

June - July 2005

The Gathering Net - 2005

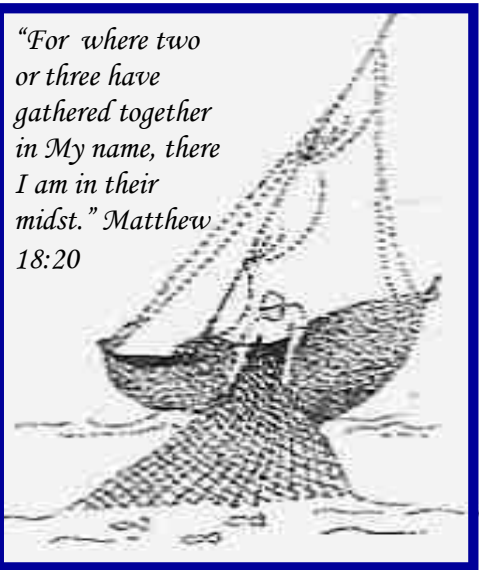
Where in the world did this trial come from, Lord?

Dear Saints,

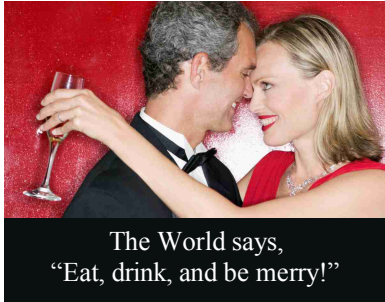
Greetings in the name of the Lord who is faithful, just and most assuredly "sovereign over all." Let's examine a verse from Jesus' lips right before He went to agonizing Gethsemane. He starts out bluntly and then picks us up with exhortation. Let's listen in as He speaks to His disciples in **John 16:33**, "These things (words at the last supper) I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you (will, shall) have tribulation, BUT take courage; I have overcome the world!"

Excuse me as I express my heart regarding the attitude of some saints/children of God in their perception of trials/tribulation. They seem to think that once we are born again we cease to have troubles and suffering. This idea is rooted in a religious spirit. I know this sounds harsh, but let me explain. The Lord never promised us the absence of difficult circumstances in this life. We are not in heaven...yet. Now, it is biblical to note that we believers do have access and receive great strength, comfort, and relief as children of God into the midst of these ordeals. The difference for us and the unbelievers is they have no resources or relief to turn to; but we have a wonderful and faithful deliverer and comforter to turn to in our difficulties. So let's establish biblically that there are and will be trials and tribulation in our lives. There are times and seasons when we are blessed with perseverance, strength and sometimes a way of escape through the Lord. (**I Cor. 10:13**) The focus of this newsletter is to determine, discern, then strategize the source of "negative circumstances," in our lives. There are four main origins revealed in God's word. The first three are clearly and explicitly stated. They are **(1) the world, (2) the flesh** and **(3) the devil**. The fourth one I will reveal and discuss after addressing the first three. My intention is to not only identify the sources but to help us discern and see biblically how to exercise the actions for a solution to these areas. Obviously, because of space constraints this will not be exhaustive but highlight the major points. **(1.) The world:** Ever since Genesis 3, sin entered the world from Satan through Adam and Eve. Since then everything in nature and human kind has been radically altered. The dominant by-products are evil, darkness, division, and disharmony. As I discuss this I want to make very clear that **#1 the world** is attractive because **#2 the flesh** is weak and tempted because **#3 the devil** has planted

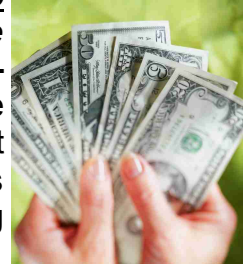
"For where two or three have gathered together in My name, there I am in their midst." Matthew 18:20



his seed in the earth and mankind which is only temporarily under his authority. (See **Luke 4:6; II Cor. 4:4; John 12:31**.) They are all inter-related. So you see even we, who are new creatures in Christ are not totally sanctified in our bodies (flesh) and our soul. We still have the constant battle with the temptations of the world and flesh fueled by the enemy and our own lustful desires. This is very clear in **Romans 7:14-25**. Now some of our weapons in combating the world and the flesh are conveyed in scripture as thus, “*You are in the world but not of it.*” “*Do not participate in the deeds of darkness.*” “*Avoid the opportunities that the flesh enjoys.*” Check out **Romans 14:11-14**. Also, we read in **I Cor. 6:18** to “Flee immorality.” In **I Cor. 10:5** we are directed to “Cast down every speculation and imagination that comes against the knowledge and obedience of Christ.” Last, but not least concerning these two areas Paul sums up our solution to this battle...in **Romans Chapter Six**. Please read the whole chapter if you are interested in getting true biblical help in these areas.

