

*"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  
2010

## *He That Overcometh...*

*From the  
Overseer's Desk*

### *From Glory to Glory Part 12*

To this point in our continuing examination of the theme *"from glory to glory"* (2 Corinthians 3:18) we have focused on how God's glory is manifested to us and through us as we sojourn this life. Still, we have only scratched the surface of what God can and will do through His people to magnify (glorify) Himself and to exalt (glorify) His children.

The theme of our most recent sermon on this subject came from 1 Timothy 6:6: *"But godliness with contentment is great gain."* It focused on what it means to the child of God to live a life of godliness and contentment in this earth. We now wish to turn our thoughts of His glory heavenward to consider the great gain part of

this verse: the gain promised to overcomers.

Paul opened 2 Corinthians 4 with consideration of how God's glory is manifested here on this earth in those in the Lord's service. We often quote from these catch phrases: *"We are troubled ..., yet not distressed; ... perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body."* (2 Corinthians 4:8-10).

Then in verse 17, Paul begins his transition from the *temporal* (which endures for a moment) to the *eternal* (which will endure forever): *"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the*

*things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."* (2 Corinthians 4:17-18).

Paul described the current conditions through which the child of God may persevere as, *"our light affliction, which is but for a moment."* In Romans 8:18, Paul made the comparison: *"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."*

The trials of this life will one day be over. We will be victorious over them – that is, we will have "overcome!" But, before we consider the *"far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory"* that awaits those who overcome, we first must consider what it means for us to overcome.

***"I have overcome the world."***

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# Bulletin board...

## 2010 Calendar

Regional Convention, July 9-11, Uniontown, PA

General Assembly: August 17-22, Ridgecrest  
Conference Center, near Asheville, NC

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## Bro. Pitts remembered

Bro. William George Pitts, Sr., 85, a deacon of The Church of God at Uniontown, PA, went to be with his Lord and Savior on March 29.

He is survived by his wife Dorothy; six children, William G. Pitts, Jr. and wife Patricia, Linda Lane and husband Alan, Shirley and husband Robert, Elizabeth and husband Barry, Homer and wife Donna, Alan and wife Angie; 12 grandchildren, 12 great-grandchildren; three sisters, Sarah Alberts, Frankie Colucci and Lucille Back; two brothers, Joe and wife Esther and Paul and wife Nancy; and numerous nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his first wife of 40 years, Garnet Lake Pitts.

He served in the US Army during WWII as a PFC, receiving the following awards: Good Conduct Medal, Philippine Liberation Ribbon with one Bronze Star, Service Medal with two Bronze Stars and the Victory Medal. He retired from US Steel with 40-plus years as an electrician.



*Bro. William Pitts*

At the Uniontown church, he served faithfully throughout his life as deacon, Sunday school superintendent, Sunday school teacher, Vacation Bible School director, prayer band leader, usher and as youth camp staff. He also dedicated many hours of service in such activities as cutting the grass and electrical upkeep. As an electrician, he helped any church he could with his ability and talent and many times asked only for his travel expenses, food and lodging. He also helped with the

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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 in English and Spanish at [www.tcog-ne.org](http://www.tcog-ne.org).

Reports and other **submissions for the FALL 2010 issue must be received on or before September 1.**

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# WMB... Coordinator Diana Seese

*"And the Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever." – Genesis 13:14-15*

Abraham and Lot had become wealthy, having so many cattle and sheep there was insufficient pastureland. Recognizing they must separate, Abraham gave Lot first choice. Lot looked at the well-watered pastureland and selfishly selected that portion.

After Lot left, the Lord told Abraham to lift up his eyes and look in every direction – north, south, east and west. Previously, God had promised the land to Abraham and his seed. Now He says: *"Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee."* (vs. 17). In other words, "Even now you can possess it by faith."

Today there is a land for us to possess for Jesus Christ. Millions upon millions do not know Him personally, Jesus said, in John 4:35: *"Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest."* Look around you! Vast fields of human souls are ripening all around us, and are ready now for the reaping.

God wants us to lift our eyes on the overripe fields and look, because *"where there is no vision, the people perish..."* (Prov.29:18) This call is personal, The Lord says, "Look around you. I need laborers in my fields." But, you may say, "What can I do? How can I go? I have a family; I have responsibilities."

