

*"Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth."* Jeremiah 23:5

# the OLIVE BRANCH

SUMMER 2009

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A publication of  
The Church of God  
Northeast Region

### FROM THE OVERSEER'S DESK

## *His Glory Revealed in You*

### *From Glory to Glory: Part 8*

In a continuing examination of our theme "... from glory to glory" (2 Corinthians 3:18) we have considered ways by which the Lord chooses to reveal His glory to us and through us. We have seen how He desires to reveal His glory in ways that far exceed what our minds can begin to conceive, or what our hearts could ever hope for. Each of these manifestations of His glory is marvelous and, like the experience of the Holy Ghost, causes us to rejoice with "joy unspeakable and full of glory." (1 Peter 1:8)

One is naturally led to wonder whether some experiences of His glory might be more glorious than others? Just how close can we be



to the Lord as we walk in Him "from glory to glory?" The answer might surprise you. So many times while He walked this earth, Christ would turn the probing questions of the scribes and Pharisees, and even those of His disciples, on their head.

Consider the question of His disciples, James and John: "... Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory." (Mark 10:37)

He responded by asking them a question: "*Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?*" (Mark 10:38) They felt they were ready: "... We can." (Mark 10:39a).

Little did they know where such a response would lead them: "*Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I*

OVERSEER continued on page 10

The Apostle Paul was passionate about prayer. His teachings and writings reflected his prayer life.

In 1 Timothy 2, Paul wrote to Timothy:

*1 I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men;*

*2 For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.*

*3 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour;*

*4 Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.*

*5 For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;*

*6 Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.*

*7 Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ and lie not;) a teacher of the gentiles in truth and verity.*

*8 I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.*

Paul prioritizes prayer in the role of The Church of God for Timothy's benefit. Before anything, The Church of God was to be a praying church and was to pray for ALL men. Prayer was one of the spiritual principles imperative for The Church of God to be firmly established and prosper. Paul wanted to convey this as strongly as possible to his successor. Paul wanted Timothy to be as committed as he was to the business of praying.

Paul starts by praying for those in various occupations and positions of authority. Leaders select the pathway others will follow -- which we pray will create an atmosphere of peace and tranquility. Next, Paul wants us to pray for the salvation of souls. Paul was ordained a minister

to declare to the Gentiles that Christ is the one Mediator or between

God and men, one who gave Himself a ransom for all.

Lastly, Paul admonishes us to pray everywhere. We must pray in our "closets," pray in our families, pray at our meals, pray when we are on journeys, and pray in the solemn assemblies, whether public or private. We must pray in love and faith.

Paul charged the Philippians to this effect: in Philippians 4:6:

*Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.*

The Church of God must be anxious about nothing. Everything must be prayed about. Nothing is too small to intercede to the Master. Nothing is too great for God to overcome.

To the church at Thessalonica, Paul instructs in 1 Thes. 5:

*16 Rejoice evermore.*

*17 Pray without ceasing.*

*18 In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.*

The way to rejoice evermore is to pray without ceasing. We should rejoice more if we pray more. We should keep our appointed times for prayer. We should not faint or become weary in our prayer life. We must not let anything hinder our prayers. We must continue in prayer until, one day, we come to that world

# SUNDAY SCHOOL



*Sunday School Coordinator  
Gary Satanek*

where prayer shall be swallowed up in praise.

These are the simple lessons Paul taught The Church of God. These lessons apply even more to us today. If the Church is to be effective, she must pray. I would like to close with one of Paul's most inspiring prayers from Ephesians 3:

*14 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

*15 Of whom the whole family in heaven is named,*

*16 That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;*

*17 That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love.*

*18 May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;*

*19 And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.*

*20 Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,*

*21 Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.*

Paul knew how to pray! May we heed Paul's example and instruction and be powerful saints of prayer!

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Let's consider Eliezer --

Abraham's eldest servant and one in keeping with this year's theme. Genesis 24:1-3 shows Abraham trusted this man so much he gave Eliezer the responsibility of finding a suitable wife for his son Isaac.

How did Eliezer respond? He has questions, but he is ready to covenant to do what Abraham requested. Eliezer is a servant who is available for service.

