

The Way of Truth

Vol. 79

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

No. 11

“Am I a Profitable Servant?”

Message begins on page 5

December 2021

IN HIM SHOULD ALL FULNESS DWELL

WHY DID God send His only begotten Son into this sinful world? Didn't He know what was going to happen? Didn't God know that Jesus would be rejected of men and brutally crucified? Didn't He know that the multitudes would despise Him through the generations? Of course, He did! It was love that caused God to allow it all to happen, for only by doing so could there be any hope for mankind. John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Not only would Jesus Christ shed His blood for the sins of humanity, but it pleased God that in Christ should all fulness dwell.

Colossians 1:12-19: "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell."

The words of an old hymn reverberate in my soul— "O how I love Him! How I adore Him!

My breath, my sunshine, my all in all.

The great Creator became my Savior,

And all God's fullness dwelleth in Him."

If we go back in time, we will find that Christ has always existed. Jesus said in John 8:56-58: "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad. Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am."

And John 1:1-5 declares, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not."

Christ was adored in heaven before His advent. Hebrews 1:1-6 declares, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat

down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son? And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him."

We find abundant evidence of this Christ active in the Old Testament. "Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; And did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ" (I Corinthians 10:1-4). The Son of God was seen coming to the aid of the Hebrew Three when they were thrown into the fiery furnace.

When the time came, Christ consented to come to earth in the form of flesh. "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

Numerous prophecies foretold of His coming, such as Isaiah 9:6: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."

Jesus was conceived and named. Luke 1:26-38: "And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible. And Mary said, Behold the

ABOUT THE COVER

On our front is a picture of a winter scene by a river in Sweden. The snowy atmosphere reminds us of the promise of God's mercy in words of Isaiah, "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow" (1:18).

THE WAY OF TRUTH

(Registered Trademark)

Vol. 79 December 2021 No. 11

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

Published by the Church of God which assembles at 12819 Point Salem Road in Hagerstown, Maryland. Publishing office: 12811 Point Salem Road, Hagerstown, Maryland, U.S.A.

The Way of Truth is published without any given subscription price, and is supported by freewill offerings from our readers and funds supplied by the local congregation. It is sent out free to anyone who is interested enough to ask for it. We shall continue this policy as long as God sees fit to make it possible. FOREIGN READERS are requested to write us at least once a year if they wish to continue receiving the paper the following year. Address all correspondence to: The Way of Truth, P. O. Box 88, Hagerstown, Maryland 21741, U.S.A. Always when writing, give your name and address clearly, please.

—Gregory E. Tyler, Editor

Our telephone number is 301-739-2980

Our fax number is 301-739-7173

Our e-mail address is truth@fred.net

Visit our website at www.wayoftruth.org

Jesus was and is indeed the Christ! John 4:42 declares it: "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." Peter confirmed it in Matthew 16:16: "And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

In Him does all God's fulness dwell! love—grace—compassion—longsuffering—kindness—faithfulness—He provides power, forgiveness, peace, rest.

"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36).

Though He was crucified, the grave could not hold Him! Acts 17:3: "Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ."

"In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (II Corinthians 4:4-6).

Yes, in Jesus Christ does all fulness dwell. Let us not be sidetracked by modern thinking. It is this Great One whom we should worship and adore. †

handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her." Jesus the Christ—the Spirit of Christ came and inhabited Jesus!

Jesus had a humble birth. He was the King of kings and Lord of lords, yet He was born in a stable. Luke 2:7-14 tells a remarkable story: "And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

Satan tried to destroy Him but he could not, for in Him did all God's fulness dwell!

In Him was every prophecy fulfilled. Micah 5:2: "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."

Acts 3:18 says, "But those things, which God before had showed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled."

IN THIS ISSUE:

Why Jesus Came	Page 2
<i>Radio message by the late A. A. Craig</i>	
The Poetry Page	Page 4
<i>Proclaiming the Savior's birth</i>	
Am I a Profitable Servant?	Page 5
<i>Full-length sermon by Dave Goble</i>	
The Children's Corner	Page 10
<i>"Angels in the Snow," by Rebecca Bland</i>	
Shadows of Good Things	Page 11
<i>Part III of the book by the late R. R. Byrum</i>	
Forgiveness	Page 13
<i>Article by the late Hoyt Matthews</i>	
Renewing Our Strength To Be an Overcomer	Page 15
<i>Full-length message by Raymond Martin</i>	
Bible Lesson of the Month	Page 18
<i>"God's Unspeakable Gift"</i>	
The Question Box	Page 20
<i>Our monthly feature</i>	
Young People's Page	Page 21
<i>"Conformity to Christ," by the late R. L. Berry</i>	

WHY JESUS CAME

Radio Message by the late Bro. Alvin Craig

(aired 12/22/91)



ON TODAY'S broadcast, I would like for you to think with me on this thought: "Why Jesus Came."

The world was in darkness. Sin was blinding and binding the minds and hearts of the people. There were religions of various kinds to be found in the nations of earth, but still sin abounded everywhere. Yes, there were a few righteous people. There were some who actually knew the true and the living God.

There was a man who lived near Jerusalem who, as a priest, served at the temple when his time came or his course came. This man, Zacharias, was married to a godly woman named Elisabeth. They were childless and advancing in years. The Bible says that they were both righteous before God.

One day Zacharias was visited by an angel while he was ministering in the temple. The angel came with this news: "Thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John" (Luke 1:13). The angel went on to tell Zacharias the work that his son would do: "He shall go before him [speaking of Christ] in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Luke 1:17).

Later, we find an angel, Gabriel, being sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth. He was sent to a virgin named Mary. She was to be the mother of the world's Redeemer. Mary makes a visit to her cousin Elisabeth in the hill country of Judea. Then she returns to Nazareth and later, with her husband Joseph, they return to Judea, this time coming to the little town of Bethlehem, as they were both of the house and lineage of David. While there, the Scriptures tell us, Mary gave birth to the promised Savior.

Isaiah asked, "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" (Isaiah 53:1). Down through the ages, not just during the time of the period that we are speaking of, many have doubted and many have not believed. Still today, people pass off the above facts as myths. But nevertheless, "The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up" (Matthew 4:16).

Isaiah goes on in chapter 53 to tell us: "For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him." So the Messiah, in a physical way, was not some handsome, good-looking man that would naturally draw people to Himself. No, Jesus did not look like the pictures that we see of Him that are drawn today. "And when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him," Isaiah said. Jesus did not come to lead a popular religious crusade. He did not come to throw the Romans out of the Holy Land, as so many Hebrews in that period of time thought. Jesus did not come to establish an earthly kingdom. Some

thought so in that day, and some still think so today, but He did not come to establish an earthly kingdom. Isaiah speaks in the third verse of Jesus' rejection by men, of His sorrows and His grief, of His being despised and not being esteemed.

Why then did the Messiah, the Son of God, come into this sin-cursed, sin-darkened world? I trust you'll notice as I read these passages of scripture of Isaiah 53, the real reason why Jesus came. In verses 4-9 of this fifty-third chapter, Isaiah tells us: "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows [How did He do this?]: But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth."

Forty days after the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, when the days of Mary's purification, according to the law of Moses was ended, they brought Jesus to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord. This was also according to the law of Moses, for the firstborn of every Hebrew mother belonged to the Lord. As the Lord had spared their firstborn back in the land of Egypt, He required them to give Him their firstborn. Now the firstborn could be redeemed. For those who were able, it was a lamb of the first year. For those who were poor, it was two young pigeons. Joseph and Mary were poor, so according to Luke 2:24, they offered two young pigeons.

After Joseph and Mary had redeemed their firstborn at the temple in Jerusalem, they returned to Bethlehem, for they were living in a house in Bethlehem when the wise men from the East came to Jerusalem looking for the One who was born King of the Jews. This is recorded in Matthew 2:2. After Herod heard this, he was troubled. He gathered the chief priests and the scribes together and demanded of them where their Christ should be born. They told Herod "in Bethlehem." Returning to the wise men, Herod said to them, "Whenever you go to Bethlehem, you come back and bring me word, for I want to go and worship Him, too." Of course, this was a lie. Certainly, Herod had no such purpose or such intent.

Herod also questioned the wise men in regard to the time that they had seen the star in the East. The wise men left Herod and Jerusalem and journeyed down to Bethlehem, which is about six miles from Jerusalem. There they offered their gifts to the young child in the house where He and Joseph and Mary were living. But in a dream, the wise men were warned of God that they should not return to Herod. They should depart into their own country another way. They should not return to Jerusalem. After Herod had waited for some period of time, and the wise men did not return,

the Scriptures tell us that with great anger he sent men to Bethlehem (and in all the coasts around about Bethlehem), and slew all male children two years of age and under in an effort to kill the Christ-child. The two years and under was based upon his questioning the time the wise men had seen the star. But God, having warned Joseph ahead of time, had taken Mary and the Christ and fled into Egypt. Thus, we see the beginning of the sufferings of our Savior at a very tender age: being uprooted from His home in Bethlehem, taken across the desert into the foreign land of Egypt as a little child. However, Joseph and Mary and the Christ-child returned from Egypt. Hearing that Herod's son was reigning, they turned aside and returned to Joseph and Mary's home at Nazareth.

At the age 30, Jesus began His public ministry. That was the legal age for a teacher to begin teaching in that day and time. After being baptized by John, the forerunner of Christ, He went into the wilderness where He fasted for 40 days and 40 nights. Of course, this too, was a trying time for our Savior. After the fast was ended, the Bible tells us that He was hungry and faced three notable temptations, as recorded in Matthew, chapter 4, of his book.

After facing and overcoming these terrible temptations, Jesus returned to Nazareth. We read that He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and stood up to read. Now the portion of scripture He read was from Isaiah, chapter 61, where the prophet spoke of the Spirit of God anointing One "to preach good tidings, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." After Jesus read that portion of scripture from Isaiah 61, He closed the book, as our *King James Bible* says, and gave it again to the Rabbi in charge of the service. Then Jesus sat down, and with all eyes fixed on Him, He said to the congregation, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4:21). Jesus told them other precious truths, as recorded in Luke, chapter 4. What happened? "All they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. But he passing through the midst of them went his way" (Luke 4:28-30).

After this, Jesus, His mother, and presumably various members of His family moved to Capernaum, down on the edge of the Sea of Galilee. As Jesus continued His ministry, we find Him opposed, falsely accused, and even accused of being devil-possessed. As He went about doing good, healing the sick, healing those who were oppressed of the devil, opening the eyes of the blind, making the lame to leap like a hart, and even raising some from the dead, His opposers accused Him of doing these mighty miracles by the power of Satan—Beelzebub. So everywhere Jesus went, He was opposed, falsely accused, mocked, and ridiculed. We find also that on at least two occasions, they took up stones to stone Jesus to death, with the intent, of course, of doing away with Him. However, it was not His time yet. So He passed through their midst, and they did not kill Him.

As we come near to the end of Jesus' earthly ministry, we see the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy, for we find Jesus being arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane. But before Judas led the guards from the chief priests, the Scriptures tell us that Jesus sweat as it were great drops of blood. Great agony, great suffering! I'm sure He not only realized the suffering that He was going to face on the cross, but I'm sure that He felt the sins of the world—my sins—your sins weighted down upon Him. How disappointed He was after He had prayed the first time and came back and found His three closest disciples, Peter, James, and John asleep. He said to them, "What, could ye not watch with me one hour?" Jesus went away and prayed more earnestly.

