

“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

WINTER
2010-11

His Glorious Church

*From the
Overseer's Desk*

NEW SERIES

Part 1 *Edifying the Body of Christ*

The theme for the Northeast Region for the 2007-2008 Church year, titled *“From Glory to Glory,”* was taken from 2 Corinthians 3:18:

*“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image **from glory to glory**, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”*

The application of this verse to the life of the individual believer

became the focus for a thirteen-part series of sermons that examined how we should walk before the Lord so that His glory might be revealed to us and be manifested in us. We considered what God can and will do through each of us to magnify (glorify) Himself and to exalt (glorify) each of us on this earth.

We learned that the Lord chooses to manifest His glorious working with the individual seeker in a multiplicity of ways under a variety of circumstances. Some that we have considered included: *His Glorious Grace and Mercies, Constrained by His Glory, Standing in His Glory, Bringing Him Glory, and Our Glorious Body.*

If you wish to review that series, it is available at our regional website – <http://www.tcog-ne.org/>.

We now expand our consideration of God's glory to focus on the special glorious purpose that God has toward the Church – a purpose that goes *beyond* His glorification of the individual.

As glorious as it is when an individual seeks after and yields himself into the Lord's glory working in his life, much more glorious is that same glory working throughout the Body of Christ, His Church.

There are aspects of God's glory that transcend the individual – aspects that shall be realized and completed only in the context of His master plan declared *“before the foundation of this world.”* (Ephesians 1:4) *“That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in*

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Bulletin board...

2011 Calendar

March 26 – Eastern District Convention, Lawrence, MA

April 9 – Western District Convention, Karns City, PA

April 29-30, Youth Convention, Uniontown, PA

May 13-15 – Ladies Retreat, Camp Sonrise, Markleysburg, PA

May 29-June 11 – Bible Training Institute, Cleveland, TN

June 17-20 – Youth/Family Camp, Mt. Chestnut Center, Butler, PA

July 15-17 – Regional Convention, Uniontown, PA

Aug. 20-23 – International Youth Camp, Ridgecrest Conference Center, Asheville, NC

Aug. 23-30 – General Assembly, Ridgecrest Conference Center, Asheville, NC

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Regional members remembered

Sis. Mary Louise (Aites) Coon, 72, a member of the Ford City, PA church and a

licensed evangelist, died Nov. 18, 2010. Born Aug. 31, 1938 in Ford City, she was a daughter of the late Edward W. and Anna (Burdett) Reitler.



Mary Louise Aites Coon

She is survived by her son, Dennis C. (Cathy) Aites of Fairmont, WV; four grandchildren, three brothers and nine sisters. In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death in 1989 by her first husband, the Rev. Virgil C. Aites, who pastored in The Church of God of Prophecy in West Virginia and Pennsylvania. She was also preceded in death by her second husband, Bro. William R. Coon in 2002.

Bro. Ray Kerlin, 82, a member of the Monongahela, PA church, died Dec. 23, 2010. Born Nov. 16, 1928 in Hustontown, PA, he was the son of the late Howard and Cecillian (Wible) Kerlin. He was also preceded in death by his wife, Fay (Speicher) Kerlin.

He is survived by daughters Regina Hicks of Punxsatawney, PA, Trudy Rock of Homestead,

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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.

Reports and other **submissions for the SPRING 2011 issue must be received on or before March 1.**

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WMB...Coordinator Diana Seese

"For, lo, I will command, and I will sift (shake) the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted (shaken) in sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth. All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword, which say, The evil shall not overtake nor prevent us." Amos 9:10

God never wanted to punish Israel, but He had to get the people's attention and cause them to consider the consequences of their actions. He told the prophet Amos that, just like grain, Israel needed to be shaken out of its complacency. They had to be shaken, through problems, until they humbled themselves and turned to Him.

