

The Way of Truth

Vol. 83

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

No. 2

*“Keeping Yourself in
the Love of God”*

Message begins on page 15

February 2025

AM I A SOLDIER OF THE CROSS?

“Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.”—II Timothy 2:3,4.



CHRISTIAN IS described in the Bible in various ways to depict his responsibilities and reveal his nature. One such description is that of a soldier. The Scriptures speak of a militant atmosphere which sets the stage for a fierce conflict—right versus wrong, good versus evil, holiness versus sin, God versus the devil, heaven versus hell, the Church of God versus all the forces of evil. Every person on Earth is engaged in this battle on one side or the other. The Lord has called us to be a soldier in His army, but many refuse. To be a true Christian is to be a soldier in His army.

The battlefield for this conflict is for the souls of men, for the affections of men, for the worship of men (as revealed in the temptation of Jesus in Luke, chapter 4), in the decisions of men—either we will overcome evil or be overcome by it. This is the true Battle of Armageddon.

On one side is Satan and his wicked throng using all kinds of deception to separate men from God, break up homes and destroy families. The spirit of the world sets itself to destroy the human race through immorality and lust. Satan works through false religion, endeavoring to destroy God’s church by dividing and conquering. His goal is to damn every soul in hell and perdition. He does this through temptation, lust, imaginations, accusations, and discouragement.

On the other side of this conflict is the Lord God Almighty. His nature is true, righteous, faithful, compassionate, merciful, longsuffering, loving and kind. He gives every good thing in life. He blesses and He helps. He gave His Son to die that every man could enjoy the abundant life that Christ offers.

God’s aim is to save whosoever will respond to His call, for He is not willing that any should perish. His army fights to make man happy by delivering him from sin. John 10:10 says, “The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.” So then every Christian should consider himself a soldier in this great warfare.

To drive this thought home in this editorial, I would like to comment on the lyrics of the old hymn by Isaac Watts, “Am I a Soldier of the Cross?” I find this song a challenge to anyone professing Jesus as Lord.

Am I a soldier of the cross? This is a question that drives me to my knees! When I consider *Fox’s Book of Martyrs* and the vivid accounts of those who gave up their lives for the cause of Christ, and suffered torment for His dear name, I am humbled and ashamed at how little I have suffered for my Lord. When I hear of brethren today in Pakistan, and other places, who have given the ultimate sacrifice for simply professing Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Savior of the world, I realize how unworthy I am to speak His name!

I received the following text this past November: “Please remember Pastor Sheraz’s family in Pakistan. He and his wife and children were attacked by Muslims last week, landing Bro. Sheraz in ICU. Unfortunately, he succumbed to his injuries a couple of days ago. His wife remains faithful. Bro. Riaz requests our prayers for them all.” This is not the only example.

Am I a follow’r of the Lamb?—Not just a professor, but a follower of the Lamb of God. Revelation 14:1-4 says, “And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father’s name written in their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.”

Shall I fear to own His cause? This is the greatest cause on the face of the earth! Remember what David declared when confronted by Goliath, “Is there not a cause?”

Or blush to speak His name? Dare we as Christians be ashamed of Him or His cause? Mark 8:38, “Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.” Will we dare to ask ourselves the question, “Will He be ashamed of me?”

Next question: **Must I be carried to the skies on flow’ry beds of ease?** The prophet Amos warned, “Woe to them that are at ease in Zion ...” So many are easily offended when the Scriptures ask them to do something difficult. Living the Christian life can be difficult at times. But it will be worth it all when we see Jesus.

While others fought to win the prize. The apostle said in I Corinthians 9:24, “Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.” It takes some pressing! Philippians 3:14, “I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

And sailed through bloody seas? The apostles (except John) came to a bloody end—Paul was beheaded—Stephen was put to death by stoning—Another Pakistani pastor, Bro. Ibrahim, was slain for his faith.

Reading from Hebrews 11, “And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of

ABOUT THE COVER

On our cover this month is a picture of beautiful Moraine Lake in Banff National Park in Canada. It is a snow and glacially fed lake which produces a unique color. It is situated in the Valley of the Ten Peaks.

THE WAY OF TRUTH

(Registered Trademark)

Vol. 83

February 2025

No. 2

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

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.

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lions, Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.” How do we compare with these as soldiers for Christ?

Are there no foes for me to face? God has called us to be soldiers in His army, and we are to fight! “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”—Ephesians 6:12.

Must I not stem the flood? Yes, I must offer my effort to resist the flood of sin that is trying to drown our generation. I Peter 5:8, 9 reads, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.”

Is this vile world a friend to grace to help me on to God? This old world is not interested in helping us to draw nigh to God. It wants to entangle us and hinder us. As our text warns us—“No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.”

Sure I must fight, if I would reign. I Timothy 6:12, “Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.”

“Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.”

Increase my courage, Lord. “Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest” (Joshua 1:7).

I’ll bear the toil, endure the pain. As another stirring hymn asks and answers: “Must Jesus bear the cross alone, And all the world go free? No, there’s a cross for everyone, And there’s a cross for me.”

Supported by thy Word. Paul proclaimed in Philippians 4:13, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” And he challenges us in I Corinthians 15:58, “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”

So from this one song our hearts are challenged to press the battle on, conquer the foe, and gain the prize which in heaven waits! †

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Jesus Christ, Our Source of Love

Radio Message by Bro. Greg Tyler

I WILL TRY to bring a short message to you concerning this thought: “Jesus Christ, Our Source of Love.” I want to refer you to St. John,

chapter 17, beginning with verse 17—“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.” I’ll read the latter part of verse 26 again: “... that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.”

I know our subject on this broadcast is “Jesus Christ, Our Source of Love,” but in passing, I would like to emphasize the need that we carry out the desire of Christ, and that desire is that we might be one, even as He and the Father are one.

The Bible teaches that all believers should be laboring together under the same banner of the Church of God. I have a burden, a concern that you might get a vision of God’s church. “I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one.” Let this sink down into your soul: the need for us to be one in the Spirit, one in teaching and doctrine, one message of the gospel for the world to believe. But our broadcast is about love, a deep subject, a wonderful subject. Not just love, but the fact that Jesus is our source of love. This 26th verse of St. John 17 has told us that it is Christ’s will that the love of God may be in us, His disciples, as He is in us.

Beloved, it is easy to have a profession of godliness, but the real test is, Do you love everyone? Love is of God, and if we don’t have love, we don’t have God. I’m not talking about just loving our friends and just loving those who love us. Jesus has said if that’s all we have, we’re no different than the publicans and the Pharisees, for they love their friends and hate their enemies. Jesus has told us to love our very enemies. The unregenerated

man cannot do this. It’s impossible. But if we have Christ living and reigning within us, then we have a source of love. We have a source of love that will enable us to love even those who spitefully use us, those who persecute us, those who talk about us, and those who do us harm. We’re able to love them; not love their deeds, but love their souls, and be concerned about them. “Vengeance is mine,” the Lord said, “I will repay.” It is not ours to take vengeance on anyone. It is ours to pray for those who spitefully use us. But we need to be connected to the source of love before we can have true love.

St. John wrote in his first epistle, I John, chapter 4, these words: “Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”

Jesus Christ is love, and God is love. He sent Christ into the world to perish for us, not when we were His friends, but when we were His enemies. While we were yet in sin, Christ died for the ungodly. That is love! Christ is the very embodiment of love. If we have Christ, we have love.

Notice what John goes on to say in I John 4: “Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. We love him, because he first loved us.”

Verse 20 says this: “If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar [Those are strong words, aren’t they? The apostle John is called *the apostle of love*, and yet he used strong language.]: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?” Verse 21: “And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.”

Beloved, if we have Christ, we are connected to our source of love. He will enable us to love our brother. He will enable us to love our neighbor as ourselves. He will enable us to love our very enemies. This is true Christianity, this is living Christianity, this is practical Christianity—that we love our brother. If you have hatred or malice in your heart toward anyone, Beloved, you cannot make heaven your home, for hatred is sin. Jesus said, “Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer.” The penalty for murder is death, so we must keep our hearts clean from any malice or hatred toward

our fellow men. Let the love of God which is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost shine out to an ungodly world.

Do you love your neighbor as yourself? Do you love your enemies? If so, it is because you are connected to the source of love, which is Jesus Christ our Lord. If you have malice or hatred in your heart toward anyone, you need Christ. You need to be saved. You need to be redeemed. You need to have the love of God dwelling within your heart. So Jesus Christ is our source of love.

Wherever you are, ask Christ to come in and root out any evil in your heart, and let the love of God come in. Seek the face of almighty God. Find peace in your soul that love may abound and that God might have His way with you. †

WINNING A CROWN

By the late
C. W. Naylor



What is Man?

WE ARE surrounded by mysteries, and not the least of these is the mystery of our own being. “Whence did I come?” “Where am I going?” and—greatest mystery of all—“What am I?” are questions that have arisen again and again in the minds of many persons. If we try to solve the question, What am I? by our own understanding and reason, it remains but a question. There are within us the stirrings of strange emotions, a reaching out after things not seen, unutterable things that we cannot interpret. Is man only a material being? Is he a beast of the field? Was he created only to eat and drink and to enjoy material things? or is he something more and something higher, with relationships more profound and far-reaching than those of the mere material?

The Psalmist viewed this question and exclaimed: “What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet” (Psalm 8:4-6). To him, man was something more than an animal; he stood only a little lower than that celestial host that surrounds God’s throne. And man is something more, something higher, indeed, than those creatures which are his servants in this time world. When the Psalmist speaks of their death, he says, “Thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust” (Psalm 124:29). Of man it is said, “If he set his heart upon man, if he gather unto himself his spirit and his breath, ... man shall turn again unto dust” (Job 34:14, 15). Man is a trinity, possessing the spiritual, the mental, and the physical. He has a body like the animal, in its functions and desires. He has reason and intelligence, and, above and beyond all these, he has a moral nature. This he alone of all the inhabitants of earth possesses. And it is with this moral nature

that man is most concerned. His life in this world is of few days and full of trouble, and all the races of man look forward confidently to another and higher and better life when this life has come to an end.

Animals are creatures of instinct. They have implanted in them certain primary elements of knowledge or consciousness that guide them where their intelligence does not reach. And man also has instincts, higher than those of the beast, but no less significant. He feels intuitively that there is a power above him which is greater than his own power. It takes no argument to convince him of this, unless he has destroyed this primary intuition through the subtleties of his reasoning. He is also conscious that he is responsible to this higher power; that in some way he has some relation with that power that gives moral value to his actions; and that these actions are worthy of the praise of this higher power or else merit retribution as being evil. He instinctively places a moral value upon his conduct, and feels that somehow, somewhere he must give an account. He feels within him the stirrings of a life that is not merely animal life. He feels capabilities and powers which are undeveloped here and now, and to which he finds himself incapable of giving more than partial expression; and this consciousness speaks to him of a future life full of greatest possibilities.

