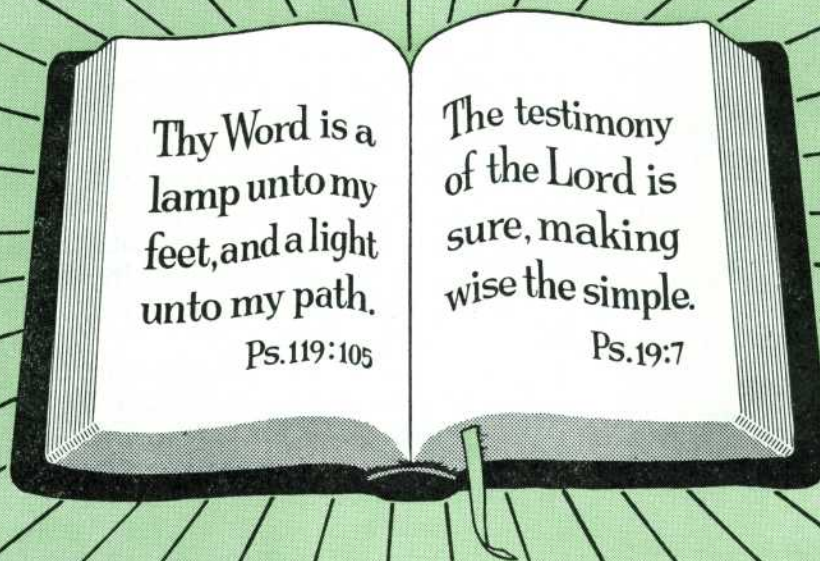


Megiddo Message

DEVOTED TO THE CAUSE OF CHRIST



God's Supremacy vs. Man's Responsibility

Why Did God Make Man the Way He Is?

The Ministration of the Spirit

Be Not As the Cockatoo

Megiddo Message

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A religious magazine, devoted to the cause of Christ and published for the dissemination of Bible truth alone.

The MEGIDDO MESSAGE will

- Strengthen your faith in the Bible
- Answer perplexing religious questions
- Give you courage for these uncertain times
- Help you live above the world's moral corruption
- Reveal to you how to develop a character acceptable to God
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Editorially Speaking . . .

Getting It All Together

“WHEREVER you are, be all there,” was the motto of a young missionary who spent much of his life among the tribesmen of South America.

Being “all there” instead of just “half there”—how much this would do to improve many a situation. Being “all there” suggests a wholehearted concentration on the matter at hand.

Jesus, who was Himself the best example of what He taught, said it simply in a beatitude, “Blessed are the pure in heart.” “Pure in heart” means single-minded, undivided in purpose and interest. The pure in heart have learned to focus everything on one objective—pleasing God.

A physical example of such focused energy is the powerful laser beam, which is nothing more or less than the concentration of diffused light rays into a single beam. And this beam, properly focused and directed, is capable of incredible heat and power. One use of it is to drill tiny, imperceptible holes in contact lenses so that the lenses become more comfortable to the wearer. Two hundred twenty such holes may be drilled in a single contact lens by means of the laser beam. Such is the result of getting light all together.

How different would be our Christian associations with one another if we always made every effort to get ourselves “all together.” If in our everyday contacts with one another we would be sure to be *all* that we aspire to be—amiable, peaceful, considerate, spiritual—how much help and encouragement we might lend each other!

Exactly how does one practice being “all there” in the presence of others? Paul expressed it in his letter to the Romans: “Share the happiness of those who are happy, and the sorrow of those who are sad. Live in harmony with one another. Don’t become snobbish. . . . Don’t become set in your own opinions.”

As Christians, we need to feel a genuine interest in the welfare of each other. We need to “have a real warm affection for one another as between brothers, and a willingness to let the other man have the credit.” And this means “no imitation Christian love.” It means being “all there” in interest and love and devotion whenever we meet. How can we be true “examples of the believers” if when we meet we are cool and distant? How can we stir another’s faith if our own is absent?

There are two simple disciplines which will help us to be “all there” in our Christian contacts: these are thinking and listening. If we meet for a soul-searching discussion and leave our thoughts at home to plan our work for the week ahead, we certainly are not “all there.” Our mental absence may well prove a frustration to others—and to ourselves.

To always be “all there” whenever we have opportunity to help others requires practice and preparation. But how else can we learn to focus our thinking and our Christian effort and have all our faith and self-control and patience and love at our command? How else can we be “all there”? ●●

God's Supremacy vs. Man's Responsibility

PRAYER

Merciful Father, once again we approach Thy throne, thanking Thee for the numberless blessings that are ever flowing from Thy bountiful hand. We thank Thee for the preservation of our lives, for continued opportunity, for more time to do the things we have promised to do and fit ourselves for a place in the world to come.

Help us to put our trust implicitly in Thee, to be of one mind on every principle and commandment that Thy infinite wisdom has dictated for our guidance.

Father, help us always to be aware of our responsibility to Thee. Thy supremacy does not infringe upon our free moral agency. Having covenanted to serve Thee, we shall one day have to give account for what we have done or failed to do. Help us to work that we may merit Thy favor.

Willing to make Thy power known, Thou hast endured with much patience the vessels of wrath fitted only for destruction, and Thou wilt one day make known the riches of Thy glory on the vessels of mercy prepared unto glory through a patient continuance in well doing. Grant that our daily living may be such as to qualify us to be counted as one of these favored mortals.

Thou hast pre-informed us of Thy selectivity. Thou dost not rate highly race, color, nationality, worldly wisdom or human accomplishments. Thou desirest character, thou desirest truth in the inward parts. Thou dost not respect persons, but in every nation he that fears Thee and works righteousness will be accepted.

Thou art the Potter, we are the clay. If we are submissive to all Thy demands, we then will be a vessel to honor, fit for a place in Thy bright new world. But if our clay or human will proves lumpy and unworkable, Thou wilt reject us and we shall sink into eternal oblivion. Grant us the wisdom to choose the better part.

Be with us in this service, and may we open our hearts to receive impressions that will go with us in the days to come, forcing us onward to holier living. In Jesus' name. Amen.

DISCOURSE

PREDESTINATION is the misapprehension of many persons who, convinced of God's sovereignty, see man as a helpless puppet in His hands. They read the words of Paul in Romans 9 and conclude that he was teaching predestination. Man, they feel, is victim of God's momentary caprice; for God in an impassioned mood may harden people's hearts and compel them to do evil against their will. Again, God may foreordain that one human vessel be honorable, and others be vessels of wrath fitted only for destruction.

But such conclusions are inconsistent with the entire teaching of the Bible. How could God give any command or admonition to erring man if it were not within the power of that man to *change* his course of action and do right? How could God reward or punish anyone for good or evil conduct if *God*—and not *the man* involved—were responsible?

No, a preponderance of Bible teaching shows that every man will be judged according to what he himself has done (Jer. 17:10; Rev. 22:12; II Cor. 5:10)—not according to what God predestined that he should do or be. If Paul's words seem to support any idea of predetermined conduct and destiny, we must be failing to understand them rightly. That is due to our misunderstanding.

We often quote the apostle Peter, that "our beloved brother Paul" wrote things "hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction" (II Pet. 3:15-16). Might we not also add Paul's own words in Second Corinthians 11:6, "Though I be rude in speech, yet not in knowledge"? Being rude in speech, he might easily be misunderstood.

And indeed, a majority have misunderstood him. But the fault does not lie with the apostle Paul. As a present-day commentator, speaking of Paul and his statements in Romans 9, says, "The reformers of the sixteenth century failed to understand him just as their opponents had failed, not only because they read him through the spectacles

Every man is free to answer the call of God, or to ignore it and go his own way--without compulsion.

of St. Augustine, but because . . . they were out of touch with the Hebrew mind. With our new knowledge both of the Old Testament and of the Judaism of St. Paul's day, we have an opportunity which was denied to them." Let us avail ourselves of this opportunity.

Predestination in the Old Testament?

What was God's attitude toward predestination in the Old Testament? There was no such thing. Never did God foreordain that a certain man should be a subject of salvation or of condemnation and remove that man's right to choose for himself. Though God made use of individuals outside the scope of His plan of salvation, He never allowed one to perish who might have fitted himself for salvation had he had opportunity. Jesus expressed this same principle in John 7:17, "If any man will do his [God's] will, he shall know of the doctrine."

Every man is a free moral agent, free to answer the call of God or to ignore it and go his own way. God's offer was open to all: "Behold, I have set before you this day life and good, . . . and death and evil." "Choose you this day whom ye will serve." However, as we have also seen, the Hebrew people thought of God as the sole origin of everything. All things derived their being from God and existed to serve His purpose. Thus they sometimes spoke of God as doing what He only permitted or allowed men to do.

Was God Unfaithful to Israel?

When we study Paul, we must keep in mind that we are studying a man who had profound insight into the plan of God. And he is also a man who involved himself in many controversies which arose in the early Church. A writer in the *Interpreter's Bible* advances the thought that the Jewish Christians at Rome may have felt some hostility toward Paul, and such would not be surprising. "Any man who has served two opposing sides with such complete devotion has given hostages to both his opponents. Paul's letters contain abundant evidence that he was often involved in controversy, and he repeatedly had to correct false impressions of his position, or to deny views unjustly attributed to him."

And such is the problem in Romans 9. Paul is not

discussing the relation of the divine sovereignty to human freewill. Paul is answering a Jewish objection to the admitting into the church of large numbers of Gentile believers. Says the Jewish objector to Paul, "If you maintain that the Jewish people have forfeited their superior place in the divine purpose, you are charging God with unfaithfulness; for God pledged Himself to Israel, and He cannot go back on His word."

