his happiness would be complete. It is certain that if men and women will abide by the commands of God, life has great things to offer. Everyone should feel his responsibility to God, to his nation, and to his fellow-men. First, we should deeply desire to carry out the will of God, and we should desire that our nation before God should prosper. If we allow the institution of the home to be broken down, then we may expect that the nation will soon fall. Selfishness in the married life will be reflected in the ill effect it has on the nation. We hope that the importance of this lesson may make its impression upon everyone.

MEDITATIONS

GOD RECOMMENDS MARRIAGE—Genesis 2:18—Not good that the man should be alone—Due to the natural makeup of man, it is not good that he should live by himself. His happiness cannot be complete without a wife. God recognized this fact and proceeded to create for him one whom He was pleased to call a help meet. So for Adam He created Eve. In making the institution of the home, He also made laws to govern the conduct of the home, which, if followed, bring the greatest degree of happiness, and, if broken, end in disappointment and sorrow.

STARTING A NEW HOME—Genesis 2:24—Shall a man leave—When a couple marry, there is formed the nucleus for an entirely new home, and God ordains that they shall leave the old roof and establish an entirely new home. Christ is ordained to be the spiritual Head of this new establishment; and if He is given His rightful place, the home is certain to be successful. God mysteriously unites them together, and their purposes and aims and efforts become one. If sin is permitted to enter and Christ is deprived of His rightful place, the purposes and aims are not one, and division and trouble are certain. Only God can mend such a condition.

AN UNUSUAL ERRAND—Genesis 24:26—Bowed down his head—Abraham sent his servant to search for a wife for his son, Isaac, who was forty years old. The servant evidently knew God, as we see from his conduct, and he leaned heavily upon Him in carrying out his mission. He considered that he had been prospered in his journey by God to this present point, and he did not fail to give God the praise.

Genesis 24:27—Not left destitute—The men of that day had a sense of truth and valued it highly. It is the same truth that Pilate asked Jesus about and of which he was so ignorant. The truth of the Word of God has not changed through the years. We have more of it in our day than men had in that day. They were responsible only for the light of truth they had; we are responsible for the truth we have. Obedience to the known

will of God always brings favor with God, regardless of the time or the people.

CHOOSING WISELY—Genesis 24:40—Shalt take a wife—Abraham saw the inadvisability of choosing a wife of the people who surrounded him. They were given over to idolatry, but his servant must return to Abraham's people and there select a woman of his relatives. These people, without doubt, had some knowledge of the true and living God. So it is today. Christians should choose companions who are of the Christian faith, having the sound teachings of the Word of God in their hearts. To marry into false religion is disastrous, indeed. Avoid catastrophe by marrying a saint.

ACKNOWLEDGE GOD'S HAND—Genesis 24:50—Proceedeth from the Lord—It is evident that these men had some knowledge of God, or they would not have been able to recognize the hand of God in the matter. Knowing it to be the Lord's working in it, they would not dare to say anything against it; yet they desired to keep Rebekah and would say nothing for it.

REBEKAH DECIDED—Genesis 24:57—Inquire at her mouth—Usually women had little to say in those days about such matters. As Rebekah was allowed to have a say in the matter, she must have been highly esteemed and considered capable of making her own decision.

DECIDING FOR LIFE—Genesis 24:58—Wilt thou go—We are prone to think that Rebekah had contact with God, or she would have been hesitant about going with this stranger to such a distant land in those days of slow travel. It would be difficult for her to return, should she be desirous of doing so. How beautiful it is to have the mind of the Lord in such matters! If God be for us, who can be against us? She was making a decision that would bind her for life and, doubtless, would change her manner of living altogether. But she knew that if God was in it, it would be a change for the better and not for the worse.

GOING WITH A BLESSING—Genesis 24:60—The mother of thousands—We note here that it was considered a blessing to be the mother of great posterity. How different things are today! The devil has been successful in magnifying the sorrow, discomfort, and inconvenience of motherhood until women try desperately to avoid this God-given privilege. God closed the womb of Rebekah, and she did not bear children for some years; however, from this union was carried on the line of the Israelitish nation, which became a power in the world and greatly affected the history of mankind. The history of the world today would be quite different if all women had yielded their bodies to the Lord without reserve. **Verse 67—Became his wife**—Abraham's wife, Isaac's mother, had died, and the need of guidance in the home was very evident. Rebekah filled this place, and it was one of great responsibility, for the family of Abraham was great and widely known. But she (as is the case of anyone who walks into a life of responsibility) did not find a life of ease. Difficulties surmounted build character, and difficulties unsurmounted bring disaster. Every person, when he or she marries, walks into a place of great responsibility; therefore, the need of great consideration when the step is taken.

