

The Good News

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How YOU Could Commit the UNPARDONABLE Sin!

Here is a shocking revelation! The frightening realization that some former brethren may have committed this sin impels this solemn warning!

by Herbert W. Armstrong

WE HAVE been stunned!—then frightened into sending you immediately this WARNING—at the sudden realization that some former brethren may have blasphemed against the Holy Spirit, and one or two others may stand this moment in danger of it!

In a long distance telephone conversation with one of our ministers this startling possibility struck us both. It has sent me immediately to my typewriter. This edition of The GOOD NEWS goes to press tomorrow morning. Fortunately I am enabled thus to get this warning message to the members of God's Church without delay.

The conversation concerned very distressing and heart-breaking news. A church member was beginning to find fault and accuse the work of God, and in this disgruntled spirit the seeds of discord were being sown in other members. This minister had taken immediate preliminary disciplinary measures. He had dealt this time in kindness, but had made plain that a repetition of this sin will be promptly dealt with in decisive action.

Test of Experience

Then this minister mentioned how

fervently he prayed that God would awaken this member to the danger. He had noticed that in every case, without an exception, where any brother or sister had begun to criticize and find fault with the work of God and then had gone on finally to accuse this work—to deny that it is the very work of God, and to become embittered against it—that person has lost all real spirituality—all contact with God, and has either gone back into the world, or over into false doctrines and beliefs.

"It's almost as if they had committed the unpardonable sin," he said. "I'm really frightened when I think of it! I surely hope God will turn this member's heart back to Him and His work, before it's too late."

After hanging up the receiver, that terrible thought persisted in my mind. I couldn't rid myself of it. I went to the Bible. I prayed over it. I was deeply disturbed, shaken by it.

Then the telephone rang again. It was this same minister calling back again. He, too, had been thinking about it. I told him what was coming to my mind, and he was impressed with the same horrible truth.

What Is The Unpardonable Sin?

The precise words, "unpardonable sin" are not used in the Bible. Yet there is an unpardonable sin, for Jesus said plainly:

"All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit *shall not be forgiven unto men*" (Mat. 12:31).

What *is* this sin that shall never be forgiven?

Jesus had just cast out a demon. In so doing He was an *instrument* being used in THE WORK OF GOD. God Almighty is working out His PURPOSE here below! The time had come for God, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to carry on His work thru the HUMAN BODY of Jesus Christ, His own begotten Son. Jesus was then the human instrument—but the work was GOD'S WORK—and the real power that did the work was THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Let me make this plain. Understand this. Get it straight.

Jesus said He spoke nothing of Himself. The Father that sent Him gave Him commandments what He should say. He spoke only as the Father di-

rected. He said that of Himself—in His human BODY—He could do nothing. "The Father that dwelleth in me, HE doeth the works" (John 14:10). The Father dwelt in Jesus by the Holy Spirit.

The work of God, at that time, was carried on BY THE HOLY SPIRIT dwelling in, and acting thru, the BODY of Jesus—then a HUMAN BODY. But that BODY was a mere agent or instrument. Of itself it was powerless. The WORK OF GOD was actually being done *by the Holy Spirit* working in that HUMAN BODY.

It was *not* the power of Jesus' human body, but the Holy Spirit, which, working *in* Jesus' human body, performed this WORK OF GOD by casting out the demon.

But the scoffing Pharisees accused Jesus of being a false prophet—they *denied that this was actually* GOD'S WORK—they said Jesus did not cast out demons by any power except that of Beelzebub, or Satan.

Jesus then said He cast out demons by the SPIRIT OF GOD. Then it was that He showed that DENYING THE WORK OF GOD—*accusing the WORK OF GOD of being NOT the work of God*, but that of the only other possible power, the DEVIL—constituted blasphemy against the HOLY SPIRIT!

"And whosoever speaketh," continued Jesus (Mat. 12:32)—NOTICE, just SPEAKING "a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, *neither in the world to come.*"

Notice that! Take HEED! Take WARNING! It's time we wake up to the POWER of God! It's time we TREMBLE before the Word of God! It's time we take these things more seriously! This can mean YOUR ETERNITY!

Any person could be forgiven for speaking against the Son of MAN—that is, the human Jesus. Speaking against a human man can be forgiven. But when they spoke against THE WORK OF GOD being done thru that man, *they were speaking against the HOLY SPIRIT!* The man, Jesus, was merely the instrument. The WORK was the WORK OF GOD, *done by the HOLY SPIRIT!*

Christ's Body Today

During Jesus' earthly and human lifetime, GOD'S WORK was carried on thru His human body, but BY THE HOLY SPIRIT which dwelt in Him. After Jesus ascended to heaven, the Father sent the Holy Spirit to enter into the COLLECTIVE BODY of begotten children who formed God's Church. Now they were *many members*—many individual *persons*—but the ONE BODY OF CHRIST!

