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The Good News

OF THE WORLD TOMORROW



The Tyrant With
Seven Heads

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11

What Is Your Reaction Time?

See page 9



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COVER: Artist's conception of Revelation's seven-headed beast. Satan, the master counterfeiter, appropriated this symbolism into pagan mythology centuries before John saw the visions about which he wrote. Be sure to read "The Tyrant With Seven Heads," beginning on page 4. Illustration by C. Winston Taylor.

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SPIRITISM

Fraud...or Fact?

Can men actually communicate with departed spirits? What about the witch of Endor? What does the Bible say of spiritism?

By Herbert W. Armstrong

Is there anything to *spiritism*?

Granted, there is trickery and deception. Houdini, one of the greatest trick artists of modern times, exposed numerous frauds. So also have Thurston, Walsh, Gearson and many another. Some leading spiritists have been convicted of plain dishonesty or common fraud and imprisoned.

Yet not all spiritism is fraud or sleight of hand!

When all the frauds, the tricks, the deceptions are carefully and scientifically sifted out, there remains something to be accounted for — some *real* SUPERNATURAL EVENTS that cannot be explained away!

Wicked spirits in control

Whether or not human beings like to admit it, the Bible plainly teaches that *supernatural powers control and operate this world*. The apostle Paul was inspired to write that human beings must struggle "against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against wicked spirits in high places" (Ephesians 6:12, Authorized Version, marginal reading).

Jesus Christ never contested Satan's claim that all the nations of the world were his. Said Satan: "All this *authority*" — the control of the nations — "I will give

You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours" (Luke 4:6-7).

Little wonder, then, that spirit-

ters. Now, spiritism has obtained millions of followers. It is a RELIGION masquerading under the name of Christianity.

Spiritism is based on the devil's first recorded lie! The devil has

'Visions' of the Dead

Ghosts
in photographs

**OUR DREAM HOUSE
WAS HAUNTED**

... Experts say
spirit of loving
child remains
in toy today

**Amazing New Proof
Of Life After Death**

**Lady's ghost haunts
'quiet' police station**

HAUNTED FAMILIES:
THE MYSTERIES SCIENCE CAN'T EXPLAIN

ism should be manifest in a world controlled and operated by wicked spirits in high places!

Modern spiritism had its birth at Hydesville, N.Y., in 1848. It began with the famous Rochester knockings heard by the Fox sis-

continued to deceive millions into believing that the dead can *talk* with the living!

**The dead cannot talk
with the living**

Notice what Jesus said about

the dead: "Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are *in the graves* WILL HEAR His voice and come forth . . . to the resurrection" (John 5:28-29).

The dead *cannot* communicate with the living!

But the DEVIL must perpetuate his lie! He must make it *appear* that the dead can communicate with the living. That is why the manifestations of spiritism exist — to perpetuate a lie!

Spiritism is a work of DARKNESS! Paul warns us, "Have NO FELLOWSHIP with the unfruitful works of DARKNESS, but rather expose them" (Ephesians 5:11).

Millions of dollars have been filched from unthinking people who have lost loved ones and who have sought to contact them in the DARKNESS of spiritist séances. GOD'S blessings come without price. But it *costs money* to fellowship spiritism's DARKNESS!

Extorting money from innocent victims on behalf of the *dead* is a RACKET ALMOST 6,000 YEARS OLD! The racket is controlled by Satan the devil. Spiritism, however, is not its only form. This racket even manifests itself in powerful denominations. Sorrowing relatives are asked to *pay* to relieve their loved ones from suffering supposedly occurring on the other side of death!

Two kinds of angels

Since not all spiritism is trickery, and since the dead CANNOT communicate with the living, then what power *causes* the phenomena of spiritism?

Remember that this world is controlled by SUPERNATURAL SPIRIT POWERS. Satan is called the *ruler of this world* in three distinct scriptures — John 12:31, 14:30 and 16:11. He is the *god of this age* whom the world worships in ignorance! Paul said, "The *god of this world* [or "age"] hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (II Corinthians 4:4, AV).

The Bible reveals that there are

only *two* classes of spirit beings created by God. Man is NOT spirit. He is mortal flesh. Paul wrote of man, "For this corruptible must *put on* incorruption, and this *mortal* must put on immortality" (I Corinthians 15:53).

Here are the two classes of spirits:

1) *Obedient angels* of God. Paul wrote: "But to which of the angels has He ever said: 'Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool'? Are they not all ministering *spirits* sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?" (Hebrews 1:13-14). Obedient angels are *spirits* sent to minister to mortal, fleshly human beings who are heirs to salvation — *heirs* to immortality!

2) *Demons or fallen angels*, subject to the princely authority of Satan the devil. Satan is the "ruler of the demons" (Mark 3:22). We read of Satan and his angels in Revelation 12:9, AV: "And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and *his angels* were cast out with him." The apostle Peter wrote of them: "For if God did not spare the *angels* who *sinned*, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment" (II Peter 2:4).

The two classes of created spirit beings are both angels. The only difference is that one class is obedient, the other class DISOBEDIENT.

The spirits manifesting themselves through spiritism are of the second class — WICKED spirits.

Cause of demon possession

The demons manifest their powers in various ways — sometimes in the *darkness* of spiritist séances, sometimes through possessing the mental and physical attributes of human beings. This latter form is often termed *demon possession*. There are several interesting cases recorded in the Bible. Turn to Acts 16:16-18 and notice one example:

"Now it happened, as we went

to prayer, that a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much profit by fortune-telling. This girl followed Paul and us, and cried out, saying, 'These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation.' And this she did for many days. But Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the *spirit*, 'I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.' And he came out that very hour."

Notice that evil spirits can possess the mental and vocal faculties of human beings. They *impersonate* or *pretend* that they are human beings. They often manifest their powers in connection with religion to deceive innocent victims or to bring reproach upon the name of God by their misconduct, as in the example of Acts 16.

In other instances they utilize human faculties in a violent manner. Institutions for the insane are filled with helpless human beings possessed with spirits of violence. Notice the example found in Matthew 8:28-32:

"When He [Jesus] had come to the other side, to the country of the Gergesenes, there met Him two demon-possessed men, coming out of the tombs, *exceedingly fierce*, so that no one could pass that way. And suddenly they cried out, saying, 'What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?' Now a good way off from them there was a herd of many swine feeding. So the demons begged Him, saying, 'If You cast us out, permit us to go away into the herd of swine.' And He said to them, 'Go.' So when they had come out, they went into the herd of swine. And suddenly the whole herd of swine ran violently down the steep place into the sea, and perished in the water."

Here is an example of the power of evil spirits — the very evil spirits *impersonating* lost loved ones in spiritist séances.

God condemned spiritism centuries ago. Here are His words:

"Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them: I am the Lord your God" (Leviticus 19:31, AV).

A *familiar spirit* is a particular spirit who associates itself with a spiritist medium, who is usually a woman. A familiar spirit is often called a *guide* because it guides or controls the séance for the medium. A *wizard* is a male human being who acts as an instrument of wicked spirits.

In this verse in Leviticus, God warns His people not to *attribute divine power* to women or men who act as slaves of evil spirits, not to regard what they say. We are to regard what God says and to attribute power to HIM! He is the Eternal your God!

Spiritism condemned in Bible

Again, notice God's condemnation of spiritism in Deuteronomy 18:9-12, AV:

"When thou art come into the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth *divination*, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a *witch*, or a charmer, or a *consulter with familiar spirits*, or a *wizard*, or a *necromancer*.

"For all that do these things are an ABOMINATION unto the Lord: and because of these ABOMINATIONS the Lord thy God doth drive them [the gentiles] out from before thee."

Spiritism is an ABOMINATION to God. He drove out the gentiles in the days of Joshua for permitting spiritism.

And the same punishment is coming upon our nations for permitting spiritism and its kindred arts to flourish!

Notice that God condemns the witch, a woman who pretends to contact the "spirit" of a beloved one who has recently died — and a consuler of familiar spirits, usually a woman who contacts a particular spirit for information — and a wizard and a *necroman-*

cer, one who professes to predict the future by the art of communicating with the dead.

These are all forms of spiritism. All these forms are *condemned* by God Almighty. Spiritism is *evil*. It is a direct instrumentality of the DEVIL. Because it is so evil, God condemns those who practice spiritism and those who seek to contact the dead in its séances!

God means business. It is a question of following spiritism and rejecting eternal life or of rejecting spiritism and obeying God in order to receive eternal life.

Spiritism perpetuates the devil's lie that the dead are not really dead. God says we must come to HIM to OBTAIN eternal life: "For the wages of sin is DEATH, but the gift of God is *eternal life* in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23). Spiritism is condemned as one of the products of *human carnality* — as a fruit of the flesh. Paul wrote: "Now the works of the flesh are *evident*, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, licentiousness, idolatry, *sorcery*, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; OF WHICH I TELL YOU BEFOREHAND, JUST AS I ALSO TOLD YOU IN TIME PAST, THAT THOSE WHO PRACTICE SUCH THINGS WILL NOT INHERIT THE KINGDOM OF GOD" (Galatians 5:19-21).

Saul's experience with a witch

One of the most noted portions of Scripture — yet one of the *least* understood — is the case of Saul and the witch at Endor. This story is found in I Samuel 28. Notice verse 3 of this chapter: "Now *Samuel had died*, and all Israel had lamented for him and BURIED HIM IN RAMAH, in his own city." Notice that Samuel was dead and buried. He was *not* alive.

Continuing: "And Saul had put the mediums and the spiritists out of the land. Then the Philistines gathered togeth-

er . . . when Saul saw the army of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart trembled greatly. And when Saul inquired of the Lord, the Lord DID NOT ANSWER HIM, either by dreams or by Urim [through the high priest] *or by the prophets*" (verses 3-6).

God would *not* listen to Saul. Saul had been disobedient. Samuel had been inspired to tell Saul, "For rebellion is as the *sin of witchcraft*" (I Samuel 15:23).

What did Saul do? "Then Saul said to his servants, 'Find me a *woman who is a medium*, that I may go to her and inquire of her.' And his servants said to him, 'In fact, there is a woman who is a medium at Endor'" (I Samuel 28:7).

Remember that Samuel was buried in *Ramah*, located in the territory belonging to the tribe of Ephraim (I Samuel 1:1, 19). But the Philistines and Saul were now near Lake Galilee, in Mount Gilboa, near Endor, about 50 miles from the place in which Samuel was buried.

The night before the battle "Saul disguised himself and put on other clothes, and he went, and two men with him; and they came to the woman by night. And he said, 'Please conduct a séance for me, and bring up for me the one I shall name to you'" (I Samuel 28:8).

Saul sinned by seeking a witch. If God would not answer Saul by a prophet because of Saul's disobedience in government administration, how much more would God *refuse to answer Saul by a prophet* when Saul sought to a witch! Remember that Samuel was a *prophet* (Acts 13:20) and a *judge* (I Samuel 7:6, 15-17). And God would *not* use a prophet to answer Saul!

In other words, God would *not* use Samuel the prophet to answer Saul; neither would God use any other means, for that matter. God absolutely refused to listen to Saul because of his rebellious attitude.

But notice what happened: "Then the woman said, 'Whom shall I *bring up* for you?'" (I
(Continued on page 23)

The Tyrant With Seven Heads

*Here is the beast with
seven heads — two millennia before John
wrote the book of Revelation!*

By Keith W. Stump

Satan is the world's great counterfeiter and plagiarist!

From ancient times, he has appropriated and perverted biblical doctrines, events and symbols and employed them for his own devious purposes.

Read here a dramatic example uncovered by archaeology.

The seven-headed Beast

In chapter 13 of the book of Revelation, the apostle John records that he stood, in vision, by the shore of the sea. "And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads," says John (verse 1).

Here, about A.D. 96, God showed John, in vision, the great world-ruling gentile kingdoms of history, represented as a seven-headed Beast rising from the sea. Another view of the Beast, at a late stage in history, is described in Revelation 17. (Request our free booklet *Who Is The Beast?* for full details.)

As regular readers of *The Good News* and *The Plain Truth* know, the prophetic end-time

Beast — a powerful, Satan-inspired government — will be overthrown at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. The government of God will then be restored to this earth, supplanting the governments of humans (Revelation 11:15).