All these instincts have a substantial basis of reality. The squirrel that has never seen a winter is led by instinct to hoard a store of nuts for the days to come. The bird that knows nothing of climate save the summer, wings its way in the autumn to a more genial climate, led by unerring instinct. The bird which has been reared in captivity in an artificial nest, if given its liberty will build a nest like those of its kind, though it has never been taught. These instincts do not mislead the unreasoning creatures. They are safe guides.

Man’s instinct is no less true, and if followed will guide him in the fundamentals of his life as it guides the lower creatures. Only man disregards these instincts. He defies his reason, and it leads him in devious paths. He sets it up as the guide of his life and bows down and worships it, but alas! how often it causes him to disregard that which the truest wisdom would lead him to value most highly! How many people live as though they were only animals! “Eat, drink, and be merry,” say they. They neglect that higher and better self. They silence the voice of conscience. They shut their ears to God. They close their eyes to their own knowledge. They live as though they were no better than the brute. They are concerned only with this world. They may recognize that there is a life beyond, but how little do they consider it!

Reader, you are more than a horse. There is in you that which is higher and better and nobler; and there is something better for you than to give your attention, your time, and your powers for this world alone. As you consider yourself higher than the beast, so should your life be higher than his. I beg of you, consider. How much higher is it? Are you living for eternity, or does your life-plan reach only to the satisfying of your own temporary and temporal desires?

The True Purpose of Life

The Bible tells us that God created man and clearly implies that all the rest of the material creation of earth

was for his benefit and for his use. But what purpose had God in creating man? Did God make him simply to gratify a desire to make something new? Is his existence the result of some mere whim? When God created him, did He expect to give him no further attention? The Bible tells us plainly that God had a distinct purpose, and that His creation was for God's own purpose, not simply that man might exist. Speaking of man, He says, "The work of my hands, that I may be glorified" (Isaiah 60:21). Again, He says, "For I have created him for my glory" (Isaiah 48:7).

That man was endowed with natural faculties that make it possible for him to know God and to communicate with Him, to understand His will, and to obey Him, and to find his highest pleasure in all these, shows that the purpose of man's life is something very exalted. It is possible for him to debase his powers, to put them to ignoble purposes, and to fail entirely of the true purpose of his life. He may develop his physical being and bring it to a high state of perfection, so that he is an athlete. He may be in perfect health. He may conform to the laws of his physical being and be worthy of the admiration of his fellows. He may develop his mind until he reaches out into the starry heavens and reads the secrets of the planets. He may delve into philosophy and into science until his mental faculties are enriched and highly developed. He may grapple with the great problems of life and solve them. He may fill the chair of some great university. Men may marvel at his learning. He may be eloquent until he can sway the multitudes. He may rise to eminence in the political world and be famous. Men may admire and respect and honor him, but the perfect body and the highly developed mind, or these two united, do not make a perfect man.

Sooner or later disease will seize upon that body. Sooner or later that mind will lose its brilliance and its power. The end is but the grave. What then? Shall we say that a man who has lived only for his body and for his mind has truly lived, has truly fulfilled the purpose of his creation? Not so. He has omitted from his life that which is highest and best. He has failed to develop that spiritual element which is his real self, that element which will live on forever. He has starved and neglected it, and it has withered away, overshadowed by the other parts of his being. If a man forgets his soul, if he makes no preparation for the life that is life indeed, there is no symmetry in his life. It is unbalanced and incomplete. No matter what his success in other lines, his life is a failure. No matter how much wealth he may amass, how much he may win, nor how much of anything of earth may be his, it must end with the word "failure," for he has not lived for God. He was created for God's glory, but how much has his life subserved that glory? Has he honored God? Has he served Him? Has he fitted himself for his society in the world to come? The man who fails to develop his mind and then is brought into the society of men of learning feels at once and feels most keenly how he has neglected himself and how hampered he is in his associations with them, how unfit he is to enjoy their society, and how little such society can really mean to him. So the man who neglects his spiritual life, when he shall have come

into the presence of God will find himself wholly unfit to mingle in the society of heaven. His soul-faculties will not be able to respond to the influences of that place. In fact, it would be torment to him to be there and constantly feel his unfitness.

There is but one true purpose in life. All other things are subsidiary to it. If we fill our life with trifles, with things that amount to nothing, shall we not reap the trifler's reward? God desires our services. He desires union with us. He desires to be honored and worshiped by us—not simply for some selfish interest; for when we give to Him that which belongs to Him, we do for ourselves that which is best and highest. And when we refuse to give Him that which belongs to Him and that which He has a right to expect of us, we are injuring ourselves and are placing barriers before our own souls. We are destroying our own selves.

Reader, what is the purpose of your life? What is your life amounting to? Are you spending it for God? Are you developing your soul, your spiritual faculties and powers? What will your life profit you if you are not? Shall you endure the things of this life, its cares, its sorrows, its heartaches, toil on till its end, only to have "Failure" written over it at the last? Be wise. God has given you intelligence. Use it for His glory. Neglect not your soul, that priceless treasure which must somewhere spend eternity, the eternity for which you are now preparing it. †

THE CHILDREN'S CORNER



"MIZE-WELL"

A Bible Lesson by Sis. Rebecca Bland

"Mommy, may we please play while we're waiting for the bus?" I asked.

"Mize-well," answered my mother. "Just be careful to stay out of the mud next to the road."

I was only seven years old, and not exactly sure about the word, "mize-well," but I figured it must mean "yes," since my mother's response sounded as though I could play as long as I stayed out of the mud.

I set my lunchbox and notebook on the ground, and tapped my five-year-old sister, Twila, on the shoulder. "You're it!" I cried. "You can't catch me!" Twila dropped her lunchbox and started after me. We played tag until the bus came, and soon I forgot all about the puzzling new word, "mize-well."

A few days later, however, I heard my mother use the word again. This time, she and my father were having a conversation.

"What would you think about making the garden a little bigger this year?" asked my father.

"Mize-well," said my mother. "It wouldn't hurt to dig up a little more of the yard. The girls would still have plenty of room to play."

“Ok, then,” said my father. “I’ll see what I can do about that.”

Why do adults say ‘mize-well’ instead of just saying ‘yes’? I wondered to myself. I thought about it for a while, and then decided that “mize-well” must be a higher-level vocabulary word than “yes.” After all, adults often used big words when smaller words would work just as well. They said “enormous” instead of “very big,” and they said “thrilled” instead of “happy.”

I liked trying out new, grown-up sounding words, and so I decided I would start using “mize-well” whenever the opportunity arose.

It wasn’t long before I had my chance. A few days later, my mother gave me a job to do. “Could you please go outside with me to hang up the clothes?” she asked. “You can hand me the clothes and the clothespins, and that will make the job go even faster.”

“Mize-well,” I said with a smile.

My mother looked sharply at me. “Mize-well?” she asked. “You’d better watch your attitude, little lady!”

“Mize-well,” I answered earnestly.

My mother set the laundry basket down and put her hands on her hips. She stared hard at me.

“Just what do you think ‘mize-well’ means?” she asked.

“I think it means ‘yes,’” I told her. “That’s what it seems like it means when I hear you say it.”

My mother sighed. “Well, in a way it does, and in a way it doesn’t,” she said.

“What do you mean?” I asked. I was confused.

“‘Mize-well’ isn’t a word,” my mother said. “When you heard me saying ‘mize-well,’ what I was really saying was ‘might as well.’ I guess it sounded like ‘mize-well’ to you because the three words ran together. That’s just how people usually say the phrase—‘mize-well.’”

“What does ‘might as well’ mean?” I asked.

“When you say ‘might as well,’” said my mother, “you are saying, ‘It makes no difference to me which choice I make. One is as good as the other.’”

I thought about it for a moment. “So when Daddy asked you if he should plow up some of the yard to make a garden, and you said, ‘might as well,’ you were saying that it didn’t really matter to you if the ground got plowed up or not.”

“Yes,” said my mother.

“And when I asked if we could play while we waited for the bus, and you said, ‘might as well,’ you meant that it didn’t matter to you whether we stood still and waited, or ran around and played while we waited.”

“Yes,” said my mother. “But when I asked if you would help me hang up the clothes, that was not a good time to say, ‘might as well.’ That was like saying it didn’t matter to you whether you obeyed me or not. It sounded disrespectful.”

“Is that why you told me to watch my attitude?” I asked.

“Yes,” said my mother. “I didn’t know you thought ‘mize-well’ only meant ‘yes.’”

From that day forward, I was careful with the way I used the phrase, “might as well.”

Our wise saying this month comes from Proverbs 4:13, which says, *Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go: keep her; for she is thy life.*

You, as children, learn many things each day. We adults had to learn when we were young, and we are still learning. No one in the world ever gets to the place where there is nothing new for them to learn.

Proverbs 4:13 tells us to take fast hold of instruction. “Instruction” is another word for “teaching.” We learn by being taught. My mother taught me to be careful in using new words or phrases before I understood what they meant. She gave me good instruction.

Once you have learned something good, you can teach others about it. That is especially true when it comes to the truths of God’s Word. The Bible is full of good instruction. We need to take fast hold of that instruction so that we can help ourselves and others.

Activity

The root of the word “instruction” is STRUCT, which means “build.” How does the word “instruction” relate to the idea of “building”? If you are not sure how to answer, you might ask an adult to give you some ideas. Then you can compare your ideas to the “Answers to Last Month’s Activity” in the next *Way of Truth* magazine.

Answers to Last Month’s Activity

1. “The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom; and before honour is **humility**” (Proverbs 15:33).
2. “By humility and the fear of the Lord are **riches, and honor, and life**” (Proverbs 22:4).
3. “Be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and **giveth grace to the humble**” (I Peter 5:5b).
4. “And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself **shall be exalted**” (Matthew 23:12).
5. “Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and **he shall lift you up**” (James 4:10). †

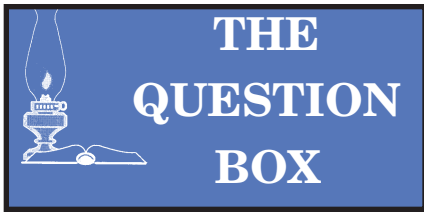
WATCH OUR WORSHIP SERVICES LIVE!

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.

STREAMING CHRISTIAN MUSIC ONLINE

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:

www.wayoftruth.org and clicking on: [Way of Truth Internet Radio](#)



**THE
QUESTION
BOX**

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



QUESTION: Do the seven parables coincide with Revelation's seven periods?

