

The Way of Truth

Vol. 82

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

No. 7

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HOW TO AVOID BITTERNESS

Message begins on page 2

WHY IS SANCTIFICATION SO IMPORTANT?

THERE IS in our generation a controversy among Church of God people concerning one of the cardinal teachings of the Bible, the second work of grace—sanctification. There are people who see the bride of Christ, have been born again, and teach holiness of living, but deny the need of being cleansed of native depravity (the inherited nature of Adam), which is the tendency to choose sin over righteousness.

How wonderful it would be to fellowship all who profess to be Church of God! After all, we believe so much alike. But this issue of sanctification separates a multitude of people from the unity Jesus prayed for in St. John, chapter 17. Is it really that important?

The answer is a resounding YES. There are some issues that people can disagree on and still have sweet fellowship if they have the same spirit of God. But we dare not overlook the importance of the teaching and experience of sanctification. There is no doubt that it is God's will. I Thessalonians 4:3, 4 says, "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour." To deny the work of the Holy Spirit in the plan of salvation is a grievous error—one that cannot be overlooked or minimized.

The word *sanctify* has many meanings: "to cleanse, purify or make holy"; "to set aside for sacred use." *Sanctification* means: "the act of setting one aside for sacred use; filling one's body with the Holy Ghost; and cleansing one's nature from native depravity."

Just as there are two phases to the experience of justification—forgiveness and regeneration—there are two phases to sanctification—infilling of Holy Ghost and cleansing from the fallen nature. Sanctification is more than simply growing in grace or walking in the light. Just like justification, it is an instantaneous experience in the soul of a person.

Sanctification is an experience subsequent to justification. Romans 5:1, 2 states, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." In other words, in order to be filled with the Holy Spirit in the second work of grace, a person must first be justified or born again. We read in Acts 19:1, 2, "And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost." The apostle asked a meaningless question if a person automatically received the Holy Spirit at conversion! He in essence said that an individual must believe first. And the Scriptures clearly teach that if an individual truly believes that Jesus is the Christ, he is saved. The disciples were saved but not sanctified until

the day of Pentecost. He told them that the Spirit of God was WITH them, but there was coming a time when the Spirit would be IN them. John 14:15-17: "If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."

Acts, chapter 8, shows us clearly that men do not receive the Holy Ghost as an abiding Comforter at conversion—Philip preached Christ unto the Samaritans and many believed for there was great joy in that city. Acts 8:14-17 spells it out: "Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost."

Sanctification is the infilling of the Holy Ghost into our body which is ordained to be His temple. Just look at I Corinthians 6:19, "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" Again, the Bible says in II Corinthians 6:16, "And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."

There is a cleansing that takes place in sanctification, and it is the church that is to be cleansed. Ephesians 5:25-27: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." This is a second cleansing.

The purging of the branches in John 15 clearly shows that once an individual is attached to the Vine (Jesus), there is something additional that must be done to the branch. John 15:1, 2, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." The word *purgeth* comes from the Greek word *kathairo*, which means "to cleanse."

The offering of blood in the Scriptures signifies a cleansing. Hebrews 10:10, "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." And notice Hebrews 10:14, "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." And a verse that powerfully shows the connection between the

ABOUT THE COVER

On our cover is a picture of a hiking trail in Yosemite National Park in California. It takes the adventurer near beautiful Bridal Veil Falls. This is a peaceful environment where an individual can get away from stress that builds up and has the potential of planting seeds of bitterness.

THE WAY OF TRUTH

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

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The apostle Paul addressed some Christians at Corinth as *carnal*. I Corinthians 3:1-3, "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?" Sanctification restores man's nature from its deranged state to a state of preservation, according to I Thessalonians 5:23, "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Sanctification is so important but should not be misunderstood by preaching it too high! H. M. Riggle said, "The terms *sanctification* and *perfection* very often stagger people because they take too broad of view of them. Sanctification does not make us perfect gods; but perfect people here on earth. Yet it does not make us so perfect that we cannot err in judgment or make a mistake. It does not place us where we are never tried or tempted, or we can never backslide. No, let no one get that idea. But we do affirm that it makes us perfectly free from sin—pure even as he is pure (I John 3:3); righteous even as he is righteous. And thank God, this experience can be retained and lived all the days of our lives, on condition that we obey God." †

shedding of blood (cleansing) and sanctification is Hebrews 13:12, "Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate."

So then, as we see through the Scriptures that there is a cleansing in sanctification, we then search the Word to discover what needs cleansed. Hebrews 10:19-22 says, "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; And having an high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." Here we see the answer: an evil conscience. Other terms are native depravity, carnal nature, etc.

Some deny the existence of such, but the Bible reveals it to anyone who will be taught. Psalm 51:5 says, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." What else could this mean but that a bend towards sin is inherited at birth? Psalm 58:3, "The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies." The Bible tells us, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). The only way to explain that is that every person is born with a nature that is weak, bent towards sin, which makes it easy to do wrong and hard to do right.

God made Adam in His own image which was perfect in nature. But because of his fall in the Garden, Adam's offspring inherited a defiled nature. Genesis 5:3, "And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth."

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HOW TO AVOID BITTERNESS

Message by the late Bro. Alvin A. Craig



YOUR SUBJECT this morning is, “How to Avoid Bitterness.” As far as I know, there are only four verses of scriptures in the New Testament where you will find the word *bitterness*. I will read one of them as a text: “Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice” (Ephesians 4:31).

There is a lot of bitterness in the world today. I’m glad for a group of saints that do not have bitterness in their hearts.

Many people are unhappy about their circumstances: their health, their job, their salary, their residence, their marriage, etc. Some are not just unhappy. Some are miserable, and they want a change.

We must remember that there is a devil in the world, and one of his dirty works is causing people to be bitter. Sometimes people get bitter toward God when He has nothing to do with the things that they are bitter about.

God never ordained for a man to go to a tavern to get drunk and get out on the highway and kill people in an automobile accident. That’s not God’s doing. So there are a lot of things that happen in the world that cause people to be bitter about things and about people.

WHAT BITTERNESS WILL DO

I have a little clipping here that came from *Mayo Clinic*. I’d like to read it—

Nearly everyone has been hurt by the actions or words of another. Perhaps your mother criticized your parenting skills. Your colleague told of your partner having an affair. These wounds can leave you with lasting feelings of anger, bitterness, or even vengeance. But if you don’t practice forgiveness, you might be the one who pays most dearly. By embracing forgiveness, you can also embrace peace, hope, gratitude, and joy. Consider how forgiveness can lead you down the path of physical, emotional, and spiritual well being. They even claim that bitterness contributes toward cancer in some instances.

Doubtless, and I’m sure you won’t disagree with me on this, these kind of attitudes are not in the will of God. They do not come from God. I believe God wants us to be happy and to enjoy life. I know there is much bitterness, much heartache, and much disappointment in the world, but don’t forget there is a devil. Again I say, I believe that God wants us to be happy and He wants us to enjoy life, and I believe if we will take His way we will be able to do so. Now, that is not to say that everything is going to go according to our liking. That’s not being realistic.

I will not say a whole lot about bitterness, but rather, I will try to say something that will help us to avoid it, keep from it, and if troubled with it, to be able to overcome it.

I’ll read another verse of scripture in connection with the message. This one is found in Philippians 4:8,

a very familiar scripture: “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.”

Our thinking will have a lot to do with our state. After all, if Satan was not allowed to put thoughts in our mind, we wouldn’t be tempted, but he is allowed to do so. So our thinking will have a lot to do with our state. We can think ourselves into a state of discouragement, bitterness, or even depression. Or we can think positively. There are physical defects in a person’s body at times that bring on depression, and there are other times when depression is a direct work of Satan. We need to know how to fight him and to overcome him.

Contentment is not a state of circumstances. You don’t have to have everything going your way to be content. *Contentment* is “a state of the mind regarding our circumstances.” It’s not the circumstances themselves, but our state of mind concerning them.

We read in the Bible about John the Baptizer baptizing people. There were different ones who came to him. Not only did they come to be baptized, but they came with a question. There were some soldiers who came to him, and they asked John, “What shall we do?” John answered them, “Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages.” My brother, Harold, joined the Army in 1939, and in his first three months, he was paid \$21.00 a month. “Be content with your wages.” Well, I think they pay soldiers considerably better than that now. But the lesson is that we are to be content.

DO NOT COVET

One of the things that we are not to do is covet, so don’t look at other people’s prosperity. The Psalmist said that his foot almost slipped. In other words, he almost backslid when he looked at the prosperity of the wicked, but then he went into the house of God and saw their end, and he dropped his envy of them. So it is not only “be content with your wages,” but be content with a lot of other things. Now I know we don’t have to be content with the devil jumping all over us. We can resist him steadfastly in the faith. We are told in the Bible to do so.

The Bible has a lot to say about contentment. Contentment is one thing that is greatly lacking in the lives of some people today. The Word of God tells us, “Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out” (1 Timothy 6:6, 7). Godliness is just simply living the way that God would have us to live. Paul told Timothy, “Godliness with contentment is great gain.” If we are living godly, we should be content. Don’t you think?

I heard a story of a widow lady who sat down at a table to eat with just a piece of bread and a glass of water, and she said, "All of this, and the Lord, too!" That's contentment. The Bible says, "Having food and raiment let us be therewith content." I think all of us have all we need to eat. Some restaurants advertise meals with "all you can eat" for one price. Well, you know, it is not always wise to eat all you can eat. So the Lord said, "Having food and raiment let us be therewith content." All of us have a lot of food to eat. We are blessed in that way. We certainly do need to be contented and thankful. Not only do we need to be thankful for food, but thankful for those who prepare such delicious food. Someone has commented on how good our camp meeting meals are. Well, the Church of God has some good singers, and it has some good cooks.

Hebrews 13:5, "Let your conversation [manner of living] be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." I'm talking about how to avoid bitterness, and this is one good way we can do it. "Let your conversation [manner of living] be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." I tell you, that's a precious promise. The Lord said that He will never leave us, nor forsake us. He didn't say that we would always feel His presence. He didn't say we'll always be bubbling over. But He said that He would be with us. The Lord keeps His promises. He does what He says He will do. One of our problems is that sometimes we try to go by feelings rather than faith. Sometimes if we went by feelings, we wouldn't have a very good experience, but if we disregard our feelings and remember that the Lord said He would be with us, we can have victory in our souls.

A LESSON WE MUST LEARN

The apostle Paul wrote a big part of the New Testament scriptures. He was one of the greatest warriors of all times, as far as the cause of Christ is concerned. Paul went through a lot of things. We read in the Scriptures where he enumerated a number of things. Paul was beaten with rods, spent a night and a day in the deep, suffered shipwreck, was in perils among false brethren, etc., but he said, "I have learned a lesson." It's a lesson we all need to learn if we don't already know it. "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound" (Philippians 4:11, 12). Do you know Paul said that while he was in prison? "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." That was a very, very important lesson that the Apostle learned. Again, may the Lord help us to learn the same lesson.