God told Abraham to begin looking from right where he was. There are God-given opportunities to share the Gospel all around us – with our

families, friends, loved ones, neighbors and co-workers. The Lord has chosen a place of service for each and every one of us. We are to walk through our land – where we are – and harvest it for Him.



We often hear that a soul went out of this life without knowing Jesus Christ. Today, lift up your eyes where you are and see the overripe fields of souls. Walk through them and possess them as the Lord directs you – for Him.

The Lord has also given us opportunities to give to our World Mission, Sharing Hands Ministry, Missionary Partnership Alliance and Coins for Missions programs. These are all good ways to help us reach souls in these last days. Let's do our best and He will do the rest!

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# CPMA... Coordinator Roger Fuester

In the Mt. Olivet discourse, Jesus gave His disciples a warning:

*"...Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows."* – Matthew 24:4-9

One of the most oft-asked questions directed at the U.S. Geological Survey is, "are earthquakes really on the increase?" Newspaper articles and television may give us the impression that they are, but really big ones, magnitude 7.0 or greater, have remained fairly constant, according to the USGS. An article on the agency's website notes that it has become much easier to detect earthquakes than previously, because there has been more than a 20-fold increase in the number of seismograph stations since 1931. Consequently, they are reported more frequently in the media.

However, statistics relating to "killer earthquakes" are far more unsettling. During 1990-99, there were 107,464 estimated human deaths attributed to earthquakes worldwide. During the next decade (2000-2009), there were 469,412 people killed in earthquakes, a four-fold increase. So far in 2010 alone, nearly a quarter of a million have perished in earthquakes. And, much of the year remains.

In Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians, he stated that Christ's second coming would be sudden:

*"But of the times and seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape."* (1 Thessalonians 5:1-3)

Labor pains or geological gyrations? Draw your own conclusions.

Without question, we are living in troubling times. We see famines, tribal wars, and persecution against Christians in Africa. Lack of respect for human life is

all around us – mass shootings, infanticide by parents, euthanasia in Holland and abortion on demand.

The bottom line is that we are being inundated with an unprecedented deluge of unadulterated, uncontrolled evil that we would never have believed possible just a few years ago, especially here in the United States. Yet the Bible tells us that it's going to get worse when the antichrist comes on the scene. See Revelation 13:5-8 for example.

Of course, we don't have to go through that time of horrible trouble if we heed Christ's warning: *"Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man."* (Luke 21:36)

The most important thing we need to focus on as we face the insecurity of our distressed generation is to hold onto the precious guidance of the Word of God. We need it more than ever because it establishes a secure footing even when the world seems to be careening down the slippery slope of hopelessness.

Whenever we are assailed by anxiety, we can draw wonderful peace from the promise Jesus gave His disciples at the Last Supper:

*"These things I have spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."* (John 14: 25-27)

Praise God!

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# Regional photos...

The region has just completed its busiest season. Photos on this page include images from our **Eastern District Convention** at New Rochelle, NY in March, our **Western District Convention** at Uniontown, PA, in April, and our **Youth Convention** at Uniontown, PA in May. Also included are pictures from an overseer visit to our eastern churches.

Photos on page 6 include our **Ladies Retreat** at Markleysburg, PA in late April and early May, and our **Youth/Family Camp** at Butler, PA in June.



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Photos from: **Ladies  
Retreat and  
Youth/Family Camp**



# OVERSEER

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Christ's concluding words to His disciples just prior to His going to Gethsemane and thence on to His death at Calvary were: *"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 could look beyond the suffering and death He was about to endure for the sake of bringing salvation to this world, looking forward unto the eternal glory that awaited Him upon His victorious resurrection. So also, the Son of God lived a life of *"godliness with contentment"* through which he became an *overcomer*.

And because He overcame, we also – by His working in us and through us – can overcome. What then does it mean for us to *overcome*? The words translated as *overcome* and *overcometh* mean to "conquer, prevail, get the victory." To overcome means more than simply to survive, or to find some way to "hang-on." To *overcome* is about our gaining complete and total victory!

## **Overcoming:**

### ***Good fight, finished course, kept faith***

Victory over what? Over whatever stands between us and our pleasing Jesus! The personal testimony of Christ was that: *"the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me."* (John 14:30b). Why? Because *"I do always those things that please him (the Father)"* (John 8:29b). Hence, Christ could say: *"... be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."* (John 16:33)

Nearing the time of his death, Paul declared to Timothy his personal testimony of *overcoming*: *"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith."* (2 Timothy 4:7) We find here three major elements or dimensions to the meaning of *overcoming the world*.

