

“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

FALL
2010

This Glorious Body

*From the
Overseer's Desk*

From Glory to Glory Part 13

For eleven issues, we have examined the theme “*from glory to glory*” (2 Cor. 3:18) in which we have been focused primarily upon how God’s glory is manifested to us and through us as we sojourn this life. Then with our last issue, we turned to considering the eternal glory that awaits those who overcome when their lives here is over. Christ fairly well summed up that matter in Rev. 21:7: *“He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.”*

As noted in Part 12, Paul began his transition at the end of 2 Cor. 4:17-18 to considering the *eternal glory* that awaits us: *“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.”

With these words, Paul set the stage for 2 Cor. 5, where he would consider the glorious nature that each of us not only will experience, but into which we will be transformed when we enter heaven’s glory. He continued to build the case for why our experiences down here (be they glorious or otherwise) *“are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”* (Rom. 8:18)

Participants in His glory

We will not simply be surrounded by various manifestations of God’s glory (read the description of the New Jerusalem in Rev. 21-22); we will be baptized (transformed, regenerated) into His glory. These words are inadequate to describe how we will be changed. So, we will use the term *glorification* to describe the transformation of our mortal physical bodies to the spiritual bodies in which we will dwell forever.

As Paul wrote his second letter to the Corinthians, he could draw upon his previous letter (specifically 1 Cor. 15), in which he persuaded them of the glorious resurrection that we all anticipate. Paul summarized our *glorification* in 1 Cor. 15:42-44:

“So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.”

Paul also could draw upon his own glorious experience he had 14 years earlier, and would describe to them later in this letter (2 Cor. 12:1-4) as to how he was *“caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.”*

On the basis of this and other glorious experiences that we shall
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Bulletin board...

2010-11 Calendar

- Sept. 25** – Western District Ministers Workshop, Uniontown, PA
- Oct. 9** – Eastern District Ministers Workshop, Lawrence, MA
- March 26** – Eastern District Convention, Lawrence, MA
- April 9** – Western District Convention, Karns City, PA
- April 29-May 1** – Ladies' Retreat, Camp Sunrise, Markleysburg, PA
- May 13-14**, Youth Convention, Uniontown, 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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Region's oldest member passes at 104

Sis. Christina Urbanija, 104, went to be with the Lord, July 27. The oldest church member in the Northeast Region, she attended the Monongahela, PA church and was a resident of Finleyville, PA.

Born in 1905 in the European nation of Slovenia, in 1925 she married Frank Urbanija, who preceded her in death. The couple immigrated to the U.S. in the 1920s. Their daughters, Veronica Cavalier of Finleyville and Louise (Harold) Smail of Finleyville, are also members of the Monongahela church. She is also survived by 10 grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren.



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Contact us:

The Olive Branch is a publication of The Church of God–Northeast Region, which serves churches in Delaware, Massachusetts, New York, Maryland, and Pennsylvania and new works throughout the greater Northeastern USA. It can be viewed online in English and in Spanish at <http://www.tcog-ne.org>.

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WMB... Coordinator Diana Seese

*"Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying,
Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?
Then send I, Here am I; send me."
– Isaiah 6:8*

Worship is our heart response to God. It is the overflow of a heart filled with adoration and love for the Lord. What a privilege is ours! We can kneel in the presence of the holy, loving Father and worship Him. We can also worship by **servicing Him.**

God had a message for His people but He needed a messenger. It would not be an easy assignment, for they were a disobedient and rebellious people. When God called for someone to go as His representative, Isaiah was ready. Filled with a vision of the holiness of God and already cleansed spiritually himself, Isaiah heard God's call. He answered, "Here am I; send me."

Today, God is still calling for His representatives – The Church of God – to go into all the world with His message. He doesn't draft us, but waits for us to volunteer.

Often we become so filled with our plans, programs, schedules and appointments that we become burned out with pressured activity and are ready to quit. *We can get so busy planning what we want to do for the Lord that we miss what He wants to do through us.* We may have become indifferent to those on their way to a Christless eternity.

