

THE PENTECOSTAL evangel

NOT BY MIGHT, NOR BY POWER, BUT BY MY SPIRIT, SAITH THE LORD

INTERNATIONAL EDITION

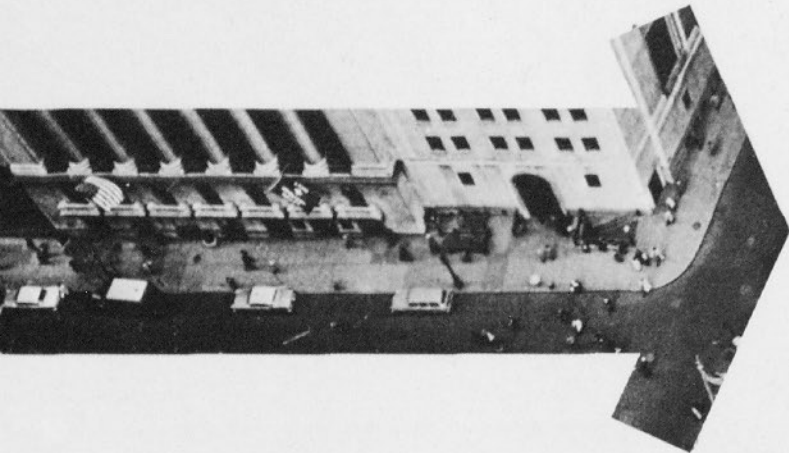


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I CAME AWAY FEELING, "WE ARE IN THE GRIP OF SOMETHING IMMENSE—SOMETHING WE DO NOT QUITE UNDERSTAND—SOMETHING THAT INTENDS TO CONQUER US!"



'AND THE BEAT GOES ON!'

By C. M. WARD

A DRAMATIC HEADLINE in a prominent Missouri newspaper stated, "We Need Cleansing of Hearts." United States Senator Stuart Symington had further said, "Americans must take a careful look at what is wrong in our society." To me his comments sounded like the Sunday night evangelistic service, with an altar call.

I sat waiting for an interview in a very large radio station not long ago. The staff was composed of highly trained, intelligent, generous people. I could not have been received more graciously or treated more kindly.

Technicians, engineers, continuity writers, staff, and stars were all at work. Production never lagged for a second. The personnel seemed disturbed only when a tiny interval of silence developed, or when an interruption of the beat occurred.

It appeared to me that even the pounding of the typewriters was synchronized to that beat. It was like an intoxicant. It drugged you. It reduced you to its will. It was almost like a hypnosis.

I came away feeling, "We are in the grip of something immense—something we do not quite understand—

something that intends to conquer us." *That beat is strong and relentless.* It pushes man over boundaries.

The Bible describes a boundary. God told the first man and woman: "Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:17).

There is something more than the arbitrary will of God involved here. God said there is a danger—a death. Yet today we are destroying moral boundaries in the name of academic and democratic freedom. Satan is still tempting us: "In the day that ye eat thereof . . . ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:4). The lure to set our own rules, to decide right and wrong, to be "as gods," has caught up with us.

The sequence is inescapable. Violence and murder followed. "Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him" (Genesis 4:8).

One thing becomes crystal clear in human experience: the strength of law depends upon God-consciousness. When Adam and Eve broke fellowship with God, it was not long until they were involved with lawlessness and a funeral. There was not as much of a thrill taking things into their own hands as they thought there would be.

There are some things to be left alone. You do not tamper with the inch, the ounce, the decimal point. They are fixed boundaries. Our freedom from calamity de-

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pend upon our freedom from interference with these boundaries. Break such a boundary, and there is an inundation that will not quit.

The knowledge of good and evil belongs to God. He makes the rules and He knows why. One thing is certain: a God-fearing nation is prosperous. "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people" (Proverbs 14:34).

Many years ago I read a biography called *Our Fritz*. It is the story of the father of the German Kaiser of World War I. Strong family ties linked him with the royal family of Britain. Thus the nickname. He was loved and respected by the British.

Unfortunately for the world, he died early in his reign. He was a born-again believer. He observed things in the Fatherland that disturbed him. He asked: "What is going to happen to us as a nation if we cease to believe? I do not refer to those of us who are not Protestant, but to those who have ceased to believe that Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of God."

History proves it was a prophetic look. He saw the frightening inroads of sophisticated higher criticism that exalted human pride above the Word of God. German culture—no longer Martin Luther's Bible—became the status symbol.

So the thirst to become "as gods" reached epidemic proportions. And the Word of God was fulfilled: "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall" (Proverbs 16:18). For Germany, World War I was a fall; World War II was destruction.

Hitler pushed the "as gods" insanity to the ultimate. He took the seed of the Satanic question, "Yea, hath God said...?" and built the theory of a super-race and the right and the mission to destroy anything "inferior." The result was unmitigated violence. "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground" (Genesis 4:10).

That was the warning in the soul of the German statesman-emperor when he asked, "What is going to happen to us as a nation if we cease to believe?" *The answer is not debatable.*

There is a tide of unbelief running at full ebb. Isaiah described it with the skill of an artist: "But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked" (Isaiah 57:20, 21).

The picture of mire is to be bogged down—stuck—engaged beyond the power of release. It is one thing to be soiled; it is another to feel the bottom giving way and to know you are sinking. That is what unbelief will do!

You trifle with God long enough and you'll unloose a flood of retribution that will not quit. James knew the pattern: "When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (James 1:15).

Suddenly a jolt big enough to awaken this nation is felt. We have experienced enough of them in recent years. A commission is appointed. They note and catalog symptoms.

Undoubtedly such symptoms were observed and filed in Noah's day. There is one thing that commissions fail to understand. *Only God can change the tide.* And, mister, there is a tide that is running *against* and not *for* this country at the present time.

That ought to mean something to those who face reality. It ought to say to them something is wrong. Instead there is the philosophy that somehow we will outdistance it. We will outgrow it. In Noah's day "they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded"—too pre-occupied to heed the warning (Luke 17:28). It is always that tragic combination of godless unbelief and worldly care.

I have often asked myself how it could be that they "knew not until the flood came."

Today we have brilliant analysts in every news media who put it on the line. How can such ignorance exist? Because where a thing is truly predicted, *knowledge* and *faith* go together, just as *ignorance* and *unbelief* go together.

Only when I give credence to that which is foretold of God does it become knowledge to me. In no other way can I know the extraordinary events of the future. By rejecting this testimony of God they revealed the unbelieving enmity of their hearts. Note how well the Bible describes them: "This they are *willingly* ignorant of" (2 Peter 3:5).

You can be wise, but unable to read the writing on the wall. When you want to be smarter than God and make your own rules of right and wrong, look out!