But many refused to listen, God warned that judgment was inevitable, particularly for those who smugly continued to sin and boast: *"The evil shall not overtake nor prevent us."*

The Word of God often warns of a shaking in the context of judgment. In Isaiah 13:13, for example, we read: *"Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the LORD of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger."*

But during such times of shaking, God also provided hope for those who remained faithful, who cast their burden on Him, and who loved rightly in His sight. Hear this side of the story in Psalm 16:8: *"I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved."* Or, what about Psalm 55:22: *"Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved."*

Yes, it is true. *"The righteous shall never be removed: but the wicked shall not inhabit the earth."* Proverbs 10:30

In our time, God is shaking the nations. He wants them to think about their lives, consider the consequences of their actions and realize they've sinned and disobeyed His laws. Just as during

Amos' time, God is calling His people to be ready to speak His Word, to be sensitive to His Spirit, to warn of the consequences of sin and to seek first His kingdom and His righteousness.



Can we children of God be thankful that we can put our faith and trust in Him? Can we be thankful that He gives us the peace that passes all understanding? Yet, the world does not know this peace that we have. We must be on our knees praying for souls and getting out of the four walls of the church to help those that need to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Lord is coming soon. He told us in His Word: *"For he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth."* Romans 9:28

Think about! We have but a short time on this earth to finish the work that He has commissioned the Church to do. The theme for WMB this year is Isaiah 6:8: *"...Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?"* Will you tell the Lord, *"Here am I; send me!"*

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CPMA... Coordinator Roger Fuester

The first question in the book of Psalms (2:1) is most relevant to the time in which we live: *“Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?”* A quick but partial answer is, “Because it is time.”

The first indication of where we are in earth time, as I have pointed out in previous boosts, is that it seems increasingly likely that Russia and Iran will soon lead a coalition of Islamic nations in a vain attempt to destroy the nation of Israel and exterminate the Jews. Vain, because God will defeat these nations that have plagued the Jewish people ever since ancient times (Ezekiel 38-39). Heretofore, I have wondered why the nations of Dedan (region of United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Kuwait and Bahrain) and Sheba (Saudi Arabia) were not part of the Islamic coalition marching against Israel, but documents circulated by WikiLeaks indicate that leaders in these countries have secretly asked the United States to bomb Iran’s nuclear facilities. They simply do not trust Iran (Ezek. 38:13). The picture becomes increasingly clear.

A second sign signifying that the end is at hand is the fulfillment of Daniel 12:4: *“But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.”* Until the 20th century, people traveled in more or less the same way that they had since ancient times. Now, more than 40 million Americans travel at least 50 miles from their home (many by air) over a single holiday (2010 Thanksgiving), according to AAA. Likewise, there has been a knowledge explosion just as Daniel predicted. For the most part, computers are leading the way. In a few minutes on the Internet, you can inundate yourself under a sea of information on virtually any topic.

The rebirth of Israel in 1948 is another critical fulfillment of the prophecy outlined in the Ezekiel 37. If you think about it, the nation of Israel would have to be re-established in order for the battle of Gog and Magog to occur. In any case, the return of Jews to the Holy Land from all over the world, amounts to a second Exodus (see Jeremiah 23:7-8). This also fulfills the prophecy that *“Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.”* (Luke 21:24). Since the Six-Day War ended in 1967, the Jewish people have had control of Jerusalem.

Another item of interest is the development of worldwide television. Why? Because it allows for a literal fulfillment of the prophecy concerning the two witnesses as outlined in Revelation 11. As you will recall, the two witnesses will prophesy during the Tribulation, having the power to trouble the earth in many ways. They will eventually be killed by *“the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit”* (Rev. 11:7). Their bodies will be left lying in a street of Jerusalem for three and a half days – a situation the whole world will observe and rejoice over – until God’s Spirit will bring them back to life, and they will ascend into heaven. Granted, this event will take place after the Church age, but the technology is already in place to permit the world to view these events in real time.



Christ also said that though no one knows the day or the hour, the time of His return will be as it was in the days of Noah (Matt. 24:37-39). How was it in the days of Noah? It was pretty bad: *“God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”* (Gen. 6:5) We find ourselves in more or less the same position of Noah – we must witness to the lost, so that they can be saved and get on board the Old Ship of Zion before the door is shut.

The Church has a lot of work to do in order to complete this Great Commission. A critical part of this is supporting the Church’s auxiliaries. If you have not already done so, please be sure to pay your CPMA dues. Our goal is for every church in the region to be 100 percent in CPMA.

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heaven, and which are on earth; even in him.” (Ephesians 1:10). Christ and His heavenly father’s purpose is “That he might present it to himself a glorious church...” (Ephesians 5:27).