ANSWER: First of all, we do not believe Revelation teaches the "seven church ages" as some do. The idea of seven church ages is not new light, or "seventh seal light," as some would have us to believe. The idea of seven church ages has been taught for hundreds of years, and even today among those who teach it, they do not all agree as to the period of time for each age.

The seven seals do not teach seven ages, for the first two cover the same period of time. Such teachers use their own human reasoning and apply the seven letters or churches in Revelation 2 and 3 to seven periods of time.

There are truths in those letters that are good for any age. And, I would say the same of the seven parables you ask about. They do not coincide with seven periods of time. Some of the parables of the Master do indeed apply to a given period of time, but these seven you refer to in Matthew 13 are not to be understood as applying to the supposed "seven church ages"! Notice verse 51, "Jesus saith unto them, Have ye understood ALL THESE THINGS? They say unto him, Yes, Lord." They understood the parables, according to their own word, but I'm sure they knew nothing of "seven church ages."

QUESTION: Will you please explain the true meaning of Romans 8:28-30, for I have many answers upon these verses which are not the same. Some say that God has chosen some people, those who will be saved. As for me, what must I believe about these verses? There is confusion about these verses. Will you please settle it?

ANSWER: I doubt very much if I can "settle" this question for those who are set in their thinking, but we will try to give you an explanation of these verses.

I think verse 28 states a simple fact, but what is God's purpose? His purpose in sending Jesus Christ into the world was to die for the whole world. "Whosoever will may come." "Jesus tasted death for every man" (for all mankind).

I will quote R. R. Byrum's comments on verses 29 and 30, as he explains them so well:

"In interpreting this 29th verse it is to be read forward, and not backward, as the Calvinistic interpretation would require. No unconditional predestination is the ground of God's foreknowledge of particular persons to be saved. The predestination mentioned in this verse is because of the divine foreknowledge. "Foreknow" from (*proegno*) means simple knowing beforehand. It is to be clearly distinguished from 'predestinate,' as is done

in the text. To 'foreknow' what follows is clear. God foresaw that some would freely choose to love and serve him. Therefore he predetermined and made provisions accordingly that they should be 'conformed to the image of his Son' through regeneration by the Spirit. But it was not enough that he should foreknow that some persons would choose to love and obey him, nor yet that he should predetermine to save them. 'Them he also called' through the preaching of the gospel. These heeded the call of the gospel and consequently were 'justified' or pardoned. Lastly, those thus justified are 'glorified' with God's presence now and the blessedness of heaven hereafter. No support whatever is given to Calvinistic election by this text. It is only when one's mind is previously filled with the Calvinistic view that he can suppose that theory is supported by this text."
—*Christian Theology*.

QUESTION: Is healing in the atonement as is the forgiveness of sin?

ANSWER: Many preachers and religious teachers have expressed their thinking on this matter, and some take one position and some take another. I feel sure that when Jesus was whipped by the Roman soldier, He did lose some blood (though the Bible says it is by His "stripes" that we are healed, not by His blood). But really, what does it change? If it is in the atonement we are to call for the elders when we are sick (James 5:14, 15). If it is not we are still to call the elders when we are sick. I believe it is biblically correct to say that Jesus purchased our healing, just as He purchased our salvation.

One meaning of the word *atonement* is, "giving satisfaction for a wrong, loss or injury." So Jesus allowed His back to be lashed to restore us to health when we have suffered such a loss.

QUESTION: Will our fleshly body enter into the kingdom of God? I read the Bible and the Scriptures confirm that He [Jesus] will come with His angels to raise those who are asleep and call those who are alive for Judgment and the righteous will be sent into heaven. Please explain.

ANSWER: The Bible clearly states in I Corinthians 15:50 "that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God."

The soul, or spirit, in man is what must be born again. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6). It is this spiritual birth that puts you in the kingdom of God.

The flesh, after death, returns to the dust of the earth. However, there shall be a resurrection, as Paul brings out in this same chapter. I Corinthians 15:53, "This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality."

Those who think they are going to live here on this earth for a thousand years and continue to eat literal food, etc., simply do not accept the teachings of the Word. At the resurrection when the righteous receive a spiritual, glorified body, like unto Jesus Christ, we will go to be with Him eternally, and will not need any food to eat, no beds to sleep in, for He neither slumbers or sleeps. †

A PLACE PREPARED

2024 Hagerstown Convention Message by Bro. Matthew Deville



IF YOU HAVE your Bibles with you, I'd like for you to turn with me to Revelation, chapter 12, verse 6. Let me say here that the woman spoken of in this scripture is referring to the church. "And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days." I'd like to entitle my thoughts, "A Place Prepared."

We had the privilege of going to Oklahoma and visiting the saints there. We stayed at Bro. Alan and Sis. Rosalie Matthesen's house. Two of their children are here with us. In the room we were staying in, there was a door that went into a safe room that was specifically prepared if a tornado was coming. Now, when this room was built, I'm sure there were specifications for it to be built to withstand high, high winds. Other parts of the house were not built to these specifications. This room was a place prepared for safety and protection for this family to go into.

We live in Louisiana, and we have faced many hurricanes that have come our way. Let me tell you, that's unsettling to see those heavy, heavy winds coming in and beating upon the trees and seeing them swaying back and forth. When warnings are issued, most of us start preparing.

I remember years back when hurricane Katrina was forecast to come in. Warnings were going out of the devastation that could take place and how people needed to make preparations for this hurricane. Many did, but some people mocked, laughed, and prepared to have parties to enjoy themselves. People were told, "You need to leave. You need to go a place that is prepared to withstand the dangers that would be coming your way." But yet, some people thought, *Oh, we're fine. We'll make it. We've ridden out hurricanes before.* They even went as far as to tell people to take a permanent marker and write their social security numbers on their arm. That way if their bodies were found, they could identify who they were. That would scare me. That would awaken me, "Hold up, this is serious," and yet some people still did not heed the warning.

WARNING: PEOPLE NEED THE LORD

Dear Ones, there are warnings going out across the land that people need God, yet time and time again they do not heed the warnings. God has prepared something so beautiful, so wonderful, but yet people do not heed the warnings. We need to flee into the place that God has prepared. Jesus said to Peter, "I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." That's a safe place to be!

The room (shelter) that I spoke about earlier that they have at their house, it is not equipped for all kinds of natural disasters. It is specifically built to withstand those high winds, but other natural disasters that are not prevalent to that area, it is not built for. But the church that Jesus is building will withstand every trial,

every tribulation that the devil throws our way because it is founded on a sure foundation. It is built by Jesus Christ. I want to be in that shelter. I want to be in that place. That's a safe place to be, but yet time and time again people will not heed the warnings. Even after all the devastation that we have seen in our state, some people do not heed the warnings that go out for these hurricanes. Even though the evidence is right before them, and they have seen it with their own eyes, they won't heed the warnings.

FLEE TO SAFETY

Today, people see the effects of sin. They hear time and time again that they need to flee to the safety of salvation and into the church, yet they do not heed the warnings. This is a place "which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Wait, is it built upon Bro. Greg? Is it built upon Bro. Harley? I love you, Brothers, but if the church were built upon you, I wouldn't have confidence in it. It is only Jesus Christ who is able to be the Head of the church. No man is the head of the church. If a man is the head of the church, that is not a foundation that will stand. If we want to be in a safe place, we have to make sure that Christ is the Head of the church we're in. That's the church I want to be in. There are so many people today who think they're in the place that God has prepared, but they have been deceived. Am I wrong in saying this? Am I saying this to be mean? No, I'm saying it because I care. I'm saying it because the results of being deceived are devastating.

Some people think their homes are prepared to withstand the wind, the rain, the flooding. "Oh, I don't need to worry. I'm in a safe place." But when they realize that they were wrong, it's too late.

We better make sure we're in the truth. "Oh, Bro. Matt, you can't know the truth." That's not what the Bible says. "Ye shall know the truth," it says. What is the truth going to do? It's going to set you free. I'm going to go by what the Bible says. God's church is a beautiful church. I'm talking about God's church. "Well, who are the members? Where's your list, Bro. Matt? Do you have a list of all the members?" There is a list, yes, but it's with the Head. "Where is it? Is it at Bro. Greg's office?" No, it's where the Head is. It's in heaven.

The Bible says, "The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47). Jesus knows who is saved. Bro. Matt doesn't know. That's not up to Bro. Matt. No man can put you out, and no man can put you in, but there are people out there who think they can put people out of the church. That's God's business. If some man has put you in, you're not in the right place. That's not the place God has prepared for you. That's not a sure foundation. God's church consists of all the redeemed. Isn't that beautiful? "Well, it's only for those

who are from West Virginia.” No. “It’s only for those above six feet tall.” No, no! It’s for all the redeemed. When you repent of your sins, when you’re born again, God puts you in His beautiful church. You’re in safety. You’re in that church that the gates of hell shall not prevail against. That’s God’s church. That’s a place of safety. That’s a place where we can stand firm. That’s the place I want to be.

There are people who live alone, but they’re a part of God’s church. Do you know God’s church has some congregations? I’m talking about the universal church. Where the candlestick is, where the Spirit of God is, that’s God’s church. But listen, we have to hold on to God’s Spirit in our midst because that candlestick can be removed, and then we cease to be a part of God’s church as a congregation. We have to hold fast to what we have for us, as congregations, to be a part of God’s church. The Spirit of God has to be leading. When someone else starts thinking that he knows better than the Spirit of God, we have a problem. The Spirit of God has to be in control.

Paul said, “After my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.” These were good, strong congregations that Paul had been to. They were established, but even here, this is a warning that we have to make sure that God’s Spirit guides, leads, and directs. There’s an enemy out there that would like to sneak in with things. “Bro. Matt, you know better than Bro. Greg. What is he thinking in doing this? Why is my pastor doing this and that?” Listen, we need to be seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit. If perhaps you think someone isn’t doing right, pray for him. “Lord, lead, guide, and direct. Have your way.” We need the Spirit in full control of all things. This is where people get off. I’m by no means saying that Bro. Greg is off. Let’s just be clear. But what I’m getting at is, the devil tries to get in to cause division, cause questioning, cause problems, and cause separation. In that way, the Spirit is not free to work and move as He desires.

A WARNING FROM EZEKIEL

Listen here to a warning: Ezekiel 13:2, “Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel that prophesy, and say thou unto them that prophesy out of their own hearts.” Dear Ones, any time we are going to speak for the Lord, we have to get everything else out of the way and make sure it is God giving us what to say and not what we want out of our own hearts. Look around our land today and you’ll see that constantly. Preachers are saying, “Send me some money. Send me this and that.” That’s easy to see. That’s easy to identify, but sometimes it gets a little more difficult to detect what’s in our hearts. David said, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: see if there be any evil way in me.” In other words, “Search me, Lord; make sure this is your will. Lord, help me to know your will in all of this.”