To answer this objection, Paul first shows that God never committed Himself to save all of Israel and to reject all others; it was always His prerogative to accept good material wherever He found it, and to reject that which proved worthless. Second, Paul shows that God's present rejection of Israel as a nation is morally justified. Thirdly, he shows that it is only selective and may be a means to universal blessing. For through it large numbers of Gentiles were given opportunity to work for eternal life. It is only the confusion that results when we try to read the conclusions of St. Augustine and Calvin into the words of Paul that we see in his words any idea of predestination. For Paul states definitely that Israel's election was an election to privilege, not an arbitrary appointment to final salvation. Paul never taught predestination.

Paul Was An Israelite

With these thoughts in mind, let us study Romans 9. Paul is speaking of the "calling" by God, which the Jews thought was exclusively theirs; Paul is not speaking of a predestined life pattern.

We begin with verse one, where Paul in burning words speaks of his passionate love for his nation and realizes most fully the signal glory of their position. Some feel Paul may have been falsely accused of disloyalty to, or indifference about, the welfare of his brethren according to the flesh, but such an idea does not fit into the pattern of his thought. We read: "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness by the Holy Spirit, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh" (vs. 1-3).

We cannot conceive of Paul's being willing to be accursed from Christ, His gospel, His service, His hope of eternal life. It is merely a figure of speech to emphasize his deep concern for his brethren. A footnote in the *New Catholic Edition* of the Bible points this out: "So great was St. Paul's longing for the salvation of his own kinsmen that he would make any possible sacrifice to that end, even to the extent of being separated from Christ, if it

were permissible to entertain such a desire. That these words are merely an emphatic way of declaring his great devotion to his people, and that they are not to be taken literally, is evident from what St. Paul has just said" in the closing verses of the chapter before. He was "persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, . . . nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature" should be able to separate him "from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Romans 9:3 in the Lamsa Version reads: "I have prayed that I myself might be accursed because of Christ for the sake of my brethren." He prays that he might be accursed "because of Christ," not "from Christ."

A Privileged People

Then in the following verses Paul proceeds with his thesis. He begins by showing that God has not broken His covenant with Israel in rejecting the Israelite nation because the Israel to which the promise was made included God's loyal worshipers from *every* nation.

"For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever" (Rom. 9:3—5). Paul's kinsmen according to the flesh had much to recommend them from a human standpoint, but God does not see as man sees; hence, they looked much different to Him.

"Not as though the word of God had taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel; neither, because they are the seed of Abraham are they all children: but in Isaac shall thy seed be called" (9:6-7). As a nation, the Jews had received a special calling to privilege; but calling alone does not guarantee acceptance, says Paul. As a nation, they were the "elect." But in the matter of salvation, God was not dealing with them as a nation, but as individuals. And those who had no greater virtue than natural descent, Paul classifies as "children of the flesh"; and "these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed."

Not all the natural children of Abraham were to inherit the promises. And Paul uses an apt illustration. The covenant was made with Abraham and his seed (Gen. 12:7). If any should have been sure of the inheritance, it should have been the immediate sons of Abraham. But even while Abraham was still alive, it became apparent that

God is no respecter of persons or nationality. He takes good material wherever He finds it.

only *some* of his descendants were involved. If only one of his immediate sons (Isaac) was separated for the line of descent, why should *all* of his far-removed descendants—nearly two millennia later—feel that they should be inheritors!

Therefore, says Paul, God has not broken His covenant with Israel at all. God is no respecter of persons or nationality. He takes good material wherever He finds it. It is part of His supremacy to choose as He sees fit; it is then every man's individual responsibility to make that calling good. "In every nation, he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (Acts 10: 34-35).

Of Jacob and Esau

Paul believed it was God's prerogative to choose His own source of raw material—which He is able to do because of His divine foreknowledge of what each will do. (But let us remember that this "foreknowledge" has no effect whatever upon the choices a person will make through his life; in no way does God's foreknowledge inhibit man's free moral agency.) Accordingly, Paul mentions Jacob and Esau, and, he explains, it is not the natural children, simply as such, who are the children of God—heirs of the promise—but a certain selected number of them. Isaac was not born in the course of nature, but in fulfillment of a promise of God; and thus only Isaac's descendants (not Ishmael's) were children of God's special promise.

The text reads: "And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; (for the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated" (Rom. 9:10—13).

If Paul by this illustration intended to teach predestination, he contradicted his whole argument heretofore. If God's love for Jacob and His hatred of Esau was a result of divine foreordination and totally beyond the influence of what these men as individuals might do and be during their lives, then Paul's whole argument is invalid. In fact, if acceptance or rejection were the result of God's

An initial calling does not guarantee final acceptance. Man's election is to responsibility, not to privilege only.

predestined arrangement, what meaning have Paul's "anguish" and his "heaviness of heart" and his "tears" for his suicidal kinsmen and countrymen? If God's love to them had been guaranteed simply by their natural descent, all of Paul's anxiety and concern were meaningless. If their acceptance had been predestined, why Paul's massive chain of reasoning to prove that, lineally descended from Abraham though they were, they were *not* the glory-inheriting children? If the word "loved" referred to a decree of election to everlasting life, the Apostle has certainly built a magnificent castle of reason and rhetoric without any foundation.

But no, what Paul means to say here is that God loved Jacob and hated Esau not as a consequence of any good or evil that either had yet committed, but in foreknowledge of what they would do and become.

Paul reinforces the point of God's supremacy in choosing suitable material wherever He finds it, and rejecting material that will prove unworkable. But all of his discussion concerns only an initial calling or acceptance; once called, it is every man's responsibility to "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith [he is] called" (Eph. 4:1), to make his "calling and election sure" (II Pet. 1:10).

Nothing can prevent God's deciding who shall belong to the true Israel, and who shall not. Indeed, the recipients of the promise of eternal life need not be Jews at all! "What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid" (Rom. 9:14). In other words, even if all Jews should reject the gospel and miss the fulfillment of the promise, God could not be considered unfaithful to Israel and His covenant invalid, because "Israel" means not Jews by natural descent, but the elect of whatever nation. Romans 2:28-29 is clear: "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God." God *foreknows* what men and women will do with as much accuracy as we may know by actually seeing them perform; and He calls only those who will do His will (John 7:17).

The Mercy of God Is Selective

"For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy" (vs. 15-16). No carnal striving can make one an inheritor of the promises, says Paul, any more than natural descent can avail. The Lamsa Translation reads, "Therefore it is not within the reach of him that wishes, nor within the reach of him who strives, but it is within the reach of the merciful God." Because the Jews "wished" to be God's first choice did not assure them of acceptance; nor could any man or woman be accepted by God, because of a self-imposed system of righteousness. God chooses His candidates as He pleases. And, says Paul, everyone chosen is selected through "the mercy of God."

We might conclude from Romans 9:15-16 that there is very little one may do to obtain the mercy, and subsequent blessing, of God: "For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." But the mercy of God is not capricious as the mercy of man might be. Read the ancient principle of the Lord as recorded by the Psalmist: "The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them" (Ps. 103:17-18). God's mercy is indeed selective; "so then it is not of him that willeth"—or wisheth; "nor of him that runneth"—according to humanly appointed standards; "but of God that sheweth mercy." And when that mercy is shown in advance of a person's performance through life, it is by God's foreknowledge of what that person will be or do.

We must remember also that potential material chosen by God for His kingdom does not automatically become a finished product. Man's election is to responsibility, not to privilege only. In the Day of final account, actions only will be weighed.

Pharaoh—Under God's Supremacy

Paul then illustrates how God uses a person *outside* His plan of salvation to accomplish His divine purposes. "For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth"

(Continued on page 20)

TIMELY TOPICS

THE prophet Micah in the eighth century B. C. lamented that the "most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge" (7:4). Even though this censure concerned Israel, it could apply equally to too many participants in our political system today, and not only to government officials, but to many private citizens as well. The recent disclosures of bribery, corruption, income tax evasion, perjury and other misdemeanors by high governmental agents points up the need for a change to "officers of peace and exactors of righteousness." This desirable change will come only

The Most Upright with the reign of Christ and His saints, after all unrighteous elements have been removed and new authorities have been instated.

Without reasonable laws, our civilization would degenerate into utter chaos. But such laws to be of value must be uniformly enforced. It does not serve the cause of justice to punish the poor for wrongdoing and allow the rich to go free when they are guilty of the same offense. Nor is it justice to adopt one standard for the average citizen and quite another for the public official.

The prophet Isaiah predicted with startling accuracy the conditions existing today. "For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness. None calleth for justice, nor any pleadeth for truth: they trust in vanity, and speak lies; they conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity. . . . The way of peace they know not; and there is no judgment in their goings: they have made them crooked paths: whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace. Therefore is judgment far from us, neither doth justice overtake us: . . . judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter" (Isa. 59:3-9, 14).

But lest we be too hard on the public official, let us remember that the public official is just an ordinary citizen elected to public duty. If the child were taught and demonstrated absolute honesty at an early age, he would be likely to manifest

honest traits as an adult. If all citizens were honest, there would be no dishonest officials. And when it comes to bribery, there are always two persons involved: the one who offers the bribe, and the one who accepts it.