Not the body of Jesus, the son of MAN—but the BODY OF CHRIST—of the MESSIAH—the SON OF GOD!

Beginning that memorable day of Pentecost, 31 A.D., GOD'S WORK has been carried on *by the Holy Spirit*, but thru this ONE BODY OF CHRIST, now consisting of the many human members who had become begotten children of God.

To those He had called and trained for positions of leadership in HIS WORK, Jesus had commissioned, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel." The WORK OF GOD was carried on by Peter and the apostles and evangelists and pastors and other elders and teachers and helpers under him—by the Apostle Paul, and the evangelists, pastors, other elders, teachers and helpers under him. But they were mere INSTRUMENTS in the process. The POWER that did the WORK of God was the same HOLY SPIRIT!

Apostasy was prophesied. A great falling away. The whole world was to be deceived. The human members of the Body of Christ were to become scattered! They were to be persecuted, and the world dominated by the Great Whore, BABYLON THE GREAT, and her daughter harlots.

Nevertheless, just before the END of this WORLD, Jesus said plainly that HIS very Gospel of the Kingdom of God "shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the END (of the world) come." (Mat. 24:14). Jesus said also, in His Message to the Churches (Revelation 2 and 3), that to the "Church in Philadelphia"—OUR VERY CHURCH OF TODAY—of very little power of our own, He would OPEN A DOOR which would empower us to carry out His commission!

That door was opened! Once again, after more than 1850 years, JESUS' VERY GOSPEL is going out to the whole world! And just as in the days of the human Jesus—just as in the days of the early apostles—we are merely the powerless HUMAN INSTRUMENTS! The real WORK OF GOD is being carried on today thru us, BY THE HOLY SPIRIT OF GOD!

The real work, then, is not *our* work—it is GOD'S WORK. Not of our human power, but BY THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD!

In the very next verse, back in Matthew 12 (verse 33), Jesus had continued to say: "Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: *for the tree is known by his fruit.*"

The FRUITS of this work are these: For the first time in more than 1850 years the same Gospel Jesus preached, THE KINGDOM OF GOD, is being preached and published into all the world as a

witness. It is offending many in this world. The religious leaders of today—the modern Pharisees—attack it as the work of the Devil—they call us false prophets, as they did Jesus. We are persecuted by the world. The world hates us. But many precious lives are being *changed*, converted, begotten of God! God is producing a precious harvest for His Kingdom. New churches are being raised up (two more this summer). The flock is being fed. Evangelists, pastors, elders, are being trained as God calls them. The sick are being healed, the demons cast out.

The FRUITS of this tree are not corrupt—they are the SAME FRUITS that the SAME HOLY SPIRIT produced in the human body of Jesus—in the collective Body of Christ in apostolic days! THE HOLY SPIRIT DOES THE WORK, and the work is exactly the same—the fruits the same—as in the days of Christ and the apostles!

BEWARE!

Brethren, we whom God has called and is using are mere human persons. We are men of like passions as you—as Elijah, as David, as Peter and Paul. We make mistakes. We do not do everything exactly as *you* may think you would do if God had called you to our office. But God did not call you to my office, or that of some of our evangelists and elders. God called *us*, knowing better than you know, our every human weakness. Yet he chose us in spite of that, and when you criticize and find fault are you not assuming to yourself the prerogatives of GOD? It is GOD who directs us—uses us as His instruments.

Yet you may speak a word against us, personally, as human men, *and be forgiven*. But mark carefully this! The very fact that you may be *forgiven* means that such speaking IS A SIN!—a sin for which, *if you repent*, God will forgive.

But—and here's where you need to TREMBLE IN FEAR!—if and when you criticize or accuse or condemn THE WORK, *then you are speaking against the Holy Spirit*—and if and when you do that, YOU SHALL NOT BE FORGIVEN! You shall not be forgiven now, or in the world to come—the WORLD TOMORROW—during the millennium or during the Great White Throne JUDGMENT!

This sort of thing always starts out with personal criticism and fault-finding against the one God has chosen and is using in the office of apostle in HIS WORK. But oh, brethren, how we have been grieved to see a few here and there along the way, thru the years, start out by finding fault against the human person of God's servant, and then in that

(Please continue on page 6)

What Kind of Faith Do YOU Have?

*You brethren need to learn how real faith can totally CHANGE
your life even after conversion.*

by Roderick C. Meredith

YOU are probably a PITIFUL example of the person you should be—even though you are already converted!

Most of us in God's church realize that we are not fully surrendering our lives to God as we should. How often we should say with the apostle Paul, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Romans 7:24).

Don't you often feel this way?

Aren't a lot of you having trouble overcoming your own bad habits and faults? And don't you often become discouraged at your seeming lack of ability to live a full and happy life, and to show forth the love and "good works" that you know God desires?

Well, there is a way out of this predicament!