CONCLUSION

Marriage should NEVER be entered into lightly! It is one of the most serious parts of your life. It will affect your life as nothing else will. In importance I would put it second only to the soul's salvation. That is why marriage is not for teenagers. I say kindly, but truthfully, teenagers, especially those 16, 17 years of age, just simply do not realize, as yet, the seriousness of life; they do not understand the problems of life. And many of us as parents have failed to teach them, even at that age, the things they need to know, and, sad but true, many of the children and young people won't listen when they have parents who do try.

God's plan is for marriage to be for LIFE! "Till death parts." That is God's plan, and it will be so if His will is carried out. God has not provided for "trial marriages," as some ungodly people are talking of now.

I trust the study of this lesson will be a help to each student. Whether you be married, or one who plans to get married, study the Scriptures and let them be your guide.


FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

1. What are the first and second most important decisions in life?
2. Why is it necessary that we have God's approval in our choice of a companion?
3. Why should a man forsake his old home when he marries?
4. Why did Abraham send his servant so far to get a wife for his son?
5. What method did the servant use in arriving at the right choice?
6. In return for the help received, what did the servant do?
7. What was the blessing that was given to Rebekah as she de-parted?
8. What responsibility do men and women have to their God and to their nation? †

WITHOUT FAITH

IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO PLEASE GOD

Radio Message by the late Bro. Alvin Craig,
delivered 8/19/01

 UR SUBJECT for the broadcast today is "Without Faith It Is Impossible to Please God." We'll use as a text of scripture, Hebrews, chapter 11, verse 6: "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

I'm sure that it is the desire of every Christian to please God. Our text of scripture tells us, "Without faith it is impossible to please [God]." So we do need to have faith in God. I'm sure that all of us can increase in faith. I'm sure that every Christian listening to this broadcast will acknowledge, "Well, I do not have as much faith as I would like to have. I would like to have more faith."

But you had to have faith to become a Christian. Without faith in God's promises and of His willingness to forgive, you could not be forgiven. So every Christian does have faith. Not only does it take faith to become a Christian, but it takes faith to remain a Christian, for the just shall live by faith. I'm sure that it is our desire, as Christians, to increase in faith, and it is our desire to please almighty God.

I would like for us to look at some examples of unbelief and to see the dire consequences of them:

First of all, I refer to the time when Moses sent twelve spies to spy out the land of Canaan before the children of Israel were going to invade the land to possess it. They chose twelve outstanding people to go into the land and to spy out the land. These men were gone for forty days. When they came back, two of them gave a good report, and ten of them did not give a good report. Ten of them said, "We're not able to possess the land. There are walled cities there, and we look like grasshoppers in their sight. If we go in there, our women will be ravaged, and our children will be slain."

But two of the twelve, Joshua and Caleb, were of a different spirit. They had faith in God. They believed God's promises. They knew that God had promised them that land for an inheritance and they believed God. Caleb said, "We are well able to go up and possess that land." But the multitudes believed the ten instead of the two. In fact, they were so moved by a rebellious spirit that they were ready to stone Moses and Joshua and Caleb. This displeased God very much. Because of their unbelief, God said that they would wander in the wilderness for forty years—one day for each year that the spies had been in the land. Forty years they would wander until all the adult men would die off and then those children and younger ones would go in and possess the land as God had promised. So after the forty years of wandering, the older ones died off. The others that grew to manhood under the leadership of Joshua went into the land of promise and possessed it.

We read in the times of the Lord Jesus and His sojourn here on Earth that He was not able to do mighty miracles in His hometown of Nazareth because of the unbelief of the people. They had seen Him grow up from childhood and they considered Him just another ordinary man. They did not believe in His Messiahship and they did not believe in His miracle-working power. So the Bible tells us that Jesus was unable to do many mighty works in Nazareth because of their unbelief.

We read in the book of II Kings of something, I suppose would be revulsion to us, but nevertheless, the Bible records it, and it is recorded there for our benefit. Remember, the Bible tells us that the things that are written therein are written for our admonition and for our learning. I speak of the time as recorded in II Kings, chapter 6, where King Benhadad of Syria besieged Samaria, which was of the capital of the little northern kingdom of Israel. He had besieged the city, surrounded it, cut it off, and starvation had set in. There was great starvation in that city.