Another way for us to avoid bitterness is to be thankful. Being thankful will help us to guard against bitterness. Who here this morning doesn't have a lot of things to be thankful for? I heard about a man one time who complained that he didn't have any shoes until he saw a man who didn't have any feet, so he found out that he had a lot to be thankful for. We can say the same thing. To have the right use of our mind is a

blessing. To have eyesight is a blessing. To be able to hear is a blessing. What a blessing hearing is! What a blessing to be able to get out of our beds! Do you remember what Sis. Novie used to say? She said, "It is a blessing to have a bed to get out of." It's a blessing to be able to get out of bed and be able to walk. I'm thankful that I'm still able to walk. So one of the things to help us to guard against bitterness is being thankful.

BE YE THANKFUL

Psalm 100:4, "Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name." How long has it been since you've said "amen" in a church service? I used to hear "preach it, brother" once in a while. "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful" (Colossians 3:15). Did you know that if you have the peace of God in your hearts there is no place for bitterness?

Colossians 4:2, "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving." It's a privilege to pray. I tell the Lord every now and then, "Lord, I thank you for the privilege of coming to you in prayer." It is a privilege, a blessing. I thought of the request that Bro. Brian gave this morning of someone's daughter with a tumor on the brain. You feel almost like the Psalmist when he said, "When my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I." Bro. Brian has asked us to pray that the next time she's examined that there will be no tumor there. That needs a miracle. God is a miracle-working God. We know there is no one in our midst who has the gift of miracles, but if we'll all pray and agree together, there's power in agreement. "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 18:19). "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving." We are told, "With thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." Ephesians 5:20, "Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

In connection with being thankful, let us look at the second text that I gave you this morning: The apostle Paul said, "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." How much does truth mean to you? We're told in Proverbs 23:23, "Buy the truth, and sell it not." I've said more than one time, and I say again this morning, buy the truth, pay whatever price it cost, and then put up a sign, "Not for sale." People have sold the truth, you know. People have turned away from God because they didn't have a love for the truth. To love the truth is a great blessing. Jesus said, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

Paul continues with "whatsoever things are honest." A person can't really be honest with God, honest with himself, honest with people, and have bitterness in his heart. Isn't it good that you can depend upon a person's word? I think there are a lot of people in the world today that you can't depend on their word. Thank God there

are still some who we can depend on. A Christian is one who is honest. A Christian is not knowingly going to tell you something that is false. We read in the Bible of some people who were honorable. We have people in the world today that are honorable, but we need more of them. I tell you one thing, America needs some honorable politicians. Maybe they wouldn't be all that much of a politician if they were honorable. Don't do those things that are not honorable.

Paul goes on with "whatsoever things are just." There is a lot of injustice in the world today, but if we're going to avoid bitterness and be what God would have us to be, we're going to be just. We will treat people justly. We'll be just in our business dealings. A person who is just in all of his ways will not be a bitter person.

KEEP THYSELF PURE

Then, Paul continues with "whatsoever things are pure." Jesus said, "The pure in heart shall see God." I was thinking in my meditations some days ago of these columnists, commentators, and others who are contending so strongly for the ungodly lifestyles of some people. I was thinking, if Jesus Christ were here today, they would probably crucify Him anew, or assassinate Him with a gun. I know God is a God of love, but He is also a God of wrath. People talk about how gentle Jesus was, but He wasn't always that way. I read in the Bible where Jesus made a whip and drove some people out of the temple area. Drove their animals out, upset their money tables. Jesus didn't say gently, *Now, Gentlemen, I'm sorry I have to do this*. No, He went in there with anger. Jesus got angry? Yes, He got angry. He got angry more than one time. There was a man who needed healing. It was on the Sabbath day, and people were looking at Jesus to see whether He was going to heal him on the Sabbath day or not. He said to them, "If a dumb ox went down there and fell in the ditch, wouldn't you go and get it on the Sabbath day? Should I refuse to do a good deed for this man just because it's the Sabbath day?" Jesus was angry because of their attitude, but it was a righteous anger. It was a righteous indignation. So "whatsoever things are pure"—pure in heart, pure in life, pure in thought, pure in action.

Paul told the young man Timothy, "Keep thyself pure." Now today we're told that it's unreasonable to expect our young people to grow up without indulging in sexual relations outside of marriage. It's not unreasonable. The Bible tells the young man to keep himself pure, and a young woman should keep herself pure, too. In fact, everybody should keep themselves pure. God has never put His approval on sin, and never will! So the pure in heart are those who shall see God.

Paul goes on with "whatsoever things are lovely." Sis. Sue has a lot of flowers out in our yard. She likes to work with them. Beautifying! On our trip to England, we went to a number of places. You talk about beauty? The flowers were beautiful. What about a little rippling brook that flows through certain places? There are beautiful birds all around. Do you know what they say about part of the animal family? The male is more beautiful. He's prettier than the females are. Supposedly, that's what attracts the female. Well, in our society, it's the opposite. But there are a lot of things in

this world that are lovely. After all that man has done to try to mar this earth, it's still a beautiful place to live, especially in the United States. It has been said that Maryland is America in miniature. Well, we have our beauty. The West has their beauty.

There are a lot of things that are beautiful. I think we have a beautiful church building to worship in. I remember Bro. James saying when he came in the first time, "It's very conducive to worship." He said that just as soon as he came in. He felt that it's very conducive to a spirit of worship. I trust I can say this without offending anyone: We need to thank Bro. Ollen, for he's the one who took the lead in seeing that we got this building. I'm not saying that he was the only one. I'm saying he took the lead. We owe a debt of gratitude to him for it.

Paul continues with "whatsoever things are of good report." What would you rather hear, a good report or a bad report? I'm sure you would prefer a good report. We heard a good report the other Wednesday night about the young men from here who spoke in the youth revival in Craigsville.

CONCLUSION

We've mentioned all of those things Paul said. He ends with "if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." Proverbs 15:30, "The light of the eyes rejoiceth the heart: and a good report maketh the bones fat." A good report brings joy to the heart.

Think on the love of God and the gift of His dear Son. Think on these things. Think of the peace that we can have through an experience of salvation. Think of the victory that we have in Christ over sin. "Sin shall not have dominion over you" (Romans 6:14). Think about our brothers and sisters in the Lord, and the fellowship that we have. I'm glad I don't live where, as we call it, "the isolated saints" live who have no place to fellowship with other saints. I think of the saints that are isolated and not having a place to worship. We are blessed that we have the privilege of meeting together and worshipping together.

Finally, we need to think occasionally about eternal life, for this world doesn't end everything. There is a better place to go. As good as it is, and the many blessings we have here, and all the good things that God does for us, there is still a better place to go. By the grace of God, I want to go there.

I trust that these thoughts and scriptures have been a blessing to you today. †

POSTAGE RATES ON THE RISE!

Postage rates have been increasing at an alarming rate. There is no subscription price for the magazine. However, we depend on the generosity of our readers to help us in our endeavor to send this gospel messenger to all the world. Please remember this ministry in your prayers and in your giving.



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

QUESTION: I John 4:1 says, “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they be of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.” How are we going to try them? What do we line them up with? We must know the truth beyond a shadow of doubt.

ANSWER: There is no simple ABC answer that can be given to this question so that anyone and everyone can “try the spirits.” A person who has a false spirit cannot try the spirits, and a false prophet cannot try the spirits. One must know the truth. He must have the Spirit of God who is the Spirit of truth. He must know how the Spirit of God works. Then when a person who knows the truth and has the Spirit of truth comes in contact with a spirit of error, of which there are so many, he must depend on the Spirit of God to alert him, to warn him. The Spirit of God cannot fellowship the spirit of error. The Spirit of God never teaches error and never anoints for the preaching of error. All error is backed by a false spirit. That is not to say that everyone who may misunderstand a portion of Scripture has the wrong spirit, but he has been influenced by the wrong spirit. There will be times when a person will have to wait and see what kind of fruit a person bears to find out what kind of spirit he is of. In some cases, harm might already be done before you become aware of a false spirit! That is why the gift of discerning of spirits is needed in the body of Christ. However, the better understanding a person has of the truth and the workings of the Spirit of truth, the better and quicker he will be able to recognize the spirit of error.

QUESTION: What did Jesus mean by “what thou bindest on earth shall be bound in heaven, and what thou loosest on earth shall be loosed in heaven”?

ANSWER: We are not to understand that the disciples could go around binding just anybody and everybody they might choose. Christ gave the disciples the commission to preach the gospel to the world, and they were to preach the “Word.” Those who obeyed the Word were loosed from their sinful habits that had bound them; those who refused to obey the Word continued to be bound.

QUESTION: What was the “thorn in the flesh” Paul was given?

ANSWER: This question has been asked a number of times. Many have given their opinions—weak eyes, and a number of other things—but Paul gives us the answer himself! “There was given to me a thorn in the flesh, **the messenger of Satan to buffet me**, [the

reason?] lest I should be exalted above measure.” So the thorn in the flesh was “the messenger of Satan.”

QUESTION: What does I John 3:4 and 6 mean? “Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law, for sin is the transgression of the law ... Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.”

ANSWER: The verses simply mean what they say. God has given us His Word to live by, and His Word is His law. To break the known laws of God is to be guilty of sin, and the wages of sin is spiritual death. He who is a Christian, a child of God, is abiding in Christ and as long as he abides in Christ he will not sin. Please understand we are speaking of imputed sin. A Christian may do something improper in God’s sight, but as long as he does not know, God will not impute it to him as sin.

Since we are living under the New Covenant, we understand the word “law” in these verses to mean the law of Christ, and not the law of the Old Covenant.

QUESTION: Why was John cast out to the island of Patmos? Who cast him out and why?

ANSWER: John himself tells us why he was cast out: “I John, who am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Revelation 1:9). So John was banished to the isle of Patmos because of his stand for Jesus Christ and the truth, which resulted in the conversions of heathens, among others.

Historians do not agree as to who was the ruler who had him banished. Some think Nero was, and others, Domitian.

QUESTION: In Hebrews 6:18 we read that God cannot lie. In I Kings 22:19-23 we read that God put a lying spirit in the mouth of Ahab’s prophet in order to entice the king. I have gone through the story very well, but why did God put a lying spirit in the mouth of this prophet?