Ezekiah 13:3, “Thus saith the Lord God; Woe unto the foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing!” Is that still happening today? If we want to be in that place of safety, in that place prepared of God, we can’t have people following their own spirit. We have to follow the Spirit of God. That’s where the place of safety is that God will lead us to. But the Bible tells us that where there is no vision, the people

perish. If it’s a false vision that doesn’t come from God, that is dangerous. That’s not leading us to a place we need to go, but sometimes people have such a desire and say, “I have to do this. I have to have something exciting, something that really inspires everybody.” Let me tell you, I like to be inspired. I like to really go and do things, but we need to make sure what we’re doing is led of God, because if it’s a false vision, that is not leading us to a place we need to be. We need to wait on God’s time.

A PLACE PREPARED BY GOD

When the church fled into the wilderness, she wasn’t visible at that time. There was so much that seemed to be against her. There was a falling away. This was a tough time, but listen to what God had prepared for her: “She hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her.” We are going to go through difficult times. It almost seems like a time of famine, but we can trust in God that He has something prepared to feed His children, even during famine. Does God take care of us even when it seems difficult? Even when it seems to be a struggle, we have to keep holding on to God. Keep doing what we know to do, trusting that God is going to take care of us, and waiting on Him. God’s timing is perfect. He knows what He’s doing, but if we try to get ahead of God and take it upon our own selves to do what we think needs to be done, there’s trouble. That got King Saul in trouble, didn’t it? His kingdom could have been established, but because he didn’t wait, look what happened. It always pays to wait on God. Wait on God and He will send what is needed.

God’s true ministers will allow the Holy Spirit to guide and direct. II Corinthians 3:6, “Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.” We need the Spirit of God to guide and direct. Why? Because we want to stay in that place of safety. So many people seem to think they’re in that place of safety. Maybe they do good. Maybe they even have the truth in some ways, but if the Spirit is not there, what do they have? Dear Ones, we need to hold fast to what we have. When God shows us something, we need to measure up. We need to be what He would have us to be. That’s where there’s safety. The Bible says, “If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land.” God is true to lead us. I thank the Lord for true women and men of God who hold fast and have a love and a burden for the souls of men. I appreciate people who will preach the truth and stand in the gap because they have a love for souls. I’m glad for those who have stood firm through the years. That’s a blessing.

The Word says, “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” Christ in His love and mercy has prepared a place for the redeemed. We don’t like to think about death. Sometimes we put it off in our minds, but Dear Ones, this is something we’re going to have to deal with. It comes our way for all of us, but Jesus prepared a place

for us—a mansion for us—a place that sounds inviting. In all of this, we have conditions. It's up to us to be ready to go to this place.

In Matthew 7:21, it says: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." I'm saying this because I want us all to be prepared. I want us to be ready, but Dear Ones, the Bible lays forth what it takes to be prepared. Listen carefully to what it says: "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? [Lord, I've lived for you. I thought I was doing what I was supposed to do. I've given money. I've tried to be good. I went to church.] I'm not being judgmental. This is the Word of God.] and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

JESUS HAS PREPARED A PLACE

You see, the Lord has created a beautiful place. Jesus came and bled and died that He might redeem us. He said, "I go to prepare this place for you, that where I am, you can be also." He wants us to be there. His desire is for us to be there.

Dear Ones, the warning goes out. It's there, but we must prepare ourselves to go to be with God. Listen, this is between you and God. You don't owe me an explanation. This is between you and God. We can either deal with it this side of eternity, or we're going to stand before God to give an account. Many with say to Him, "Lord, I did this. I helped out my neighbor. I went to church. I went on missionary journeys. I did this and that." But He will say, "Depart from me, ye that work iniquity." How sad to stand before God at the judgment and hear, "Depart from me." I don't want to make people feel bad. I like to make people feel good, but more than anything, I want people to be prepared to go to heaven. I love precious souls. I'm here to tell you, Dear Ones, you need to make preparation because we're all going to stand before God one day.

I want to go back to the last line of verse 21 in Matthew 7: "But he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." It doesn't say *he that knoweth the Bible from front to back*. What God requires is that we're willing. We may not understand all it takes to serve God. I sure didn't. There was so much I didn't understand, but that didn't stop God from saving me.

Jesus said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden." Maybe there are problems you're having that the devil is telling you that you need to work out before you get saved. That's not what Jesus said. He said, "Come unto me. Bring your problems and concerns." That's what His will is. That's what His desire is. "Bring all that you have and give it to me."

As we walk in our lives and God shows us some things, be willing, "Lord, I'm willing to do whatever you would have me to do." That's what He wants from us. If we bestow all our goods to feed the poor but are not doing what God wants us to do, we're not accomplishing what He requires of us. Let me promise you this: God's will and His desire is what is best for you. God has never required anything of me that was not for my

benefit. Sometimes in the moment it didn't seem that way, but later on I realized God was looking out for me. He knew what was best for me. "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end" (Jeremiah 29:11).

God wants what's best for you. He has prepared a beautiful, beautiful way. He died for the beautiful church that you can be a part of, that even through your trials and troubles, you can find refuge and strength and peace in difficult times. He's also prepared a beautiful, wonderful place that we can spend all eternity with Him.

CONCLUSION

Dear Ones, just like those who have faced and seen the devastation of a hurricane, will we take heed to the warnings given by God? Look around our land. Take heed. Hear me in this. Do we see the devastation of sin on our land? Do we see that sin is taking people farther and farther and deeper and deeper? But God has prepared a place of safety for you. Heed the warning, for your life will soon be o'er.

I believe God is speaking to hearts. God loves you. Do you believe that? The thief comes to steal, kill, and destroy. Let me tell you, the devil is doing it left and right all across the land, but God has something better for you. Dear Ones, we have to surrender ourselves to Him. If you're saved, is God showing you that there's something you need to let go of? If we're going to stay in that place of safety that God has for us, we have to surrender our all to Him.

Ephesians 5:15-17: "See then that ye walk circumspectly [carefully], not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is." The Holy Spirit helps us to see what the will of God is. If you're unsaved, it is His will that you be saved. Let God have His way. He loves you. We love you.

May God bless you. †

OUT OF BOX 88

Dear Way of Truth Publishers,

You continue to make a wonderful difference in many lives because of His light in each one of you. Our encouragement comes from the holy Word of God and you publish it so well. Thank you for sending me *The Way of Truth* in 2024. My offering I send to you.

—J. J., Tennessee

To the Church of God Universal:

Thank you for your interesting magazine. It brings me a lot of comfort, peace, and joy. Here's a little thank you gift to help in your publication.

—J. W., Illinois

You certainly know how to make a person feel special by providing God's Word to everyone that will ask. Thank You!

—L. P., Kentucky

THE POETRY PAGE

THE WHISPER OF LOVE

Fanny Crosby

I cannot be sad if my Savior is near,
He bids all my sadness depart;
I cannot be lonely, if gently I hear
His whisper of love in my heart.

The whisper of love, soft whisper of love,
How oft, like the poor wandering dove,
I fly to the ark with my Savior to rest,
And hear His soft whisper of love.

I cannot be weary; the days are not long,
If onward I trustingly move;
And oft on my journey I pause in my song,
To hear the soft whisper of love.

And when, from the path He has taught me to tread,
My footsteps forgetfully rove;
How kindly again to that path I am led,
And cheered by the whisper of love.

No voice in the world is so tenderly sweet,
No charm can my sorrow remove;
No accents in glory my joy would complete,
Without the soft whisper of love.

JUST GIVE ME LOVE

Michael Dubina

Just give me love, I pray to God,
And let me live each day
With blessings of good health and heart
To share on every 'way;
Not gifts of glory, wealth or fame—
Just love to warm my heart
And fill me with the depths of joy
That, only, love imparts.

Just give me love, I pray, dear Lord,
For love has proved to be
Your greatest gift to humankind—
Unto Eternity;
And love is all I want and need—
In twilight years of life—
To keep me warm against despairs
And shelter me, in strife.

GOD'S GIFTS

Colette Fedor

It's in the silence of the soul,
Where peace and wisdom stay,
To guide us through the din and strife,
Confronting us each day.

God placed this gift within us,
With His loving Grace,
Knowing that we need His love,
When trials of life we face.

This strength will gently guide us,
His love will see us through,
Releasing gifts of faith and hope,
To bear, what we must do.

GOD'S LOVE

Frances Gregory Pasch

God's love has no boundaries
It's flowing everywhere.
He has enough for everyone
And even some to spare.

So take a heaping handful
And give some out each day ...
Speak it by your actions
And with the words you say.

As you share His love with others,
He'll make it multiply,
For God's love has no boundaries ...
There's an infinite supply.

LOVE

James Joseph Huesgen

A pen that's always busy
A voice upon the phone,
A letter in the mail,
To prove we're not alone.
Love said upon a paper,
A voice within the air,
Reassurance of a loved one,
To show how much we care.
To prove our love is sacred,
To help one understand,
That love is always near you,
On the lips, within the hand. †

THE REFINER'S FIRE— THE POTTER'S CLAY

BY THE LATE BRO. H. R. MATTHEWS

A verse and the chorus of the song "Consecration" written by Mildred E. Howard says—

My all, O Lord, to thee I give, Accept it as thine own;

For thee alone I'll ever live, My heart shall be thy throne.

My life, O Lord, I give to thee, My talents, time and all;

I'll serve thee, Lord, and faithful be, I'll hear thy faintest call.

For this to be my consecration and your consecration, we must pass through the Refiner's fire that all dross may be removed. We must be as clay that is placed upon the Potter's wheel to be shapen into the vessel that He shall choose. For there to be personal reservations concerning the Refiner's fire and the Potter's clay would place this consecration in jeopardy.

Every saint of God has his Refiner's flame. Every saint of God becomes clay in the Potter's hands. In James' admonition to all saints, he penned, "Submit yourselves therefore to God." Even when we cry out for the Refiner to remove the flame, when we begin to cry out for the Potter to remove the hand that shapens the clay, a heart of submission must respond by saying, "Yes, Lord, not my will but thine be done." Our divine example was Jesus Himself who spoke these very words as He passed through the heated furnace as He consecrated Himself there in the Garden of Gethemane to suffer, bleed, and die to pay our debt of sin that we could not pay.

Read thoughtfully the words of the world's most fruitful missionary, the apostle Paul, as he passed through the Refiner's flame, and the hands of the divine Potter: "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given unto me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong."