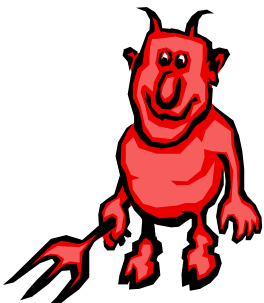


The World says,
“Eat, drink, and be merry!”



Flesh: “Give me more.”

Now to number three, **the devil**. Many of you who know me will realize that one of my pet peeves is the unscriptural credit that Satan gets concerning all the troubles, temptations and problems in our lives. Granted, he plays havoc throughout the world, **BUT** he is only one being that is not omnipresent. Forgive me, but I am so tired of hearing many saints telling me how many times Satan has messed with them this week, etc. It is just not scriptural. Why? Because he cannot be everywhere all at once. **I Peter 5:8** states “Be of sober spirit, be on the alert, your adversary the devil prows, walks, and roams the earth seeking whom he may devour!” So am I denying Satan’s power and presence? No, I am just emphasizing that there are limitations to his scope and sphere of authority. Granted, he has a whole horde of demons, principalities, powers, and minions at his disposal that harass us often. There seems to be two groups of believers who have two extreme understandings of demonology. The one group focuses too much on the enemy and everything is demonic and they are constantly in spiritual warfare. Excuse me again, but I think at times they are truly shadow-boxing. The other extreme is the denial of the enemy and his minions’ activities and therefore can be easily ensnared or controlled without them knowing it. I do not mean to imply that I have the perfect revelation in this area, but I do believe there is a balance. Again, the bottom line solution is to follow scripture. “Resist him in your faith”, **I Peter 5:9**. “Submit to God, resist the enemy, he will flee”, **James 4:7**. My personal favorite is not focusing on the enemy or my sins and weaknesses but as **Hebrew 12:2** states, “Fixing your eyes on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.”



“I’ve got a better way.”

I know this is long, but hang on we’re almost through. I want to now address the fourth source of negative circumstance. I.E. trials, afflictions, suffering.... Hang on...**#4 is God, Himself!** Whoa. I know some of you are saying, “This is blasphemy,” but hear me out. We believers, when we sin, are not punished or condemned, but there is sowing and reaping and consequences that result from sin. The by-product of sinning in a saint’s life first and foremost results in diminished fellowship and the manifest presence of God in our lives. Also, there are physical, mental and emotional effects to our body and soul. Because Papa God loves us so much, especially as His children, it grieves Him and He knows how much damage sin can be to our lives. Consequently, He must choose to discipline those whom He loves and are His. Sin is bad for us; God is good for us! Therefore the Holy Spirit, whose job it is to conform us to Jesus’ image and make us holy, is committed to keep on sanctifying our lives, whatever it takes! The Old Testament is loaded with examples

of God correcting and redirecting His people, “the Jews/Israelites,” and His individual chosen leaders. He sent other kingdoms and nations to defeat and rule over them. In the book of Judges He allowed famine, hunger, storms and even sent them snakes and evil spirits to kill and torment them. **Numbers 21:6; I Sam. 16:14; 19:9**

I know you’re probably thinking, “But that’s the Old Testament.” Yes, but it is the same God who loves His children with a covenant love. These things happened to them because of their disobedience and their need for further testing.

There are also examples in the New Testament. One glaring illustration is in Paul’s life recorded in **II Cor. 12:1-10**. Paul experienced a very unique vision and revelation that few, if any, have ever seen. Because it was so supernatural, he would have had a great temptation to boast and be proud. But God, in His infinite wisdom and love, kept Paul humble by sending a messenger from Satan to buffet him with a thorn in the flesh!