We need to come into His presence and let Him fill our vision with Himself. How? The Word of God says in 2 Cor. 4:6: *"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."* God reveals Himself to us in the person of Jesus Christ. Our focus must be on Him.

Then we are ready for God's call to put us where He wants us. We are available to Him. He will show us *His agenda.*

When we are filled with His love, He can love the world through us. We will see the lost world through His eyes and seek His plans and His help for reaching the world. We will begin to pray that: *"...the Lord of the harvest ... will send forth labourers into His harvest."* (Matt. 9:38)

As we see the lost world as He sees it and pray for people through His heart of love, our response will be, *"Here am I; send me."*

Now is the time for us to go into all the world and reach the lost. I believe that the mandate of God to go is increasing in urgency! Do you feel it? Christ gives us the instructions and commands us to go, but to whom? Every creature! Where shall we go? Into all the world! It is very clear what our responsibility is. Will we accept this challenge this new church year of 2010-2011, for the sake of all lost souls?

The mission theme for this year is: *"Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?"* WMB leaders: Please use this theme this year.

Other aspects of our WMB work have not changed this year. Please continue to boost offerings for: Missionary Partnership Alliance, World Missions (October and March), Sharing Hands Ministry, Coins for Missions and \$100 missions workers.



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CPMA... Coordinator Roger Fuester

The lead front page headline in my local paper one recent Sunday really grabbed my attention: **Pilferers prey on the faithful.** The basic premise of the article was that too much trust makes church embezzlement common. The story detailed how money had been misappropriated recently from a number of churches in Delaware. A number of specific points were made:

- In many cases, the embezzler was the least likely suspect.
- Lax oversight was usually a contributing factor. Few churches conducted audits.
- Sometimes the churches were reluctant to press charges, even when substantial sums of money were involved. The reason? Churches wanted to avoid bad publicity.
- Restitution is often a problem.
- Church embezzlement is not a rare event – a survey sent to 174 Catholic dioceses revealed that an incredible 85 percent of respondents reported a theft in the past five years.

Why are churches so vulnerable? Church members come to worship the Lord with good people and aren't thinking about who's likely to rip them off when the service is over. Under these circumstances, people let down their guard, believing they are among holy and consecrated people. However, the fact remains that wherever there is money, there is going to be temptation.

When there is a case of embezzlement, the congregation goes into a state of shock. Usually, the church sustains a decline in membership and giving. Unquestionably, the effects on an embezzled church and its membership are devastating.

Nevertheless, one key point was missing from the article, even though it was factual and well written. A more accurate headline would have been the following: **Pilferers rob God!**

Yes, embezzlement had hurt the churches and their members. But, the monies taken had been offered to God. It's hard to believe that an embezzler would steal from God, but that's what happened. I don't know whether the perpetrators really didn't believe in God, or thought that He would look the other way. But, offertory prayers usually state that

offerings are given to the glory of God (or something to that effect), and I believe that God considers the funds put in the collection plate to be His, regardless of the donor.

Before closing, one additional point needs to be made: Embezzlement is not the only way to rob God. In the last book of the Old Testament, the prophet Malachi issued a stern warning to a people exhibiting a progressively lackadaisical attitude to worship and the values God had set for them:

“Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.”
Malachi 3:8-10

It is noteworthy that tithes and offerings are mentioned in virtually the same breath. Both are clearly important. To be sure, I would rather be blessed than cursed.

We are now in a new Assembly year. I am praying that each and every member will join the CPMA with a \$10 donation, so that the Northeast Region will be 100 percent in 2010-2011.

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Regional photos...

Photos on pages 5 and 6 are from various services, skits and events during the Seaquest Vacation Bible School at Uniontown, PA in July and the Regional Convention, which also took place at Uniontown in July.



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shortly consider, Paul now expressed a deep longing and expectation for that glorious body that awaited not only him but each of us who overcome: *“For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven:”* (2 Cor. 5:1-2)

We often sing of having a *mansion* over in gloryland, but that is not the type of *house* for which Paul yearned here. He was speaking of the *glorious body* he would receive *“...fashioned like unto his (Christ’s) glorious body.”* (Philippians 3:21)

Our glorious state of creation restored

Then with the phrase, *“If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked.”* (2 Cor. 5:3), Paul expressed his anticipation of our glorious spiritual bodies as the final, complete reversal of man’s fall in Eden. The *nakedness* that man experienced when Adam and Eve fell from their *glorified* state will be reversed when we are again *clothed in His glory*.