This new sermon series upon which we now embark will focus upon how God’s glory has and will be manifest to and through His Church as He accomplishes His eternal purpose.

“But we all, with open face...”

Look closely at the beginning of our key text verse: “But we all, with open face...” This scripture is not just addressed to each individual who would seek to have God’s glory manifested in his life. This verse – in its supporting and confirming God’s grand purpose as revealed in the above scriptures from Ephesians – is intended for the whole (collective) Church body.

While the Lord is most certainly pleased to see this scripture fulfilled in any individual’s life, His greater pleasure is to be in the presence of His people who are seeking to behold Him. His great expectation is that “we all” – together as one unified body – would walk and live so that God’s glory is not only seen in a member here or there. He wants to see us all – in perfect harmony and unity – “changed into the same image from glory to glory.”

Christ indicated His full agreement of this view – His Church being glorified as one body – as He concluded His Gethsemane prayer in John 17:21-24:

- (21) **That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.**
- (22) **And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:**
- (23) **I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.**
- (24) **Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may**

behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.

The above passage from John 17 was examined in detail in our past series that considered individuals and God’s glory. We considered the basic question: How can each of us bring glory to God?

Looking at the same scriptures in the context of His Glorious Church, we now ask another question: How does our bringing Him glory, and our being gloried by Him differ for the entire Church, as opposed to an individual, to fulfill the intent of this scripture?

This new series will focus on answering this question.

Paul has provided an explanation of what God intends in Ephesians 4:11-16:

- (11) *And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;*
- (12) *For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:*
- (13) *Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:*
- (14) *That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;*
- (15) *But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:*
- (16) *From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.*



Regional
Overseer
James Smith

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This passage of Scripture identifies many of the resources and principles that the Lord has provided for the fulfillment of 2 Corinthians 3:18 by the Church. In future sermons we will examine them in greater detail – to understand how they enable our laboring together as the Church to enter that glorious state the verse describes. For now, we will focus on two important points to be gleaned for this passage.

“Till we all come”

The first point is that we ALL are involved in the fulfillment of God’s great plan. The middle verse of this passage, *“Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”* (Ephesians 4:13) complements our text scripture: *“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”* (2 Corinthians 3:18)

The participation of we all acting together as one in perfect harmony is expected by both scriptures. In both scriptures, the path of action is defined: *“with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord,”* and *“come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God.”* In both scriptures, the goal is established: that we come *“unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ”* and that we be *“changed into the same image.”*

From this passage it is clear that the Lord expects the full participation of everyone – as our former General Overseer A.J. Tomlinson used to say: *“Everyone a worker, and a work for everyone.”*

Paul described our everyone-ness in 1 Corinthians 3:9 as: *“labourers together with God.”* Christ prayed in John 17:21 *“That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.”* He confirms this in John 17:23,24 to be the key to our being *“made perfect in one,”* that *“that they may behold my glory.”*

There clearly is to be a glory of the whole body that transcends the glory that is manifested in each part (each member).

Edifying the Body of Christ

The second point to make is in regards to what our role is to be in seeing His glory manifested in His Church! The Lord indeed desires to shower many blessings – an abundance of His glory – upon His Church. However, His blessings will only come because we have done our part! Paul reduces our part in God’s plan to one word: Edify!!

Twice in our text from Ephesians, Paul employs the term edifying: *“...for the edifying of the body of Christ.”* (Ephesians 4:12) and *“...maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.”* (Ephesians 4:16) We, the membership, cannot *glorify* the Body of Christ; only our Lord and Savior can do that. However, we can – indeed we have the responsibility to so live that we – *edify* the Church.

This word *edify* is from the same root word as *edifice* (a building, especially one of large size or imposing appearance; any large, complex system or organization). To *edify* means to build, construct; to establish, build-up or strengthen a person, institution, etc.; to uplift (Dictionary.com).

Everything that Christ has given each of us: every talent, every anointing, every gift, every responsibility, every calling – and, yes – every test, every burden, every trial is provided for the purpose of our edifying Him and His Body, the Church.

Paul listed several specific roles in Ephesians 4:11: *“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.”* Whether or not you personally have one of these responsibilities, your part is to receive from these such as He may provide, and with His grace and guidance to allow them to work through you in our laboring together – that the Church might be edified.