Paul came face to face with this same situation throughout Europe. He told the bon vivant of Corinth: "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish, foolishness; but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" (1 Corinthians 1:18-20).

So testimony was given, as it is being given to this nation; yet through unbelief people can be as unprepared as though they had not been warned.

It is an awful thing to be caught in this relentless rhythm of hell. Daniel told Belshazzar: "Thou... hast not humbled thine heart, though thou *knewest* all this; but hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven" (Daniel 5:22, 23).

There came a full moment of reckoning!

Senator Symington is right. There *is* something wrong with our society. We have made the Bible simply an interesting adventure into comparative religions. *Our forefathers made it the cornerstone.* We have developed our own morality. Our forefathers left the question of right and wrong to God.

We desire peace. It is the politician's dream, the draft-card burner's quest. It is the soldier's sacrifice and the demonstrator's cause. Why can't we find peace when we work so hard for it and spend so much to obtain it?

The answer is clear. You cannot have it both ways. Peace and righteousness go together. Paul told the Romans: "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Romans 14:17).

You cannot go your own way and enjoy heaven's blessings at the same time. It cannot be done. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked," It is time for America to turn around and face that fact!

THE TONE OF HER VOICE HAD AN URGENCY TO IT.

IF EVER YOU NEED HELP...

By J. L. McINTOSH



IT WAS HALLOWEEN NIGHT 1966. Already the neighborhood was alive with children dressed in all forms of weirdness.

We had been invited to a friend's home for the evening and were just leaving our house when the phone rang. I heard the voice of a very disturbed young wife: "Reverend McIntosh? My husband wants to talk to you." The tone of her voice had an urgency to it.

Leaving the family at the home of friends, I drove to the address. Pat Woodell answered the door and ushered me into the living room where her husband Ray sat wringing his hands. He had been on a weekend drunk and had just sobered up.

I took a chair where I could sit directly in front of him and asked that we pray for God's leading in our discussion. They agreed.

Then I asked Ray if he were an alcoholic. He said he wasn't sure what an alcoholic was. So I told him their characteristics—how they will lie and steal to have that drink. The necessity to have that one drink is more than they can control. That first drink leads to another and another until they are intoxicated.

When I finished, he looked very startled. "You couldn't have drawn a better picture of me if you had known me," he said.

But analyzing his problem wasn't the answer. "The first thing you must realize is that you cannot help yourself," I told him. "You need to be delivered. And your help must come from Someone mightier than you."

I opened my Bible and began showing him God's plan of salvation. When I was assured he understood that Jesus Christ was his only hope for deliverance, I asked if he were ready to give God a chance in his life. He said, "Yes," and we knelt to pray.

That night Ray Woodell became a new man in Christ. He was delivered from his sins as Jesus came into his heart.

But Ray Woodell's story doesn't begin or end there. He later told me: "Several months before my conversion a young man came to our door and invited me to church. Before he left, he asked for the privilege of praying with us. Then he said that if I ever needed help I should call his pastor, Brother McIntosh."

Ray Woodell never escaped that young man's prayer. "I couldn't imagine why a teen-ager would be so interested in me and my family," he said.

Ray Woodell's drinking problem started in 1954 when he first moved to Kansas City from Arkansas. He relates:

"I was too young to buy liquor, but it wasn't too hard to find someone who would buy it for me. Drinking became the biggest thing in my life. I would even borrow money to drink on. I was ashamed for my family to see me drunk and I would often slip into the basement where we lived and sleep off the effects of the drinking.

"My last drunk was the weekend before my conversion. That Saturday I went to town to pay some bills. As I waited for a bus to go home, something happened. The next thing I remembered I was sitting at a bar two blocks away. This drinking spree lasted until Sunday night.

"My money was gone. How could I face my wife?"

J. L. McIntosh is pastor of Northeast Full Gospel Assembly, Kansas City, Missouri.

"I had often thought of ending it all; so when I got home and found my wife gone, I decided this was the time. I was loading my rifle when she came in. She wrested the gun from me and ran to hide it.

"After thinking about what had nearly happened, I realized there was no hope for my situation within myself. I had tried Alcoholics Anonymous, but it wasn't my answer. Perhaps this was the time that young man who had prayed for me was talking about. Perhaps the church could help me.

"I had to be sure this was what I wanted to do, so I waited until the next day—until the effects of the liquor had worn off—before I told my wife, 'Call the preacher that young man who prayed for us a few months back told us about.'

"Later while Brother McIntosh was praying with me, I felt a burning sensation in the area of my shirt pocket. Instantly I jerked the half pack of cigarettes from my pocket and threw them across the room. No one had even



Mr. and Mrs. Ray Woodell and their five children.


mentioned smoking to me, but I knew then that God was not pleased with my using them.

"I haven't had another drink of liquor or smoked another cigarette since that night in 1966.

"My wife and I had no previous church affiliation. Now we are both converted, are members of Northeast Full Gospel Assembly, and God has filled both of us with His Holy Spirit. My parents were backslidden for years, but through this they are again serving the Lord.

"Before this, our money went for drink. Now we are buying a car. We are also buying a home. And we are helping to support the church with tithes and offerings.

"It is simply impossible for me to tell you how much it has meant to my family since we have made Jesus Christ the center of our lives. How I thank Him for His love and mercy."

Ray Woodell's testimony is part of the endless story of God's great mercy. God met Ray's need when he turned to Him. He is waiting to do the same for you. 

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THEY ARE SAYING

Sure Control of Violence

William R. Bright, president, Campus Crusade for Christ International:

"I was shocked when I first heard of the tragic assassination of Senator Robert F. Kennedy.

"Then I realized that I had no right to be shocked, for this act of violence is just another example of the logical outworking of the natural human heart. As the apostle Paul wrote, 'When you follow your own wrong inclinations your lives will produce these evil results: impure thoughts, eagerness for lustful pleasure . . . and there will be wrong doctrine, envy, murder, drunkenness, wild parties, and all that sort of thing' (Galatians 5:19-21, *Living New Testament*).

"What happened in Los Angeles, Memphis, and Dallas can happen anywhere. The only answer to present riot and rebellion, turmoil and tumult, hate and horror, is the love of God shed abroad in the human heart through the power of His Holy Spirit."

Everything But God's Will Is Subordinate

Madame Chiang Kai-shek, in US News & World Report:

"Life is really simple, and yet how confused we make it. In old Chinese art, there is just one outstanding object, perhaps a flower on a scroll. Everything else in the picture is subordinate. . . .

"An integrated life is like that. What is that one flower? As I see it now, it is the will of God. . . . I used to pray that God would do this or that. Now I pray only that God will make His will known to me."