He is also a servant who seeks God's will. In verses 12-14 the faithful servant prays for a prosperous journey as he nears the city of Abraham's kindred. Hear his prayer:

*(12) ...O LORD God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed this day, and shew kindness unto my master Abraham.*

*(13) Behold, I stand here by the well of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water: (14) And let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that thou hast shewed kindness unto my master.*

Eliezer didn't just think up a plan then run out haphazardly to carry through with it. He submitted his plan to God, then he prayed for



# WMB

2008-09 Theme:  
"Faithful Servants"  
Matthew 25:21



WMB Coordinator  
Diana Seese

guidance. He was a servant who left room in his own strategy for God to operate His will.

After praying for guidance, Eliezer waited and watched to see what God would do. Verse 21 finds him wondering at the speed with which a woman meeting this criteria appeared. He "held his peace" but by verse 26 he not only accepted God's answer, he accepted it thankfully.

As the story continues, Eliezer enters the house of Rebekah -- a relative of Abraham. In verse 33 it says Eliezer does not even take time to eat until he tells Rebekah's family the purpose of his journey. Eliezer did not let fleshly desires for rest and refreshment distract him from his covenant task -- fulfilling his master's request.

In verses 34-49, Eliezer then explains his role simply. He tells the entire plan from beginning to

end. He does not boast nor exalt himself. He places the credit exactly where it should be -- on God and his master.

He is then in a hurry to return home with this God-chosen wife for his master's son. No matter what, this faithful servant kept moving on until the mission was accomplished and he was safe at home with his master.

Can it be said of you and I that we approach our spiritual responsibilities with this kind of single-mindedness and careful planning -- while ultimately depending upon God? Let us strive to do so until we, too, can return home to our Master and hear Him say:

*Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. (Matthew 25:21)*

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## CONTACT US

*The Olive Branch* is a publication of The Church of God Northeast Region, which serves churches in Delaware, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York and Pennsylvania and new works throughout the greater area. It can be viewed online at [www.tcog-ne.org](http://www.tcog-ne.org).

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For more information contact:

*The Olive Branch / Nora Edinger; 49 Poplar Ave.,  
Wheeling, WV 26003; (304) 232-0204;  
[olivebranch@tcog-ne.org](mailto:olivebranch@tcog-ne.org)*

or Regional Overseer James Smith; P.O. Box 4188,  
Clarksburg, WV 26302-4188; (304) 657-4258;  
[overseer@tcog-ne.org](mailto:overseer@tcog-ne.org)

# Around the region

The region was buzzing with activity in the spring and early summer. Here are four pages of photos from some of the major activities.

— **(Page 4)** The Lawrence, MA church has experienced **tremendous growth**. Nearly 20 youth were recently born again, nine people were *baptized in water* and seven received the church covenant.

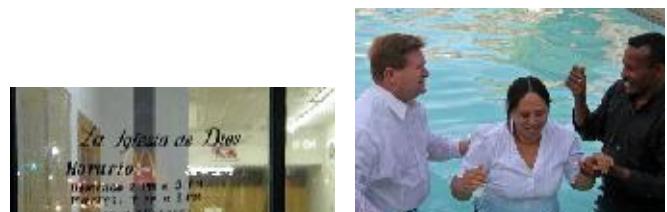
Regional Overseer James Smith, his wife Nancy and the Pinnick family from Virginia visited the church in May. The Pinnicks, who formerly served in missions work in Central America, served as Spanish/English interpreters. The Lawrence church now also has new, *larger meeting facilities and a full-sized van*.

— **(Page 5) Bro. Edward and Sis. Kay Burdett** celebrated their **50th anniversary** at an early May surprise party in Uniontown, PA. The couple pastor the Monongahela, PA church.

— **(Page 5)** In May, a regional **Youth Convention** took place at the Uniontown, PA church. **Sis. Sharon Griffin**, headquarters' youth representative, was guest speaker. Sermons and skits focused on a theme of *winning the race*.

— **(Page 6)** In early May, more than 26 regional women met for **Ladies Retreat** at Camp Sonrise in Markleysburg, PA.

— **(Page 7)** In late June, more than 60 campers, staff, and visitors gathered for the region's first **Family Camp**. Campers ranged in age from 3 to senior adults. four campers were born again, and four baptized in water.



*Above: photos from The Church of God at Lawrence, MA*

*Directly below: photos from the Burdetts' 50th anniversary party.*

*Right and far below: racing skit and other activities at the Regional Youth Convention.*



*Around the  
region  
continued...*

*This page: a skit, various speakers,  
chapel activities and fellowship from  
Ladies Retreat*



*This page: family camp at Mt. Chestnut in Butler, PA*



*More photos from all the activities on these photo pages can be viewed on line at [tcog-ne.org](http://tcog-ne.org).*

*A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*

-- John 13:34-35

We sometimes hear stories from people who feel their sinful choices caused some in their churches to desert them. But, according to scriptures such as those found in 1 Corinthians 5 and Matthew 18:15-18, spiritual abandonment is supposed to be a last resort, not a first course of action.