Seven centuries before John's time, the prophet Isaiah also used the imagery of the slaying of a creature from the sea to symbolically picture the triumph of God's Kingdom.

Isaiah declared: "In that day [at the end time] the Lord with His severe sword, great and strong, will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, Leviathan that twisted serpent; and He will slay the reptile that is in the sea" (Isaiah 27:1). In Psalm 74:14, this "Leviathan" is described as being multiheaded.

In Bible symbolism, Satan himself is pictured as a serpent and as a dragon with seven heads (Revelation 12:3, 9, 20:2). Reflecting this symbolism, Satan's systems of government are pictured in prophecy in similar terms.

But unknown to many students

of the Bible, the seven-headed beast was a well-known symbol some two millennia before the time of the apostle John — and centuries before the days of Moses!

From the early ages, many of the details of God's plan for mankind — including elements of prophetic symbolism later to be written down in the books of Daniel and Revelation — were revealed to God's righteous servants (see Isaiah 46:10, Hebrews 11:13, II Peter 1:21, Jude 14-15). Not surprisingly, Satan early appropriated much of this symbolism and introduced it into pagan mythology and worship.

Why?

We shall see in a moment.

Lotan — the chaos monster

Among these appropriated symbols was that of a seven-headed beast. In ancient Canaanite mythology, the name of this multiheaded creature was *Lotan* or *Lothan*. The name *Lotan* is believed to be related to the Hebrew word *leviathan* (meaning "jointed monster" or "serpent"),





and could possibly be a contracted form of the word. The formidable Lotan is described in the ancient accounts as "the tyrant with seven heads," "the primeval serpent," "the chaos monster," "the twisting serpent" and "the ancient dragon."

The seven-headed Lotan appears prominently in the Ras Shamra religious texts. These are ancient tablets of poems and ritual rules, in cuneiform, excavated at the site of ancient Ugarit in northern Syria from 1929 to 1933. One of the greatest finds in Near Eastern archaeology, they tell us much about the Canaanite culture condemned so strongly by God in the Old Testament.

Accounts of this monster have also been discovered at various sites eastward in Mesopotamia. It is a regular element in the mythology of the ancient Near East. Among some peoples, the seven-headed Lotan was even worshiped as a god, and sacrifices were offered to him.

In West Semitic mythology, Lotan ruled the rivers and seas. In the Ras Shamra texts, Lotan

was challenged to battle by the god Baal, who slew him with magic weapons after a furious battle. The victorious Baal then received the honor of supreme kingship.

Pictured in a cylinder seal impression from Tell Asmar in Mesopotamia (see photo above) is the seven-headed dragon under attack. Four of its heads hang limp and defeated. The fifth faces impending death. (See Revelation 17:10 for an interesting parallel.)

Myth and legend?

So here we have an ancient account of a seven-headed dragon from the sea being slain in order to establish the rule of a god-king. The parallel with Bible prophecy is too clear to be missed. The triumph of the soon-coming Kingdom of God will be secured with the downfall of Satan and the final phase of his seven-headed kingdom.

Anticipating the book of Revelation, Satan — the master plagiarist — anciently introduced a counterfeit of the same theme

into mythology and pagan worship. His object?

To prepare the ground for biblical criticism in modern times — to generate controversy and cast doubt on the book of Revelation!

Just as some critics today dismiss the biblical account of the virgin birth of Jesus as a "throwback" to a more ancient mother-child motif as found in ancient Egypt (Isis and Horus) and Mesopotamia (Ishtar and Tammuz), modern critics view the beast symbolism of the book of Revelation as a mere carry-over of myth and legend from ancient Canaanite epics.

But what John saw in vision was no mere mythology!

The days are fast approaching when all will see with their own eyes the fulfillment of God's unerring revelation. There *is* a Beast — and his days are numbered! The good news is that just ahead lies the triumph of God's Kingdom over this world's system.

This vision is certain — and the interpretation sure (Daniel 2:44-45)! □

Could YOU Be Denying Christ?

Why did Jesus Christ express such concern toward those He called "lukewarm"? Why did He say He would rather they be "cold"?

By Robert C. Smith

The young man's attitude and approach to Jesus Christ was *not* childlike!

Jesus had just taken little children up in His arms, and blessed them. Jesus said, "Of such is the kingdom of God," then reiterated, "Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it" (Luke 18:16-17).

The young ruler, holder of substantial prestige and honor, sought from Jesus that final ingredient that would, in like manner, qualify him for God's Kingdom. With a guise of humility, he admitted to keeping the Ten Commandments "from my youth." He was quick to point out his good points, and seemed desirous of knowing if there might be anything else he should be doing — *if* any such thing remained.

He didn't expect the answer he received.

His cloak of humility slipped a bit when he approached Jesus

with a salutation of subtle flattery: "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (verse 18).

Jesus reacted: "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God" (verse 19).

When Jesus heard the profession of righteousness, He reminded the young man that in spite of all his marvelous accomplishments, "You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me" (verse 22).

Typically *unchildlike*, the young man received the admonition sorrowfully and went away, for he was very rich.

Or he thought he was (verse 23).

He professed a desire to live righteously, but his fruits did not bear out the profession. He asked what he might do to prove his intentions, but when Jesus' reply did not meet his approval, he walked away.

He was guilty of bearing false witness!

James was inspired to write,

"A doubleminded man is unstable in all his ways" (James 1:8, Authorized Version).

The young man wanted the Kingdom of God, but he did not wish to relinquish his positions and possessions. He wanted to "have his cake and eat it, too." He had forgotten Jesus' words as revealed in Luke 14: "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple" (verse 26).

The young ruler was not willing to forsake all in order to be Jesus Christ's disciple.

Jesus wants us hot

In an admonition to the future Laodicean church, Jesus said: "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth" (Revelation 3:15-16, AV).

Jesus is telling any with such an attitude, in essence, "I wish you would be hot, but if you will

Photo by G.A. Belluche Jr.



not be hot, I would rather have you be cold!"

If we as Christians are hot, we will be all the way into — pulsating with, excited with, breathing, eating, sleeping — this way of life. We will have our arms locked around the tree of life — Jesus Christ being the trunk or vine, and we the branches — where we may be dressed and nourished by the Father, the vine-dresser (John 15:1-6).

If we are lukewarm, we will be slowly simmering to death. We will be lacking real warmth or feeling of enthusiasm (the word *enthusiasm* comes from the roots *en* and *theos*, literally meaning "God in you"). We will have little involvement. We will be just barely there.

The person who continues to be lukewarm right up until Jesus Christ's return simply will not make it into God's Kingdom. The person who is hot, on the other hand, will literally burst into eternity as a member of the Family of God.

But what about being cold? Why would Jesus rather we be cold than lukewarm?

Jesus answers that for us in I Corinthians 5:1-5: "It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you . . . and you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you. [Therefore] deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."

The person who is hot is all the way *in* God's Church. The person who is cold is all the way *out* of God's Church — but may yet be saved through the crucible of life in Satan's world. He may come to real repentance before the return of Jesus Christ, and experience that marvelous change into the God Family in the twinkling of an eye at Jesus' coming. The flesh may be destroyed, but the spirit will not be relegated to that eternal death.

But what about the lukewarm person?

Jesus said: "So then, because

you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of My mouth. Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing — and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked'" (Revelation 3:16-17). Jesus reminded them that they only thought they were rich, when, in reality, their spiritual poverty was made obvious by their conduct.

They professed to be something that they were not.

The lukewarm attitude

If we say we are Christians, we will be living as Jesus Christ does. We will walk as He walked, in absolute harmony with God the Father in everything pertinent to this way of life. We will willingly abide by the rulings and teachings of the Body of Christ, into which we have been mercifully added. We will be truly rich in obedience, loyalty, involvement, faithfulness, commitment. We will be seeking correction in prayer and Bible study, and we will accept that correction as life-saving, without any attempt at self-justification.

The Laodicean attitude talks back! Jesus remarked, "Because you say . . ." (verse 17). Self-justification! The Laodicean replies in other words, "You don't understand — this is why I do it this way." Self-justification, whether we are right or wrong, reveals an attitude that is less than childlike.

Even the patriarch Job said: "If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me: if I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse" (Job 9:20, AV).

The lukewarm, professing Christian will feel comfortable justifying his less-than-total commitment. He will find fault and criticize the status quo.

The book of Malachi chronicles that lukewarm attitude for our admonition. The people ask, "In what way have we defiled You?", trying to justify giving less than the best in sacrifice (Malachi 1:7).

In verses 12-14, God replies:

"You profane it, in that you say, 'The table of the Lord is defiled; and its fruit, its food, is contemptible.' You also say, 'Oh, what a weariness!' And you sneer at it . . . and you bring the stolen, the lame, and the sick; thus you bring an offering! Should I accept this from your hand? . . . But cursed be the deceiver who has in his flock a male, and makes a vow, but sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished — for I am a great King . . . and My name is to be feared among the nations."

Our profession, at baptism, was to go all the way. We said, by words and actions, that we wanted God to teach us His ways. We had supposedly counted the cost. We were, at least briefly, childlike. We were, at that time, hot.

Subsequent reading through the book of Malachi shows that the people had an argumentative attitude regarding marriage relationships (chapter 2) and financial obligations (chapter 3). In each case there is an attitude of being neither all the way involved in this way of life nor, on the other hand, all the way out.

Rather, there is a desire to maintain an attitude that could be phrased this way: "Isn't it better that I have a little involvement than none at all? Isn't it better to have at least a facade of righteousness — attending services *most* of the time, sending at least *some* money (even if not a full tithe), allowing self to succumb to drunkenness or gluttony *occasionally*, picking and choosing those areas of Christianity in which I feel comfortable?"

Jesus Christ emphatically says that is not so. "I would thou wert cold or hot." No in-between. Not lukewarm.

How serious is it? Jesus says to those who are lukewarm that He will spew them out, or vomit them up. In other words, lukewarmness sickens the very stomach of our Savior.

Being lukewarm denies Christ

It takes faith to live God's way of life. Jesus inspired, "Now the

just shall live by faith; but if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him" (Hebrews 10:38). And in verses 26-27 of the same chapter, He reminds, "For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries."

How are we lukewarm?

Jesus refers to "those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. They are presumptuous, self-willed; they are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries" (II Peter 2:10). They argue. They justify! They are quick to talk back to the authority of Almighty God. And they are truly bearing false witness! Professing to be Christian — followers of Christ — their conduct totally violates the nature of that Christ.

The Guidebook to our profession exhorts: "Now by this we

We will know and know that we know the veracity of the Word of God, as revealed in the pages of the Bible. We will have pored over and ingested its life-giving words of instruction. We will have proved the faithfulness of God, incorporating into our lives His every word.

And we will have established irrefutably where the Church is that Jesus Christ said He would build. We will know the basic beliefs of that Church and believe them. We will know intimately the Church's basic doctrines as revealed in Hebrews 6:1-2, and will abide by them with every fiber of our being.

We will be attuned to the policies of God's Church, which are generated from the top down according to the system of government God has placed in His Church, and will desire to get wholeheartedly in step with them.

In I Corinthians 11, after explaining the Church teaching

those beliefs, doctrines and policies and doing them. Being cold means disagreeing with them and walking the other way.

All the way in, or all the way out!

Being lukewarm destroys character. Being less than total in our commitment allows for pretense, spiritual game-playing, and bears false witness. In other words, breaks the commandments of God.

"I am the Lord your God," thunders the Creator. "You shall have no other gods before Me" (Exodus 20:2-3). Peter said, inspired by Jesus, "For by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage" (II Peter 2:19). Anything less than total commitment produces a double-minded person, and no one can serve two masters (Matthew 6:24).

If we violate the First Commandment, we become guilty of breaking the remaining nine (James 2:10). We take the name of God by professing to be Christians, but it is in vain, or without basis, if we live contrarily. It all has to do with obedience and commitment. No commandment is excluded from violation if we are lukewarm, self-justifying and hypocritical in our profession of faith.

Judgment on us now

"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (II Peter 3:9). God has begun a good work in us, and His desire is for us to make it into His Kingdom (Philippians 1:6).

Why, then, if Jesus' desire is for us to make it, would that same Jesus express so graphically that He would rather we be cold than lukewarm?

Let Jesus Himself answer that question.