Let us look back farther in time to that great Patriarch, Abraham, and his heated furnace: "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son." God did not permit Abraham to be tried above that his faith was able to bear; nevertheless, the verse says, "When he was tried." Abraham did not cry out to God, saying, *But Father, this is the son of promise through which all the world will be blessed, and you are asking me to slay him? Not so, Father, not so!* No! He began preparation immediately to travel to Mount Moriah and carry out that which God had commanded him to do. It was a test, and when God saw Abraham's faithfulness, He substituted a ram in the place of Isaac.

Joseph, the beloved son of Jacob, certainly passed through the heated furnace when he was sold into slavery by his brothers, and ultimately was cast into prison because of false accusation brought against him by the wife of his master, Potiphar. But Joseph kept his integrity through it all, and he became prime minister of Egypt and savior of the brothers during famine who had betrayed him years earlier.

Though Satan was given permission from God to destroy all the possessions of the perfect man, Job, including his sons and daughters, Job did not curse God as Satan supposed that he would. Rather, Job countered, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly." Satan thought then to intensify the heat of the fiery furnace by challenging God to afflict Job and he would curse Him to His face. God gave Satan permission to afflict Job, which he did by afflicting him from head to foot with severe boils, and even though Job's wife became a mouthpiece for Satan, saying to her husband, "Curse God, and die," Job did neither, but retained his integrity by saying, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." Because of his faithfulness, Job left the heated furnace with greater possessions, including seven sons and three daughters.

King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished when he saw four men walking about in the burning fiery furnace, for he had three men cast into the furnace. They were Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, the three Hebrews that had, under the threat of being cast into the burning fiery furnace, refused to bow down and worship the golden image that he had set up, saying to the king, "If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." In his rage, King Nebuchadnezzar had the furnace heated seven times hotter and the three men bound and cast into the furnace. The Lord was so pleased with their holy integrity that He accompanied them into the furnace. What they were bound with was burned off, and the furnace heated seven times hotter had no effect on them. Nebuchadnezzar called them from the furnace and praised their God who had delivered them.

Daniel, the Hebrew teller of dreams and friend to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, had his own heated furnace which he passed through. It had been decreed that no petition should be made of any god except King Darius for thirty days. Anyone doing so should be cast into the den of lions. Daniel's enemies knew of his custom of praying thrice daily facing Jerusalem, and they gathered near his place of prayer hoping to the end that Daniel would be cast into the lions' den. The king loved Daniel, but he had signed the decree and had no choice but to comply. The following morning, the king hastened to the lions' den and in a lamentable voice, he cried out, "O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions? Then said Daniel to the king, O king, live for ever. My God hath sent his angel,

THE STEPS OF THE RIGHTEOUS**THE SPIRIT WORKS THROUGH DAVID****Scriptures:** I Samuel 16:11-13; 17:37, 40, 45-50.

1 I Samuel 16:11 And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all thy children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Send and fetch him: for we will not sit down till he come hither.

12 And he sent, and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to. And the Lord said, Arise, anoint him: for this is he.

13 Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah.

1 I Samuel 17:37 David said moreover, The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said unto David, Go, and the Lord be with thee.

40 And he took his staff in his hand, and chose him five smooth stones out of the brook, and put them in a shepherd's bag which he had, even in a scrip; and his sling was in his hand: and he drew near to the Philistine.

45 Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied.

46 This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel.

47 And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hands.

48 And it came to pass, when the Philistine arose, and came and drew nigh to meet David, that David hasted, and ran toward the army to meet the Philistine.

49 And David put his hand in his bag, and took thence a stone, and slang it, and smote the Philistine in his forehead, that the stone sunk into his forehead; and he fell upon his face to the earth.

50 So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and smote the Philistine, and slew him; but there was no sword in the hand of David.

Memory Verse: Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me.—Psalm 51:11.

Aim: To give an insight into the dealings of God with the early saints.

INTRODUCTION

IT WOULD SEEM as if people today think that whatever comes into their hands by any means is theirs and they have a perfect right to do whatever they desire with it. This is not true and indicates that they have lost consciousness that there is a God and that some day they must give an account to Him. In the third verse of today's lesson, we are told that the Spirit of God came upon David from that day forward.

and shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me; forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt" (Daniel 6:20-22). Just like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, Daniel stayed true to his God in whose hand was the refining flame.

The twelve apostles of Jesus Christ, excluding Judas, suffered the death of martyrdom, except the apostle John. John died a natural death, but he had his share of time in the Refiner's flame. He and the apostle Peter shared the prison walls and the jailer's whip. In his last years, and probably the last living of the twelve, John was exiled to the Isle of Patmos for the cause of Christ. The Romans did not banish their exiles there because it was a seaside resort. It was a tiny, barren island where exiles were sent as a matter of punishment. The Revelation was given to John and written to the seven churches of Asia. John addressed them in this manner: "I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ."

The reader may question why I chose those that were so great in the faith to be examples of those who passed through the Refiner's flame and those who were in the hand of the Potter. I must point out to the reader that these men were such great men in the faith because they did submissively, humbly, and meekly pass through the Refiner's flame and the Potter's hand.

I will place here in this article Hebrews, chapter 11, beginning with verse 32: "And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions. Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect."

Jesus said to His disciples, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Whether it is a direct call for us to go, or whether it be through our labors that we make possible for others to go, we must obey this command. This consecrated life will be ours as we pass successfully through the Refiner's flame (the heated furnace) and as we pass through the hand of the Potter's clay. †

As a result of this, we find him doing some very wonderful things. If Christians will always obey the still small voice, life's pathway will be filled with much more fruitfulness. Neglect of prayer and study of the Word of God will dull our spiritual sensibilities, making it difficult to hear the voice of God. Any soul who does not have the guidance of the Spirit of God is indeed in a dangerous place. We cannot see into the future, not even one second. We know not how to direct our own path.

MEDITATIONS

LEAN NOT TO YOUR OWN UNDERSTANDING—I Samuel 16:11—Remaineth yet the youngest—It is natural for men to draw conclusions from what they can see and feel. So was it in this case. David was young, and it did not seem at all probable that he would be the one God would call to fill the place of such importance. God's ways are not our ways, and He has instructed us that if we will acknowledge Him, He will direct our path. Walking by faith is walking when we cannot see what lies ahead of us; but perfect faith in God causes us to believe and know that if we walk, the way will be prepared ahead of us by God, and we shall not stumble or fall.

DIVINE AUTHORITY—I Samuel 16:12—And the Lord said—When David was brought in from the field, the Lord said to Samuel, "Arise, anoint him: for this is he." The Lord saw in David one He could use in His service. May the Lord help us all to be one He can use.

ANOINTED FOR SERVICE—I Samuel 16:13—The Spirit of the Lord came—This was the Holy Ghost who came into the life of David to empower him for the work that God had called him to do. We must recognize the fact that there are two spiritual forces in the world. All of mankind is under the influence of either one or the other. God is the one Almighty force and is absolutely morally pure. Satan is the other (second) power and completely degenerated. Men who are under the complete control of God are fortunate indeed and are certain to reflect the life of Christ in the world. This now became the job of David, to reflect the beauty and glory of God in the world. It was this spiritual power in his life that gave him the ability to pen so many beautiful Psalms. It was the Spirit of God in his life that enabled him to play the harp so well which temporarily drove the evil influences away from Saul (I Samuel 16:23).

FAITHINGOD—I Samuel 17:37—The Lord that delivered me—As in the case of Samson, so also in this case with David, it was the power of God that enabled him to fight against a wild beast that was much stronger than he. Read Verses 33-35 of this same chapter. Please note that David did not take the honor unto himself but gave the honor to God, where it belonged. David reasoned that the same God who delivered him when he was attacked by the bear and lion would deliver him from the attack of the Philistine giant. Likewise, we all may reason if God delivered David out of the hand of the Philistine and gave him a great victory, he will also deliver us out of the hand of any enemy we may face. We must make a practical application of this

truth to our own lives; otherwise, it is of no use to study it.

UNDAUNTED COURAGE—I Samuel 17:40—Chose him five smooth stones—Only by the presence of the Spirit of God in his life could anyone have displayed such great courage as David did before this giant. He chose five stones for the fray, not knowing whether some unexpected thing might happen with the first four attempts. Evidently, he was confident that in five attempts he was certain to be successful. The 151st Psalm, which is not in the accepted Bible, declares that David hit the giant with the third stone. (You can find this Psalm in *Clarke's Commentary* at the close of the book of Psalms.) David did all that he knew to do and trusted the rest in the hands of God. This should be the practice of every one of us in this life.

A POWER UNRIVALED—I Samuel 17:45—In the name of the Lord of hosts—The outcome could not be judged by the two forces that appeared on the field of battle. There was an invisible force on the field that no one could see, and that force was on the side of David and his sling. This giant in defying David was defying Almighty God. Had he known this, without doubt he would have withdrawn his threat.

MAKING GOD KNOWN—I Samuel 17:46—The earth may know that there is a God in Israel—We see very readily here that the ambition of David was not to make a name for himself, although he did do that very thing. He was interested in letting the world know that God was still on His throne and that He rewarded the man and nation who put their trust in Him. David's faith took in a great deal of territory here, and he proved to the world that God was able to perform all that His good Word had promised. Many a soldier of the cross has received courage and gone on to fight the battle through after reading about this battle of David's. Let us show the world a mighty God.

GIVING PROPER RECOGNITION—I Samuel 17:47—The battle is the Lord's—Here is a very great truth that needs to be preached to the nations of the earth. While many people are working hard to make weapons of defense and destruction, it still remains a fact that the battle will go the way the Lord determines, and he who has his trust in the Lord is certain to win. David, as young as he was, recognized this fact and prospered by it. If God be for us, who can be against us?

DAVID'S WORDS BACKED UP WITH ACTION—I Samuel 17:48—David hasted, and ran—David was speaking by the power of the Spirit of God and was backed up with the power of heaven. Every Holy Ghost-filled Christian has access to the very same power.

HIS WORD VINDICATED—I Samuel 17:49—Took thence a stone—The equipment of David was indeed very humble, but it accomplished the purpose as well as if it had been the very best that the day could offer. Though we have little in our hands, yet it is impossible to state what great things may be done if it is consecrated to God. Undaunted, David hesitated not, but hastened on to do his very best with what he had,

and God saw him through. Let us take courage and press on with what we have, to accomplish the task God has set before us.

PREVAILING BY THE SPIRIT—I Samuel 17:50—So David prevailed—Again, it was the Spirit in the life of David that gave him the victory in this most unusual circumstance. The Spirit is never late; we need never fear to trust Him.