The Edifying of Itself in Love

Paul has summarized how our laboring together works: *“From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.”* (Ephesians 4:16) This verse touches all the major points of what is needed to edify His Body.

First, we have **“the whole body fitly joined together.”** We may not always see how a particular

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piece is supposed to fit, or why it is thus needed, but He does. He has chosen to place each of us into the Body “as it hath pleased Him” (1 Corinthians 12:18). Each member is in the best place to satisfy God’s purpose.

Second, we are “**compacted by that which every joint supplieth.**” The word *compacted* as used here means to be “*knit together in every joint.*” Each joint – where two or more people, programs, etc. come together, touch one another, interact with one another – must have the proper strength, flexibility, and durability.

Picture in your mind how a tree bows and bends in the winds and rain so as not to break, yet has the strength to extend its limbs skyward to receive the sun’s radiant energy, and its roots deep to uphold it in the harshest of conditions. In the Church, each member and each work will fit perfectly together – strengthening and supporting the whole.

Third, the compacting of each joint is just right because of “**the effectual working in the measure of every part.**” Each member of the joint and the glue that binds are just right. Consider the miracle chemical we call water (H₂O). It is a miracle in so many ways. Its chemical and physical properties are exactly what we need for there to be life.

So, too, the Lord has provided us the “living water,” the Spirit, the Word – these are His miracle ingredients that when properly combined will produce the perfect binding for each and every joint. In the scripture before Ephesians 5:27 “...a glorious church,” Paul reaffirms the perfect working of His ingredients: “*That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,*” (Ephesians 5:26).

Fourth, by using the right members from which to build, and using the right *compacting*, the result “**maketh increase of the body.**”

With the Lord as the “*wise master builder*” (1 Corinthians 3:10) – there to oversee and to guide our every move and action, we are able to build an edifice (to *edify*), a building, a Body that others (the world) would think impossible. This building indeed will be glorious beyond all our imagination when it is finished – ready to be presented to Him. (Ephesians 5:27)

Labourers Together with God

Perhaps the hardest part to imagine is that we each have been given the opportunity to work with the Master Builder as “*labourers together with God.*” (1 Corinthians 3:9)

The Lord indeed desires to shower many blessings – an abundance of His glory – upon His Church. However, His blessings will come because we have done our part! Paul reduces our part, our role, in God’s plan to one word: Edify!!

Some of my fondest childhood memories are of going to work with my dad, to see what he did, and to lend my hand in helping him. Looking back on those times, I now realize that it wasn’t really my literal help that he needed that was so memorable, but rather the fellowship that we enjoyed in our laboring together.

The commentator Adam Clarke in his discussion of 1 Corinthians 3:9 has described our roles thus:

“*Ye are God’s building.*” - Ye are not only the field which God cultivates, but ye are the house which God builds, and in which he intends to dwell. As no man in viewing a fine building extols the quarryman that dug up the stones, the hewer that cut and squared them, the mason that placed them in the wall, the woodman that hewed down the timber, the carpenter that squared and jointed it, etc., but the architect who planned it, and under whose direction the whole work was accomplished; so no man should consider Paul, or Apollos, or Kephias, anything, but as persons employed by the great Architect to form a building which is to become a habitation of himself through the Spirit, and the design of which is entirely his own.”

Praise God!

In coming sermons we will examine in greater detail just what He has provided us for the work, and the roles each of us have in the completion of His greatest creation. But do not forget our purpose above all else is to edify Him and His Body, the Church.

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ABM... Coordinator Nancy Horchar

“Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.” Hebrews 12:2a

Have you ever sung the chorus, “Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus?” Have you ever let the words sink deep into your heart? One way to do that is to consider the alternatives:

We could turn our eyes upon yesterday. There, we would see things burned into our hearts – like 9/11 or the many storms that have done destruction inside and outside the U.S. We might also see a lot of personal thoughts, dreams, deeds and wishes that cause delight or dismay. How frustrating that we can’t bring back or change the past. Perhaps yesterday is not where we should be focused.

Should we turn our eyes upon today? We all certainly have plenty of things to do – jobs to go to, homes to clean, work to finish, meals to prepare. The list goes on and on – so much so that focusing on today might leave us discouraged and depressed before we even start our day – and that’s before we even think about turning on the news or reading the newspaper. Maybe we all just better turn over, pull the covers over our heads and forget today. Let’s wait for tomorrow.