If we see a brother or sister fall into sin, our first effort should be restoration. In 1 Thess. 5:14 it says: *Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient toward all men.* As The Church of God, our commitment to following God should be evident in our Christ-like attitude. Yet, we sometimes turn away the very people Jesus told us to love fervently -- our fellow believers.

1 Peter 4:8 tells us that charity (love) shall over a multitude of sin. Such was the case in Luke 15:20, when the prodigal son's father met him with a hug instead of the hard tongue lashing that the boy well

deserved. In John 8:11 we read about an adulterous woman who might have died at Jesus feet (by the

stoning) if He would have condemned her rather than forgive her. Think about our own destiny if Lord had not went to the cross for us. Jesus loved us with our own failures and faults and He has commanded us to do likewise.

The Son of God living through us changes our perspective. You might say we look through rose-colored Christ glasses, perceiving the world and its people as He does. If we look at them as He does, we no longer will focus on someone's ugly sin. We will instead see people in need of much love, redemption and restoration.

Church, instead of driving out those who are entrapped by sin, let us draw them back where they belong. We need to keep all that He has given us.

We can do this in many ways. Call when someone misses a service. Invite someone over for coffee or tea. Send a card of encouragement. Unless you are the pastor, speak up about

# ABM

2008-09 Theme:

*Let us love one another  
1 John 4:7*



*ABM Coordinator  
Nancy Horchar*

someone's sin only when the Holy Ghost guides you. Above all, pray. We can win back our fallen brothers and sisters with Christ's love.

Other ABM matters: Can you help the church by hosting a band meeting or by paying your annual \$5 to the church emergency fund?

Also, as the Regional Convention is right on our doorsteps, we need to prepare for a love offering for our regional overseer. I would ask that you let the Lord direct you in this offering. Also, I am asking that each one bring a pounding (such as canned goods or household products) for the overseer.

Most of all, keep the ABM program in your prayers. We want God's divine will in everything that is said and done. See you at the convention.

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*Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.*

*Revelation 3:20*

It has been said that your internal thoughts and actions are reflected in your outward character.

Your heart is like a house where you spend the majority of your days. It is a place where you can keep your hopes and dreams, as well as your feelings and fears. Some of these rooms are filled with trophies from accomplished achievements and proud moments. But other rooms are garnished with the things that make you feel ashamed.

The lock is on the inside of your heart. Therefore, you are the only one who can allow someone access. Jesus is knocking at your door! He wants to come inside but you are the only one who can let Him in.

You do not have to be ashamed about what has happened in the past. The Lord already knows what is in your heart. He knows everything about you! He wants you to allow Him to help you clean out your rooms filled with unwanted thoughts and actions. He wants to take refuge inside your heart. The choice of whether or not to answer the door is up to you!

You might say to yourself, "But I cannot hear my Savior's voice." Is it that you cannot hear His voice or that your mind is

focused on something else? This is happening more and more in our society. We concentrate deeply on our jobs or a project at school or different relationships and block out everything else. Have you ever been so entranced with something on the television that you never heard someone calling for you from the other room? The Lord may be calling on you but you are too busy with the cares of life to hear Him.

There is hope. The scripture says "*IF any man hear my voice, and open the door.*" You can repent. You can change. You can open the door and allow Jesus Christ into your heart as your personal Savior. If you open up to Christ, He will lead you on the path to eternal life. Are you opening the door? Let's find out:

- Are you praying, studying, meditating and fasting?
- Are you actively attending church services and allowing your mind to be open for the Holy Ghost to lead you?

These are your Christian responsibilities. You should make

# VLB

*2008-09 Theme:  
Destination: The Winner's  
Circle (1 Corinthians 9:24-27)*



*VLB Coordinator  
Stephanie Satanek*

it a point to do each of these things daily. This shows God the real intentions of your heart. I always want to be willing to do what the Lord would have me to do. I never want to be called an unfaithful servant. We need to open our doors of our hearts to the Lord before it is too late. Christ is calling, "Let me into your life!" The time is drawing near when He will return for his children. If you do not answer His call you will be left behind and miss out on the greatest reward ever!

