

The Way of Truth

Vol. 82

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

No. 8



"CHARITY NEVER FAILS"

Report of Hagerstown Convention

Page 2

September 2024

FOLLOWING HARD AFTER GOD

“Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice. My soul followeth hard after thee: thy right hand upholdeth me.”

—Psalm 68:7, 8.

WHAT IS implied in the statement, “My soul followeth hard after thee”? First, we must understand that to be a follower of Christ, one must be born again or justified in the sight of God. This is the result of choosing to follow Him. The Spirit of God calls and convicts an individual and he must make a choice. As Matthew 6:24 declares, “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” So this choice is a result of being dissatisfied with the world and its fascinations. The follower of Christ has proved its emptiness and found the pathway of sin to be “a dry and thirsty land where no water is.”

The soul that follows Christ has found something better than this old world. It implies an experimental acquaintance with God. Job 22:21, “Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee.” Christians have sought and found Him. His grace and love are enjoyed in the soul. They realize the blessedness of divine acceptance and favor.

Following God implies a lively exercise in spiritual things. II Peter 3:18 instructs the born-again Christian, “But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.”

The average Christian has measured success by observing these principles. But we dare not attempt to follow Christ “afar off.” If we do as Peter did, eventually we will likewise fail the Lord. To have perpetual success in this Christian way, one must go deeper in his experience and not just follow, but follow HARD after Him! This is the secret to success—“*my soul followeth hard after thee.*” This begins with a complete abandonment to God. Romans 12:1, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.” This is combined with a complete alienation from sin as implied in the very next verse: Romans 12:2, “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” This will enable an individual to draw nearer to God which *following hard* is all about! “For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God” (Hebrews 7:19).

Following hard after God means we endeavor to love Him more intensely and endeavor to delight ourselves in Him more and more. If we do that, we are promised in Psalm 37:4, “Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.”

Following hard after God produces wholehearted devotion and service. Romans 11:33 exclaims, “O the

depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!”

Following hard after God produces intense longing for spiritual things, like a thirsty man longs for water. Psalm 42:1, 2, “As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?” This in turn, creates a fervency in prayer and sweet communion with God, as James 5:16 describes, “Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”

In addition to the effectual fervent prayer, there develops in the life of someone *following hard after God* time for meditation upon God and heavenly things until his soul is enraptured somewhat as the apostle Paul relates in I Timothy 4:15, “Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all.”

Those *following hard after God* have an inward longing to see Him as He really is. They fellowship the attitude Paul expressed in Philippians 3:7-10, “But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.”

There is visible evidence of *following hard after God*. Most obvious is that your life is more and more conformed to the image of Christ. I Peter 2:2, “For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.” Our example is full of love and compassion for others. We treat people as Jesus did.

Another evidence that the soul is *following hard after God* is the fact that he is not satisfied to just barely doing enough to get by, but rather, is abounding to every good work. Again, I refer to scripture: II Corinthians 9:8, “And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work.”

You do not have to beg someone who is *following hard after God* to attend worship services because he delights in spiritual devotion and worship. Psalm 40:8, “I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.”

Another evidence that a soul is *following hard after God* is that he is easy to be entreated. He receives the wisdom from above which according to scripture is

ABOUT THE COVER

The 2024 convention in Hagerstown, Maryland, was a meeting filled with the glory of God. On our front are a few glimpses of those singing and preaching. Photos by Bro. Dave Marquiss from Pineville, Louisiana. For a report, turn to page 2.

THE WAY OF TRUTH

(Registered Trademark)

Vol. 82 September 2024 No. 8

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

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

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

—Gregory E. Tyler, Editor

Our telephone number is 301-739-2980

Our e-mail address is truth@fred.net

Visit our website at www.wayoftruth.org

That instruction is given in Matthew 6:19-21: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Are you *following hard after God*? †

GOD'S MIRACLE BOOK

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

This is true for a number of reasons:

1. It is miraculous in its origin—coming to us by divine inspiration.
2. It is miraculous in its durability—outlasting the opposition of its critics and surviving the attempts of its enemies to exterminate it.
3. It is miraculous in its results—transforming the lives of those who read and believe it.
4. It is miraculous in its harmony—agreeing in all its parts, even though written over a period of 1600 years by about 40 different authors.
5. It is miraculous in its message—telling of many occasions when God supernaturally intervened in the affairs of men to accomplish His redemptive purposes.

manifested like this: James 3:17, "But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy."

Following hard after God produces a consistent and practical life which inspires others to do likewise. We all cannot be Paul's, but by *following hard after God* each of us can face life with the same vigor the apostle displayed in Philippians 3:12-14: "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

There are advantages of such a life. First of all, our experience is daily enriched here and now. I refer to Ephesians 3:19, "And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."

Secondly, we are preserved from evil and dangers. As Peter emphasized in I Peter 3:13, "And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?"

Also, our usefulness in God's service will be enhanced as Paul pointed out in II Timothy 2:21, "If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work."

Our concluding thought is this: *following hard after God* will multiply our treasures in heaven.

IN THIS ISSUE:

2024 Church of God Convention	Page 2
<i>Report of Hagerstown meeting</i>	
Love Never Fails	Page 4
<i>Full-length sermon by Doug Shenberger</i>	
Reciprocal Love	Page 7
<i>Radio message by G. E. Tyler</i>	
The Poetry Page	Page 9
<i>Truth in rhythmic form</i>	
The Question Box	Page 10
<i>Our monthly feature</i>	
Charity Fails Not	Page 11
<i>Full-length sermon by Donovan Darby</i>	
Steps Heavenward	Page 14
<i>Chapter XV of the book by the late R. L. Berry</i>	
Young People's Page	Page 15
<i>"Willing to Be Broken," by Cameron Deville</i>	
An Exclusive Christ	Page 16
<i>Article by the late D. S. Warner</i>	
Bible Lesson of the Month	Page 17
<i>"The Baptism of Cornelius by the Spirit"</i>	
The Children's Corner	Page 19
<i>"Think About It," by Rebecca Bland</i>	
"The Last Days"	Page 20
<i>Article by the late W. G. Schnell</i>	

2024 CHURCH OF GOD CONVENTION

(A Report taken from notes by Bro. David Marquiss and Sis. Sarah Arch)

Theme: "Charity Never Fails"

Theme Scripture: *"Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."*—I Corinthians 13:4-7.

THE ANNUAL Convention of the Church of God in Hagerstown, Maryland, was held Tuesday-Sunday, July 2-7. We want to give God glory and praise for the beautiful way He blessed in this effort. As is the custom of the local congregation, prayer meetings were held ten evenings before the meeting. The saints did pray and fast and surely the Lord poured out His blessings. The Word of God went forth under the anointing of the Holy Ghost. The singing was truly heavenly.

Visiting saints from other countries as well from other states arrived safely, bringing the total to 175. We appreciate their sacrifice in coming to be with us.

Prayer meetings were held each morning at seven o'clock. Those given the responsibility for thoughts before prayer were as follows: Tuesday, Bro. Thomas Harris; Wednesday, Sis. Dorrette Clarke; Thursday, Sis. Melisa Allen; Friday, Sis. Hyacinth Goodlitt; Saturday, Bro. Abel Leal; Sunday, Sis. Linette Jutan.

Below is a synopsis of the general services. Few message excerpts in italics:

Tuesday—10:30 A.M.—The speaker was Bro. Doug Shenberger, assistant pastor of the local congregation. Title: "Love Never Fails." This entire message begins on page 4.

2:30 P.M.—Speaker: Bro. Donovan Darby. Title: "Charity Fails Not." John 3:16, Romans 5:8, and other scriptures were used. *What is charity? Charity is love; the passion we have for our fellow men that causes us to care, to be interested in their welfare, to respect, and to appreciate them. God made a way so that man could come back to Him. He made a plan of redemption so that we could be saved and come into fellowship with Him. It was the love of God that lifted us up out of sin. All of us who are saved today weren't always saved. We were sinners. We were wicked. We were evildoers. But something happened. Our lives have been changed. Our lives have been transformed. The Lord came and rescued us.* This entire message begins on page 11.

6:00 P.M.—Speaker: Bro. Harley McClung. Title: "Christians Are Followers of Christ." Text: Ephesians 5:1, 2, and other scriptures were used. *We can't be followers of Christ without following what He taught us to do. Jesus came to teach us God's higher ways. If you're not following Christ, you're against Him. Nicodemus was a religious man, but he heard more to following Christ than mere religion. We're to love one another as He loved us. He didn't give us the leeway to condemn others. If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is not one of His. Love the brethren with a pure heart*

ferently. Charity will not fail. Lord willing, this entire message will be printed in an upcoming issue.

Wednesday—10:30 A.M.—Speaker: Bro. David Goble. Title: "The Everlasting Gospel in an Ever-Changing World." Texts: Malachi 3:6; Acts 1:8, and other scriptures were used. *The world is ever-changing because it left God in the very beginning. God gives His people power to operate in a changing world. How can we work in an ever-changing world with a never-changing God? God changes things, but He doesn't change truth. Don't be afraid of change when God is behind it. Charity is giving great honor and esteem. God wants a love relationship with people. There is no doubt in the everlasting gospel of Christ. Christ is the true definition of charity. When we go out into the lost world, we take charity with us.* This entire message, Lord willing, will be printed in an upcoming issue.

2:30 P.M.—The young people were in charge of this service. The theme of the service was, "Vessels of Honor." Special songs were sung and four speakers spoke on the given topics; namely, Bro. Alan Richards—**Being Material God Can Work With**; Bro. Cameron Deville—**Willing to be Molded and Shaped by God**; Sis. Joley Williams—**Willing to be Tried by Fire**; Sis. Jillian Gossard—**Being Willing to be Used However He Pleases**. This was a very inspiring service. May the Lord continue to bless our precious young brothers and sisters in the Lord.

6:00 P.M.—Speaker: Bro. Duane Jeffries. Title: "Who Touched Me?" Text: Mark 5:25-32; Luke 10:38-42; Matthew 14:22-30, and other scriptures were used. *None of us are worthy of God's love, but even so, He loves us. In the cold world we're living in, we need more love. The woman with the issue of blood was healed. She pressed through the crowd to get to Jesus. Mary sat at Jesus' feet. She had chosen the good part. Peter walked on the water. As long as he kept his eyes on Jesus, he was fine, but as soon as he took his eyes away from Him, he began to sink. Jesus reached down and lifted him up. Even the winds and the waves obeyed Jesus.* Lord willing, this entire message will be printed in an upcoming issue.

Thursday—10:30 A.M.—Speaker: Bro. Doug Koerner. Title: "Love—how it is expressed—how it is perceived." Text: I Corinthians 1, 13; Other scriptures were used. *Without love, all the other gifts will not work or mean anything. Sometimes we perceive things differently from someone else, but the love still needs to be there. Love suffers long toward others. Love is kind. We need to work at love even though we have the love of God in us. It doesn't always flow easily. We express and perceive love differently from each other. When someone acts a certain way, we may perceive it with a wrong attitude. Their intention might not be what we perceive it to be. Don't judge by what you see—we may not perceive true intentions. Charity never fails. God doesn't perceive. He know our hearts and He is the one we need to please.* This entire message, Lord willing, will be printed in an upcoming issue.

6:00 P.M.—Speaker: Bro. Terry Deville. Title: "Keep the Lower Lights Burning." Text: I Timothy 1:18, 19. *Lower lights, as well as lighthouses, were important to the safety of vessels. We are the lower lights. There's a*

storm raging in the world—evil. *The Lighthouse, Jesus, will always be there. Nothing can take that light away. We have a responsibility to help souls make it through the channel. The way to keep our lights burning is to lift up Christ every day. A form of godliness will not reveal danger. You won't help anyone by laying down the standard. God gave us the most advanced way to live. Don't let Satan make us ashamed.* Lord willing, this entire message will be printed in an upcoming issue.