**First**, Paul had *"fought a good fight."* He had been a mighty warrior for his Lord! He had lived a life of constant battle with Satan. In the natural realm he had fought: *"... in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods,*

*once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep;"* (2 Corinthians 11:23-25)

Paul also battled in the spiritual realm: *"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high*

*places."* (Ephesians 6:12) Paul described how he had *"fought with beasts at Ephesus"* (1 Corinthians 15:32) by which he meant Satan, the roaring lion, and his principalities and powers. In Macedonia, his casting devils out of one possessed resulted in he and Silas being cast into prison. He fought not only for his own salvation, but for that of everyone he met; *"warning every man."* (Colossians 1:28)

**Second**, Paul had *"finished his course."* He had gladly gone wherever the Lord so led him. The example of his obeying the Lord directing him to Macedonia (Acts 16) was not an exception in his life, but the rule. Everywhere he went — whether on the mission field, in the prison hall, on a slave ship headed for Rome, or before a king — Paul could leave the testimony (his life's accounting) similar to that which he left with the Ephesians regarding all his travels, travails and labors for His Lord: *"I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. ... I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears."* (Acts 20:27, 31)

**Third**, Paul also could declare: *"I have kept the faith."* Under no circumstance did he compromise with the world — not in what he taught; neither in how he lived or in how he conducted himself. As he declared unto Agrippa: *"I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision"* (Acts 26:19), so also he could declare to all: *"I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."* (1 Corinthians 9:27) Paul later said to Timothy: *"I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me,*



Regional Overseer  
James Smith

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# OVERSEER

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for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry.” (1 Timothy 1:12)

## **Glory promised to them that overcome!**

We now shall consider the majesty of the eternal glory of God that awaits those who overcome. Following his testimony of overcoming, Paul proceeded to declare the glory that awaited him because he had overcome: *“Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”* (2 Timothy 4:8)

He made it clear that his own life was not a special case. A crown of glory was promised to all who overcome: *“... not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”*

Christ also spoke clearly in His pronouncements to John in the Revelation of the glory promised to those followers who overcome. How interesting that the theme of overcoming with which Christ concluded ministering to his Church (John 16:33) before going to Gethsemane, and on to Calvary is the same theme with which He concluded each of His letters to the seven churches of Asia as recorded in Revelation chapters 2 and 3.

These letters were written to local churches then existent during the time of John. Among the diverse characteristics of these seven churches is captured just about every type of experience that Christians have encountered — from extreme persecutions and trials, to false teachers and deceivers, to faults and failures, to labors and victories. Whatever you may have experienced in your Christian walk, the members of one or more of these churches had similar experiences.

We will not all experience in our earthly lives the exact same trials (or blessings), but we all can be the overcomers to whom Jesus made glorious eternal promises in these chapters. Let us now take a quick look at what He has promised:

*“... To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.”* (Revelation 2:7)

*The Apostle Paul made it clear that a crown of glory was promised to all who would overcome.*

*“... He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.”* (Revelation 2:11)

*“... To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.”* (Revelation 2:17)

*“And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:”* (Revelation 2:26)

*“He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.”* (Revelation 3:5)

*“Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.”* (Revelation 3:12)

*“To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.”* (Revelation 3:21)

Notice that Jesus does not speak to *“them of Ephesus,”* or to *“them of Smyrna,”* etc. No, His glorious promises in each case are to *“him that overcometh!”* To those who overcome, both to the members of each of these seven churches, and to those who would later read these letters, are given seven glorious eternal promises. We now consider the richness of these promises.

The letters to the seven churches not only form a distinct unit in the book of Revelation, but are fundamental to the total message of the whole book of Revelation. Each promise in each letter to those who overcome finds its fulfillment in Revelation 19-22 – summarized in the table that follows:

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# OVERSEER

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The Promise	Made	Fulfilled
<i>Eat of the tree of life</i>	Rev. 2:7	Rev. 22:2
<i>Second death powerless</i>	Rev. 2:11	Rev. 20:6
<i>New name, hidden manna</i>	Rev 2:17	Rev 19:9; 20:15
<i>Power, rule, morning star</i>	Rev 2:26-28	Rev 19:15, 22:16
<i>Dressed in white, name not removed from book of life</i>	Rev 3:5	Rev 19:8,14, 20:12
<i>Pillar in temple</i>	Rev 3:12	Rev 21:22
<i>Reign with God</i>	Rev 3:21	Rev 20:4,6

These eternal promises each could be expanded upon with its own sermon. They hail from when God walked with man in the Garden of Eden before his fall, unto the final completion of God's program.