The Way Out of This Trouble

Brethren, let us realize first of all that God has called us for a definite purpose. He has predestinated us to become his own children (Ephesians 1:5) and he has purposed that we should be partakers of the *divine nature* (II Peter 1:4).

Yes, we are to have the very *nature* and character of our heavenly Father implanted within us. Doesn't a human child have the nature of its father? Certainly! And God has given us this as an *exact type* of our birth as one of His own children. As a child of God, we will inherit the very nature and attributes of God!

How else could we ever obey Jesus' command, "Be ye therefore *perfect*, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect"? Many of us are just beginning to realize the *tremendous* meaning in these words! We are to grow spiritually, "unto a *perfect* man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

Is YOUR Life Exciting and Full?

What a CHALLENGE this is to make the most of our lives!

God has commanded us to live full, exciting and productive lives just as Jesus Christ did. Why should we tremble at this command? God stands *bound* to help us! Christ said that God is *more willing* to give us the Holy Spirit than

we are to give our hungry children bread (Luke 11:13).

We can face life *completely* unafraid! God has promised that if we seek *first* His kingdom and righteousness, all our material needs will be added (Matthew 6:33). Christ said that even the very hairs of your head are all numbered (Luke 12:7) and then said FEAR NOT! Why should we fear while we *know* that God is protecting us, guiding us, and providing all our needs?

Nearly everyone in the world today is seeking some kind of *security*. But as God's own begotten children, we have the *only* real and unfailing security there is.

With this knowledge then, let us face our troubles *squarely* and without fear. We find that the true Christian life is a time of many trials and tests, don't we? But that is the *WAY* God is *building our character*! Don't hard work and exercise help build physical strength? Well, God is sending us through a spiritual "obstacle course" to strengthen us spiritually.

Here's ONE Test

Paul tells us in II Timothy 3:12, "*all* that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." In I Peter 3:12-19, Peter tells Christians not to think it strange because they are going through a fiery trial, but to REJOICE inasmuch as they are partakers of Christ's sufferings. Yes, we should be *happy* that we have these momentary trials to help build within us a holy and righteous character which will last throughout eternity.

Knowing that God is doing all these things to strengthen us, we can face life with renewed courage and *enthusiasm*. Let us put the Ten Commandments and God's other laws to *practice* in our daily lives. Yes, I said *practice*, because we won't be able to do this perfectly at first. When we begin to become serious about these things, many of our erstwhile friends and relatives will make fun of us. Perhaps some of their criticism will be justified, because we often tend to become too serious or sometimes even sanctimonious about our beliefs when we begin trying each day to *live* them.

You Are the Only Light in the World

But we can grin and bear it, can't we? Rome wasn't built in a day you know. It takes *time* and *experience* to learn to use the proper judgment in living by God's laws. We need these problems to strengthen us for the bigger ones ahead. We are helping to build the most valuable and lasting thing there is—the *character of God*. That is why God is putting us through this experience of material life.

Christ said that his followers are "the light of the world" and "the salt of the earth." We should be continually helping others with our time, money, or prayers. It is our duty to give to those who are really in need; to visit the sick; to comfort those who are in distress. We are to be an example or a "light" to those about us (Matt. 5:13-16).

How should we go about this? Brethren, here is where we have to put faith and courage to *work*. Every true follower of Christ should try to develop his talents and abilities so that he can be more of a light to his fellow men.

Yet Perhaps Poor and Uneducated

Many of you are in poor financial circumstances and some have not had very much of this world's education. This is true because God is not now calling many wise and wealthy of this world. *But* God has given each of you many "talents." Are you studying and developing those talents so that Christ may say, "Well done," when He returns?

Remember that you are to take Jesus as an example. Do you think he used sloppy speech? Didn't he have a good knowledge of world affairs? Wasn't He neat and clean in appearance and courteous in manner? If you will study the life of Christ carefully, you will see that he was truly an educated, cultured man. Even when Christ was only 12, the learned Pharisees were "astonished at his understanding" (Luke 2:47).

If we are to be "perfect" even as God and Christ are, we will have to acquire new knowledge of how to live and conduct ourselves. No matter what our station in life, each of us should try our best to improve. By doing this, we will then be able to help others much more

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effectively. They will respect our judgment more in *spiritual* matters because they see the good results it has brought in our *material* life.

The Challenge of Real Christianity

This is really a challenge to *grow*, isn't it? Yet if we are to be kings and priests in the kingdom of God, we will all have to multiply our present talents and abilities many times. *We will* do this with God's help!

Remember that, "unto whomsoever *much* is given, of him shall be much required" (Luke 12:48). So those of us who have had more education and opportunities will be expected to accomplish much more than those less fortunate. But we are all commanded to develop the talents that God has given us, and to use them in His service.