ANSWER: The answer to your question is this: Micaiah, the true prophet of God, had warned the king, had given him true counsel, but he would not accept it. He listened to the false prophets who were under the control of a lying spirit. God allows men to choose, He permits them to make their own choices. This is what is to be understood by the verses you ask about. It is not that God made a lying spirit go to the king, but that He permitted it. The king did not have to listen to the lying prophets; he chose to do so. Therefore, he was responsible for what followed. There are a number of verses in the Old Testament that speak of God “doing” so and so, when all that is meant is that He permitted it, not that He ordained it to be so. An example of this is found in I Samuel 16 where it speaks of an evil spirit “from the Lord” troubling Saul. What is meant is, when the Spirit of God departed from him, then an evil spirit was permitted to trouble him. Had he been true to the Lord the true Spirit would have remained with him. †

THE CHILDREN'S CORNER



ISOLATED

Bible Lesson by Sis. Rebecca Bland

“Dear Lord,” prayed my father one night during our family devotions, “please bless all of your people everywhere.” Even though I was only seven years old, I listened carefully to my father’s prayer. My father and my mother prayed such earnest and sincere prayers to God, and I wanted to be able to pray the way they did.

I thought about what my father had just said in his prayer. I thought about God’s people “everywhere.” I had met some of God’s people who lived in faraway lands. At camp meeting time each year, people of God came from places like Jamaica, Grand Cayman, and Honduras to worship with us. From what I heard people say, I could picture the church buildings in those places. There were palm trees all around, and the sea was nearby.

“Bless those that are isolated,” my father continued, “and cannot attend church services.”

Isolated. I had heard that word before. Sometimes in our church services, a worker from the Way of Truth office would read a letter from “an isolated saint.” I tried to picture isolated saints. I had never seen the word “isolated,” and so I thought it had something to do with “ice.” I pictured a saint of God living in a house that was surrounded by miles and miles of ice and huge piles of snow year-round. These saints could never attend church because they were trapped. I wondered how they were even able to send a letter to us.

After prayer that evening, I decided to talk to my father about it. “What can we do to help the isolated saints?” I asked him. “Will they ever be free?”

“We can pray for them,” said my father. “We can pray that God’s presence will meet with them and encourage them when they study the Bible and pray.”

“But couldn’t we rescue them?” I asked.

“Rescue them?” questioned my father. “How would you do that?”

I thought about the times we had been snowbound in our little house at the top of a steep hill. It might be a day or two before the snowplow made it to our country road, but after that big truck with its mighty blade went through, we were able to get our car out and travel freely again. Then we weren’t “isolated” any more.

“Maybe we could get a great big snow plow and make a path for them to get out,” I suggested.

My father regarded me with a puzzled frown. “What exactly do you think ‘isolated’ means?” he asked me.

“I thought ‘isolated’ meant stuck in ice and snow,” I told him. “I thought ‘isolated saints’ lived in the middle of a huge field of ice all year long. I thought that’s why they couldn’t go to church services.”

My father didn’t laugh at me, but a little smile played around his lips. “‘Isolated’ means all by yourself—away from others,” he explained. “Isolated saints do not have any other Church of God saints living in their community, and so they have no opportunity to attend church services unless they travel a long distance. They worship God in their private devotions, and they receive encouragement by reading *The Way of Truth* paper. It is not easy to worship alone, Sunday after Sunday, and so that is why we pray for God to be with them and strengthen them.”

It took me a while to change my mental picture, but the older I grew, the better I understood the meaning of the word “isolated.” When I became a college student, I often felt isolated, even though there were other students all around me. It was because most of the other students dressed in a worldly fashion while I endeavored to dress modestly. In the words of my father, spoken many years before, I felt all by myself.

Children, there will be times in your life when you will feel “isolated.” You may be the only one in a whole crowd of people who is trying to do what is right. But one thing is sure—you will never be truly isolated when you are obeying God. The Lord has promised never to leave us or forsake us.

Our wise saying this month comes from Proverbs 2:7 which says, *He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous: he is a buckler to them that walk uprightly.* A buckler, which is a type of shield, is something that protects a soldier. If you are a soldier in the Lord’s army, He has promised to protect you. He will be right by your side, no matter how hard your battle might be. As long as you have the Lord as your helper, you will never be isolated.

Activity

In Daniel 3, we read about three young men who were tempted to feel isolated. Fill in the blanks to complete the story of how God was with them.

Nebuchadnezzar, the king of _____, made an image of _____. He commanded all the important people of the kingdom to come to the dedication of the image. He made a law that everyone had to _____ down to the image when they heard the sound of _____. Three Hebrew children named _____, _____, and _____ refused to _____ down and _____ the image. Nebuchadnezzar told them they must obey, or he would cast them into a _____ _____. The three _____ children told the king they would never _____ the golden _____. The king was so _____ he commanded the furnace to be made _____ times hotter, and he told his _____ to throw the three _____ children into the flames.

But the three Hebrew _____ were not alone in the _____. When the king looked in, he saw _____ people walking around in the _____, and the fourth person looked like the _____ of _____. The king called the three

Hebrew children out of the _____. The only thing that had burned were the _____ that had bound them. There was not even a _____ of fire on the young men. The king was _____! He made a new law that said everyone must _____ the God of _____, _____, and _____.

Answer to Last Month's Activity

1. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right" (Ephesians 6:1).

2. "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 3:16).

3. "Love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous" (I Peter 3:8b).

4. "Be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5b).

5. "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:32). †

STEPS HEAVENWARD

By the late R. L. Berry

Chapter XIV

Stumblings

YOU MAY comfort yourself, young convert, that while you make mistakes and stumble along, others had the same to go through when they first started for heaven. And it might encourage you to know that the very best Christians now and then make mistakes. Mistakes are not necessarily sins. The fact is that mistakes and stumblings are a part of life as it has to be lived in the flesh. It would take an infallible being, a God, to avoid all mistakes, and since we are men and not God we shall make more or less of them as long as we live here.

It is common for young Christians to imagine and feel that they make many more mistakes than anybody else. It is a case of every man knowing his own troubles while he is ignorant of his neighbor's. Your brother may be feeling the same about himself.

Mistakes follow as a natural consequence of our human natures. The mind of man grows and develops largely through experience, which is a dear though thorough teacher. And experience consists in a large measure of doing the wrong thing and finding it out just a little too late to prevent trouble. A little child usually learns the fire burns by putting his fingers on the stove.

A new-born babe in Christ must learn the things of God much as babies and children learn natural things. Little children do many things that should not be done, yet no one condemns them, because they did those things innocently. Mother puts a clean dress on Mary, and Mary goes promptly to where there is some nice

mud and water and makes mud pies. This is great fun for Mary, but Mother does not think it is much fun when she sees Mary's dress. Mary may be scolded or punished for this, or she may simply be told not to do that again, or she may be given something to do that will be as great fun as making mud pies and still keep her dress clean. But whatever happens, Mary promptly does some such thing again the very next day, because Mary is very full of life and that life must find some expression. Hence Mary makes a great many mistakes. But how shall Mary ever learn any other way? As Dr. Frank Crane said, "Every man has the privilege of making his own mistakes."

Awkwardness goes naturally with inexperience and childhood. How amusing it is to see one ride a bicycle for the first time, or skate, or play ball, or do almost anything! Many mistakes are made in the learning of a trade. It takes years of training in some lines of business to perfect one's knowledge and experience so that mistakes can be avoided.

Young converts are awkward, every one of them. But they have a new life from God planted in them, and awkward or not awkward, mistakes or no mistakes, that life must find expression, so they again go ahead doing what they feel God would have them to do. When a young convert first prays in public, it usually sounds very poor to him; but to the older Christians it is the sweetest of sounds to their ears. And the first testimony may be awkward, but it, too, is sweet to the other saints. In the doing of such things as the young convert thinks to be the will of God, mistakes may be made.

Not only in matters of worship may mistakes be made, but also in the daily life. For instance, the convert may be too quick in speaking his mind, may judge another too soon or too harshly, may slight a brother, may do or say a number of things that had better not have been done or said. But the right way to do things is usually learned by first doing them the wrong way. In other words, we feel disposed to do or say something and we go ahead, only to find out a little too late that either we should have kept still or silent, or we did or said the thing in the wrong way. Such mistakes point out the right way, and in the future the Christian has his past mistakes as a guide-post saying, "This is not the way, go some other way."

Every mistake is a step toward success, because every detection of what is false or erroneous helps us to find what is true.

Force of habit sometimes causes young converts to err. And there are many things some young converts do that are not right but which are not counted as sins to them because they do not as yet have the true, Bible light on them. Among these we might class tobacco using, wearing of jewelry and of apparel for adornment, going to places of worldly amusement, keeping bad company, using slang or by-words or coarse, near vulgar language, joking, gossiping, exaggerating, taking offense at slights, and such like. As light comes, these things are laid off.

Mistakes are not sins. To err in judgment is human. God knows that man is imperfect in knowledge, that he always will be. Jesus taught us to pray, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." And as we con-

tinually hold a forgiving attitude toward our fellow men who may occasionally not treat us just right, so God will overlook the mistakes which His children make.

But what shall one do with a mistake? Shall he ignore it entirely? or shall he become discouraged by it? Some mistakes may be ignored, some may have to be corrected and apologized for; but over none of them should one be discouraged. The apostle Peter was a very human disciple of Christ's, and his natural impetuosity led him to commit many mistakes. If any man had a right to be discouraged with himself it was Peter. But in spite of his stumblings Peter became a great apostle and a mighty man of God.

Old Giant Discouragement knows by long experience how to attack a soul who has made a mistake. He begins by making the mistake look a great deal larger than it is, and he suggests that so faulty a person should quit professing. He will crush the poor, trembling disciple to utter despair unless that disciple flies to the Lord and renews his strength.

There are two things to avoid in the matter of making mistakes: First, do not take them too lightly so that you leave yourself undisciplined, and, second, do not take them too seriously, which may lead to discouragement. When a mistake is made, face it like a man, acknowledge it on the spot, and if it has wounded someone else apologize for it at once. If it offended the Lord alone, acknowledge it to Him and ask pardon for it.

After a mistake has been acknowledged and apologized for and the Lord has pardoned it, then it should be promptly put out of mind and forgotten. To think and ponder over a mistake is folly. They should promptly be disposed of—brought out into the light, apologized for, and pardoned, and then the young disciple should go forward as though nothing whatever had happened, committing it all to the Lord in prayer, asking Him to overrule it to His glory and enable His young pilgrim to profit by it. †

ONE THAT LOST HIS FOCUS

Radio Message by Bro. James Arch

I AM VERY thankful for the privilege of coming back into your homes today, or wherever you may be listening to this broadcast. The purpose of the gospel, of course, is to tell the story of Jesus Christ and His redeeming love to the world around us. Also, it is to try to help others who are walking with God to keep focused and to keep going, for the Bible tells us that one of these days we shall reap if we faint not.