Let me read to you just one incident of what was going on in Samaria as it was being besieged by the

army of the Syrians. I'll begin reading from the twenty-sixth verse of II Kings 6: "And as the king of Israel was passing by upon the wall, there cried a woman unto him, saying, Help, my lord, O king. And he said, If the Lord do not help thee, whence shall I help thee? out of the barnfloor, or out of the winepress? And the king said unto her, What aileth thee? And she answered, This woman [speaking of another woman] said unto me, Give thy son, that we may eat him to day, and we will eat my son to morrow. So we boiled my son, and did eat him: and I said unto her on the next day, Give thy son, that we may eat him: and she hath hid her son. And it came to pass, when the king heard the words of the woman, that he rent his clothes; and he passed by upon the wall, and the people looked, and, behold, he had sackcloth within upon his flesh." That gave us an idea of the dire circumstance that was there in Samaria at that time.

Notice now in the first and second verses of the seventh chapter of II Kings, where Elisha said, "Hear ye the word of the Lord; Thus saith the Lord, To morrow about this time shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria. Then a lord on whose hand the king leaned answered the man of God, and said, Behold, if the Lord would make windows in heaven, might this thing be? And he said, Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof." It really took something for this man of God, Elisha, to make such a prophecy. Whenever they were starving to death, and even buying bird's dung to eat, this man of God said, "Tomorrow about this time, you're going to be able to buy food at a very low price."

During the night, there were four lepers outside the gates of Samaria, and they decided that they would go to the camp of the Syrians because they said, "Well, if we remain here, we're going to die, but if we go to the camp of the Syrians and they kill us, what's the difference? But if we can go to the camp of the Syrians and they are kind enough to give us something to eat, then we'll not starve to death." So they decided to go into the camp of the Syrians. Lo and behold, when they got to the camp of the Syrians, they found the camp deserted, as far as man was concerned. The army of Syria had heard a certain sound that had scared them, and they fled for their lives and left all their provisions behind. These four lepers ate all they could eat and then they said, "Well, we shouldn't just stay here. Let us inform the people of Samaria what has happened." The gate was opened and the people rushed out of the gate to get to the camp of the Assyrians that they might get food. As the people rushed out of the gate, they trampled to death this man who had doubted the word of the prophet. Elisha had said this man would behold it, but he would not be able to eat the food that he prophesied would be so abundantly supplied the very next day. The word of the prophet came to pass just as he said.

Beloved, whenever God speaks—even though it be through His servant—we need to believe what He has to say, for God cannot lie. The man who doubted did not partake of the food, but those who rushed out were able to get an abundant supply of food and the siege was lifted.

Now let us look at some who believed and who saw God working in their midst. The prophet Elijah, who was before the prophet Elisha, had prophesied that it would not rain until he gave the word. So there was a drought of more than three years. There was starvation again, and water was not found. Food was very scarce. Elijah contested the four hundred and fifty false prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel and showed who was the true and living God. He challenged them to prove who was the true and living God. They prayed for hours and nothing happened. Then Elijah prayed, and God sent fire from heaven and consumed the sacrifice. Before he prayed, Elijah gave the message to King Ahab that there was the sound of an abundance of rain. Elijah said unto Ahab, "Get thee up, eat and drink; for there is a sound of abundance of rain" (I Kings 19:41). After Elijah said those words to Ahab, Elijah went to pray, but he didn't get the answer the first time. He didn't get the answer the second time, the third time, the fourth time, the fifth time, or the sixth time. Each time Elijah prayed, he sent his servant out to look. After Elijah had prayed the seventh time, the servant came back and said, "There ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand."

Elijah had to be a witness that God had heard his prayer. Believe it or not, Elijah took off running and he outran King Ahab in his chariot back to Jezreel. Yes, God just girded that prophet up and gave him such strength and speed of legs that he outran Ahab and his chariot. There was an abundance of rain just as Elijah had said that there would be.

We read in the New Testament about a centurion, a soldier who was in charge of a hundred men. He had a servant that he loved and appreciated very much. We read about this in Matthew, chapter 8, verses 5-13. This servant was sick and this centurion had heard of Jesus. He went to Jesus and asked Him to heal his servant. Jesus said, "I'll come and heal him." But the centurion said, "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it." When Jesus heard the centurion say to Him, "All you need to do is just speak the word and my servant will be healed," He marveled and said to them that followed Him, "Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." This Gentile centurion manifested greater faith than the Israelites did, according to Jesus' statement, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." Whenever He turned to the centurion, He told him to go. As the centurion went, his fellow soldiers met him and told him the time that his servant had been healed. The centurion knew that it was the very same hour that Jesus had said to him, "Go thy way; your servant is healed."