Adam and Eve once had been *clothed in His glory* as described in Psalm 8:5: *“For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour.”* Then when they transgressed, they found themselves *naked* of His glory. (Gen. 3:7)

Man, *“...clothed upon with our house which is from heaven”* (2 Cor. 5:2), will finally be redeemed to a state comparable to (indeed, superior to) that of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden: a state in which their bodies not only were eternal (could not die), but also that permitted them to stand in the glorious presence of the *“LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day.”* (Gen. 3:8)

Paul earnestly looked forward to that day when we once again, *“being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle (earthly body) do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.”* (2 Cor. 5:3-4)

In heaven, we are not simply to be observers. We will be full-fledged participants in His glory, which will totally permeate our beings. We will experience His glory *completely* in our new glorified spiritual bodies. That glory which the Son had with the Father before the foundation of the world will be ours too: *“Who shall*

change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.” (Philippians 3:21)

Sustained by the expectation of our ultimate glorification

Paul’s expectation of the glory that awaited him sustained him through the many trials and tests he endured in this life (Rom. 2:7; 8:18; 2 Cor. 4:17; 2 Tim. 2:10). Peter also referred to our expectation of *“the glory that should follow”* when He shall appear (1 Peter 1:8, 21; 4:13,14).

John expressed great expectation regarding our future glorification: *“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.”* (1 John 3:2-3)

Even Christ, being in great agony and travail in Gethsemane, drew strength for His ordeal from His knowledge of the *glory* that awaited Him as an *overcomer* (John 16:33). Christ had spoken many times of being *glorified* of the Father while He ministered in His earthly body upon this earth (Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22; Luke 9:35; John 11:4; 12:28).

Now He looked beyond those earthly manifestations of God’s glory to a far greater glory awaiting Him upon His victory over death and hell, and His return to Glory (heaven). He began His Gethsemane prayer with the words: *“Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: ... I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.”* (John 17:1,4-5)

What of the glorious body awaiting overcomers?

The question then is: Just what do we know, yea how can we even begin to grasp, what our glorious heavenly bodies will be like? We have given to us two major sources: The *Word* and the *Spirit* reveal what we shall be.



Regional
Overseer
James Smith

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First, we know from 1 John 3:2 that *“it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”* We have previously noted that we expect our spiritual bodies to *“...be fashioned like unto his glorious body.”* (Philippians 3:21)

The body of Christ in heaven is of the same nature as the bodies of the saints who will be in the resurrection, and which the apostle called *“spiritual bodies.”* (1 Cor. 15:44) Any understanding and insight we might glean from the Word regarding manifestations of Christ in His heavenly glorious state reveals that much about what we too shall be when He appears.

Our second source Paul went on to reveal in 2 Cor. 5:5. God has *“... given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.”* In Ephesians 1:13-14 Paul tells us that we are *“...sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.”*

While we cannot begin to consider every example, let's now explore both of these sources further so that we might gain a greater appreciation of what awaits those who overcome.

Christ's glorified state manifested to us

We have many prophetic statements as well as eye-witness accounts of Christ's heavenly glory manifested to mortal eyes.

Christ's heavenly glory was shown to many of our New Testament brethren. While yet in his earthly body, He was transfigured into His heavenly glory in the mount before the eyes of Peter, James and John when He was seen with Moses and Elijah. In Matt. 17:2: He *“was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.”* Mark 9:3 says that, *“his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow.”* According to Luke 9:29, *“the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistering.”*

This vision of Christ in His transfiguration matches the vision seen by Daniel: *“the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool.”* (Dan. 7:9) In Revelation, John saw Him: *“His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; ... and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.”* (Rev. 1:14,16)

Christ also appeared unto Paul in His glorified state. As Paul journeyed toward Damascus, *“suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven.”* (Acts 9:3) He reported at the end of his encounter with Christ that *“when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand.”* (Acts 9:8) The blindness was likely due to the brightness of our glorified Christ.