The political system in the United States, whereby the party which can furnish and spend the most money has a decided advantage, is a priori dishonest. The system also tends to keep an incumbent in office, even though a better man might be running against him.

This situation will not be possible in God's future kingdom. All public servants then will be selected on the basis of character alone. No nepotism, no bribery, no buying an appointment. God will enforce His ancient principle: "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God" (II Sam. 23:3). All rulers shall be fully qualified. Having been subjected to the most rigorous training, they will be fully prepared for their positions. All the emotions common to their animal nature will have been brought under control by constant suppression and practice. They will be "civilized" in the most lofty meaning of the term. They will have put away all lying, all anger, all hatred, all revenge that are so common today. All such characteristics will be unthinkable to them. In the words of the apostle John, the officers will stand "without fault before the throne." They will have met and passed the test God has prescribed for all rulers in His righteous Kingdom. They cannot be bribed. They are far above even considering a bribe—in fact, they will have no use for it. For they have in their possession "length of days" in one hand and "riches and honour" in the other (Prov. 3:16).

We as ordinary citizens have been granted the opportunity of sharing in this future righteous kingdom, if we will only make ourselves worthy now. The requirements have been stated clearly, as by Moses in Deuteronomy 10:12-13, "And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, to keep the commandments of the Lord, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good."

"To fear the Lord," to "walk in all his ways," to "love him, and to serve" Him all mean the same thing. The fear of the Lord is "the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments" (Ps. 111:10). "If ye love me," said Jesus, "keep my commandments" (John 14:15).

The requirements are simple: Obey. But to obey

is not that simple. It takes all our time, energy and zeal. It means denying all ungodly lusts and desires, following a narrow, prescribed path. It means squeezing ourselves into the mold God has designed. It means becoming a new creature.

But the reward is more than worth the effort—far more. If we pass the test, not only shall we become the “most upright” by men’s standards—we shall be “without fault” before the throne of God and shall be permitted to live with Christ through all eternity. ●●

Self-Denial Week

The week beginning with February 3 will be set apart for the observance of self-denial by the Megiddo Mission congregation, and by all scattered abroad who choose to observe it with us.

Self-denial being a Bible principle and an inseparable part of the Christian’s everyday duty, we take this opportunity to discipline ourselves by restricting the great variety of food to which we are accustomed. During our Self-Denial Week, we refrain from all meat, fish, fowl, eggs, cheese (except cottage cheese), cakes, cookies, pastries of all kinds, and partake of just three different articles of food at any one meal (the variety may be different with each meal, as desired). Exception is made for the aged, and those on special diets.

We make our selection from all varieties of vegetables and fruits (fresh, frozen, or canned, seasoned to taste), bread, butter, cereals and milk (no tea or coffee)—a plentiful diversity from which to select. To eat to satisfaction of three articles of staple food can scarcely be termed a hardship, though it is a restriction. And we find that this practice increases our appreciation for our abundant blessings which we are too inclined to forget.

Self-denial is a Bible principle in no way confined to eating. The major part of our task of self-mastery involves denying ourselves the right to think, to speak, to act and to feel in any way contrary to the law of God. It is our duty to think first and always: What is right? What will please God? What will help me toward my goal of a perfect character? The fulfillment of this duty is certainly worth any means we may employ, for its reward is life and immortality! ●●

Good Finishers

Have you ever observed that some people accomplish more than others? No matter what they undertake, somehow they seem to get it done. They seem to have a certain rare ability to be good finishers.

Then there are those who start as zealously as any, but who never finish what they start. They either delay, forget or put off until the morrow what should have been finished the day before.

Good starters are not always good finishers.

What of us who have entered the Christian race? Is it our chief concern, our aim and determination to be a winner? Is it our settled resolution to *finish* our race?

We may have started with considerable speed and enthusiasm. But in the long days of preparation and practice, how easy it is to sit and to dream of the wonderful things we *could* do for the Lord and never stir beyond a few unsuccessful efforts. And all the while we sit and dream, we lessen the earnest zeal we had at the start.

Any race horse can start full speed ahead, but the winner must have *staying* power. To pursue the common track of daily duty—and not falter; to run speedily—and not grow weary; to run and keep running—when the novelty has worn off and youthful zeal has diminished and the applause of the cheering crowd is faint in the distance; this is the test that singles out the winner.

We are in a contest for life. Unless we keep pressing without faltering, working without fainting, we may never enter the Kingdom. The day is nearly spent. The hours are getting fewer and fewer. Each moment is more precious than gold. Dare we to become drowsy? Dare we lose all because we failed to give the race our last full measure of effort?

On!—ere the day is over.

On!—ere the race is done.

No rest till all sin is conquered,

And the victor’s crown is won.

There is only one school of learning. It meets in Gethsemane and in the every-day valley. The Lord Himself is the great teacher. There is room in the school for you and me.

NEW!

What the Bible Really Says About THE ATONEMENT

Have you ever wondered
how **CHRIST'S DEATH**
on Calvary
saves **YOU**?

The facts are—
it doesn't!

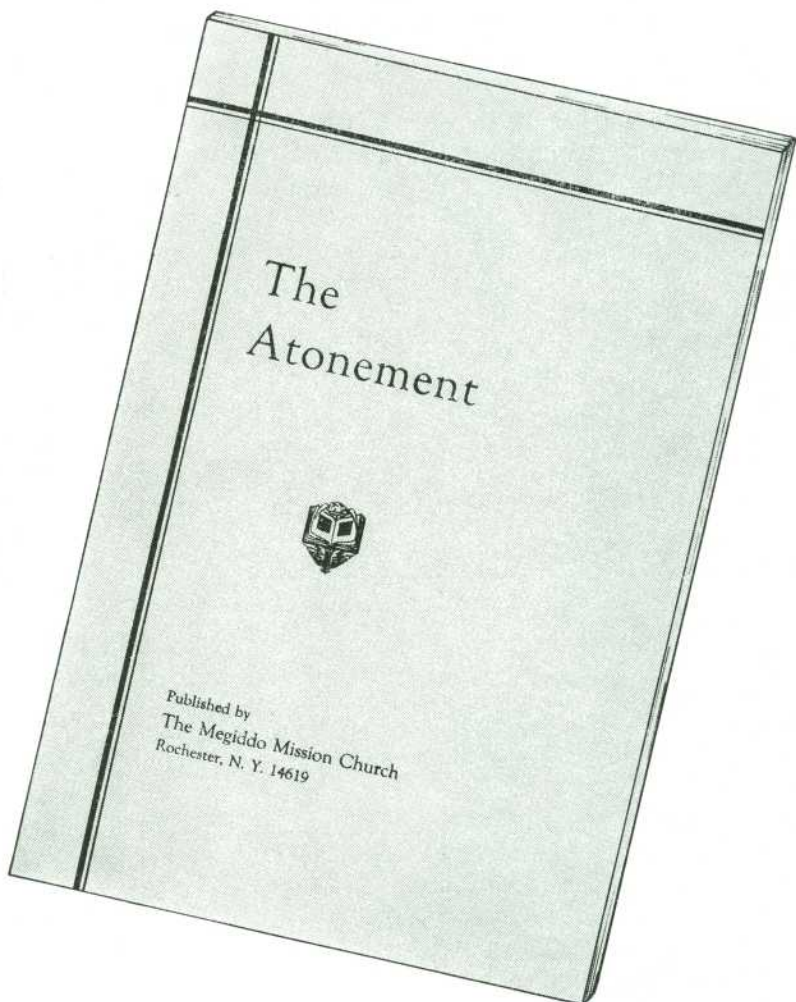
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WHY?

Why Did God Make Man the Way He Is?

A question anyone might ask: Why? Man is greedy, selfish, arrogant, hateful; or he is generous, kindly, humble and compassionate. Man is energetic, enterprising, forward-looking; or he is lazy, cynical and shortsighted. Why did God make man the way he is?

The question is pertinent in these days when the news media is crammed with all sorts of heinous crimes. Especially does it concern those not familiar with the plan of God in creating the earth and man upon it. Why did God do it?

The answer depends on the spirit that motivated the question. One might feel almost like criticizing the God who would be so unwise as to set loose upon His fair earth such a creation as man has proved himself to be. Man has too much potential which he has used for inglorious ends; too much brain-power which he has spent devising his own destruction. Why did God fashion so potentially harmful a creature as man?

The words of the apostle Paul seem appropriate: "Who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?" (Rom. 9:20).

His reply is direct. Who are we to place ourselves on a par with God and criticize His works? Who are we to say what He should or should not have done?

Or someone unfamiliar with God's will and ways might ask in a humbler, inquiring spirit why God should have made man the way he is. For our answer we would search deeper into the Word of God, the Book which God has left for man's instruction and guidance.

Man's finite mind falls far short of being able to comprehend the infinite wisdom of God. But we can learn something of His purposes by reviewing His Word. Isaiah, inspired of God, proclaimed:

"Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth. Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding" (Isa. 40:26, 28).

Isaiah spoke again: "For thus saith the Lord that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited" (Isa. 45:18).

These passages of Scripture afford us opportunity to expand our understanding of the manifold wisdom and power of God. They tell us that He has countless inhabited worlds on high, and that it was according to His eternal plan that He created the earth and caused it to become inhabited.

Inhabited by whom? At present it is filled with a diversity of men, each free to choose his own course in life and glorify himself or his Creator. But the Creator has larger ultimate purposes. Early in the history of God's people He inspired Moses to write: "For as truly as I live all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord" (Num. 14:21). And what is God's glory? God's glory that will fill the earth is His people. Isaiah refers to them as those who are precious in the sight of God (43:4) and "called by my name" and "created for my glory" (43:7). He says also, "I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory" (46:13).