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*Pictures from our region's recent Youth Convention and Youth/Family Camp are in this issue on pages 5 and 7.  
Check it out!*

## OVERSEER

continued from page 1

*drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized.”* (Mark 10:39b) Indeed, James and John both suffered greatly in this life as they gave themselves completely to fulfilling His call.

His also responded regarding who would be chief: “... *whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: And whosoever of you will be the chiefest shall be servant of all.*” (Mark 10:43-44).

Jesus had just totally reversed the concept of *greatest* (e.g., as one to be looked up to; or highly exalted and respected) for His followers. The path to *greatness* leads through the valley of *humility*.

To further reinforce His point, the Master then provided a concrete example to His disciples by washing their feet as described in John 13. After he had washed their feet, He turned it into an object lesson in John 13:12-17:

- (12) ... *Know ye what I have done to you?*
- (13) *Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am.*
- (14) *If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet.*
- (15) *For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.*
- (16) *Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him.*
- (17) *If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.*

Christ has also pointed the way to our becoming that “*glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should*

*be holy and without blemish.*” (Ephesians 5:27). As with the path to greatness, so also is the path to becoming that

“*glorious church*” – to have His glory rest upon us.

Ephesians 5:27 has described the finished product, but what of the path to reaching that glorious state? 1 Peter is dedicated to the answer to that question!

Christ has left us an example that we should follow. Paul has summarized the example Christ left us: “*Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*” (Hebrews 12:2)

While Christ walked this earth, His ministry was glorified of the Father in many ways: “*Father, glorify thy name.* Then came there a voice from heaven, *saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.*” (John 12:28) Christ spoke many wonderful, glorious words: “*Never man spake like this man.*” (John 7:46); He performed many marvelous miracles: “*And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written.*” (John 21:25).

But the act that defined Jesus Christ as the “*only begotten son of God*” (John 3:16). His mission, His purpose in coming to earth,



*Regional Overseer  
James Smith*

occurred when “... *he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*” (Philippians 2:8). For this selfless sacrifice of Himself, His Father “... *hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: ... to the glory of God the Father.*” (Philippians 2:9,11).

In previous sermons of this series we have examined various ways that the Lord works in our lives daily to reveal His glory to us, and to manifest His glory through us for others to see.

But there is something greater (more glorious) awaiting us – if we are willing to pay the price. What will be our answer to His question: “... *can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?*” (Mark 10:38)

We now are ready to examine the path that lies before the Church as she presses her way into that glorious realm of perfection about which we preach. When the Lord anoints His ministers to preach, teachers to teach and singers to sing, that is *glorious* – everyone is blessed. When He delivers one from sickness and disease, that is *glorious* – we rejoice with that person. When He provides for our needs beyond what we can even think to ask, that too is *glorious*.

But perhaps the ultimate *glorious* experience for the Christian to realize in this life is when one endures suffering for the sake of Christ, for the sake of the Gospel. There is a *special glory* of the Lord for those who suffer for Him, for His name. Consider the words of Paul in Romans 8:16-19:

- (16) *The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:*
- (17) *And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with*

*Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.*

(18) *For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*

(19) *For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.*

We have read verses 16-18 many times with the thought that our sufferings down here on this earth will be rewarded when we reach heaven – and they indeed will. But we miss the full meaning of this passage regarding our walk in this life.

There is a special “glory which shall be revealed in us” down here. Look closely at the last half of verse 17: “*if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.*” In both the suffering and in the glorying, we are together with Him.

Indeed, this *glory in suffering with Him* that is revealed in us is the manifestation of that expectation to which the earthly creature (the sinner) longs, and by which is moved to turn his life over to Him.

There is something special about the effect that the children of God who suffer for Christ have on the non-believers. The Lord takes those experiences and turns them into glorious opportunities for winning the lost. Fox's Book of Martyrs is filled with accounts of Christians who were persecuted even unto death that through their living and dying for Christ they should be instrumental in winning many souls – even their tormentors – to the Lord.

This thought from Romans is elaborated in 1 Peter, which was written during a time when Christians were suffering greatly for the Gospel. The entire book of

1 Peter is devoted to helping Christians to understand the role that suffering for Christ plays in their maturing to perfection in His eyes. Consider 1 Peter 4:12-16:

(12) *Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:*

(13) *But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.*

(14) *If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.*

(15) *But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters.*

(16) *Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.*

Rather than focus on the nature of the *suffering* (what we feel), Peter focused on the trial – the source of the testing and refining of the Lord – and the purpose and meaning of the experience to those who endure and overcome trials (tests) related to their service to the Lord.