We do not know the details of what Paul saw, but he shared his experience with Barnabas who afterward related that Paul *“declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way.”* (Acts 9:27) Years later, to King Agrippa, Paul declared the light from Christ that illuminated him to be *“a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun”* (Acts 26:13) To the Jerusalem counsel that questioned his experience, Paul stated that *“I could not see for the glory of that light,”* (Acts 22:11) thus indicating the glory associated with the One who had shown His glorious light upon him.

Moses, too, was in the presence of the Lord and even asked to see God's glory: *“I beseech thee, shew me thy glory.”* (Ex. 33:18) After the experience that followed that request, *“the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance.”* (2 Cor. 3:7 and Ex. 34:29-30) John Gill (*John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*) has described Moses' experience thus:

“The brightness of the Eternal Glory, though Moses had witnessed it only in a modified manner (Ex. 33:22-23), was so reflected in his face, that Aaron and the people were stricken with awe, and feared to approach him until he gave them words of encouragement.”

From such manifestations as these of heaven's glory, and of Christ's heavenly (eternal) glory in particular, we must conclude that there is a radiance of light signifying His presence and glory with us that we do not fully comprehend while still in our earthly bodies.

We shall be like Him

Having considered Christ in His heavenly glory, we now will look specifically at what we shall be like when we finally enter His presence in Glory. Yes, we often refer to heaven by the term Glory. After all, everything there will be glorious beyond our imagination.

John has summarized what we can expect in 1 John 3:2: *“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”*

Clearly, what awaits us is this manifestation of Christ's heavenly glory in us!! So many scriptures often are taken as only symbolic (such as *“light of the world”* where light is equated with *insight, inspiration, or*

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understanding), when in fact there is also an eternal glorious meaning also being expressed. Consider John's description of that glory: "And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." (Rev. 21:23)

Daniel tells us that when the Lord returns, "*many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.*" (Dan. 12:2) Then he goes on to describe the nature of those who awake to everlasting life: "*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.*" (Dan. 12:3)

Christ echoed this same theme from Daniel when He explained privately to His disciples the parable of the tares in Matt. 13:43: "*Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.*" Commentator John Gill elaborates this passage describing our expected future state thus:

"... made so, by the righteousness of Christ imputed to them: these ... shall now "shine forth" in the robe of Christ's righteousness, in perfect holiness of nature, in all felicity and prosperity of soul; and in the shining dazzling robes of glory, incorruption, and immortality, on their bodies; eves the sun, having no spot in them, or upon them, and without any clouds of darkness: they will be as Christ himself, the sun of righteousness, with whom, and in whose glory they shall appear, both in soul and body."

Our heavenly nature will have become like that of Him whom we now love and serve with all our hearts. Indeed, the Apostle John summarized our much anticipated eternal nature so well: "*We shall be like him!*" To continue John Gill's elaboration of Matthew:

"... these at the resurrection shall shine, both in body and soul; their bodies shall be fashioned like to the glorious body of Christ; their souls shall be filled with perfect light and knowledge, and be completely holy, without any sin upon them; and this light and glory that will be upon both soul and body will be like the brightness of the heavens when the sun is risen; yea, it will be like the brightness and glory of the sun itself, as our Lord affirms."

The earnest of our inheritance

Our fully understanding what we ultimately will be must wait until "*when he shall appear,*" at which time we are fully assured that "*we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*" (1 John 3:2) Until that time, we must rely upon the Word, and upon our other source of inspiration: "... the earnest of the Spirit." (2 Cor. 5:5)

We must conclude that there is a radiance of light signifying His presence and glory with us that we are far from being able to comprehend in our earthly bodies.

In Eph. 1:13-14, Paul tells us that we are "...sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory."

An earnest is what is given to confirm an agreement, to assure ultimate completion of the thing promised ("closing the deal"). An earnest is never returned but is in fact a portion (of like kind) of that which is promised and ultimately delivered. For example, the earnest given when one commits to purchasing a home is in fact part of the eventual total payment for that home.