## **He that overcometh shall inherit all things**

The last two scriptures of Revelation regarding "overcoming" are: "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death." (Revelation 12:7), and "**He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.**" (Revelation 21:7)

The first of these scriptures spells out characteristics of those accounted an "overcomer." They have "overcome the wicked one" (1 John 2:14), the first: through their trust in **the blood of the Lamb**. Christ himself achieved a victory over Satan by his death, and it is because of His victory that we are now able to triumph.

The second was the **word of their testimony**. As did Paul, they lived (stood true to) what they believed. As with Christ, and before that Enoch, they had the testimony that they "pleased God." (Hebrews 11:5)

Finally, their love for Christ was greater than their love for their own lives. They agreed with Paul: "*But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have*

*received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.*" (Acts 20:24)

The second scripture, Revelation 21:7, describes for us the glorious relationship awaiting those who overcome. The following paraphrase from John Gill's *Exposition of the Entire Bible* provides an excellent summary of what this scripture means:

**He that overcometh**,.... All spiritual enemies, sin, Satan, and the world, the antichristian beast, his image, mark, and number of his name; who is more than a conqueror through Christ; one that perseveres to the end, notwithstanding all temptations, trials, and difficulties.

**shall inherit all things**; the kingdom of Christ in the new Jerusalem state, and all things in it; heaven, eternal glory and happiness, and everlasting salvation; yea, God himself, who is the portion, and exceeding great reward of his people, and will be all in all. the new heaven, and new earth, the presence of God with men, freedom from all evils, and divine refreshments from the fountain of living water before mentioned.

**and I will be his God, and he shall be my Son**; ... though we are now, in the present state of things, the sons of God, yet it does not appear so manifest that we are, or at least what we shall be; but in this new and glorious state of things, it will be abundantly manifest that we are the sons of God and seed of Christ; and it will be known how glorious we are, and shall be, when we shall see Christ in his glory, and be like him.

The chorus of a song recently made popular by the McKammies: *I've Made Up My Mind*, expresses the determination that each one of us should have to be one of those who overcome:

*I've made up my mind no matter what others say  
I will follow Christ and walk in His ways.  
Though the battle gets hard and the road gets steep, that's okay.  
I've set my heart on becoming like Christ,  
Dying with Him, and raised to new life.  
All the things of this world I'm leaving behind  
'Cause I've made up my mind.*

What glorious promises! Oh, that each of us should purpose to be an overcomer through Christ.

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# ABM...Coordinator Nancy Horchar

*"The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD: but the prayer of the upright is his delight." – Proverbs 15:8*

What is the word:

- that unites far-separated souls around one common seat of mercy?
- that brings mankind's storm-driven ships into the haven of safety and peace?
- that turns back the shadow of death on the face of life's dial?
- that gives songs in the night and lifts the load of guilt from the conscience-smitten heart?
- that gives us strength to bear daily burdens?
- that lifts us up when we have fallen?
- that makes us co-workers in the Kingdom?
- that sets the captives free?
- that keeps the soul company in its hours of loneliness and comforts it in sorrow?
- that sets a lamp of forgiveness and reconciliation in the window for the prodigal and the wanderer?
- that makes the angels rejoice when they hear it from the lips of a repentant sinner?

That all-prevailing, conquering word is "PRAYER."

James 5:16 says: *"...The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."* The prayers of a person who is living in a holy way indeed have great effectiveness and are powerful in their work.

Prayer is our most important conversation, our direct access, our lifeline. Prayer must hold a high priority in our lives as Christians. The word of God lets us know this in several scriptures such as: *"Pray without ceasing."* 1 Thessalonians 5:17 and *"...men ought always to pray..."* Luke 18:1

The Word tells us that, through prayer, the early Church received mighty power. Today, we hear our pastors, our leaders, and our Sunday school teachers all talk about prayer. But are we really praying enough?

That's a question each person must answer for himself or herself. I can only say for myself that there is most likely room for improvement. It comes down to commitment and sacrifice. Do we really want to see changes in our lives and in our families?