"And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: 'My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be

(Continued on page 22)

All the way in, or all the way out! Being less than total in our commitment allows for pretense, spiritual game-playing, and bears false witness. In other words, breaks God's commandments.

know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. . . . He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked" (I John 2:3-6). If we walk in the way that Jesus Christ wants us to choose, we will be hot!

We will have proved the dramatic existence of the creating God Family. The world and the universe around us will have been revealed to us as the manifestation of the works of a Creator, Designer, Lawgiver, Sustainer, Orchestrator, Life-giver and Responder to the needs of the creation.

regarding hair length, the apostle Paul concluded with, "But if anyone seems to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor do the churches of God" (verse 16).

Paul stated the facts, realizing that there might be some who would not be in total agreement and who would be quick to express that disagreement, and established the authority behind those facts by adding, "We have no such custom," That's it, Paul said. Obey—and be hot. Disobey, justify, compromise, maintain a questioning posture—and be lukewarm.

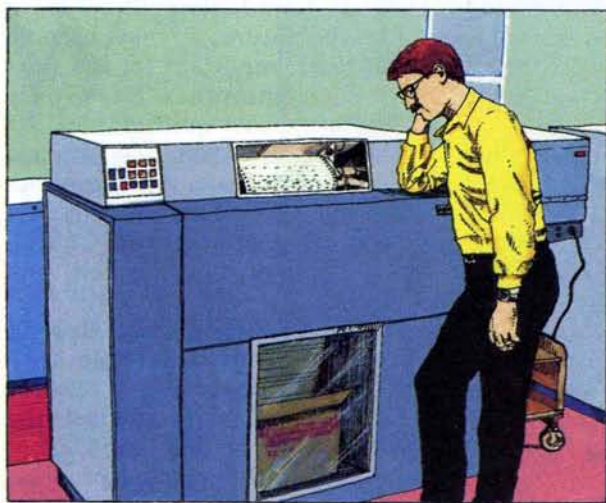
Or, view the crescendo of God's burgeoning work from the outside by being cold.

Being hot means agreeing with

What Is Your Reaction Time?

The incredibly powerful computer we use to help us do the work of God's Church today has a serious handicap. It is too slow.

To be fair, not *all* parts of our computer are too slow.



You probably know that a computer is actually several different machines linked together. The part that does the computing is called the central processing unit, or CPU.

You can't really accuse a CPU of being slow. It operates in units of time called nanoseconds — one billionth of a second. If you could take a step every nanosecond, you could walk around the earth 23 times in one second. So, if our computer is too slow, you can hardly blame the CPU. No, the fault lies with the other equipment.

In order for the CPU to turn its calculations into something useful, it must produce some kind

of display or printout. Our CPU could find your name among the millions of others on our mailing lists in just a few nanoseconds, but that wouldn't help you get your magazine. It must somehow put that information onto a label so that the post office can get *The Good News* from us to you.

Printing that label is what takes time. We have a printer that can print 800 lines a minute, which is pretty fast. But compared to the capacity of the CPU to produce information, it is slow and cumbersome.

The problem is that while the CPU can flash information at the speed of light, the poor printer is governed by the force of gravity, and the laws of motion and inertia. There is a limit to how fast physical machinery can operate before it literally falls apart, and the high speed printers are approaching that limit.

In an effort to design printers that can keep up with the latest generation of computers, engineers are doing away with mechanical printing entirely. Ink is sprayed onto the paper. But even with this advanced technology, physical forces will always govern how fast a machine can operate. This is known as the "reaction time" or the "flywheel effect."

Now what has all this got to do with you? Well, we have seen

how inertia and reaction time to some extent handicap the effectiveness of the physical components of the work of God.

Spiritual components also react

But how about spiritual components? The spiritual components are far more important than the computers, word processors, printing presses, television cameras and other equipment that we need to preach the Gospel.

The spiritual components are the people whom God has called from around the world to support His work. Jesus Christ has picked those people carefully and set them in the work as it pleases God (I Corinthians 12:18).

The Bible in several places describes God's people as being like the parts of a body. Some are ministers. Others are writers, schoolteachers, computer engineers. They don't all have the same job. Most — the vast majority — are not in the direct employ of the work, although they work to support it through their prayers, tithes and offerings.

But each person is important, just as every part of a body is important. There are no vestigial organs in the Body of Jesus Christ. It is vital that each of the spiritual components of the work does its part properly.

As the apostle Paul wrote in his epistle to the Ephesians: "From whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body" (Ephesians 4:16).

But what happens if, due to

slow reaction times, some of the spiritual components don't function as they should?

What you do matters

It is easy to see how slow or malfunctioning physical machinery can affect God's work. (Imagine how this article would appear if only one key of my typewriter refused to operate!) It affects the work much more if a spiritual component does not work properly.

Let's see how this can happen. Jesus Christ is constantly directing His work, sending instructions, orders and directions. He has chosen to work through human instruments, so that God's begotten sons and daughters learn the "family business."

Instead of doing it all Himself, God shares the work load with those He has called. So He sometimes lets us struggle with the work's problems and challenges. But we also share a genuine feeling of accomplishment in its success, as God works through us.

Also (and this is very important), by working together, letting God use each one of us as He will, we see firsthand the fruits of living the way of cooperation, sharing and giving. Today we learn those lessons — tomorrow we can teach them.

But, of course, there is a potential problem in using human instruments. If the work is to be effective, those human instruments have to react and respond.

Do you react quickly, or does the "flywheel effect" and inertia slow you down?

Suppose, for instance, that you are asked to pray for someone who is sick. When do you do it? At the earliest available opportunity, or does it slip your mind until you are in bed? Then, you tell yourself that "sleepy-time prayers" aren't heard, but that you will do it first thing in the morning. But of course you forget. It's the same thing the next day and the next. And then, you forget altogether.

Eventually, you hear that the sick person has recovered and is

thanking everyone for their prayers. No thanks to you. You were one part of the Body of Christ who didn't react.

Nearly every reader of this magazine receives, at one time or another, an urgent co-worker letter from Pastor General Herbert W. Armstrong telling of new opportunity or challenge in God's work. It needs your prayers and perhaps, if possible, your help with an offering.

How do you react? "Ho hum — just another co-worker letter." It goes on the shelf, unopened. You plan to get around to reading it, of course, but somehow you never do. Again, you, as part of the Body, aren't working effectively.

Collision course

One of the most dramatic examples of "slow reaction" happened back in the 1960s, when the giant oil tanker *Torrey Canyon* was wrecked off the English coast.

The crew realized their ship was in danger. There were rocks about three miles ahead, and the 120,000-ton tanker was heading straight for them. Desperately, the crew tried to take evasive action, but it was too late. Ignoring the engines straining in reverse and the helmsman's desperate efforts to change course, the ship kept going, ran onto the rocks and began to break up.

Therefore, a large section of the English coastline was inundated with millions of gallons of life-smothering crude oil. It was one of the worst maritime disasters in history. The crew had seen it coming but, once in motion, those giant ships travel several miles before they fully respond to a command to slow down or change direction.

What happens when you learn something new — through a sermon perhaps, or your own personal Bible study? King David (who learned, sometimes the hard way, that God's instructions are to be taken seriously) wrote, "The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. . . . Moreover by them Your servant

is warned" (Psalm 19:9-11).

God warns His people of dangers ahead, just as the captain of the *Torrey Canyon* tried to keep his ship from impending doom. If you are like that ship — slow to react and change direction — don't blame God if one day you run aground spiritually.

Jesus told us to pray that we would do God's will on earth as it is done in heaven. Jesus set the example. He said He came "not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me" (John 6:38). When His Father wanted something done, Jesus got on with it. He didn't keep going His own way, doing what seemed important to Him first. That is the way each part of the work of God today should be done.

Your life may depend on it

In the future, it may become even more important for the spiritual components of God's Church to react quickly.

During the last few frantic months of this age, many prophecies will be fulfilled. Christ has arranged to protect His Church from the worst of the end-time horrors. But He strongly indicates that escape may depend upon the individual reacting quickly and decisively!

"Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place . . . then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let him who is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house. And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes" (Matthew 24:15-18).

We don't know now exactly how those instructions will apply to God's people all around the world. But the lesson is obvious. Some people's lives are going to depend upon their ability to respond without delay to instructions from God.

It's important to get into the habit now, "for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not expect Him" (Matthew 24:44). □

YOUR FAITH

It May Be the Death of You!

Some will not make it into God's Kingdom — and all because of their faith! What about you?

By Roger G. Lippross

Without faith you will not be saved — you cannot qualify for God's Kingdom.

Yet no subject pertaining to salvation is more misunderstood in professing Christianity than that of saving faith!

Some time ago, I had lunch with some friends who considered themselves Christians. A couple of the men asked me, during our conversation, to prove that what I believe is true.

Being put on the spot at a lunch table, it was difficult to come up with all the right scriptures. But I was able to quote several, only to find that nothing I said made much difference to these particular individuals.

Even though I proved several of my beliefs — I particularly remember proving that the Sabbath should be kept today — it still had little effect on those men.

The element they were missing



— and, it seems, the common missing element among those who leave God's Church — was faith. Not just faith in the Church or a man, but faith in God's Word. Faith in God's ability to solve problems. And, of course, they lose the faith that this *is* God's Church.

Did these men lose their faith long before that day at lunch? Or did they ever have the right kind of faith to begin with? Eventually, they became quite vehement and began to ridicule me, saying I

was blinded and not really objective about things, and asking where my human reasoning was.

Some of you may have gone through a similar situation. I remember this one well, and it shook me for quite a few days, because I had looked up to these men for years.

But I saw that their self-generated faith could not stand the test. Their faith was killing them just as surely as a disease. They were on their way to the grave. They had forgotten — or, more likely, never understood — that human reasoning is not true, godly, saving faith.

So what is faith? Where does it come from? How do you get faith — or can you, indeed, “get” faith?

How often have you heard somebody say “My faith is weak” or “I don't have much faith” or “I think if I had a trial, I'd crack up”?

Have you heard such statements? I have; I've even said

Photos by G.A. Belluche Jr.

them myself. Why not take a look at how your faith compares with what God says faith is?

Why do we need faith?

Ephesians 2:8, Authorized Version, tells us, "For by grace are ye saved through faith." In other words, without faith you will not be saved. It's pretty plain right there!

Many of us lack the faith to receive answers to our prayers. We lack the faith to free our minds of the fears and worries of daily life. We lack the faith to be healed.

Faith is an indispensable element in the Christian life — it is like glue, holding everything else together. We need it to obey God, to be submissive, to believe that God is in control and to know that He will work things out in the end. The submissive wife of Ephesians 5:22 needs faith not in her husband, but in God.

If your faith does not move you to keep God's law in all its ramifications, then your faith will be the death of you. James 2:26 says, "Faith without works is dead." Faith must be coupled with actions or deeds. Inactive, static faith is not pleasing to God. It leads, ultimately, to death — eternal death!

What is faith?

The apostle Paul, inspired by God, described what faith is: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). Verse 3 says, "By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God."

Through our five senses we receive physical information, but faith does not come to us that way. Faith has nothing to do with the physical world — it's a spiritual matter.

Faith is the confidence or assurance that we will fulfill the human potential God has given us. In other words, if you have the conviction to believe that medical science will some day rid the world of all disease, that's a type of faith — faith in man. But faith in God is the belief that God will

do what He has said He will do. Faith is believing that God's Word, as revealed in the Bible and through God's servants, is true.

Where does it come from?

How do we get faith — if we can get faith? Can we generate faith ourselves?

God says, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8, AV). So that's where faith comes from — from God. God gives it to us through His Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22).

Romans 10:17 says, "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." So we receive faith partly by reading and studying the Bible, God's Word.

To have faith, we need to draw close to God, to know Him. We need to repent of past transgressions against God's law, to do God's will, to pray, to fast, to grow in grace and knowledge of God (II Peter 3:18), to ask God to give us true faith.

Jesus had tremendous faith in God. He said, "I can of Myself do nothing" (John 5:30). He relied on God completely and believed God implicitly. We need the kind of faith that Jesus Christ had.

And Galatians 2:16, AV, shows that the faith God will give us through His Holy Spirit is actually the very faith of Jesus Christ — the same faith Jesus had! Notice: "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ."