Friday—10:30 A.M.—Speaker: Bro. David Shaw. Title: “He Is Just the Same Today.” Text: Isaiah 53:1-5. As this was the Divine Healing Service, several scriptures were used in the examples of healing: Mark 5:1-15, 21-34. *Our relationship with Jesus should be to please Him and seek His will. God breathed into man and he became a living soul. No one can attain to God's knowledge. Because of love, Jesus paid our penalty for sin and our healing. When Jesus met the demoniac, He did not have to use chains. He used the power of the Word. He gave a command and the demons had to obey. Jesus paid the price so we can have healing for free. Have hope because Jesus is able to take care of any disease.* This entire message, Lord willing, will be printed in an upcoming issue.

2:30 P.M.—An Appreciation Service for our pastor, Bro. Greg Tyler, for 50 years in God's service was given in his honor. Chairman: Bro. Doug Shenberger. Tributes sent from various affiliated congregations were read by Bro. Doug, and others in attendance also gave their tributes. Some songs were sung that were Bro. Greg's favorites.

6:00 P.M.—Speaker: Bro. Tim Crooks. Title: “Our Eternity-Bound Soul.” Text: Ecclesiastes 5:13-16. *We bring our soul into this world and we take it out. We only give account of our own deeds. The things of this life are fleeting. No one can work out my salvation but me. Many will try to enter in by good works. That won't get us through the gates. Few will be saved because people don't want to strive to enter in.* Lord willing, this entire message will be printed in an upcoming issue.

Saturday—10:30 A.M.—Speaker: Bro. Paul Wilson. Title: “Hope in Stormy Times.” Text: Matthew 8:23-27. *We are in stormy times, but we have an Anchor that keeps the soul. There are things in life that come to disturb our peace, joy, and love. There is comfort and hope in the midst of the storm. Jesus was in the ship with His disciples. When Jesus is in the ship, everything is all right. Sudden storms can appear unexpectedly. They can be so disturbing and can shake you. All you can see are the waves. Storms can come in like a flood. Job stood firm because he knew where his hope was. The Master is still saying, “Peace, be still” today. There may be dark places in your life, but when Jesus speaks the sun comes out.* This entire message, Lord willing, will be printed in an upcoming issue.

2:30 P.M.—Speaker: Bro. Franklyn Bascoe. Title: “Keeping Yourself in the Love of God.” Text: Jude 1:20, 21. *We must earnestly contend for the faith. We must build on a sure foundation. When God is on your side, the devil can do you no harm. What God has blessed, Satan cannot reverse. It is so important that we keep ourselves in the love of God. If we don't keep ourselves*

in the love of God, then we are not in the place to receive His favor. Lord willing, this entire message will be printed in an upcoming issue.

Following this service, a Baptismal Service was held. Five were baptized: Sisters Diane Little, MaKenna Goodyear, Gail Cook, Juliana Gossard, and Bro. Nathaniel Shenberger. May the Lord bless and keep them faithful to Him.

6:00 P.M.—Speaker: Bro. Matt Deville. Title: “A Place Prepared.” Text: Revelation 12:6. *The church that Jesus built is equipped to withstand every disaster, because it is built on a sure foundation. People have the warnings time and time again to flee sin, but they do not take heed. A man-made foundation will not stand. Only Jesus Christ is the sure foundation. We have to hold fast to what we have or the candlestick will be removed. We need to seek the Spirit's leading in every way. We need to wait on God's time. We will go through difficult times, but we have to keep waiting on God's timing. We all have to deal with the fact that death is coming. Jesus has a place prepared for us, but there are conditions to be met. We must prepare ourselves. God's will is for our benefit and our best.* This entire message, Lord willing, will be printed in an upcoming issue.

Sunday—9:30 A.M.—Open Sunday school. Bro. Ralph Craig was in charge. Sis. Rebecca Bland taught the lesson “A Vision of the Work.”

10:30 A.M.—Speaker: Bro. Harley McClung. Title: “Redeemed With Great Price.” Text: I Peter 1:18-23. *We can't comprehend Jesus' great suffering. He didn't have to suffer, but He knew the mind of His Father. When we take Jesus to heart is when we're able to return to the capacity of love He has for us. Jesus didn't have to pay the debt because of something He did, but because of our sins He suffered for us. God's first and greatest commandment is to love Him with all our hearts. All of us need to search our hearts. Is God getting anything for His great investment? The Word of God must be cherished. It's not God's will that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. The way to heaven is through the strait and narrow way. Our life is but a vapor. Eternity is never-ending.* Lord willing, this entire message will be printed in an upcoming issue.

6:00 P.M.—Speaker: Bro. Lee Jeffries. Title: “The Never-Failing Love of Christ.” Text: John 3:16. *When the world turns against you, there is the never-failing love of God. He has not left you alone. He has a purpose for your life. You can count on God's faithful love. He is always looking out for our best interest. Christ loves me and is interested in me.* This entire message, Lord willing, will be printed in an upcoming issue.

We want to express our appreciation to those who willingly worked so hard in the temporal affairs before and during the convention. The young people helped tremendously in every way possible. Those who were responsible for the preparation of the meals, we say “thanks” for such delicious food each day.

Most of all, thanks to our heavenly Father for His divine guidance and care throughout the entire six days of the convention. We were blessed by seeing precious souls saved, sanctified, and healed.

We are looking forward to next year's meeting with great anticipation!

LOVE NEVER FAILS

2024 Hagerstown Convention Message by Bro. Doug Shenberger



WE HAVE A lovely theme this year! Of course, it is drawn from what we call “The Love Chapter”—I Corinthians 13. It starts out with “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.” We understand and believe that in this chapter, the usage of the word *charity* is talking about love.

In the Bible, one of the things it says about love is “against such there is no law.” I’ve heard someone say one time that they were a little afraid of people talking too much about love. But my response to them was, “Against such there is no law.” I know a lot of people who use the word *love* can come up with something that isn’t truly love, but when we’re talking about love, we don’t have to be afraid of love.

The thought of “love never fails” is a vital thought. It is something that will affect every area of our lives. It affects particularly our relationship with God and man. If we take those two forces out of our lives, there’s not much of anything left. That’s what love impacts.

Love is something that most everyone knows something about. I Corinthians 13 is a very well-known chapter in the Bible, and I believe we can benefit from a study and a reminder about some of the great truths that are given to us here this week. It’s easy for things to leak away from us and to forget to really grasp the importance and the power that this subject involves. I trust we’ll be reminded to look at ourselves and see how well we’re truly doing in exemplifying the love of God to the world through our example.

I’m looking forward to hearing a lot of other ministers speak this week. One good thing about being first is that I can sit back and enjoy hearing others. I trust that they’ll do a better job, but it’s my responsibility this morning to introduce this subject. I trust it will cause us to think about some aspects of love.

WHAT IS LOVE?

One of the questions that I’d like to ask to begin with is, What is love? If we’re going to say that love never fails, it will be helpful to have some idea of what we’re really talking about, and to really be able to grasp what we’re claiming, because the experience of a lot of people in the world today is different than that. What they view as love is something that is often failing.

I’m not going to endeavor to say that I can fully explain love to you this morning. Love is one of the greatest things in life, and we could talk about it for a long time. But in general, *love* is a strong affection that motivates us to do good to someone and to all people. It’s an emotion that is very difficult to keep hidden. We see that most often sometimes when we think about

romantic love, a love towards another individual. If you really love a person, it’s very hard to keep it a secret. You don’t really want to keep it a secret. You want them to know something about it. You want them to experience the benefits.

Love motivates you to do good to people. It motivates you to help them. It motivates you to want to spend time with them. It motivates you to want to protect them from danger, from harm, and from any hurt or pain. When you really love someone, you rejoice with them. You rejoice in their prosperity. You want the very best for them. You want them to excel, to be blessed, and to benefit. You want them to have all that’s good that life can give them.

LOVE WORKETH NO ILL TO OTHERS

The Bible tells that love worketh no ill to his neighbor. I want you to think about that for a minute, because we as human beings have a lot of ability to work ill to our neighbor. Some of it is just intentional. People go around and work ill to their neighbor. They undermine people. They hurt people. They offend people. They take advantage of people. That’s human experience, a lot of what we live with in the world today. But “love worketh no ill to his neighbour” (Romans 13:10). Now, that’s a high calling. We can read that verse and say, “That’s a real pretty verse, that’s a great thing,” but when we really think about it, there’s a lot involved there. That means we don’t work any ill to their reputation. We don’t go around to see whether we can cast doubt on a person’s reputation. We don’t try to find something to find fault with and share it with other people so that they won’t be quite as well regarded as they would have been otherwise. That’s working ill to our neighbor. We don’t work ill to them emotionally. We don’t say things to them to endeavor to discourage them. We don’t work ill to them mentally, spiritually, or physically. We don’t work ill to our neighbor.

It takes some intention, actually, to avoid working ill to our neighbor. To go around saying, “I’m not going to work ill to my neighbor,” has to be somewhat of an intentional act, because you can accidentally work ill to your neighbor. I’m not saying that we as human beings are faultless, and that sometimes we are not accidentally going to work ill to our neighbor, but if we have a mindset and a love for them that is motivating us to not want to work ill to them, then we might want to find out something about them. We might want to be aware of them in a way that would cause us to intentionally avoid working ill to our neighbor, if at all possible, even by accident.

Love is also unselfish. If we greet somebody, or someone asks about us, I don’t think we would want to say, “I’m a selfish person.” That’s not real common. I

don't think a whole lot of people would go around saying, for example, "You know, I'm Doug Shenberger, and I'm selfish." Love is an unselfish thing.

These attributes of love are important when we think about our theme *Love Never Fails*. We can call some things love that might fail, but they might not really be love. We can identify love sometimes by what it does more than just by reading off a definition. But love is giving. God so loved that He gave. When we love like God loves, we're able to give. We're able to give of ourselves. We're able to give of our love. We're able to give to meet the needs of others. We're able to give cheerfully. I believe that God so loved that He gave cheerfully. Love is humble, love is longsuffering, love is Godlike. The Bible tells us that God is love. So God is Godlike. If you ever wanted to be like God, then that's a great place to start. Love never faileth.

In I Corinthians 13, verse 8, it says: "... but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away." We live in a physical world where most things do fail. We see failure all around us. We see decay. We see that our bodies fail. We have just a little time, like a vapor that vanishes away. We see organizations fail. We see deterioration and decay. This verse that I just read says that prophecies fail, tongues fail, knowledge fails.

There is a general reality that things and people fail. They're prone to mistakes or prone to failures and loss. So it can be hard for us to really grasp that there's something that would never fail because we're used to failure. It would be hard for us to really fully embrace this thought. I'd like for us to try to do that this morning and through the week. Not to just look at this theme and say, "Well, that's a nice thought. Love is a great thing. It's a powerful thing, but it does have its limitations." But truly grasp that love never fails. That's an interesting thing to meditate and think about and to make sure that we're able to not just have a head knowledge of that truth, but that we internalize it. It becomes a part of us in the way we look at life and the way we interact with God.

I said already that God is love, and we believe and teach that God never changes. He's been the same as He's always been. He's an unchanging God. He's always consistent. He's always there. He's unable to fail. He never fails to keep any of His promises. God never goes back on any of His Word. He never runs into a situation that He can't deal with. He never fails. He is love. So love is a Godlike thing. It's from God. It's the nature of God. We need to get a vision of it. Love is something that never fails. A human experience tends to disapprove it and to disagree with it. There are many claims of people who say "I love you" and something happens. They don't anymore. How can we truly believe in the power of love? How can we truly have faith to believe in the power of love?