Peter makes clear to us that tribulations are not something strange or unusual to the child of God. As early as the Beatitudes in His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus made the relationship between our suffering for Him and our rejoicing in being blessed and rewarded for that suffering – Matthew 5:11-12:

(11) *Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.*

(12) *Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in*

*heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.*

In His last statement in John 16 before His prayer in Gethsemane, Christ declared that tribulations were to be a significant part of the lives of His disciples: “*These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.*” (John 16:33) Christ encouraged us to “be of good cheer.” He overcame the world. So, too, can we overcome through Him.

Peter encouraged us to “... rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings.” What is the benefit of suffering, and why should we rejoice: “... that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.” How is that glory revealed? “... *the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you:*”

Many Christians have suffered persecutions, trials and tribulations. Not all of them have been “*to the glory of God!*” Verse 15 makes it perfectly clear that to suffer for our own ill advised behavior merits no rejoicing or glory. Indeed, such actions on our part make us a reproach unto the Lord. How many times in the last few years have we seen someone highly esteemed as a Christian by the world fall into condemnation. This only gives Satan another opportunity to attack the true believers.

Contrast this situation to that described in verse 16: “... *if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.*” In the days of the early Church, “Christian” was used as a derogatory term intended to heap scorn upon the person so called – much as the term “holy

## OVERSEER

continued from page 11

*roller” has been used in our time to disparage those who would espouse holy living before the Lord. But the early Church refused to be so scorned. Paul tells us in 2 Timothy 1:12 “For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.”*

As the Church presses onward toward perfection, something both terrible and glorious will happen. The world will no longer be able to find fault in our living, our speech, or our everyday behavior EXCEPT that associated with our Christian walk before the Lord.

Consider the experience of Daniel in the days of Darius. Daniel had served God faithfully through the reigns of Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, and now that of Darius. Throughout that time, Daniel never failed the Lord – his walk remained consistently holy; always obedient to the Lord, as described in Daniel 6:4-5

(4) *Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him.*

(5) *Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God.*

The only place where Daniel’s despisers could find supposed fault was in his serving his Lord. What treatment by the world can we expect as we draw closer to perfection? This world will not be satisfied with our being “good

citizens.” NO, they will turn upon us with wrath, seeking to find fault in our service to the Lord. Consider the experience of Stephen found in Act 6:7-10:

(7) *And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.*

(8) *And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.*

(9) *Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called the synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen.*

(10) *And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake.*

The unbelievers’ response was to bribe people to lie concerning the words of Stephen. He was pulled into their counsel to be tried for these charges. They fully intended to find fault with him and to punish him. But Stephen was not shaken; rather, the glory of God rested upon him! (Act 6:15) “*And all that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.*”

We cannot begin to imagine what the Church will experience in trials and tribulations before our Lord returns. Throughout the ages, there have been times of great persecution of Christians — on every scale from individual martyrdom to thousands at a time. (The largest number of crucifixions at one time in history is attributed to 10,000 martyrs of Mount Ararat. These were Roman soldiers who, led by Saint Acacius, converted to Christianity and were crucified on Mount Ararat in eastern Turkey by order of the Roman emperor. (The account is attributed to the ninth century scholar Anastasius Bibliothecarius.)

While martyrdom may be thought to be the ultimate test, there are in fact many ways other than through death that the Christian can suffer persecution and tribulation. Read the whole book of 1 Peter. Consider Paul’s continuing discussion of God’s glory juxtaposed with Christians suffering for Christ, as given in 2 Corinthians 4:8-17. In particular verse 17: “*For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;*” Consider Christ’s own words in Luke 6:22-23

(22) *Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man’s sake.*

(23) *Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets.*

That I may reinforce the point that there await us *glorious tribulations* as we move toward perfection, indulge me to leave with you a final example that occurred in the early 1990’s (in our life time) as recounted in the book *Megashift*:

...Hawa Ahmed was a Muslim college student in North Africa. One day she received a Christian tract in her dorm room and accepted Christ. Because her father was an emir, a Muslim ruler, she knew he might disown her, but she was completely unprepared for what actually happened.

When she told her family that she had become a Christian and had changed her name to Faith, her father flew into a rage. He and her brothers stripped her naked, then tied her to a chair and put a big metal plate at her back, then wired it for 240 volts of electricity.