CONCLUSION

This is indeed a very miraculous working of the Spirit of God as revealed in the life of David. But we serve a miraculous God. He is all-powerful and delights to show Himself strong in behalf of them that fear Him. There is a great need for a David today to go forth and to meet the awful giant of false religion that is threatening the forces of the living God. This enemy today is dressed in the clothes of an angel of light and has deceived millions of the people of the earth. If we are not successful in uncovering him and revealing his real identity to the people of the earth, it is certain that all true faith will vanish from the earth, which means that the end of time will be ushered in at once.

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

1. Why should people be made to realize that the world and all that is in it belongs to the Lord?
2. What two forces in the world exert constant influence upon the men of the earth?
3. Why is it not safe to lean upon our own understanding?
4. Why can Christ speak with such great authority?
5. Where did David get the courage to go ahead when to the natural eye all looked so impossible?
6. Why was not the whole army of Israel equipped with slings?
7. Why do material things become a hindrance to winning a spiritual battle? †



Dear Young People,

This month's article is a continuation from the Young People's service on "The Fruits of the Spirit." Sis. Sabrina Shenberger is sharing thoughts on the fruit of "Goodness." We trust you will be blessed! May we each one desire to be more fruitful for Him!

Blessings,
Bro. Doug

GOODNESS

By Sis. Sabrina Shenberger

Goodness is a moral quality that constitutes Christian excellence. It is a reflection of the perfection of God's character. It is holiness, purity, and righteousness. Goodness is godliness.

We are told in Psalm 107:1-9, "O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy; And gathered them out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south. They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in. Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses. And he led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation. Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness." Here we are told that because of His great goodness toward us, we are satisfied and filled with His goodness. Therefore, it should flow from us to others.

We can't have true goodness within ourselves. Yes, there are people in the world who are good people. Many have good morals and endeavor to do good. But true goodness, one that flows from within and overflows our lives, has to come from a saved and sanctified life. If we don't have these experiences we can only be and do good to a certain level. At some point, we will not have the power to do good, because we are doing it all within our own strength. When we have done all the goodness we can in ourselves, it still falls short. In Isaiah 64:6 we read, "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." And good works are not enough to make our lives full of goodness. In Ephesians 2:8-10 we are told, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Thank the Lord, we can have His precious Holy Spirit living in our hearts to fill us with His goodness.



In Romans 15:14 we read, "And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another." This leads us into another definition of goodness. It is about choosing to be kind, generous, and understanding towards others, even when it's not necessary. It is about working for the benefit of others, not one's self. It is being "good" to others. Having in our hearts and minds that in all we do it is for the good of others. We don't do anything that will cause harm. We want to share goodness everywhere we go.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, may we live by God's grace. Ephesians 5:9 says, "For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth."

May our lives be a true testament of what a saved and sanctified life should be. My prayer is that I may be full of His goodness and share it with all I come in contact with. †

KEEPING YOURSELF IN THE LOVE OF GOD

2024 Hagerstown Convention Message by Bro. Franklyn Bascoe

MY THOUGHTS to you are taken from the book of Jude, verses 20 and 21: “But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.” I want to speak about “Keeping Yourself in the Love of God.”

CHARITY NEVER FAILS

Charity (love) never fails, but on our part, we have some work to do. There is some work to do. The fact that Jude wrote this tells that there’s a possibility that persons can fall out of love with God. They can lose the love of God out of their hearts. But notice it says, “Keep yourselves.” We are individually responsible for ourselves. I can’t keep you in the love of God if you are not willing to be kept, but I have the responsibility of keeping myself in the love of God.

Verse 1 of Jude says, “Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called.” Are you called this afternoon? One songwriter says, “He called me long before I heard, Before my sinful soul was stirred.” Christ has made a universal call. He said, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” One little song says, “I’m not sorry I answered the Master’s call.” So Jude was writing to those who are called. To those of you who have not answered the call, I trust that you will answer the call before it’s too late.

Jude goes on to say in verse 2, “Mercy unto you, and peace, and love, be multiplied.” The third verse is one we know and have repeated oftentimes: “Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” Jude, in his time through the eyes of the Spirit, realized that this was a necessary warning to be given. There was a danger in persons not adhering to the faith that was once delivered to the saints.

Ephesians 2:20 says, “And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.” We are told by Paul, “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” As long as we are building upon that foundation, we are safe. The foundation in any structure is a very, very important part of the building. The Bible tells us, “The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.” The Lord knoweth those who are His.

I often talk about the time I was working with a company. My boss and I went into a certain area in Montego Bay and we were passing some buildings and saw a structure. The bottom was built of concrete but

on top were boards. His remark was, “That person is not sure of his foundation.” Therefore, he did not put anything of heavy weight there. But we are building on a sure foundation. The scripture says that the foundation of the Lord is sure, so we are warned that we should give diligence. Careful effort was given to warn us that we should contend for the faith that was once delivered to the saints.



There are reasons why we should contend for the faith. Jude says in verse 4, “For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.” This is one of the reasons why we are warned. As we read down through this passage, we are told of some of the things that happened before. We are told of Sodom and Gomorrah. We are told of how God called the children of Israel out of Egypt, but afterward destroyed them that believed not. Therefore, this is why we are warned to keep ourselves in the love of God.

It is so important to be kept in the love of God. I thought about the foundation standing sure and of some of the benefits of keeping ourselves in the love of God. I think about the protection one has in abiding in the love of God. We sang earlier in the service, “Trust and obey, for there’s no other way to be happy in Jesus, But to trust and obey.” One line speaks about “the favor He shows, And the joy He bestows, Are for them who will trust and obey.” There are benefits in keeping ourselves in the love of God. I am sure every one of us enjoy the favor of almighty God. We are in a good place when God shows us favor, but there are conditions to be met. Unless we keep ourselves in the love of God, we are not in line for the favor of almighty God.

THE STORY OF JACOB

My mind goes back to Jacob. We know the story about him running away from home because of what he did. He was working for his uncle Laban. They made a deal about his wages, but we see from the scriptures that Laban was not a very fair man. They came to an agreement for one of Laban’s daughters with whom he was in love. Jacob loved Rachel, but after working for Laban for seven years, he was given Leah. Jacob was disappointed. We read in Genesis, chapter 29, that Jacob wasn’t very pleased that it was Leah he was given instead of Rachel, but because he loved her, he decided he was going to work seven more years. I don’t believe we have men like Jacob these days. We don’t have that kind of patience.

Listen to what the Word of God says in regard to Jacob in Genesis 29:20—“And Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him but a few days,

for the love he had to her.” Seven years is a long time. I believe a lot of persons would have changed their minds. “I can’t wait this long.” But the writer says that because of the love Jacob had for Rachel, he decided he would work for seven more years, and it appeared to him as just a few days. I marvel at the level of protection that God showed to Jacob. I’m talking about keeping ourselves in the love of God.

Jacob did his brother wrong, but he came to the place he realized he was wrong, and he repented. God was with him. The Bible tells us that he came to a place and took a stone and used it for a pillow and there he had a dream. Angels were ascending and descending on a ladder. Jacob woke up out of his dream and said, “How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God.” Jacob vowed a vow saying, “If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father’s house in peace; then shall the Lord be my God.” Jacob kept his end of the bargain. God was with him. The part that causes us to realize that God protected him was when he realized that his uncle Laban had started to act strange (funny towards him).

Jacob hid his possessions, his sheep that he had worked for. He left Laban’s house without telling him. But when Laban realized that Jacob had gone and had taken his wives and possessions, he pursued him. But you know, God is always watching. He cares. He protects His children. We are not to think that the devil is going around doing anything that he wants to the people of God. Laban had an intention and God knew his heart. Verse 24 of Genesis, chapter 31: “And God came to Laban the Syrian in a dream by night, and said unto him, Take heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad.” That sounds like a threat to me, but this is how God protects His children. God knew what Laban had in his mind, therefore, He warned him, “Don’t say anything, either good or bad.” Why? Because Jacob was in the love of God. There are so many benefits in keeping ourselves in the love of God. We have God on our side.

THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL

I thought about the children of Israel as they journeyed to the Promised Land. We read about the prophet Balaam, and how Balak wanted to give him some reward to curse the children of Israel, but every time he went out, instead of cursing them, he blessed them. Balak said, “Change your position then. Go to this other place. Maybe you’ll be able to curse them from there.” But every time he went out to curse them, he blessed them. Listen, when God is on your side, the devil can do you no harm.

THE STORY OF BALAAM

We are told in the book of Numbers, chapter 23, that when Balaam found out that he could not curse the children of Israel, Balak was not happy. He said to Balak, “How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed? or how shall I defy, whom the Lord hath not defied?” Someone has said: “Whom God blessed, no man curse.” We have no reason to walk about fearing what the enemy would do to us when we have a God as we have.

His love fails not. We need to put confidence in our God.

Numbers 23:19 says: “God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?” Whatever God says He means it. We can take Him at His Word. The songwriter has written: *’Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus, Just to take Him at His Word; Just to rest upon His promise; Just to know, “Thus saith the Lord.”* God cannot lie, and therefore, we have every reason to stand upon His promise.

Balaam said to Balak, “Behold, I have received commandment to bless: and he hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it.” Listen, we can’t go beyond God. Balaam did all of this because of reward. The scripture made mention of it in Jude: “Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward.” Listen, as children of God, we should not allow ourselves to be bought. It has happened because of what is offered. People change their minds toward God, but we should not allow ourselves to be bought. As a matter of fact, we’ve already been bought. The scripture tells us, “For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.”

WE MUST KEEP OURSELVES

There are some things we ought to do in order to keep ourselves in the love of God. We can’t wait for somebody to keep us. A preacher once said, “We cannot be a wheelbarrow Christian.” We know what a wheelbarrow is. Anywhere you push it and leave it, that’s where it stays until someone pushes it again. We need to have a drive in us. The brethren sang recently, “I’m going to love, love ’til there’s just no more love; I could never, never outlove the Lord.” We need to purpose it in our hearts that we’re going to stand for God. The songwriter says, “Standing on the promises that cannot fail, When the howling storms of doubt and fear assail, By the living Word of God I shall prevail, Standing on the promises of God.” God never fails. He cannot fail. Let us stand on the promises of God. In standing, we are sure that we’re going to keep ourselves in the love of God.

We have, through the ages, lost a lot of precious souls. Persons who stood for the Lord and turned aside. It is sad. Valuable souls. Persons we were counting on. God is counting on us. Therefore, He has given us His Word in what we ought to do keep ourselves in the love of God.

Paul said to the Ephesians, “Stand, and having done all, to stand.” So it is quite possible. If we fail, it’s because we have not done all. But as long as we do all, we will be able to stand. God’s grace is sufficient.