I'd like to ask some questions about love. If we turn over to Luke, chapter 10, verse 25, we will find a lawyer who asked Jesus a question. Jesus responded in verse 26: "What is written in the law? how readest thou?"

The lawyer said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all

thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself."

Jesus said, "Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live."

Verse 29: "But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?"

So Jesus had just heard him say that he's to love his neighbor as himself.

Jesus said, "You got it. You have the answer. Just do it and you'll live. You'll have spiritual life."

You're very familiar with that parable, so I'm not going to spend a lot of time going through that this morning.

Jesus gave a parable about the Good Samaritan. You know what happened and how the person had fallen into a serious situation. He was wounded. People who were high up in authority in religious matters saw his need but ignored it and walked by. Along came a man who was regarded as an inferior person. He saw this person's need. He responded. He loved this fellow man. He probably didn't know anything about him, but he just had compassion and love towards him.

Jesus used that parable as an explanation, a challenge, and an example to that lawyer, because the lawyer wanted to be able to be seen and to say that he loved his neighbor. But it seems he wanted to limit the scope. You know, it's a lot easier if you can limit the scope of this idea of love to just certain people. "I do have this neighbor on one side, and I love him." He wanted to justify himself, but Jesus just blew the scope wide open. Jesus was really saying, "Everybody is your neighbor." If you really would look at this honestly, I believe you have to say that Jesus said, "You need to love everybody as yourself." Who is my neighbor? was the first question I wanted to ask. Do we have a vision of that? Do we have a vision to believe that we have a need to love them? Love for them never fails. It's never the wrong thing to do. It's never something we have to be afraid of doing.

We'll turn to I John. John had a good bit to say about love. In I John, chapter 4, verse 20, we read: "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar [You might say, 'Fortunately, I don't hate my brother. I'm okay here.' But the verse keeps on going. It says]: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" Yes, it's wrong to say that you hate your brother, and if you say you love God when you're doing that, John said, "You're a liar." He's basically saying, "That's an impossible claim to make. I can't credibly say that I love God if I don't love my brother. He that loveth not his brother, how can he love God?" That's probably a verse that a lot of people would rather wasn't in the Bible. "I don't hate them. I just don't get along with them as well as I do with other people. I kinda avoid them, but I'm good because I don't hate them." We need to love our brother.

What did I say earlier? "Love worketh no ill to his neighbor." So what does that mean in reality to us? It means that love doesn't undermine. It doesn't separate itself. It doesn't withhold its approval. It doesn't withhold its help and blessing. It doesn't seek to isolate somebody as some form of punishment. "Well, what if

he's not my brother? That would help, right? If he's not my brother, maybe I can be excused on this, because if he's not my brother, I don't have to love him, right? He doesn't even like me. He's actually working against me. He speaks ill of me. He's hurtful to me. He's damaged my reputation. He's offended me. He's my enemy."

LOVE YOUR ENEMIES

Let's look at Matthew, chapter 5. Jesus Himself had something to say about that. Verse 43: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy." That's the way most religions still believe. That was accepted teaching, and Jesus is saying, "That's what you've heard." He says in verse 44: "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you." Why? "That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven." Verse 46: "For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye?" That's just natural, that's human. Anybody can do that, but Christianity can help you love your enemies. That's one of the greatest proofs of Christianity, the uniqueness of Christianity. Real Christianity will give you power to love your enemies, to bless them, and do good to them. That doesn't mean that you just do something in secret. That means you actually do something for them, or to them in their behalf, and be a blessing to them.

When we talk about Christianity, we're talking about something real. We're not talking about a form. We're not talking about something that is a powerless joining of an institution. We're talking about the love of God in action. Love never fails. It's powerful. It's life-changing. The only way you're ever going to have power to love your enemies is to truly love God. I don't care how hard you try, you'll never do that without the love of God in your heart.

God's love is the motivating force in our lives. Love is one of the most powerful motivators that we'll ever experience. We'll do things because of love that would seem ridiculous otherwise. We'll give because of love. We'll go sleepless because of love. We'll suffer because of love. It's one of the most powerful motivations that human beings can experience. If love is truly the overriding motivational force in our lives, that's an interesting thing to think about, because that should make a big difference in how we interact with people. Without that motivation, I might have a lot of great intentions. I might have a lot of great plans. I might have a lot of great knowledge. I might be very manipulative to try to work things out to get what I want out of life. I might be able to have a lot of understanding about how to do that to get what I want and to appear the way I think I need to appear. But when we're actually motivated by love, we'll truly do good to people, and we'll go above and beyond.

I'd like to draw your attention to Revelation, chapter 2, verses 1-3: "Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:

And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted." What a beautiful testimony! There's a lot there to be proud of and pleased with. You would think that everything was fine. But it goes on to say, "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love."

I want us to think about that, because this is a serious question to ask or to think about: Have we to any degree left our first love for God? If so, how will we know that? What would be the warning sign? What should we be aware of? How can we make sure that we haven't left our first love? The church in Revelation 2 did all those good things, but what was it that they had done that they had left their first love? It's not pointed out to us in any detail there about what was involved. But I think that there's one area we can look at in our Christian experience and think about to want to measure ourselves of where we are, and that is, How am I loving people? How much do I love people? That's one of the things I was just pointing out to us that God said. One of the ways we know whether we love Him or not is whether we love people. Do we just want to love God? We can raise our hands and say that we love God, but it's more than just words. It has to work out in our lives. It has to change us. It has to change the way we live with people.

God is not calling us to live in a monastery or go up to the top of a mountain and live all alone. There's a story about a man who did that. It says he wanted to get close to God so he went out alone. He prayed and called upon God. He sought God. "God, why aren't you meeting with me?" God said, "I'm down here among my people. I want you to come and love my people."

LEAVING YOUR FIRST LOVE

I want us to just think a little bit about our theme. It says, "Love Never Fails." But we can leave our love. We can let go of it. We just can't seem to make it a priority. We can leave our first love, that great love for God that gives us a love for people. So I ask you this morning, Is there anybody you're having trouble loving? Are you having trouble loving your wife? Are you having trouble loving your husband? I started there in the home because those are the people who are closest to us. They are the people we know the best. They are the people who can hurt us the most a lot of times. Are we having trouble with their love in the home? Children, are you having trouble loving your parents? Are you having trouble loving your neighbor, your brother? Let me ask you, if there's anything that comes to mind there, are you having any trouble loving God? Is everything fine with you and God? "Just that person. He's difficult. She's difficult. I love God more than ever."

God so loved the world that He gave; not because we were so good, not because we were so great, not because we were so worthy. He calls us to love people; not because they're perfect, but because He loves them. If He gives us a loving and a forgiving spirit, He calls us to something not human, not natural. It's Godlike. It's sublime, and it's Christianity. It's to believe that love never fails.

I Corinthians 13:4-8a: "Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself,

is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth.”

Jesus had something to say to His disciples. He said, “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” The strength of the love we have for one another is the strength of our testimony of Christianity. How do I feel about my love this morning? How do I feel about my love for God? If there’s any problem there with our love for God, we might want to look at our love for one another. Our ability to be understanding and loving to one another. I believe the more we do that, it is easier just to love God. The more we love God, the easier it is to love one another. It works together.

In spite of all the good and noble and praise-worthy things done by the church there in Revelation 2 that I just read about, God said, “You need to fix the problem.” He just didn’t say, “I have somewhat against thee,” but He said, “You need to fix it. You’ve left your first love.”

You need to make it a priority with your relationship with God and man. You need to make it right. You can’t let it continue. You can’t just let it simmer along. You can’t just accept it as a reality and say, “That’s just the way my life is.” It demands immediate attention.

CONCLUSION

How is our love today? Is our heart full of love for God, His people, and His creation? Is it motivating us to do something? Is our love for God getting greater? Does my wife know that without me even telling her because it’s spilling over on her? Does your husband know that because it’s spilling over on him? Does my family know that I’m loving God more because they feel it and know it? Do the people know that I’m loving God more because I love them more? What’s my testimony?

If we want to be useful, if we want to be great, if we want to be used by God, if we want to be influential, we don’t do that by tearing somebody else down. That doesn’t build us up. But if we love more, if we really believe, and we’re confident that love never fails, we’re going to love when it’s hard to love, and because God says to love. We’re going to love even when people are unlovable. We’re going to do that through the power of God. We’re going to do that because of our relationship with God. It’s going to change us and make us what He wants us to be. Love never fails. †

POSTAGE RATES ON THE RISE!

Postage rates have been increasing at an alarming rate. We do not charge for the magazine. 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 giving.

RECIPROCAL LOVE

Radio Message by Bro. Greg Tyler

(aired 1/14/90)



OUR THOUGHTS are entitled, “Reciprocal Love.” There is no question that God loves you. The Bible tells us, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” The *world* in this passage signifies every human being on the face of the earth. It doesn’t matter if you’re rich or poor, black or white, or if you’re an American, an African, an Asian, or European. That has nothing to do with it. God loves you. God gave His Son for you. Even when you have done your worst against Him, God still loves you.

This world is good. I know men have made a mess of it in many ways, but in its purity the world is good. As God made it, the world is good. When God was finished creating everything, He said, “It is good.” I believe it just that way. Nature is beautiful. God made our human bodies in a marvelous way so that they operate perpetually up to the point of death. Your heart beats thousands and thousands of times and pumps blood to every part of your body. You have senses. You’re able to see, if you’re normal, and hear and smell and feel and taste. All of these things are good.

The Bible tells us that God sends His rain upon the just and the unjust, and that seed time and harvest would not cease. God has been faithful to His Word. He has showered us all with many, many blessings. No matter what lot you might find yourself in, Beloved, you still have many blessings from God if you’ll stop and count them.

The love of God is a beautiful subject. I could speak on it, not only in these few moments, for the love of God is so rich, so deep, so long, and powerful. But my subject is, “Reciprocal Love.” What I mean by that is that though God loves us, I ask this question: Do we love Him? for I believe with all of my soul that God desires man to love Him. I believe God desires us (you and me) to love Him with a pure love.

In the book of St. Mark, chapter 12, beginning with verse 28, we read: “And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he [speaking of Christ] had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all? And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.” We see that above all else, God desires us to love Him and our fellow man.

I want us to think for a few minutes about our responsibility to love God, what it means to love God, and how our lives will be if we truly love Him. Someone you love, you don’t mistreat. Someone you love, you don’t trample underfoot. Everyone likes to be loved.

Love is a wonderful thing. I don't know of any human being that doesn't like to be loved and knows how it feels when someone loves them. Beloved, I believe God is the same in this sense. I believe God wants to feel loved.

God could have destroyed the earth long ago, but because of His longsuffering and His great love, He has spared us all to this present hour. But God desires our love towards Him. He desires that we serve Him. He desires that we live our lives in such a way as would please Him, and not to think only of ourselves, but to think of others, and use our lives in a constructive manner for the benefit of all humanity. There is so much selfishness on every hand. This is not according to the will of God. God would have us to love, and the more we love Him, the more we're going to love our fellow man, and the less selfishness we will see in the earth.

God planned that our affection (love) would be centered on Him and upon heavenly things. God made us physical and spiritual. It is not the physical that can love God but the spiritual (the inner man). God desires us to give our affection and our allegiance to Him above all other things and above all other people on the face of the earth. If we love *anyone* more than Him, we can't be His disciples. If we love *anything* more than Him, we can't be His disciples. God not only desires our love, but if we're going to make it to heaven, He requires our love. Beloved, it is only fitting and right and fair and decent. Why should we not love God? God is good. Sin is bad. Satan is bad. The world is full of evil, but God is good. Why shouldn't we love Him with all of our heart, our soul, our mind, and strength as Jesus commanded us to do?