After Jesus had prayed the third time, His will submitted to the will of God, here came Judas the betrayer and kissed Him, which was a sign of recognizing Him as His teacher. But it was a kiss of betrayal. Then, of course, they took Him and led Him back across the Kidron Valley into Jerusalem. There they questioned Him the remainder of the night in the things that happened. The soldiers slapped Him, spit upon Him, blindfolded Him, and asked Him after they had slapped Him, "Who was it that slapped you?" They plucked out portions of His beard. A Roman soldier took a whip and scourged Him. Yes, as Isaiah prophesied, He was whipped. Finally, through the streets of Jerusalem outside the city walls, they led Him up to a place called Golgotha, a place of a skull, and there He was crucified.

Why did Jesus come? Let us look again at the scriptures in Isaiah 53:5: "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." In verse 6, Isaiah points out: "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." So Jesus came to seek and to save those who had gone astray. He came to seek and to save us from our sins and to make it possible for us to have peace with God. And in having peace with God, peace with our own selves, peace in our own soul, peace in our own mind, and peace with our fellow man. He came so that we could have healing for our body and eternal life for our soul.

Did Jesus come in vain in your behalf, or have you received Him as your Savior and Lord? If you have, God bless you and keep you in His love. If not, will you seriously consider what I have said today? Will you seriously consider why Jesus came, why He suffered, why He died on that cruel cross? It was for you. Will you not seek Him with all your heart? There is peace for your troubled soul, but only in Jesus Christ can you find the peace that your soul stands in need of.

We live in a troubled world today. Broken homes, broken lives, wars, famines! But Jesus came into this sin-sick, sin-cursed world, suffered, bled, and died on Calvary, and rose again the third day so we could have peace. Jesus said, "My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you." This world cannot give the peace to the soul that Jesus Christ can give, but He stands ready to give it to you, for He tasted death for every man.

If you do not know Jesus today, if you do not know the salvation that He came to purchase for you, again I would encourage you to seek Him with all your heart. †

THE POETRY PAGE

LOVE CAME DOWN

Amy C. Ellis

Though at birth the Savior lay
In a lowly bed of hay,
Starlight streaming from above
Circled Him with bonds of Love.

Humble shepherds in the night
Heard the angels, saw the Light;
So they left their fields to go
To the Blessed Child below.

Mary's arms were round Him there;
Joseph, too, showed tender care.
Love came down to earth that night
Bringing Joy and Peace and Light.

TWENTY CENTURIES HAVE PASSED

Rega Kramer McCarty

Twenty centuries after Christ,
The town of Bethlehem
Remains as it was long ago,
A place to honor Him.

A place of worship more renowned—
The birthplace of our Lord,
Where still the holy truth abides
In the beauty of His Word.

Still shepherds watch their flocks at night,
Upon Judean hills,
And still the people shape their lives,
According to God's will.

Candles light the sacred scene,
And voices lift in prayer,
The spirit of the Christ-child
Seems ever present there.

Twenty centuries have passed,
Yet much remains the same—
Pilgrims come to Bethlehem
To worship in Christ's name.

ALL HAIL, IMMANUEL!

Israel Smalling

All hail to Thee, Immanuel,
The mighty Prince of Peace!
Wonderful, Counselor and Guide!
Thy praise shall never cease.

Almighty God, we worship Thee
Through Christ Thine only Son;
All praise to Thee, Immanuel,
For that which Thou hast done!

We thank Thee for Thy humble birth—
Humility complete.
A pattern for Thy people, Lord,
Who worship at Thy feet.

Give us that willing, lowly mind
To do Thy Father's will,
To follow in Thy footsteps, Lord,
Oh, keep us from all ill!

BORN TO DIE

Geneva Showerman

I think that I can almost see
That small Judean town
That night, two thousand years ago,
When Christ the Lord came down.

The inn, the shops, the flat-topped homes
Where weary pilgrims slept,
The nearby softly rolling hills
Where fleecy flocks were kept.

And then I think I see the sky
Aglow with heav'nly light,
As angel messengers proclaim:
"The Christ is born tonight!"

I see the shepherds hasten
To where the Babe lay,
A stable bare, a manger bed;
But—"God with us" that day!

And when I think of Bethlehem,
I think of Calvary;
A lonely hill, a rugged cross,
A death of agony.

For He, the Babe of Bethlehem,
Was born, His life to give!
And willingly He gave His life
That you and I might live! †

AM I A PROFITABLE SERVANT?

2021 Hagerstown Convention Message by Bro. Dave Goble

IT IS A privilege to stand before you again. Before I go into the message, I thought it would be good to share a few things about myself for the benefit of those who may not be familiar with who I am:

I come from a place called Carmichael, which is a suburb of Sacramento in northern California. I was born in California. I moved to Sacramento to go to school. I got saved there, and met my wife on the front row of the church, which is a good place to meet your wife. She helped me with the Scriptures during the first service I was in, because I didn't know where to find anything in the Bible. A couple years later, we were married. We've been married now for 38 years.

We have four boys. The oldest is 36, the youngest, 26. We have a granddaughter. Unfortunately, my wife is at a family event (a wedding in Seattle) and wasn't able to come. I kept her updated, and she sends her greetings.

The Lord saved me November 1, 1981. I was living in Europe the year before I came back and the Lord saved me. It was the beginning of the senior year of my last year of college.

I was ordained in the gospel ministry in 2003. I was installed as pastor at the congregation in 2007. So it's been an interesting life since the Lord saved me, but I would like to tell you a little about what God did for me when He saved me.

As I said, I was a college student when I was introduced to the gospel. But you know, during those four years of college, I went deeper in sin than I ever thought I would go. So if anybody tells you that you can control how deep you're going to go in sin, we cannot control what sin will do to us. I'm ashamed of the things that happened to me during those times, because prior to then, in my parent's home, I was raised to know better. But when I got out on my own, I sowed my wild oats. You know, I don't know where I would be today if the Lord had not arrested me when He did.

Before the Lord saved me, I was so discouraged about religion and about church. By the way, I wasn't looking for the Lord. He was looking for me. I had grown up religious. I'd seen what hypocrisy was in nominal religion, and I had determined that I was going to turn my back on it because it was no good in it. It wasn't helpful and wasn't solving any problems. I'll like to say: if your faith is not solving a problem, you need to examine your faith. Our faith is meant to solve our problem. The faith that I had grown up with, unfortunately, solved none of my most pressing problems. I grew discouraged and left the church that I was in and went out into the world. I thought, you know what? God doesn't have a people on the earth. He can't save us from sin because what religion teaches, I couldn't find it borne out in the lives of my friends. It's just a hypocritical way of living. I had become sort of disenchanted with religion and with God. Fortunately, God never withdrew the seed of faith that

was planted when I was young. I didn't believe He would, but the enemy wants to take that last precious seed that's in your heart.

I like to tell the young people, or anyone really, understand what that most precious seed is that's in your heart. No matter what happens, never let the enemy near to that. Guard it with everything that you have, because that's what God will use to bring you back to Him.

Well, by the time I had come back from Europe, as I said, I had done things I said I would never do. The first day of school, a fellow that I was with, testified saying that he had gotten saved over the summer. I knew what he was like, because I was with him in Europe, and he wasn't saved then. Anyway, he introduced me to the congregation that I now pastor.

It was about a month later, after we had Bible study, that the Lord convinced me that there was yet a people on Earth that loved God and were living free from sin. Now you see, for someone who had been disenchanted with religion, this was critical that he understands that he can depend on you, that he can walk after you. He can examine your life, and your life will testify that there's an honesty about you, that there's a faithfulness about you, which is not fake, and you didn't learn it in Sunday school. It's an experience that God gave you. That experience of salvation was what I so wanted.

The Sunday night, I think I was at church once and then the second service. I desperately wanted to be saved. I had prayed in my room at home to be saved the Wednesday before, but I just didn't feel like the Lord had saved me. I went back to church on Sunday and that night after the service, no one told me to go to the altar. I didn't understand what any of that was about. Isn't your testimony precious to you? Can you feel it? Can you feel the love of God if He saved you? I got up out of my bench and I went to the altar. As I said, nobody told me to do that. The minister met me there and asked, "What are you seeking?" I said, "I want to be saved."

As we continue this service tonight, I thought I would ask you this question. You don't have to raise your hand. Is there anybody here that wants to be saved? You can think about it, and as the service goes on, and when we end, I want you to understand that God still has a church on the earth. There are many witnesses here of a life free from sin. This is not false. This is not fake. We're not putting on religion, but this is real. I so desperately wanted what was real in life.

I bowed that night seeking salvation. The minister said, "I believe you can have it tonight. There might be something you're holding on to that you can just let go of, and then you'll have the confidence that God will save you. If you're ready and willing to be saved, God will answer your prayer. He's not holding back."



When I got up from the altar, I had the conviction and the confidence that God had saved me. Bro. Richard, a minister in our congregation, was there that night. We went for ice cream afterwards, and one thing he told me I'll never forget: "No matter what you do, never give up on God. Hold on to this for the rest of your life." After that, the Lord blessed us. I married my wife a couple years later.

That's just a little bit about me that I wanted you to know. The most important thing is, God delivered me from sin and I'm yet saved today. Later on, He sanctified me. He showed me what that meant. I had a struggle. The enemy was trying to pull me back. Someone talked to me about being sanctified. He said, "You know, you just need to give your whole life to God. Take that contract. Sign on the bottom line and let God fill in the rest."

God changed my nature. I used to have a snaky, foxy, sneaky kind of nature. God put a different nature inside of me. Praise God tonight!

If you'll turn in your Bibles to Matthew, chapter 25, I'm going to be speaking from a couple of places in this chapter. I'm going to begin with verse 31, but we'll skip around down to the end of the chapter. I'm not going to read all those verses. I'm just going to lay out a beginning here for you, and then we're going to go back in the chapter to verse 14 and look at the talents.

I would like us to find ourselves in this chapter, and I would like us to examine ourselves to determine whether or not we are a profitable servant. "A Profitable Servant" is the title of our message. There are different ways you could title this, but think of this in terms of *am I a profitable servant?*

First, we're going to speak about the Lord's business. We'll look at this almost like an enterprise, a business. I hope you'll stay with me in this. We'll just use it in a way to examine the Scriptures. What is the business of the Lord? The second is, What's the cost of the business? Any business, if it's going to stay in business, has a cost to do in business, right? The third is, What's the profit of this business? Unless a business earns a profit, it's not going to stay in business for very long, despite of what some people say today.

What is the Lord's business? Let's look at Matthew 25:31-34: "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand [This is some of the part I want to get to.], Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Don't you want to hear "come ye blessed"? I want to hear that.

Then Jesus will say, "I was hungry, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee hungry, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a

stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

Now Jesus has another message for those that He places on His left hand. That will be a part of what we'll get to in a moment, but I would like us to remember those that are on the right hand and what their business is about. That will be important for us also. You might ask, "Well, does that mean we'll have to literally provide food to people, or literally provide clothing to people, or literally visit, etc.?" Sometimes it does, but it's the very least we can do. We're not meant to pass by someone who is suffering or who is spiritually naked or has been abused by religion or by the world. Someone who has suffered in some family way or some personal way. We're not meant to pass by them.