We all have challenges. Paul said, “I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.” The Lord said, “My grace is sufficient for thee.” There’s no shortage of grace. The Word of God tells us that we need to come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. Listen: Sometimes certain challenges take a greater grace than the grace we needed in the past. Yesterday’s grace is

not sufficient for today, but God always provides grace. There is no lack in Him. He's all-sufficient. Therefore, let us put our trust in Him. Let us do our part in insuring that we keep ourselves in the love of God. It's our responsibility. Do all that you know you ought to do. Verse 20 in Jude says, "Building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, Keep yourselves in the love of God."

There is a tendency for man to blame others. "You are the cause of my downfall. You are the cause of my backsliding," but it's a lie. We need to take responsibility. Way back in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve wanted to blame someone else. Adam said to God, "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." Eve said, "The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat." We need to take responsibility for our actions.

CONCLUSION

Bro. Terry reminded us the other night to keep our lower lights burning. In a line of that song, it says: "But to us He gives the keeping of the lights along the shore." We have a responsibility. It's not just walking free-handed till we get to heaven. It's a fight, but we can make it, by the grace of God.

The Lord bless you. †

THE IDEAL CHRIST

By the late J. T. Wilson

WHAT WE think of Christ may be far different from what others think of Him, and may also be different from what we would think were we better acquainted with Him. Our thoughts of Him are colored by our environment, our early training, our reading, our association with others, our education or by our inability to gain knowledge of Him. Generally speaking, however, that self which thinks and knows is several steps in advance of that self which wills and does. We frequently make use of the expression, "I have done my best," or, "I am doing my best," but technically speaking, that is not often true, for we usually know better than we do. Our ideals do affect our conduct, however, and it is our duty to gain the highest possible idea of Christ for "as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he."

What Christ is may be different from our idea of Him. He is what He is, and what we think of Him does not change Him. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever." "Before Abraham was, I am." As Christians, we make an effort to live up to our ideals of Christ and of what we believe it is possible for us to be. Christ, while on Earth, was a perfect Man, God's incarnated idea of man. He was all of God and His attributes that could be put into a man; but there are some purely divine attributes which are impossible to man. We have our geographic limitations, our vision has a limited range, and our knowledge is only fragmentary and incomplete.

However, we should not be content with what we now know, but each of us should possess the highest

possible ideal of Christ, else we cannot reach our highest spiritual development.

Most men have some hobby which they ride, and preachers, as a rule, are not more free from this practice than are other men. One minister makes a hobby of sanctification, another never preaches without touching on the subject of the church, a third puts the stress on unity and a fourth, something else. Each of these preachers will draw certain people to himself and to his teaching. All of the doctrines here mentioned are Scriptural and are perfectly good doctrine, but to be constantly placing emphasis on one phase of Christ's teaching, is to get a distorted idea of Him, and a single idea of Christ is sure to send us off on a tangent.

The Christ of meekness and love would upset all justice. The same Christ, who without a murmur, suffered Himself to be beaten and spit upon, could when necessary overturn the tables and with a whip, drive the money changers from His Father's house.

Again, referring to the unchangeableness of Christ: Let me say that He is our perfect example. That is, He is the perfect man and that which is perfect in the absolute sense cannot be improved or made more perfect; therefore He does not change, is incapable of change. He set us an example for all time. Of ourselves, we cannot say we do not change. We, being infinite, must of necessity be subject to change.

We may reach our ideal of today but by the time we have reached that goal, our ideals have changed and enlarged to such an extent that we find ourselves still striving to reach higher.

A few years ago, while in Colorado, I decided to climb to the top of a certain mountain. As I raised my eyes toward the summit, the distance from the base to the top did not seem great. But when I reached that point which seemed the summit, the top still seemed as far away as when I first began to climb. Again, I began the ascent and the same experience was repeated. Thus as we reach what seems to us the ideal, we find our vision enlarging and our ideals reaching higher.

Theology is a progressive science, although many good people seem to think that it is an exact science as unchangeable as the laws of the Medes and Persians. To others, both theology and science are objectionable terms. But we need not fear these terms for both are perfectly good words which, when put together simply mean a systematic knowledge of God and such knowledge of God cannot harm us. However, this knowledge of God cannot be reduced to an exact science for the simple reason that our ideals are constantly reaching higher as our knowledge of God and His Word increases.

Our knowledge of Christ and His teaching is only fragmentary and yet there are those who claim to have arrived at a full understanding of all God's truth.

I met such a man in Memphis, Tennessee, several years ago. In the course of our conversation, I said to this man, "Do you mean to tell me that you know all the truth and that there will be no further revelation of God's will to man?" He replied, "That is exactly what I mean." Friend, can you not see that this attitude would close every avenue to further knowledge and spiritual growth and that crystallization would result?

The fact is that as time goes on, we are sure to emphasize some passages of Scripture to which we are giving but little attention now and other passages which we now emphasize strongly will be emphasized less because of the greater knowledge of the present. I believe my knowledge of Christ is greater than it was a year ago and that my ideal of Him is accordingly a much higher ideal, and I believe that all true Christians are striving for a greater knowledge of Christ and as that knowledge increases, we are striving for that greater spiritual growth that makes Him our ideal.

I have never, since becoming converted, been willing to subscribe to any written creed, other than the Bible because no creed contains more than a few fragments of the whole truth and all sectarianism is built on a fragmentary Christ. Those denominational bodies which have been organized around a creed have crystallized and ceased to make progress in the revelation of truth or to increase in spiritual power. And whenever God has seen fit to reveal more truth to a believer, that believer found that he must leave his denomination in order to declare what to him had been revealed ... Creeds imposed upon men prevent them from reaching their highest ideals of Christ. This is true regardless of whether these creeds have the stamp of age or are of modern origin and as we reach a more perfect ideal, our denominational differences disappear.

What think ye of Christ? Regardless of your thinking, Christ remains the perfect ideal and if your neighbor's ideal is better than yours, then his life will be better than yours and his theology will be greater than it was a year ago and that my ideal better than yours.

We are all responsible beings and must make use of every possible means of raising our ideals and of increasing our spiritual power. We cannot understand Christ if we are constantly in an atmosphere foreign to spiritual things. Even the Savior Himself found it necessary to live in constant touch with the Father.

It is hard enough at best for finite minds to understand spiritual things but if we love Christ supremely, we want to be in His presence as much as possible. We want to hear all we can about Him and we want to read about Him as well as to associate with Him. Again, what think you of Him?

Look not to Job for an example of patience. Look not to Moses for an example of meekness. Look not to Abraham for an example of faith. Look not to John for an example of love.

If your ideal of meekness is the man Moses, then you can rise no higher than Moses rose. If your best illustration of faith is seen in Abraham, then you cannot rise higher. If in Dorcas you see the best ideal of love in action, then your ideal of love is still but fragmentary. It was the divine power in these characters that made them rise to such great heights in the manifestation of these qualities. But even then they were generally noted for but one outstanding quality. Christ possessed all these qualities and hundreds of others in infinitely greater degrees than any other man, hence it is to Him we must look for every good quality. He possessed love, faith, meekness, generosity, strength, fearlessness, loyalty, comradeship, sympathy, power, every power developed to the ninth degree.

What think you of Christ? Think your best thoughts of any man, Christ is more. Reach as high as your ideal can carry you, Christ is more. Raise your ideal of what a man should be, still higher, Christ is still above that ideal. In Philippians 3:12-14, Paul says, "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."

The apostle must have had some such thoughts as we have been endeavoring to convey to your mind. He had made great progress but had not arrived, hence pressed on with a constant desire to reach higher in the things of God. May the God of heaven give us a better ideal of Christian living, may we have an ever increasing knowledge of the Christ and may that knowledge make us more like Him. Has your ideal of Christ been raised today? What think ye of Him? †

—Reprinted from the August 1995 issue

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Alvin A. Craig, Radio Minister

(Aired on Sundays unless otherwise noted.)

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THE TREE OF LIFE

Sermon by Sis. Rebecca Bland

THE STORY I will tell you this morning, you've heard before. If you're a blessed person, you've heard it many times. It's not going to change. It's a blessed story, and we're going to hear it again, because every time we hear this story, it gives honor and glory to God. I might just go about telling it a little bit differently, and from just a little different aspect, but it's still the same old story of love.



I'd like to turn to our text which is found in Revelation 22. Don't be afraid hearing me say "Revelation," because I'm not going to talk about anything over my head, and so you're perfectly safe. There's a lot in Revelation that's still a mystery to me, but this part is not. Revelation 22, verse 14: "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." I'd like to entitle my thoughts, "The Tree of Life." This story starts back at Genesis.

You remember hearing about the Garden of Eden. It was a beautiful place. It was paradise on Earth because everything was perfect. Never happened since then, has it? Everything was perfect, and one of the main reasons everything was perfect was because those first two people, Adam and Eve, were innocent. They didn't even know what evil was. Can you imagine having no concept of evil? God wanted it that way. God doesn't want people messing with evil. He doesn't want them having anything to do with it. He would like to keep them totally away from evil. It's so foreign to who He is, and there's not one evil thing that is good for mankind. So God would prefer that people didn't even have contact with it. Adam and Eve didn't have any concept of evil. That's why they were totally, perfectly happy. The key was unquestioning obedience to God. Unquestioning obedience to God is the key to Paradise. Obeying God—not wondering why—just doing it.

Adam and Eve had right to a special tree that was in the garden. It was called "the tree of life." It symbolized immortality, eternal life, no death, no sickness, no tiredness, no pain, no sorrow—just life. The tree of life was the key to paradise, and they had free and full access to it. It was not forbidden. But it didn't stay like that. You know the story. I don't even like to talk about it. It makes me sad, but it's true. It happened.

Adam and Eve ended up choosing a different tree over the tree of life. I don't think they really stopped to think *we are choosing this tree over that tree*, but they did. There was another tree in the garden—the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God had told them not to touch it, leave it alone. As long as they

unquestioningly obeyed that and stayed away from it, their lives were perfect. But one day, they went to that tree. Eve went first. The tree looked good. We can't always go by looks. If God says *no* about something, it doesn't matter what it looks like. "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 16:25).

The tree looked good, and on top of that, there was a serpent speaking for Satan, who said to Eve, "Look at this tree. Why don't you try it? Look at it. I don't know why you stayed away from this tree all this time. It is just as good as any other tree. It is just as good as the tree of life over there. It is beautiful." She shouldn't have even gone over to it, should she? Yes, it looked good. "Well, why won't you try it?" the serpent asked. Eve said, "Because God said if we eat of that tree, we will die." The serpent said, "No, you will not. Something really good will happen if you partake of that tree. God knows it, and He's trying to keep that from you."

We know, as human beings, we don't like to be kept from things we might enjoy, right? So Eve listened a little more to what the serpent said. He said, "God knows that if you eat of that tree, you're going to be like He is." But that was just foolishness. Was she going to be like God? No, but she was going to learn about something God didn't want her to know about and that was evil, because that tree was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. At this time, all they knew was God and good.