God knows our weak areas and the temptations we struggle with in our lives. He will use whatever instrument or circumstance to keep us on the right track. The Lord never is out to harm us but to help us get free. One of the most illuminating scriptures to me on this subject is stated by David in Psalms 118:18 when he said, “The Lord has disciplined me severely, but has not given me over to death. Again this is Old Testament but this is best explained in the New Testament in **Hebrew 12:5-11**.

So in conclusion we are definitely going to face negative circumstances in our journey on earth. The first one, **the world** is generally out of our control, so just live in it by grace and ask the Lord’s strength to persevere through it. Secondly, **the flesh**, we have much more to do with and then we still need God’s grace and power to crucify the flesh. The third, **the enemy** is real, powerful and has lots of helpers, but we can resist, rebuke, and not focus on him, but keep our eyes on Jesus. Again, remember “Greater is He that is within us than he that is in the world.” Lastly, **the Lord** creates circumstances and situations to discipline, admonish and correct us because He loves us dearly and wants us to be like Him! He really does know what He is doing!!

I want to thank all of you who support this ministry through prayer and finances. I am excited to announce two new things for The Gathering. I received a gift from an individual to purchase a lap top and another gift from a local church to purchase the voice recognition software. Thank you Jesus for these new tools that will help make writing my book so much easier.

Also we now have our website up and running. Ray Griffith got us started and our precious and faithful editor of this newsletter, Jacque Lunsford, has put in hours of work as our “Webmaster.” It is the first one she really has ever attempted to do and is honing her skills. She is doing a great job. Remember, we are up and running but still upgrading and updating the site. It is www.thegathering.ws Praise the Lord. He is Good!

In His love and service,

Carmen

Hebrews 12:5-11

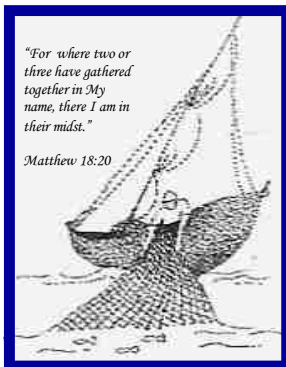
And you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons,
 “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are reprov- ed by Him;
 for those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son, whom He receives.
 It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?
 But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partak- ers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live?
 For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sor- rowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

THE GATHERING IS A MINISTRY OF UNITY AND RECONCILIATION OF THE BODY OF CHRIST!

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Look What Carmen's Doing Now...

- * Wednesday, July 13: Watchman City Prayer Walk
- * Sunday, July 17: Panama City Vineyard Church
- * Wednesday, July 20:
 - 10:30: Servant Leadership Team
Aldersgate Methodist Church
 - 11:30—1:00 John 17 Pastors' Luncheon
Aldersgate Methodist Church
- * Sunday, July 24, 4 PM: Gary Hundley Ordination,
Vaughn Forest Baptist
- * Thursday, July 28, Noon: Beasley/Allen Bible Study
- * Wednesday, August 17:
 - 10:30: Servant Leadership Team
Frazer UMC
 - 11:30—1:00 John 17 Pastors' Luncheon
Frazer UMC
- * Thursday, August 25, Noon: Beasley/Allen Bible Study
- * Saturday, August 27, 8:30—Noon: Central AL Prayer
Leaders' Network Quarterly (CAPLN) Training Event at
1st Baptist Church, Montgomery
- * Saturday, August 27, 6 PM: Wedding in Tallassee, AL

the prayer closet - *"Brethern [and sisters], pray for us."* 1 Thess. 5:25

- * *Pray for Carmen and Elaine to prosper and be in health, as their souls prosper. 3 John :2*
- * *Pray for "the church of Montgomery" [God's people from all Christian churches, in unity] to be victorious over the world by their faith. 1 John 5:4*
- * *Pray for the CAPLN Training Event in August, that it will be a tool in helping many pray for their cities more effectively.*
- * *Pray for upcoming John 17 Meetings and Servant Leadership Meetings, that area pastors will grow in love and unity with each other, and then lead our communities toward biblical transformation.*
- * *Pray for God's anointing on Carmen as he ministers in churches and Bible studies, etc.*
- * *Pray for the Lord to guide Carmen as he writes his book.*
- * *Pray for wisdom for Carmen and Jacque as they develop the Gathering website. James 1:5*
- * *Praise God for His abundant love and care for us!*