This Israel is all who have become indeed His chosen people, Jews inwardly, as defined in Romans 2:28-29: "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one

inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, ... whose praise is not of men, but of God." They are true soldiers of God, precious in His sight, those whom "God hath set apart ... for himself" (Ps. 4:3), those who are godly. And seven times in Psalm 37 we are told that these special people, the righteous, shall be the inheritors of the earth.

If God's special interest is only in the righteous, His "precious" ones whom He will glorify, why did God create the wicked and those who care nothing about their Creator? Why did He not limit His creation to those whom He foreknew would be godly, those who would ultimately become valuable to Him?

Surely God could have done just that. He could have created all men righteous by nature and incapable of sinning. But such was not His plan. God did not purpose to make man machinelike, but rather a free moral agent, free to choose His own destiny. God created man with an intelligence capable of learning to discern between good and evil. God created man with a conscience which could be educated to that which God loves and that which God abhors.

At the same time, God established laws of nature by which His creation, including man, could be propagated and perpetuated. Such a plan was necessary if He was to have men free to serve Him or reject Him. To all He gave this present life, with opportunity to have *more* life extended to everyone who would choose to live by His code of laws. But it was never God's principle to force mankind to obey His laws. God's immutable arrangement has always been and still is a matter of choice: "Obey and live, disobey and die." The Bible is God's written revelation of these two choices available to men, and the results of each choice.

Throughout the Scriptures these two ways are frequently referred to; one leads to eternal joy and happiness, and the other to eternal oblivion. God's offer of a blessing "if ye obey the commandments of the Lord your God ... and a curse if ye will not obey" (Deut. 11:27-28) still holds. But, He urges, "choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live."

God has created man capable of sinning, if that is his choice; but He has also given to man the means whereby he can change himself from his naturally sinful condition and make himself acceptable in the sight of God. God's promise is found in Ezekiel 18:21, "If the wicked will turn from all his sin that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die."

Many people like to think of God as only a God

of mercy; but His mercy is conditional and selective. It is boundless, but it is "from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, ... to such as keep his covenant and to those who remember his commandments to do them" (Ps. 103:17-18). God's Word makes crystal clear the fact that He is not only a God of love and mercy, but also a God of judgment and retribution (Rom. 11:22). The day is coming when "the wicked shall be cut off from the earth, and the transgressors shall be rooted out of it" (Prov. 2:22), when He "will early destroy all the workers of iniquity; that I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the Lord" (Ps. 101:8). But those that are "willing and obedient" shall "eat the good of the land" (Isa. 1:19-20).

Why did God make man the way he is? So that the individual really interested in something beyond this life might have full and free opportunity to seek a better life, even an eternal life. The promise is, "Ye shall seek me and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart" (Jer. 29:13).

Such seeking and searching reveals what we must do to prepare for that better life. It also reveals the separation between those who say to God, "Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto Him?" (Job 21:14-15); and those who answer as did Joshua, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15). ●●

A Workman's Prayer

Grant me, O Lord,
Thy grace, I pray,
To think some worthy
thought at dawn,
To form with care
the words I say,
And do my work in
praise of Thee.

Lead me from darkness
to the light,
Let me have vision
strong and clear,
Help me keep faith
in this day's fight,
Joined with the love
that casts out fear,
Restore my strength
with rest tonight. Amen.

Are You An Energy Waster?

Do you waste your energy?

It is easy to waste it—by acting destructively, by speaking carelessly, by chasing after things of too small value to be worthwhile.

Here is a simple test. Answer “yes” or “no” to each question.

1. Do you become irritable with other people and lose your composure?

2. Are you fretful and impatient when you can't have your own way?

3. Do you insist on arguing for your point, even though you know the other person is not likely to change his mind?

4. Do you allow your prejudices to influence your decisions?

5. Do you pursue needless ambitions and waste valuable time in non-essentials?

6. Do you spend time dreaming of what you might have been?

7. Do you envy people who are able to do what you cannot?

8. Do you take every opportunity to criticize others?

9. Do you make excuses for your mistakes, rather than an outright, honest admission?

10. Do you spend time at leisure activities just because they are “popular”?

11. Do you feel frustrated when you can't keep up with what others do?

12. Do you act on an impulse—and then regret what you have done?

13. Do you resent other people's suggestions?

14. Do you complain when your normal routine is upset?

15. Do you take criticism as a personal affront or as an opportunity to improve?

16. Do you find yourself so “busy” that you do not take time to meditate, pray and study the Word of God?

17. Do you feel discouraged when everything you attempt does not succeed?

18. Do you pursue trifles—at the expense of real values?

19. Do you spend words, words, words—to no profit?

The Sacred Season

The New Year is approaching—the season which, on the ancient Hebrew calendar, was distinguished by its special days and spiritual revivings. The year, as God commanded Moses to count time, began with the new moon of Abib, which was the first new moon to follow the spring equinox.

The new moon occurring this year on March 23, the New Year will begin with the evening of that day (days were always measured “from even to even”—Lev. 23:23). At this time (March 23, March 24), the Megiddo Mission Church will conduct special services and programs as we offer praise and thanks to God for bringing us to this time of beginning again. The day will also be observed in honor of Christ, our coming King, whose birth, life, ministry and future destiny we remember at this time. All interested friends and subscribers are invited to attend.

Thirteen days later (Abib 13) we will meet to observe the New Passover, the anniversary of our Lord's Supper (this year on April 4), when we renew our covenant to serve our God wholeheartedly. This will be followed two days later by a special morning worship on Sunday, April 7, commemorating Christ's triumphant resurrection. Fifty days later (May 26) will be the day of Pentecost, when over nineteen hundred years ago, the power of the Holy Spirit descended upon the assembled disciples to give them new impetus to carry out the task they had been assigned. ●●

Words to WALK By

What you are tomorrow depends on what you learn today.

It is better to be straight than quick.

If you have iron in your blood, use it—don't let it get rusty.

A religion that is not worth exporting is not worth keeping at home.

The world is full of willing people. Some are willing to work, others are willing to let them.

Don't compare your goodness with the goodness of other men, but with that of the Man of Galilee.

The wages of sin have never been reduced.

UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God."

The Ministration of the Spirit

THROUGHOUT the Acts the great work accomplished by means of the Holy Spirit is stressed. The first notable increase in the number of the Christian community was a direct result of the inspired preaching of Peter after Pentecost. God had always been at work in the created world, but never before had He given so much of His power to so many; and using that power to the full, much was accomplished. And when God saw that that stage of His plan was completed, the power was withdrawn.

V. THE MINISTRATION OF THE SPIRIT—NEW TESTAMENT

C. The Spirit After Pentecost

The coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost brought a drastic change in the lives of those who received it. In our study of the Spirit in the Old Testament we noted a similar result. The foreknowledge of Jacob, the dreams of Joseph, the courage of Gideon, the skill of David in battle, the ability of the prophets to prophesy were all the result of the power of the Spirit of God upon those individuals. And in the New Testament, the power of Jesus to do miracles and to prophesy, even to foretelling His own death; the courage of the apostles after Pentecost, and the miracles they were able to do were likewise attributed to this same Spirit, then known as the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit in the New Testament is the power behind all that is said and done by Jesus and the apostles. The New Testament concept is like that of the Old; it is God at work, it is a living experience, not just an abstract explanation. It is not a theory, but a power at work through individuals, men and women of God's own choosing. We will review more evidence of the Spirit at work after Pentecost.

2. Power in prayer. One cannot study the Book of Acts without realizing how truly great was the power possessed by the apostles after Pentecost.

The power was shown not only in miracles of healing, but also through answered prayer.

a. The Church prays. After being threatened by the council, Peter and John returned to the brethren and reported the incident. They had informed the men of the council that they must continue to speak, and with the brethren they prayed for the power to do so. "And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spake the word of God with boldness" (Acts 4:31). **It appears to have been a sort of second Pentecost, a renewal of the Holy Spirit power, an affirmation by God that He was behind the movement and that their prayers were heard.**

b. Cornelius' prayer heard. In Acts 10 we read of the prayers of a Gentile convert being heard. In connection with the same incident, Peter's prayers resulted in a vision that brought him an important message from God: God is no respecter of persons, it matters not whether Jew or Gentile; God judges men according to their works. **All visions are the work of the Spirit, a means of communicating important messages from God to man.**

c. The church prays for Peter. Peter was in prison, and "prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him" (Acts 12:5). God heard through His Spirit and answered their prayer. He sent His angel and released Peter and he returned to the assembled brethren while they were still praying. **The angel of God wrought the miracle of his release.**

3. Power in "tongues." When the Holy Spirit power came upon those assembled at Pentecost, we read that they "began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." With this event "speaking in tongues" became a part of the Apostolic Church; it was one of the gifts of the Spirit. By speaking in tongues we do not mean some unintelligible gibberish, but the ability to speak and to understand other languages or dialects. The miracle of tongues-speaking included both the speaker and the hearer (I Cor. 12:9-11).

The power of languages was necessary to the spreading of the Gospel throughout the then-known world, a task they had been commissioned to

perform. We note that Phillip was able to converse freely with the Ethiopian eunuch, to the end that he was converted to the new faith. Peter also experienced no difficulty in making his mission known to Cornelius who was of "the Italian band," a mission directed by the Spirit of God.