What Once Was Wrong Still Is

Paul Harvey, in The King's Business:

"Nobody disputes the fact of our nation's moral decay, but there is much dispute about what should be done about it. Most every newspaper, broadcast, magazine, and law enforcement bulletin headlines the degeneracy of the generation.

"Not everybody wants to call sin, sin. Some call it 'mischief,' 'delinquency,' or 'rebellion.' And hardly anybody can agree where we should draw the line.

"Yet moral law is very specific to any reader of God's Word. You can ignore that Word, or deny it. You can argue it, deride it, poke fun at it. . . . But when you have done your worst, the Word is still there.

"There is explicit Bible Law which condemns: a child rebelling against his parents . . . students rioting to disrupt the work of a university . . . a social agitator encouraging 'civil disobedience' . . . adopting personal dress and habits which are dirty, dishevelled, repulsive . . . having a beer bust . . . having a sex orgy.

"These offenses are not new; they are specifically defined in the Bible. And the laws against them have not changed. What once was right still is. What once was wrong still is."

HOW TO LIVE BETTER FOR LESS



Rosalie

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THESE UNADVERTISED BARGAINS THAT ARE AVAILABLE TO EVERY FAMILY.

By RUTH COPELAND

ARMED WITH PSYCHOLOGICAL KNOW-HOW, advertisers are systematically working to break down your resistance. They are spending millions to persuade consumers to purchase the most exciting assortment of commodities, conveniences, and luxuries ever devised by man.

The admen would give you the impression that every problem of your home and family will be solved simply by acquiring their products. They presume, of course, that in this affluent society everyone can afford a private swimming pool, several cars, a lake cabin, luxurious motorboat, and anything the human heart could wish.

Many parents fall for the bait. "If the children need it, they shall have it," they decide. So everything from lavish new wardrobes to new suburban homes with central air and automatic appliances go into the family budget.

Children are often denied the experience of wanting something and waiting for it. Once Junior was content with a bicycle—now he wants a car. Once young sister was happy with a new school dress but now she wants a formal.

"Everybody's doing it!" is the excuse. But everything has its price, and eventually the average family awakens to find it is spending more than it is earning. So Mother hires a "sitter" and goes to work, while Dad finds a way to moonlight for extra income.

Parents become overtired and frustrated; homelife is disrupted; children are neglected—and everyone is on edge. Dad and Mother salve their conscience by saying,

"We just must meet the payments—we need these things to make our home happy," as though *things* can make family life happy and successful. It would be funny if it were not tragic.

You can live better for less. Here's how. Take advantage of these unadvertised bargains in happiness that are available to every family.

Companionship has no consumer product rating but it can bring some of the greatest pleasures any family ever enjoyed. Anyone can pack a simple picnic lunch and enjoy a good time at the park.

An hour of Dad's time spent behind a catcher's mitt, letting a boy demonstrate the speed and control with which he can pitch that ball, will do more for his son than a pocketful of cash to spend downtown.

An occasional walk and heart-to-heart talk with Dad can do more for a girl's self-confidence than a shopping trip or a session at personality school.

Haven't you noticed, when you play with the little ones, how much they want your fellowship? "See me, Daddy! See what I can do!"

Try giving them more of *yourself* and less *things*. The gift will be infinitely more satisfying and the monthly payments no trouble at all.

Having Mother at home is not so much a luxury as a necessity—but it means more to children than the most expensive outfit at the clothing store. Better is the modest home into which a child can run confidently when school is out and say, "Where are you, Mom? Guess what hap-

pened today!" than a lonely, tomblike house, however exclusive or lavishly furnished it may be, where there is no one waiting except a "sitter" who is impatient to return to her own home. Mom may think she is doing something big by earning the money to pay the "sitter," the delicatessen, and all the costs of keeping up with the Joneses, but any small boy can tell you that nothing from the delicatessen is half as wonderful as watching his own mother mix up cookies or cinnamon rolls, and then smelling the sweet, spicy fragrance from the oven.

There is no price tag on *laughter*, either. In fact, it cannot be bought, but your home can have it. Incidentally, it can save a lot of doctor's bills too. Someone wrote to a medical authority asking what is the best heart medicine. The substance of his reply was that laughter not only does the heart good like medicine (as the Bible puts it) but is also a tonic to the stomach, liver, glands, kidneys, arteries, and blood pressure.

Another way to live better is to *tell stories* to your children. Instead of spending money on entertaining, tell them stories from the Bible and from other books and from your own experiences. No entertainment is quite as satisfying as a story personally narrated by Dad or Mom with all the expression and color you can put into it.


Something else you can afford to have in your home are *good manners*. This kind of training will help your children more than dancing lessons or psychiatry.

Peace in the home is within your income too. There is a price tag on this. It may cost some self-denial, such as buttoning your lip to cut off a sharp retort. It may cost a bit of kindness, "Yes, Dear"—or an apology, "I'm sorry; I was wrong"—but it will not increase the monthly payments.

Showing love will definitely raise your standard of living. One day I counselled a young lady who was in desperate need of help. After conversing at some length I sensed that the girl had not uncovered the basic cause of her insecurity and confusion. Later she wrote that her greatest childhood regret was that her mother and father had shown her no affection. The sequel was that the girl gave all her heart to the first young man who showed her any affection. We can only hope he is the right one!

Above all, *you need God* in the home if you want your family to live better. He desires to dwell in each heart, of course, but there are some things a parent can do to welcome His gracious Presence into the family life. One is to give thanks to Him before each meal. Another is to read the Bible together in the home each day, as well as to attend church together.

When the Son of God was upon earth, He graced the humblest homes with His presence. He blessed the bread on their tables, stroked the heads of their little children, and solved their family problems by performing miracles. As the Unseen Guest in your home He will do the same for you.

To summarize, there are many ways you can live better for less money. Why not have a family conference and decide to balance the budget? Not only will you save yourself from possible bankruptcy, but the kind of people your children are a few years from now will make you glad there was companionship, laughter, peace, and love in your home when they were growing up. 

IS YOUTH TO BLAME?

IF YOUNG PEOPLE GET INTO TROUBLE, who is to blame? Is it entirely their fault, or must parents carry a large part of the responsibility?

One thing we know: problem youth do not just happen. They are the product of environment and example. Instead of blaming their children, perhaps parents need to examine themselves to see if they are giving the right kind of training.

Take a minute to grade yourself on the following questions:

- | | YES | NO |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Do you sometimes say "no" and teach the children they can't have everything they want? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Do you show personal affection to make your children very certain that you love them? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Do you treat each child as an individual and really try to get to know him? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Do you promote character-building recreation, amusements, and hobbies in your home? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Do you provide good magazines and books for your children, including Christian literature? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. Do you give as much time, thought, and money to the spiritual growth of your children as you give to their physical, mental, and social growth? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. Do you encourage your children to bring their friends home frequently? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. Do you always know where your children are and what they are doing? Do they always know where you are and what you are doing? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. Do you demonstrate to your children that Christ, prayer, and Bible reading are important in your life? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10. Do you take your children to Sunday school, worship services, and other Christian gatherings? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

If you can answer "yes" to all 10 questions, you are doing well. If not, you need to improve your own record before expecting your children to improve theirs.