I'll be drawing most of the thoughts for this service from the 73rd and the 77th Psalms, whose name Asaph appears on both of them. In fact, his name appears on several of these Psalms. It appears from what we can find in the 73rd Psalm that he lost his focus, but found it after a while.

The word *focus* means "the central point of attraction, attention, or activity, etc." It is very, very important that Christians stay focused on what they are doing.

Before I go to Psalm 73 and Psalm 77, I will read a scripture taken from the second epistle of John in the New Testament. I will begin with verse 1 and end with verse 8: "The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth; For the truth's sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever. Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love. I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father. And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another. And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it. For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward."

According to the eighth verse there, Christians must be very careful that they don't lose what they have received from the Lord. We can lose our interest. We can lose our love. We can lose a lot of things in life if we're not careful. Not only the physical, but so many have lost their interest in that which is spiritual in our world that we're living in.

To compare ourselves as Christians with those not running this race is injurious to the soul of a person. Apparently, this was Asaph's problem. If you'll look into the 73rd Psalm, you will see there that he openly admitted this: "But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked." He focused on other people's goods and possessions apparently, and was not focused on what he had himself. Success of the ungodly plunged this man into despair. It's a touching story and a very moving story. It's an awakening story for any Christian to take heed to.

Asaph thought that all his goodness was in vain. If you'll look at verses 13 and 14 of Psalm 73, you will see, "Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning."

The old blind hymn writer, Frances Crosby, wrote a song that we sing quite often today. It says—

*Pass me not, O gentle Savior;
Hear my humble cry;
While on others Thou art calling,
Do not pass me by.*

*Let me at a throne of mercy
Find a sweet relief;
Kneeling there in deep contrition,
Help my unbelief.*

*Trusting only in Thy merit,
Would I seek Thy face;
Heal my wounded, broken spirit,
Save me by Thy grace.*

I'm reading this for a little later on into the message, as we will come to a scripture here which this last verse is based on.

*Thou the spring of all my comfort,
More than life to me,
Whom have I on earth beside Thee?
Whom in Heav'n but Thee?*

Chorus:

*Savior, Savior,
Hear my humble cry;
While on others Thou art calling,
Do not pass me by.*

What had begun as pure devotion had now turned to discouragement in the life of Asaph. Fortunately, he realized his mistake. Verses 17 and 18 of Psalm 73 says: "Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction." He found that material prosperity had no value in terms of eternity before God. The world has become so materialistic, so secular, and so worldly-minded. We need to remember that there's a God in heaven, the One who does everything for us that others cannot do, and the One who brought us where we are. Prosperity has come about because of the result of our forefathers standing on God's promises and holding fast to that which was right. I trust that it will continue that way.

Asaph came to himself and confessed his mistake before God. Verses 21 and 22 of Psalm 73 says: "Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins. So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee." Then Asaph began to think of the rewards of the righteous. Verses 23 and 24 say: "Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory." He resolved his fear and apprehension. That's the scripture I just referred to, that the song, "Pass Me Not" was based on. Verse 25: "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee." Yes, he resolved his fear and apprehension.

What I'm saying on this program today is designed to help us to see that there is always space for a turnaround. Nobody needs to stay under the bondage and hand of the enemy. We can always see the positive side of life as well. Thank God for the wonderful message of love and hope and redemption that we always have before us. It's always easy to lose interest in anything if we're not careful. That's how life is. People lose their interest in things. They begin to build and then stop. They get discouraged. They try this and that and the other thing, and it still doesn't work, and they're still in the same condition that they were in.

I wonder how many people have tried the Lord Jesus Christ in their lives. You see, it's no exception either with serving God. There are people who serve the Lord for a while and drop out of the race. They fall out along the way. Their course was diverted by something. They failed to keep focus on the God of heaven and earth, the One in whom we live and move and have our being.

July-August 2024

We need devotion. We need a strong prayer life to continue to retain our experience with God and to triumph over the problems of life. Never before have I seen problems like I am seeing today in the world as it now stands. There are problems and problems and problems. People are distressed, hopeless, depressed, and homeless. People are foodless. All kinds of situations are existing around our world. God is love, and in Him there is no darkness at all, My Beloved Friends. We can always trust in God.

What we do and how we live, we do so ourselves. So many bypass the beautiful way that God has provided. Many scoff at it, in fact. Many call it fanaticism. Many say there's nothing to it. That is not the case. It's real, it's real, it's real. It's very real. Thank God for the reality. The apostle Paul said, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."

The songwriter says—

Oh, how well do I remember how I doubted day by day,

For I did not know for certain that my sins were washed away;

When the Spirit tried to tell me, I would not the truth receive;

I endeavored to be happy, and to make myself believe.

So I prayed to God in earnest, and not caring what folks said;

I was hungry for the blessing; my poor soul, it must be fed;

Then at last by faith I touched Him, and, like sparks from smitten steel,

Just so quick salvation reached me, oh, bless God, I know it's real!

But it's real, it's real;

Oh, I know it's real;

Praise God, the doubts are settled,

For I know, I know it's real!

Sometimes we have to come to grips with ourselves when we're walking with the Lord, and ask ourselves a few questions: Where am I? How is my relationship with God? How is my relationship with other people? How am I keeping my heart? Solomon said, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life."

We find this man, Asaph, again, in Psalm 77. He spoke of seeking God in his trouble: "In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord: my soul refused to be comforted." Then God healed him. Listen to the cry of this man: "I cried unto God with my voice, even unto God with my voice; and he gave ear unto me." Asaph vowed to remember God's works. With everything else in life, he pledged to remember the works of God and what He had done and what He could do. Verses 11 and 12: "I will remember the works of the Lord: surely I will remember thy wonders of old. I will meditate also of all thy work, and talk of thy doings."

It's a wonderful thing to have a deep, rich life hid in Christ. My Beloved Friends, the world is going full

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speed ahead. We're going at a big rush all the time. Take a little time to think about your spiritual well-being and your journey here, for it is only for one time, and then it will all be over.

Asaph realized that there was none like God. In verse 14 of Psalm 77, he said: "Thou art the God that doest wonders: thou hast declared thy strength among the people."

To be converted to Christ, to be saved from a life of sin, to enjoy the new birth (in other words), is a wonder. It's a mystery. The Bible calls it a mystery. Who but God could take a human being out of hopelessness, out of the gutters and deep life of sin and plant his feet on the Rock and give him a life that he enjoys?

Keep focused on God, keep focused on His Word, on His love and wonders, and finally make it through to the end. Be able to say, as the apostle Paul said before leaving this world, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

What a day that will be when our Jesus we shall see! When we see the face of our loving Savior, what a day, what a day that will be! There will be no more sorrow, no more trouble, no more pain, no more sickness. All will have vanished away, and we will enjoy the bliss of a heavenly home forever with the Lord. †

BIBLE LESSON OF THE MONTH

THE STEPS OF THE RIGHTEOUS THE COMING OF THE SPIRIT ON PENTECOST

Scriptures: Acts 2:1-8, 12-18.

Acts 2:1 And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

3 And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.

4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

5 And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.

6 Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language.

7 And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans?

8 And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?

12 And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this?

13 Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine.

14 But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words:

15 For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day.

16 But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel;

17 And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:

18 And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy.

Memory Verse: And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.—Acts 2:4.

Aim: To get a clear picture of the first outpouring of the Spirit.

INTRODUCTION

THE COMING of the Spirit on Pentecost is one of the most outstanding and spectacular accounts that we find in the Word of God. Before this time, such a thing had never happened. The nearest to it perhaps was the occasion when God put His Spirit upon the seventy elders in Numbers 11:25. Moses had the gift of prophecy, and God gave the elders the same gift. We read in Genesis 1:2 that the "Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." In Genesis 6:3 we read that the Spirit of God "will not always strive with man," which proves that at that early date the Spirit of God was working with the hearts of men, endeavoring to get them to obey the high God of heaven. However, the Spirit of God was poured out in a miraculous way at Pentecost in a manner unknown before that time. The office and mission of the Spirit, though existing before, had, to a great extent, been kept secret.

MEDITATIONS

THE PROMISE OF THE FATHER FULFILLED
—Acts 2:1—Pentecost was fully come—Pentecost

was a feast day of the Jews commanded in the law (Deuteronomy 16:10), which occurred 52 days after the Passover (the day which commemorated the children of Israel's deliverance from Egyptian bondage). Upon the arrival of this day, which was ten days after the ascension of the Lord Jesus, the disciples of Christ were found assembled together and were agreed upon the doctrines of the Lord. There was no division there. Acts 1:15 declares that there were 120 of them. **Verse 2—There came a sound from heaven**—Jesus had instructed them to tarry. We make a wrong application of this scripture if we instruct seekers to "tarry" now. The only reason that Jesus instructed them to tarry was because the time for the pouring out of the Spirit had not yet arrived. Now that the Spirit has been poured out and is freely working everywhere, all the converts need to do is to believe the Word of God in Luke 11:13, where we read, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" He who is truly saved from sin and asks in faith is certain to receive the Spirit of God, for God is more willing to give than man is to receive. **Verse 3—Cloven tongues like as of fire**—God, by no means, gives a demonstration of fire at all times when He appears, but does on some occasions. When He appeared to Moses to appoint him to deliver Israel, He appeared in the burning bush. On Mount Sinai when the law was

given, there was a great demonstration of fire, so intense that the mountain seemed to be on fire. Fire is a cleansing agent and could signify the great power to cleanse the heart from the effects of the fall in the Garden of Eden. It is well to remark here that the disciples on this initial outpouring of the Spirit were “sitting,” not lying on the floor, as seems to be the position of some religious professors today when they receive the power, falsely so called. This was not “wild fire.” **Verse 4—They were all filled with the Holy Ghost**—Each disciple had reached the place where he was ready to receive the Spirit of God. They were all entirely submitted to the will and purpose of God. The Spirit came into their lives and took full and complete control. Directed by the Spirit of God, some began to speak in other languages that they had not learned. Their speaking in tongues was not an evidence of Holy Ghost baptism. They received the Spirit first. Then He imparted this gift to fill a special need at this particular time. All 120 were filled with the Spirit, but only the ones spoke, to whom God “gave utterance.” **Verse 5—Devout men**—These were men who loved the Lord, who to the best of their ability kept the law. **Verse 6—The multitude came together**—Something new had happened, and their curiosity brought the people together. God had given the gift of languages to the disciples, and they were able to speak all the languages of those present. **Verse 7—Were all amazed**—Nothing like this had been seen or heard of before. They who spoke were all Galilaeans (that is, from Galilee); yet every man was able to hear the gospel in the language that he knew. All speaking in tongues that is ordained by God has an interpretation and is in some language used on the earth.