4. Power delegated to others. A study of the work of the Holy Spirit in the book of Acts indicates that not only did the original group of believers receive the Holy Spirit, but the apostles received the power to delegate that Power to another by the laying-on of hands.

It is also evident that the power of the Spirit was not automatically given to all who joined the church. There is nothing to indicate that the large numbers who were converted soon after Pentecost received the power of the Holy Spirit or performed any miracles. In his summation of the work of the early converts, Luke says: "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles" (Acts 2:42-43). **The "wonders and signs" were done by the apostles, not by all, indicating that only they had the power to do so.**

In Acts we read of the power of the Holy Spirit being transmitted to others by the laying-on of the apostles' hands. Philip had been preaching in the city of Samaria, and when the apostles at Jerusalem heard of his success, they sent Peter and John. After they prayed and "laid they their hands on them... they received the Holy Spirit" (Acts 8:5-17).

A similar instance is recorded in Acts 19 concerning the missionary efforts of Apollos. Paul arrived in Ephesus where Apollos had been preaching and learning that they knew nothing of the Holy Spirit, he instructed them and when he [Paul] had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them."

D. Paul and the Spirit

Paul's work as the greatest Christian missionary this world has ever known began with the miraculous appearance of Jesus. This experience of Saul on the Damascus Road is one of the best known events in the Bible. It marked a turning point, not only in the life of Saul, but also in history. The Christian religion was to gain a foothold in the world that, though growing apostate, would last in some form until the Founder of that faith would return to take charge of the whole world.

For Saul, it was the beginning of a new life with a new name, Paul. The life of Paul exemplified his

own words: "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new" (II Cor. 5:17). Of Paul it could be truly said "old things are passed away; ... all things are become new." For him it meant an entirely new beginning, a complete reversal of his course. It meant supporting the new faith with the same zeal with which he had previously persecuted those who followed Christ.

1. The gifts of the Spirit. We are indebted to Paul for a further explanation of the power of the Holy Spirit. While God's power is unlimited, the power bestowed upon various individuals at different times was limited.

Paul gave a clear and concise explanation of these gifts in his letter to the Corinthians: "There are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are varieties of service, but the same Lord. There are many forms of work, but all of them, in all men, are the work of the same God. In each of us the Spirit is manifested in one particular way, for some useful purpose. One man, through the Spirit, has the gift of wise speech, while another by the power of the same Spirit, can put the deepest knowledge into words. Another, by the same Spirit, is granted faith; another, by the one Spirit, gifts of healing, and another miraculous powers; another has the gift of prophecy, and another ability to distinguish true spirits from false; yet another has the gift of ecstatic utterances of different kinds, and another the ability to interpret it. But all these gifts are the work of one and the same Spirit, distributing them separately to each individual at will" (I Cor. 12:4-11, NEB).

All power to do the abnormal or super-normal came from God, but not to all alike. Whatever power was necessary in a given situation was granted, whether the need was for a means of escape from an enemy or the courage to stand before heathen rulers. We will study Paul's use of some of these powers granted him.

a. The ability to speak and to write. Paul was abundantly blessed with both these gifts. His letters to the various churches contain some of the most comprehensive teaching of the Scriptures. When he defended himself before magistrates or kings, he was never at a loss for words.

Paul's teachings never contradicted the teachings of Jesus and the other apostles. He let it be known from whence he received his authority: "The things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord"; "I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ" (I Cor. 14:37; Gal. 1:11-12). **It was through**

the power of the Holy Spirit that Paul was able to receive instruction from Jesus.

b. Miraculous powers. Paul is better known as a missionary and a writer, but he also worked miracles through the power of the Holy Spirit. Early in his career, when confronted by the wicked Elymas, he rebuked him sternly and caused him to become blind. At Lystra he healed a man who had been crippled from birth and at Troas he restored to life a man who had fallen to his death while listening to him preach. **These miracles, and all others done by Paul, were through the power of the Holy Spirit, the power of God.**

c. The Spirit at work. A study of the Acts reveals that the Spirit of God was the power behind the entire missionary effort. When Paul set out on his first missionary journey, it is recorded that they were "sent forth by the Holy Spirit" (Acts 13:4). His second journey also was influenced by the power of the Spirit, this time in a vision commonly known as the "Macedonian Call," which resulted in the Gospel being carried into Greece.

Through the same power of the Spirit, Paul was told where he should not go as much as where he should go. In the course of his second missionary journey they "were forbidden of the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia," and again, when they tried to go to Bithynia, "the Spirit suffered them not" (Acts 16:6-7).

While at Corinth (Acts 18:9-10), the Lord spoke "to Paul in the night by a vision," saying, "be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city." Heeding the instructions, Paul taught there a year and a half. Again, on his way to Jerusalem, Paul testified that the Holy Spirit had informed him that hardships and imprisonment awaited him in every city (Acts 20:23-24). And on board the doomed ship on a boisterous sea, God saw fit to send His angel to Paul with a cheering message: The ship would be lost, but there would be no loss of life; Paul would be brought before Caesar.

All these instances were the work of the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit. God Himself, through His Spirit, was directing the missionary work of the Great Apostle and his companions.

2. The gifts to cease. The gifts of the Spirit played a major role in fulfilling the command of the Lord in Mark 16:15: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." The signs and wonders that followed were the work of the Holy Spirit and gave convincing evidence that God was behind the movement. As explained by Paul in a long dissertation in I Corinthians, the gifts were many but they were not possessed by

all. And in due time, all were to end: "Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge [super-human knowledge], it shall vanish away" (13:8-9).

The Living Bible translation states it more clearly: "All the special gifts and powers from God will some day come to an end, but love goes on forever. Someday prophecy, and speaking in unknown language, and special knowledge—these gifts will disappear."

Paul, through the gift of prophecy given him by the power of God's Spirit, was foretelling that the Holy Spirit power would be withdrawn and miraculous powers would cease. They would no longer be able to speak in an unknown tongue; they would no longer be able to heal the sick or raise the dead. Such miracles would not be done again on earth until the power was restored. **History confirms the fulfillment of Paul's prophecy; there is no evidence of any supernatural knowledge or of any miracles such as those done by Jesus and the apostles since the Bible was completed, at the end of that age. This was in accord with Jesus' own words; He had promised to be with them "unto the end of the world," as translated in the King James Version. The Greek word *aion* is here translated "world," but the meaning is "age," and it is so translated in most newer versions of the Bible.**

VI. THE SPIRIT IN OUR DAY

Most major denominations today claim the power of the Holy Spirit. To the majority the Holy Spirit is "He," the third person of the Trinity, God in the person of the Spirit, a "spirit being" that enters into and guides all Christian believers. But believing the words of Paul, that the power was to cease (I Cor. 13:8), and observing the dearth of spirituality and miracles in our modern world, we take the position that it did end and there have been no miracles, visions, tongues or prophets since the end of the Apostolic Age.

The Holy Spirit, as understood by the average church member, cannot be found in the Scriptures. That is the Holy Spirit of theology, not the Holy Spirit of the Bible. The idea of an inward witness that assures the believer that he is in possession of the truth and that he has entered into fellowship with Christ, is wanting in the Scriptures. The Holy Spirit of the Scriptures was a wonder-working power that bore witness to the Gospel in the New Testament just as the Spirit of the Old Testament bore witness to God by angelic visits, subduing of enemies and other miraculous works.

A. The More Excellent Way

In his long dissertation on the gifts of the Spirit, Paul made the brief statement, "And now I show you a more excellent way" (I Cor. 12:31). These few words, rendered in the **New English Bible** as "the best way of all," point out the way for us today. Continuing in his discourse, Paul explained that the gifts of the Spirit would end: "Are there prophets? their work will be over. Are there tongues of ecstasy? they will cease. Is there knowledge? it will vanish away; for our knowledge and our prophecy alike are partial, and the partial vanishes when wholeness comes. . . . **there are three things that last for ever: faith, hope, and love; but the greatest of them all is love**" (I Cor. 13:8-10, 13, NEB).

At that time they had the power to do miracles, to prophesy, to speak in tongues; they had super-human knowledge when it was required, yet it was not the complete knowledge of God. But it was to end, to "vanish away," when "wholeness comes," or as rendered in our Common Version, "when that which is perfect is come." That which is perfect or whole is the Holy Bible. When the Bible was completed, when John had completed his record of the vision he received from Jesus, and the Bible was complete, it was the end of the Apostolic Age. Since that time there has been no Holy Spirit power as the apostles knew it.

But we have no need of it—we have the written Word. We have the "more excellent way," the way of faith, for "we walk by faith, not by sight" (II Cor. 5:7). The more excellent way that was to abide was as stated above: "Faith, hope, and love; but the greatest of them all is love." Love is the greatest because "love is the fulfilling of the law" (Rom. 13:10). And according to John, who was also an apostle, "the love of God" is "that we keep his commandments," or again, "This is love, that we walk after his commandments" (II John 6).

The "more excellent way" is that we learn His commandments from the Bible, His Word which He has given us, and that we keep, or obey those commandments, and "grow up into him in all things, . . . 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" (Eph. 4:15, 13).

B. God at Work Today

God has been working on this earth for nearly six thousand years. For some four thousand of those years, God worked openly among men. He sent His angels with special messages; He caused men to see visions and to prophesy of things to come; He sent His Son to be a living example among

men. When the Son had finished His work and joined His Father in heaven, He sent back His Spirit upon those who would continue His work in that Age.