My wife and I were in Sacramento one time. We were seated out in a public area and many people were passing by to and fro. I looked off in the center of the square and there was a young lady seated on the bench. She looked to be about 18 years old. She had a backpack with her. You can sometimes tell when someone is on the road. I said to my wife, "There's a runaway." The Lord impressed me that this girl was fleeing from something and on her own. The Lord convicted me and I said to myself, "Should I go and approach her and ask her if there was something I could do to help her?" I was praying and trying to seek God's counsel, and maybe I went into the store, and when I came back out the girl was gone. I thought, *I missed my opportunity. I should have gone at that moment when I saw that human being who needed some help.* I believe she needed some help. I should have gone. I should have gone and done what we just read about. I'll never forget that.

On the plane coming here, after a long trip trying to get to Baltimore, I was sitting next to a young lady who was blind. I could tell that she was on her own and didn't have anybody to help her with her water and her tray. When the plane landed, I asked her, "Do you need help to get off the plane?" She said, "Yes, please." So I said, "Here, take my elbow." We walked off the plane, and I said, "Do you need help to get to the baggage area?" She said, "Yes, would you help me, please?" I had no idea how she was going to do this all by herself. She had a cane, but it wasn't going to help. I said, "Follow me."

We went down to the baggage area and she said to me, "This is what my bag looks like." I got her bag, and I asked her, "Do you need any help to get a ride to someplace?" She said, "Yes, would you please take me to the taxi stand outside?" I said, "I can take you there." We walked out there. Honestly, I had no idea how she was going to do this by herself. Maybe she had a plan, but at that moment, I was her plan. I told her that I was a pastor, and we will be meeting here in Hagerstown for the convention. I should have given her the church's website, but I wasn't sure how she accessed the internet. Anyway, as I was leaving, I said "good-bye" to her, and she said, "Thank you, pastor." I don't know if we'll ever

meet again. By just human kindness, you feel good about yourself, don't you? You feel like you've helped another human being here. We didn't have a long sermon together, but just human kindness. I thought, *maybe later in her life when the Lord convicts her and she has a need, she might remember there's a Church of God in Hagerstown. She might get online and try to find you.* God can deal with her. He can do the work. But a saint of God just showed another human being kindness. That, too, is the gospel in action. You all know what I'm talking about.

This is the kind of thing that I'm seeing in Matthew 25. This the Lord's business. The Lord is in the salvage business and the regeneration business. He salvages men and women, boys and girls who have been ruined by sin, broken by sin, abused by sin. He salvages them as if a ship sank in the ocean and lying on the bottom. Everybody has given it up. Nobody else can do anything else with it. It's broken apart, ruined. It will never float again.

Humanity says, "There's no hope in that one." But there's a Salvager. His name is Jesus. He knows where those ships are and He reaches down further than we can reach. He pulls us out of a miry clay and lifts us up to a high and holy way. Even a fool, though a way-faring man, should not err therein. That's how the Lord deals with folks that are ruined by sin. He lifts them up. That's the business He's in. He's in the salvage business to save us from ourselves. But He just doesn't lift up that old sunken ship that's no good anymore. He makes it brand new again. He regenerates it. He puts a new hull on it so that it can float. It can carry the heaviest load. He's in the regeneration business. He retitles it. He puts new paint on it. He puts a new flag of registry on it. We used to fly a pirate flag. Now we fly a gospel flag. That's the business the Lord is in tonight. If the Lord is in that business, I need to be in that business.

The Lord has raised an enormous amount to operate His business. Revelation 5:9, "And they sung a new song, saying [The new song is the song of salvation. You can't sing this song before you're saved. You can't sing this song in false religion. They had to hang their harps on the willows because they can't sing that song where they hung their harps. But here we sing this song. Our heartstrings are plucked together. They have a unison about them. We have the same harmony, the same melody, don't we, Brethren? We sing in harmony. Sweet sound. We pluck the same strings. We know what it sounds like. I love you, Brethren. Do you know the sound of that new song? Has the Lord changed your heart? Did you know there's a worship service going on right now in heaven? They're casting their crowns before the Lamb right now. There are thousands, and tens of thousands, and thousands more that are worshipping the Lamb right now. I want to be there one day.], "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."

Revelation 5:10-12: "And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth. And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels

round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."

We can say tonight, "Worthy is the Lamb!" There is none other more worthy than the Lamb. He's worthy. The Lamb controls everything that we are. He has my mind, my strength, my soul. He has everything that we are. My opinions. Did you know that the Lord owns your opinions? I need to be careful what I think. My thoughts belong to the Lord. If my mind belongs to the Lord, what I think belongs to Him. All souls are His. All minds are His. All opinions are His. My attitudes belong to Him. Everything that I am—my preferences, my biases, right? Everything belongs to the Lord. Therefore, I need to be careful what I think, how I go about my business, what I say to people. This is the business the Lord is in. He salvages people. He saves and regenerates people for His purpose and for His glory. I exist because God allows it. I am redeemed because the Lamb was slain. I have hope as a human because of this business. So it's the business we've talking about, and ultimately, we want to get to the profit, because I want to be a profitable servant.

Let's get to the cost of this enterprise. That's the business the Lord is in. This is the chapter on the suffering Servant, which is Jesus. This is the cost He paid for us. Isaiah 53:3, "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief [Aren't you glad He's acquainted with grief?]; and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not." Each of us, at one point in our lives, has despised or not esteemed Him. We fell into these at one point. That's very important to remember.

Isaiah 53:4-7: "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted." But look at the cost: "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him [Jesus] the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." I won't continue to read on down, but you understand the great cost that Jesus paid for us. We understand it as ultimately the blood of the Lamb. Jesus Himself shed His blood that I might be redeemed, that my foolishness might be taken care of, and my disobedience might somehow be taken care of. These are things I couldn't fix, right? There are some things about us that we just can't fix. We need a Savior.

Ultimately, all of us represent the cost of the enterprise, because Jesus died for us. So if I am redeemed, I am bought with a price by the blood of the Lamb. Therefore, if I am redeemed, I represent the cost that Jesus paid for my soul. In other words, there's a bunch of cost in this room here of the enterprise. Let's say a business, when it operates a business, has inventory

that it sells. So it purchases inventory, and later on it's going to sell it. It buys the inventory, puts it on the shelf, and then at times when it's needed, it goes off the shelf, out the door, and somebody buys it. That's how they make a sale.

As long as the inventory remains on the shelf, it produces no profit for the enterprise. Follow me here, okay? You can polish it, shine it, and you might even need to repair your inventory sometimes. It might be damaged and you need to fix it. That's necessary. You need it to look good so that somebody will buy it. When you go to the store and somebody has returned a packaged item that they opened, but there's another one there that's not been opened, normally you'll pick the one that hasn't been opened, because you don't know what happened to the one somebody opened. You take it home and a part might be missing. Then you have to return it. So sometimes inventory needs to be fixed. There's a good purpose for that.

Keep in mind, we are the inventory, but we're not meant to stay on the shelf. Because Jesus paid for us, we represent the cost. If a business just covers the cost, it will go out of business after a while. Are you following what I am saying? I'm not talking about the government that can print money out of nothing. I'm talking about a business that needs to earn money.

Jesus finds us, He cleans us up, He pays for us, and He makes something out of nothing. We were nothing before Jesus found us, and then He made us something. This is what it cost the Lord to produce the church. He specializes in making something out of nothing. Anobody into a somebody. But He never invested all of that simply so He could just cover the cost.

Now let's go back to Matthew 25 and finish this. We'll look at the talents. God wants a profit from you and from me. I think sometimes we have misunderstood what cost is and what profit is. We need to be clear about this. Verses 14-16: "For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey. Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents." He earned a profit, didn't he? He took what he had been given and used it for the benefit of the Lord. Verses 17, 18: "And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money." This is the one that had a problem.

Matthew 25, verses 19-21: "After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord." Let me stop here one moment. Bro. Harley spoke to us about joy and I just can't get away from that. "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord"—a profit for a saint of God produces

joy. That's what happens when we work for the Lord and we use what He has given us for the benefit of the Kingdom. It produces joy in the congregation. There's nothing like success that makes us happy like more success.

Isaiah 40:31: "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." I'm still trying to renew strength here tonight, because the profit that the Lord wants from us will produce joy. The joy will help us to mount up. One of the prime ways the church manifests itself is by producing joy. It's strength in itself. Doesn't joy strengthen the church? I think you all have been through the same pandemic I've been through. We haven't seen anything like it, have we? It was hard where we were and it's still hard. California lost a lot of people. The county I live in lost a lot of people. You all suffered great loss. It didn't spare any of us, did it? We need joy. We need to renew our strength.

Matthew 25, verses 22-24: "He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed."

Now you see, if we don't fully appreciate that the Lord expects a profit from us, there will be excuses that we'll make. They'll seem to us to be legitimate. "Physically I'm not able. I'm not a bold person. I find it difficult to testify. I'm shy." There could be many reasons why we find it difficult to use the talent the Lord has given us, because all of us have been given a talent. When the Lord saves us, He gives us a talent to use for Him. I don't believe He saves us to put us on the shelf.

One of the reasons why good people sometimes find it difficult to use their talent is fear. Fear of men, fear of anything. Lord, help us to get past the fear. The enemy wants to keep you afraid. Young People, fear is one of the prime tools the devil uses. Peer pressure, looking different, "what will they think of me." I've been there. He'll want to keep you in fear, and keep you in fear from using your talent. He'll want you to bury that talent in the earth. That's not your backyard I'm speaking of. That's this earth right here. He wants us to bury the talent He's given us in the earth, under a bushel where the candle can't be seen. He wants us to bury that talent that nobody else knows is there.

Matthew 25:26-30: "His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant [I always thought, *this seems like a severe penalty for the person who gave back the talent to the Lord that he received from Him*. In other words, he didn't gamble with it, he didn't do any number of things to waste it in that regard.], thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every

one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." The penalty is severe for just covering the cost.

Now his lord didn't expressly say here that this one went out into sin. In our language today, backslid. He simply said that this servant covered his talent in the earth and didn't use it. Therefore, because he did not return a profit to the Lord, He considered him wicked and slothful and cast him into outer darkness. Here's the severity of this: it cost the Lord so much to buy us. We don't understand the cost that it cost the Lord to purchase us. We had no other remedy. No one else could have bought us. Only Christ, and He paid such a high price for us. He did not pay that price so that we could be found as His inventory sitting on a shelf and not being used for anything. That business will go out of business.

The church, which is composed of men and women who have been bought with a price, who hides that talent in the earth, and uses it not for the glory of the Lord, will go out of business. The only way the Church of God can survive is to use the talents that the Lord has given us for His profit.

Now we may need to be cleaned up when the Lord saves us, right? My hair was longer. I got my hair cut after I got saved. I drank things that I don't drink anymore. I went to places that I don't go anymore. I looked at things that I don't look at anymore. I dress in ways that I don't dress anymore. I listen to things that I don't listen to anymore. More than that, I started listening to things that I had never listened to before. I started watching things that I had never watched before. The Lord changed me.

Sometimes a person will think, *Oh, the only thing that you can be as a Christian is you take things away from us.* Let me pause for a minute. (*Gives Illustration*): I'll ask this brother to stand up. Now I'm facing this brother and say to him, "Okay, let's play a little game. I want you to change five things about yourself and we'll see how that goes." So we both turn around, and let's say that he had his collar unbuttoned. He's going to change something about his appearance, and so he unbuttons his collar. "Go ahead and button your collar, then turn around." I'm trying now to figure out what he has changed about his appearance, and he looks at me and says, "What have I done, Brother, to change my appearance?" He turned his tie over. Now if we keep playing this game, eventually what we'll do is, we'll start taking other things off. After a while, we start to get very uncomfortable.