Tomorrow – yeah right. With our world as it appears on the nightly news, who knows when it will disappear? We live in a world where nothing is certain for anyone. So, focusing on even the future can lead to dread and fear.

So, where do we look? The answer really was in that familiar chorus:

“Turn your eyes upon Jesus.

Look full in His wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace.”

Jesus. It certainly makes sense.

He is the one who’s been with us in our yesterdays, is with us today and – the Bible assures us – will be with us in all our tomorrows. The Holy Spirit recently spoke to our local church in a Wednesday night service, saying that things are coming upon our world that we can’t even comprehend. But, He said not to fear as He would be with us. Jesus is also the one who brings love, joy and peace to our hearts.

So, how do we direct our gaze at Him? We must give Him our yesterday, our today and our tomorrow. Turn all those circumstances of life that are around you, beyond you and within you over to Him. You will be surprised how true the words to the chorus will be. And, you will be able to face whatever comes – a condition critical to not being left behind (our ABM theme). We want nothing to keep us from seeing His wonderful face – now or then.

Also, if you haven’t paid your emergency \$5 for the new church year, please do so as soon as possible. My prayer is that each one will have a healthy and happy new year.

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VLB...Coordinator Brenda Buenavista

“Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them. LORD, I have hoped for thy salvation, and done thy commandments.

My soul hath kept thy testimonies; and I love them exceedingly.” Psalm 119:165-167

A short-story writer named Anton Chekhov once said, "Knowledge is of no value unless you put it into practice." This statement is so true when it comes to acquiring knowledge of the Word of God. Gaining all the understanding of the Word means nothing – if it is not put into practice.

Our VLB theme for this Assembly year is “Lovers of the Truth.” How beautiful it is to not only know His Word but to practice it and love it deeply! This is exactly what the psalmist felt in his heart when he stated he had “*done thy commandments*” (practiced) and loved His testimonies “*exceedingly.*” When a love for the Word is planted in our heart, our heart will not be divided between Him and the world. Our love for His Word, the Truth, will subdue EVERYTHING!!

Pilate once asked Jesus, “*What is truth?*” John 18:38 Do you know this Truth today? More importantly, do you love it? We are blessed to be in the right place. The Church of God is and will remain “*pillar and ground of the TRUTH.*” 1 Tim. 3:15

On another note, Bro. Dustin Hayes, our General VLB Coordinator, has encouraged us to return to the original VLB colors (red, white and black), specifically the red vests which were traditionally worn to youth events. I want to encourage all our regional youth to wear your red vests to VLB services and to Youth Convention this spring. If you have not been able to find a red vest and would like to have one made, please feel free to contact me for more information.



Also, please remember that one of the purposes of the VLB department is fund raising for World Outreach Literature. I will be sending out letters to each local church where there is a functioning Victory Leaders Band with more information on a new fundraising project. We want to help lead the lost to the Truth.

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BTI...Coordinator Wendell Flick

“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.” James 1:22

In order to be effective for God, we must be doers of the Word. Isaiah 50:4 tells us: “*The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary.*”

BTI provides us with the knowledge of God’s word – so that we can speak as a learned people

sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ with a lost, weary and dying world.

I encourage you to go to BTI May 29-June 11 in Cleveland, TN.

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Sunday School...

Coordinator Elaine Smail

As a teacher in a Christian school, my teaching philosophy focuses not only on the intellectual development but also the character development of my students. One particular boy in my fourth-grade class is struggling to make choices that reflect the Christian character he should possess. In a recent conversation, after he confessed to wrong doing, I shared with him a scripture in an attempt to help him in his struggle. *“Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer.”* Psalm 19:14

The point I was trying to make to this boy was that not only our words but our thoughts must be acceptable to God because God sees all, knows all and will provide the strength we need to do what is right. Now, I believe this boy comprehended to the best of his ability what this scripture meant and how he should put it into action. However, I realized God was also sending and important message **to me** and I want to share it with you.