A STRANGE THING HAPPENED—Acts 2:12—What meaneth this?—Being astonished at this sudden happening, the onlookers were made to wonder what the meaning of such an event could be and what could be expected to happen next.

DOUBTERS AND SCOFFERS—Acts 2:13—Others mocking said—The devil is always present to discredit the work of God if he can get some person to believe his lies. God never does anything wrong, and the devil never does anything right. Our senses should be highly developed in detecting the voice and hand of God and the voice and hand of the devil.

UNITY BRINGS POWER—Acts 2:14—Peter standing up with the eleven—Here is a real picture of unity and enthusiasm. Peter was the speaker, but all eleven of these newly baptized men were solidly behind him. “One shall chase a thousand, and two shall put ten thousand to flight.” How we do need unity today as we face the awful forces of sin and Satan! Two cannot walk together unless they be agreed.

AN EFFORT TO DISCREDIT THE WORK OF GOD—Acts 2:15—These are not drunken—There is an immense difference between a man who is filled with the Spirit of God and one who is filled with wine. (Paul commanded us not to be filled with wine, but to be filled with the Spirit.) It seems that unless someone was actually looking for something to discredit the work of God, such a gross misrepresentation could not have been made.

PETER SPEAKS WITH CONVICTION—Acts 2:16—This is that—Peter was acquainted with the prophecy of Joel and knew its proper interpretation. To know the true meaning of the Word of God is the only way to get a sure foundation upon which to build our Christian experience. **Verse 17—I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh**—To “pour out” leaves one with the understanding that the Spirit of God is to be given in abundance. In this age we are to have enough power to accomplish everything that is required of us in the Word of God and more. God is going to give unto His people, not only His Spirit, but also the gifts of the Spirit to embellish the church. This blessing is for all who will accept it. (Of course, there are conditions to be met before God will bestow His priceless gifts upon anyone.) Men and women, boys and girls, old and young, Jews and Gentiles are eligible under the gospel plan. Here is adequate proof that it was God’s will that women preach. No longer could it be said that there was no open vision. God now was going to reveal Himself and His truth to the world by prophecy, by visions and by dreams. He is still doing these things. The reason that we do not have more of it is because of unbelief and love for ease and the material things of this time world.

CONCLUSION

Here we have a clear picture of the baptism of the Spirit of God. However, this account in its entire setting cannot be bound upon believers as a pattern. Some have done this and resorted to the teaching that unless a believer speaks in tongues he has not received the Spirit. Peter, in giving an account of the baptism of the Spirit in the household of Cornelius (Gentiles), declared that at that time, which was sometime later, the Spirit of God fell upon the household of Cornelius as it did upon them (the Jews) at the first. It is evident this is only the second time such a marvelous demonstration had occurred, once for the convincing of the Jews of the reality of the new system and once to convince the Jews and Gentiles that the new plan was for the Gentiles as well as the Jews. Not always does God impart a gift at His coming. Of course, the greatest of all gifts is the Spirit Himself; but some make the mistake of thinking that when God said He would give us the gift of the Spirit, He meant He would give us the gift of tongues. The purpose of the coming of the Spirit of God into the human heart is to enable that soul to use every faculty of the body as God ordained when He created man.

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

1. What was unusual about the happening on the day of Pentecost?
2. Was the Spirit of God in the world previous to the coming of the Lord Jesus?
3. What was the promise of the Father?
4. Why were the disciples required to tarry in Jerusalem?
5. Can we predict in detail beforehand how a person will act when he receives the Spirit of God?
6. What did the cloven tongues signify?
7. Why did God give the gift of tongues on the day of Pentecost? †

The Vitality of a Personal Relationship With Christ

Message by Bro. Gregory E. Tyler



LET US TURN to St. John, chapter 13. I'll begin reading from verse 18. This is after Jesus instituted the ordinance of feet washing. "I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me. Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me. When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. Then the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom he spake. Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved. Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of whom he spake. He then lying on Jesus' breast saith unto him, Lord, who is it?"

I'd like to focus on verse 23, and the picture that it gives us: "Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved." I couldn't get that picture out of my mind this week of John, the beloved, hugging the Master. I thought about "The Vitality of a Personal Relationship With Christ."

The church is very important to each one of us, and well it should be, but we need to know and understand how vital it is that each one of us have our own personal relationship with the Master, irrespective of anybody else.

THE EXAMPLE OF JOSEPH

I was thinking about Joseph and what a wonderful character he was. What made him so special was his determination to stay true to his Master, come what may. He was separated from his family. He was sold into slavery, and yet he upheld his integrity because he had a personal relationship with God. He didn't have a church to go to. He didn't even have family to lean on. Joseph was all by himself, except the Lord was with him. What caused him to be able to resist the temptation of Potiphar's wife? What caused him to maintain a wonderful Christian attitude in spite of the fact that he was cast into prison? What caused him to have forgiveness in his heart toward his beloved brothers who betrayed him? It was the fact that Joseph knew God. It was the fact that he had a relationship with God, and he was determined to stay true to his Christ.

Someone has written, "Jesus Christ never asks anyone to define His position or to understand a creed, but 'Who am I to you?' ... Jesus Christ makes the whole of human destiny depend on a man's relationship to Himself." He doesn't ask what church have you joined or what organization are you a part of. He doesn't even ask whether you assemble with the saints of God or

not. He doesn't ask whether you're pleasing your family or not. Those things are good in their place. But the real question is: Who is Jesus Christ to you? How close are you to Him?

If there were a picture of the upper room, and you were there, would you have been the one who was leaning on His bosom and staying close to Him? Or would you have been one of the ones concerned with other things?

We have to establish a relationship with Christ, ourselves. Part of the mission of the church is to see the church which He purchased with His own blood. Part of the mission of the church is to show people how to be saved. The church cannot save you. It's an individual responsibility. It's up to us to point you to Christ, to show you the way. But in the final analysis, you are the one who has to begin a relationship with Christ. Jesus has done everything possible to form a relationship with every human being. He died on the cross for your sins. He took your place on Calvary.

WHAT JESUS DID ON THE CROSS

A story is told—

There was a little girl whose parents had had a miserable marriage and were divorced, having nothing in common save their affection for the child. One day as the girl was playing in the street she was knocked down by a bus and seriously injured. Taken to the hospital, she was examined by the doctors but was found to be beyond human aid. Hastily summoned to the hospital, her parents heard the sad news and stood silently, one on either side of the bed, looking down helplessly at the little girl. As they stood there, the child's eyes suddenly opened and seeing her parents she tried to smile. Then drawing one arm from under the sheet, she held it out in the direction of her father. "Daddy," she said, "give me your hand." Turning to her mother, she stretched out her other arm. "Mummy," she said, "give me your hand." Then with a final effort of her fast-ebbing strength she drew them close together.

This is a picture of what Christ did on the cross. The Savior took the hand of sinful hateful humanity and placed it in the loving hand of God. Jesus reconciled us to God; He broke down the barrier; He restored the broken fellowship caused by sin or turning our backs on God. Just as in this little girl's dying to bring her parents together, Jesus was dying to bring God and us together, but we have to make the effort to keep the relationship going.

With His dying breath, Christ took my hand and put it in God's hand. He took your hand and put it in God's hand. What more could He do than what He has done?

Jesus told Nicodemus in St. John 3, "Ye must be born again." It is still that way this morning. That's how we begin our relationship with Christ. It's by giving our hearts to Him and being saved. I remember the night I gave my heart to the Lord. "I was there when it happened," the songwriter said, "and I ought to know." God saved my soul from sin, and I began a relationship with Jesus Christ. If you're saved, you can say the same thing. What a wonderful day that was! O happy day, when Jesus washed my sins away! We began a new relationship that day with our Creator, with our Master, with our Savior. But that was only the beginning.

In any relationship, there needs to be growth or development. In developing a relationship with Christ, it takes some things. One thing I wrote down was, it takes having peace with our fellow man. You can't have a relationship with Christ if you can't get along with your fellow man.

OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS

One commentator noted that *you can tell what a man's relations with God are by looking at his relations with his fellow men. If a man is at variance with his fellow men, if he is a quarrelsome, competitive, argumentative trouble-making creature, he may be a diligent church attender, he may even be a church office-bearer, but he is not a man of God. If a man is distant from his fellow men, it is good proof that he is distant from God; if he is divided from his fellow men, he is divided from God.*

There is something about a relationship with Christ that enables us to forgive others. It enables us to get along with others. It enables us to be peaceful and have a peaceable spirit. John, the beloved, said in I John 4:19-21, "We love him, because he first loved us. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also." Isn't that true? If we want a close relationship with Christ, we must get along with our fellow man. We must love our brothers and sisters. We must have a burden for the lost.

We must also spend much time with Christ. If we're going to develop a relationship with Christ, if we're going to be able to say that we lean upon His bosom, it's going to take time alone with Him. Someone has written: "Any deep relationship to another human being requires watchfulness and nourishment; otherwise, it is taken from us." That's true when it comes to the family of man, and it's also true when it comes to our relationship with Christ. If we want a deep and close relationship, it takes watchfulness and nourishment. It takes time. It takes time on our knees in prayer. It takes time listening to the Word of God in our personal life.

There is a hymn in our hymnal that's very meaningful to me. It's entitled, "Sitting at the Feet of Jesus"—

*Sitting at the feet of Jesus,
O what words I hear him say!
Happy place! so near, so precious!
May it find me there each day.*

*Sitting at the feet of Jesus,
I would look upon the past;
For his love has been so gracious,
It has won my heart at last.*

Sitting at the feet of Jesus, [We can do this anywhere if we put our minds to it.]

*Where can mortal be more blest?
There I lay my sins and sorrows,
And when weary find sweet rest.
Sitting at the feet of Jesus,
There I love to weep and pray;
While I from His fullness gather
Grace and comfort every day.*

Bless me, O my Savior, bless me, [Is that the cry of our hearts?]

*As I sit low at thy feet;
O look down in love upon me,
Let me see thy face so sweet.
Give me, Lord, the mind of Jesus,
Keep me holy as he is;
May I prove I've been with Jesus,
Who is all my righteousness.*

OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST

So it takes time in our busy schedule to develop a relationship with Christ. Again, it doesn't matter what others do, this is between you and your Lord. How close are you? On a scale of 1-10, how close would you say you live on the bosom of the Lord? I'm ashamed to say, in my estimation, I don't live as close to Him as I ought. He's precious to me. He's dear to me, but I want Him to be dearer still.