What about your faith? Is it from God — the very faith of Jesus Christ Himself — or something you worked up yourself? Will it stand the test, or will it mean your eternal death?

To help us understand real, Christlike faith more fully, let's look at one of the greatest examples of faith in the Bible. It is an example of faith that even Jesus Himself marveled at — the living faith of the Roman centurion

(Luke 7). This story gives us valuable insight into how Jesus, the Son of God, looks at faith. It also clearly shows up the pitiful faith that is taking many of this world's professing Christians absolutely nowhere.

The faithful centurion

Luke 7 relates how a Roman centurion sent for Jesus, requesting that Jesus come and heal the centurion's servant. The inspiring story starts by showing us how the centurion's faith translated into love. He loved his neighbors, and they loved him.

We are told that the centurion's servant (the correct translation is "slave") was "dear" to him (verse 2). In other words, he loved his slave. This was unusual in those days, as slaves were commonly looked on as just property to be used and sold at will.

Verses 3-5 show that the centurion was loved and respected in turn by the leading Jews of the city, who willingly and instantly pleaded with Jesus to come and heal the slave, even saying that the centurion "was worthy" of the miracle. "For he loves our nation," they explained, "and has built us a synagogue." The centurion had given of his own money to build the Jews a place where they could worship God.

This, too, was unusual, since relations between the Romans and the Jews, a subject people, were not the best.

Let's be honest with ourselves. Do our neighbors have such a high regard for us as so-called Christians? Would our neighbors put out so much effort on our behalf if we were in the place of the centurion? Do your neighbors care much about your welfare?

Unfortunately, too few of us show enough concern for our neighbors. Sometimes we don't offer them much love or service. But death will be our reward if we don't express faith with love!

Clearly, the centurion knew who his neighbors were, and his concern for them was based on the royal law as recorded in James 2:8: "If you really fulfill the royal law according to the

Scripture, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' you do well."

The centurion represented something hateful to the Jews of his day — the government of Rome, a harsh occupation army. The centurion was able to overcome this by his love for his neighbors, the Jews. Jesus knew all these things and measured the love the centurion showed by the high regard the Jews had for him in return. How does your love measure up?

The centurion's love was just one element of his faith because, as we see in James 2:20, "Faith without works is dead." The centurion's work in this case was loving his neighbor, as Jesus admonished us to do in Luke 10:25-27.

Jesus Himself marveled

The next event in the story shows that the centurion's faith manifested itself in another important way — humility. Jesus already had decided to go with the elders to see the centurion and his slave, but before He could reach the house, friends of the centurion came out to Him saying, "'Lord, do not trouble Yourself, for I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof. Therefore I did not even think myself worthy to come to You . . .'" (Luke 7:6-7).

This is a tremendous example of the centurion's perspective of himself, even though the elders said he was worthy. Though he was a centurion, a man of rank and high office, accustomed to being shown honor, he did not have an inflated opinion of himself. He knew that he didn't deserve anything, not even considering himself worthy to speak to Jesus personally, but instead cast himself before Jesus, through the messengers, in meekness and humility.

The centurion's faith reaches a crescendo and explodes across the pages of time with his next statement, giving us a rare and valuable example of what saving faith is: "But say the word, and my servant will be healed."

The centurion obviously knew

that the very forces of the universe were under Jesus Christ's control. Notice verse 8: "'For I also am a man placed under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it.'"

Here we see the final icing on the cake. What better man to understand obedience and how government works than a centurion — a military man. He said he was also "a man placed under authority." He understood that Jesus was under the authority of His Father, under God's government, but that Jesus had at His command all the power of the universe if He needed it.

It is in the next few words of verse 9 that we get that wonderful glimpse into the mind of God. Jesus Christ, called *Immanuel*, or "God with us" (Matthew 1:23), revealed what He thought about the whole affair, about this man's faith: "When Jesus heard these things, He marveled at him, and turned around and said to the crowd that followed Him, 'I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!'"

Yes, Jesus Himself marveled at this centurion's incredible faith. And there is a lesson here for us today. Our concept of faith may be based on hope or trust, but Jesus saw the centurion's faith was also expressed in love, humility and the understanding of government through obedience to the authority of God.

For more understanding, you need to read Herbert W. Armstrong's foundational booklet *What is Faith?* It's absolutely free for the asking. Why not write for it now?

Do you have the kind of faith that the centurion had — the faith that Jesus Himself would marvel at — or is your faith the

self-generated kind that is weak in times of stress?

Ask God for this faith

Are you one of those who is trusting in human strength, not realizing that you don't really have faith? Do you have the saving, spiritual faith of Jesus Christ, or your own physical faith based on human reasoning? Be warned: Your own faith — faith that is not of Jesus Christ — will be the death of you.

If you think your faith is of yourself and not of Jesus Christ (Philippians 3:9), then go to God in prayer. Ask Him to give you the faith that His Son had while He walked this earth. Remember, without faith we cannot be effective Christians and make it into God's Kingdom.

In Hebrews 12:2, we see that Jesus is "the author and finisher of our faith." Through Jesus Christ we have salvation, and through Jesus Christ we can obtain the faith that we need to keep God's law, please God and qualify for God's Kingdom.



What of my friends at lunch that day? They have gone now — out of God's Church and back into the rat race of this world. They seem spiritually dead. If they don't repent, their self-generated faith, not God's gift, is going to be the death of them.

Remember the Roman centurion — his faith was marvelous to Jesus Christ. Don't let yours be the death of you. □



*"A word fitly spoken
is like apples of gold
in settings of silver."*
Proverbs 25:11

The Art of Christian Conversation

Jesus Christ said, "By your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned" (Matthew 12:37). Just how will God judge your words?

By Marc Segall

If someone were to describe the type of conversationalist you are, would he use the words *tactful*, *kind* and *considerate*?

Or would he be inclined to say *blunt*, *sarcastic* and *intimidating*?

"Death and life are in the power of the tongue," as Solomon so poignantly put it (Proverbs 18:21).

Spoken with thought and care, our words can produce lasting, beneficial results. But spoken carelessly, they bring harmful consequences and tragic misunderstandings. We need to stop and evaluate the care we take in ordinary conversation.

The dictionary defines conversation as "informal talk, often spontaneous in nature." How responsible are we for this everyday type of conversing?

Jesus Christ provides the answer: "For every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment" (Matthew 12:36). It obviously behooves us to be aware of what we say in our conversations.

"A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things" (verse 35). This

implies that we should become skilled artisans in producing the verbal "good things" to which the Word of God refers.

"A word fitly spoken"

The ability to say the right thing at the right time has great value. As Proverbs 25:11 says, "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver." All of us have experienced that sense of satisfaction that comes when we respond in a mature and fitting manner (Proverbs 15:23).

One way we can use words that are not "fitly spoken" is by using too many of them. If you tend to talk too much or are overabundantly blessed with the "gift of gab," you should remember Proverbs 10:19: "In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is wise."

The more we "gab," the easier it is to say the wrong things. We all need to develop the habit of considering what we should say and how much we should say before we open our mouths.

Another way we can converse in words that are not "fitly spoken" is by responding prematurely. Do we really listen to what other people say, or are we too busy trying to butt in with a response? Do we even let them finish?

Consider soberly what the

Bible says about this: "He who answers a matter before he hears it, it is folly and shame to him" (Proverbs 18:13).

The old saying "look before you leap" could be modified to "listen and think carefully before you speak." How many misunderstandings and hurt feelings would be avoided if this principle were diligently practiced?

Avoid put-downs

All of us have winced under the sting of barbed sarcasm or humiliating insults. Even so, many of us still think there is something really funny about sarcastically pointing out the faults of others.

Some stage comedians revel in the sport of sardonic put-downs. Laughing at someone else's faults is a way of putting ourselves up. But there is really nothing funny about this kind of "humor."

Some people make fun of themselves. It's good to be able to laugh at yourself, but constant self-deprecation can be dangerous. Jesus commanded, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:39). Verbally belittling yourself or others is not fitting for any Christian.

There's an old saying, "Charity begins at home." The place to begin practicing verbal love is with our families. Paul wrote,

Photo by Hal Finch

"If anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Timothy 5:8).

What our families need as much as, if not more than, food and shelter, is love, a right self-image and an adequate diet of verbal support and praise. Communication that tears down, such as is described in Colossians 3:8, has no place in the Christian home.

And, parents, the example of godly conversations must come from the top down, starting with you. If your children hear verbal courtesy and thoughtfulness, they will learn to speak respectfully, too. Verbal kindness is conta-

gious, but, unfortunately, so is verbal cruelty.

It is tragic to hear someone say to his mate, child or friend: "What a dumbbell you are! Don't you have any brains?"

Children look to their parents as authorities, and if a trusted daddy or mommy says "Johnny is so clumsy — he's always spilling things!" or "Mary is so slow — it takes her forever to learn something!" Johnny and Mary will believe and accept that they were born clumsy or stupid and are doomed to remain that way.

On the other hand, if a child happens to overhear a parent's praise ("Johnny is really a fast runner! He won a footrace at school today!"), the child really

believes he has a strength and works all the harder to develop it. For better or worse, children's mental health and self-image depend on their parents to a great extent.

Cutting remarks only tear down the hearers. God's Word is clear on this point: "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers" (Ephesians 4:29).

Simply by following the principle of refusing to humiliate others in our conversation, we can add hope and encouragement to the hungry ears of our listeners. Our conversations and off-the-cuff words can be opportunities to

Words! Words! Words!

By Jack R. Elliott

We have all grown up in a world that places little value on a person's word.

People say things that aren't true, make promises they do not intend to keep, say cutting things designed to hurt and belittle.

The attitude seems to be summed up in the expression, "Talk is cheap."

But is it?

When God spoke, mountains arose and the covering seas were pushed back from the land throughout the world. When God spoke, plant, fish, bird and animal life was created upon the earth. When God spoke, humanity came into existence.

When God speaks in judgment, He speaks with a sharp, two-edged sword (Revelation 1:16, 2:12), clearly distinguishing between good and evil works. That sword is the Word of God (Ephesians 6:17).

Hebrews 4:12 explains: "For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

If words are so powerful and so important to God, should not they also be important to us?

With words we give answer to our

accusers, discover and reveal error, admonish relatives and friends to avoid evil, reward loved ones and praise our Creator.

Those in positions of responsibility and authority make rules, reward achievers and punish the slothful — all with words.

Also with words, God's Church proclaims the good news of the Kingdom of God.

Cutting words

Our words can be sharp. They are capable of cutting to the heart of a matter. With God's guidance we can use words to promote good and avoid evil, but if we are malicious or careless in what we say, we err exceedingly and betray a trust our Creator places in everyone He calls.

True Christians are often shocked by man's inhumanity to man, yet sometimes we speak words to one another that bear that same violent animosity.

James asks: "Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask" (James 4:1-2).

In modern vernacular, people seek their own desires. Instead of turning to God for guidance as obedient children under His authority, people take matters into their own hands. When someone blocks their goals, they become frustrated and develop resentments and hatreds.

David prayed, in Psalm 64:2-3: "Hide me from the secret counsel of the wicked, from the insurrection of the workers of iniquity, who sharpen their tongue like a sword, and bend their bows to shoot their arrows — bitter words."

Murder statistics from various nations reveal the shocking fact that most murders occur within the home.

Certainly, most of us would not think of ourselves as capable of slashing our loved ones with a sharp sword or shooting them with arrows, but to chop someone up with bitter, hateful words is akin to assaulting him with a deadly weapon.

Spiritual wounds, which may never heal, threaten the eternal lives of spiritual brothers and sisters just as certainly as fleshly wounds threaten their physical lives.

Of course, if you're on the receiving end of these sharp swords and arrows, you cannot often change what others say about you. But the hurt

practice love (I Corinthians 13).

The Third Commandment and euphemisms

So often today we hear the name of God used in empty, flip-pant ways. Whether in movie dialogue or casual exclamations, the holy names of the Father and Jesus Christ are tossed around with utter disregard.

The Third Commandment tells us not to use the name of God in vain. Notice the warning that goes with this vital law: "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain" (Exodus 20:7). Yet many well-meaning people, out of ignorance, use

God's name in euphemisms.

A euphemism is defined as an inoffensive term substituted for one considered offensively explicit or unpleasant.