The more I know God, the more I love Him. The more I know of God, the closer I want to draw to Him, for "God is love" the Bible tells us. The Scriptures teach us not to center our affections on the things on Earth, but to set our affections on things above. So many people have their affections on things of this earth. That is wrong. Oh, we can enjoy the good things of life, but to center our affections on things of this earth is wrong. God deserves our affection. God deserves our love. He deserves our life, Beloved. I plead with you, set your affections on things above. Seek God with all your heart. Reach out to Him this very hour and seek His face, for He is close to everyone of us. If you love Him, you will keep His commandments.

God doesn't want us to love Him in word or with our lips only, but with our heart and with our life. I believe that any thorough and honest study of the Word of God will show us that if we love God as Jesus taught here, with all of our heart, our soul, our mind, and strength, then we're going to live a certain kind of life. We're going to live circumspectly and uprightly. We're going to live in obedience to the Scriptures to the very best of our knowledge. We're not going to live the same wicked life that we did before we met the Master. No, if we love Him, then we're going to do His commandments and do His blessed will to the very best of our ability.

There is the love of God that shines upon everyone of us, but there are so few who love God in return. I know most everybody would say that they love God and want to please Him, but when it comes right down to it, when it comes to setting their affections on things

above, when it comes to loving God more than anything else in this world, very few people are doing it.

We're told in I John 2:15, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." We're not to love the world or the things of the world, but we are to love God the Father supremely. We're to love Jesus Christ as our Savior.

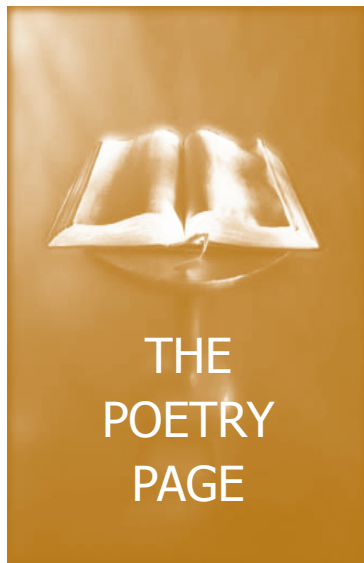
Oh, can't you see Him suffering there on Golgotha's Heights, bleeding and dying so that you can make heaven your home? Nothing, Beloved, nothing you could have done would have made it right with God the Father. Your sins separated you from God, and only one thing would put you back into fellowship with God, and that was the sacrifice of His own beloved Son. Can't you see Him hanging over the valley there and suffering and finally dying so that you could be saved? It should stir your heart. You should want to love Him. You should want to serve Him.

I'm not talking about joining church. I'm talking about loving God. I'm not talking about shaking some preacher's hand or getting your name on some church book. No, Beloved, many people have their names on a church book and are dead as dead can be. I'm talking about loving God with all of your heart, your soul, your mind, and strength. I tell you, under the authority of God's Word, that you're going to live differently. You're going to be a new creature in Christ Jesus. You're going to treat your fellow men with love and kindness. You're going to give and not take. You're not going to be selfish, but you're going to be a giving individual, for God does that when He has His way in our life.

I beseech you, everyone, to love God. Give Him love in return for His love to you. Yes, He's going to love you, but that doesn't mean you're going to go to heaven when you die just because God loves you. He loves everyone, but if you refuse to love God, and love the world more than you do Him, then in the last day the love of the Father will not be in you, and you will hear, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." I don't want you to hear those words. I want you to hear, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." For you to hear those words, you must love the Lord and serve Him in this time world. †

CD's of our services are available for purchase. These are \$3.00 each; however, orders of 10 or more are only \$2.50 each, postage paid. Please write in the blank how many you would like to receive. Send check or money order to: The Way of Truth CD Ministry, P. O. Box 88, Hagerstown, MD 21741-0088. (credit cards now accepted.)

- ___ CD #1597 *Regrets of Things Left Undone*—G. E. Tyler
- ___ CD #1598 *God's Plan for You*—Paul Wilson
- ___ CD #1599 *Put Away Childish Things*—Doug Shenberger
- ___ CD #1600 *God So Loved the World*—Rebecca Bland
- ___ CD #1601 *Father's Day Service*
- ___ CD #1602 *Not Being Conformed to This World*—Thomas Harris
- ___ CD #1603 *Obstacles to Our Faith*—Brian Richards
- ___ CD #1604 *Walking Worthy*—David Martin
- ___ CD #1605 *Be Strong and of a Good Courage*—Rupert Shippy
- ___ CD #1606 *God's Loving Kindness*—Gary Alwell



WHY DOUBT GOD'S WORD?

A. B. Simpson

It is strange we trust each other,
And only doubt our Lord.
We take the word of mortals,
And yet distrust His Word;
But oh, what light and glory
Would shine o'er all our days,
If we always would remember
God means just what He says.

EVER NEAR

Author Unknown

There is an EYE that never sleeps
Beneath the wing of night;
There is an EAR that never shuts
When sinks the beams of light.

There is an ARM that never tires
When human strength gives way;
There is a LOVE that never fails
When earthly loves decay.

That EYE unseen watcheth o'er all;
That ARM upholds the sky;
That EAR doth hear the sparrow's call;
That LOVE is ever nigh.

PETITION

Amy C. Phillips

Quiet my heart, Lord,
When troubles surprise;
Quiet my fears when
Forebodings arise;

May I be calm
In life's weary quest;
Trusting in Thee,
Find confident rest.

Thou knowest each heartache,
Each burden and care,
Give strength for the conflict
As I pause here in prayer.

As humbly I kneel,
Lord, give me Thy grace;
Let me see through the cloud
Thy benevolent face.

OUR TASK

D. L. Cross

Lord, Thou hast come to save
The world from strife and sin.
We, Lord, Thy chosen people
These lost must strive to win.
Win them from paths of sin
Unto a life with Thee,
A life filled with Thy love,
And joy both full and free.

REST IN GOD'S KEEPING POWER

Kathryn Blackburn Peck

What shall I do when my sad heart aches?
Where shall I hide when the tempest breaks?
When bitter grief my being shakes?
Rest in God's keeping power!

How shall I trust when my hope is vain?
How shall I smile in the midst of pain?
After mistakes—how try again?
Rest in God's keeping power!

How shall I meet the dread future years?
How face the sure-to-come tests and tears?
How cross the tide when death appears?
Rest in God's keeping power!

BLESSINGS

Mavis Tuttle

Always remember to forget
The troubles that passed away.
But never forget to remember
The blessings that come each day. †

Lord be praised for all His blessings!



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

QUESTION: Did King Solomon repent before he died?

ANSWER: The Bible tells us, “When Solomon was old, his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father. ... And Solomon slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David his father” (I Kings 11:4, 43). If he repented, the Bible does not say anything about it.

QUESTION: If a person is very wicked and he repents, will all his sins be forgiven entirely?

ANSWER: Yes! Regardless of how wicked a person is, if he meets Bible conditions for salvation, the Lord will forgive him of his every sin entirely and save him. The only exception to that is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

However, that is not to say that a person will not suffer for past sins. Someone living in sin may do things that he will have to suffer for the rest of his life, but that does not mean he hasn’t been forgiven by God.

QUESTION: What was the spiritual position of Peter before he denied thrice that he did not know Jesus?

ANSWER: He was a child of God, a minister of the gospel, and one of the 12 apostles. He said in Matthew 16:16 that Christ was the Son of God, and I John 5:1 says, “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.” Peter backslid when he denied Christ, but he was reclaimed and used mightily by the Lord.

QUESTION: In I Corinthians 13:13 we read, “But now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.” Why is FAITH not the greatest of these three, but love is?

ANSWER: If you will study this chapter closely, you will see why love is the greatest. In regard to faith, Paul said, “Though I have ALL faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I AM NOTHING.” On the other hand, in regard to love, Paul said that it suffers long, is kind, envieth not, is not puffed up, seeketh not her own, thinketh no evil. In fact, Paul said love NEVER fails. Therefore, it is the greatest need of all, and without it a person cannot be a Christian.

QUESTION: Please explain the difference between and the background of the two Mary’s: Mary, the sister of Lazarus and Mary Magdalene; and which one washed the feet of Jesus and dried them with her hair?

ANSWER: The Mary known as Mary Magdalene was called that because she was from Magdala, a town along the Sea of Galilee. Jesus healed her of seven demons.

This Mary was one of a group of women who gave money and provisions to Jesus and His disciples. She also accompanied the group that traveled with Him on some of His preaching and healing missions.

We also understand that she was with the group that went with Him to Jerusalem on His final trip, before He was crucified, and witnessed His crucifixion. She was the first to know of His resurrection.

Mary, the sister to Martha and Lazarus, lived in the little town of Bethany, which was on the east side of the Mount of Olives, the “back side” of the mount from Jerusalem. Jesus visited this home a number of times. It was this Mary that “anointed” the Lord with ointment, and wiped His feet with her hair (John 11:2).

Now we read in Luke 7:37, 38 of “a woman” coming and weeping, who “began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with ointment.” But we are not told who this woman was.

QUESTION: What is the cause of backsliding, as a full Christian? Is it much knowing of the Bible, or is it being overproud of oneself?

ANSWER: There are different reasons why some backslide. Knowing the Bible should not be one of them! We are to study to show ourselves approved unto God. I like to encourage people to learn all the truth they can, as long as they apply it to their heart and life. It will help them to stay true to the Lord.

Pride causes some to fail; no one should be proud, however, of the fact that he knows the Bible. The Bible says pride goes before a fall. The Scriptures also tell us that God hates a proud look.

I would think that a lack of study and prayer would be another cause of some backsliding. One becoming “lukewarm” will also cause backsliding. Letting malice come into your heart toward someone will cause backsliding.

Possibly most backsliding is caused by people becoming careless in their Christian living, allowing the cares of life to take up too much time, and then their heart begins to go out after the forbidden things of the world.

Peter tells us in II Peter 1:4-11 what to do to keep from falling.

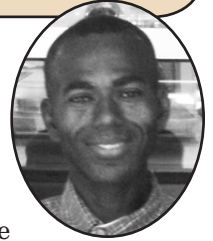
QUESTION: Can we conclude that the Church of God is a Protestant church, protesting other Protestant churches? If not, please explain.

ANSWER: The Church of God is not a Protestant church! It is the bride of Christ. Most, if not all churches known as Protestant, did not start until the time of Martin Luther, thus could not be the church Paul said Jesus purchased with His own blood—Acts 20:28.

Of course, the Church of God “protests” against sin and all evil, including false religion. †

CHARITY FAILS NOT

2024 Hagerstown Convention Message by Bro. Donovan Darby



I WILL BE speaking, by the Lord's help, on "Charity Fails Not." Don't be surprised if I say some of the things that Bro. Doug said this morning, because we are speaking on the same theme and using the same Bible. It is the truth that charity never fails. It certainly cannot change. We can rest assured on what the Bible teaches. This is one of the truths that the Bible teaches. It is a clear statement.

What is charity? *Charity* is love; the passion we have for our fellow men that causes us to care, to be interested in their welfare, to respect, and to appreciate them.

Love is a powerful word when it is rightly used or applied. Someone can say, "I love you," but there's nothing to back it. But when someone truly loves you, that is powerful. I thank God for the love of the saints of God. We love one another with a pure heart fervently. There is something about Christian love and fellowship. Our world today is lacking love. Our world is dying for love, but thank God, the saints of God have love, because we have the love of God within our hearts.