There's another way to change. Instead of taking things away, you can pick things up. You can add things. Now before you were saved, you didn't pick that up, did you? Very seldom. I tell you, I didn't pick it up. (*The brother is holding up the Bible*). He's adding things. This is important, because we think the only way the Lord changes us is by taking things away from us. The Lord has given us so much. (*brother sits*). Yet, human nature is, the only way I can change is having to give up stuff. That's what the devil tells young people and

older people, too. He says, "You keep having to give up stuff. You can't do this, you can't do that." That's how the enemy talks to us. What he's trying to do is, he's trying to tell you that this is a gospel of only taking things away.

But if we'll listen to the voice of the Lord, He's saying, "I'll give you so much more. First of all, I have a mansion waiting for you in heaven. I'm going to give you health that you never would have had, had you stayed on the alcohol and on the drugs. You're not going to be suffering that. I'm going to add health to you." Some of us had lost our mind, but He gave us the spirit of a sound mind.

We were acquainted with people that really didn't help us at all. God gave us a lot of new friends, not back stabbers. If I were to ask you to stand up and say what the Lord has given you that you didn't have before you were saved, we would have many stories of what He has given you. So the Lord has to clean us up, change His inventory so that it is ready. That's a part of what happens here. It is necessary, but still that is the cost. That's what this is, and it's tremendous.

Why would the Lord go through all that trouble for us just to bury our talent in the earth? That's awful. He says, "It's wicked and slothful." After He has gone through all that trouble, we take this and bury it or put it back on the shelf. What He says is, "I'm doing this for a purpose, not just to cover my cost, but to make a profit." So the Lord needs everyone of us to be in the field of labor, whatever that is. Some sister might say, "Brother, I just can't get out." But you can pray. You can pick up the telephone and call, perhaps.

I was telling the brethren about two gentlemen in our congregation. One has a disease where his body is completely paralyzed. Essentially, the only things that work are his mouth and his eyes. He communicates now by his lips. We read his lips to know what he is saying. He's had, I would say, a greater impact on our congregation and on his family in the two months that he's been at home from the hospital. He's at home on a respirator. He's had a greater impact than he ever had in the decades before. He's earning profit for the Kingdom. So you say, "Brother, I can't get out." I can understand what you're saying, but there is something you can do for the Kingdom to return a profit.

I hope we haven't mistaken covering the cost for a profit. We have an obligation, not only for those who are skilled or outgoing. We have an obligation to take the talent the Lord has given us and return a profit to the Kingdom. You might ask, "Brother, how do I do this?" That is up to you and the Lord and your ministry and how you go about that business. I think the Lord tells us here from verse 31 and on down in Matthew 25 to "care deeply for others." Let us care deeply for our neighbor. Let us care deeply for each other. What are the two greatest commandments upon which hang all the law and the prophets? "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. ... 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."

I love this other commandment that the Lord gave His disciples: "A new commandment I give unto you,

THE CHILDREN'S CORNER



ANGELS IN THE SNOW

A Bible Lesson by Sis. Rebecca Bland

That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." Love in a sacrificial way, where I don't tear down my brother, I don't talk behind my brother's back, and I don't crucify my brother. I feel very strongly about this character assassination. That happens in the dark. Saints don't do that. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples." All men need to know that we're His disciples. That's where the profit comes from. We must care deeply about the other. Discover their needs.

Jesus said, "I saw you hungry, I saw you thirsty and naked." He did something about it. Let's not give somebody something salty when he's thirsty. We have to discern what the need of the other is to be profitable. Otherwise, we're not profitable. Each of us must know our profitable opportunities or we'll just stay on the shelf. This is very simple. We need to know that we're a profitable servant. Our eternal soul depends on it because of the great cost that the Lord has spent for us.

How is it with you tonight? Is there anybody here that needs to be redeemed and brought into this enterprise? Is there anybody here that's not been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb? You still find yourself in sin. Maybe you're there because you say, "They're just a bunch of hypocrites and it's fake." I want to tell you, there is still a church on this earth, and there are yet people in it. Christ is yet Sovereign over that church, and you can count on it. Quit listening to the devil and start listening to God. Won't you like to be saved? Won't you like to know that you're going to make heaven your home?

I've asked myself this question, and sometimes I wonder if I can answer it yet: Am I truly a profitable servant? My job as a pastor is preaching and teaching and counseling. That's what I'm supposed to do. But is that what the Lord is asking me to do to return a profit? Am I just covering my cost? Am I just being shined and polished up, then go home, and then what? Or, am I truly spending myself for the Kingdom?

Thank you for your attention. We love you. We appreciate the ministry that's here and the spirit of the convention. Words cannot express the love that we have for you all in this convention. It's precious to us, but I'll tell you, I have a tremendous burden that the church needs to grow. It will not grow unless the Lord builds it, but are we in the right place? Are we a profitable servant?

The Lord bless you. †

SUNDAY SCHOOL LITERATURE

We have a six-year series of lessons. Each quarter we print quarterlies for Adults and Young People, Intermediates and Juniors. We also print leaflets for Primary and Nursery-Beginner children.

The first quarter of 2022 begins January 2 and is entitled, "Sin, Man's Greatest Enemy."

Order your sample today: The Way of Truth, P. O. Box 88, Hagerstown, MD 21741.

"How beautiful!" I said to my friend, Teresa.* We stood at the French doors in her kitchen and looked out at a wide lawn covered in a thick blanket of snow. In the woods beyond, tree branches bowed gracefully beneath their icy burdens.

As we looked out across the yard, I heard shouts of laughter, and suddenly two figures appeared on the snowy landscape. Teresa turned to me with a smile. "My daughters begged to go out and play, and so I told them they could for a little while. Pretty soon they'll come back in for some hot chocolate."

We watched as Teresa's daughters, ten-year-old Sara and eight-year-old Serena* stamped a path through the snow to the woods. Standing side by side at the edge of the treeline, they looked up in delight as branches swayed in the breeze causing sparkling clouds of snow to fall upon their upturned faces. A few moments later, the girls turned back to the snow-covered yard. With a shout of delight, they threw themselves onto their backs in the deep snow, stretching their arms and legs as wide as possible. Sweeping their arms in wide arcs, they made "wings." All the while, their feet were moving through the snow to create curving white robes.



"They're making snow angels!" I exclaimed. "Do you remember when we were children and we used to make them?"

Teresa nodded. "That's what the girls told me they wanted to do when they asked to go out," she said. "They have been looking forward to the snow for just that reason." She watched her daughters for a moment, and then she turned to me with a laugh. "Did I ever tell you about the time they tried to make snow angels in the house?"

"No!" I said. "How would they do that?"

"Well," said Teresa, "it's funny now, but I wasn't laughing when it happened. The girls were a few years younger then," she said, "but they should have known better."

Teresa poured us each a cup of hot chocolate and motioned for me to sit at the kitchen table while she continued her story. "It was a winter morning, but there was no snow on the ground. For several days the girls had been asking, 'Do you think it will snow tomorrow?' I told them they would have to listen to the weather report and keep their eyes open.

“On this particular morning, I was in the living room folding laundry while Sara and Serena finished up their breakfast in the kitchen. Suddenly, I was aware that I hadn’t heard any talking or laughing from the girls in a while. *I wonder what they are up to*, I said to myself.

“I got up from the sofa and tiptoed to the kitchen. You’ll never believe what I saw!”

“What did you see?” I asked.

“Sara had climbed up on a chair and gotten the bag of flour out of the cupboard. She had poured it all over the kitchen floor. Both girls were lying on their backs on the floor, dragging their arms and legs through the flour. ‘We’re making snow angels, Mommy!’ Serena said.”

As soon as I heard Teresa say these words, my hand flew to my mouth. “Oh no!” I said. I could picture flour all over the kitchen floor—and all over two little girls.

Teresa laughed. “It took us a while to clean up the mess,” she said. “I think the girls finally understood that you have to have real snow to make snow angels.”

We got up from the table and looked out at the lawn. Sara and Serena were nowhere to be seen, but there in the snow were the prints of two perfect snow angels.

Sara and Serena are grown-up young ladies now, but I still have to smile when I remember the snow angel story their mother told me.

Many of us are fascinated by the idea of angels floating down from heaven in their white robes. There are several stories in the Bible about angels, but the one you probably know best is the story of how God sent angels to tell the Bethlehem shepherds about Baby Jesus’ birth.

Do you remember what the angels said to the shepherds? They said that they brought tidings (news) of great joy to all people. Do you know what that great joy was? It was the joy of the gospel Jesus brought to the earth. The gospel brings us the hope of eternal life. It brings us the promise that, if we believe in Jesus and ask Him into our hearts, we will live with Him forever in heaven one day.

Our wise saying this month comes from Proverbs 10:28 which says, *The hope of the righteous shall be gladness: but the expectation of the wicked shall perish.* Righteous people are those who have given their hearts to Jesus. They understand His words and obey His commandments.

If you want to have the great joy the angels told the shepherds about, you must love and serve Jesus with all of your heart and soul. You will have the great gladness that the angels told the shepherds about. There is no greater joy on the earth than this.

*not their real names

Activity

Can you finish these Bible verses that tell us about the gospel of Christ?

1. “Jesus came into Galilee, preaching _____” (Mark 1:14b).

2. “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach _____” (Mark 16:15).

December 2021

3. “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto _____”

(Romans 1:16a).

4. “But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel _____”

(I Peter 1:25).

Answers to Last Month’s Activity

1. Exodus 20:12—Honor your father and mother
2. I Peter 5:7—Cast all your cares on Jesus
3. Hebrews 13:16—Do good and communicate (help others)
4. Matthew 5:16—Let your light shine
5. James 1:27—Visit the fatherless and widows; keep yourself unspotted from the world †

SHADOWS OF GOOD THINGS

By the late Russell R. Byrum

(Part III)

THE TABERNACLE AND ITS FURNITURE

(Exodus 25-27, 30, 35-38, 40)

GOD ALWAYS desired to come near to His people as every loving heart craves intimate association with those it loves. He desired to commune with men, the exalted creatures made in His own image, who are able to serve Him from choice and to reciprocate His love. When God created men He prepared a place deep in their hearts that He alone could fill. During the time of Adam’s holiness, God doubtless often came to beautiful Eden in the cool of the day to commune with him. And ever since man’s sin separated him from God, God has sought to draw as near to man as His holiness and man’s sin would allow. Though the holy God could not dwell in men’s sinful hearts, yet He decided to dwell among His people Israel when He led them out of Egypt. Therefore He ordered Moses to build Him a suitable dwelling, becoming to His dignity, that He might tabernacle among them.

No house like this was ever built before. It was not extraordinary in the same respect as are some buildings. It could not compare for vastness with the temple of the sun at ancient Heliopolis; for this house of Jehovah was no larger than a small two-room cottage. Neither were its walls built of glistening marble or imperishable blocks of granite as was the temple of Diana at Ephesus or the Parthenon at Athens, for it was a light, portable building.

It was principally peculiar because it was to become the abode of the invisible, infinite God of all the universe among His people Israel. He whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, the one who inhabits eternity and whose presence fills remotest space, was to specially dwell there to set His name there and there to exhibit His glory.

Page 11

Therefore He gave full specifications for it Himself. It had a divine architect. This was important; for it was to be, not merely an abode, but an instrument for divine worship then and a type of the grandest realities men's minds have ever known. Though so small a structure, yet it must be of quality in keeping with the infinite dignity of Him who was to dwell there. It has been estimated by William Brown that it cost one and one half million dollars. It was literally covered inside and outside with plates of gold. Also all of its furniture was either of solid gold or overlaid with gold.