But now for nearly two thousand years God has been silent. Since the power of the Holy Spirit was withdrawn at the close of the Apostolic Age, He has not spoken to men on earth except through His Word, the Holy Bible. But because He is silent in our day does not mean that He has cut Himself off from the world. He is still at work, but His work is now done silently, by less spectacular means than angels, visions, tongues or miracles. Our time is comparable to the time when Samuel was a child: "The word of the Lord was precious in those days; there was no open vision" (I Sam. 3:1). We walk by faith alone, faith based on His Word; there are no miracles to confirm the Word.

We will discuss means by which God works today:

1. His care for His own. Through the Psalmist, God promised that His angel would encamp about them that fear him (Ps. 34:7), and His mercy is unto those who remember His commandments and do them (Ps. 103:18). The promise was renewed in the New Testament in the letter to the Hebrews: "Are they [the angels] not . . . sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" (1:14).

2. His arrangement of world affairs. Through the prophet Daniel God informed us that from that time on there would be but four universal kingdoms, followed by the fifth, Christ's Kingdom. The prophecy of the four has been fulfilled. World rulers have risen from time to time and aspired to dominate the whole earth, but God has not allowed it. Those who would usurp too much power have been cut off before they could attain their desired end. And we are confident that in our time there will not arise a world ruler from among men that will rule the whole earth. It is not in God's plan. Nor will He allow any man or nation to trigger an atomic or hydrogen bomb that would destroy mankind and the earth. It is part of His long-range plan that there should be men and women living on the earth to meet Christ at His return, and we are sure that He will protect His people until the fulfillment of His plan. Peter was inspired to write that "the Lord is not slack concerning his promise, . . . but is longsuffering, . . . not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Pet. 3:9).

*Reprints of these studies are available
upon request.*



"Cockatoo! . . . Pretty Cocky!"

Be Not As the Cockatoo

WHEN Jesus lived in Palestine, He pointed out to His followers many lessons from the common scenes of everyday. He drew illustrations from nature and from various objects which the people understood. If He had been living in Australia, He might well have said at some time to His disciples, *Be not as the cockatoo.*

Cockatoos are birds confined chiefly to Australia, but are popular at aviaries. They attract attention by their grotesque movements, by their exceeding love of approbation, and their repeated mention of their own name. Wherever two or three of these birds are found in the same apartments, however silent they may be when left alone, the presence of a visitor excites them to immediate conversation. They erect their crest, ruffle their plumage, and the air resounds with "Cockatoo!" "Pretty Cocky!" in all directions, diversified with on occasional yell if the utterer is not noticed immediately.

In their love of approbation these birds demonstrate a trait that is very human. The cockatoos are excused for their showy demonstrations. But humans—we who have minds and wills and know God—ought to worship *Him*. The approbation of God should be fairer to us than the praise of ten thousand men. Indeed, we should desire praise from none other than God. When we count God's approval our only gain, we will have characters that are genuine, pure, noble and holy.

How petty to seek the praise of men. We are merely as the birds who call, "Cockatoo!" "Pretty Cocky!"

Jesus was deeply concerned about this deep-

seated human weakness. It was repugnant to Him. So much of the so-called righteousness of His day was done to be seen of men. Jesus warned His disciples against all such display: "Take care! Don't do your good deeds . . . to be admired. . . . Don't sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do" (Matt. 6:1—3, *Living Bible*). Jesus was teaching them that those who inherit the Kingdom will not be courting attention from their fellowmen.

It may be amusing to see the cockatoo solicit attention, but what of us humans? Too easily we may do it, and in too many ways. Close inspection of ourselves is always good. Our apparel may be modest, but is our deportment modest too? When we give to another, is our whole desire to help or do we secretly wish to display our generosity and hear sweet words of gratitude and praise from someone?

Is our daily work done for God, or do we keep in mind our own prestige?

Of course, when we speak, we speak for others to hear, but do we speak for God and to His glory?

Do we use our powers to draw others to God—or to ourselves?

Are we always ready to tell what God has done and will do, or do we glory in what *we* do and how *we* do it?

How easy it is to be like the cockatoo, to erect our crest, ruffle our plumage and make the air resound with "Cockatoo!" "Pretty Cocky!"

When the cockatoo is not noticed as quickly as it wants to be, "it lets out a yell." And humans—are they not very like that? They do not utter a yell. Of course not. But often when they do not receive

the publicity that they expect, they become sadly disgruntled and life loses its zest for them. Their actions emit a strident yell!

Oh! may our love for God grow so strong that the greatest zest of our life may be found in those things which only God knows and sees. May our chief joy be those moments when we gain a victory over our lower nature, those moments when our souls are gathered in—not to ourselves but to God—and the door is closed against all distractions. Yes, “be *not* as the cockatoo.”

Birds are excused for their characteristics. Certainly. But we who worship God are accountable. If we do anything to be seen of men, or of women, we must take the consequences. Jesus said plainly, “. . . ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.” Of those hypocrites who sound a trumpet before them that they may have glory of men, He said, “Verily they have their reward.” One commentator says these words are better translated, “They have received ‘payment in full.’” The Greek word used here is the same word used in technical business on receipted accounts which are “paid in full.” Jesus is saying that those hypocrites who seek and receive the fair speeches of men have a certain reward—the admiration of men. They get what they want. But that is all they will ever get. And how empty! They cut off all possibility of future reward. To them, life is like a blind alley, a dead-end street. There is no joy ahead. Their joy is turned sour.

Let us remember these unhappy consequences.

There is a story which illustrates the same lesson (though it assumes that a man's soul goes to heaven at death—a teaching contrary to Biblical thought). A little old lady was touring heaven one day when she noticed bundles around here and there. “What are these?” she asked. And the angel in charge said, “They are the material which the faithful have sent on ahead to be used in their future homes.” The little lady had been very active in her church, and had done much good work in her day, so she asked eagerly to see her own bundle. The supervisor looked at her and said, “We are sorry, lady, but none of your material has been forwarded.” The disappointed little lady had done so much, but her work had not been done in single-hearted devotion to God. Therefore her deeds had not been accepted in heaven.

How sad it will be in that Day of Reckoning if our service has not been singlehearted. The rewards of self-denying virtue are great. Jesus reminded His disciples, “Your Father which sees what happens in secret will give you your reward in full.” In this present life we enjoy the satisfaction of having God's approval, together with the

peace and happiness of a good conscience. But this is not all. Our ultimate reward will be at the day of judgment when the secrets of all hearts are disclosed.

Let us look at the cockatoos once again. They are alone and silent. Visitors approach, and the birds immediately are excited to a conversation. They erect their crest, ruffle their plumage, and the air resounds with “Cockatoo!” “Pretty Cocky!” An occasional yell is heard from one because it is not soon noticed.

May this ridiculous picture of the cockatoo so impress us that we will always seek our honor from God *only*. Then when we stand in that coming august assembly, when the hearts of men are judged, we will not be among those who have been “paid in full” by the admiration of men. Rather, may we be among that happy faithful throng who have a crown of righteousness awaiting them—even *life forevermore!* ●●

From A Reader

“God Bless You”

It is a phrase widely used—“God bless you.” So many people seem to use it. It covers many events, including sneezing. But there's one thing it is not—it is not a replacement for good, honest charity.

The Epistle of James reminds us that it's no use saying, “God bless you” to someone who is without food and adequate clothing. Good words are no substitute for Christian action.

To ask God to bless someone is not another way of wishing them well, either. Spoken sincerely, we are wanting a person to enjoy spiritual health, to know divine guidance, and to experience the benefits which come from a righteous life now and future.

It is true that “blessings abound where'er Christ reigns”; and only those who allow God to rule their entire lives now will ever know the blessings that follow. The prophet Malachi, who told the Israelites they were robbing God by not giving Him what they knew belonged to Him, also informed them that if they responded wholeheartedly to His law, they would receive such abundant blessing that they would not be able to contain it. The same principle applies in our day, for “it is more blessed to give than to receive.”

Mrs. M. L., New Brunswick, Canada

An Alphabet to Live By



ACT like a Christian.

BE cheerful.

CARE about what God thinks of you.

DO good to everyone.

ENJOY the beautiful things God gave us.

FORGIVE others.

GIVE thanks for everything.

HELP others whenever you can.

IMPROVE your character.

JUST keep trying.

KEEP your tongue from saying bad things.

LEARN to be polite.

MAKE sure you have good habits.

NEVER be proud.

OBEY your parents.

PRAY every day.

QUIT being foolish.

READ God's Word.

SING praises to God.

TELL the truth.

USE your time well.

VALUE your friends.

WILLINGLY help others.

XCEL in doing good.

YIELD not to temptation.

ZEAL-OUSLY do right.

Not Too Little

I'm always "too little," they say, when I ask,
"Please may I help?" with some big task!
Why, I could pound nails on the head . . . I think,
Or wash the dishes or scour the sink.

But Mother just says, "Oh, wait, my dear,
You're too little now, perhaps—next year."
And then I sit down in a corner? Oh, No!
That's never a way for a boy to grow.

But run along to sing and play,
And go on small errands 'most every day.
I'm not as big as a house—that's true,
But there's a lot of things that I can do!

And I'm not "too little" to learn the good;
To do the many things I should.
I'm not "too little" to do my part—
Mother says this makes the very best start.

And I'm not "too little" to shine abroad.
This bright little Light I have from God.
Know what? I'm going to shine all I can,
As slowly I'm growing up—into a man.