We, The great Church of God, have a great desire to know our Lord better and better and to get closer to Him as we feed upon the "Bread of Life," God's Holy Word. Praise God.

2 Peter 3:18 tells us: "*But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.*"

Bible Training Institute has been placed in the Church to enable and empower us to, indeed, grow deeper in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, thus transforming us into vessels of honor *meet for the master's use*. It also helps us to do God's will and do our part to win a lost and dying world to Christ and His Church.

# BTI

*2008-09 Theme:  
That We May Know Him  
Daniel 11:32*



*BTI Coordinator  
Wendell Flick*

Let's be sold out to God's will for our entire lives. God bless BTI.

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## OVERSEER

continued from page 12

Faith begged them to put her Bible in her lap ... Though her arms were tied, she was able to touch a corner of the Bible, and as she did, she felt a strange peace, as if someone were ... beside her.

They plugged in the cord—but nothing happened. They fiddled with the wires and tried four times, but the current refused to flow!

Finally, in frustration, the emir beat her severely, screamed, *You are no longer my daughter!* and threw her into the street, still without a stitch of clothing.

Bruised and disheveled, the once-beautiful girl ran through the streets in humiliation and pain. The humid African evening added to her feeling of hot embarrassment, though people did seem to look at her more in curiosity than in shock. Trembling and in tears, she ran all the way to the apartment of a Christian friend named Sarah.

Sarah's jaw dropped when she opened the door to see her

naked, panting, wounded friend. She whisked her inside, clothed her, and tended to her needs.

The next day, Sarah was speaking with several neighbors who told her they had seen Faith running up the street.

"Yes," Sarah commented, "how sad that my friend was thrown out of her home and forced to run through the streets unclothed."

"What are you talking about?" asked one of them.

"I'm talking about that young woman who ran naked to my door last night. She ran right past you."

"You must be mistaken. The girl who ran past us last night was wearing a beautiful white gown." The others agreed.

"Yes!" added another, "we wondered why someone dressed so nicely was running down the street."

While we cannot begin to imagine what tribulation awaits the Lord's followers as His return nears, neither can we imagine the glorious manifestations (above and beyond what we can think or ask)

of His presence and approval upon those who live by Romans 12:1-2:

(1) *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.*

(2) *And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*

This is, after all, the purpose of the tribulations we shall endure, to make our living sacrifice acceptable unto Him.

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## *Some final thoughts...*

Jesus's teachings about tending sheep, fishing and caring for grape vines may seem exotic these days. How many Americans, after all, have ever spent even a few hours taking care of sheep or pruning vines? Not many.

Yet, at the time of Jesus's earthly ministry, these activities were common place. If the multitudes that heard Him weren't directly experienced with such goings on, they no doubt had a working familiarity with them.

That was the point. Jesus wasn't trying to be poetical or "religious." He was teaching the people about God in a direct and practical way. And, if we can read past today's surface unfamiliarity of some of His words, He is still using them to speak about how God is the very real answer to our very real life problems.

Take clothing, for instance. The other night, a combination of alarming news reports, too much laundry and end-of-the-day fatigue got me into a funk about our two

young daughters' clothing of all things. Never mind that God has already provided them with lovely clothes to wear today and many more in storage for their tomorrows. I started thinking about the uncertain economy and the current sufferings of people in other nations and began to worry that a tomorrow could actually loom in which it would be difficult for our family -- or any family -- to clothe growing children.

Distressed at such a thought, my motherly mind began to spin with ideas of neighborhood clothing exchanges and other strategies for coping with potential dire circumstances on the global level. I began to wonder what my grandmother did when she was caring for five children during the Great Depression. Maybe I could learn to sew on a machine, I mused.

Then, out of the corner of my eye, I saw a brilliant splash of orange on the other side of the garden. It was the first large lily of the



*Assistant Editor  
Nora Edinger*

season and God's sense of humor in pointing it out made me laugh out loud.

Of course. Jesus told us about dealing with these kinds of worries by using God's artistic flourishes as a practical backdrop. It's found in Matthew 6:28-30 -- part of the Sermon on the Mount -- and many of you can probably quote it:

*(28) And why take ye thought for raiment (clothes)? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: (29) And yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. (30) Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, o ye of little faith?*

Nothing exotic about that, is there? God used the literal one-day splendor of that lily bloom to remind me of how very well He can care for His creation -- including my family. The combination of a real-life worry and a real-life lily brought His words into sharper focus.

May the Bible so come alive for each of us on a daily basis. For that is surely what God intended.

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