So it is with the promise of the Holy Ghost. As Christ prepared His disciples for His soon departure back to His home in Glory (see John 14-16), He spent considerable time describing the work of "*the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost,*" who would assume responsibility for guiding them after His departure (John 14:26).

Christ identified several works of the Holy Ghost whom His Father would send from Glory upon His return there (John 16:7-14). In particular, He concludes His discussion of the role of the Holy Ghost: "*Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.*" (John 16:14)

The Holy Ghost certainly at times informs and warns us about things to come here on this earth. But He has a yet greater purpose: to prepare us for our journey to and for what awaits us in Glory. We are saved "*by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.*" (Titus 3:5) We are "*sanctified by the Holy Ghost.*" (Rom. 15:16) When we are "*made partakers of the Holy Ghost,*" who is our earnest from heaven, we "*have tasted ... the powers of the world to come.*" (Heb. 6:4-5)

Experiencing our earnest now!

Some have speculated as to how literally we should take the description of the Holy Ghost falling upon the Church on the Day of Pentecost as "*cloven tongues like as of fire.*" (Acts 2:3) We are told that "*it sat upon each of*

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ABM...Coordinator Nancy Horchar

"For what shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

Mark 8:36

People today chase after so many different things. Only *one* thing is needful, however, according to the Bible. Having a fistful of money, a great estate or lots of prestige doesn't mean a whole lot if you've gone on to your ultimate address without the Lord. Also tragic is to find that, in the middle of a busy life, you are living in a barren land where Christ does not dwell and life is not found. We must not get wrapped up in the things of this world and lose our life, our soul, our meaning by chasing after what is not lasting.

We must be so careful. If there was ever a time to be close to the Lord, it is now, as our new ABM theme reminds us. It is, *"No One Left Behind,"* and is a reference to all being ready for the return of Jesus. Continuing that thought, here are some "maintenance" reminders for those of us who are already born-again Christians:

1. PRAY: Talk to God about everything. (Philippians 4:6-7)
2. STUDY THE BIBLE: Listen to God by reading the Word of God. (Heb. 4:12)
3. FELLOWSHIP: Spend time with others who know God personally. (Heb. 10:25)
4. MAKE DISCIPLES: Help others to know God personally. (Matt. 28:19-20)
5. OBEY: Let God daily direct your life. (John 14:15)

We must do all we can do to make sure that our souls are right with the Lord. If we lose our souls, we will miss heaven and lose all. God's power saves and can *keep us saved* and enable

us to live victorious Christian lives.

Another key way to maintain our souls is to fully utilize the Assembly Band Movement ministry. The ABM is the church's department of pastoral care and its purpose is to see that each member of the church is properly cared for – a ministry of keeping, maturing and equipping the Body of Christ.

A fully functioning ABM will mean local churches' prayer bands are in operation. These home meetings are so important in keeping our members. They allow a time for everyone to get to know one another and their needs. They allow a time for Bible study and a time of prayer – both personal and corporate. They allow a time of worship and fellowship.

These home meetings are also wonderful for training church members to care for and be committed to one another. The band service is set in motion to minister to both the physical and spiritual needs of the sheep.

My prayer is that every prayer band in every church of the Northeast Region will be functioning properly. They should be functioning in a way so that *No One is Left Behind*.

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VLB... Coordinator Brenda Buenavista

"..But His word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones"

– Jer. 20:9

Have you ever tried putting a lid over a pot of water to help aid the boiling process? It could be quite a help, especially when we need our water boiling quickly! When we begin to see those bubbles forming we know it will soon reach boiling point. But sometimes when larger bubbles form at the very bottom of the pot and rise, it causes the water to boil over in a frenzy. When this happens, it's time to run (after we turn down any literal flame, of course)!!

This came to mind as I thought about the desire many have expressed to stay on fire for the Lord. We can all agree that the Lord has moved in the hearts of many VLB's this summer. Many sought salvation, sanctification and the baptism of the Holy Ghost in our region.

But what happens next? It is not always easy to maintain that high spiritual temperature when we go back to school or work and we don't see enough of each other to encourage one another. The solution is prayer! Prayer will keep our temperature on HIGH and our flames fanning so much that it will cause them to be spread around reaching others. I am positive that Jeremiah had an intense prayer life. That is surely what caused the Word of God to be like *"burning fire shut up in my bones."* We can all have that same experience and keep it.