Make a fresh start! Don't be afraid to begin learning all over again the worthwhile things you only half-learned years ago. Get the books you need to improve your knowledge of the English language, history, and of other vital subjects. Learn more about your job so that you can be a more profitable workman or farmer. This will probably mean an increase in your responsibility or pay. This is God's way! It will enable you to serve others more and to glorify God by the example you set.

Do you catch the vision? We are building the characters which will fit us to be kings and priests with Christ (Rev. 5:10 and 20:6). "Know ye not that we shall judge angels?" (I Cor. 6:3). So let's give ourselves completely to God. The very purpose of life is to *change* and *grow* better each day. Let

us continually ask God's help in this. "For with God nothing shall be impossible," as is recorded in Luke 1:37.

The Big Test

BUT, in the very process of developing our own characters, a *tremendous responsibility* has been placed on our shoulders! God has given us a job to do *together*, as co-workers with Christ.

We who know God's truth have THE MOST IMPORTANT JOB ON EARTH TO PERFORM!

We have to fight against and subvert our own human nature which inclines us to disobey God. Then we must go out to help others—must expose, battle, and overcome the false teachings which cause all of this world's misery. Last of all, we must challenge and conquer the very power of Satan himself—for he will turn his full fury on God's true servants.

In all of this, we will require power and strength from God—or we would utterly fail in our own efforts.

We should look upon this job of ours as a BATTLE.

In Ephesians 6:10-20, the apostle Paul uses this symbolism in describing our struggle, "against the *rulers of the darkness of this world*, against *spiritual wickedness in high places*." He tells us that our only offensive weapon is "the word of God." We must understand and be able to use this word effectively.

Paul told his young helper, Timothy, that he should, "... endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (II Tim. 2:3).

We, too, must be willing to endure *hardship* and to *sacrifice* for the work of God. We need to have more ZEAR for the struggle in which we are engaged.

How many of you have *really sacri-*

ficed that this gospel might go out to all the world?

Men in this world will train long, hard, grueling hours, will often have to sacrifice many of their ordinary comforts, and will sometimes *even give up their jobs*—just to compete in the Olympic Games for what Paul calls a "corruptible crown" (I Cor. 9:25). Are you willing to go *beyond* just "doing your bit"? Let's show God that WE REALLY MEAN IT!

Remember that *actions speak louder than words*, and that "faith without works is dead."

God Almighty uses your monetary support as a *test* of your Christian loyalty. These are Christ's words: "For where your treasure is, *there* will your heart be also" (Matt. 6:21).

How about your prayers? Your Bible study? Have you brought others to the truth by the example of your life?

You may not be called to give all your time, and talents, and energy—your very life—to God's work as Mr. Armstrong and others have. But what you can do, *God holds you accountable for*. Are you doing YOUR PART?

You see, brethren, if we use our "pounds" or "talents" with great *wisdom* and *zeal* in carrying out our part in the work of God during this present life, that is a pretty good indication to God how well we will exercise the powers and responsibilities He will give us in the World Tomorrow. In choosing those to fill important positions in God's kingdom, Christ is going to look to our *accomplishment* in His work *now*.

Will you be like the zealous servant who told Christ, "Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds"? (Luke 19:16).

And Jesus answered, "Well, thou good servant: *because thou hast been faithful in a very little*, have thou *authority* over ten cities" (Verse 17).

Yes, before granting us the great *power* and *authority* that will be ours as a member of His very own family, God is testing our PERFORMANCE after He has called us in this life. *Our big test* is NOW. So let's put more ZEAR into this business of *mastering ourselves*, overcoming every fault, and carrying out our part in the work of God's church.

Live By Faith

The *reason* is that most of you have not yet learned to completely *trust* and *believe* that God's way is ALWAYS best for *you*—and for *everyone* concerned.

Ask God, plead with God to help you ALWAYS to *live* by the faith that His law—His way—is best. Be as the apostle Paul who said, "The life which I now
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RADIO LOG

"The WORLD TOMORROW"

Herbert W. Armstrong analyzes today's news, with the prophecies of THE WORLD TOMORROW!

TO ALL OF EUROPE:
 RADIO LUXEMBOURG — 23:30
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Should You ASSEMBLE Without a Minister?

We know you brethren long for local church fellowship. We know you need it. BUT, should you assemble by yourselves without a minister whom God has sent to feed the local flock?

by Herman L. Hoeh

DURING the recent festival of Pentecost we were again brought face to face with a serious problem.

Every year God is adding more members to His Church. For the first time many of you are finding brethren who live in your vicinity. You return home from the holydays filled with the joys of personal fellowship. Soon you begin to visit with nearby brethren. With *social* fellowship comes the inevitable desire to assemble on the sabbaths for round-table discussions.

Many feel the necessity of *social* contact with brethren. They equally desire to learn more about the Bible. What could be better than meeting each sabbath for Bible study, it is reasoned! And think of the *social* fellowship!

Immediately some will think of Hebrews 10:25. "We should assemble ourselves together," they will say.

