

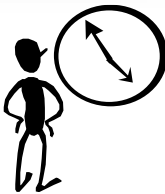
## THE BATTLE CREEK BULLETIN

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### Time of Assembly



#### **Sunday:**

Bible Study 9:00 a.m.  
Worship 10:00 a.m.  
(every other week)

Worship 5:00 p.m.

#### **Wednesday:**

Bible Study 7:00 p. m.

## God's Unchanging Hand

By Ken Weliever

*"For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven, inasmuch as we, having put it on, will not be found naked. For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed, so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life. Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge. Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord -- for we walk by faith, not by sight -- we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord" (II Corinthians 5:1-8).*

Her father died in her infancy. When she was four years old, she was left paralyzed following a spinal infection that rendered her an invalid. She lived her life in a wheelchair. And suffered the uncertain ravages of the Civil War. But Jennie Bain Wilson lived a productive and joyful life as she grew up in rural Indiana.

In 1881, at age 25 she was carried into a creek in her wheelchair and baptized into Christ. She wrote, "It gave me much joy to thus confess my dear Savior." Jennie's life was then dedicated to her love of music and poetry. She penned over 2200 poems. One of her most famous poems set to music and found in many hymnals is "Hold To God's Unchanging Hand."

The first verse offers this insight and exhortation:

Time is filled with swift transition,  
Naught of earth unmoved can stand,

Build your hopes on things eternal,  
Hold to God's unchanging hand

In today's text, Paul is essentially admonishing us in a similar vein. He speaks as one who has suffered hardship, endured trials, and experienced adversity, yet he provides a hopeful assurance of the Christian's future.

Note these declarative affirmations.

## We Know

There's a lot we don't know. But through God's Word, we know everything we need to know to live an abundant life. We can know God. Know Jesus. Know the revelation of the Holy Spirit. Know that His promises are steadfast and sure. Like Paul, we know.

## We Have

Paul was a tentmaker. So, he compared this body to a tent. Something temporary. Weak. And lacking beauty. But, there's something we have. "*A building from God.*" A heavenly house. A glorified body. One that is permanent. Glorious. And immortal. Interestingly, he spoke of it like he was already in possession of it. And in his mind, he was.

## We Groan

No doubt the debilitating condition Jennie Wilson suffered led to a great deal of groaning. There's no question, Paul suffered physically, mentally, and emotionally. He was beaten, stoned, imprisoned, imperiled, misrepresented, misunderstood and weary from his work for the Lord.

The problems, perplexities, and predicaments of our earthly existence produce either an audible groan or an inner sigh. And we all know the feeling when we suffer pain, experience loss, feel heartache and walk in the shadow of death.

## We Walk

Yet, through it all, Paul said, "*we walk by faith and not by sight.*" As Paul wrote earlier our focus is not on what we see, but on what we don't see with the naked eye. What we literally see is temporal and transitory. But what we see through the eye of faith is spiritual and eternal (II Corinthians 4:16-18).

Thus, we walk in the light of God's Word. We walk in the footsteps of Jesus. We walk in love. We walk according to our Christian calling. We walk in wisdom. And we walk not as pagan people in the lusts of their flesh. We walk according to His commandments. We walk in the Spirit.

## We're Confident

The result of this approach to life is confidence, assurance, trust, and courage. Twice in the text, Paul expresses confidence in his eternal future.

We too, can take heart in this hope, and not lose heart regardless of life's troubles, trials, and temptations to quit.

So, we share and sing with Jennie Wilson the sentiments of her song:

Trust in Him who will not leave you.  
Whatsoever years may bring.  
If by earthly friends forsaken,  
Still more closely to Him cling.

Covet not this world's vain riches  
That so rapidly decay.  
Seek to gain the heav'nly treasures.  
They will never pass away.

When your journey is completed,  
If to God you have been true,  
Fair and bright the home in Glory  
Your enraptured soul will view.

Hold to His hand, to God's unchanging hand.  
Hold to His hand, to God's unchanging hand.  
Build your hopes on things eternal.  
Hold to God's unchanging hand.

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## Return to the Lord

By Warren E. Berkley

Built into the message of the prophets was the appeal to repent. These men were sent by God to expose sin and urge the guilty to repent. Often the appeal was framed as a challenge to return to the Lord (Isaiah 6:10; Jeremiah 3:1; Malachi 3:7). For instance, Joel's appeal to Judah was for the people to repent of their sins. "*So rend your heart,*" and "*return to the Lord your God*" (Joel 2:13). Through the distribution of His judgments (locusts, drought, desolation), God intended to admonish His people to come out of their sin and back to Him. It was His loving purpose to prompt a change in their direction. The essential definition of repentance has not changed through the dispensations. We can, therefore, use Joel's statement as the basis for our understanding of returning to the Lord. And this study can find application for those who have been baptized but have left their God.