RESIST

By GEORGE HOLMES

THE AGE OF MAN slowly sinks to its demise. Its convulsive death struggles are felt in every area of life. Jesus painted the picture in Matthew 24 and warned His disciples that these death throes were bound to test *their* faith and patience.

He said many would be "led astray" and would "fall away" (see verses 5, 10, Amplified Version). Unless a person is looking at Christendom through rose-tinted glasses, he must realize this is happening right now in an unprecedented way.

The most searching and alarming of all Christ's predictions comes in verse 12: "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold."

Jesus warns us ahead of time and then tells us the *cause* of spiritual coldness will be the increase of iniquity—*lawlessness*. Rebellion against authority is no new principle. Its working, through the centuries, has been like leaven in dough: somewhat hidden, a "mystery" (2 Thessalonians 2:7).

However, the mystery of lawlessness is now in the open and will soon find embodiment in the Lawless One (the Antichrist). The coming of this evil genius "will be attended by great power and with all sorts of [pretended] miracles and signs and delusive marvels—[all of them] lying wonders—and by unlimited seduction to evil and with all wicked deception . . ." (2 Thessalonians 2:9, 10, Amplified). The tidal wave of lawlessness now prevailing in the world is understandable—and inevitable—in the light of this statement.

In homes, colleges, communities, and nations, rebellion against law and order is the gravest problem of the hour. Protests for a thousand causes, by multitudes of different people, erupt like rashes of boils. A protest against having nothing to protest about can be expected next!

Yet how can people know God's laws unless they read the Bible? It is quite possible there are thousands in this

country who have never even heard of the Ten Commandments, let alone know where to find them. With all the moral road signs obscured or removed a holocaust of trouble is inevitable. Understandably, Jesus pointed out that Christians living in such times as these will find their spirits worn with an uphill fight and temptations to slipshod living.

Today people seem gullible enough to believe in any panacea offered in the name of religion—except the saving gospel itself. They will mail their money to cranks who offer the most preposterous remedies for their ills. "Take heed," the calm voice of Jesus speaks over the centuries, "that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive *many*. And many false prophets shall rise and shall deceive *many*." Many impostors are fooling many people.

Wars, hot and cold, grip men with fear and uncertainty. The confusing blast of propaganda, the departure of sons and husbands to Vietnam, the seeming lack of solution or possible end to the conflict are, in themselves, a war of attrition upon the believer's spirit.

The bedlam of opposing ideologies and the mushrooming of militant minorities has caused "nation to rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom," as Jesus predicted. Worldwide rebellion and relentless revolution is the climate in which we live.

Famines, pestilences, and earthquakes add their terrifying quota. Predictions that part of our continent is to fall into the sea are sufficient to make people flee to "safer areas." It would be wise to heed the written declaration of the Lord God: "I will once more shake not only the earth but heaven as well. The words 'once more' plainly show that the created things will be shaken and removed, so that the things that are not shaken will remain" (Hebrews 12:26, 27, Today's English Version).

"All these," explained Jesus, referring to the foregoing



tensions, "are the beginning of sorrows." The death throes of man's day will coincide with and become the labor pains of the Day of Christ—the Millennium when He will reign upon the earth and bring in the Golden Age of peace and prosperity.

Like an incomparable physician, having diagnosed the cause, Jesus also deals with the *symptoms* of spiritual coldness. As a thermometer indicates a person's physical condition, so our *love* reveals our spiritual state. We may say we love God, but our acts prove whether we really do. "The love of *many* shall wax cold," declared the Saviour, "because iniquity shall abound." If our love is not growing, it is decaying. Love is not sentiment, caprice, or merely a warm feeling. "This is the love of God,

that we keep his commandments" (1 John 4:3). Now we can understand why living in an environment of lawlessness presents such a challenge to the Christian. Modern man doesn't like the idea of keeping commandments.

Our love does not *suddenly* turn cold. Jesus carefully pointed out it "waxes" cold—that is, it cools gradually. Spiritually, it is not a blowout we have to fear, but a slow leak. The fire dies down; there is a subtle, unnoticed cooling off. There is a slow erosion due to the winds of lawlessness. To the leader of the busy, fundamental church at Ephesus, Jesus said, "I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love" (Revelation 2:4). The believers were not spiritually cold, but they were on the way to becoming so. Never forget, Jesus warned, "The love of *many* shall wax cold."

By implication Jesus, in His searching analysis, shows us the *antidote* for spiritual coldness. While many offer a diagnosis of the ills of society and the church, Christ alone advances the remedy.

We can help ourselves by remembering that Jesus told us the majority of Christians will be affected by a declining love. Because He told us beforehand, none should be tempted to say, "It could never happen to me." It is happening to many—right now—and no one can escape the danger.

We must keep on rowing if we would not drift with the current. Jesus put it like this: "But he that shall endure to the end shall be saved" (verse 13). He calls for perseverance. The importance of the basic Christian habits of daily personal prayer and Bible meditation are vital and essential. And "let us not hold aloof from our church meetings, as some do. Let us do all we can to help one another's faith, and this the more earnestly as we see the final day drawing ever nearer" (Hebrews 10:25, Phillips). Christians desperately need each other. We need the church—and the church needs us.

Some centuries ago, in a town in southern France, Marie Durant, a bright 14-year-old girl was brought before the authorities and charged with holding the Huguenot Christian "heresy." She was asked to abjure her faith. She was not asked to commit a criminal or immoral act, but just to say, "I abjure." Because she would not do this she was imprisoned in a tower with 30 other women.

In this day of glib insincerity and doubletalk, some may think this girl was foolish to prejudice her years of maidenhood and the dignity of motherhood for the sake of two words. But for 38 years Marie refused to recant. What buoyed up her and those other women in that prison while days stretched into months and years? What kept them as they endured the bodily deterioration and weakening that comes with incarceration? What gave them strength to endure to the end?

Their secret is condensed into a single word scratched on the prison wall and read, today, by tourists: *Résistez*—resist. That was the one, simple, uncompromising principle that made them persevere. It is a principle needed more than ever in these days.