But what happens?

Wherever groups gather together a dominant individual inevitably arises. By force of personality others begin to look to him—even though he may *not* understand the Bible as well as they. He becomes a leader. Yet he may *not* be capable of keeping order. He is usually the center of arguments, doubts and divisions. Dissension and errors gradually arise. Some brethren leave in disgust—soured on the truth.

Is this *God's way* of feeding the flock?

New Testament Example

There are two methods by which we can LEARN the solution to this problem: 1) by New Testament *example*, 2) by Jesus' *instruction*.

First, let us understand the example of the Bible itself. We are experiencing today the same problem which confronted the early, inspired, Spirit-filled Church of God. The apostolic Church was a *scattered* Church (Acts 11:19). So are you brethren today! But what did that early scattered Church do?

Open your Bibles to Acts 11. Notice that some "which were scattered abroad" (verse 19) "came to Antioch . . . and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord. Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem." What did

they do? Notice it! "*They sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch*" (verses 20-22).

Barnabas was a trained teacher (Acts 13:1). Barnabas also sought out Paul (verses 25-26), who had already been trained personally by Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:17-18). They were eminently qualified to feed the flock.

Jesus Christ directed His apostles at Jerusalem to send pastors lest the Antioch brethren would assemble without leadership. The SAME example occurs in Acts 14.

The apostles, Barnabas and Paul, fled the city of Iconium because of persecution (verses 1-5). They came to Lystra where the Jews soon attacked them as they were conducting their evangelistic work. Thereupon they fled to Derbe (verse 20). In each of these cities the apostles were prevented momentarily from continuing their ministry. They soon returned, however, to confirm the disciples in the faith (verse 21). Now observe verse 23: "And when they had ordained them *elders* in EVERY church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord."

Paul did *not* establish churches without pastors! EVERY local church had its pastor. Jesus called His people sheep. They need a shepherd. Paul therefore gave them pastors, or shepherds, who would feed the flock. We are NO different today. God's people still need pastors to lead them into truth.

And notice, too, that they were *ordained*, with prayer and fasting, *by the apostles*. God did not leave it to the brethren to gather together and to follow anyone who had a desire to become an elder. In these cities, where hundreds were being converted, Paul established local churches and ordained elders for EVERY church! But before ordaining elders Paul's practice was to teach them personally, both in public and in their homes. He said so in Acts 20:17, 20.

This is God's pattern—God's WAY.

If we are to enter the Kingdom of God, *we* must come under the government of God. We must learn to conduct ourselves God's WAY. Christianity is a WAY of life.

Joined to Christ

To many people, a local congregation becomes a place of *social* rather than *spiritual* fellowship. People join themselves together, instead of being *joined to Christ*. In John 15:5, Jesus said: "I am the vine, ye are the branches." What would you think if the branches would say to themselves, let us bundle ourselves together? Yet that is exactly what you are doing when you meet *of your own accord without ministers!*

To be a Christian you need to "abide" in Christ—you need to *live* by His instruction. Do the branches of a grapevine receive their sap from each other? Or do they receive it from the central stump? You need to receive your spiritual power from Christ—the vine. Not from a branch—an individual who thinks he would like to hold a study group on the sabbath.

Your *spiritual* fellowship is not merely with one another, but "with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ" through the Holy Spirit (I John 1:3). Notice what John writes in verse 6: "If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and *walk in darkness*, we lie, and *do not the truth*." If you claim to have real fellowship with God, and "walk in darkness"—disobey the instruction of the Bible—you are not doing the truth. You are actually cut off from real fellowship with the Heavenly Father.

"But if we walk in the light"—if we obey the Biblical instruction—"we have fellowship with one another" (verse 7). How plain! In order to have real fellowship with one another, you need to *abide* in the teachings of Jesus and His apostles—you need to follow the example and the instruction of the Bible, which is ABSOLUTE and FINAL AUTHORITY!

New Testament Instruction

Now let us turn once again to Hebrews 10:24-25. What is the *purpose* of assembling in local churches? "To provoke unto love and to good works . . . exhorting one another."

Notice carefully that Paul explains the *purpose* of our assembling, but *he does* (Please continue on page 6)

Unpardonable Sin

(Continued from page 2)

disgruntled and embittered spirit proceed progressively into condemning THE WORK OF GOD, and denying that it is the work of God.

This work has grown too great and powerful to be the work of a human man, apart from either God or the devil. If this is not the very WORK OF GOD, then it must be that of SATAN. And to accuse it—to condemn it—I ask you, brethren, IS IT NOT MORE THAN POSSIBLE THAT THIS IS SPEAKING AGAINST THE HOLY SPIRIT, and therefore the UNPARDONABLE SIN?

Brethren, in fear and trembling, I warn you, with all the love in my heart, "BEWARE!"