How God made known to Moses what the nature of His dwelling should be we are not told further than in the description in Exodus 25-30. From Hebrews 8:5 it seems God showed him a pattern of it in Mount Sinai; but whether this was a mental conception of it from the oral description such as an architect might have of a structure before he draws his plan on paper, or whether it was shown to Moses in a vision or otherwise, we do not know. The important point is that it was designed by God as a whole and in minute details. Also Moses was warned against any deviation from God's specifications. This was essential to its usefulness as a type.

Its Names

Inasmuch as the name of a type is given by God with direct reference to that which is symbolized or typified, the meaning of the names of the tabernacle should first receive attention. Of the various terms used to designate God's ancient dwelling-place, the one employed in the first mention of it to Moses is given in Exodus 25:8 and is translated "sanctuary." This word is full of meaning and is probably the most comprehensive term used to designate the tabernacle. It is said that the original Hebrew word is never used to describe the temples of heathen deities, but only to describe the sacred abode of Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel, whose name is holy. Holiness is the most prominent idea connected with the tabernacle and its service. To make people holy was the great purpose of God's revealing true religion. Then they were made ceremonially holy, now actually holy. Holiness is peculiar to the religion of Jehovah. Therefore He designated His dwelling-place as a sanctuary. The term is used of the tabernacle as a whole, of the holy place, and also of the holiest place. Though the tabernacle represented these various degrees of holiness, yet it was all holy because of the awful holiness of Him whose glory was manifested in the thrice-holy place beneath the outstretched wings of the cherubim.

The next word used in Scripture to designate that first house of God is the one translated "tabernacle." It is probably the most common name of it. Its sense is "to settle down" or "to dwell." It expressed the grand truth that the infinite God had come to dwell among His people. "Let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them," were the words in which he first commanded the making of the tabernacle. It was the first statement of the wonderful truth afterward included in the name given to Christ, "Immanuel," which means "God with us." The

term "tabernacle" is used of the curtains, the boards, and of the entire structure.

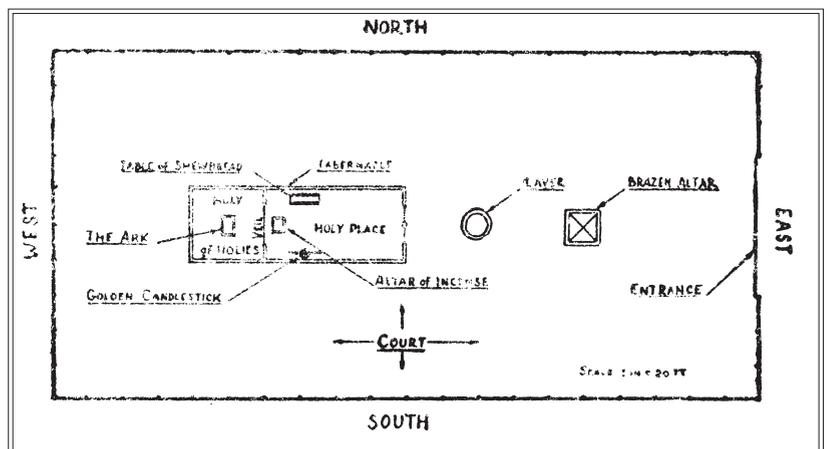
The third important Scriptural name of the tabernacle is one translated "tent." It is the one used of the common tents such as those in which the patriarch Abraham or Lot dwelt. It expresses much less of spiritual significance than does "sanctuary" or "tabernacle." It has been supposed to have value to us as indicating somewhat as to the structure of the tabernacle. It seems to be used especially of the coverings of goats' hair, rams' skins, and badgers' skins which were over the upright framework of boards. Therefore it is sometimes called the "tent of the tabernacle." Some interpreters have understood this to teach that the tent was therefore separate from and over the tabernacle; but probably this does not positively prove more than that it was a cloth covering whether a flat roof over the framework or a separate tent with a ridged roof.

Another descriptive designation of the tabernacle very expressive is "tabernacle of the congregation." The Revised Version renders this "tent of meeting," which is much better. The idea is not the meeting of the people with each other, but their meeting with God. "At the door of the tent of meeting before Jehovah, where I will meet with you, to speak there unto thee" (Exodus 29:42). There at the brazen altar in the presence of the pouring-out of the blood of sin-offerings the holy God would meet sinful men and speak to them.

It is also called "the tabernacle of testimony," because there in the holiest place with the sacred ark for a receptacle were deposited the divinely inscribed tables of stone, which were representative of God's righteous law.

General View of the Tabernacle

That we may better understand the several parts of the tabernacle by viewing them in their relation to the whole, let us in imagination take a walk through the sacred precincts of the house of God and make a survey of it.



Here we stand in the midst of the camp of Israel before Mount Sinai, with the rough, rocky peaks of Horeb looming in awful grandeur on every side. Of the twelve tribes of Israel the tents of three tribes may be seen to the east, three to the north, and as many to the

west and to the south. Fringing the great interior square thus formed are pitched the tents of the tribe of Levi, that thirteenth tribe especially holy, of whom are the priests and whose work it is to care for and serve the tabernacle. Immediately to the east of us dwell the priestly families, because the tabernacle door is to the eastward, and these ministers of the sanctuary must be nearest of all. In the great square thus formed is located the sanctuary. Literally, "God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved" (Psalm 46:5).

From the eastern side of this square we face to the westward from the tents of the priests, and before us is the holy house, with its entrance on the east side, nearest us. First notice this high fence around the tabernacle enclosing a yard, called the "court." This court you will notice is a hundred cubits long and fifty cubits wide. Or allowing eighteen inches for the cubit, which measure is supposed to have been originally derived from the length of a man's forearm, from the elbow to the tip of the middle finger, it is 150 feet long by 75 feet wide. It is as big as a large-sized city building-lot. The surrounding fence or wall is very peculiar in that it consists of hangings of fine linen suspended between posts, which stand five cubits, or seven and one half feet, apart. The fence is also five cubits, or seven and one half feet, high, so we cannot see over it. These sixty posts are set in sockets of brass and have hooks and fillets of silver. But the entrance, which is thirty feet wide, including four of the spaces between posts, has instead of the common white hanging a much more beautiful one in gorgeous colors—blue, purple, and scarlet—the colors of royalty.

Passing through the entrance to the court and looking straight ahead of us, in the further end of the court we see the tabernacle itself, and immediately before us stands the large brazen altar, where expiation is made for sin, and between this and the tabernacle is a large brazen vessel called the laver, filled with water, in which the priests must always wash both their hands and feet before entering the dwelling-place of God. We expect to come back to these to examine them more carefully later, so we shall pass on.

The tabernacle proper is not very different in size and shape from the common flat-top, black-goats' hair tent of the average Arabian desert-dweller as it has been constructed for thousands of years. Raising the beautiful hanging of blue, purple, and scarlet and passing between gold-covered pillars we stand in the holy place, the first sanctuary, where we common people can never actually enter. It is as large as a large-sized living-room—a place of beauty and grandeur. The walls and ceiling are of the same fine linen and kingly colors as the hanging at the entrance, and are inworked with figures of cherubs in recognition of the presence of Deity.

Before us on the south side is the seven-branch golden candlestick or lamp-stand shedding its light round about. On our other hand is a table overlaid with pure gold. On it are twelve loaves of bread, upon which is frankincense. Moving on we come to a beautiful little altar covered with gold. On this sweet incense is burned daily, morning and evening, for a sweet odor before Jehovah. Also on its horns are marks of blood, the blood of atonement sprinkled on it from the sin-offering.

Now with trembling hand and bowed head we reverently lift the beautiful second veil and quietly enter the sacred inner room, the holiest place. Naturally all is dark, but we know we are in the presence of Him who dwells "in the thick darkness" (I Kings 8:12.) Here we stand in the awful presence of the Almighty God. We are before the "throne of grace." This inner room is but half as large as the first, and its walls are covered with the same kind of beautiful hangings. The one piece of furniture is the chest-like gold-covered ark, containing the testimony, and over it serving as its lid the pure-gold mercy-seat with a golden cherub on either end stretching its wings out over the mercy-seat like a golden canopy. Here above the mercy-seat and under the shadow of the outspread wings of the cherubim (according to Jewish tradition) the Shekinah light, the glory of the Lord, ever shines. From here Jehovah speaks to and blesses His people. Here also on the mercy-seat once each year, on the great day of atonement, the blood of atonement is sprinkled. Here intercession is made for transgressors, and here mercy is extended to sinners. †

FORGIVENESS

By the late Bro. Hoyt Matthews

WHEN the promised Messiah was born in Bethlehem of Judea, the city of David, the birth appears to have occurred during the hours of darkness, and immediately an heavenly angel made the announcement that a Savior was born. The announcement was not made within the walls of Caesar's Palace or from the pinnacle of the temple, for this did not conform to the character of the lowly Child, Jesus. But rather, His birth was announced to the lowly shepherds who were abiding by their flocks at night. When they sought Jesus, they found Him lying in a manger within a stable, wrapped in swaddling clothes, not the kingly robes of the rich and famous. The swaddling clothes would well symbolize the mercy, forgiveness, and love that would follow His ministry to sinful man, for with such was He clothed.

The King of kings born in a stable? Yes! The King of kings was born in a stable. No doubt even the animals felt His holy presence. This was His humble beginning that followed Him as He came to minister to sinful man. He came not to be ministered unto. He it was who humbled Himself by bringing forgiveness even to those that would pierce His side, for it was in behalf of these that He pled, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Forgiveness! a more magnanimous word cannot be found within the pages of the world's dictionaries. If *forgiveness* be born of another word, it would have been "mercy." Join mercy and forgiveness and with what are we gifted? "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

Mercy and forgiveness are swallowed up of love. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed

upon us, that we should be called the sons of God” (I John 3:1).

Mercy, forgiveness, and love are born in the eternal heavens, for with these is Father God clothed. With mercy, forgiveness, and love, the three must be combined in order to produce the desired end. But these three did not tarry for the day that Jesus entered Gethsemane, for the promise was as good as the deed. The plan was in place, when on day six, God completed His creative work of the heavens and the earth. Soon mercy, forgiveness, and love would need be set in motion, for God’s law had been transgressed. It must be understood, however, that these virtues must be activated by godly sorrow and repentance. Pardon then seals this greatest of all transactions, that is, God casts our sins into the depth of the sea, to remember them against us forever no more.

“Amazing grace, how sweet the sound!” But this grace cannot reach the offended heart where an unforgiving spirit dwells. The apostle Peter was curious as to how oft he must forgive an offending brother. He asked Jesus, “Shall I forgive him seven times?” In His reply to Peter, Jesus said, “I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven” (Matthew 18:22). This reflects the endless mercy of our Lord and Savior. Can mercy and forgiveness be reckoned to those that act contrary to this splendid example? May upon the internet of our hearts be inscribed the enduring admonition of Jesus: “And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive you your trespasses” (Mark 11:25, 26).

That forgiveness may be rendered, it must be sought. “Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near” (Isaiah 55:6). Not only must God’s forgiveness be sought when the sinner desires to become reconciled to Him, but also forgiveness must be sought among men when offences occur; nevertheless, there must be a forgiving spirit, whether or not the offender seeks forgiveness. Be sure of this, however, our forgiving spirit does not clear the offending one who fails to seek forgiveness.