GOD IS LOVE

The first thing that we would like to look at today is God's love. God created the world. He created Adam and Eve. He gave them a command, but they disobeyed that command and sinned. They lost fellowship with God. God could have done without them. He could have allowed them to go their own way, but He still loved them. He loved them so much that He provided a way. God loved His creation so much that He made a way that His creation could come back to Him in fellowship.

Did God's love fail after Adam and Eve sinned? No. His love didn't fail. We are told, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." It says, "For God so"—an expression showing great love. It is not an ordinary love. It is a special love—"that he gave." So we can see that love is giving. He just didn't give us something. He gave us His best—"his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

A writer caught the vision: "Oh, the love that drew salvations plan! Oh, the grace that brought it down to man! Oh, the mighty gulf that God did span at Calvary." God made a way so that man could come back to Him. He made a plan of redemption so that we could be saved and come into fellowship with Him. It was the love of God that lifted us up out of sin. If it weren't for the love of God, Dear Ones, we would not be here rejoicing today. We would have no hope, but the love of God lifted us up out of a life of sin and placed us in God's kingdom.

The writer of another song wrote: "I was sinking deep in sin, Far from the peaceful shore, Very deeply

stained within, Sinking to rise no more [But something happened. We were sinking. Love lifted us. Love came along and took us out of sin. We were deeply stained within. That's what sin does. The songwriter was deep in sin. He was sinking to rise no more. We had no hope. We were drifting and drifting away from God. We were dying.]; But the Master of the sea heard my despairing cry, From the waters lifted me, Now safe am I. Love lifted me! Love lifted me! When nothing else could help, Love lifted me."

Another writer wrote—

On the peaceful shore today

Praises glad I sing;

Sinful days have passed away,

To the Lord I cling;

In his holy light I dwell,

Pure and sweet and free,

While to all the world I tell

How he raised me.

I tell you, Dear Ones, we owe it all to Jesus today, because sin left a crimson stain, but He washed it white as snow. Because love lifted us up, we can sing, "I've found my Lord and he is mine, He won me by his love; I'll serve him all my years of time and dwell with him above."

Romans 5:8, "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." What love! We were enemies of Christ. We grieved Him. We displeased Him. We dishonored Him. We turned our backs on Him, but He died for us. We were condemned to die, but He died for us. Charity (love) fails not.

WHAT THE LOVE OF GOD DID FOR US

Let us look at what the love of God did for us. All of us who are saved today weren't always saved. We were sinners. We were wicked. We were evildoers. But something happened. Our lives have been changed. Our lives have been transformed. The Lord came and rescued us. What a blessing it is that we can be saved from a life of sin and be sitting in heavenly places in Christ! That's where we are today. We are sitting in heavenly places in Christ. The love of God freed us from the bondage of sin. Aren't you happy today that you are free? Aren't you glad you're saved? Aren't you happy to be a child of God? Freedom is a great blessing from God. It's wonderful to be free. We are not only free from sin. We are also free from false religion. We are free from the spirit of sectism. That should cause us to rejoice. That should cause us to be thankful. So when we are saved and free, we are also free from false religion.

We are free from the power of Satan, that wicked enemy that had us in bondage. He had us in slavery,

but we are free from him today. This is something for us to rejoice about. This is something for us to be thankful for. We are no longer in bondage to him. We are servants of the most high God. We are servants of righteousness, and we present our bodies as a living sacrifice.

The love of God made new creatures out of us. The apostle Paul said, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." It's a marvel how God can save people. It's a marvel how God can change the lives of men. According to the songwriter's experience "the greatest of all miracles was when my Jesus saved me." Being saved by the grace of God and being transformed is a miracle. Only God can do that.

When the Lord saved you, He took away your past, your condemnation, your guilt, and your fears. He took you out of that horrible pit and placed your feet upon a Rock to stand. He didn't leave you there to fall back into that pit. He established your goings. Thank God it seems like the Christian life gets brighter and brighter every day. It seems the more we serve the Lord, the sweeter it gets. The songwriter wrote: "The longer I serve Him, the sweeter He grows, The more that I love Him, more love He bestows; Each day is like heaven, my heart overflows, The longer I serve Him, the sweeter He grows."

THE PAST IS GONE

When the Lord makes someone a new creature, don't bring up his past. Don't tell him what he was, because he's a new creature in Christ. It doesn't matter how far the backsliders have gone, or how far the sinners have gone, once they return to the Lord, we need to accept them. We should not doubt them. Why? Once they're redeemed, we need to accept them. There are people who like to throw people's past at them. But let me tell you, Dear Ones, when the Lord forgave you, He forgave you. He put your sins in the sea of forgetfulness, never to remember them against you.

When the Lord forgives us, we also need to forgive ourselves. Don't live in guilt after the Lord forgives you. Even if someone holds something against you, don't let that trouble you. Move on. We should not let anything stop us from going forward, because we need to go forward. Forward, forward is the battle cry. Church of God, march forward. Let us move forward, because God's love never fails.

We were condemned to die without any hope. Spiritually speaking, we were guilty in the courtroom. The songwriter wrote:

*I stood in the courtroom, the judge turned my way,
It looks like you're guilty, now what do you say?
I spoke up, "Your honor, I have no defense,"
But that's when mercy walked in.*

While we were in sin, we had no defense. We had no one to plea for us. We could not do it by ourselves. But what happened? Mercy walked in, and Mercy paid our price.

Dear Ones, if it was not for the mercy of God, we wouldn't be able to be here. Thank God for His mercy. Part of a song says: "Mercy there was great, and grace was free; Pardon there was multiplied to me; There my

burdened soul found liberty, At Calvary." Thank God for mercy. One songwriter said, "I could have fallen, my soul, cast down; But mercy rewrote my life." We could be in condemnation. We could be in sin, but Mercy rewrote our life.

I'm thankful I'm not in the bondage of sin. I'm thankful that I'm free today. I'm thankful that I'm a part of the family of God. I'm thankful that my name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life. So God's love does many things for us. It causes us to be a part of the family of God. According to the songwriter, "You will notice we say Brother and Sister 'round here; That's because we're a family, and these folks are so dear ..." Dear Ones, I love my brothers and my sisters. I love the saints of God, because they are the people of God. I feel it a privilege to be a part of this wonderful family.

The love of God does not fail us. It raises us up from the dead state of sin to life in Christ. The apostle John said, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." That's one way you can know you are saved, because God has put His love in your heart for the brethren. The world does not love us. John told us the world does not love us. The saints of God love you. No child of God has hate in his heart. No one can be a child of God and have hate in his or her heart. We must love the brethren. God has put His divine love in our hearts one for another. Love protects. It assures. It cares. Love will be there when you need it. So God has put His divine love in our hearts one for another. No power of hell can rend us from each other. Did you know that? Thank the Lord that He gave the promise that the gates of hell shall not prevail against the Church of God. God's love. Charity never fails.

LOVE ONE ANOTHER AS I HAVE LOVED YOU

Jesus told us in St. John, chapter 15, verse 12: "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you." We need to be thankful to the Lord for His love to us. We need to tell Him that we love Him. We need to tell Him that we appreciate what He does for us. We need to show it. We need to tell it. If we truly love Him, we are going to follow Him and obey Him. We are going to be submissive to Him.

We are members one of another. There's a bond between brethren. We should show interest in each other. We should watch each other's back. Do you agree with me? Because united we stand; divided we fall. We need to be together and stand together. When one member suffers, all the other members suffer with him. We feel each other's pain. We feel each other's needs. We feel each other's concerns. That is the love that God has put in our hearts one for another. Thank God we care about the welfare of each other. There is no color in the God's church. When God looks down from heaven, He doesn't look at our color, at our race, or our nationality. He looks on us as His people who are one. We should not allow race or color to come among us and our fellowship, because we are one.

We are told, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it" (Ephesians 5:25). Love never fails, and love should never fail between wives and husbands. Isn't that true?

It should never fail, because God's love never fails. If a man truly loves his wife, he will cherish her. He will care for her. He will support her, and he will also appreciate and respect her. No husband who truly loves his wife will abuse her verbally or physically. We need to cherish our wives.

A few weeks ago, I called my wife from work and told her that I love her. Do you know what her response was to me? "I love you." Isn't that beautiful? But I'm making a point. We need to love as husbands and wives and that love should never change. Our love should increase for each other. You cannot tell your wife that you love her and at the same time be telling another woman that you love her. That's not true love. You cannot truly love your wife or your husband and allow your affection to go out to someone else. If you do that, you are ruining and destroying your marriage.

The apostle Paul said in Titus 2 that the aged women must teach the young women to be sober and to love their husbands. Wives need to love their husbands. Wives need to respect their husbands and appreciate them. They should work together and stand together. Too many times people allow someone else to come in between. It has happened. But when difficulty arises, husbands and wives need to work things out together. As children of God, you can come to the Lord in prayer and tell Him about your problems. That love needs to be there one for another. Husband, tell your wife, "I love you." Wife, tell your husband, "I love you."

What about our love for our children? It doesn't matter how far our children have gone in sin, it doesn't matter what bad decisions they may have made, we should still love them. We should still care about them. We need to care about our wayward children. They need our prayers. We need to pray for them. We should love them even when they make bad choices. Charity fails not.

What about our families? Most of us who are saved have other family members who are not saved. We need to love them and care about them, because they need the Lord. One of the best ways we can care about them is by praying for them. We need to encourage them to give their hearts to the Lord.

What about our enemies? We need to love our enemies. Children of God do not go around causing people to become their enemies. They do not, but it can be that someone can become your enemy. If someone becomes your enemy, you need to love that person. What did Jesus say? "Love your enemies." I tell you, it takes something to love our enemies. It takes something to love people who are against us. It takes something to love people who try to destroy or mar our character. The love of God does not fail to love them, so we need to love them.

The apostle Paul said, "If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head." This is not to harm him, but this is to melt his stony heart. This is to help break him, to help him to see himself. If you treat your enemy well and be kind to him, it can even bring him to Christ. Isn't that true? You see, people are people, and they can be broken. The Word of God can melt the stony heart. It can bring down pride. The Word of God can make big men cry. It's powerful and sharper than

any two-edged sword. It cuts and heals. So we need to love our enemies.

We need to love those who have wandered away from the fold of God. We need to love the backsliders, because God loves them. The songwriter wrote, "Tho' I forget Him and wander away, Still He doth love me wherever I stray; Back to His dear loving arms would I flee, When I remember that Jesus loves me." He still loves the backsliders. He still cares about them, and He wants them to return to the fold. They need a guiding light. That guiding light, Dear Ones, is the saints of God showing them love and praying for them. When people sin against God and turn from Him, He does not cut them off. He still loves them and wants them to return.

CONCLUSION

We also need to have a love for the truth. Not many people today appreciate truth. When you stand for the truth, you're sometimes criticized and opposed, even by religious people. If most of the religious organizations were really preaching against sin, they would not have so many followers as they do. I tell you, Friends, only the truth of God's Word can keep people. Only the truth of God's Word can bring people to Christ. We need to have a love for the truth. Truth is precious. We need to value it.

What about spiritual things? David said, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord" (Psalm 122:1). How happy are we to enter into the house of the Lord? If you have the fire of heaven in your soul, you will have the desire to go to the house of God. There's where God meets with His people and blesses them. It really means something to God when His people worship Him. If you send up praise to God, He will send down the blessings. Praise elevates God. It exalts Him. It magnifies Him. It glorifies Him. It lets Him feel glorious. He's glorious. We need to worship Him.