Jesus set the ultimate example of obedience in prayer, although His day was filled from morning to night with many pressures and responsibilities. He addressed crowds, healed the sick, granted private interviews, traveled and trained His disciples. Yet, He made prayer a top priority. If Jesus – the Son of God – was so dependent on prayer, how much more should you and I spend time alone with God?

Truly, prayer, along with fasting, can make a difference in lives.

On another note, Regional Convention is just around the corner. I am asking each one attending to bring a food pounding for Bro. James and Sis. Nancy Smith, our regional overseer and his wife. We will also receive a love offering for them during the ABM program.

Also, at some time during the convention, I would like to meet with all the prayer band leaders from local churches.



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# VLB... Coordinator Brenda Buenavista

*"If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou has set up." Daniel 3:17:18*

What determination we can see in these scriptures from the three Hebrew young men! I am sure most of us have heard the story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and the miracle that happened in the furnace. Yet, have you ever considered how determined they were to put their life on the line instead of dishonoring God and worshipping the golden image Nebuchadnezzar had created?

The Bible states that at the sound of numerous instruments *"..all the people, the nations, and the languages, fell down and worshipped."* (Daniel 3:7) There were no exceptions to the rule! ALL people – great and low, rich and poor – were expected to obey.

Yet, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego decided they would not conform to their present surroundings and bow. Imagine the sight of thousands or more bowing down at the indicated time but three young men were still standing! Surely they were aware of the repercussions their disobedience would bring upon them. This was no small matter which could have been punishable with a few nights of incarceration. This was a big deal! It was decreed that whoever failed to fall on their knees would perish in a furnace. Nevertheless, they still chose to obey God before man. They were convinced their God, who would eventually deliver their peer Daniel from the lion's den, was able to deliver them from the fiery furnace. However, if it pleased God not to, they were also willing to accept that.

From the time they arrived in Babylon, these three Hebrew men, along with Daniel, demonstrated they were indomitable. They were determined to be distinguished children of God and refused to contaminate themselves with the king's meat and wine. Instead, they insisted on eating pulse and drinking water for the span of 10 days.

Consequently, we see that God honored them and awarded them with knowledge, wisdom and, as the Bible states, with a physical appearance that was *"fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat."*

They did not contaminate themselves with what they ate and they were not about to contaminate themselves by worshipping a false god!

In both instances, what really stands out is how willing they were to prove God! What does the bible tell us about proving God? Malachi 3:10 says, *"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now ... if I will not open you the windows of heaven..."* Also, Romans 12:2 states: *"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."*

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego's faithful stand exalted God! When these three men were thrown in the furnace, there were four men seen and it was evident who the fourth person was – the Son of God. Even Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged then that they were, *"servants of the most high God."* (Dan 3:26)

As we go about our daily lives and encounter those "golden images" set in the world, let us be empowered by the same faithfulness these young men possessed. By remaining faithful in a sinful world, we are telling others WE WILL NOT BOW! God will honor us when we are willing to take a stand in our service for Him and choose Him before anything or anyone. Then, the world will see the hand of God move in our favor and they, too, will be able to acknowledge us as servants of God.

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# Sunday School...

Coordinator Elaine Smail

Merry Christmas! Does anyone, beside me, stop to think about the message of Christmas in July? One of the messages of Christmas, that is the message of PEACE, is a very good reason for us to have the spirit of Christmas alive in our hearts **today** and **every day**. Just how can this be when discouraging news surrounds our lives on every turn, heartache and sadness plague the lives of our families and friends, and personal problems seem a regular occurrence? The Bible provides us with answers to the plea for peace, no matter what time of the year it is.

To start with, all of humankind is offered peace with God: *"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."* Romans 5:1 Every sinner can enter into this state of reconciliation with God through faith in His Son Jesus. The invitation of salvation is extended to anyone who will accept it. Once accepted, the sinner is no longer in conflict with God. Now a new creature in Christ, the saved one has peace with God. It is impossible to attain this state without salvation. A saved person knows God and is known by God. To know God through Christ is peace! In 2 Peter 1:2 we are promised, *"Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord."*

Emotional peace can also be enjoyed by the saved one as cares are cast upon the Savior and focus is kept on Him: *"Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you."* 1 Peter 5:7 All burdens that you will ever bear in your lifetime are important to our Savior. In Philippians 4: 6-7, emotional peace is promised: *"be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."* A child of God need not worry about anything. All of our troubles and even that which is not understood are to be given over to God. When put into action, this basic principle of wise Christian living yields the reward of emotional peace that goes far beyond human comprehension.