Many sincere people would never use Jesus' name to exclaim their disgust when they make a mistake. But they will instead say something like "gee-whiz" or just a shortened exclamation like "geez" or "gee," not understanding it as a euphemism for "Jesus."

Similarly, many know that it is wrong to use the name of God in shock or anger, but they will quickly say "golly," or "gosh." Even though an "inoffensive" term is used, because it is used as a substitute to sound like the name of God, it should not be

that results from these stinging words may make you guard your own words more diligently.

If you have been wounded by words, you must not risk your own salvation by allowing the wound to fester. If you even suspect that you harbor ill will toward anyone, pray that God will reveal it to you and grant you repentance in order to help you root out this contrary spirit. A root of bitterness can be spiritually fatal (Hebrews 12:15).

The spiritual mirror

If you look into that mirror of righteousness, the Bible (James 1:23-25), and find yourself guilty of abusive words or irresponsibility with your tongue, what should you do?

If you have been guilty of bitter words with your loved ones, or if you have indulged in gossip — that ugly practice of telling things about others that hurts their reputation or that keeps sins from being forgotten — or if you have used verbal knives against your competitors in business, what should you do?

Ultimately all our sins are against God. Seek Him with a "broken and a contrite heart" as David did in the 51st Psalm, and He will forgive you: "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; according to the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions" (Psalm 51:1, 17).

Repeated sins build habits

Deeply established habits of gossip or misuse of the tongue cannot be broken with just a simple resolve to

quit. You may need to fast and pray many times that God will not only forgive you but will help you to repent and to replace evil, destructive speech habits with wholesome, constructive ones.

When God has answered your prayers and granted you repentance, you won't need reassurances; you will know by the change that has come over you. But you will need to keep vigilant. It is easy to slip back.

You will also find yourself deeply concerned for those who might still be hurting from your actions — people who could be harboring ill feelings to their own detriment.

Now you should follow the admonition Christ gave in Matthew 5:23-24: "If you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift."

God will not accept your gift of prayer with this offense hanging over your head. It will affect your conscience until you do the right thing about it.

But when you go, go to your brother solely to bind up that wound. Don't go to demonstrate what a good person you are or to try to justify what you did. Go with a pure, sincere, loving heart.

Misused, our words can cut deep wounds, but spoken thoughtfully, sensitively and honestly, they can also go a long way toward healing those wounds and building better relationships. □

said.

All too often, people in this society use the name of God along with a condemning verb that sounds horribly profane. Others wouldn't use that blasphemous epithet, yet are overheard saying "goldarnit" and similar phrases. Since this type of term is a euphemism of God's name and a wish that God would condemn, we should avoid using it.

As Leviticus 19:12 says, "You shall not swear by My name falsely, nor shall you profane the name of your God: I am the Lord."

Speaking of swearing, notice Jesus' instruction: "Do not swear at all: neither by heaven [expressions like "for heaven's sake" or "my heavens"], for it is God's throne; nor by the earth ["land's sake" or "my lands"], for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one" (Matthew 5:34-37).

Jesus made it clear: Swearing in any form, but especially using God's name or His creation, is wrong. It cheapens and detracts from the importance and the meaning of God and the works of His hands.

When you are tempted to swear or use a euphemism for God's name, why not instead make an intelligent comment that does not blaspheme your Creator? Even in an official or public situation when asked to swear by God's name, or on the Bible, simply say, "I affirm this is the truth." Spoken by one with a reputation for honesty, a "yes" or "no" should be sufficient.

From the abundance of the heart

Jesus said, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" (Matthew 12:34).

The term *heart* refers to our inner thoughts and feelings. What we allow to enter our minds will eventually come out in some form of verbal expression. As

Jesus asked the Pharisees, "How can you, being evil, speak good things?" (same verse).

The books we read, the movies and television we watch and the music we listen to affect our daily thoughts and emotions. We need to be concerned about the thought-provoking, value-altering media we expose our minds to, because what we see and hear will affect our conversations.

Our unprepared, spontaneous, idle words reveal aspects of our nature to our listeners (Philippians 4:7-8). They will affect our reputation, for better or for worse, and a good reputation is more precious than great wealth (Proverbs 22:1).

We are told in I Corinthians

13:5 that love "thinks no evil." If our thoughts are tolerant, respectful and kind toward others, then our speech will reflect this. We do "say what we think," whether we mean to or not.

Our words portray the real you and the real me. They express what type of self-control and character we have, and so will also affect our future: "For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned" (Matthew 12:37).

The Bible teaches that we can qualify to rule under Jesus Christ in the Kingdom of God (Luke 19:17, Matthew 25:21). One of the main ways we can begin to qualify is by learning to control our thoughts and the conversa-

tions those thoughts trigger.

Proverbs 16:32 states, "He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city."

The art of conversation takes determined effort to develop. But the Bible, especially the books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, is replete with instruction and examples of how we should and should not use our tongues.

And mastering the art of Christian conversation is a vital ingredient in our quest to become mature Christians: "If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect ["mature," Rheims translation] man, able also to bridle the whole body" (James 3:2). □

Sabbath Talk

By Marc Segall

The whole subject of Christian conversation relates in no small way to God's holy Sabbath. A major aspect of keeping the Sabbath — an aspect we may seldom think of — concerns the type of conversation appropriate for this special time.

If you are unsure of which day God has specifically set aside as His Sabbath or of exactly how He expects us to observe this day, write immediately for our free booklet, *Which Day Is the Christian Sabbath?*

In Isaiah 58:13-14, God gives us special instruction on how to keep the Sabbath. Read these verses. They tell us not to tread our feet on the Sabbath day, which means that we aren't supposed to keep the Sabbath the way we choose to, but the way God says to.

Part of God's instruction is that Christians should not be "speaking your own words" on that day. It becomes clear that there are some topics of conversation that are appropriate for the Sabbath day and others that are not.

What topics are not appropriate? Remembering that the Sabbath day was created for humanity for rest, refreshing and drawing closer to the Creator (Mark 2:27, Exodus 20:10-11, 31:15-17) gives us direction.

Conversations about all our prob-

lems on the job or other aspects of our work usually detract from the rest and peace of the seventh day. Dialogues about our investments, moneymaking projects or other business schemes are not fitting, either.

What place does a discussion about the status of your favorite football team have on God's day of rest? These subjects can be discussed on the other six days of the week.

Ask yourself, "Does this conversation have anything to do with the purpose or intent of the Sabbath?" If the answer is a clear "no," then it's time to steer the conversation toward topics more fitting for the day.

What topics are these? The most obvious one is to discuss why you and your family appreciate the Sabbath.

It's wonderful to be able to express your gratitude for the benefits of extra time to rest, pray, spend time with loved ones and be taught from God's Word.

We can talk about God's plan and how thrilling it will be when all the earth is at rest during the coming reign of Jesus Christ in the Kingdom of God on earth (Isaiah 2:2-4, 11:6-9). It is beautiful in God's sight to see families speaking words of encouragement and gratitude to each other, especially on the Sabbath (Psalm 133:1).

If we live with people who believe differently than we do, we at least can try to avoid stressful, argumentative subjects. We can speak positively (Philippians 4:8) and try to direct the conversation toward those areas that are mutually uplifting.

When we are around people of like mind and faith, we can use the Sabbath as a prime time to talk about the exciting accomplishments of God's Church and the work it is doing. The conversation might naturally lead to a discussion of world events and how they relate to Bible prophecy (Luke 21:36, 12:37).

What else can we talk about on the Sabbath day? How about the very subjects and topics covered in the pages of this magazine? Maybe we learned something that struck us as significant. If so, that would make a fine topic of Sabbath conversation. Various principles and tips on successful Christian living are often discussed in these articles. They can be woven into a lively discussion that will edify all who are listening (I Thessalonians 5:11).

Malachi 3:16 states: "Then those who feared the Lord spoke to one another, and the Lord listened and heard them; so a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the Lord and who meditate on His name."

There is no better time for God-centered conversation than during the Sabbath. When God hears us not speaking our own words, but words fitting for a Holy Day, we are one big step closer to keeping the day the way God intended. □

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

I was baptized at age 13 by a minister of a large Christian denomination, but I didn't understand the true meaning of repentance until I began studying my Bible, hearing your broadcasts and reading your magazines. Should I be baptized again?

This is a vital question for many of our readers. Baptism is an important step in your spiritual life, and it must be done at the right time and in the right way, *after* true repentance.

The key to this whole problem was given by the apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost when he said, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

Notice that repentance comes first. Baptism is second — after repentance.

What do you repent of? Sin. And what is the Bible definition of sin? "Sin is the transgression of the law" (I John 3:4, Authorized Version). Sin is breaking God's law. To be really converted, you must repent of breaking God's law — stop breaking it and begin obeying it, now and in the future. And you must believe that Jesus Christ paid the penalty of your sins in your stead and is your personal Savior.

And repentance is not something you can "work up" yourself. God must grant you true repentance in the first place. As Romans 2:4 says, "The goodness of God leads you to repentance." This must come first.

Then you need to be baptized by complete immersion as an outward sign of your willingness to completely bury your old self and literally give your very life to God.

But, frankly, most people who attend the churches of this world and are baptized by them don't really know what to repent of, especially teenagers. They don't

know what sin really is.

In early youth, most young people sincerely intend to "do better" or to "follow their church." But since they have not been taught what sin actually is, they completely fail to realize exactly where they have stood in God's sight. They are usually only sorry humanly for having disobeyed their conscience, their parents or their church.

In short, they don't really repent. They aren't broken up about the sinful state of their lives — about their own human vanity and selfishness, which express themselves constantly — about their basic nature or disposition to serve *self* and not God, to *get* and not *give*.

If you are wondering about your baptism, ask yourself why you were baptized in the first place. Were you baptized simply because many of the members of your family were baptized, and you felt looked down upon or left out? Did you stand in the water and go through the ordinance of baptism simply to join the group with whom you had been fellowshiping? Were you baptized because you temporarily thought it was the "right thing" to do?

Such people don't immediately begin to study and understand the Bible. They just continue to go along with the ways of their friends and this world. Their lives are not changed. They don't come to personally know God. Such people have not truly repented and their baptism was not valid!

If you were baptized for any of these reasons, your baptism was probably not valid, because your motives were not right. You need to really repent and be baptized into Jesus Christ by a true servant of God in order to receive the Holy Spirit and be added to the true Church of God (I Corinthians 12:13).

For a thorough biblical explanation of the subject of baptism, write for our free booklet *All*

About Water Baptism. It will help you evaluate your own situation and show you how to proceed.

What is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit?

Only three places in the Bible mention "blasphemy against the Holy Spirit": Matthew 12:22-32, Mark 3:20-30 and Luke 12:10. The Greek word in these verses means "to speak abusively, defame, vilify." Certain people of Jesus' day blasphemed the Spirit by attributing the power and works of God to the devil — by saying Jesus cast out demons by an unclean spirit.

Blasphemy against the Spirit of God is not pardonable. The reason is this: We can come to repentance only when the Holy Spirit convicts us that our ways have been wrong and that God's ways are right. If we reject, by not repenting, the Holy Spirit and the works it does, we are rejecting the only channel through which we could qualify for God's gift of grace. The unpardonable sin is the one unrepented of.

Falling away after once having the Holy Spirit is also unpardonable (Hebrews 6:4-6). Falling away means turning from God's way of life after sincerely embracing it, or rejecting Christ's sacrifice, which makes it possible for humans to receive God's Spirit after repentance and baptism (Acts 2:38). It is possible, as I Thessalonians 5:19 shows, to quench the Spirit in us.

Many have worried needlessly about this question. No one who has blasphemed the Spirit of God wants to do the works of God. He hates them! But as long as one is truly repentant, wants to live God's way of life and strives to overcome, he or she has not committed the unpardonable sin. For more information, write for a copy of our free booklet *What Do You Mean — "The Unpardonable Sin"?* □

Just a Minute *Your Best Investment*

*Concerned about money, your job or career, your home?
Here's an important perspective about your long-term security.*

By Malcolm Tofts

"I have changed my value system," said the refugee, telling me her sad story of shat-

World country that fell to communism. She told me her story of broken dreams.

"What has the experience taught you?" I asked.

Christians. Each day we receive another precious 24 hours. From evening to evening, another 86,400 seconds are credited to our account. And we have to spend every one of them! A day misused is gone forever.