I have always noticed that those whose hearts—and their pocketbooks as well—are really in the work of God are the ones who remain spiritual, close to God, and who are growing spiritually. And, without exception, every single member of God's Church who has ever lost interest in this WORK OF GOD—this work of carrying the Gospel to the world going out now from Pasadena headquarters—begins to fall backward spiritually. Soon such people go off into false doctrines. Their understanding is closed. They begin to believe errors and lies. They become more and more bitter, unhappy, and they either go back into the world or they go into some false offshoot movement which bears no fruit, and fails totally to carry out the Commission of Christ—THE WORK OF GOD!

Your own spirituality—your closeness to GOD—your spiritual growth and development—your hope of eternal salvation in the Kingdom of God, *depends, then, on keeping your heart in the very WORK OF GOD!*

The very PURPOSE of our lives should be, NOT the social enjoyment of local church congregations, but GETTING CHRIST'S GOSPEL TO THE WORLD! That's the *main* purpose of the local churches. That's the MAIN PURPOSE OF YOUR LIFE, AND MINE!

Kind of Faith?

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live in the flesh, I by *the faith* OF the Son of God" (Gal. 2:20).

Ask God to give you *that* faith—Jesus' own faith. Through His faith and power in you, make yourself act just as you know He would in EVERY situation.

This is a real challenge. It will take determination and courage. But it will enable you to be a *shining example*, to find a *peace of mind*, and to receive God's blessing and ETERNAL REWARD.

Without Minister?

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not explain HOW the local assembly should be conducted. To understand *this*, we must turn to other verses which explain this phase fully.

In Eph. 4:11-17 Paul explains that Christ gave evangelists, pastors and teachers and other ministerial offices "for the perfecting of the saints . . . for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man . . . that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the slight of men, and cunning craftiness . . . but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things."

What is the purpose of the ministry?

To instruct the brethren to grow in love and in good deeds—exactly as Heb. 10:24 mentions. Then God intends *the pastors* to set the right example and to instruct the flock which should assemble *with* a minister. IF BRETHREN COULD ACCOMPLISH THIS BY ASSEMBLING WITHOUT A MINISTER, THEN JESUS WASTED HIS TIME TO TRAIN INDIVIDUALS TO BECOME PASTORS OR ELDERS. Then he was mistaken in training the disciples to preach and to feed the flock, if the flock could feed itself!

The very fact that the ministry is FOR the edifying of the church is PROOF POSITIVE that assembling without a shepherd will NOT lead to unity and perfection in knowledge. Without a pastor, disunity, contention and error will inevitably arise in a local group. *Experience proves it!*

Where Two or Three Gather Together

But didn't Jesus promise that wherever two or three brethren gather together, He will be in their midst?

The common misapplication of this text comes from careless reading. Christ was discussing with His apostles the matter of making binding decisions in the church (Mat. 18:17). He promises to back every decision—even where only two or three are gathered together IN HIS NAME!

What does "in His name" mean?

It means "by His authority"! We baptize "in the name of Jesus Christ"—"by His authority." But Jesus never gave authority for His converts to hold meetings by themselves without a pastor! Any who do so are not acting according to Jesus' commands. They are going contrary to Christ's authority. He does not promise to be in their midst. Besides, according to the pattern laid down in Lev. 23:2-4, *God orders His ministers*

to convoke assemblies—to order meetings. God tells us upon which days we must meet, and He orders His ministers to tell the people when and where He wants the assemblies held. It is God's doing, not man's. Ministers are God's bond-servants and the shepherds of the flock.

Now we can also understand clearly other New Testament passages. In writing to Philemon, Paul spoke of "the church in thy house" (Philemon 2). This is not speaking of brethren gathering for discussion groups or Bible studies. It is speaking of a *church*—an organized body of saints—over whom Philemon presided. Notice that Paul addressed him as "fellow-laborer" (verse 1). In verse 24 Paul lists "Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my fellow-laborers." These men were elders and evangelists laboring with Paul in the ministry. Philemon was also a "fellow-laborer"—a minister. Paul even calls him "a partner" (verse 17). The church in his house was NOT without a pastor.

Be THANKFUL

Another important consideration many brethren still overlook is that the local church is for the instruction of those who are converted. *It is not the place to convert outsiders!* Yet it seems that some, not understanding this important principle, want to hold sabbath study groups to convert outsiders. And sometimes the unconverted are the very ones who dominate the meeting!

Mr. Armstrong has learned by experience that every group needs competent spiritual leadership. It cannot be left to zealous, but unwise, desire to have Christian fellowship. True fellowship comes by *obedience to God's WAY*. Even though most of you are scattered and have no regular sabbath service, yet be thankful that you are being fed through two magazines, The PLAIN TRUTH and The GOOD NEWS. You can hear the daily broadcasts—you actually hear Mr. Armstrong on the radio in your own homes! When the "World Tomorrow" Broadcast is on the air, you are attending, in a sense, a church service *with a minister*. This is how God is feeding His flock!