Perhaps Isaiah 26: 3 puts the whole matter of emotional peace into the clearest perspective: *"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee."* Notice the peace is referred to as "perfect." Anything that comes from God can only be perfect because God is perfect.



Peace with others can be a reality, too. Jesus spoke of this interpersonal peace in His Sermon on the Mount. In the Beatitudes, a peacemaker is referred to as a "child of God." To further emphasize this point, Paul writes in Rom. 12:18: *"If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men."* To practice harmonious living with others, despite the pressure of trials and persecution, is a true mark of a Christian.

When the Prince of Peace returns to the earth, we can also anticipate an everlasting peace. This is the peace of the future. A permanent, universal peace is not in God's plan until after the Great Tribulation, when the new heaven and earth are established. We are told of a truly peaceful time in Revelation 21:4 when: *"...God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."*

In today's world, the only true peace to be found is in the heart and life of a child of God who is dedicated, consecrated and working toward perfection. Psalm 37:37 puts the finish on this matter: *"Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace."* With that in mind every day, surely we can help to fulfill the angelic message: *"Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men!"*

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# BTI...Coordinator Wendell Flick

*"...but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits. And they that understand among the people shall instruct many." Daniel 11:32b-33a.*

We that strive to know our God stay close to Him in prayer and through His word. We gain strength in our spirits to do great things for His glory. Truly, through its biblical courses, BTI has to offer all a great opportunity to understand God's Word and to instruct many.

*"And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn*

*many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." Daniel 12:3*

God bless BTI.

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## PITTS

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electrical installation at the General Headquarters Building in Tennessee.

He was a devoted husband and a godly father and will be missed greatly by his family. His dedication and devotion to the Lord has been an example and an inheritance for us as we continue to also travel the path he choose to someday join with him to spend eternity with the King of Kings Jesus Christ.

"I love you more than you will ever know," is a quote from our dad every time he saw one of his children. Dad, we would like to say to you today, "Dad, we love you more than you will ever know."

We would like to dedicate the following poem in memory of a faithful servant of the Lord:

**God's Garden**  
*God looked around His garden  
And found an empty place,  
He then looked down upon the earth  
And saw your tired face.  
He put His arms around you  
And lifted you to rest.  
God's garden must be beautiful  
He always takes the best.  
He knew that you were suffering  
He knew you were in pain.  
He knew that you would never  
Get well on earth again.  
He saw the road was getting rough  
And the hills were hard to climb.  
So he closed your weary eyelids  
And whispered, "Peace be thine."  
It broke our hearts to lose you,  
But you didn't go alone,  
For part of us went with you  
The day God called you home.*

Dedicated by wife Dorothy Pitts and children

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# Final thoughts...

Assistant Editor Nora Edinger

Some people wake up with a smile and a readiness to seize the day. Other people need some time to adjust to things like light – and the people who fit in the first category.

It usually takes me, for example, about seven minutes of listening to the news before I'm willing to acknowledge the clock-radio alarm. But, recent mornings have me rethinking that habit. Just in the last week, I have started my day with big doses of horror rising from deep in the Gulf of Mexico, a sink hole in Guatemala, at least two volcanoes, two exploding gas wells, coal mine tragedies and sundry other bits of death and destruction.

Lying in bed frowning at today's bad news, I couldn't help but thinking of another morning routine I encountered in a fictional book set in an English convent. There, at least according to the book, one nun woke the others with the soft sound of a wooden rattle and, more importantly, some get-up-and-go words. "Christ is risen," she said as she stood outside the door of each room. She then waited for the words, "Thanks be to God," before moving on.

"Christ is risen. Thanks be to God." Hmm. What a way to wake up. Think about it. If Christ is risen –

defeating death, sin, sickness and everything else the adversary tries to beset us with – even the inevitable awfulness of the news reaches our hearts in a different way. Yes, the world is experiencing a rising tide of sorrow. Yes, people and other parts of God's glorious creation are suffering and dying because of man's evil. Yes, there is trouble on every hand and in every land. But, Christ is risen! And, there is hope where there would otherwise be no hope.

That's the kind of wake-up call that should cause even the slowest-starting of us to begin our day with the power of prayer and a readiness to take His love out of our home and into the streets of every town, state and nation.

Yes! Christ IS risen. Thanks be to God, indeed.

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