Our test is not the loneliness of imprisonment—not yet. The danger more likely is that having too much liberty for ourselves we shall become soft. We may not be called to suffer the bludgeonings of sadists, but we are called to resist the encroachments of a lawless age and submit ourselves to the disciplines of God, lest we wax cold and betray Christ. It is a stern battle. *Résistez!*

READ THE WORD

CHAPTERS FOR THIS WEEK

Sun. Ezekiel 17, 18	Thurs. Ezekiel 25, 26
Mon. Ezekiel 19, 20	Fri. Ezekiel 27, 28
Tues. Ezekiel 21, 22	Sat. Ezekiel 29, 30
Wed. Ezekiel 23, 24	Sun. Ezekiel 31, 32

"Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die (Ezekiel 18:4).

GOD'S STRATEGIC NAVAL ASSIGNMENTS

Chaplain (Commander) DAVID W. PLANK, U. S. Navy, United States Naval Academy

IT WAS A BEAUTIFUL AFTERNOON late in May 1968. As I walked along the red-bricked sidewalk of Harvard University's Divinity Street toward the William James Building, I thumbed through the mail I had just picked up from my box.

One letter looked especially interesting. On the left end of the long envelope was printed "NAVY" in large, bold, blue-and-gold letters. And beneath it was Navy's 1968 football schedule.

Just a few days previously I had been officially notified that upon completing my postgraduate studies at Harvard University, I would be assigned to the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis, Maryland. As an Assemblies of God Navy Chaplain I was to join two other Protestant chaplains in providing a religious ministry to the over 4,000 midshipmen at the Navy's "university," founded in 1845 to provide graduates who are dedicated to a career in the naval service.

My first thought was that I had been sent an application for season tickets to the football games. As I tore open one end of the envelope, I found something better—a three-page handwritten letter which began:

"Dear Chaplain Plank: I'd like to introduce myself. I'm Don Ross, one of the Naval Academy football coaches (civilian) . . . and manager of our Athletic Recruiting Office. . . . I just learned of your assignment here. May I say you are an answer to prayer."

Don Ross went on to say that he had been a Christian for many years, yet he had felt something lacking in his life. Then one day God wonderfully met both him and his wife, Carol; they experienced the blessed infilling of God's Holy Spirit. The letter continued:

"There is a real movement amongst the midshipmen. . . . I can think of no better place for a chaplain than at our Academy. The potential is almost beyond the human mind to conceive. I offer you my complete cooperation and help."

As of this writing, I have just reported for duty to the Naval Academy for a tour of three years. It is thrilling to witness here the clear evidence of the Holy Spirit's working, to be joined in this ministry by Christian brethren of kindred spirit, to realize that at this institution midshipmen are being trained not only in the naval sciences, but in godliness as well.

These men who will one day mind the helms of America's ships, submarines, and airplanes around the world, and assume other leadership positions of ever-increasing responsibility, are being equipped morally, mentally, and physically. And it will be our privilege to equip them also with the whole armor of God in order that they may be wholly God's, enabled to minister in His Name in a broken world.

Don Ross is only one of many outstanding men whom God has filled with power for service, strategically locating them in the Navy, and mightily using them to His glory.

I think of Electronic Technician First Class Douglas Shake who was empowered at Treasure Island, San Francisco, and who moved on to Keflavick, Iceland,



Chaplain David Plank



Don Ross



Commander Robert Thomas




where he established numbers of prayer and Bible study groups, winning many men to Christian discipleship.

I'm reminded also of Commander Robert Thomas, who along with his lovely wife, Cozette, moved into the fullness of the Spirit while stationed in Yokosuka, Japan. There they established not only a weeknight church-in-their-home, but they were instrumental also in forming a Full Gospel church in a neighboring Japanese village and in leading spiritual retreats for servicemen.

There is not space to tell the similarly exciting stories of Navy Captain Jack Duncan, stationed in the Pentagon; Lieutenant Commanders Bob Wright and Ken Baily (a

flier) in Vietnam; Commander Carl Wilgus serving in the Bureau of Naval Personnel; and the many others. But there *is* space to say that God is powerfully and wonderfully moving by His Spirit through the hearts and lives of many dedicated servicemen, of every rank and rate, situated under and upon the sea, on the land, and in the air.

Remember daily in your prayers the members of Christ's church who are in uniform. Let God fill *you* with His Spirit and strive by His grace and help to be faithful to *your* high calling in that strategic place where God has stationed you. 

"IF I HAD KNOWN WHAT WOULD HAPPEN, I WOULD HAVE ACTED DIFFERENTLY."

IS THERE EVER A SECOND CHANCE?

By CHARLES A. HEATH

IS IT TRUE THAT "opportunity knocks but once"? It may seem so. Often a person waits in vain for a business opportunity to be repeated. How many have wished they had invested a few dollars in a certain business venture which later became a financial success! A dollar invested in the beginning would be worth thousands today—but it's too late, they tell themselves, to cash in on the opportunity now. Perhaps it is; but there are other business opportunities today just as promising to an investor if he is willing to take the risk.

One does not sit in a courtroom very long before he hears expressions of vain regrets. "I didn't mean to do it." "If I had known what would happen, I would have acted differently." Persons in trouble fondly wish they could undo the past and have a chance to live the time over again, but it is impossible to recapture those same opportunities. They are gone forever. He who wastes his opportunities must face the consequences.

But there are always new opportunities by which, if we try, we may in some measure redeem the past. You may remember Roy Regals, the young football player who, some years ago, carried the ball in the wrong direction in a Rose Bowl game. Can you imagine how low he felt after such a blunder? But the coach sent him from the shower room, where he was nursing his agony, with the words, "Roy, get up. You're going out on that field to play again. The game isn't over." He had a second chance.

Lots of people have botched their lives but have arisen from their gloom, squared their shoulders, and gone out into the arena of life to try again. And many who failed the first time have succeeded the second.

The same is true in spiritual matters. Some of the strongest, most fruitful Christians are people who failed the Lord in earlier life but arose from defeat and, with God's help, tried again. "For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again..." (Proverbs 24:16).

The gospel gives men and women a second chance. Simon Peter's story is a good example. His crime was as

heinous as the crime of Judas Iscariot. He not only denied the Lord but compounded his sin by boasting, "Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee" (Matthew 26:35). At the telltale crowing of the cock, the awful realization of how he had failed broke through, and he wept bitterly (Mark 14:72).


The thoughts, the confessions, the promises Peter made to God during this time of weeping we cannot know; but there must have been great self-condemnation, deep repenting, intense soul-searching. Peter arose from abject defeat to become a powerful spiritual leader. The heavenly messenger sent him a personal message concerning the resurrection: "Go tell his disciples *and Peter*." Peter became the spokesman for the Church at Pentecost. He was the apostle chosen to open the door to the Gentiles.