### Repentance is a change in direction

The simple word "turn" shows that to be so. Those guilty of sin (before or after baptism) need to turn; a change of direction is needed. If you've been letting the world influence your thinking, your speech, your conduct, your dress, or your attitude, you

need to change your direction. If you've abandoned the assembly, harbored ill will in your heart, accepted false teaching, helped false teaching advance, participated in party strife, or refused to grow, God seeks a change in your direction. Repentance is a change in your direction, turning from your sin to the Lord (I Thessalonians 1:9-10).

## Repentance occurs in the heart

Observe in Joel 2:12, *"with all your heart."* Everything we do before God ought to be done with a whole heart. Repentance, to be complete and genuine, must come from a whole heart: a heart of reverence for God, love for God; a heart influenced by the cross of Christ. Repentance should be the product of a heart of mature responsibility toward everything that is holy and right. The conviction of sin from the Word should be let in so that repentance finds its' true and good expression.

## Repentance is not a ritual

*"So rend your heart, and not your garments..."* (Joel 2:13). It was customary among the Jews to express their emotions in very public, visible ways. To this day in middle eastern cultures, when a family member dies, there may be public weeping and wailing; throwing dust in the air; beating the breast, and rending of garments. The problem to be noted here is, the emotion must not be ritualized and confused with true repentance. The fact that someone may cry in public or come down an aisle doesn't assure wholehearted repentance. Repentance is a personal decision to leave sin behind and come to God. It is a decision of heart, productive of good fruit. It may be accompanied by some open expression, but the essence of the matter lies in the heart and the results in life.

## Repentance is made possible by a gracious God

*"Return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love..."* (Joel 2:13). If you are alive to hear the Word, be convicted and repent, and thank God that you have such a blessed opportunity. Thank Him for the precious blood of Christ. *"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance"* (II Peter 3:9). If you are alive today, you can repent. Thank God for the time He has given you to return to Him, but don't presume upon His grace and providence. *"He relents from doing harm"* (Joel 2:13), but the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night. Repent while there is time.

If you are reading this as one convicted of your sin, now is the time to repent. If you just plan to repent someday, that isn't good enough. Ask God to relent, turn from your sin and enjoy peace with Him through the Lord Jesus Christ.



## Coddling Sinners

By Ron Daly

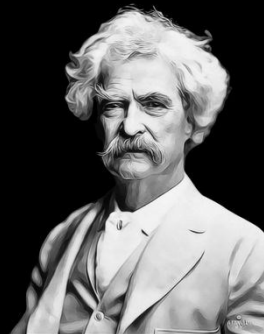
To "coddle" is to treat indulgently. Coddling sinners not only can be but is disastrous to an individual or congregation. God does not give us any authority to provide an "escape hatch" for sinners, that is, people who sin and do not repent. Obviously, if a person repents of his sins and turns to God, he or she is not in the classification of a sinner. But, when a person persists in sin, any sin, and shows no evidence of repentance, the matter must be confronted!

Some of the Lord's people are more understanding toward sin and sinners than God is. Surely, God is merciful, understanding, and longsuffering with his children (Luke 6:36; Hebrews 4:14-16; II Peter 3:9). Yet, even our God eventually says, "Enough is enough!" (Hosea 4:17; Acts 17:30). It is never right to encourage wrong. It is never right to finance wrong. It is never right to cover up wrong. It is never right to just look the other way. According to God's word, sin has to be dealt with.

Sinners may fit several categories. There are transgressors in the area of morals (adulterers, homosexuals, pedophiles, rapists, and pornographers); speech (gossipers, liars, slanderers, blasphemers, and vulgar talkers); doctrine (false teachers, compromisers, and those who refrain from declaring God's whole counsel) are examples.

Most knowledgeable people wouldn't knowingly "coddle" sinners in the realm of morality. Those who commit adultery, homosexuality, pedophilia, rape, and read/publish pornography are obviously wrong and most people would say "We must not indulge their sins!" On the other hand, individuals and congregations are increasingly "coddling" those who persistently sin by speech and doctrine. God wants us to be consistently right in our treatment of those who sin. We don't do ourselves or the sinner any good when we are passive and do little or nothing about his sin. We anger God, grieve the Spirit, trample the Christ, and hurt the cause when we, out of fear, favor, or the desire not to make people mad, overlook the obvious and "coddle" the sinner when we should correct the sinner (II Timothy 4:1-5; Matthew 18:15-17).

## Worrying



**"Worrying is like paying a debt you don't owe."**

- Mark Twain