A noted song writer once wrote: “... And a Christlike spirit everywhere be found.” As we stated in an earlier comment, a Christian is a Christian because he has a Christlike spirit. The Christlike spirit will be reflected in the Christian as he responds to the enemy and as he responds to the offender. “Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for as it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire [acts of kindness] upon his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good” (Romans 12:17-21).

Invariably, problems will arise among brethren. Personalities will vary greatly. Some personalities will be more lovable than others. There will be closer rela-

tionships between some than between others. Peter, James, and John accompanied Jesus more frequently than the remaining nine. The apostle John was closer to Jesus than the remaining eleven. With an unfailing approach, the Word of God lays out a unity that binds all saints of God together in perfect harmony. “Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Colossians 3:12-16).

Mercy, forgiveness, and love brought Jesus to His own, but sadly, His own received him not. To those who did receive Him, to them gave He life, and gave it more abundantly. “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3).

It is within the mansions of glory where the whole family in heaven and in earth do dwell, where we find the lively stones that are embossed with the words of life more abundant: mercy, forgiveness, love, and grace. In the life of worldly pleasures, these cannot be found.

UNSEARCHABLE RICHES Fanny J. Crosby

O the unsearchable riches of Christ! Wealth that can never be told;

Riches exhaustless of mercy and grace, Precious, more precious than gold!

O the unsearchable riches of Christ! Who shall their greatness declare?

Jewels whose luster our lives may adorn, Pearls that the poorest may wear.

O the unsearchable riches of Christ! Freely, how freely they flow,

Making the souls of the faithful and true Happy wherever they go!

O the unsearchable riches of Christ! Who would not gladly endure

Trials, afflictions, and crosses on earth, Riches like these to secure?

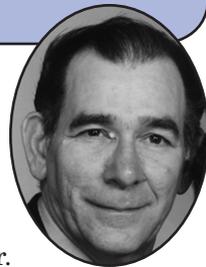
Precious, more precious, Wealth that can never be told:

O the unsearchable riches of Christ! Precious, more precious than gold! †

“Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.” — Ephesians 3:8.

Renewing Our Strength To Be an Overcomer

2021 Hagerstown Convention Message by Bro. Raymond Martin



I WILL BE speaking on our theme. It shouldn't surprise us to hear the scriptures read over and over, but I appreciate the theme that we have. I want to read verses 28-31 of Isaiah 40: "Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

I would also like to read verse 4 of First John 4: "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world." Notice what he said: "Ye are of God, little children [We're His children.], and have overcome them [We didn't do it in ourselves.]: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world." Then we read in chapter 5, verse 5: "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" If you don't believe that Jesus is the Son of God, you're not going to overcome the world.

I want to add just a little to our theme, "Renewing Our Strength," and that is, "Renewing Our Strength To Be an Overcomer." God gives us power to overcome the wiles of the devil.

I was only in one afternoon service, and I appreciated the testimonies that were given by the young people, but I feel most of you all that are here today have a testimony. Our testimonies are important, for they will help us and help others. Our strength is renewed by testimonies of people witnessing for the Lord. Sometimes we can think back on things God has done for us, and it renews our strength.

I don't remember if it was in 1955 or 1956 that I was here and was healed of poison ivy. I was pretty small. I had poison ivy from the top of my head to the sole of my feet. I climbed a cherry tree, and it had poison ivy on it. At the time, I didn't know what it was. You've heard me tell this before, but I think it's worthy of being told again. Some things stick with us down through the years that help to give us the strength to keep going on. I came with my parents. While we were here, my parents brought me up to the altar to be prayed for. The poison ivy was very bad. God touched me. Just overnight, after I was prayed for, it began to dry up. That is the God we're still serving today. He's real. He hasn't lost any of His power. I tell you, these children will remember some of the things that are happening in their young lives as they grow older.

I could give you a number of testimonies of things that God has done for me, but I have another special

testimony. In 1975, my wife was healed. She had a nervous breakdown after our youngest child was born. I was afraid to leave her and go to work. She was in a real bad shape. I know the medical world can do a lot of things, but God can go much further. My wife was prayed for by different ones around where we live, and I knew God was able to heal her. We had seen some healings in between that time. She was unable to sleep for many nights. I believe it was the Lord that impressed me to bring her here to Hagerstown to be prayed for. Now God could have touched her just as well at home. He's the same God everywhere. He's the same God in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, or wherever you're from. He's a mighty God. Bro. Gene Marquiss was the pastor at the time. I don't remember who all were there with him when she was prayed for. We went back home, and the very first night, she slept like a baby. God touched her. My desire is to still see healings like that again. God is still able to heal, and He's still doing some, but we want to see more. So your testimonies are important. You're special to God.

It is the will of God for everyone to be saved. He doesn't want anyone to be lost. He wants us to make our home in heaven. We don't have to surrender to the adversary. The devil is not going to quit as long as we're in this life. He's not going to stop, but we have One that is much higher that will help us. We don't have to give into the burdens and trials. I'll say this, especially to the young people, God will see you through. I realize there will be some that will grow weary and faint, no doubt, by the way.

The Bible tells us in the book of Luke that Jesus was going through some villages and cities on His way to Jerusalem. There was someone that asked Him, "Lord, are there few that be saved?" Do you know what Jesus said? "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." We have to keep our eyes on the Lord. We have to go back to Him for more strength. He has what we need. It is my desire to encourage you to continue to strive and to wait upon the Spirit of God. Jeremiah said, "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." Psalm 37:23: "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way." So we need His help. We need His Spirit to guide us. Let me say this: you can be one of the few that can make it. The Bible says, "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." But it went on to say, "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves." We need to keep our eyes on Jesus or we'll sink. God sees His people.

I was thinking about Joseph. Jacob loved his son, Joseph, but his brothers envied him. Jacob sent his son to check on his brothers to see how they're were doing. Because of jealousy, the brothers hated Joseph. There's no room in the family of God for jealousy and envy. Joseph was sold. He went through some hard things. The brothers had plotted to take his life, but they threw him in a pit where there was no water. He was there for some time. A little later, I think the older brother said, "Let's not kill him. Let's not have his blood on our hands."

Then Joseph was taken to Egypt and sold as a slave to Potiphar. You know the story. Don't give up when people falsely accuse you or lie on you. Potiphar's wife got her eyes on Joseph. Joseph ended up in prison for something he didn't do. But God was there with him. I know this might be a simple story, but God gave Joseph some strength. Yes, the Lord was with him. He gave him some renewed strength. Joseph wasn't in Egypt just for a few days. He spent over two years in prison for something he didn't do. Let me tell you, it takes some strength to go through something like that. The Lord had His hand upon Joseph, and God used him because he waited upon God. Joseph had his heart fixed upon the Lord. His mind was made up, "I'm going to stay true. I'm going to be faithful." Not only that, but his affection was set upon God.

God gave Joseph the ability to interpret dreams. He interpreted the dream of the baker and the butler. The baker's dream wasn't so good, and Joseph told the butler, "They're going to take you out of here. They're going to restore you back to your place, but think on me." Do you know what happened? The butler forgot all about Joseph.

Sometimes we forget about what others are going through. People ask you to remember this or to remember that in prayer. I have to write down some things at times. It's easy to forget when things are going well. Let me tell you, God doesn't forget you. He doesn't overlook a single one. He sees you. He knows where you are. He knew where Joseph was all along. He doesn't miss anyone. He knows where we're standing. Joseph stayed faithful to the Lord, and he came out on top. Pharaoh put him in control of all that he had. Joseph became the governor of the land. Young People, you cannot see the future, but it is no telling what God may have for you that are here this morning. Stay true to the Lord. He will use you.

Later on, of course, there was another Pharaoh, and things didn't go so well for the children of Israel. He began making it hard on them. They had great afflictions and sorrows, but God saw them. He saw His children. He saw their afflictions and heard their cries. He still sees them today. Don't give up when your prayers are not answered the first time. Keep praying! You've prayed the first time, the second time, and the third time, and you still haven't seen the answer, but just keep praying. How many times has the devil tried to discourage us? I'm not alone in this. God is no respecter of persons, and neither is the devil. If the devil can trip you up, he'll do it. God raised up Moses to deliver the children of Israel. He brought help to them.

God has not changed. He is still the King of glory, the Bible tells us. He's strong and mighty. He's the One who made all that is in the world. He's bigger than the world, yet He can live in the heart of a man. He's everywhere. Sometimes it's beyond what I can comprehend, but He's the mighty God. If you're unsaved, He wants to live in your heart. He wants to give you strength in the time of trouble. We all will face trials as we live. There are going to be battles, but we can look to the Lord, and He'll renew our strength. He'll give us power to make it.

The Bible says in Psalm 37:39, "But the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord: he is their strength in the time of trouble." I like that verse of scripture. God gives us strength to be overcomers of every obstacle that stands in the way. He's promised to be with us. He doesn't go back on His promises. He's faithful to every promise. The Bible says in Psalm 46:1, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."

God made many things, and they were good. The Bible tells us that God made man in His own image. He loves mankind. I said that to say this: what He has done for me, He'll do for you. I'm glad He doesn't show any partiality, aren't you? Partiality is seen in many workplaces. You don't see it in church work. God is fair to everyone. He wants us to be that way. He wants us to be honest with each other. He wants us to love each other just like He loves us. The Bible says we're the apple of His eye.

When the storm is raging, God can calm the waters. When the storm was raging, the disciples awoke Jesus and asked, "Carest thou not that we perish?" He cares for us. I'm glad He cares for us, don't you? He's still calming the storms. He's still helping us along the way.

God sent His Son to help us to be an overcomer. He did all that He could do. He was faithful to the heart of mankind. He gives us power to stand fast and to hold on. We're told in Ephesians 6:10, "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." We cannot stand in our own power. We can't stand against the devil in our own power. We need the help of God. When we begin to feel like we're getting weak, we need more strength. We need to go to Him. Let Him renew our strength that we might fight and be all that God would have us to be. It's not in our own power that we can overcome the world. We can't do it in our own power. But thank God, we can do it if we have God on board.

Isaiah tells us in chapter 26, verse 3: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee." I like that verse of scripture. What a blessing it is to have perfect peace! Just to be at ease and have that perfect peace with God. But there is something we have to do. Our mind must be stayed on Him. We have to put our trust in Him. We have to keep our mind upon Him, for He is our strength. Yes, there is a positive side of life when we put all our trust in the Lord. With all that is happening in the world, we need to seek to trust Him more and more. We must keep our affections on the Lord.

I used to sing a song years ago called, "Stand By Me." Do you remember that song?

*When the storms of life are raging, stand by me;
When the storms of life are raging, stand by me.*

When the world is tossing me like a ship upon the sea,

Thou who rulest wind and water, stand by me.

Do you ever feel like you're tossed about this way and that way? I want God standing by my side when that happens. I want His help when the world is tossing me or when it seems that way.

In the midst of tribulation, stand by me;

In the midst of tribulation, stand by me.

When the hosts of hell assail, and my strength begins to fail,

Thou who never lost a battle, stand by me.

God has never lost a battle. As long as He's standing with you, you can win the battle. You can be an over-comer. He'll give you strength to overcome.

The Psalmist says in Psalm 121:1, 2, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth." You're not going to get any help looking downward. I know sometimes it gets hard, and we almost want to go around with our head hanging down, but we need to learn to look upward. God is still God. He is still there, and He wants us to look to Him. He wants to renew our strength. Look to the church for help. That's why we're here. Look to the saints for help. Most of all, look to the Lord. After I backslid, I knew where I had to go to get back to the Lord. I knew what I had to do. I knew where I could get help. I knew I could go back to God's people. That's what the church is. It's not the building.