The church at Laodicea received another chance. None of the seven other churches mentioned in the Apocalypse received such a severe rebuke. It was indicted for being lukewarm, deceptively rich, proudly independent. The Lord said that in His eyes they were wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. But on the heels of that stinging rebuke came one of the most gracious invitations in the New Testament: "Buy of me gold... that thou mayest be rich... raiment, that thou mayest be clothed... Behold, I stand at the door, and knock! if any man will hear my voice, and will open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Revelation 3:18-21).

Listen! God is the God of the second chance. The gospel offers you a fresh start. The Bible contains many examples of this fact.

Remember the lesson Jeremiah learned in the house of the potter. When the vessel was marred, the potter did not discard it but made it again. God, the Master Potter, is able to make marred lives into useful ones.

Jesus told the story of the Prodigal Son to make it crystal clear that a person who has failed once can rise out of defeat and begin again. Climb over that hill of repeated failures and broken vows. Cast aside the mocking relics of those discouraging defeats. Your Father waits to give you the ring of sonship, the new robe, and new shoes for your weary feet. If you have wandered far from God, He waits today to receive you back with open arms.

Put your faith in the words of Jesus: "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37). This is your second chance. Don't miss it. 



The Wisdom of Temperance

Next Sunday's Lesson

BY J. BASHFORD BISHOP

PROVERBS 23:1-35

THE WORD *temperance* simply means "self-control" and has to do with every area of a Christian's life and conduct.

SELF-CONTROL AND EATING (Proverbs 23:1-3)

These verses suggest the easy danger of gluttony when one attends a feast and possesses a keen appetite. A good appetite is generally a sign of health, something for which to thank God; but one must beware of becoming a victim of appetite. The way out of such temptation as suggested here is to "put a knife to thy throat." This of course does not suggest suicide; it is merely the Old Testament way of expressing the New Testament principle, "Mortify [put to death] the deeds of the body" (Romans 8:13). It means that in the power of the Holy Spirit one refuses to cater to an improper appetite.

SELF-CONTROL IN ACQUIRING MATERIAL GOODS (23:4)

"Labor not to be rich... Wilt thou set thine eyes

NATIONAL SUICIDE



AT THE LAST IT BITETH LIKE A SERPENT,
AND STINGETH LIKE AN ADDER. PROV. 23:32

Lamuel

upon that which is not? For riches certainly make themselves wings." Jesus agreed with this proverb for He said, "Labor not for the meat which perisheth" (John 6:27). A Christian is obligated by God's Word to provide for his own household. The desire to acquire is God-given and good when kept in its place. The warning here is against becoming so absorbed with securing wealth that it leads to evildoing or neglecting spiritual duties. To get money in order to use it unselfishly is a blessing; when money "gets" the man, it becomes a curse.

SELF-CONTROL AND STRONG DRINK

(Proverbs 23:20, 21, 29-35)

This *Evangel* may be read by some to whom alcohol is a real problem. All of us need to be reminded of the danger of addiction and warned against the drink habit.

Observe the effects of strong drink as outlined in the above verses of Scripture:

1. *Sorrow and woe.* Under the influence of liquor, men do things they bitterly regret later. They often suffer the loss of health, positions, homes, and the love of their families.

2. *Quarreling and violence.* Quarrels, violence, and murders that have grown out of drunkenness have caused grief and pain, destroyed property, crowded our jails and penitentiaries, turned many into paupers, and sent others to the electric chair or the hangman's noose.

3. *Physical disfigurement.* "Who hath redness of eyes?" This question may refer to the familiar sight of the bloodshot, bleary eyes, the inflamed nose with swollen veins, and the blotchy countenance of the habitual drinker.

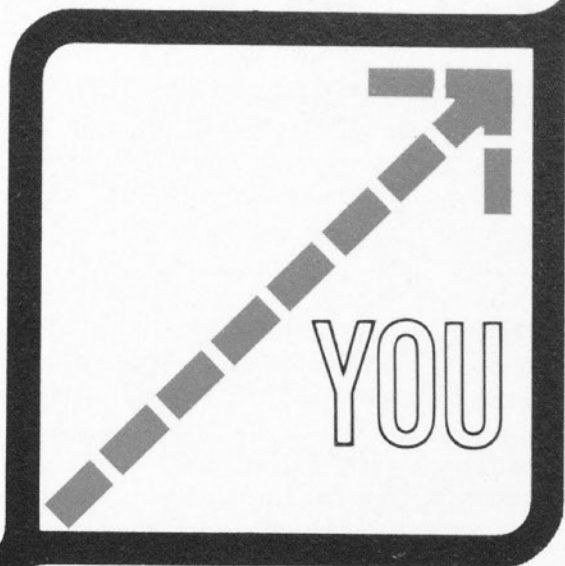
4. *Sensuality and vice.* "Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things." A man under the influence of liquor is easily tempted. His judgment is clouded, his passions inflamed, his sensibilities dulled, and he is ripe for sexual sins and crimes.

5. *Reckless stupidity.* "Thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea." The drunkard not only exposes himself to needless dangers, but he is completely unaware of the dangers of his position and unable to cope with the situation. According to the National Safety Council, alcohol is involved in as many as half of the automobile accidents costing up to \$8 billion a year. Expenditures in 1967 by drinkers for alcoholic beverages (over \$15 billion) and financial losses caused by alcohol-involved motor vehicle accidents alone were large enough to have provided every poor family in America an extra \$1,000. And this is to say nothing of the tragic toll of deaths and maimed bodies due to alcoholism.

6. *An enslaved will and a hardened heart.* "When shall I awake? I will seek it yet again." Here is the great tragedy of strong drink. Some would like to stop drinking but cannot because of its enslaving power; others do not want to stop drinking because the habit has seared their consciences and hardened their hearts. Thus the number of alcoholics in America continues to increase at an alarming rate.

Christ can transform the alcoholic and make him a magnificent monument of God's power to save. Should not the Christian make every effort to warn young people and adults against this danger, to help rescue its victims, and to pray to Him who is able to free every alcoholic from Satan's clutches?





YOU *CAN* MISS IT

By ELVA J. HOOVER

SHORTCUT TO SOMMERVILLE?" The friendly operator of the service station nods and smiles. "Sure. You go straight through town to the third stoplight and turn left. Then you go about two blocks—or is it three—anyway, you'll see a big used car lot on the right. Go one more block and then take the highway that angles off toward the east. Save you at least five miles. You can't miss it!"

Confidently you start on your way, counting the stoplights, one, two, three. And then just as confidently you turn left. But then your troubles begin. Which of the two or three "big used car lots" did he mean? And, which way in this strange city is east? Where is the highway that angles that way? It all sounded so clear when he was telling you, but everything's confusing now.