We read of Jesus walking along. A great throng of people was around Him. There was a woman that had an issue of blood and she had been going to the doctors and spent all she had, but she did not get any better. She grew worse. But whenever she was in the area where Jesus was, she said in her heart, "If I can but

touch the hem of His garment, I know I shall be made whole." She pressed through the crowd and touched the hem of His garment. The very instant she touched Jesus' garment, she was healed. Jesus asked, "Who touched me?" The disciples answered, "Well, Master, with all of this throng around you, you ask, 'Who touched me?'" This was a special touch, for she touched Him by faith and said within herself, "If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole" (Matthew 9:21). She touched Him by faith and she was made whole. She was healed instantly.

Hebrews 11:6, "Without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

James 5:15, "The prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up."

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

Whether it is the salvation of the soul, the healing of the body, or the answer of prayer in some other area of our lives, it takes an unwavering faith in God. "But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord" (James 1:6, 7). Have faith in God. †

THE POETRY PAGE

THE PATH

Colette Fedor

God's wisdom is within us
Showing us the way,
To live each day for Him alone
And from the path not stray.

The path is strewn with many thorns
And snares to block our way,
But these are only stepping stones
To teach us how to pray.

It's for His will, not ours you see
That we are meant to be,
And every prayer is one more step
On the pathway to be free.

WHERE HE LEADS

Margaret Loyd Rockwood

Do not question where He leads
But if you choose to follow,
The path is straight and sometimes steep
And you'll find joy and sorrow.

There may be thorns along the way
But roses bloom there too,
There may be cloudy, gloomy days
Then skies of azure blue.

A happy heart won't always smile
On this side of the river,
But promises He'll always keep
He said "I'll leave you never."

THE FAULT IS MINE

Edith M. Lee

Sometimes God seems so far away,
The mists between so dense,
My heart is filled with sudden dread,
Foreboding, and suspense.

The very prayers I utter
Come straightway back through space—
Too weak to make their faltering way
Up to the throne of grace.

And then again, God seems so near,
I cannot but believe;
His faintest whisper rings as clear
As vesper chimes at eve.

"I'll never leave thee nor forsake,"
His gentle whisper saith;
And what had caused my sudden dread
Was just my lack of faith!

HE MAKETH NO MISTAKE

A. M. Overton

My Father's way may twist and turn,
My heart may throb and ache,
But in my soul I'm glad I know
He maketh no mistake.
My cherished plans may go astray,
My hopes may fade away,
But still I'll trust my Lord to lead
For He doth know the way.
Tho' night be dark and it may seem
That day will never break;
I'll pin my faith, my all in Him,
He maketh no mistake.
There's so much now I cannot see,
My eyesight's far too dim;
But come what may, I'll simply trust
And leave it all to Him.
For by and by the mist will lift
And plain it all He'll make,
Through all the way, tho' dark to me,
He made not one mistake. †

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OUT OF BOX 88

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus,

I have been meaning to write to you for some time, but it seemed that something always came up and I forgot.

I have been receiving the paper for almost 50 years now. God has put on my heart to help you and pray for you.

Bro. Marquiss came to our camp meeting back in the fifties as our first evangelist at our camp meeting. I am thankful to have received the paper ever since. I receive a blessing from reading the messages in there.

I am thankful that you stand for the true Church of God and His holy Word. Praise God for the glorious bride of Christ that He has built upon the truth that He is truly the Son of the living God.

May God richly bless and keep you in His everlasting love.

—B. E., Missouri

ADD A NAME TO OUR MAILING LIST

If you know of someone you feel would appreciate this magazine, feel free to send us the name. Please make sure he/she wants it and it won't be refused.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

STATE _____ ZIP _____

LABOR DAY MEETINGS

HATTIESBURG, MISSISSIPPI

Church of God at Bellevue

2802 Highway 589

September 1-5, 2021, Lord willing

Bro. Darrell Sanford, Pastor

Service times:

Wednesday thru Friday, 7 PM

Saturday and Sunday, 10 AM & 6 PM

Cookout on Monday



CARMICHAEL, CALIFORNIA

Church of God

5334 Whitney Ave.

September 2-5, 2021, Lord willing

Bro. David Goble, Pastor

Service times:

Thursday & Friday, 7 PM

Saturday and Sunday,

10 AM & 6 PM General services

Also 4 PM Youth Services

Theme: "Conquering and to Conquer"

(Revelation 6:2)