In the book of I John, chapter 4, verse 8, it tells us: "God is love." His very nature is love. There's no hatred in God. "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (I John 1:5). We have a loving heavenly Father who loves and cares for us. He wishes us good. He wants us to prosper. He's looking down on us and willing to have compassion on us. He's willing to take our burdens and sorrows. His compassion faileth not. Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He still hears and answers prayer.

God so loves us. He's not willing that any should perish but come to repentance. There is not another god as our God. What a mighty God He is! We cannot fathom His might. He's just glorious and wonderful. Charity never fails. Let us love God. We should not find it hard to love Him. He's lovable. He requires us to love Him. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself" (Luke 10:27). If we do that, we are going to be on the altar of sacrifice. We're going to say, "Lord, here am I; use me. Lord, I'm available. I'm here to do your will. I'm here to stand for you and do your service." If we love Him with all our being, we will be true and faithful to Him.

If our heavenly Father deserves anything, it is our best. Our best really satisfies Him. Let us love Him with all our hearts. Let us love Him because He first loved us. Charity never fails. †

STEPS HEAVENWARD

By the late R. L. Berry

Chapter XV

Failures

IT OCCURS IN actual experience that a young convert may find that he has yielded to some temptation and has committed a sin. A young convert was, soon after his conversion, surprised into swearing. Something did not go right, and partly from force of habit the words came out of his mouth before he thought of what he was saying. He fell on his knees, and made no attempt to justify himself or to shield himself, by saying he did not mean to swear. He had said those words and he was responsible, he told himself, even if he did not mean to say them. So he promptly asked the Lord to pardon the words, and he then and there renewed his covenant, promising God that never more should such words be heard from him, and he claimed grace to overcome. The result was perfect deliverance from the habit of swearing.

A fine Christian gentleman was once beguiled into sin by the cunning power of a crafty person, and he fell grievously. For a few days darkness and despair hovered over him and he was tempted to follow the example of Judas, who betrayed the Lord. Finally he came back to the Lord, bitterly repented, and was restored, and is doing a good work for God. Peter the bold disciple denied Jesus, cursed and swore, and sinned, but he went out and "wept bitterly," and was fully restored to divine favor.

Christianity is the religion of mercy. There is grace sufficient for every temptation, and the promise is that no temptation shall overtake us except what is common to man, and that God will not permit us to be tempted above what we are able to bear, but will, with the temptation make a way of escape, that we may be able to bear it. Notwithstanding such great promises some do sin, and the great question then is, "What shall I do?"

We find a good answer to this question of what shall one do with his sin in the story of Achan, found in the book of Joshua. Through Achan's sin of covetousness, Israel suffered a defeat. Weeping and wailing arose and discouragement swept over the camp. Joshua fell on his face before the Lord and uttered all that was in his heart. He looked for utter failure. But the voice of God was: "Up, sanctify the people," which meant the people were to be presented to the Lord. A test was made to find the guilty one. At last Achan came, and the lot fell on him as the sinner. Poor Achan confessed the evil he had done. To put away the sin that had caused so great a failure, Achan and all he possessed were killed, and a great heap of stones was raised over the place.

Sin must be confessed and put away entirely, if the soul would go on for God.

Failures are very unpleasant things to deal with; but after one is made, the question then is what to do with it. A variety of methods may present themselves. Some may have it suggested to them to hide it, cover it up, keep on professing without repenting of it, to others it may be suggested that all is lost, to hope is useless, and the best thing to do is to give up and drop out of the Lord's army. Young convert, if you should fail, do neither one. Satan suggested both of these methods, for in either case he will have a strangle-hold upon your soul.

Discouragement only hinders when a failure is made. Nothing is gained by spending several days in dark discouragement. One may feel that to chastise oneself for the failure for several days, and to feel very miserable for a long time, is the right way to get back to God. And after some time of this, then the soul goes to God for pardon. The idea underneath this is that God will not pardon at once for Christ's sake, but might pardon us if we will feel very bad a sufficient time to reconcile God into a forgiving mood. This idea is wrong and leads into vexatious delays in returning to God, and such a course is full of danger. Some wait to seek pardon till some future public service is held, a week or a month hence, and in the meantime the enemy works hard to prevent the soul from ever starting again.

What shall you do if you sin? First, do not become discouraged, for it does no good, and second, do not cover the sin, "for he that covereth his sins shall not prosper." But do as Peter did, go and weep bitterly; or as David did when he sinned; "I acknowledge my transgressions," cried David. "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned ... Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean ... Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation" (Psalm 51:1-13).

Drag your sin out into the light of God. It is not necessary to tell man of it, unless man is affected by it, but tell God of it. And in the face of that sin renounce it, condemn it, abhor it, slay it as Israel did Achan, and take a stand against it. Then ask God to pardon it. Make a full, clean breast of the matter and a good, open confession of it to all concerned, and God will pardon you and restore the joy of salvation.

Will the Lord forgive as soon as we ask Him? Yes! A little girl one time expressed herself on this point in this way. She asked if God would forgive as soon as we asked, and she was told that He would. "Just as soon?" she questioned doubtfully. "Yes," replied the teacher, "the very minute we ask, He forgives." "Well," she said, "I cannot believe that. I should think He would make us feel sorry for two or three days first. And then I should think He would make us ask Him a great many times, and in a very pretty way, too, not just in common talk. And I believe that is the way He does, and you need not try to make me think He forgives me right at once, no matter what the Bible says."

There are many who act just as this little girl said she believed. They forget that God is just as eager to forgive this one sin as He was to forgive all their sins when they were converted. His love reaches out with the same abounding mercy as at the beginning.

Sins are grievous; but once committed there is only one thing to do. "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (I John 2:1). †



Dear Young People,

In Jeremiah 18:3, 4, we read, "Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it."

We can trust our lives into the hands of the Master Potter. He knows what's best for us. We need to be willing to be molded and made into a vessel of honor. There are times we may even need to be broken in order to lose ourselves and be more like Him!

These thoughts bring this song to mind. It was written by Carroll McGruder.

Vessel of Honor

*A vessel of honor, I'm longing to be.
As clay to the potter, may I be to thee.
You may have to break down, resistance at times.
But Lord don't stop molding and shaping my life.*

*Shape me dear Father, please make me like you.
Mold me completely so I can be true.
If you have to break me, may I understand.
You're still loving and molding my life in your hands.*

*It would be such disservice, results would be nil
If clay rejects potter, and it seeks its own will.
It could only be cast out, to the old potters mill.
Please don't cast me out Master, put me back on your wheel.*

*If you have to break me, may I understand.
You're still loving and molding my life in your hands.*

May the following thoughts from Bro. Cameron Deville be a blessing to you.

Blessings,
Bro. Doug

WILLING TO BE BROKEN

Cameron Deville



LOT OF TIMES in life, we make mistakes. But we can learn from these mistakes if we are willing to be broken.

A couple years ago, Bro. Terry Deville brought a message in the 2022 Hagerstown convention on "Falling on the Stone." His main text of scripture was taken from Matthew 21:42-44. These scriptures explain how Christ is a Stone, which is the Head of the corner. But in verse 44 it says, "And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall,

it will grind him to powder." This means that when we are being chastised, if we reject the correction that God wants to give us, it pushes us away from Him. But when we've messed up and see our need, and we humble ourselves to fall on Christ, He lifts us up to a closer/higher place with Him.

Correction comes from love. Hebrews 12:7 says, "If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" God wants us to be happy, but until we allow ourselves to fall on that Stone, we just simply can't. The closer and closer we get to Christ, the happier we will be.

By falling on the Stone, we give our troubles to God. Sometimes we go through trials that can just seem to drain the life out of us, but God wants us to share our burdens and leave them with Him. Psalm 61:2 says, "From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I." Jesus is our best Friend, one that sticks closer than a brother. Let us learn more how to put our trust in Him and fall on the Stone.

He is the Potter; I am the clay. Sometimes when clay needs some fixing, a potter will break it and remold it. We need to be willing to be broken so that Christ can mold us more and more into His image.

Sis. Lauren Swain sings a song that talks about being molded. In the chorus it says, "Shape me dear Father, please make me like you. Mold me completely, so I can be true. If you have to break me, may I understand. You're still loving and molding my life in your hands."

The older I get, the more I realize I need Christ each moment of my life. And God is right there for us, but we must be willing to be broken. †

WATCH OUR WORSHIP SERVICES LIVE!

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

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

Way of Truth Internet Radio

An Exclusive Christ

By the late D. S. Warner

JESUS IS the sovereign, universal King, and “only Potentate.” He only is the Christ of God; He is the Savior of men, neither is there salvation in any other. “Ask of me,” saith God in the covenant made with His Son in the untold ages of the past—“Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen [Gentile nations] for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession” (Psalm 2:8). Not only is He Lord over all the earth, but “when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him” (Hebrews 1:6). Jesus is the King eternal over all heaven and earth; yea, throughout the vast universe. His kingdom therefore is an exclusive kingdom. It leaves no place for any other. It is the stone that breaks all other powers to pieces, and fills the whole earth. His church is likewise exclusive; it does not “live and let live” other institutions called churches. The word of truth acknowledges no other church but the one divine fold founded by the Savior. He who discerns the sacred body of Christ is bound to discard everything else; and he who acknowledges the confused multitudes of men’s creeds and party organisms, as churches, has never “discerned the body of Christ,” which is the church (Ephesians 1:22, 23; Colossians 1:18, 24).



The Spirit of God of the Bible is an exclusive Spirit. It repels and rejects every other spirit. God’s children have been “baptized by one Spirit into one body, and have been all made to drink into one Spirit” (I Corinthians 12:13). This all-searching and eternal Spirit in the hearts of the redeemed of the Lord takes cognizance of what kind of spirits dwell in the hearts and bodies of others who claim to be the worshipers of God. If of opposite character, there is no fellowship. If all are in possession of the pure and gentle Spirit and nature of God, the blessed elements of heaven, their hearts flow joyfully together; and this is fellowship, pure, heavenly, and the source of much happiness. Thus the Spirit of God endorses Himself, and excludes all else.

The religion of Jesus Christ is exclusive in its nature. It compromises with no other. It justly assumes to be the only true religion, and announces all others as of the devil. This very characteristic has chiefly elicited the persecutions that have befallen Christ and His church in all ages. Had Christ been willing to fuse with Jewry, and endorse alongside of His own laws and traditions of the Jews, they would not have crucified Him. Had the apostles grafted the new faith upon the Old Testament code that was ready to die and vanish away, then, says Paul, would the “offense of the cross have ceased.”

At one time under the great persecution inflicted upon the saints of God by pagan Rome, the pagans offered to spare the lives of the Christians, and give them their religious liberty if they would but acknowledge their gods and their religion as being genuine. But this they could not do even to save their lives. Nay; only the system of divine worship that Christ founded is of God. It alone is the truth, and every other is a lie and a fraud. As it was then, so it is now: to confess any religion and creed but the New Testament, is to deny Christ. To confess that there is any church but the one Jesus built, is to make God a liar. To be honest in the sight of God, and to stand upon the offensive foundation of the exclusive Christ and His exclusive church, kingdom, and religion, is what stirs hell today, and calls out what little persecution saints have to endure in these last days, which, however, may yet assume degrees of severity that will deserve the name of persecution. Oh, praise God! My soul says, Let it come as the providence of God shall permit, and He will overrule it to His glory, to the more perfect purging of His sanctuary, and to the spiritual improvement of His remnant.