Whether you are an oil billionaire riding along proudly in your limousine or a dirt farmer saving for a secondhand tractor, you have an equal amount of the precious treasure of time each day. Are you investing that treasure wisely?

How we use our time shows where our hearts are. Other matters that are important to us will receive proper attention only if we first learn how to use our time wisely.

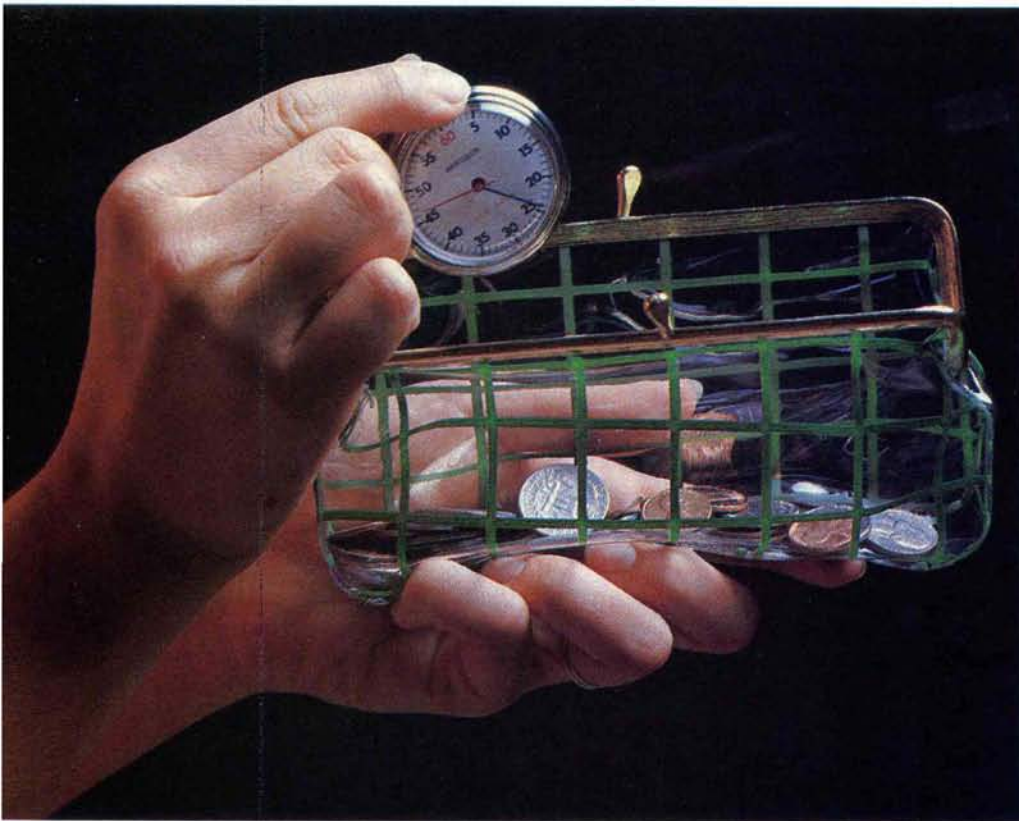
The time wasters

Cleverly, Satan has devised a world in which, if we are not careful, we can become so engrossed with inconsequential matters that we have no time for matters of true importance. This is true even in a physical way.

For instance, tests have shown that even some executives of the most successful companies waste much of their time on trivia. They are usually unaware of the waste. When these business executives are asked to record, minute by minute, where their time goes, they are usually shocked to discover how many hours are bled away by trifles.

Chances are, if you take a hard look at how you use the hours of your life, you, too, will have to admit that too much of your

Photo by G. A. Belluche Jr.



tered hopes.

"I had been far too materialistic. I had concentrated on getting physical things. Now that they have all been swept away, I want to cling to more enduring values."

Helen is an intelligent, once-wealthy woman in her early 20s who was forced to flee, penniless, with her family from a Third

"I was overly concerned with physical things. I need to invest my time more wisely now," she replied.

Helen had learned the hard way to invest her time in enduring values.

Time is one of our treasures — perhaps the greatest one. And the Kingdom of God is an investment that requires the time of true

time is oozing wastefully away.

Of course, I am not referring to time spent well, in balance. We all need to eat, sleep, work, play and rest. What I'm talking about is wasted time.

For example, how much of your day do you spend watching insipid television programs or reading meaningless magazines? Do you waste time worrying? Or being sick because you don't eat right?

If you look hard, you will probably find many hours slipping by unproductively. It is a problem we all struggle with. Whenever I check up on myself, I find that much of my time needs to be reorganized.

First things first

Satan knows that true Christians believe in prayer and Bible study. He knows that it would be almost impossible to shake our belief in the value of those essential areas.

Therefore, Satan takes an indirect approach. He tries to keep us so busy with other matters that we become deluded into thinking that we have no time for the spiritually essential areas.

He does this by offering many attractive and appealing — but unprofitable and harmful! — alternatives.

In addition, the environment around us offers many perfectly wholesome and right pursuits that nevertheless can distract us if we overemphasize them or put them before our spiritual obligations.

The result is the same as if we had deliberately decided not to pray or study. We must guard against wasting time in these areas by firmly committing ourselves to doing the important things first.

Get the focus

Look at it this way: A photographer focuses his camera on the subject of his picture until that subject becomes clear. If the subject is clear, the photographer doesn't worry if the background blurs a little.

We need to do the same with

our time. We need to focus on our priorities. The rest of the items requiring or inviting our attention will then appear in their proper perspective.

You can redeem your time, and the Bible commands you to do so! The apostle Paul said that we should be "redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:16).

For example, if you find yourself in need of more time, ask yourself if you really need to read all the details of all the crimes reported in the newspaper. If you concentrated on the major news issues and trends, especially those related to Bible prophecy (the situation in the Middle East and the rise of Europe, for example), and skimmed the rest of the paper, you could still be getting the most important news — and you would be spending your reading time more profitably (Luke 21:36).

Once spent, time can never be replaced. We can only live this day today. The best time investment we can make is putting the right amount of time into preparing for the Kingdom of God. God's Kingdom is the only government that will not eventually collapse. That is why we are commanded to redeem the time and use it wisely.

Sad to say, some have preferred to invest their time primarily in the things of this world. How about you? How do you compare with the rich man in Mark 10:17-22, who turned down the chance to become one of Christ's disciples because he couldn't bear to part with his goods? He's dead now, his goods long ago divided among heirs, and he has no promise of anything more.

Some men and women set themselves a physical goal — a public office or a fat bank account, for example — drive themselves relentlessly toward that goal, deprive themselves of rest and relaxation — then die of heart attacks from overwork and stress just as they attain "success." What a tragedy of wasted life!

By contrast, let us read what

Jesus instructed His disciples:

"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:19-21).

If people without God's Spirit are willing to expend so much for a physical goal, how much more should we be willing to sacrifice our time readying ourselves for the office and the understanding of a God?

Eternal treasure

In this world, we spend so much time acquiring and then maintaining physical things that it sometimes seems that they are controlling us, instead of us controlling them. But stop! Get off the merry-go-round and think just a minute.

Longtime readers of *The Good News* know that the Bible clearly shows what is ahead for humanity — more frightful upsets and violence, worldwide, and a time of greater trouble than the world has ever seen (Matthew 24:21).

Fortunately, although our property may be destroyed, we as true Christians will be able to claim God's protection from such catastrophic events as Psalm 91, verses 3 to 7, describes, and God also promises to supply our needs (Psalms 37:25).

Our enemies can rob us of our televisions and radios. They can steal our fancy carpets and curtains. They can confiscate our homes and deny us jobs. But there is no need to be disheartened if our real treasure is not invested in those trinkets. Unless we let them, our enemies cannot take away our time invested in the Kingdom of Heaven.

If we continue to give God our best time now and in the short time remaining in this age, God will give us more time than we can imagine — eternity.

Where could you find a better deal? □

LETTERS

April issue

What an inspiration and delight to read Clayton Steep's article, in the April 1984 *Good News*, entitled "Let There Be Light."

That put a whole new slant on the subject of light and darkness — one I've never thought of in quite that way before! God's Word came alive before my very eyes and was presented in such a way that I don't think I'll ever forget it.

Besides, I've never thought of myself as a lit match in a dark room — think of the excitement and sheer joy when all of the matches are ignited and the darkness is gone forever! It's really something to look forward to and rejoice about.

And thanks so much for the encouragement in "When Will I Ever Overcome?" It was so timely, and the picture of the man spinning the plates was a perfect picture of the frustration I feel at times of trying to overcome.

Helps me realize how much we need our loving Father's strength and power to keep it all together and reach on toward perfection.

Sally Green
Kennewick, Wash.

I would like to thank Earl H. Williams for "Psalms and Salvation: The Message Most Overlooked!" It was wonderful!

I knew the Psalms were used for comfort during trials and help with our prayers, but Mr. Williams showed us much more. He showed us the inspiration God displays by having His Bible written the way He did.

Robin Wilson
Concord, N.H.

I've loved the Psalms, but never thought of them as prophetic messages as Mr. Williams pointed out.

Really, I thank all the authors for such interesting, educational articles in the magazines.

Elma Chestnut
Parkdale, Ore.

No request for money

I have been receiving *The Good News* for almost a year now, and the information in each copy has been a great help to me in my daily life. I've read excellent articles on subjects that I really needed help with.

Also, I am pleased that such a good magazine is offered free of charge. Not many organizations will send free literature unless one makes a contribution. If one has to make a contribution in order to receive something, then that something is not free!

I can understand why you've never made a request for money. It's because God is blessing you by touching the hearts of many (like me) who make contributions because we love the truth and want to make sure it reaches others. Yet we all realize that it does take financial support to print such a quality magazine, and it is costly for you to send these articles through the mail.

I've made contributions in the past, and I know it was cheerfully accepted, as I was very happy to make this contribution to you.

Continue on with the good work that you are doing by informing a troubled world that there is a wonderful world tomorrow.

I know that days of unspeakable horror are coming, and I want to be able to escape the terror that is coming. You are helping me and others to get our lives in order by this wonderful work.

N.M. Johnson
Millsboro, Del.

Help from widows

I want to say thank you to the widows, young and old, who do so much with so little every single day. I'm not certain what two mites will buy in today's market, but I can't help but believe that two mites is just about the price of the postage that sends *The Good News* to the other people like myself who do double back flips when the magazine finally arrives. Hang in there, girls. It's almost over.

Reader
San Antonio, Tex.

"Teeth" in the magazine

I wanted you to know that *The Good News* is forceful, alive and up-to-date — so fascinating, I can hardly put it down. Seems to me you are beginning to "put teeth in it."

Donnie M. Gainey
Cottondale, Fla.

A Bible chapter reference was left out of the boxed article entitled "Guidelines for Effective Fasting" on page 18 of the May Good News. In the third paragraph of the second column, the reference in parentheses should read "Isaiah 58:13." The first scripture reference in the third column is also to Isaiah 58.

Lukewarm

(Continued from page 8)

discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives. If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons" (Hebrews 12:5-8).

Peter recorded that "the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God" (I Peter

4:17).

God is not yet dealing with the masses of humanity around this world — not yet judging them according to their works. He is judging His Church — those who profess to be witnesses not only for Jesus Christ but of Him as He resides in us — and God realizes the time is short.

The principle in I Corinthians 5:5, mentioned earlier, "Deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus," helps explain the answer.

Jesus continues, in Hebrews 12:10-11: "For they [our physical

fathers] indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it."

Jesus Christ asks us to choose life. He knows that unless we are *totally* committed, we will be lukewarm, and if we are lukewarm, we will not attain to that life — eternal life in the Family of God.

He would rather we be hot or cold — because He loves us! □

SPIRITISM

(Continued from page 3)

Samuel 28:11). Notice that the woman spirit medium claimed to contact the dead by supernaturally bringing them up from the grave through the familiar spirit. This form was practiced in times past when the people believed that the dead were in their graves. *Today* spirit mediums have the familiar spirit produce a voice from the air, because it is commonly believed *today* that the dead are *not* in their graves but somewhere else!

Saul replied to the woman, "Bring up Samuel for me."