Your wife spots a parking place, so you pull over to the curb, fish the map out of the glove compartment, and study it. Then you go to the next corner, turn around, and go back to a certain intersection where the highways are plainly marked. Following the map you turn left here and proceed with assurance to Somerville on the highway. "Shortcuts aren't for me," you decide.

It's happened to us all, at one time or another, and the familiar tag line, "You can't miss it," has become a joke with us. We've found out too often that we *can* miss it.

As we journey through time toward eternity, we are interested in arriving at the right destination. We want to go to heaven. And God has given us His Word as a map to guide us. The highway is very plainly marked: "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matthew 7:13, 14).

The heavenly Guidebook gives no shortcuts, no vague or haphazard directions. It is so plain that even a child may find the way. It indicates no superhighway, no easy path, and yet there are many travelers who profess to know "shortcuts" and "new routes." They assure us that if their instructions are followed, "You can't miss it!"

Some proclaim dogmatically to all who will listen,

"Just join the church and you can't miss it." And the membership rolls increase with the names of many who base their hope on this false premise. But the Word of God shows clearly that "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3).

Another would-be guide says, "Do the best you can. Treat everybody right and pay your debts and you can't miss it." But the road to destruction is made broad to accommodate the myriads of travelers in this direction. They have somehow overlooked the plain Word of God which tells us, "There is none righteous, no, not one" (Romans 3:10).

"Just *believe*," says another. "And if you are sincere, it really isn't so important *what* you believe. You can't miss it."

But what does God say? "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. . . . For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him [Jesus] shall not be ashamed. . . . Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 16:31; Romans 10:11; Acts 4:12).

Are you trying to figure out which preacher or which church or which philosophy is right, blaming your lost condition on the fact that they do not always agree? Such an excuse will not stand in the judgment. You have the Bible, God's infallible Guidebook. You do not have to *guess* which way is right. You do not have to miss heaven.

Turn to John 14:5, 6. "Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?"

"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

Now turn to John 10:9 and you will find that Jesus said, "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved."

You can't miss it if you come by way of Jesus Christ, the way of the Cross. It's the way of repentance and of simple faith, and of genuine conversion. But don't try the shortcuts—if you do, you *can* miss it!

GOD HEALED THEM...

...OF EMPHYSEMA

WHEN MY DOCTORS DISMISSED ME from the hospital, I was in the last stages of emphysema. He told my family there was nothing that could be done for me except to be kept comfortable until the end.

But he also said to me, "I want you to keep reading your Bible, praying, and believing." Those words inspired my faith, and I did just that.

In November 1964, about a month after I went home from the hospital, our church was in a revival with Evangelist Bob McCutchen. I went forward for prayer and was anointed with oil and prayed for. God answered prayer and instantly healed me!

I was taking several dangerous and costly drugs, but I have not taken a dose of medicine for my lungs since that night.

On February 18, 1967, I was examined by the same doctor who, over two years earlier, had encouraged me to pray and believe God. He could hardly believe what had happened, but X rays showed no foreign matter in my lungs.

I believe God gave me two new lungs when He healed me. I give Him all the praise and glory for my miraculous recovery.—Mrs. Carrie Sorrell, Rushville, Ind.

(Endorsed by Pastor J. E. Priest, First Assembly, Rushville, Ind.)

...OF HERNIA

WHEN WE CAME INTO PENTECOST, I embraced the teaching of divine healing and I preached this wonderful truth. We saw many people healed in answer to prayer. For this reason it was hard for me to understand why God did not heal me of a hernia from which I suffered for years.

Whenever I saw others go to the hospital for hernia surgery, the enemy would taunt me with the thought that sooner or later I would be doing the same thing.

In spite of this trial by delay, we saw God heal others from worse afflictions. In one pastorate we witnessed the Lord give a 14-year-old boy a sense of pain, something he had not had since birth. God created a new kidney for his brother, who had been born without one.

The Lord restored sight to one of my eyes and the use of my left arm which had become useless.

While helping to complete two large basements and taking care of a big lawn at one of our pastorates, I endured much discomfort which often taxed my faith; but there came a day of victory! Praise the Lord!

On the morning of November 18, 1966, when I arose, I was prompted not to wear my truss for that day. I said, "All right, Lord." Never before had I tried to go without it; I couldn't. But I went through that day without the truss. There were times of discomfort; but I had a quietness and assurance that the Lord was healing me!

I also went without it the next day, again with the certainty that God was healing me.

Sunday was the test day. After teaching Sunday school

and preaching in both services, I was always bothered more by the hernia on Sunday night than any other time. But that Sunday morning I resolved to go through the day without it for the third consecutive day.

As I spoke that morning on Psalm 103, the Spirit of the Lord came upon me and I had great liberty. I preached with such energy as I had not shown for some time because of my physical condition.

I had some times of testing in the following week but I continued to trust the Lord and refrain from wearing a truss. For 19 months I have been free from the weakness and incessant pain I had before. At present I am busily engaged in laying cement blocks for a Sunday school annex. I know the Lord has done the work, and to Him belongs all the glory.—Ross P. Simmons, pastor, Assembly of God, Waupun, Wis.

...OF TOXIC ENCEPHALITIS



TWO YEARS AGO our little boy Johnnie was critically ill with acute toxic encephalitis (inflammation of the brain). The doctors told us he had only a very small chance to live—and that if he did live, he would probably be crippled or mentally retarded.

But much prayer went up to God for Johnnie's healing, with the result that he was miraculously healed, and today he is a normal, healthy four-year-old.

When he was taken to the hospital in Ontario, Oregon, on August 28, 1966, Johnnie had a temperature of 105.2. As the temperature continued to rise, he went into convulsions. After having three seizures he was rushed to St. Luke's Hospital in Boise, Idaho, and placed in care of a specialist. The temperature raged for six days—and so did the trial of our faith.

We had faith in God's power to heal, but our family had undergone one test after another. In the two months prior to Johnnie's illness I gave birth to a baby and had to be taken back to the hospital two weeks later with a kidney infection and a near nervous breakdown.

I was home just 10 days when my husband became seriously ill and was taken to the hospital. No sooner was he released, it seemed, than Johnnie took sick. In addition, our little girl was facing major surgery. It seemed more than we could bear!

We prayed; our pastor prayed; the church prayed—but Johnnie kept growing worse. Then the crisis came. Johnnie was completely hysterical unless kept under strong sedation. We left his room after seeing him throw his little body from one end of the crib to the other, completely uncontrollable.

With despair in our hearts, my husband and I walked down the corridor and entered a small chapel. There a minister said to us: "Don't trust God for what He has done or what He can do; but trust Him because He is God and He knows what He is doing." It was then we made a complete surrender. Previously we had been unable to pray, "Not our will, but Thine, be done." When

we reached this point of surrender, Johnnie immediately began to improve.