God's Supremacy

(Continued from page 6)

(Rom. 9:17-18). God used Pharaoh as a tool to bring about a desired end, that His "name might be declared throughout all the earth." God's use of Pharaoh was the same as the use He made of Cyrus the Persian, as aforementioned (Isa. 45:1).

Here again Paul's use of this illustration might raise the question of God's supremacy as opposed to man's responsibility. But to Paul, the matter was not a philosophical question as St. Augustine and Calvin thought it to be; we must remember that Paul was dealing with a religious issue, namely, the right of God to accept Gentiles into His service on an equal basis with the Jews. And Paul's point of departure was the omnipotence of God to choose good material wherever He might find it. Once chosen, it was up to the individual himself either by merit or demerit to determine his own destiny.

We should remember also that the Hebrew mind had little interest in secondary causes. Every event was traced directly to God as the final Cause. If something happened, God was responsible. "This took place" and "God did this" were two ways of saying the same thing. An example of this is the passage under discussion (Rom. 9:17-18).

Who Hardened Pharaoh's Heart?

A survey made by the editors of the *Interpreter's Bible* seems to throw considerable light on God's manner of working. We quote:

"The hardening of Pharaoh's heart is described in three ways: 'The Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh' (Ex. 7:13; 9:12); 'the heart of Pharaoh was hardened' (Ex. 7:22; 9:7); and 'Pharaoh hardened his heart' (Ex. 8:15, 32). The meaning must be the same in every case. . . .

"On this point of human responsibility the views of the Pharisees were clearly defined. The classic expression of their attitude comes to us through Josephus: 'All things are governed by Fate, yet they (the Pharisees) do not take away from men the freedom of acting as they think fit. For they think that it has pleased God to mix up the decrees of Fate and man's will so man can act virtuously or viciously.' This simply affirms two facts: God's supremacy and man's responsibility, leaving undecided the philosophical question of their relation; and no one who is more concerned to live his faith than to reflect upon it has ever found the two views incompatible. The man of deep religious insight is persuaded that God's supremacy is unchallenged and that his own moral responsibility is unquestioned."

Seven times we are told that the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart; three times that he hardened his own heart; once that it was God's leniency that prompted him to harden his heart. Exodus 8:15 lists this once-mentioned instance: "But when Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart, and hearkened not unto them, as the Lord had said." Another text specifically states that Pharaoh hardened his own heart; it is the words of the Philistine lords: "Wherefore then do ye harden your hearts, as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? when he had wrought wonderfully among them" (I Sam. 6:6).

Paul is making an example of Pharaoh to show the marvelous workings of the Almighty in using His own materials in any way He sees fit, once that material has shown no interest in cooperating voluntarily in His eternal plan and purpose. Thus God can either choose or reject Jew or Gentile; He is no respecter of nationality. But God's use of such a man as Pharaoh in no way militates against His principle of placing before the life-seekers a choice between serving Him or not serving Him. The use of Pharaoh was only to fill a temporary need; the life-seeker's choice concerns his eternal destiny.

No wonder that the apostle Paul exclaimed: "How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out." It is beyond our finite capability to fathom the workings of divinity; we cannot know the motives and purposes behind God's acts. However, it is our responsibility to use with a high sense of obligation the advantages He has given us. Though we cannot explain His sovereignty, we can be scrupulous in our stewardship.

The Potter and the Clay

Then says Paul to his Jewish critics: Perhaps you will say, "Why doth he yet find fault? For who can resist his will?" (v. 19). How can God find fault when one disobeys if He Himself has predestined that one to disobedience? Who can resist His will?

Paul replies in a similar manner to a similar question in Romans 3:5-6: "Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance?" He does not so much answer the question as to deny its propriety. "How can you, a man, presume to question the morality of an action of God?" And then he proceeds to use the analogy of the potter and the clay.

The potter has complete control over the clay. Of the same lump he can make two vessels, one for "honorable service," another for "menial service." "However, O man, who are you to question God? Shall the thing formed say to him who formed

it, Why have you made me like this? Does not the potter have power over his clay to make out of the same lump vessels, one for special occasions and the other for daily service?" (vs. 20-21, Lamsa). It is Israel, "marred in the hand of the potter" by its own persistent wickedness, that is in view, and what God claims is His right to make of it "another vessel," that is, to use it for another purpose than that originally intended. When Paul speaks of "vessels of wrath fitted for destruction" (v. 22), he means just what Jeremiah means (Jer. 18:1-10). God has the right to "pluck up," "pull down" and "destroy" a nation, according to its just deserts; or if that nation changes its ways, to "build and to plant it." It is a case of God's supremacy *versus* man's responsibility. God Himself "afore prepared unto glory" the "vessels of his mercy." If those which were originally intended to be vessels of His mercy are now fit only for destruction, they have but themselves to blame. Meanwhile Paul would have us observe the longsuffering with which God has borne with them—and us.

The illustration of the potter and the clay is even clearer in its original context in Jeremiah. Let us read a few verses (Jeremiah 18): "O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel. At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, . . . to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; if that nation, . . . turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation . . . to build and to plant it; if it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them." The entire responsibility lay with the people themselves; God would reward or punish according to their deeds.

Gentiles Equal With Jews

In Romans 9:23-24, Paul repeats his argument that Gentiles as well as Jews are to be accepted into the Christian way: "But he poured his mercy upon the favored vessels, which were prepared for the glory of God; namely, ourselves, the called ones, not of the Jews only but also of the Gentiles" (Lamsa Translation). God reserved the right to call into His service any who would prove themselves suitable, workable material, irrespective of nationality or of their past life. And Paul reinforces his original point: Not only do some "who are descended from Israel" *not* "belong to Israel," but also some who are *not* descendants *do* belong.

Then again God's freedom of choice, as well as the human factors affecting that choice, are spelled

"The man of deep religious insight is persuaded that God's supremacy is unchallenged and his own moral responsibility unquestioned."

out: Paul quotes from the prophet Hosea (vs. 25-26): "As he said also in Hosea, I will call them my people, who were not my own people; and her beloved who was not beloved. And it shall come to pass that in the place where it was said you are not my people, there shall they be called the children of the living God" (Lamsa Translation). We are free moral agents, and our status with God *can* be changed. Once beloved is no guarantee that we will always remain beloved; or once in disfavor does not foreordain us to perpetual disfavor.

In verse 27, the Apostle continues with his thesis that being a Jew, racially, does not assure one's acceptance, and at the same time he builds a case against the belief in universal salvation. "Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved." The newer versions add the word *only*. "Though the number of the children of Israel should be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant shall be saved." Only "the leftovers shall be saved," as it is worded in another of the newer versions. Jesus' declaration in Matthew 7:14 agrees perfectly: "Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

And what is the mark of the remnant that shall be saved? It is their faithfulness to the requirements which other Israelites, trusting in their exclusive privileges, ignored; it is their devotion to what Jesus called the "weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith" (Matt. 23:23). Election not only *can* be forfeited—a majority of Paul's kinsmen *have* forfeited it. And to Paul, the actual position of the Jews was merely a crowning instance of a moral law whose operation the prophets had described: "A remnant shall be saved."

God's supremacy does not abrogate man's responsibility. We still can choose to serve Him or not serve Him. And in the Day of Final Account our acceptance or rejection will be according to what we ourselves have done, or failed to do, and not because we were predestined either to success or failure. ●●

On Humility

Humility is the first lesson we learn from reflection, and self-distrust the first proof we give of having obtained a knowledge of ourselves.

—Zimmerman

Lowliness is the base of every virtue,
And he who goes the lowest builds the safest.

—Philip J. Bailey

They that know God will be humble; they that know themselves cannot be proud.

—John Flavel

It is easy to look down on others; to look down on ourselves is the real difficulty.

THE INDISPENSABLE MAN

Sometime when you're feeling important,
Sometime when your ego's in bloom,
Sometime when you take it for granted
You're the best qualified in the room,

Sometime when you feel that your going
Would leave an unfillable hole,
Just follow these simple instructions
And see how they humble your soul.

Take a bucket and fill it with water,
Put your hand in it up to your wrist,
Pull it out and the hole that's remaining
Is a measure of how you'll be missed.

You can splash all you wish when you enter,
You may stir up the water galore,
But stop, and you'll find that in no time
It looks quite the same as before.

The moral in this quaint example
Is do just the best that you can.
Be proud of yourself, but remember—
There's no indispensable man.

—Author Unknown

Humility is often a feigned submission which we employ to supplant others. It is one of the devices of pride to lower us to raise [us]; and truly pride transforms itself in a thousand ways, and is never so well disguised and more able to deceive than when it hides itself under the form of humility.

—La Rochefoucauld

It is the laden bough that hangs low, and the most fruitful Christian who is the most humble.

—Anonymous

*He that is down, needs fear no fall;
He that is low, no pride;
He that is humble ever shall
Have God to be his guide.*

The fullest and best ears of corn hang lowest toward the ground.

—Bp. Reynolds

Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.

—Jas. 4:10

When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?

—Ps. 8:3-4

Before honour is humility.

—Prov. 15:33

Jesus and His humble apostles set us an example of humility which we must follow if we ever hope to be accepted in the glorious Day of His coming.

—Rev. Maud Hembree

And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.

—Matt. 20:27

No man is wise who is not good,
No man is wise who is not humble.

Humility is the most difficult of all virtues to achieve; nothing dies harder than the desire to think well of oneself.

—Shakespeare

Meditations On the Word

(Continued from page 27)

nor should it be weak. It must be followed by actions that demonstrate we mean it. We are interested in having our brother restored to spiritual health; we rebuke him; he repents, and we forgive. Then we must assist in various ways to bring him back into the way of holiness and truth.