It's sad but there are a lot of people running to get help and not finding it. They're going to the wrong places. Beware of false prophets. They need to go where the Lord is. I wish everything was done to the glory of God. That's what the Bible teaches. There's a lot of ministering in our world today that is not to the glory of God. A lot of things that are happening in our world today are not to the glory of God. "My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth."

This same God that I'm speaking about is our Captain. He's walking by the side of every child of God. Paul said, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31). God has always made a way out. When the world is closing in, God makes a way out. I spoke earlier of the children of Israel crying out to the Lord when Pharaoh's army got close to them. God gave Moses a message to give to them. They were afraid. Moses told them what the Lord told him. He said, "Fear ye not, stand still [wait]." We don't have to fear what the world is going to do to us or what's going to happen. We need to learn to wait. "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace." Let me tell you, God is bigger than any problems that you have. He knows already what you're going through. He knows what I'm facing. He will help us.

As we look around in our world today, we see so much sin, yet the world is filled with religion. It's filled with religious people who claim to be Christians. I'm not the judge, but I'm a pretty good fruit inspector. I've been saved long enough to know some of what the Bible

teaches. They belong to this church group or the other church group. They dress the same way the world does. They live that same way. They do the same things. They pattern after the world. Young People, don't let that get you down. Hold on to what you have. Don't let them influence you. Stay true and faithful to the Lord. You don't have to pattern after the things of the world. One lady asked me one time, "Bro. Martin, do you preach on things?" I said, "Well, the Bible says we're not to love the world, neither the things that are in the world. If we don't preach on things, what are we going to preach?" The things of this old world will keep you out of heaven.

I couldn't begin to name all the things that are deceiving people today in our world. The young as well as the old are being deceived. We see so much ungodliness in our world in the way people are dressed and in the things that they're doing, yet they're professing to be Christians. There's a difference. God's people are different from the world. He gives us strength to be different and to live different. We don't have to pattern after the world. There's joy in serving the Lord.

Hebrews 10:23 says, "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; for he is faithful that promised." We have a High Priest to go to. He's looking on and ready to help us. With Him, all things are possible. He gives us strength.

We're a living in a world where people are taking a lot of chances on their soul. We can live the Christian life. We're not living this life on our own, but to have the Lord's help and have Him to give us the strength, we have to be surrendered to Him. Our all has to be on the altar. We have to wait upon Him to lead and to guide us. Over and over in the Word of God, we are instructed to wait upon the Lord. He will give us the strength. He knows our heart.

Waiting has never been easy for me. I remember Bro. Alvin saying to me one time, "Bro. Martin, I get tired of waiting at a red light when there are no cars coming. It seems like it's five or ten minutes before it changes. I get a little bit impatient with that." He told me that himself. I do, too. Do you like to sit and wait? It's not easy. If you want to be a winner, it takes some patience and waiting.

I used to go to Louisiana to do some hunting. This was probably back in the 80's. Bro. Terry and I would go hunting together. Their squirrels are different than ours. I've killed a lot of squirrels at home in Virginia. I had trouble seeing those squirrels in Louisiana, but I finally caught on. It took some waiting and patience. We both deer hunted, too. I tell you, when you get out there and you don't have some patience to wait, you're not going to go home with a deer. That's just the way it is, unless the deer makes a mistake and come across in front of you.

It's the same way serving the Lord. You have to wait upon the Lord and have patience. He'll bless your heart and fill you up. Your bucket will run over. This is the good way.

Being with God's people renews our strength. It helps us. We find encouragement from one another. Just because you've been saved a number of years doesn't mean the devil won't get you down. We need

each other. Many times just a word from a brother or sister will renew our faith. God knows how to use them for our benefit. Yes, we find strength from one another. God has always used people. We need to be vessels that He can use to help others along the way.

God makes us strong. When we seek for His help and wait on Him, He gives us power and more of His Spirit. He revives us. Paul said that we are more than conquerors through Him. We're not just conquerors. We're more than conquerors through Him that loved us.

One writer wrote, "I Won't Ever Quit." Let me read it:

*When life's path is all uphill,
Perhaps I'll have to stop and sit;
I'll tarry there and rest a while,
But I won't ever quit.*

*The climb is rough, the mountain is steep,
My torch is barely lit;
Still, by the grace of God, my friend,
These feet will never quit.*

*I'll trudge along this path of life,
Until the race is run;
I'll fight the foe and win the prize,
Then hear my Lord's "well done."*

*If morning's sun is failing dim,
It seems the road will have no end,
I'll travel on beyond the curve
To see what's around the bend.*

*I'll never drop out of this race,
Although I'm slow today;
But if you make it home ahead
You'll know I'm on my way.*

*God's standing at the open gate,
His arms outstretched a bit;
He's waiting there to take me in,
Because I purposed to never quit.*

I don't want to ever quit. I want to be faithful till the end. If you're not saved, you need to come to the Lord.

We live in a world today that is filled with so many things to discourage us. They're passing laws that are contrary to the Word of God and using our tax dollars to enforce some of them. Then they try to get you involved with so many sinful things. There's probably a lot we don't know that they're doing. They're trying to make you to be a part of the world. The world is after you. They've already enticed a lot of church people. Yes, they're accepting homosexuals. They have their homosexual preachers.

We have to choose to be different. I'm not going to say it's hard to be different, for the Bible says that the way of the transgressor is hard. The Lord will make it easy for you if you choose to follow Him. He'll give you the strength. He'll renew your strength to be an overcomer of the things that are happening in the world today. †

Scriptures: II Corinthians 9:7, 15; Matthew 2:1-12.

II Corinthians 9:7 Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

15 Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.

Matthew 2:1 Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,

2 Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.

3 When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

4 And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.

5 And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet,

6 And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, art not the least among the princes of Judah: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.

7 Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.

8 And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.

9 When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.

10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

11 And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

12 And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

Memory Verse: Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

—II Corinthians 9:7.

Aim: To set forth the truth concerning God's gift to mankind.

INTRODUCTION

WE HAVE through the years accepted the observance of Christmas as a matter of fact, but there are some things to which we need to be alerted. First, it is quite evident that the Lord was not born at the time of year that is celebrated as His birthday. Second, the time celebrated is the time that was originally observed by the pagan world in their celebration of their worship of the sun god. There can be no doubt that this was a result of a large number of pagans who came into the Christian faith when Christianity was declared to be the state religion by Constantine in 313 A.D. Third, it is absurd to be giving gifts to everyone but the One who has the birthday. The wise men did not give gifts to Mary and Joseph, but to the Babe

Himself. Their gifts were given to Him because He was King and not because it was His birthday. Then businessmen have made this season of the year a time of great money-gathering. They are little interested in the Child who was born supposedly on this day. The money they can gather unto themselves is the thing in which they are interested. When the angels brought the message, "Peace on earth; good will toward men," it was not to be limited to December 25. It is a principle for all times. Nothing could be more pleasing to the Lord than that we devote this time to the humble worship of the Lord.

MEDITATIONS

THE GIFT OF GIFTS—II Corinthians 9:15

—Unspeakable gift—The gift of Christ, the perfect sacrifice, and the gift of eternal salvation are so inseparable that they cannot be dealt with apart. You cannot have the one without the other. So if we say that Christ is the unspeakable gift, or if we say the salvation of our souls is the unspeakable gift, it makes little difference. The gift of both is great indeed, and without them, what would man do? There would be no hope for man. He would, indeed, be most miserable. The hope of this present life is little. Riches so frequently take wings and fly away. Friends so frequently fail and turn out to be bitter enemies. Health, which is one of the greatest blessings of natural life, fails often without a moment's notice. There is nothing in this world that we can build on with any certainty, but the gift of God gives us hope for eternity and smooths out many of the rough places in this world. It is a disturbing fact, however, that the vast majority of people are paying little heed to the unspeakable gift, trampling it underfoot to get the meager blessings that the time world has to offer.

A GREAT EVENT IN HISTORY—Matthew 2:1

—Jesus was born—This is one of the greatest events of history, and the happenings that surround this event have influenced the family of man more than anything else. For centuries men knew that a Child would be born into the world to fulfill a great purpose. Job prophesied of it when he declared that he knew that his Redeemer lived and should stand upon the earth in the latter day. Many a Jewish mother, without doubt, looked upon her baby boy's crib and wondered if her child might be the promised and anointed One. Over 2,000 years have gone since this event, and the story is still thrilling, and the glory of the event still lives.

THE ONE GREAT KING—Matthew 2:2—Where is he?—Some sought Him for the purpose of worship; others would have destroyed Him. Rejected by the Jews because He did not fill their idea of a king, He became actually the true King of every heart who beholds the spiritual reality of His eternal kingdom. Today He resides in every heart who has been born again of the Spirit. There He reigns as the true and righteous King that He is. **Verse 3—Was troubled—**There was something in the air that could not be explained, and the uncertainty of it caused both Herod and the people of Jerusalem to worry. Herod looked at it from a natural sense. He could not allow anyone to arise who would threaten his throne. If he had accepted the Christ who

made His way into the earth as a Child, he would have been greatly benefited and enabled to do the tasks properly that were his in life. **Verse 4—Demanded of them—**He held a place of authority and held a commanding position. Little did he realize that there was One watching over this newly born Babe who towered so high above mankind that before Him all nations became as a drop in the bucket! **Verse 5—By the prophet—**Students of the Old Testament had an understanding in regard to the promised Christ and were able to answer Herod's question correctly. Yet their spiritual understanding in regard to His mission was clouded and darkened to the point that they rejected Him when He appeared.

CHRIST, THE RULER—Matthew 2:6—Rule my people—Israel in general looked for a material king who would rule from a throne in Jerusalem. They could not understand that He was to be the invisible moral ruler who would lead them to victory over the mighty enemies, sin and the devil. These are the greatest enemies that man has, and when he wins over them, he gains the greatest victories that are possible to be won.

DIVINE GUIDANCE—Matthew 2:9—Went before them—It is a great honor indeed to have the high God of heaven delegate one of His celestial bodies to lead to the desired location. However, we do not see God sending one of His stars to direct King Herod. We who know Him are encouraged to command Him concerning the work of His hands (Isaiah 45:11). We are His children and of His family; therefore, He will do great things for us if we ask and believe.

CAUSE FOR REJOICING—Matthew 2:10—When they saw the star—Only the guiding hand of God could make known to them the purpose of the star and its presence, rather than causing fear (as it might have for some), produced great joy.

TRUE WORSHIP—Matthew 2:11—Fell down—He who really finds Christ is going to fall down and worship Him and also is certain to offer Him gifts. First of all, everything that he has and everything that pertains to him is going to be put entirely at the Lord's disposal, and the ensuing life will be one of a continual living sacrifice.

OBEYING GOD RATHER THAN MAN—Matthew 2:12—Another way—We can and must be obedient to our rulers as long as their laws and commandments are not contrary to the laws and commandments of God. The wise men regarded the Lord as King of kings, and His command was to be obeyed ahead of all others. We who are true followers of Christ will always be found doing the very same thing.

GIVING FREELY—II Corinthians 9:7—Not grudgingly—A heart that is fully committed to the will of God will be led of God in all things, not by outward manifestations but, usually, by an inward conviction. So when there is a financial need, an inner conviction will present itself in regard to what should be given. That will be what has been purposed in the heart. Do not fail to do according to what you have purposed and do it gladly, for it is being done not as unto man but

unto God. How perfectly God knows our hearts and understands if we are giving willingly or not. He is grieved if we give with a grudge.