Keep your soul "pot" bubbling. Just put a lid of prayer over it!

Some young people wanted to share their personal testimonies of what they experienced this summer. God bless our VLB's!

"At the 2010 General Assembly this summer I experienced something great! I was saved and

also sanctified! I felt so happy and new, like a whole different person. I am so happy I got to attend the General Assembly this year and I thank God for all He has done for me."

*Chelse Guthrie,
Uniontown, PA*



"When I was at the Regional Convention, I experienced and felt many things. I could feel the presence of the Lord flow through the church and the people as well. I experienced going through the prayer line with Raisa, and I got sanctified that night! God has blessed my life through the convention!"

Alicia Smail, Monongahela, PA

"Brother Leighty made the altar call after the last message he preached at Youth Camp and I began to feel something beautiful inside me. He called for all those who weren't in good standing before God to come forward. I stood there at the altar lacking words and all I could say was, "Holy, Holy, Holy" and give Him thanks. I thought I saw my sister in the flesh as Sister Brenda prayed for me with so much hurt. Slowly but surely I began to feel more and more free and asked the Lord to forgive me for the sins I had committed. Then a flood of tears started to flow as I enjoyed that special moment and I wanted to feel more of Him. I had not felt a touch like this from the Lord in a long time."

Willy Benavides, Lawrence, MA

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Sunday School...

Coordinator Elaine Smail

The value of American money has steadily diminished over time. Some would walk by a penny on the ground and think it wouldn't be worth bending down to pick it up. Likewise, if you asked the average American, "What is Sunday School worth to you," some would say the value of Sunday School has diminished like American money. What would you say? If there is a doubt in your mind about the value of Sunday School, you might want to keep reading...

The Sunday School spirit was ignited by Christ and was passed by Him to the disciples. 1 Cor. 12:28 gives the inspiration for Sunday School: *"God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues."*

The earliest record of formalized Sunday School began in the 1780s in Britain, during the Industrial Revolution. Evangelist Robert Raikes devised a plan to gather poor, undereducated working children into education classes on Sundays, the children's only day off. The motivation for Sabbath or Sunday schools was to better the future of society, curb delinquency and give instruction in reading, writing, hygiene and good citizenship. There was hope the morality taught, being based on the truth of Scripture, might bring about a transformation in the hearts of the children.

By the early 1800s, the goals of the Sunday School concentrated on religious education and became the primary outreach arm of churches. It was extended to all age groups and became a way for unbelievers to be introduced to and brought into the life of the church. By the mid 1900s, Sunday School attendance was a universal aspect of childhood.

The trend for permissive parenting in the 1960s brought a change in culture and the start of a slow decline in Sunday School attendance. By the 1970s, there was an unbelievable increase in weekend leisure and church attendance was no longer a priority. The world of television, athletics, apathetic parents and the negative depiction of religion made Sunday-School-going a thing of the past. Sunday School was even once billed by *Life* magazine as "the most wasted hour of the week."

Yet, at approximately 230 years of age, Sunday School is a survivor. Most churches have a Sunday School program and use Sunday School as a means of

religious education and evangelism for the upcoming generation. In The Church of God, specifically, Sunday School has stood the test of time and church reorganization.

At the first General Assembly of The Church of God, in the early 1900s, it was determined that Sunday School would extend the outreach and influence of Christ in our communities. Minutes from that meeting stated that Sunday School could sometimes, "be organized and run successfully where a church could not be established at once, thereby opening and paving the way for more permanent work in the future."

Today, our literature is printed for ages 3 through adult and is published in five languages: English, Spanish, French and languages of the Philippines and India. It is used in more than 20 nations. To do this, the Sunday School department has a staff of three and two translators. Still others write and print the materials.