The spirit masquerades as Samuel

Instead of the familiar spirit appearing *first*, and then the visionary form of a dead person, the woman saw *first* a form that looked exactly like Samuel!

"When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out with a loud voice. And the woman spoke to Saul, saying, 'Why have you deceived me? For you are Saul!' And the king said to her, 'Do not be afraid. What did you see?'" (I Samuel 28:12-13).

Notice that the familiar spirit did not manifest itself first at Saul's séance. Instead, the familiar spirit produced the form of Samuel that **ONLY THE WOMAN SAW!** Saul did not see it! He asked the woman what *she* saw!

"And the woman said to Saul, 'I saw a *spirit* ascending out of the earth.'" This is an *incorrect* translation. The word translated "spirit" is *elohim* in the Hebrew. It can mean either the true God, pagan gods or *judges*. In Exodus 22:8-9, the Hebrew word *elohim* is translated *judges*. In I Samuel 28:13, the verse should have been translated, "I saw a *judge* ascending out of the earth." This is *proved* by what follows: "So he said to her, 'What is his form?' And she said, 'An old *man* is coming up, and *he* is covered with a mantle.' And Saul *perceived* that it was Samuel, and he stooped with his face to the



One of the least understood portions of Scripture concerns Saul and the witch at Endor, in which an evil spirit impersonating Samuel spoke to Saul.

ground and bowed down" (verse 14).

A deception

Notice that Saul still did **NOT** see anyone! He only *perceived* by reasoning from what the woman said that the form the woman saw was that of Samuel!

Here we have a perfect illustration of the impersonation of

human beings by evil spirits. The familiar spirit produced an illusion that only the woman saw. To her the illusion was that of a judge rising out of the earth. Remember that Samuel was actually buried about 50 miles away, not at Endor where the séance was occurring! Samuel was *not* resurrected. The whole thing was a SUPERNATURAL

Illustration by Basil Wolverton

FRAUD! While *impersonating Samuel*, the spirit spoke to King Saul thus: "Now Samuel said to Saul, 'Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?'" Notice the *lying* spirit. Satan lied to Eve in a similar manner.

"And Saul answered, 'I am deeply distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and GOD HAS DEPARTED FROM ME AND DOES NOT ANSWER ME ANYMORE, NEITHER BY PROPHETS NOR BY DREAMS. Therefore I have called you, that you may reveal to me what I should do.'"

The spirit continued to impersonate Samuel by reprimanding Saul for all his evil deeds. Finally the spirit concluded by saying: "Tomorrow you and your sons will be with me. The Lord will also deliver the army of Israel into the hand of the Philistines" (verse 19).

How did the spirit know what was to happen? Because God often makes His plans known to evil spirits! Notice I Kings 22:22-23 and II Chronicles 18:21-22. God permitted "lying spirits" to know His plans.

God rules over all. But He has allowed Satan and his demons to control and influence this entire world. The familiar spirit of the witch at Endor must have known that God would deliver Saul that next day. So it told Saul what would happen in order that its impersonation of Samuel might *seem* real!

Saul's punishment

Now read what happened to Saul because he inquired about the future from a spirit medium: "So Saul *died* for his unfaithfulness which he had committed against the Lord, because he did not keep the word of the Lord, and also because *he consulted a medium for guidance. But he did not inquire of the Lord; therefore He killed him*, and turned the kingdom over to David the son of Jesse" (I Chronicles 10:13-14).

That is exactly how serious God regards spiritism! He took the life of Saul for seeking information at a séance!

In His revelation to John, Jesus

warns us of the *growing* influence of wicked spirits. The control of these wicked spirits, described in Revelation 16:13-16, will lead to ARMAGEDDON!

TODAY we are warned, "Do not believe every spirit, but TEST THE SPIRITS, *whether they are of God*" (I John 4:1). We need to *prove* whether spirits are good or evil.

Notice what Isaiah wrote: "And *when* they say to you, 'Seek those who are mediums and wizards, who whisper and mutter,' should not a people seek their God? Should they seek the dead on behalf of the living? To *the law and to the testimony!* If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:19-20).

Evil spirits pretend to bring light

The spirits who masquerade as human beings at spiritist séances *pretend* to bring LIGHT and knowledge.

Here is what Paul wrote of them: "For such [ministers who pretend to serve Jesus Christ] are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! FOR SATAN HIMSELF TRANSFORMS HIMSELF INTO AN ANGEL OF LIGHT. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works" (II Corinthians 11:13-15).

James tells us what to do when the influence of wicked spirits is present: "Therefore submit to God. RESIST THE DEVIL and he will flee from you" (James 4:7).

You must not obey the devil by yielding to his temptations. Instead, ask God for help. Refuse to yield to satanic influence. Submit to God's correction. Let Him guide you.

The most important chapter in all the Bible relating to our combat with evil spirits is found in Ephesians 6, beginning with verse 10. Here is what we read:

"Finally, my brethren, be *strong* in the Lord and in the *power of His might*. Put on the

whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, *against wicked spirits in high places*. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand . . . stand therefore, having girded your waist with TRUTH" — Jesus said the *truth* shall make us free (John 8:32). God's Word — the Bible — is *truth*. We need to *understand* it.

Continuing in Ephesians 6:14: "Having put on the breastplate of righteousness" — righteousness is defined as keeping all God's commandments (Psalm 119:172). "And having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace" — we must all work, that the good news of the Kingdom of God may reach the whole world.

"*Above all*, taking the shield of FAITH with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one" — *absolute trust* in God for deliverance despite all obstacles — "and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the WORD of God" — use the Bible to know what to do and what to resist. The Word of God is the only sword that can vanquish evil spirits, and that can help you overcome sin and produce self-mastery!

"*Praying* always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end *with all perseverance* and supplication for all the saints" — don't slack off in praying, don't become negligent.

PRAY with perseverance, not only for yourself, but for all those whom God has called (Ephesians 6:15-18).

We are all in this battle together! It is a titanic struggle.

Our eternal life depends upon whether we overcome the temptations of the devil and submit to the rule, the AUTHORITY, of God over our lives. It is high time we recognized the evil powers that manifest themselves through spiritism! □

'Let This Mind Be in You'

Replacing carnal pride with the humility of Jesus Christ is an absolute prerequisite to qualifying for eternal life.

By Jerold W. Aust

Blood began oozing from His forehead and temples. It began as small, almost imperceptible droplets, forming a crimson edge along His hairline. Then bright red drops began to run down around His eyes and nose.

He didn't blink them away or wipe His face. He was too intense.

No other humans heard Him speak. A few men, just beyond earshot, had come part way with Him, but they were sleeping — exhausted.

Now His shoulders heaved as He poured out His heart to God. His head bowed, His arms and hands extended in a position of appeal, His dynamic inspiration was apparent to anyone who would have seen!

Then, suddenly, He arose and walked back to the three men He'd left a short distance behind. Though He had asked them to watch against any interruption, He found them fast asleep. He admonished Peter over this failure and again exhorted the three to watch and pray.

For the second time, He returned to supplicate God. And for the second time He returned only to find His three disciples sleeping.

Finally, for the third time He went to pray as before. When He returned to His followers, He

found them sleeping again. He directed them to rise and follow Him, for Jesus Christ knew that the hour of His betrayal was at hand (Matthew 26:36-46, Luke 22:39-46).

We know Jesus never sinned — never broke His Father's holy laws (Hebrews 4:15). We know He never harmed another person during His physical life on earth. We know He performed many miracles to improve others' health and welfare, and set a perfect example of how life should be lived.

So why was Jesus going through this great mental anguish, even to the point of sweating great drops of blood in heart-wrenching supplication to a spiritual Father He couldn't physically see, and for an ignorant and wholly ungrateful human race who could not have cared less?

Why blood, sweat and tears?

Simply put, it takes deep humility to be God and then to sacrifice yourself so billions of others can become Gods!

Sound easy? Far from it. Developing godly humility is one of the most difficult actions anyone could perform. Why?

Because humans are not born with humility. We are born into a ready-made world pervaded with pride, and are highly susceptible to the world's natural influence. It takes the personal sacrifices of prayer and fasting to receive godly humility — the very humility

of Jesus Christ, which God will put in us through His Holy Spirit. And we must have this humility in order to qualify for God's Kingdom!

Jesus knew this. He made the first man of the dust of the ground and the first woman from the man (Genesis 1:26-27, 2:21-22, Hebrews 1:2, John 1:3, 10). He was fully aware of Satan's domineering influence on weak, fragile, gullible human flesh and mind (II Corinthians 4:3-4, Ephesians 2:2-3, Revelation 12:9).

Therefore Jesus of all people would surely know how easily humans could be influenced, especially understanding the devil's insidious power and Satan's avowed purpose to exterminate all human life from existence (Isaiah 14:12-17).

Here's the point: Since Jesus made human flesh, with its weaknesses — since Jesus was God in the flesh experiencing what He created (Hebrews 2:16-18) — and since Jesus knew what it was like to be very God with all its inherent powers and inability to sin (I John 3:9) — He humbled Himself to the very point of His death on the stake.

The point is that spiritual strength to overcome and endure to the end comes only through much prayer and fasting.

Jesus did this. Without sufficient humility, Jesus could not have endured the extreme mental and emotional pressure and the

excruciating physical pain that was shortly to follow. Only with this type of humility could He at once perfectly obey God our Father, relying on God's strength, and perfectly resist the pulls of the flesh, influenced by Satan the devil.

In short, that kind of deep, godly humility provided a Savior for you and me. Without it, we are as walking dead, destined for everlasting death, wiped from God's memory.

Read about this humility for yourself: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:5-8).

He did it for us. He desires that we become very God. (If you have not read Herbert W. Armstrong's book *The Incredible Human Potential*, write to our office nearest you for a free copy.) Jesus' purpose is to bring many sons unto glory (Hebrews 2:9-10).

It should now be more understandable why Jesus prayed so earnestly, even to the point of sweating blood and shedding tears. As he drew near to God, so should we (James 4:8). If He couldn't succeed without this type of closeness to God, neither can we. Our salvation rested in Jesus' obedience to God, and that obedience was based on His humility.

It is impossible to obey God without depth of humility.

Which brings us to the opposite of humility — pride. How well do you understand pride? What's the difference between pride and proper satisfaction in knowing you or others have performed well?

Proud or pleased?

There is a difference between being pleased with your perfor-

mance and being carnally proud.

God said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17).

The apostle John wrote, "And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in his sight" (I John 3:22).

Paul wrote to the Hebrews, "But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (Hebrews 13:16).

So we see that God permits us to be pleased with our accomplishments or the accomplishments of others as long as our attitude is based on God's two great commandments: love toward God and love toward people.

We can be pleased with others' performance for good. People are not rebuffed when you speak highly of someone else's good actions. But what about your own accomplishments? The Scripture says, "Let another man praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips" (Proverbs 27:2).

Paul wrote, "But 'He who glories, let him glory in the Lord.' For not he who commends himself is approved, but whom the Lord commends" (II Corinthians 10:17-18).

So we may be pleased with our own performance only if we are obeying Jesus Christ's example and teaching (II Corinthians 10:12, James 1:25). Even then, as we exercise godly humility, we must give the real credit for our every success to our merciful, compassionate, all-loving God (James 1:17, Philippians 2:13, 4:13). Even Jesus said of Himself: "I am the vine, you are the branches . . . for without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). Be very careful, therefore, how pleased you are with your own performance, and be always aware of where your good works come from.

Pride is quite another story. God hates pride, and for good reasons.

In a word, pride destroys

(Proverbs 16:18). And pride is personified in the being of Satan, who is king over all the children of pride (Job 41:34).

Pride severs our relationship with our humble God (Psalm 10:3). It causes us to depend on our own human power (Psalm 49:11).

Pride restricts our service to others, just as a chain around our arms would restrict our helping hand (Psalm 73:6). It corrupts our communications (verse 8). It causes us to demean and spiritually assassinate our fellowman (Psalm 119:21, 69-70, 78). Pride keeps God at a great distance from us (Psalm 138:6).

Pride, in short, is an abomination to God (Proverbs 6:16-17). God hates pride and arrogance (Proverbs 8:13). One who refuses correction is proud (Proverbs 10:17). Pride brings on shame (Proverbs 11:2). Contention is based on pride (Proverbs 13:10). If you're proud, God's Word says you hate yourself (Proverbs 15:32). A proud heart is sin (Proverbs 21:4).