CONCLUSION

We see no evidence about us today of any world-wide working of the Spirit of God in the hearts of men. Most religion is formal and being entered into half-heartedly. Far more zeal and energy is being thrown into the pursuit of the things of the world. One reason for this is, we are not worshiping God in the beauty of holiness as commanded in His Word. One avenue of our departure from such worship is plainly brought out in this lesson. The Christian spirit of love and helpfulness should be shown throughout the year. Our devotion and service to Christ should flow very evenly the whole year through.

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

1. What is the nature of most of the Christmas celebration today, especially in those cases where strong drink is introduced?
2. What is the “unspeakable gift”?
3. What event in history has had the greatest influence on mankind?
4. How would you describe Christ as King?
5. Were the wise men justified in disobeying king Herod?



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



QUESTION: What does Isaiah 1:27 mean?

ANSWER: According to verse one, what follows in this chapter was “concerning Judah and Jerusalem.” The prophet goes on to point out how sinful a nation they were. Then in verse sixteen he calls on them to “put away the evil of your doings.” In the latter part of this chapter, God makes it clear He will have a holy people, “Afterwards thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city.” Verse twenty-seven tells us how this was to come about. This prophecy found its fulfillment in the coming of the Messiah and the redemption He purchased through His death and resurrection.

QUESTION: Does God have delight in human sacrifice? Or do we have delight only in the human sacrifice? Why did He accept Jephthah’s daughter?

ANSWER: It is true God instructed Abraham to offer Isaac, but that is an exception. That was a type

of God giving His only begotten Son for our sins. When God saw Abraham loved Him so much that he would not withhold his son from Him, He stopped Abraham and Isaac was not slain.

I do not believe God ever approved of human sacrifices. He wants us to be “living sacrifices.” Romans 12:1.

As for Jephthah, some do not believe he offered her a *burnt* sacrifice. According to Dr. Hale’s exposition, as quoted by Adam Clarke, Jephthah’s statement, in the original language, meant, “If thou wilt surely give the children of Ammon into my hand, then it shall be that *whatsoever cometh out of the doors of my house to meet me* when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall either be the Lord’s, or I will offer it up (for) a *burnt offering*.”

According to this rendering of the Hebrew, “the vow consisted of two parts: 1. That what *person* soever met him should be the Lord’s or be dedicated to his service; and 2. That what *beast* soever met him, if *clean* should be offered up for a *burnt offering* unto the Lord.”

The Levitical law allowed one to redeem a person at a certain price if a person repented of his vow. See Leviticus 27:1-8.

Further, Adam Clarke says, verse 40 should be understood as saying “the virgins of Israel went at different times, four days in the year, to the daughter of Jephthah, that they might comfort her.”

Why? Having been given to the Lord, she was not to marry, and thus could have no children which brought great sadness to an Israelite woman.

If one insists that Jephthah actually gave his daughter—burnt her to death on an altar—that still does not say God approved or accepted the sacrifice.

QUESTION: Does all sickness come as a result of sin? Does God heal without forgiving sin? Where is the source of sin?

ANSWER: It is my understanding that man did not know sickness until after the fall, so we say that sickness came as a result of sin; but that is not to say that everyone who gets sick today is a sinner, or that his sickness came as a direct result of a sin he committed.

I am sure Jesus healed many sinners, and even in our day, sinners have been healed, but Jesus said to some, “Go and sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you.”

As to the last part of your question, it depends on what you mean by “source.” Sin comes from the devil, but a person must yield to the tempter before he becomes guilty of committed sin. James said, “Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust [strong desires] hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.” †

OUT OF BOX 88

Thank you so very much for your magazine. ... I pass your magazine on to my pastor and sometimes to a friend. I thank you so much for sending it to me. —V. P., Florida



Dear Young People,

Our article this month speaks beautifully to the thought of being more and more like Jesus as we walk in the Christian way and the protection it gives. Some thoughts that it brings to mind are how would Jesus interact with people? In person, online, in difficult situations; we

have numerous examples of how He dealt with people in His time on Earth. What would He choose to do with His life in the world we live, how would He influence people's lives?

As you read these thoughts taken from "Steps Heavenward," written by the late R. L. Berry, let His Spirit speak to our hearts and show us ourselves and what He would like us to become!

Blessings,
Bro. Doug Shenberger

CONFORMITY TO JESUS

"Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth" (I Peter 2:21, 22). And Paul says we were foreordained to "be conformed to the image of his Son" (Romans 8:29). "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (II Corinthians 3:18).

Nothing is plainer in the Bible than that the Christian is to be like Jesus. Look at the apostles! When they first came into contact with Jesus, they were not very much like Him. Every now and then in their association with Him we see the contrast. Once in a storm they saw Jesus coming on the water and they thought it was a ghost, and they cried out for fear. Once they wanted to call fire down from heaven to kill some Samaritans. And they quarreled about getting the chiefest place in the kingdom. They were not just like Jesus; there were some differences in the point of view and in the disposition of heart. But after three years of looking at Jesus and especially after Pentecost the apostles became like Jesus. They were brave, they were kind and full of love, they bore persecution humbly like Jesus, and nearly every one of them died for Jesus. The transforming power of Christ made them act like Jesus.

Jesus is the Christian's great pattern, the one perfect model and example. A Christian is a Christian, a follower of Jesus, one who learns of Him and lives like Him. Young converts are called to live again in a sinful world the life of Jesus. Young converts, like the apostles, cannot at once live just like Jesus, they have begun to live as He lived, but there must be considerable correcting before they become full men in Christ. But the young babe in Christ is a son of God, and that divine life will most surely produce a mature Christian by and by. Everything that lives must have time to grow, and all things that begin must be given time to come to perfection. Babies are perfect babies but not perfect

men; so a new convert is a perfect babe in Christ, but he will become more like Christ as he continues to view in the mirror the glory of God.

The important thing to do is to keep our promise to the Lord to live for Him. He will see to the keeping of us, and our life will be more and more like His.

To be like Jesus we must have a clear idea of whom Jesus is. The picture of Him must be clear. Where do we obtain that picture? You have seen photographs that were taken on a cloudy day or in places where the light did not shine upon the object being photographed. The result was a blurred, dim picture. Some people's picture of Jesus seems to have been taken in the dark, in the gloom, and not in the clear light of the gospel.

We obtain a true picture of Jesus in the New Testament. The light of Him shines forth from it. The young convert should take pains to read the New Testament thoroughly. Its meaning may not always be plain, and you will find obscure passages, but the more you read and meditate the clearer becomes the meaning and the brighter becomes the picture of Jesus. Always remind yourself that you are the Lord's never to turn back, and always keep in mind that you are to be a Bible Christian, like Jesus, not a mere average Christian as we see them today.

There are only two possibilities on this line of conformity. We shall either be conformed to Jesus or be conformed to the world. We cannot be conformed to both at the same time. One excludes and drives out the other. And more than this, young Christian, the tendency of your life, now, since you are saved, will be one way or the other. You will be conformed either more and more to Jesus or more and more to the world. And if you become so conformed to this world that you become like it, Jesus Himself would not know you as a Christian if He should see you. Take great care which way you are going.

If a farmer or a plow-boy wants to make a straight furrow, he marks something across the field to look at. From that object he does not take his eye. If the newborn babe looks steadfastly to Jesus, he will see more and more the beauty of Jesus, and that seeing will make him more like Jesus. He will be changed into the same image. But if he gets his eyes on the world, he will become more and more worldly, he will be changed into the same image as the world is. Alas! many young converts get their eyes on the wrong image.

There is a secret about this seeing Jesus and being conformed to Him. When Christians in olden times were burned at the stake, the spectators and executioners wondered from whence came the sustaining grace to those martyrs. Jesus said we should pray to the Father in secret and He would reward us openly. The Christ-like life manifest to the world must feed in secret upon spiritual food. The Christian must find his strength renewed by constantly looking to Jesus. We become like those we associate with, and if in the secret closet we hold intimate conversation with Jesus, drink of His Spirit, gain His view of life, become filled with His love—we shall be conformed to Him. The measure of our conformity is the measure of our usefulness. Strive to represent Jesus to the world by close conformity to Him. †

Church of God (Universal), Inc.
The Way of Truth
P. O. Box 88
Hagerstown, MD 21741-0088 U.S.A.

Non-Profit Organization
U. S. POSTAGE PAID
Mercersburg, PA
Permit No. 15

RADIO LOG

The Way of Truth Broadcast

Alvin A. Craig, Radio Minister

(Aired on Sundays unless otherwise noted.)

Alabama, Mobile, WIJD 1270, AM & 97.9 FM 6:00 A.M.

Georgia, Augusta, WFAM 1050, 8:00 P.M. Wednesday & 11:30 A.M. Sun.

Illinois, Carmi, WROY 1460, 9:00 A.M.

Kentucky, Prestonsburg, WDOC 1310, 7:30 A.M.

North Carolina, Mooresville, WHIP 1350, 6:00 A.M.

Listen live—tunein.com/radio/whip-1350-s29320/

Oklahoma, Marlow, KFXI-FM 92.1, 7:00 A.M.

Listen live—Go to www.kfxi.com

Pennsylvania, Altoona, WFBG 1290, 9:00 A.M.

Tennessee, Chattanooga, WLMR 1450, 3:00 P.M.

Tennessee, Chattanooga, WLMR-FM 103.3, 3:00 P.M.

Virginia, Narrows, WZFM-FM 101.3, 8:00 A.M.

Virginia, Blacksburg, WKEX 1430, 8:00 A.M.

Virginia, Christiansburg, WKEX-FM 105.9, 8:00 A.M.

Virginia, Roanoke, WKBA 1550

Fri. 1:30 P.M., Sat. 12:30 & 4:30 A.M.; 5:30 P.M.

Sun. 12:30, 2:00, 6:00, 11:00 A.M.; 5:30 P.M.

Listen live—Go to www.wkbaradio.com

West Virginia, Summersville, WCWV 92.9, 8:30 A.M.

SHORTWAVE

WWCR, Nashville, Tennessee 4.840 on SW band

Sunday, 7:30 A.M. Eastern Time—12:30 G.M.T.

Listen live—Go to www.wwcr.com

WINB, Red Lion, Pennsylvania 9.320 on SW band

Friday, 9:30 P.M. Eastern Time, Saturday, 9:30 P.M. Eastern Time—2:30 G.M.T.

Listen live—Go to www.winb.com

INTERNATIONAL

JAMAICA, MELLO-FM, 88.1, 88.3, 88.5, 7:00 A.M. Sundays

Heard throughout Jamaica

THE BIBLE STANDARD BROADCAST

Church of God (Universal)

James Arch, Pastor

Radio Cayman

1:30 P.M. Sun. E.S.T.

Grand Cayman

Listen live—Go to www.radiocayman.gov.ky

**Listen to The Bible Standard Broadcast from anywhere in the world via the internet. Go to www.radiocayman.gov.ky and then click on Listen live & o.o. (Since it airs live you have to log on at the appropriate time.)*

Postage Rates Increase Again

The United States Postal Service implemented a new wave of increases which hit our foreign mailing particularly hard. We don't want to cut back our mailings, rather we have a desire to send the gospel to the uttermost parts of the world. We appreciate those individuals and congregations who willing assist us in this endeavor. May God bless each one. Please help us pray that this messenger will continue to be sent out until Jesus comes. Your gift to this ministry is tax-deductible.

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 _____