Johnnie is well now, and what a joy it has been to tell everyone we can of this marvelous healing. His mind is not affected, nor is he crippled in any way. We are grateful to God for His kindness.—Wanda Lehmkuhl, Payette, Idaho.

(Endorsed by A. E. Rainwater, pastor of the Assembly of God in Payette, Idaho. "At the most crucial time in Johnnie's illness," he writes, "I went to the hospital in Boise. The nurse put a gown and mask on me and I went into Johnnie's room and prayed again for him. I knew the Lord gave him a healing touch and that He would complete the work—and He did.")

...OF CANCER

JUST BEFORE MY SON'S FIRST BIRTHDAY, I noticed a large lump on the left side of his body. I took him to the doctor who, after two days of examinations, said he would have to undergo surgery at once.

After the operation the doctor gave us some very bad news. He said our baby had a highly malignant tumor and that he could not possibly live longer than two weeks. No doubt he would have died had not God intervened in answer to believing prayer.

But my father, who has since passed away, took our little boy in his arms and carried him to the altar of our church, the First Assembly of God in Danville, during a prayer service. Our pastor prayed for him. When my father brought him back to where we were sitting, he told me he knew Ken was healed; for as the pastor prayed, he could feel the power of God come upon them. He said God's power went through his body and Ken's.

Little Ken showed improvement immediately. A year later the fact he was still alive was so remarkable that the newspaper carried a picture and story about it. Five years later the doctor gave Ken a clean bill of health.

This gracious healing occurred in 1950. Today Ken is a big, healthy young man, and there never has been a recurrence of the cancerous tumor.

What a privilege it is to have a God who heals and answers prayer.—Nina Charles, Danville, Illinois.

(Endorsed by James E. Hyllberg, pastor of First Assembly, Danville, Illinois.)

...OF THREE DISEASES

ALTHOUGH I AM 77 years old, God has healed me of three serious diseases—high blood pressure, diabetes, and heart trouble.

Many times when I knew only God could help, I had asked my pastor and the congregation to pray for me, but the relief was temporary.

One Saturday afternoon when I was very discouraged, I called Pastor and Mrs. Fred Davis, Assemblies of God ministers whom I knew. We stood by faith on James 5:14, 15. In accordance with His Word, God touched my body and healed me of these three "killers."

A week later I went to the doctor for a checkup, and he found my body free of all three diseases. I thank God for men of faith with Christian love who can pray the answer down.—Faye Chapin, Oxnard, Calif.

(Endorsed by Fred F. Davis, pastor of Bethel Temple Assembly, Oxnard, Calif.)



...the only way

JESUS CHRIST is man's only hope of heaven and eternal bliss. But how will your friends and relatives, your neighbors, your community know it—unless you tell them?

People today generally know less about spiritual matters than they did a few years ago. We cannot assume they know the way of salvation, yet simply ignore it.

This special issue of the *Evangel* was designed to present clearly how to be saved; designed to cut through the complacency many people have toward spiritual matters designed to help you let your world know that Jesus Christ is the only way to God.

Glance through this issue again. Notice how the gospel is presented—clearly, convincingly, relevantly. Think of the many ways you or your church can use this evangelistic tool in witnessing endeavors and in person-to-person encounters.

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WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN?

THE SUPREME COURT of Iowa ruled on a most unusual case. It concerned a trust fund a Methodist physician left in charge of four trustees with instructions that the proceeds be distributed among "persons who believe in the fundamental principles of the Christian religion and in the Bible, and who are endeavoring to promulgate the same."

There was a dispute between the trustees and the nephews and nieces of the deceased as to what "the Christian religion" is.

The relatives argued: "There is no common agreement as to what constitutes the fundamental principles of Christianity." To prove this, seven clergymen took the witness stand and testified that their denominations do not agree on all theological points.

Attorneys for the trustees countered by producing clergymen who testified that Christians can be identified as those who believe in God, in the Apostles' Creed, in the Holy Trinity, and who confess faith in Christ.

The judge of a lower court ruled that among Christians "there is widespread lack of accord in their characterizations of the man Jesus and in their interpretations and applications of His teachings." Furthermore, he said, it was beyond the prerogatives of the courts to define Christian fundamentals. He ordered the trustees to hand over the fund to the nephews and nieces.

But when the case was taken to the state's Supreme Court, it upheld the late doctor's will. The state's highest court ruled 7 to 2 that it is possible to define what kind of person can be called a Christian and decreed that the

trustees were capable of determining from the language of the will who should benefit from the trust fund.

We do not know how the trustees would define "the fundamental principles of the Christian religion" but we believe the Bible does designate what kind of person can be called a Christian. The term *Christian* is found three times in the Scriptures.

The first place is Acts 11:26: "The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch." What kind of persons were these disciples? They were men who "preached the Lord Jesus." They believed in "the grace of God" and they clung to the Lord with purpose of heart. So it says in the Bible (Acts 11).

They were not a static group. It says "much people was added unto the Lord." Some of these converts had been Jews; others had been Grecians; but all had turned from putting their trust in such things as ceremonial religion or mere culture and had put their whole trust in the gracious redemption that Jesus Christ accomplished on the Cross.

The second place is Acts 26:28 where we read that King Agrippa said to the apostle Paul: "Almost thou persuadest me to be a *Christian*!" What kind of speech had Paul made that caused the king to say that? Paul had said, "Repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance" (see verse 20). It takes this to be a Christian.

Paul had told the king about the transformation Christ had made in his own life. Once Paul had been a persecutor of the Christians, but one day he heard the voice of Christ and saw His glory. Paul explained to King Agrippa that after this experience he became a minister and a witness chosen by God to open people's eyes—"to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Christ Jesus" (verse 18).

The story of God's transforming power as demonstrated in Paul's life made such an impression on the king that he was almost persuaded to be a Christian. He realized that to be a Christian was to be a changed man.

The third place is 1 Peter 4:16: "Yet if any man suffer as a *Christian*, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf." To be a Christian, in the mind of the apostle Peter, was to be a target of persecution.

The Scripture says that "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." Peter acknowledged that there is a stigma, a reproach, to being named after Christ (verse 14). He knew that to be a Christian means to be a godly person, and anyone who lives a godly life in this present world will not be popular with the ungodly.

Link these three passages together and you have an answer to the question, "What is a Christian?" A Christian is one (1) who has repented of his sins; (2) who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ with all his heart and tries to get others to do the same; (3) who is a changed man or woman; (4) who can be distinguished from people of the world by the godly life he lives.

The term *Christian* means "one of Christ's." A Christian is one who loves the Lord Jesus Christ supremely and lives for Him alone, no matter what others may think or say or do to the contrary.

The question is, "Are you a Christian?" God is the Judge, and you must plead your case before Him.