So, if you have ever doubted the value of Sunday School, don't! The penny IS diminishing in value, but , Sunday School is a priceless treasure. Let's be encouraged and take heed to the words of our General Sunday School Coordinator Robert Strong:

"When we understand the teachings and precepts of God's Word, we are able to combat the devil with the power of the Truth, for God's Word is Truth. We miss out on valuable instructions contained in the lessons taught in our Sunday School classes when we fail to attend Sunday School. Our Sunday School lessons continuously provide us with words of encouragement and hope. Be faithful in your Sunday School attendance and expect the hope of God to abound in the joy and peace of God."

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BTI...Coordinator Wendell Flick

God has placed Bible Training Institute in the church to teach, train and equip us in sound doctrine. It will help us to win the lost to Christ and His church.

“Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.”
1 Timothy 4:16:

If you are unable to attend BTI at church headquarters in Tennessee, consider the many

great courses available through correspondence. They can be taken individually or used as part of a group study.

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OVERSEER

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them. “Throughout the Word, a fire has been employed to denote cleansing and purifying. God is identified as “a consuming fire.” (Heb. 12:29)

Many are the first-hand testimonies of those who have been marvelously used of the Holy Ghost in these last days. I have two aunts who received the Holy Ghost as teenagers in the 1930’s. Under the power of the Holy Ghost, one scooped hot coals from the pot belly stove that heated the country church and held them in her cupped hands while she walked around the room speaking in tongues. The other grabbed and hugged that same hot stove while also speaking in tongues. Neither of them was burned or harmed.

Many others likewise can tell of other miraculous manifestations of the Holy Ghost. When we experience such mighty moves of the Holy Ghost upon us and within us, we are partaking of “*the powers of the world to come.*” (Heb. 6:5)

This power that works in our natural bodies through outward manifestations more importantly works within us to purify us, burning out our earthy impurities so that we may one day stand before Him in our new glorified bodies, having “*put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.*” (Eph. 4:24)

Paul continued in 2 Cor. 5 to explain the working of our earnest from the Lord: “*old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*” (2 Cor. 5:17) This taste of the Spirit now working in our spirits is the earnest

(the beginning of) a transformation that will be fully realized when we stand before Him in our new glorified bodies, when “*Death is swallowed up in victory.*” (1 Cor. 15:54)

At that time, John’s words will have come true: “*we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*” (1 John 3:2)

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URBANIJA

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Sis. Urbanija was a member of The Church of God for 54 years. During that time, she was a prayer group leader, winning many families to the Lord through meetings in her home. She was also known for helping church fund-raising through chicken dinners, hoagie sales and making nut rolls.

At home, Sis. Urbanija kept a family farm operating while her husband worked in coal mines. She raised cows, chickens and pigs in addition to canning fruit and vegetables. She also tended 1,000 tomato plants at a time for the Heinz company of Pittsburgh.

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Final thoughts...

Assistant Editor Nora Edinger

The city in which we live and the city in which we attend church are both very old – pre-Revolutionary War, in fact. The downtowns of both are dotted with grand old churches whose steeples reach high into the sky, pointing to God’s holy heaven like so many fingers. They are lovely, but I noticed something odd about one when I happened to be taking a look from a park instead of the car window. The tower stretching above one church was hollow! It had walls that appeared to enclose space in the same way the main building did. But, the spire itself was empty except for crisscrossed support cables.

Curious, I began looking at other church towers and steeples and found that most of them were just as empty. It was understandable – from an architectural and financial point of view – but I couldn’t help but marvel that the very things intended to point our attention to God were hollow. *They appeared to be much more than they actually were.*

And I couldn’t help but remember that realization when a pre-believing friend recently told me about how some “Christians” had compared their lifestyles so favorably with hers that she felt spiritually crushed instead of drawn to the Savior. Those individuals, whom likely had good intentions, built themselves up to be lofty and impressive. But, the results of their

efforts to point another to Jesus came up worse than empty.

That’s no doubt what the Old Testament prophet Isaiah had in mind when he wrote Isaiah 64:6: *“But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.”*

Even in the grace era – in which we can live in God’s sanctifying power over sin – using our righteousness to point to God can be as empty as a steeple. We must remember that the steeples (or own lives) are tools to point to God, not to ourselves. If we keep the attention on Jesus, no one will ever be disappointed with anything less than substance and strength.

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