God will eventually humble all the proud humans on this earth, as well as Satan and the demons (Isaiah 2:11, 14:15). Pride has no place and will never have a place in the everlasting Kingdom of God (Revelation 21:23-27, 22:14-15).

These are the kinds of pride God hates, and why. Pride can hurt you now in your efforts to serve God and, if not repented of, can cause you to be burned up in the final judgment in the lake of fire (Hebrews 6:4-8, Revelation 20:14-15, II Peter 3:7).

Can you really take that chance?

Take on Jesus' mind

You need to replace your human pride, which is fueled by Satan, with Jesus' humility. There is no other alternative — no other choice.

And you haven't much time to do it. If you decide to wait, you are already shackled by your pride and don't know it.

The good news is that you don't have to remain bound and

spiritually inhibited by carnal pride.

That same Jesus, who did *not* take Himself for granted as you and I do and who literally sweat blood in agonizing supplication to God in pure humility, did so for your eternal salvation.

Do you plan to remain just as you are, thinking God will receive you while you are buried in your pride? That is impossible! He will not. He cannot. To do so would put Him in the business of perpetuating destroyers like Satan the devil.

If you don't turn from your prideful way God will mercifully put you out of your misery — forever. He doesn't want you to suffer, and carnal pride produces suffering. Satan and the demons will suffer forever because of their pride (Jude 13).

There is a better way. It's called humility. It is the opposite of pride. The humble person depends on someone much greater than himself to overcome Satan, this sick world and his own greedy, lustful, selfish thoughts.

How do you gain humility? First, on your knees in private prayer. Properly praying to God demands humility. Then, you must study the Scriptures on humility as you would dig for gold — with dedication and fervency. Also, you must give yourself in humble service to others and stop thinking of yourself as better than anyone else.

There's still another spiritual, humility-producing tool that too few people know of, or, if they know of it, they fail to use it.

The tool of fasting

Fasting helps us to gain a godly perspective as to our relationship with God. When we go without food and water for a period of time, we begin realizing how weak and fragile we are and how quickly we would die were it not for our great God. Fasting also helps us to concentrate more on our fellowman's needs and less on our own.

If you have not done so, carefully study all of Isaiah 58. Here God shows how we are cursing

ourselves because of our foolish pride, and how we can overcome pride with humility through prayer and fasting.

Note how Isaiah also shows, in a single verse, the greatness of God and to whom this great God looks: "For thus says the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: 'I dwell in the high and holy place, with him who has a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones'" (Isaiah 57:15).

God helps those who are humble. You can replace your pride with Jesus Christ's humility.

Jesus' example

Had Jesus not humbled Himself in heart-wrenching prayer before his scourging and crucifixion, He likely would not have succeeded in His earthly mission. Had Jesus not fasted 40 days and 40 nights before His temptation by Satan, and fasted at many other times throughout His physical life, He could not have

ship the King of humility. Humanity will finally be at one with God on this earth.

And so Jesus' words ring loud and clear for this great coming event: "However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting" (Matthew 17:21).

We are commanded to fast on the Day of Atonement for this very purpose, as well as for personal preparation to serve both God and man in the greatest work on the face of this earth (Leviticus 23:26-32, Matthew 24:14, 28:19-20, Ezekiel 3:17-21).

Will you do it? Jesus did. And no servant is greater than his master. Since Jesus Christ, our Master, prayed and fasted for us, to provide the way for humanity to be reconciled to God, we must follow His example and do the same for others (Matthew 6:16-18, Romans 12:1).

If you have not been aware of or understood how to keep God's true annual festivals, write for our free booklet *Pagan Holidays — or God's Holy Days — Which?*

Hebrews 12:4 tells us, "You

You need to replace your human pride, fueled by Satan, with Jesus' humility. And you haven't much time to do it. If you decide to wait, you are already shackled by your pride and don't know it.

become our Savior (Matthew 4:2, 17:14-21).

Prayer and fasting go together like love and marriage, like bread and water, like air and breathing, like obedience and salvation. For the great crises in life, and for life in general, prayer and fasting are inseparable.

The Day of Atonement, the fifth of God's annual festivals, is now nearly upon us. The Day of Atonement, which this year falls on October 6, pictures our great King of kings incarcerating Satan and the demons for 1,000 years. For the first time in history, humanity will be free of this king of pride — free to obey and wor-

have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin." Jesus did — for you! Therefore: "See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven... for our God is a consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:25, 29).

Jesus Christ Himself set the example for you with His own innocent blood, His profound, heartfelt prayers and His selfless fasting. For your sake, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5). □

The Power of Temptation

Like the pull of gravity or the force of magnetism, there is an invisible power working on your mind. It pulls and tugs, trying to bend your will toward its source. If you allow it to draw you, its pull intensifies, and soon its power seems overwhelming. Finally, you give up all resistance and yield.

avoid or resist it? Is temptation sin?

An admonition from Jesus

During Jesus Christ's final night with His disciples, before His crucifixion, He gave them a warning: "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:41).

Jesus well understood the subtleties and powers of temptation and the weakness of human

from a magnet, invisible lines of force will reach out from the magnet to attract the iron. If you place the iron piece just a little closer, the attraction will intensify. Nudge the iron still closer and it will be drawn all the way to the magnet.

Temptation works much the same way. For some people the object of wrong attraction might be money, for others drugs. Some are allured to overindulge in food and drink. For a great many the enticement comes from power and sex.

The original, classic case of temptation is found in the first book of the Bible. Eve, the first woman, was approached by a subtle serpent — Satan the devil — who aroused Eve's interests and desires by offering her a false image. In her deception Eve "bought" it (Genesis 3:1-6). Satan succeeded in enticing her and stirring up a wrong desire within her. Through Eve Satan tempted Adam, the first man, to sin, and the result is the world in which you live.

What Satan did to Eve he is doing to the whole world. The Bible calls him the "god of this world" (II Corinthians 4:4, Authorized Version). He is the father of lies (John 8:44), and we may also appropriately call him the father of temptations. He has created an atmosphere of lust, envy, jealousy and competition that has led billions of mankind into sin and resultant death. Satan, the "prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2), has been responsible for the wrong enticements, pulls and attractions that influence us in this world.

But as flesh-and-blood humans, we carry a burden of responsibility

You have just succumbed to the power of temptation.

Temptation is a real force, and it is dangerous! Every person who has lived, including Jesus Christ, has felt its power.

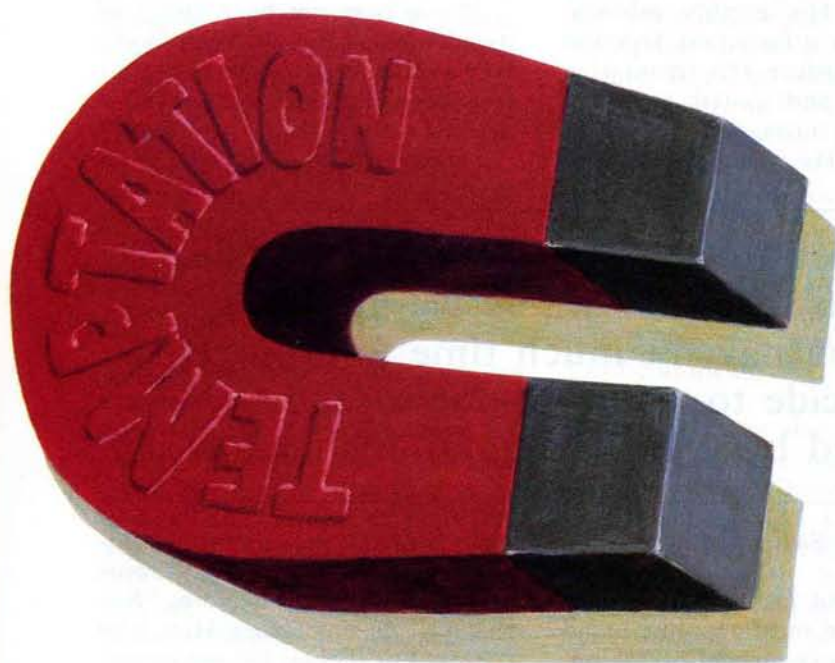
As a Christian, you need to know how temptation works — and how to resist its subtle influences, which lead to sin!

Where does temptation come from? What is the best way to

beings. That's why He gave this admonition.

Temptation is not sin, but it is the forerunner of sin. Temptation is an appeal to the carnal, human mind and flesh to think or do something contrary to God's law of love. It's a force of attraction in the wrong direction.

Have you ever experimented with a magnet? If you place a small piece of iron not far away



ty, too, for many of the temptations that draw us.

Flesh and blood — a root of temptation

Speaking through the apostle James, God said: "Each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death" (James 1:14-15).

The apostle Paul frankly discussed his own battle with temptation: "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me" (Romans 7:18-20).

As Jesus said, the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.

The Bible tells of many individuals and even whole nations that have succumbed to temptation. In the book of Judges, for instance, is the story of how Samson was unsuccessful in resisting Delilah's temptation (Judges 16:4-21). Samson, therefore, endangered his own life and the security of his people. II Samuel 11 shows how David became so obsessed with his desire for Bathsheba that he perpetrated both adultery and murder.

Joseph, on the other hand, was able to resist temptation in the case of Potiphar's wife (Genesis 39:1-12). Joseph exercised a restraint and control that kept him from yielding to a persistent temptress — that kept him from sinning against God. How did he do it? Why was he able to resist when others could not?

Joseph was just as human as any of us. He wasn't perfect. He sinned in his life. The Bible says, "There is none righteous, no, not one... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:10, 23). Yet, in this and other situations Joseph was able to master temptation and

keep himself from sinning. How?

Let's remember Jesus' admonition: "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation." While David and Samson had temporarily forgotten this principle, Joseph apparently had not. He remembered he was human and vulnerable to temptation, and so stayed close to God in prayer, watchful of circumstances around him.

Forgetting how human we are is a serious mistake. It will lead us to lower our spiritual defenses and allow ourselves to draw near situations we ought not. Human nature or, more accurately, carnal mindedness is tuned in to temptations. It desires to go the wrong way. It is naturally attracted to Satan's lures. Unless we catch ourselves and resist soon enough, we will be caught off guard and pulled into sin.

Let's turn our attention now to the example of Jesus Christ. In the book of Hebrews we find this statement: "For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15).

For 33½ years, Jesus Christ successfully withstood all the pulls, tugs and enticements of Satan, this world and His flesh, and did not sin. Jesus followed His own advice. He knew His own human qualities and strengths were no match for the spiritual warfare He had to wage. He plainly stated, "I can of Myself do nothing" (John 5:30).

No human being has the strength to fight this spiritual warfare alone. But though we can do nothing of and by ourselves, Jesus also tells us, "With God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26). When a person is spiritually close to God and relies on God's power, seemingly impossible tasks become possible.

Resisting temptation

Speaking to those who had received God's Holy Spirit, Paul said, "For God has not given us a

spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind" (II Timothy 1:7).

This is the way Jesus Christ fought all His battles and won. He had a full measure of God's Spirit. He had the very mind of God. He was able to overcome every wrong temptation.

The greatest time of temptation in Jesus' life, the confrontation between Himself and Satan, serves as the example of our learning. You can read about this titanic spiritual battle in Matthew 4:1-11. Satan three times tried to tempt Jesus into sinning against God and thus disqualifying Himself as Savior of the world. But Jesus rejected Satan's lures and thus qualified to replace Satan as ruler of the world at Jesus' Second Coming.

The confrontation between Jesus and Satan was a total success for Jesus. He had fasted and prayed and was filled with the knowledge of the Scriptures, and was well armed for the enticements and attractions that were put before Him. Jesus knew the enemy was not just Satan, but the fleshly pulls of His own body.

In Paul's second epistle to the Corinthians, God inspired these words: "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (II Corinthians 10:3-5).

Just as Jesus Christ needed the spiritual presence of His Father to assist Him with His struggles, so we need Jesus Christ's intervention and assistance in our struggles. He can help us literally capture every wrong thought before it leads us into sin. He can and will help us to overcome the temptation to sin, if we stay close to God spiritually.

Let's take seriously Jesus' helpful admonition to watch and pray! □

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