Let's realize our blessings and be thankful, no matter where we are. But let's be obedient and doers of God's WAY. He knows best!

Instead of murmuring about the lack of trained ministerial help—we are trying our best to train those whom God gives—why not do as Jesus said: "The harvest indeed is plenteous, but the laborers few: PRAY therefore the Lord of the Harvest"—Jesus—"that he send forth laborers into his harvest"? (Luke 10:2). That is your duty, brethren!

KEY to the Book of Proverbs

Here's how you can better understand the Book of Proverbs!

by Jack R. Elliott

MOST people think they understand the Book of Proverbs—but they really do not!

Have you noticed that the first nine chapters of Proverbs are not the proverbs of Solomon at all?

These chapters are only *an introduction* to them.

Have you noticed, also, that in this introduction *God* is speaking to you direct, in the *first person*? Solomon was merely the instrument in God's hand. Though Solomon wrote these words through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, God nevertheless is speaking direct to you!

Many who read the book of Proverbs fail to observe these facts. They fail to understand the significance of the first nine chapters. They misunderstand the first verse because it announces "the proverbs of Solomon." It is assumed that Solomon was writing especially to his own sons to introduce a series of disconnected proverbs. Consequently, they miss the dynamic and personal appeal of God Almighty to His children of all ages. *That includes you and me!*

If you have not noticed this KEY, as few people have, the chances are that you have missed THE GREAT KEY to wisdom that God reveals in the book of Proverbs.

Let's not overlook it any longer!

Introduction a KEY

A close examination of the first few verses of chapter one and chapter ten will reveal that Solomon's proverbs begin in the first verse of chapter ten! The intervening verses contain the KEY to unlock the proverbs to your understanding.

The Eternal—the Lord of the Old Testament, also called the WORD—is the One through which the Father has always dealt with man. He spoke directly to the prophets of olden times. He was made flesh and dwelt among us to instruct the apostles. Through His resurrection and life, we may receive God's Holy Spirit. He has spoken to all ages through the prophets and apostles. Their writings were under His direct inspiration.

Thus, He is also the spokesman in the book of Proverbs, speaking through Solomon the wisdom of God.

If, therefore, God is speaking to us, calling us His sons, should we not listen and weigh each word carefully? Should we not take each one to heart? These

are the words of Almighty God! They are spoken to you and to me, giving us insight into a part of His own character. The proverbs express the same character that must someday be in us if we are to have eternal life.

The Great KEY to Wisdom

God says, "Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get wisdom: . . ." (Ch. 4:17).

If we are alert, we will not read far before we realize that He is speaking of a *different* wisdom than we are used to. This is not carnal, human wisdom.

What is the definition of this wisdom? *Don't guess!* The factors involved are too important to resort to just guessing! You may pick up most any dictionary and find man's definition of wisdom—*what man thinks wisdom is*. But, can we accept that?

Job 28:12-13 shows us that we cannot. "But where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding? *Man knoweth not* the price thereof: neither is it found in the land of the living."

Job did not stop with man. He continued looking until he found true wisdom. "God understandeth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof . . . and unto man he said, Behold, THE FEAR OF THE LORD, *that is wisdom*; and to DEPART FROM EVIL IS UNDERSTANDING." (Job 28:23, 28.)

Again in Proverbs 9:19, "*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom*; and knowledge of the holy is understanding." (Read also Psalm 111.)

What does "the fear of the Lord" mean? Does it mean that we should "quake in our boots" at the mere mention of His name? Are we to be so afraid of Him that we don't dare seek Him?

Again, we must not guess, but look to divine revelation for the answer.

This time in the eighth chapter, 13th verse of Proverbs, "*The fear of the Lord is to hate evil*: pride, and arrogance, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate." Since God hates pride, arrogance, evil ways, and lying or oppressing lips, could we be terrified that He will bring His wrath upon us if we do what pleases Him?

Not at all. Paul said, "Let us come *boldly* unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (Heb. 4:16.)

Purpose of Proverbs

Now, let us begin these first nine introductory chapters of Proverbs with these facts in mind. Don't forget, it is God who is talking to us.

In verses 1 thru 6 of chapter 1, note the proverbs are given that we may know *wisdom* and instruction, that we may perceive words of understanding. These are the same proverbs of God that His servant Solomon used according to the wisdom God gave him (I Kings 4:29).

Right away we are given the key to wisdom (verses 7 thru 9) which is obedience to God. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; but fools despise wisdom and instruction." Yes! Before we can even begin to know knowledge and wisdom, we must obey God. We must first keep His commandments which in turn opens our minds to apply the knowledge from God that the proverbs contain!