Life is tough, not only for a 10-year-old boy. Maintaining a positive outlook in the shadow of the negative influences in our lives requires a conscious, continuous effort. Psalm 19:14 is a reminder to us to personally resolve and determine to be acceptable in God’s sight, no matter what! Philippians 4:8 also urges that we think and act in a positive manner becoming of a child of God: *“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.”*

To think on “these things” will make the *meditation* of our hearts acceptable in God’s sight. As we face our daily challenges, it is

possible to not only remember but live these positive words. Matthew 19:26 states: *“With God all things are possible.”* **Yes, positive is possible.** Yes, it is possible for the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart to be acceptable in God’s sight.



This message doesn’t end without drawing a connection to Sunday School. Bible study and prayer are necessary elements in our lives to keep us acceptable in God’s sight. We can get a weekly boost in our Bible study by participating in Sunday School. About the time you are reading this edition of *The Olive Branch*, we will be into our winter quarterly study of Psalm 23. This is an enjoyable study of one of the most well-loved and recognizable chapters in the Bible. In a simple but profound manner, this Psalm demonstrates the many ways in which God meets our needs as compared to how a literal shepherd meets the needs of his sheep. Indulge in this quarterly Sunday School Bible study. Indulge in God’s Word! And, may the meditation of your heart be positive and acceptable in God’s sight.

I wish you a shower of God’s blessings in this New Year. May you be found acceptable in His sight each day of your life’s journey until you reach your eternal destiny.

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Regional photos...

These regional photos include images taken at a new home-based prayer meeting in Baltimore, MD at the home of Bro. Danny Cabrera. Bro. Cabrera, pictured singing at right, is a member of the Church in Central America who recently moved to Baltimore. He and Bro. Mardo (playing guitar) have witnessed to area residents and this meeting was a result.



Regional staff are also working with these people, some of whom are from other church groups and some who are new to the faith. A pastor originally from Central America, Bro. Jose Urbina, is also involved in this new work. He is pictured seated below.



Also on this page is a photo of the children's Christmas program at Monongahela, PA.

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PA, and Connie Luckadoo of McAlisterville, PA; sons Samuel Kerlin of Perryopolis, PA, Howard Kerlin of Jefferson Hills, PA, and Brian Kerlin of Floreffe, PA; eight grandchildren, five great-grandchildren, four sisters and nieces and nephews.



Sis. Elizabeth Wright, 69, a member of the Groves City and Karns City, PA churches and a licensed evangelist, died Aug. 27, 2010. Born July 17, 1941, she is survived by her husband, Bro. Elsa Wright, sons Elsa Wright, Jr. of Youngstown, OH, Bob Wright of Arkansas and Jeff Wright of Florida; daughter Angel of Pennsylvania; and several grandchildren.

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Final thoughts...

Assistant Editor Nora Edinger

While baking for Christmas with our daughters I realized that I was automatically doing things the same way my grandmother taught me when I was a little girl. When our cooling racks overflowed with oatmeal cookies, I set out sheets of waxed paper to house the rest. When everything was done, we lined round tins with more waxed paper and neatly stacked cookies one layer at a time. More than 100 years separate my grandmother's birth with that of our youngest daughter's, but what gramma knew how to do then still works perfectly well now.

That's not that different from Christianity. I was impressed by this fact when our home-based Bible study arrived at the subject of Lydia's Sabbath-day meeting with Paul and Silas – found in Acts 16. They met on a Grecian riverbank because there was no synagogue in the city of Philippi. The river is where people went to pray to God – as opposed to city temples where prayers were made to idols.

Lydia opened her home to Paul and Silas and the first church in Europe was born. There was none of the grand cathedrals visitors love to view today. There wasn't even a humble chapel. There were just two ministers, a woman, her family and a house – and it was the start of an entire continent being reached with the Gospel.

Simple ingredients.
Simple methods.

That was something I ran across again in the Scriptures the same day as the cookie baking. In Matthew 15:34, Jesus asked the disciples what they had to work with before He fed thousands of people. *“Seven (loaves), and a few little fishes,”* they replied. A small start, but astounding things resulted.

“Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to day, and forever.” Hebrews 13:8 If He can reach a continent and, ultimately, the Americas with one house church, if He can feed thousands with “a few little fishes,” He can surely take our smallest churches and geographically isolated members and do something amazing, as well. We just have to put what we have in His hands and let Him do the rest!

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