It takes time for public worship. Yes, if we're going to draw close to Christ, we need to assemble where Christ is. We read in Matthew 18:20, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Do we believe that? When the saints gather together, Christ is here. He's here this morning. He's in our midst. I believe the Word of God, don't you? I don't know where He is in this audience. He might be sitting there, or there, or over here, but He promised to be in the midst when people gather together in His name. He's seeking such as would worship Him in Spirit and in truth. That's why I say that if we understand and comprehend the fact that Jesus Christ the Lord is with the people of God when they gather together, we need to have a desire to be here. Not necessarily to be with other saints, although that's wonderful and beautiful in its place, but we need to be here because we want to have fellowship with God. We want to draw close to Him. He said He would be here when we gather ourselves together.

Now, there are 52 weeks in a year, and if we count Sunday school as a separate attendance of Christ, we have about five times a week: Sunday school, Sunday morning, Sunday night, Wednesday night, and Saturday night. Every week Christ has promised to be with us. That amounts to 260 times a year. Of those 260 times, how many times do we miss Christ? How many times did we know He was here and we allowed other things to get in the way? That's a question we need to ask

ourselves, is it not? We want to draw close to Him. One way to draw close to Him is to be where He is. I know He's with us in our homes. I know He's with us wherever we go, but there's something special and remarkable about the fact of people meeting together in His name. His presence is so much more real, so much more powerful. What would you have missed this morning if you didn't hear the men sing, "I Can't Even Walk (Without You Holding My Hand)"? That song has been ringing in my ears this week and it will continue to ring in my ears. It's a beautiful, beautiful song.

EXPERIENCING THINGS TOGETHER

We also develop a personal relationship with Christ by experiencing things together with Him. Not only good things, but bad things as well. Not only the high points, but the low points as well. Sometimes when you go with someone through some low point, someplace of darkness, it draws you closer together than when you go through good places together.

I was thinking about the three Hebrew boys, and how they had a personal relationship with the Lord. They refused to bow down before that idol. As a result, the king made the furnace seven times hotter, and threw them into the fire. We all know the story. They didn't know what was awaiting them. They didn't care. They were going to be true to God. But they found when they went through that fiery trial, something happened in the midst of that fire. There was someone in there with them, and He was the Son of God. He set them free from the ropes that bound them. The fire didn't even singe any hair on their heads. They came out of the fire with victory because they went through the fire with Christ. I thought about their experience after that time. From that point forward, they could always point back to the fiery furnace. It didn't matter what happened to them, they could always point back to that fiery furnace and know that Christ was with them there.

We experience things together. All of us have been through things in life with Christ. Some hard things, some low points, but He brought us through. He has proven that He never leaves us nor forsakes us. So no matter what the future holds, there are points in our lives we can point back to, for we know Christ has brought us through.

Bro. Terry Deville, Sis. Carol, Ellen, and I are very close for several reasons. One of those reasons is that we've experienced a lot of things together. We've stood on the edge of the Grand Canyon together. We've walked through the forest of the Redwoods whispering to one another. We've seen many wonderful sights together. We've also gone through some low points together. God willed that Ellen and I would be in Deville when Bro. Terry's son was killed. I can't imagine what it is like to lose a son, but Terry and Carol leaned upon us at that time. We provided some strength to them that we didn't even know we had, ourselves. That's part of the reason we're so close. It's not only because of the good times we've had together, but of the sorrowful times we suffered together.

The same is true with Christ. He'll bring us out on top and give us many victories. We can rejoice on the mountaintop together with our Lord. But He's also going

to be with us through our dark times. As you experience those things together with Him one-on-one, no one else involved but you and Christ, a bond will form in your heart with Him. You'll become more and more dedicated to Him. You'll become more and more in love with Him. I'm speaking of the vitality of our relationship with Christ.

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

If we're going to have a good relationship with the Lord ourselves, we will have to overcome some obstacles in the relationship. Every relationship has obstacles. I counseled a couple this week about marriage. I said to them, "Don't expect things to go over so smoothly. There will be some obstacles on the way that you're going to have to pass over together." The same is true with our relationship with Christ.

The first obstacle: *doubting His faithfulness*. It's an obstacle. Things can happen that seem more than we can bear. The enemy will attack us and try to cause us to doubt God's faithfulness, but I refuse to doubt His faithfulness. God is faithful. I Corinthians 10:13, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." I've proven God to be true through the years. I've preached it and I stand on it this morning. God is faithful. For us to establish a good communication and a good relationship with Christ, we have to overcome the obstacle of doubting His faithfulness.

Someone has said—

"It is not true to say that God wants to teach us something in our trials. In every cloud He brings, God wants us to unlearn something. God's purpose in the cloud is to simplify our belief until our relationship to Him is exactly that of a child. God uses every cloud which comes in our physical life, in our moral or spiritual life, or in our circumstances, to bring us nearer to Him, until we come to the place where our Lord Jesus Christ lived, and we do not allow our hearts to be troubled." Overcoming doubts of God's faithfulness. We can do it by the grace of God, and by believing in His Word and His promises.

Another obstacle that we have to overcome to keep a good relationship with Christ: *bad habits*. Habits are formed as we grow and develop, and not all of them are good. Bad habits can destroy a relationship with someone. We need to be pliable in God's hands. If we want to grow in grace with Him and draw closer to Him, we need to be pliable in His hands. The prophet Isaiah cried, "But now, O Lord, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand" (Isaiah 64:8). "Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands?" (Isaiah 45:9). We cannot question God's work in our lives. "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (I John 1:7). Paul said, "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all

filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” Overcome your bad habits. Face them face head on, and ask God to help you that you’ll be able to be that child of God that He would have you to be. It’s a wonderful thing to be a child of the King. It’s wonderful to know Him, not only as your Savior, but as your Friend and your Guide.

Oswald Chambers once wrote—

When you are rightly related to God, it is a life of freedom and liberty and delight; you are God’s will and all your commonsense decisions are His will for you unless He checks. You decide things in perfect delightful friendship with God, knowing that if your decisions are wrong He will always check. When He checks, stop at once. We have to be sensitive to the check of the Spirit. God will help us to be what we ought to be.

Here’s a quote I’ve never thought about: *When you walk with God, you get to go where He’s going.* We often think that when we walk with God, He’s going where we’re going. If we’re walking with God, we’re going where God is going. There’s a little different twist on it, isn’t it?

Another obstacle we have to overcome to develop a good relationship with our Lord: *selfishness*. I don’t care if you’re saved and sanctified, you have to struggle with self. Even though self has died in sanctification, the devil still tries to use the flesh to conquer you.

Someone has written—

In the initial stages of discipleship you get “stormy weather,” then you lose the nightmare of your own separate individuality and become part of the personality of Christ, and the thought of yourself never bothers you anymore because you are taken up with your relationship to God.

Paul said to the Galatian church, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” We must keep ourselves crucified. We must conquer self. We must not give into the flesh and baby ourselves if we’re going to develop a good relationship with Christ. He told us that we must take up our cross daily and follow Him. I have learned through the years that when I override my physical needs and my physical problems, and let God have His way, I always receive a blessing. God never fails. We have to overcome selfishness if we’re to please the Lord and draw close to Him.

THE OBSTACLE OF SELF-INDEPENDENCE

There’s a connecting thought: *self-independence*. We have a tendency as human beings to become independent, to do things on our own. That’s when this song came to me: “I Can’t Even Walk (Without You Holding My Hand).”

Peter was a disciple of the Lord. God blessed him and used him, but when Jesus told him that he was going to deny Him, Peter rebuked the Lord. Can you imagine that? Then we read of Peter following afar off, and then denying the Lord. We have a tendency to put confidence in self. But the closer we get to Christ, the more we depend upon Him, as the song says—

*I thought number one would surely be me,
I thought I could be what I wanted to be;
I thought I could build on life’s sinking sand,
But I can’t even walk without You holding my hand.*

Chorus:

*Lord, I can’t even walk without You holding my hand;
The mountain’s too high, and the valley’s too wide;
Down on my knees; I learned to stand;
Lord, I can’t even walk without You holding my hand.*

*I thought I had done a lot on my own;
I thought I could make it all alone;
I thought of myself as a mighty big man,
But I can’t even walk without You holding my hand.*

*And since I made Jesus my all in all,
Now when I’m in trouble, on His name I’ll call,
For if I don’t trust in Him, I’ll be less than a man,
’Cause I can’t even walk without You holding my hand.*

CASTING ALL OUR CARES ON HIM

We need to cast all our of our cares upon Him, for He cares for us. Paul said in once place, “When I am weak, then am I strong.” When we realize our frailty and how much we need Him, we gain His strength. We then can say, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” We need to lean on His bosom. In times like these, Church, we need to hug Him. We need to stay close to Him. We need to picture ourselves as John, the beloved, leaning on His bosom.

How is our relationship with Christ? We need the church. We lean upon each other, and rightly so, but how is our relationship personally with Christ? Will we be able to stand? Will we be able to be true? If we have a closeness with Christ, it will help us to overcome in this gain-saying world.

Our final thought: *reaping the benefits of the relationship*. Every good relationship has some benefits. When you marry someone, there are wonderful benefits involved. When you come connected to Christ and live close to Him, there are some wonderful benefits involved.

The Psalmist said, “Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle’s.” There are wonderful benefits in this time world when walking with Christ.

Peter said to Jesus one time, “Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee.” But Jesus didn’t pat him on the back. Jesus answered and said, “Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel’s, But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren,

and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.”

Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. We must live close to Him. We must work on developing a close relationship with our Lord personally, one on one. What is the state of your soul? What is the state of your personal relationship with Christ? This is vital to our success in the Christian faith.

HEAVEN AWAITS US

I Corinthians 2:9, “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.” Heaven awaits us all. We must fight the good fight. We must lay hold on eternal life. We must, by the grace of God, develop a close relationship with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

A true story is told of a sexton who was in charge of a cathedral in Europe—

In a large stone cathedral in Europe there was a large, magnificent pipe organ. It was a Saturday afternoon, and the sexton was making one final check of the choir and organ loft high in the balcony at the back of the church. He was startled to hear footsteps echoing up the stone stairway, as he thought the doors were all locked and no one was around. He turned to see a man in slightly tattered traveling clothes coming toward him. “Excuse me, sir,” the stranger said. “I have come from quite a distance to see the great organ in this cathedral. Would you mind opening the console so that I might get a closer look at it?” The custodian at first refused, but the stranger seemed so eager and insistent that he finally gave in. “May I sit on the bench?” That request of the stranger was met with absolute refusal by the cathedral custodian. “What if the organist came in and found you sitting there? I would probably lose my job!” But again the stranger was so persistent that the sexton gave in. “But only for a moment,” he added.