The sects would have no objection to our accepting the Bible name, Saints, if we would confess that they, in all their pride, tobacco filth, and abominable worldly conformity, are saints also. They would not care if we do use the title given by the mouth of the Lord, viz., “the church of the living God,” if we would only confess that all the sects are likewise churches of God—sister churches. But this would be confessing a falsehood. The Lord owns no sisterhood of sects, but ascribes to “mystery Babylon” Rome, and a family of harlot daughters. The Bible gives no place for a plurality of brotherhoods in Christ. “But one is your Father, and all ye are brethren;” “one family in heaven and earth” (Ephesians 3:15). “For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another” (Romans 12:4, 5). Only “one body in Christ.” As we discern that body, and know that God has inducted us into the same, it would be dishonesty in the sight of God, and a base, cowardly compromise to please men, to admit that several hundred other bodies are also in Christ. Yea, it would be making God a liar, since His Word says there is one body in Christ, and only one.

God has raised up a people who fully discern the body of Christ. They have taken their stand upon the platform of “all truth,” as it is in Christ Jesus. By the process of salvation they have been taken into the one fold of Christ (John 10:9). Jesus Himself added them to His own body, the church (Acts 2:47). They teach and accept no other condition of membership in the church, than these conditions found in the Word of God. And by a life of perfect obedience to the divine will, of faith toward, and holiness unto the Lord, they have this witness that they please God, and are abiding in the one and only Church of God, which is the body of Christ, and which includes all the saved in heaven and earth. They, with perfect consistency and loyalty to God, resist every other spirit but that which they have received of God; reject every other so-called church but that which Christ built upon the rock; and say to all honest disciples of Christ who have been falsely taught, and taken

by men into men's churches, "Come out of her," "Come out from among them." And though this is the point of offense and persecutions, by the grace of God we will not compromise the truth to save our lives.

All sects are associated together on a plane of sisterly non-exclusiveness. They dare not teach "one God," "one body," "one Lord," one Spirit," "one way;" because no one of them dare set up the claim of having and being in that one God, Lord, body, Spirit, and way. None of them hold a divine charter for their existence, hence no one challenges the right and title of another. In other words, all are without foundation in the Word of God; therefore they agree not to question each other's foundation. All have a glass house, hence must not throw stones at one another. But we repeat again, God has raised up a people who believe the Word of God, and act accordingly. Christ has but "one fold," one church, and knowing we are saved into this one fold, to be consistent before God, and act out His Word, we must ignore every other so-called fold or church.

With a view of destroying the work of God, the enemies of Ezra and Nehemiah proposed to join with them in building the temple and the wall. But they answered them, "The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build: but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem" (Nehemiah 2:20).

They were then an exclusive people unto the Lord, and their reformation at Jerusalem was a grand type of the present reformation, in which God is restoring a pure church, the bride, the Lamb's wife. "As the Lord liveth, what the Lord saith, that will I say." It would be bigotry for one sect to say, "We are the church, and all the rest are frauds." But for God's true saints, who follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, and belong to Him, and adhere only in "his body, which is the church," and which includes all saved men in heaven and earth, in or out of sect folds—for such to talk of other churches, would be inconsistent and God-dishonoring; yea, confusion. Therefore, be sure you are right, then go ahead, in holiness of heart and life, and let earth and hell rage. "Noah condemned the whole world." One man mounted on eternal truth can safely defy all the devotees of human creeds and systems on earth. There is "one God." Amen. Then all others are idols. "One body." Amen. Then all sect bodies are excluded. "One Spirit." Then all spirits not in fellowship with the pure in heart, are not of God. "One Christ," and all others are anti-Christ. Here we stand in defiance of hell and earth. Amen. †

—Reprinted from June 1976 issue

SUNDAY SCHOOL LITERATURE

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

THE STEPS OF THE RIGHTEOUS

THE BAPTISM OF CORNELIUS BY THE SPIRIT

Scriptures: Acts 10:1-6, 42-48.

Acts 10:1 There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band,

2 A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.

3 He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius.

4 And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God.

5 And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter:

6 He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do.

42 And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead.

43 To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.

44 While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.

45 And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.

46 For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter,

47 Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?

48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

Memory Verse: Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.

—Acts 10:34, 35.

Aim: To further impress the student with the true Bible teaching of Holy Ghost baptism.

INTRODUCTION

GOD HAD SOUGHT to keep His people under the law age separate from all other people and had commanded them not to associate with them, making it a very serious offense if they should intermarry, as Solomon did. Many years of this kind of instruction raised a barrier between the Jews and the Gentiles, the Jews considering themselves above the Gentiles. However, it was the plan of God in the gospel age to bring all people under the power, influence, and blessing of the gospel. Peter was the man whom God had chosen to carry the first message to the Gentiles; but Peter, being a Jew, considered it improper to go unto the Gentiles, so it was necessary for God to give some unusual manifestation to convince Peter of His intentions. Therefore, Peter was given the vision on the

housetop of the animals let down in a sheet from heaven, and he, being hungry, was commanded to slay and eat. From this he learned that all men were precious in the sight of God and none should be called common. The test of fellowship was their devotion to the law and will of God. So it is today that in all nations any man who will do the will of God is acceptable with Him.

MEDITATIONS

A MAN OF RESPONSIBILITY—Acts 10:1—A centurion—“Centurion” denotes that Cornelius had under his jurisdiction one hundred soldiers, so he had to be a man of some ability. But if there is anyone who needs the gospel, it is the man or woman who has responsibility. God has instructed us to pray for the rulers of our land, promising us if we do that, we shall live in peace; therefore, we see that our peace and prosperity to a great extent is controlled by those we have elected to fill public office.

A DEVOUT MAN—Acts 10:2—One that feared God ... gave much—The description of Cornelius makes it plain to any honest student that Cornelius was a saved man. His influence had been a power in changing the lives of all his house. Also, generosity toward those who were in need was a very good indication that Christ was in the heart. **Verse 3—Saw in a vision**—It is evident that Cornelius, having known the joy of sins forgiven, sought a deep walk with God, and in his efforts to obtain it, he actually prayed down an angel from heaven. **Verse 4—Prayers and thine alms are come up**—In John 9:31 we read that God doesn't hear sinners, but if any man be a worshiper of God and do His will, God will hear him. This was the state of Cornelius, for God heard him and answered his prayer. Cornelius was fearful here, but this is not uncommon. Heavenly beings vested with mighty power and about whom we know so little cause great concern to weak humanity.

MEN, NOT ANGELS, ARE THE GOSPEL MESSENGERS—Acts 10:5—Send men to Joppa—Peter had been through the experience of Pentecost and knew what it took to complete the experience of man with God. He would be well able to give the instruction that Cornelius needed. Peter was an ignorant and unlearned man in worldly affairs; nevertheless, he had what it took to meet the spiritual requirements of God. **Verse 6—He lodgeth with one Simon**—Simon was a tanner. In this kind of work the odor is offensive, so he was required to locate his business away from the public, along the seashore. It seems that this would have been a stumblingblock to the men who called for Peter. The world would say, “Why should such powers be entrusted to a man who associated with one who was so little esteemed?” But God looks not on the outward appearance, but on the heart.

A SOLEMN THOUGHT—Acts 10:42—Judge of quick and dead—There is great need that we impress deeply upon the hearts of men that the life we have lived in this world must be faced again. We read in Matthew 12:36, 37 that we shall give account at the judgment of every idle word that we have spoken, for by our words we shall be justified, and by our words

we shall be condemned. The “quick” are they who are born again of the Spirit; they shall give account of their deeds, which will be easy. The “dead” are those who are lost in sin; they must give an account of their deeds, which will be difficult.

AGRACIOUS PROMISE—Acts 10:43—Receive remission of sins—We cannot help the past, but we can make sure of the future. In the name of Jesus, all sins are wiped out if we believe on Him. Christ was the One who the prophets spoke as the hope of mankind.

THE COMING OF THE SPIRIT—Acts 10:44—The Holy Ghost fell—The household of Cornelius were gathered together and were deeply sincere to obey whatever they should hear from the mouth of God's servant Peter. They were promising prospects for the truth of the Word of God. Their eagerness to believe made it easy for the Spirit to come. Some seem to think it necessary to tarry a long time and to struggle a great deal in order to receive the Spirit of God, but this is not true. God is more willing to give us His Spirit than we are to receive Him, but He will not come into our lives until we have completely surrendered the whole of our being unto Him. He must have absolute control of our lives if He is to abide with us.

THE GIFT OF THE SPIRIT IS FOR ALL BELIEVERS—Acts 10:45—Were astonished—The Jews were of the opinion that the blessings of the gospel were for the Jews only. It is evident that they did not understand the promise of God to Abraham when He said that in Abraham all the nations of the earth should be blessed. With God there is no respect of persons. Any man anywhere who will do the will of God shall have the blessings of God.

ASUPERNATURAL DEMONSTRATION—Acts 10:46—Heard them speak with tongues—Tongues is one of the gifts of the Spirit but is not the gift of the Spirit. The gift of the Spirit is the Spirit Himself. The true gift of tongues is the power granted by the Spirit of God to an individual to speak a language that he has never learned in the natural way. Because a person can speak in tongues is no indication that he has the Spirit of God, for it is possible for the devil to give a false gift of tongues. The very worst of sinners may have power from Satan to speak in a language that he has never learned. In this last day it is necessary that we be very careful of what we believe and with whom we associate, for the devil is transformed as an angel of light and is deceiving many.

WATER BAPTISM ESSENTIAL ALSO—Acts 10:47—Forbid water—Water baptism has no power within itself to cleanse the soul from sin. It is symbolical of a work that has already been wrought in the heart; and since God has commanded it, the believers will gladly obey. In this instance, water baptism followed Holy Ghost baptism, which proves beyond doubt that such procedure is acceptable with God. The apostle Paul was also baptized with the Holy Ghost previous to water baptism. **Verse 48—Tarry certain days**—They were desirous of knowing more about the new experience that they had just received, so they besought Peter that he would stay awhile with them. Some resort to the practice of baptizing in the name of Jesus only because

of the statement of Peter here, but such is contrary to the last commission of the Lord Jesus when He declared that His followers should baptize “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.”

CONCLUSION

This was an unusual occasion, as was the first baptism of the Spirit on Pentecost. The first occasion inaugurated the incoming of the gospel dispensation, and the baptism of the house of Cornelius marked the advent of the Gentile people into the grace of God. Up to the time of the baptism of Cornelius, there had been no demonstrations as had happened at Pentecost, for Peter said in Acts 11, when telling of the baptism of Cornelius, that God poured out the Spirit upon Cornelius as He did upon them at the beginning (Acts 11:15). It is the purpose of God to give every believer the gift of the Spirit, but it is not His purpose to make all people act alike when they receive the Spirit. Our emotional make-up has much to do with the way we act when we are baptized with the Spirit. When the Spirit comes into our hearts, He bears witness with our spirit that we are God’s children.

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

1. Give the reasons why we know that Cornelius was a saved man before he received the baptism of the Spirit.
2. Why was it necessary for Cornelius to send for Peter to find out what he wanted to know?
3. What was it that yet remained for Cornelius and his house to do?
4. What is the difference between the gifts of the Holy Ghost and the gift of the Holy Ghost?
5. Are tongues an evidence of Holy Ghost baptism?
6. Why should all believers be baptized with the Holy Ghost? †

THE CHILDREN'S CORNER



THINK ABOUT IT

Bible Lesson by Rebecca Bland

“How do you like your new house?” asked my cousin, *Sharon.

“I love it!” I said enthusiastically. “It has so many rooms you could get lost in it!” Although the big stone farmhouse to which we had just moved was more than 100 years old, it was new to us. Ever since I could remember, our family had lived in a tiny house at the top of a steep hill. Now we had a seemingly endless playground of rooms, staircases, and hallways.