Businessmen and clergymen alike read Proverbs for practical information, but all in vain because they do not know how to apply them. They have not learned *obedience* to God, and they are foiled from the beginning. "*My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother . . .*"

This is God speaking. Remember? If He is calling us His son, then He is the Father whose instructions we should hear. This being so, who is the spiritual "mother"? The mother whose law we should not forsake?

Whose Laws Should We Obey?

Remember that a woman is used symbolically to mean a church. A virtuous woman the symbol of the true church (Rev. 12), and a whore a false church (Rev. 17).

In this case the true church is symbolized. We know that the true church constitutes those people in whom the Holy Spirit of God resides (Gal. 2:20), and over whom God rules.

It is apparent then that the "mother" is symbolically the *church* through which the Spirit of God operates.

The "law of thy mother" then is the law of God, given us through the Holy Spirit, *preserved in the Bible, and taught by the true church*—the Church of God—your church!

Notice verse 8 again. How befitting it is that God should begin (after showing that the fear of the Lord is the

beginning of knowledge and that fools despise wisdom and instruction) by importuning us not to be fools, but to follow His instruction and the laws revealed by His Spirit and taught by the church.

Are you following this in *your Bible*? If you are not, you are missing the most of the lesson.

What a Son of God Should Know

In the next ten verses (Prov. 1:10-19), God enjoins His sons not to succumb to the enticement of sinners and to take part with them in their evil ways.

Verses 20 thru 23: Wisdom is not forbidden to the world. She cries out in the streets and all the busy places. Anyone who will can hear and follow right ways instead of the foolish way of the sinners outlined in verses 10 thru 19. Notice what God's wisdom cries, "How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?" Yes, this includes the so-called wise of this world who think they have great understanding but reject God as a superstition. They reject God and His rule over their lives by refusing to keep His commandments. He is the Creator and Ruler of the whole universe. But puny, headstrong, created man rejects Him. "Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you."

Notice the *fate of the headstrong*. *Verses 24 thru 33:* These verses show what will happen to those who hear God's call but who have no regard for it. Read it for yourself and see that you take heed, and that *you* don't spurn His counsel and despise His reproof.

Rewards to the Righteous

Chapter 2: This whole chapter is devoted to those who will receive His words and keep His commandments and who seek wisdom as if it were hidden

treasure. (Verse 9) "Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity (that is, what is equal or right, thus righteous; the opposite of inequity); yea, every good path."

The remainder of the chapter shows that when wisdom enters into one, he is preserved by discretion. And that understanding shall keep him by delivering him from evil men who speak "froward" or obstinate, self-willed or oppressive words.

Wisdom also delivers from the "strange woman"—both symbolic and literal. If you have only seen the literal meaning before, you have missed the greater significance of this and other scriptures. Literally, of course, this means a licentious woman. But, if we realize that a woman is used throughout the Bible as a symbol of a church, then this scripture takes on real meaning.

God Pleads With You as a Father

Chapter 3: This is one of the most beautiful chapters of the Bible. God is admonishing His son—YOU—to walk in right paths. He explains how and why they are best, and about the rewards and happiness that come from them. Read them carefully—PRAYERFULLY.

Chapter 4: God continues to speak to us, in the personage of the Eternal—the one who was made flesh, the one we know as Jesus Christ. This is brought out so clearly in the opening verses of this chapter. "Hear, ye children the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding. For I give you good doctrine, forsake ye not MY law. For I was my father's son, tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother (the Holy Spirit that binds the whole Church of God together).

"He taught *me also*, and said unto me, Let thine heart retain my words: keep my commandments, and live." (Jesus did keep His Father's commandments! See John 15:10 and realize that Jesus' commandments are the Father's.)

Have you ever wished you could just sit down and have a heart-to-heart talk with Jesus? Here is your chance! No other scripture is so obviously a personal appeal to you and me to live righteously so that we can inherit the glory of God, dwell safely, and be quiet from the fear of evil. Get the significance of the scene—Jesus is talking to you with AUTHORITY as well as love.

If you had a son killing himself in some way, would you sit up and talk to him about the weather, or some other unimportant matter? No! You would be trying to do all you could to get him to quit doing that which will kill him!

Your son might wish you would change the subject, but you wouldn't.

God is not going to change the subject either. Your well-being, your happiness and salvation are His chief concerns when He talks to you.

So, then, before He begins to give you those precious pearls of wise and practical truths in the form of proverbs, He gives you the Great KEY that will unlock them for you.

Obedience Toward Him

Proverbs contain practical solutions to our many problems. But knowledge of how to apply them in your life is gained by obedience to God. We must keep His law FIRST. Keeping God's law corrects our attitudes and opens our minds so that we know how to apply it.

So reap the benefits and the comforts of a private conversation with God, who knows all your private thoughts. He is not just saying them for you to forget; He has had them written down so you may have them again and again!

On the remainder of Proverbs a running commentary would be but vain words. There is no trick to understanding these words of God—just an acknowledging and a surrendering to Him is all that is needed.

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