The custodian noticed that the stranger seemed to be very much at home on the organ bench, so he was not completely surprised when he was asked by the stranger to be allowed to play the organ. “No! Definitely not!” said the custodian. “No one is allowed to play it except the cathedral organist.” The man’s face fell, and his deep disappointment was obvious. He reminded the custodian how far he had come and assured him that no damage would be done. Finally the sexton relented and told the stranger he could play the instrument, but only a few notes and then he would have to leave. Overjoyed, the stranger pulled out some stops and began to play. Suddenly the cathedral was filled with the most beautiful music the custodian had ever heard in all his years in that place. The music seemed to transport him heavenward.

In what seemed all too short a time, the dowdy stranger stopped playing and slid off the organ bench, and started down the stairway. “Wait!” cried the custodian. “That was the most beautiful music I have ever heard in the cathedral. Who are you?” The stranger turned for just a moment as he replied, “Mendelssohn.” The man was none other than Felix Mendelssohn, one of the greatest organists and composers of the nineteenth century!

The cathedral sexton was alone now in that great stone edifice, the beautiful organ music still ringing in his ears. “Just think,” he said softly, “I almost kept the master from playing his music in my cathedral!”

Each one of us has the opportunity to have a personal relationship with the Master of the universe, Jesus Christ. Let’s not keep Him from “playing His music” and being Master of our lives!

Sometimes we get so bogged down with our temporal responsibilities that we don’t let Him do what He wants to do in our lives. Let’s allow Him to make good music in our hearts. Let’s allow Him to have His way.

Again, what is the state of your personal relationship with Christ? I believe if God had His way, we would endeavor to draw closer to Him. †



Dear Young People,

What a wonderful thought to spend some time meditating on the character of God! He desires to have a close relationship and communication with His children and is often waiting for us to fulfill our part in investing the time and thought to know Him, have faith in Him, and allow Him to work more fully in us. May we all be challenged by these thoughts given to us by Sis. Cassie Gossard.

Blessings,
Bro. Doug

WHO GOD IS AND WHAT HE HAS DONE FOR US

By Sis. Cassie Gossard

I’ve been really busy lately. I’m sure we can all relate to that; life gets busy, situations come up, and our schedules are full. During these busy times, it can be easy to let our ever-growing relationship with God come to a resting point. Not that we’ve lost out on our salvation, but we’ve prioritized things in a way to where God seems a little distant.

Once I catch myself sinking into these times, I pause to reorient myself.

In those times I like to go to the Bible and read about God, who He is. It helps to recenter Him because if I KNOW who He is, really know and understand deeply, it’s easy to keep Him close, even in the busy times.

I’ve been reading through the book of Psalms recently and came across this Psalm that goes over who God is and what He has done for us. I would like to go through some verses in Psalm 103 that really encapsulate God’s character.

I ask that as you read through these verses, you really soak them in. They are so rich and true. Take the time to slowly read and let God direct your thoughts.

Psalm 103:1-5: “Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth

all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's."

These few verses really show us how blessed we are. God was willing to forgive the trespasses that we had committed against Him. He's ready to heal when the need arises. He saved your life from destruction, grabbed you up from the devil's traps, took you in His arms, and brought you to a life of victory through Him.

You are crowned by His loving-kindness and tender mercies; they are a gift God has given to you, and they follow you throughout your days.

God's love is so immense. He knows what is best and He wants to offer it to you. As the first couple verses say, we should bless His name for all He gives to us so freely.

Verse 6: "The Lord executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed."

Verses 8-12: "The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide: neither will He keep His anger for ever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us."

God is so good to us! This passage really reminds us of the loving and righteous King that God is. He is full of mercy and grace.

He is so merciful that the sins we had committed against Him, the Ruler and Creator of the universe, He holds against us no more once He forgives us. He is ready to throw all the sinful things that we did as far away as the east is from the west and remember them no more because of His great mercy.

Verses 13-18: "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust. As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them."

God wants to shield, comfort, and guide us as He knows our frailty and weakness. Some more verses that go along with this thought:

Psalms 91:4, "He shall cover me with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler.

Psalms 116:6-8: "The Lord preserveth the simple: I was brought low, and he helped me. Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee. For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling."

As long as we stay true to Him, He will stay with us to help, lift up, protect, and lead in our lives.

Psalms 103:19-22: "The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all. Bless

the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word. Bless ye the Lord, all ye his hosts; ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure. Bless the Lord, all his works in all places of his dominion: bless the Lord, O my soul."

Reading all that is stated in these scriptures should make us want to lift God up and glorify His name! He has done so much and has given so generously. These few scriptures only capture a fraction of God's character, but I hope it has been enough for us to see and appreciate how good God is and that He should always take preeminence over everything else, even busy schedules. He is a present help, Protector, Provider, Father, and so much more for His children. †

THE TEMPTER'S "IF"

By the late C. W. Naylor

SATAN IS never convinced; that is, he never acts as if he were convinced. You may prove a thing to him over and over again, but he is right back to question it, no matter what proof you offer. He may be whipped out a little while, but only for a season; then he is back ready to ask you to prove the whole thing over again. Of course, he did not doubt who Jesus was. He knew very well. Nevertheless, when he came to tempt Him in the wilderness he said, "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." He did not ask proof so that he might be convinced and believe on Jesus. He said "if" only to tempt Him. Jesus refused to accept the challenge. But that did not satisfy Satan, so he again said, "If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down." Again Jesus refused to give him the proof asked. This was in the beginning of Jesus' work, but all through His life the tempter was always ready with an "if." Through the Pharisees he demanded a sign, but Jesus refused to give it. In His last hours upon earth the same "if" was thrown in His teeth. As He hung upon the cross, they that passed by said, "If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross." And the chief priests with the scribes and elders said, "If he be the king of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe on him." One of the thieves also said, "If thou be Christ, save thyself and us."

He had proved His deity in a thousand ways. He had done things and said things that no man had done or said before. He had given evidence that ought to have convinced anyone, evidence sufficient to convince all those who were teachable. Satan himself was convinced, so that the demons cried out that they knew Him and told who He was, and yet Satan returned to the attack again and again saying, "If thou be the Son of God." In his first attacks Jesus met him with the Scriptures. In the attacks that he made through human agents while Jesus hung upon the cross, he was ignored.

Temptation is always an invitation for us to come down to a lower level. Satan said, "Cast thyself down." The unbelieving Jews said, "Come down." Whenever Satan comes to us with his "if" of unbelief, his attempt

is always to get us to discredit ourselves or our Lord, to get us to come down to a lower level. In fact, he would have nothing to gain if he could not get us to come down. When we listen to him and try to argue with him and offer him proof of this or that that he questions, we are only coming down to a plane where we give him a hold upon us. The truth is a firm footing. Upon it we may stand and instead of having to establish the truth, the truth will establish us. Satan has been battering his head against the truth since time began and has hurt only his head and has never injured the truth.

He sometimes comes to us and says, "If thou be a son of God, do this or that to prove it." He can use Scriptures very forcefully sometimes. A man once said to a brother, "The Bible says, 'If they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them.' Now, if you believe that, let me mix up a dose of poison for you. If you are really a believer, it won't hurt you if the Bible is true." The brother answered him as Jesus answered Satan, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Some people say, "If you are a Christian, you can pick up snakes and they won't bite you." Some people are foolish enough to try it, and some of them are bitten, and God lets some of those die for their folly. If Jesus did not use His power to convince the devil when He was on earth, He will not use it to convince him through you or me. We are only casting ourselves down at Satan's feet if we try such things.

Sometimes Satan says: "If you are a son of God, why do you feel as you do? Christians ought to feel joyful. You are a pretty Christian; see how you feel." When he says that to some people, they have a hard time trying to prove that he is not correct. They feel that they must prove it or else acknowledge that what he says is true. They overlook the fact that it is not proving it that makes it so, but believing it. If they believe that they are saved and obey God, they will be saved whether Satan acknowledges it or not. He may surround them with a lot of "ifs," but that will not affect their salvation unless they believe his "ifs."

To another he says: "If you are a child of God, why do you have so many trials? People who are what they ought to be will never have such trials." They know that they have the trials, and if they listen to Satan's "if," they have a hard time holding fast their faith. But trials no more prove that one is not a child of God than it proves that one is, for all people, saved and unsaved, have trials.

Sometimes he says: "If you are a Christian, why is it you have so many faults? You are a pretty Christian, aren't you?" All Christians have faults. None of us are perfect in the absolute sense, and the more humble we are, the more conscious we are of these faults; but they do not prove that our hearts are not right if we are doing the best we can.

Satan has many "ifs" of all sizes, colors, and shapes, and he will present the one that he thinks will attract your attention and give you the most trouble. Perhaps he will have a half a dozen set up around you at one time. Sometimes he will bring scriptures and apply them to you and make them seem as though they had a very real application to your case when they have no bearing upon it at all. All you have to do in such a time

is to use your good sense and meet him with faith and the Word of God. He is the devil; meet him as though he were the devil, remembering this one thing, that "greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world."

He often comes to persons and says, "You might as well give up." By that he means you might as well come down to his level. Sometimes he discourages people until they feel that it is of no use to resist him. He makes his "ifs" so plausible that argument will not answer them. At such a time you can only meet them with faith and a determination to serve God no matter how things seem. If you are a Christian, Satan does not doubt it in the least. He knows if we are serving God, but still he will do with us as he did with Jesus. He will come around and say, "If thou be." He will act just as though he were not assured that we are saved, as though he very much doubted the matter, but would like to know and so favors us with a chance to prove it to him. Yes, he would like to favor us this way, but do not accept his offer. You do not have to prove anything that he asks you to prove. He is only taunting you. If you ignore him, that will hurt him as much as anything you can do. If you will go on your way not allowing him to disturb you, keeping your faith steadfast and your courage strong, he will not enjoy it a bit. But don't suppose for a moment that you can live so close to God and be so spiritual that you can convince the devil that he will acknowledge that you are what you profess to be. No matter how true you are, he will be around with his "ifs," and you will have to meet him.