“Show your cousin the house,” my mother said to me. Mom and her sister, my aunt, were sitting in the living room, catching up on family happenings. I was

only too happy to lead the way through the house, my cousin and my sisters in tow. Since all of the other girls were younger in age, I relished the importance of my role as guide.

We traveled through the house, peeking into every room. “This is the junk room,” I said when we reached a tiny room on the second floor.

“Why do you call it the ‘junk room’?” asked Sharon.

“Because it still has stuff in it from the people who used to live here,” I told her. “We haven’t cleaned it out yet.”

“Can we look through the stuff?” Sharon wanted to know.

“Yes,” I told her. “Mom doesn’t care what we do with the things in here as long as we don’t make a mess.”

“Maybe there is a treasure in those piles,” said my sister, Wilma.

“Maybe,” I agreed. “That would be exciting!”

We had been searching through the piles of junk for only a few minutes when my sister, Twila, gave a cry of delight. “Look what I found!” she called out. She held in her hands a long, slim bundle, tightly wrapped and tied with string.

“What is it?” asked Sharon.

All of the girls looked at me. Since I was the eldest, they thought I should know what the mysterious package held.

I untied the bundle and carefully unrolled it. “A kite!” I exclaimed.

“A kite!” repeated Twila. “Will it fly?”

“I don’t know,” I said. I had no experience flying kites. We had watched my father fly a kite once or twice at our old home, but we had never flown one, ourselves.

“I know you have to tie it to a ball of string and run with it,” I told the girls. “And it’s supposed to have a tail.” I thought for a moment, and then went on. “But maybe it will fly without one. We can try and see.”

“Where will we get the string?” asked Sharon.

“Mom probably knows where some is,” I told her.

We trooped down the stairs and into the living room where my mother and my aunt were visiting. They stopped their conversation long enough for my mother to find us some string and help us tie it onto the kite.

“Where are you going to fly your kite?” my mother wanted to know.

“Out in the backyard,” we told her.

“Well, watch you don’t get it stuck up in the tree,” said my aunt.

We ran out the door, across the back porch steps, and into the yard. “Here!” I said, handing the kite to Twila. “You hold it until I tell you to let go.”

I let out enough string to put 15 or 20 feet between Twila and me. “Let go!” I called as I began to run. I looked behind me and saw the kite rise into the air. It didn’t get very high, but it was enough to excite me. I hollered and I screamed. My sisters and cousin joined in until the backyard rang with our yelling.

My mother and my aunt came running out of the house. I held up the kite in triumph and opened my

mouth to tell them we had actually gotten it off the ground for a few moments. But my mother reached me and grabbed me by the shoulder before I could say a word. My aunt was right behind her. Their faces were filled with dread and fear.

“What’s wrong?” cried my mother. “Who got hurt?”

“Nobody got hurt!” I said. “The kite went up in the air!”

“Well, of all things!” said my aunt, breathing a sigh of relief. “The way you were yelling, we thought someone was half killed!”

“I never want to hear that kind of screaming again unless you need help,” said my mother. She and my aunt shook their heads and turned to go back into the house.

My sisters and my cousin and I looked at each other sheepishly. We had not been thinking of anything but our excitement. We had not even considered that my mother and aunt might be alarmed by our yelling.

Children, you are often told by your parents and other adults to think before you act. That is because every action brings with it a consequence. If we think first, we may be able to avoid actions that will bring unwanted consequences to ourselves and others.

A person who thinks before acting is known as a “prudent” person. The Bible has good things to say about those who are “prudent.”

Our wise saying this month comes from Proverbs 13:16, which says, *Every prudent man dealeth with knowledge: but a fool layeth open his folly.* It takes knowledge and wisdom to be prudent. A foolish person acts first, and then has plenty of time to be ashamed of his “folly” or foolishness. Sadly, the consequences of foolish actions are laid open for everyone to see.

God is pleased with those who have the desire to make right decisions, and He has promised to help them. If we ask Him each morning to guide our steps and help us think before we act, He is sure to answer that prayer.

*NOTE: Name changed to protect privacy.

Activity

There are 12 verses in the book of Proverbs that mention the word “prudent.” See how many of them you can find, and write down your favorite one. Share it with a family member or friend. Be ready to explain that a “prudent” person is one who is careful to think before acting.

Answer to Last Month’s Activity

Nebuchadnezzar, the king of **Babylon**, made an image of **gold**. 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 **bow** down to the image when they heard the sound of **music**. Three Hebrew children named **Shadrach**, **Meshach**, and **Abednego** refused to **bow** down and **worship** the image. Nebuchadnezzar told them they must obey, or he would cast them into a **fiery furnace**. The three **Hebrew** children told the king they would never **worship** the golden **image**. The king was so **angry** he commanded the furnace to be made **seven** times hotter,

and he told his **soldiers** to throw the three **Hebrew** children into the flames.

But the three Hebrew **children** were not alone in the **furnace**. When the king looked in, he saw **four** people walking around in the **fire**, and the fourth person looked like the **Son of God**. The king called the three Hebrew children out of the **furnace**. The only thing that had burned were the **ropes** that had bound them. There was not even a **smell** of fire on the young men. The king was **amazed**! He made a new law that said everyone must **worship** the God of **Shadrach**, **Meshach**, and **Abednego**. †

Voices from the past ...

“THE LAST DAYS”

W. G. Schnell

THE WORDS selected for the heading are often employed by writers both of the Old and the New Testament to designate the present dispensation. We desire to call the special attention of the reader to all the texts in which it is thus applied, and to prove by the contexts that the inspired authors spoke of the current dispensation.

Jacob is the first of the Old Testament saints to employ this expression. Upon his deathbed he called his sons around him, saying, “Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the *last days*.”—Genesis 49:1.

The burden of his prophecy is that which he uttered concerning Judah: “Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise: thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy father’s children shall bow down before thee. Judah is a lion’s whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up? The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.”—Verses 8-10.

The main feature of the above prophecy is the coming of Shiloh (rest-giver), a term used to signify the Savior; and the adoration of Judah, which in the Christian dispensation is fulfilled in the worshipping of Jesus of Nazareth, who sprang from the tribe that descended from Him.

He also predicted a continuous line of rulers in the seed of Judah, which was fulfilled from David to Christ. Justin Martyr, a writer of the second century, tells us that Herod was the first foreign prince who swayed the scepter in Judah, and it was during his reign that our Savior was born. “Dialogue with Trypho,” Chap. LII.

Jacob doubtless uttered this prophecy only to give a sign unto the chosen nation that when they should see a foreign ruler seize the scepter they should know that the time had arrived for the Christ to make His appearance. So it seems that every feature of Jacob’s prophecy pointed to the coming of Christ and what should take place in the Christian era. Yet he said he was telling them “that which should befall them in the last days.”

Isaiah is the next to use the expression, “last days.” He says: “And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the LORD.”

Here we have a sublime description of the ushering in of the Christian dispensation, and the present peaceful reign of the Messiah in the hearts of the redeemed. The new covenant has actually been given at Mount Zion, and the word of the Lord is going forth, which began at Jerusalem. Luke 24:47. But all this the prophet said was to come to pass in the last days. So it is very evident that he also denominates the Christian era “the last days.”

Next we come to the prophecies of Micah, who was the last of the Old Testament prophets to use the expression, “last days.” He says: “But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.”—Micah 4:1, 2.

The prophecy is so very similar to the one we quoted from Isaiah that we deem it unnecessary to quote further. Like Isaiah he speaks of the law going forth out of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem, in the last days; which we have already shown to have met its fulfillment in the introduction of Christianity. Therefore we rank him among the inspired writers who denominate the Christian era “the last days.”

New Testament writers also call the Christian dispensation “the last days.” Paul says, “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.”—II Timothy 3:1-5.

Surely the spiritual-minded can see in the above a prophecy of the great apostasy. But were there not such characters as Paul here describes upon the earth in his day? Yes, but the mere existence of such wicked elements as are here described upon the earth cannot imperil Christianity so long as it does not become contaminated; and such was not the peril predicted by

Paul. The burden of his prophecy was that these wicked characters should cloak themselves with a profession of Christianity. This even his own words in verse five clearly show: “Having a form of godliness, but denying the power.” This, to our sorrow, we see strikingly fulfilled on every hand today. But mark the fact that all this was to take place in “the last days.” Shall we not therefore, add this to our list of testimonies that the Christian era is “the last days”?

But Paul speaks more clearly in another place. “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.”—Hebrews 1:1, 2.

This statement is so clear that it would be difficult to misunderstand it. Whatever the signification, it is evident that “these last days,” in the text just quoted, applies to the present dispensation.

We will here make room for Peter’s testimony. “Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts.”—II Peter 3:3.

Here we have another application of the term “last days” to the Christian dispensation. If any of the Millennial teachers are desirous of stretching this prophecy to a future age, they refute their theory of universal righteousness, for Peter is speaking of the present age, and we add his testimony to our list of scriptural evidences that the present dispensation is “the last days.”

We have now proved our point by six clear scriptural proofs. It is evident that the texts we have quoted from the Old Testament are not applicable to the latter part of the old dispensation, because as we have shown they belong to predictions of events that have met their fulfillment in the new dispensation. It is also very evident that Paul in Hebrews 1:1, 2 was not speaking of the latter end of the present dispensation: because he affirms it as an event already completed—“God hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.” With these facts before us we can but conclude that the inspired writers called the Christian era as a whole, “the last days”; and I know of no sensible interpretation of their words except that in the dispensation in which we now live is the last age of time. Why then do men, in opposition to these clear statements in God’s Word, look for an “age to come”? †

CHEER UP

“Cheerfulness keeps up a kind of daylight in the mind, filling it with a steady and perpetual serenity. An inward cheerfulness is an implicit praise and thanksgiving to Providence under all dispensations. It is a kind of acquiescence in the state wherein we are placed, and a secret approbation of the Divine Will in His conduct towards man.”—Joseph Addison

“One of the highest of human duties is the duty of encouragement. It is easy to pour cold water on their enthusiasm; it is easy to discourage others. The world is full of discouragers. We have a Christian duty to encourage one another. Many a time a word of praise or thanks or appreciation or cheer has kept a man on his feet.”

—Barclay’s Commentary, Hebrews

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

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

CHURCH OF GOD REVIVALS

SANDY BAY, ROATAN ISLAND, HONDURAS

September 17-22, 2024, Lord willing

Bro. Paul Wilson, Evangelist

Sis. Siggie James, Pastor

HAGERSTOWN, MARYLAND

October 4-6, 2024, Lord willing

Bro. David Shaw, Evangelist

Bro. Greg Tyler, Pastor

ESSEX, MARYLAND

October 18-20, 2024, Lord willing

Bro. Matthew Deville, Evangelist

Bro. Doug Koerner, Pastor

PHILIPPINE CONVENTION

Paniqui, Tarlac, Luzon

December 26-30, 2024, Lord willing

Bro. Rey Fabian, Host Pastor

**Please pray for the success of
these meetings.**

RADIO LOG

The Way of Truth Broadcast

Alvin A. Craig, Radio Minister

(Aired on Sundays unless otherwise noted.)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Listen live—Go to www.kfxi.com

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

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

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

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

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

SHORTWAVE

WWCR, Nashville, Tennessee 4.840 on SW band

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

Listen live—Go to www.wwcr.com

WINB, Red Lion, Pennsylvania 9.320 on SW band

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

Listen live—Go to www.winb.com

INTERNATIONAL

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

Heard throughout Jamaica

THE BIBLE STANDARD BROADCAST

Church of God (Universal)

James Arch,

Pastor

Radio Cayman 1:30 P.M. Sun. E.S.T. Grand Cayman

TUNE IN AND LISTEN