Eve thought about it, and she pictured herself k-n-o-w-i-n-g stuff that she didn't know about. Those things still happen today. People try to tell others, "You just don't know about this. You should try it." People don't like to think there's something they don't know about. There are things God does not ever want you to know about. As long as you stay not knowing, you'll stay happier. Eve didn't like it that God was trying to keep her from experiencing something great, so she allowed herself to be talked into it. We don't know how long it took. We don't know if it was several days she went to the tree and was tempted, or if it was the first time, but she finally reached out and took the fruit, partook of it, and gave some to Adam.

All of a sudden, Adam and Eve did know some things they had not known before. They realized they weren't wearing clothes and it made them feel odd. They felt something inside of them that was closing them off from God, because when He came down to talk with them that evening, they hid from Him. They had never hidden from God before. They hid from Him because something wasn't right. They had died. Their souls were not connected to Him anymore, and they didn't know what that was, but it was an awful feeling. They didn't like it. They had died. The serpent lied when he said, "You won't die." Yes, they did. They were still breathing and moving around, but their souls had died.

God can tell us to not to do something, and if we ask Him why, He has every right to say, "Because I said so." You know, when you're a child, you don't like to hear those words. You ask for permission to do something, and when you're told *no*, you ask, "Why?" And Mom says, "Because I said so." Is that your mom just trying to throw her authority around? No. You probably

wouldn't even understand the reason. You wouldn't want to sit and listen for hours to her trying to explain what you can't understand yet because of your inexperience. That's God. God doesn't need to explain to us *why*. In His infinite wisdom He can see 'way down the road. Why obey God? Just because He said so. That's what Adam and Eve should have thought when they were asked by the serpent to partake of that fruit. God said so, and that's enough. For so many today, it's not enough. So Adam and Eve were driven out of the garden.

I remember, as a little girl, I had a treasured little children's Bible with pictures in it. The first picture was of Adam and Eve being driven out of the garden. I used to spend a lot of time looking at that picture. It was sad. I remember Eve's face. She was ashamed. She was embarrassed. Adam had his arm around her, and they were bowed with their shoulders in an attitude of shame. There was an angel standing there with a flaming sword. The Bible tells us that there was a flaming sword that turned every which way to keep them out of the garden. Do you know why?

Let's look and see why. Genesis 3. Now, we're going from the last book of the Bible back to the first book of the Bible for a few minutes. Genesis 3:22, "And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever." Why were they driven out of Eden? What were they being denied access to? The tree of life. They had chosen that other tree, and now that's what they had—the knowledge of good and evil. They had no more access to the tree of life. That's a really important point. If it had stayed that way, we would be of all men most miserable ... if access had been denied forever.

There were other things that happened, too. If you'll go back up to verses 18 and 19, you'll see that they called down on themselves a curse. "Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth," talking about the land. If you'll go up to verse 17, it says "cursed is the ground for thy sake." "There will be thorns and thistles. You'll have to work really hard." When we were children working in the garden, we used to get mad at Adam and Eve. We used to say, "I don't know why they had to listen to the serpent. Now we have to deal with all these thorns and thistles and weeds." You know, that was just a waste of time for us to be angry at Adam and Eve. Do we know if we had been in their spot we would have resisted temptation any more than they did? We don't know that, do we? Do we know that? We would hope so. I used to waste a lot of time being mad at Adam and Eve instead of being thankful for what we're going to talk about in a few minutes. Access to the tree of life. Thorns and thistles were the least of their problems.

Adam and Eve were denied access to eternal life. God created them because He wanted someone to love Him, and the only way you can prove that you love God is to obey Him unquestioningly. He's not going to make you listen. He could have knocked the fruit out of Eve's hand, couldn't He? But He didn't. Because He still loved man, and because He wanted to have communion with him now—and for all eternity.

Let's look at Genesis 3, verse 15. I'm sort of going upward in this chapter instead of reading downward.

He was speaking to Satan in the form of a serpent. This was God speaking: "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." That's the first glimpse of the promise of salvation's plan. It (the seed of the woman) shall bruise thy head. Jesus was going to come one day, and He was going to conquer sin, death, hell, and the grave. Stamp out sin for all those who would believe on Him. His heel would be bruised. Don't think that sin didn't cause Jesus pain. It caused Him pain during His entire ministry, and in the end, it cost Him His life. But He was the Victor. He stood on the head of the serpent and conquered death and sin, and gave us the chance to have eternal life—and that was the only way it could happen.

I'd like to look at a really precious verse in First Peter. I keep having songs coming to my mind as I'm speaking. Sometimes I might just start singing, and you can sing with me. A lot of these songs have whole sermons in them because they're based on the Word of God. I Peter, chapter 1, beginning with verse 18: "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained [clear back before Adam and Eve, because—did God know that they weren't going to listen? Did He? He did.] before the foundation of the world, [because He loved them, and He loves us]."

A lamb without blemish and without spot. We read in the Old Testament where they were commanded to bring a lamb. They would have to stand there at the altar with their hand on that lamb. It was to be a lamb that was without blemish, representing Jesus who did no sin. Standing there with his hand on that lamb, the man who brought it faced the priest, saying, "I'm bringing this of my own free will and I'm acknowledging my sins and I'm begging that I can place my sins on this innocent animal." This animal would be sacrificed for his sins. That's what happened when Jesus came. He was sacrificed for our sins, like a poor innocent lamb that hadn't done any of the things that person had done. Jesus came, an innocent Lamb, to take away the sins, not just for each of those people who stood there at Calvary, but for the whole world.

When we think about those people in the Old Testament—they knew that some day there would be a Savior. If they paid attention to prophecy and paid attention to the word that God spoke to them, they knew there would be a Savior. Though they didn't live in His time, as long as they had faith in those promises, they could have the benefit of those promises. There were lots of prophecies that showed people from time to time the plan salvation that would unfold.

I just want to read a few of these prophecies to you right now. I'd like to read a promise of His birth. We usually read this at Christmastime: Isaiah 7:14, "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name *Immanuel*."—meaning "God with us." Do you remember how God used to walk in Eden with Adam and Eve? He's promising to send His Son to the earth

so that He could have fellowship with man once more.

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

Jesus' ministry was foretold, and He got up in the synagogue and read this scripture. When He sat down, He said in Luke 4:21, "This day [How could they've missed it?] is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." Isaiah 61:1, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." Isaiah 9:2, "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined."

Jesus' betrayal at the hand of Peter was foretold: The prophet Zachariah 11:12, "They weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver."

Jesus' crucifixion was foretold in the Psalms. When you have time, read Psalm 22. It's amazing how many details of the crucifixion are there. I'm just going to read a couple of verses beginning with verse 16: "The assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet. I may tell all my bones [They saw all His bones because of the way He was stretched out by the cross]: they look and stare upon me. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture."

Here is another piece of prophecy that we find in Psalm 16:10b: "Neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." What does that tell us was going to happen? Jesus would rise from death.

I never saw in my little children's Bible a picture of the return to Eden, but we do have that privilege. I always saw Adam and Eve being driven out. But you know, we have the privilege of going back to that beautiful time. Did you know that? Jesus paid the price that we could return to perfection. Yes, we still have pain and suffering in this life. Our mortal, physical bodies will return to the dust, but we have the promise of eternal life. We have the promise of entering Eden again. We do.

There are several verses in Revelation that tell about the access to the tree of life. This reminds me of Bro. Brian's message recently about being an overcomer. What does it mean to overcome sin? We can overcome through Jesus. Revelation 3:5, "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels."

There's a song that keeps running around in my mind. Do you know this?—

*I have overcome now by the blood of the Lamb,
And I'm clothed in my raiment so white;
And I'm on my journey to that glorious land,
Where forever I'll dwell in the light.
Praise the Lord, I am washed
In the all-cleansing blood of the Lamb,*

*And my robes are whiter than the driven snow,
I am washed in the blood of the Lamb.*

Let's turn to Revelation 22 again and look at the second verse: "In the midst of the street of it [talking about the Holy City of God], and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month [Is there a time when the tree of life runs out?]: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." I'm not sure exactly why it says on both sides of the river. I know F. G. Smith thinks that maybe that means *those of us here on Earth and those in heaven all have access to the tree of life*. That's a beautiful thought, isn't it? Why? Because we are one family. There's a place in Ephesians, I believe, that says, "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." We all have access to that tree of life. We don't have to wait until we get to heaven to have access to it. We have access here on Earth. But in heaven, we won't have to worry about being tempted to turn away from it.

In conclusion, I'd like to read our text one more time. Revelation 22:14, "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." When Jesus was on the cross, do you remember the last thing He said? "It is finished." What did He mean by "finished"? He had purchased access to that tree of life for us. We could go back to that immortality that Adam and Eve were tempted into giving up. "It is finished." We have access once again to the tree of life.

We have a song that we sing called *Waves of Devotion*. The chorus says, "The waves of devotion are flooding my soul, And sparkle so bright in the sun; I drink of that fountain, O glory, I'm whole! My Eden on earth has begun." Did you hear that? We have access to that perfect life again because Jesus paid for it. He paid for that access, and we can experience it again. "My Eden on earth has begun."

Do you want to live forever? Do you want to have eternal life? Do you want to have access to the tree of life right now? Don't wait till heaven. That's not when the access will be opened. It is open for us now. It's either life here on Earth and life to come, or death on this earth and death to come. You can't live in death on this earth and then suddenly have life in heaven. To have life in heaven, you must live the life here on Earth. You must have life through His Son here on Earth to have eternal life. And then your Eden on Earth begins. We can walk and talk with Him here on Earth. We don't have to wait till heaven. "And He walks with me, and He talks with me, And He tells me I am His own, And the joy we share as we tarry there, None other has ever known."

We have a crown waiting for us in heaven if we accept that access to that tree of life here on Earth. There's a place in Revelation that says, "Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." Keep that access to the tree of life clear and free. Jesus paid for it. If you haven't accepted that access from Him, you have a chance right now. Today! Why would you want to live like Adam and Eve lived—in misery when they were cut off from access to the tree of life? Jesus paid for you to have it. †

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July 1-6, 2025, Lord willing

Bro. Gregory E. Tyler, Host Pastor



HAGERSTOWN SPRING REVIVAL

Hagerstown, MD

March 27-30, 2025, Lord willing

Bro. David Goble, Evangelist

Bro. Gregory Tyler, Pastor



HONDURAS REVIVAL

Coxen Hole, Roatan

April 15-20, 2025, Lord willing

Bro. Lee Jeffries, Pastor

**THE CHURCH OF GOD
STANDS FOR**

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

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

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