Sometimes people say, "If you are what you profess to be, you would try to please me." Then they ask us to do something that will displease God, and if we will not accede to their requests, they heap condemnation upon us. Sometimes they sincerely think that we ought to do thus and so, when we can see very clearly that it would not do at all. We cannot act according to the wisdom of this world. We must act according to the wisdom that God gives us. If people feel that we should do some other way, we cannot consent to do wrong to please them. Satan often works through people to discourage us and to condemn us. People often say, "If you were as good as you say you are, you would do so and so." They say this because they wish that thing done regardless of what moral consideration may be involved. Remember that such things are only Satan's "ifs," and meet them as you would meet Satan himself. Stand by the truth. Keep a clear conscience before God; do not allow yourself to be talked into or forced into something that you cannot do with a good conscience. Let a holy life and a godly conversation and obedience to God be the proofs of your life to the world and to the devil. When he comes with his "ifs," meet him as Jesus met him in the wilderness and on the cross. Pay no attention to his sneers; give no heed to his pretended unbelief. Do not try to prove anything to him. Go your way unafraid, trusting, confident, and disregard both the tempter and his "ifs." †

—Reprinted from the September 1994 issue

IF IF IF IF IF IF IF IF IF IF

The Way of Truth

THE POETRY PAGE

A SWARM OF "FLYS"

Author Unknown

Fly from self, and fly from sin,
Fly the world's tumultuous din;
Fly its pleasures, fly its cares,
Fly its friendship, fly its snares.
Fly the sinner's hast'ning doom,
Fly and 'scape the wrath to come.
Fly to Jesus, He's the road,
Fly through Him alone to God.
Fly to mercy's gracious seat,
Fly, 'tis sorrow's last retreat;
Fly to Christ in deepest grief,
Fly, and you shall find relief.
Fly and let your wings be love,
Fly and stretch your flight above;
Fly while life and grace are giv'n,
Fly from Hell and fly to Heaven.

MOMENT BY MOMENT

Author Unknown

Never a heartache and never a groan,
Never a teardrop and never a moan,
Never a danger but there on the throne
Moment by moment He thinks of His own.

JUST GET BEHIND AND PRAY

Reta Belle Lyle

What matter if you cannot go
To distant lands and preach?
What matter if you somehow fail
With eloquence to teach?
What matter if you cannot sing
Or lead in any way?
There is a place which you can fill—
Just get behind and pray.

The missionaries need your prayers,
The preachers need them too;
Without the help of praying saints
There's not much they can do.
The teachers could not teach the Word,
They need help day by day.
So hold them up before the Throne
And get behind and pray.

What matter if you cannot give?
Let not your hearts be sad;

The beggar gave his heart and life
For that was all he had.
You too can give your hearts to Him
To use in His own way,
And may He help us always
To get behind and pray.

ON TITHING

Roselyn C. Steere

I wonder why the Lord did ask,
For tithes, from you and me;
When all the treasures of the earth,
Are His—eternally?

And why should He depend on us,
To fill His house with meat;
When we have so very little,
And His storehouse is replete?

But He said to bring our little,
And He would add His much;
Then all the heavenly windows,
Would be opened at His touch.

And blessings running over—
Even more than has been told—
Will be ours; but there's no promise
If His portion we withhold.

Are we afraid to prove Him?
Is our faith and love so small,
That we tightly grasp our little,
When He freely gave His all?

WAITING FOR ETERNITY

John F. Ackerman

We'll understand it better by and by
When we meet our Savior in the sky.
Oh, the joy that it will be
When His face we at last shall see.

If you lived for Christ below,
Surely then you will be ready to go
With your robe all white and clean,
Washed in God's own Calvary's stream.

'Twill be a wonderful time up there,
When we see our loved ones, oh so fair.
Christ has gone to the Cross for you,
Are you standing loyal and true?

To your Master always be,
Ready, watching, and waiting for Eternity.
Christ will come and it won't be long
And then we'll sing Redemption's song. †

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

BY THE LATE H. R. MATTHEWS

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.”

—Galatians 5:22, 23.

THE FRUIT of the Spirit is what identifies the life of Christian living. You will notice that the word *fruit* is used in the singular, meaning that this fruit or virtues all come from the same source, or, as it were, from the same vine.

Jesus said, “I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing” (John 15:5).

As we bear the nine fruit of the Spirit that are listed in the Galatian epistle, we become equipped to bring forth fruit that Jesus spoke of in John 15:5. The ultimate in fruit bearing is the entering into the fields that are white already to harvest and harvesting precious lost souls and bringing them into the camp of the saints. Jesus told His disciples that they were the light of the world. He went on to say, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). This is fruit bearing that excels.

The branches of the vine that are withered and bear no fruit are removed from the vine and cast into the fire and burned.

Since the fruit of the Spirit are essential to successful Christian living, let us examine the fruit of the Spirit and become better acquainted with its contribution to victorious Christian living. It is well that the list of the fruit of the Spirit begins with *love*, for love is the bedrock from which all other Christian virtues flow. Love is eternal as is the One from which it flows. It was love that brought the world into existence and populated it. When transgression brought sin into the lives of men (for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God), “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son ...” “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.”

The theme of the gospel is love. Love propels the gospel to all nations. It is love that transforms the heart of stone to a heart of flesh.

Love conceived and bore *joy*. J-O-Y spells joy; Jesus first, yourself last, and others in between. “The joy of the Lord is your strength.” It gives us victories over the tests, tribulations, and trials of life. Joy banishes sorrow and sadness. Where there is an absence of love, there is an absence of joy.

Peace is the offspring of love. Peace dispels turmoil and strife. Jesus said, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be

afraid.” Where there is an absence of love, there is an absence of peace.

The parent of *longsuffering* is love. Longsuffering bears long with those who are traveling the broad road of sin. Jesus bore long with us, for it was our sins that pierced His hands and feet with the three rusty nails that fastened Him to the old rugged cross. Longsuffering bears long with those with whom we may differ. “Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meek-

ness, 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” (Colossians 3:12, 13).

Gentleness is a beautiful virtue which was also conceived in love. The human nature is sometimes fragile and delicate and must be dealt with in a way that does not create barriers. “And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach,

patient” (II Timothy 2:24). The gentle person is always considerate of others in all ways. Where there is an absence of love, there is an absence of gentleness.

The fruit of *goodness* is brought forth of love. The Scriptures declare that Barnabas was a good man. When we think of a good man, we think of one who is kind-hearted and benevolent, ready to give lodging to the weary traveler, to give a morsel of meat to those that hunger, a cup of cool, sparkling water to those who are athirst. We think of one that lends comfort to the sorrowing one; one who sheds tears of compassion as he visits the bedside of the one who is sick. The fruit of goodness seeks to do good to all men, especially to those of the household of faith. Where there is an absence of love, there is an absence of goodness.

The fruit of *faith* is born of love. The fruit of faith is the unwavering confidence in the One we are trusting to meet our needs. Jesus said, “Have faith in God.” Faith is our shield that protects us from all the fiery darts of the wicked one. Of the fruit of faith is born a faithfulness to the cause for which Christ died. The fruit of faith rejoices in the promises of God. The fruit of faith dispels the fiery trials of doubt and fear that assail all those who put their trust in the God with whom nothing is impossible. As the twelve disciples requested of Jesus, “Lord, increase our faith,” so we present our petition, “Lord, increase our faith.” Where there is an absence of love, there will be an absence of faith.

In the family of love, we find the fruit of *meekness*. The fruit of meekness is clothed with humility. It does not retaliate when falsely accused or evil spoken of. Meekness does not desire vain glory or to be honored above our brethren. Meekness is not haughty. It considers others better than itself; condescends to those of low estate. Meekness is not weakness. Jesus Himself was meek and lowly of heart.

We now come to the ninth member of the family of love. This fruit of the Spirit is *temperance*. Temperance is moderation. We are instructed by the Scriptures to be temperate in all things. The apostle Paul declared, “All things are lawful for me, but all things are not



expedient” (I Corinthians 10:23). Paul was not speaking of sinful things in this verse, for we are not exhorted to be temperate in sinful things, but to abstain from sin. Jesus told the sinful woman to “go, and sin no more.” It is the lawful events of life in which we are to be temperate. It is the unlawful things that we are to abstain from. Temperance would govern our exercise of the laws of nature. One prime example mentioned in the Scriptures is the appetite. An inordinate appetite is the predecessor to gluttony of which Solomon wrote, saying, “And put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite” (Proverbs 23:2). Shall we be temperate in things pertaining to the Spirit? Temperance in spiritual matters would be necessary only in matters of fanaticism; that is, requiring obedience beyond what the Scriptures require. Where there is an absence of love, there is an absence of temperance.

This wonderful grace of the fruit of the Spirit is not something that we grow into; rather, it is imparted at that moment that repenting and believing the gospel takes place. We then begin our growth in this grace. At the time of sanctification, this grace is enhanced and will reach perfection only when this mortal shall put on immortality and we gaze into the face of Jesus, for “when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” (I John 3:2).

The souls of them to whom the gifts of the Spirit are imparted are well garnished with the fruit of the Spirit. The early disciples did not follow Jesus because of a guaranteed salary and retirement benefits. Their souls were fired by the fruit of the Spirit to a spirit of evangelism that would take the gospel to the ends of the earth. They well knew that martyrdom ever loomed in their future, but they loved not their lives unto the death.

To those who share the fruit of the Spirit, it brings about the unity of the Spirit. Even many who are unbelievers are attracted to those in whom the fruit of the Spirit dwells.

As the spiritual eye beholds the fruit of the Spirit, what does it see? It beholds a bowl of beautiful fruit centered on a golden stand (truth). It is pleasant to the eye and sweet to the taste—“Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace” (Proverbs 3:17). “O taste and see that the Lord is good” (Psalm 34:8).

The fruit of the Spirit is nourishing to the soul, “and makes glad the city of God” (Psalm 46:4).

The highway of holiness is way-marked by the fruit of the Spirit. On this highway are the saints of God. They are traveling aboard the chariot of love to that celestial city where the streets are paved with pure gold (truth), a city where sin and sickness, sadness and sorrow are banished, a city where Satan and his imps (his offspring) are not permitted to enter.

Dear Reader, join this happy throng aboard the chariot of love. Ere long we shall enter the gate of that fair city where the saints shall join the holy angels in singing Redemption’s song and praise to the Lamb of God who was slain to purchase our redemption. Don’t you want to go there?

May God’s rich graces flow through each heart. †

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Alvin A. Craig, Radio Minister

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Good morning,

I want to say my offering to your publishing work is so important to me and the people it is reaching out to.

The Way of Truth was and still is a big part of my walk with God. I am now 56 years old. As a preteen my mother would read and pass The Way of Truth to me. I have letters that Sis. Rebecca and I shared many years ago.

I just wanted you to know I love reading and studying the Word of God.

—L. P., Kentucky

To: The Church of God (Universal)

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Please accept my offering of \$ — for your ministry. You have blessed me for quite awhile now. Your articles and ministry messages are so good to my soul which reminds me, even here in prison, how close we are to God’s return, and how we are to live a holy life. God’s Word says, “Without holiness, no man [will receive God].” ...

Please continue to pray for me. I will be sending you my tithes and offerings once a month, Lord willing.

—C. H., Illinois

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**THE CHURCH OF GOD
STANDS FOR**

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

**YOU SHOULD KNOW MORE
ABOUT THE CHURCH OF GOD**

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