Our duty with our fallen brother does not end with our rebuking him and revealing the error to him. It does not end with forgiveness, for further exhortations may be necessary; and always there is the supreme importance of our example. Nothing is more convincing to others of the seriousness of our endeavors than a good example, a life that is in reality what it should be. The words we utter may be truthful, but if our own behavior is wrong the hearer is not likely to take it to heart.



Grasp Your Opportunities

When Jehovah decreed that a deluge should destroy that old world long ago, then to Noah He gave a commission to build a boat and preach the word to let men know. Did Noah refuse that assignment because he had never built boats? No! He got on with his work and preached more and more as he worked. So should we grasp every opportunity. Just a few well-chosen words are enough to let others know that we have been with Jesus, that we have learned of Him. The time is now.

Crewe, Cheshire, England

N. T.

A Blessing

We are indeed blessed with the special privilege of having the *Megiddo Message* come into our home each month. There is great need for more and more spiritual knowledge. The things of this world have never seemed less secure than at the present time.

All the unrest and upheaval should move us to action, to redeem the time and think on things which are true, honest, just, pure, lovely and of good report, ever striving to attain new heights each day.

There are many goals in secular life which men strive to attain; but we are striving for the prize of our higher calling. Let us always keep our eyes on the goal just ahead.

Charleston, Mississippi

R. M. S.

February, 1974

As has been said, "How can I hear what you say, when what you are keeps thundering in my ears?" The words of the wise are as nails (Eccl. 12:11), but their examples are the hammers that drive their words in to take a deeper hold. The father that whipped his boy for swearing and swore while he whipped him, did more harm by the bad example than good by the correction.

We must always consider ourselves. We are liable to err, being human, and then we shall need others to assist us. We, too, will wish to be treated "in the spirit of meekness," to receive our brother's forgiveness, and see his virtuous example, that is so necessary to a healthy, growing faith.

"Let us go in scenes of sorrow, undismayed,
Trouble's hand on us tomorrow may be laid,
Let us help while now we can,
Ev'ry burden to relieve;
As we bless our fellow man
So a blessing we'll receive."

Strength in Solitude

We many times appreciate solitude. And many times it is necessary. Christ Himself found it necessary to fortify Himself for His earthly ministry with solitude.

Solitude can many times bring man to God. Even a few minutes in the morning beholding the beauty and wonders of God's creation can give strength for the day. Many times the beauty of a sunrise or a sunset awakens us to think that there is something greater and more important than the possession of earthly treasures.

We must also remember that a Day is coming when every man will stand alone before God. We need to get ready for that Day now.

Medicine Hat, Alberta, Canada

J. G.

Alive!

Keep on praising the Lord in your *Megiddo Message*. You make Psalm 119:105 come alive for me every day. "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

I go singing along my way.

Valley Station, Kentucky

J. E. J.

Deceased

I must write and tell you about Grandma Minnie Jones. She passed away on December 5 (aged 94 years). She suffered a stroke the last week of October, which left her throat paralyzed. It was hard to see her lay a month with nothing anyone could do for her, especially knowing of her love and devotion to the Lord. Her sons were so wonderful, also her whole family. They had nurses around the clock, but she finally went into a coma. It was my privilege to have spent the best seven years of my life with such a devoted one; she so wanted to live until Elijah comes, and I surely wanted her to. The world is in such a sad state; it surely won't be much longer.

Eugene, Oregon

R. Gallivan

NOTE: Sister Jones has been an earnest reader, correspondent, subscriber and active representative of the *Megiddo Church* in her locality for over fifty years. —EDITOR.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

"I must ask you a question: Is all tradition wrong? Do not all nationalities have their particular traditions which make them unique? Did not the Jewish people have traditions?"

You are correct in assuming that all nationalities have their particular traditions which make them unique, which distinguish them from other nationalities. The Jewish people have many such traditions, which make them singular as an ethnic group. And where the issue is merely one of social or cultural consequence, the "right" or "wrong" of that tradition is relative to the standard of the person who is judging the tradition.

But when a tradition is compared with the Word of God, it may or may not be justifiable.

Tradition, generally speaking, is information, beliefs, or customs handed down from generation to generation by word of mouth rather than by written instruction. Usually a tradition has its source in a social attitude or institution, rather than in a precept from God; thus, tradition is not accepted as authority. Many people, particularly those of Roman Catholic persuasion, place tradition on a level with Scripture, but the Bible gives us no authority to do this; for Scripture is the Word of God; tradition is the custom of men.

We find in the Gospels that Jesus denounced the scribes and Pharisees for the traditions to which they held. In Matthew 15 the Pharisees chided Jesus because the "disciples transgressed the tradition of the elders." Jesus answered them, "Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?... Ye have made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition." Because of this, Jesus called them hypocrites, honoring God with their mouth while their heart was far from Him, "teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (vs. 2-9). And again in Mark 7, He likewise accuses them, saying, "For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men.... ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition."

The Jewish people of Jesus' day were holding to a volume of traditions which they had added to the law of Moses, and Jesus was telling them plainly that their traditions were not of God.

Much religion today follows the same pattern, though to a lesser extent, in holding to beliefs and customs not prescribed by the law of God.

How can we judge tradition "right" or "wrong"? Only by comparing it with the Word of God.

"You quote Romans 10:4 to prove that the law of Moses ended, but I am confused. Why should Paul have said that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness?"

Romans 10:4 reads in our Common Version, "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." The statement is the conclusion of the thought which begins the chapter: the only acceptable righteousness is that which is God-decreed; righteousness according to human standards does not save.

The text is clearer in several of the newer versions. Let us read from the NEB, beginning with verse 1: "Brothers, my deepest desire and my prayer to God is for their salvation. To their zeal [the zeal of the Jewish people] for God I can testify; but it is an ill-informed zeal. For they ignore God's way of righteousness, and try to set up their own, and therefore they have not submitted themselves to God's righteousness. For Christ ends the law and brings righteousness for everyone who has faith." A footnote on this last verse (v. 4) reads, "Or, Christ is the end of the law as a way to righteousness for everyone who has faith." Phillips' *New Testament in Modern English* also clarifies the translation of this text: "For Christ means the end of the struggle for righteousness-by-the-Law for everyone who believes in him."

Paul is contrasting two standards of righteousness—righteousness by the law of Moses and God's righteousness, or righteousness by the faith of Christ. And there is a vast difference. Righteousness by the law of Moses does not avail to salvation, for that law could not take away sin (see Heb. 9:9; 10:1-2, 4, 11). The Jews, in their strivings to keep their own law, the law of Moses (to which they had added a multitude of interpretations), were failing to attain to the righteousness of God because they were holding to a standard they themselves had set up. While the Gentiles, whom the Jews looked down upon because of their ignorance of the law, were becoming truly righteous because they had accepted Christ and His faith and teachings for their lives.

Christ had brought the law of Moses to an end, and only righteousness by God's standards remained to justify men.

"When referring to the nation of Judah (the southern tribes), why does no one include the tribe of Simeon? They only include the two tribes, Judah and Benjamin (also some Levites)."

The statistics in Numbers 1:22, where the Simeonites are given as 59,300, compared with the second census (Num. 26:14), where the number is 22,000, indicates a diminishing tribe.

There are a number of occasions where the Simeonites showed a bad character, and it may be that God withheld some of His blessings from them; for example, the massacre of the Shechemites (Genesis 34); and the case of Zimri, a member of a leading family of the tribe of Simeon, who was slain by Phinehas in the affair of Baal-Peor (Num. 25:14).

In Judges 1:3, Judah invites Simeon to unite with them in attacking the Canaanites.

By the allotment given to Simeon in Joshua 19:1, the lot includes towns previously taken by Judah (Joshua 15:31-32), and no borders are mentioned. In Joshua 19:9, we read: "Out of the portion of the children of Judah was the inheritance of the children of Simeon: . . . the children of Simeon had their inheritance within the inheritance of them." Jacob's prophetic words concerning Simeon and Levi were literally fulfilled: "I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel" (Gen. 49:7).

The tribe of Simeon lost its identity when Israel divided into two kingdoms. The southern kingdom included Benjamin and Judah, into which Simeon had been merged.

"Why is Dan not mentioned among the one hundred forty-four thousand in the book of Revelation (chapter 7)?"

The various listings of the tribes throughout the Bible do not seem to follow any definite order—in the Old Testament there are at least fifteen arrangements, and the one in Revelation 7 does not agree with any one of them.

Why is Dan omitted in the listing in Revelation? One commentator suggests that the omission may have been a copyist's error, in that "Dan" may have been replaced by "Man," for Manasseh (the tribe of Manasseh would not have needed inclusion, being part of Joseph). Another Bible student suggests that the omission may have been intentional, due to the Jewish tradition which regarded Dan as a sinful tribe and followers of pagan customs of idolatry (see Judges 18:30).

"I have heard Ephesians 4:26 used to defend anger that flares up quickly and dies quickly. Some say anger is all right if you do not keep that feeling too long. What do you think?"

The Bible is plain in its condemnation of anger.

February, 1974

"Anger resteth in the bosom of fools"; "Cease from anger and forsake wrath"; "But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice . . ." (Eccl. 7:9; Ps. 37:8; Col. 3:8). And the Sacred writers seem to make no distinction as to the length of time that one may be stirred by anger. Any feeling not controlled by the directives of divine law is forbidden, whether its duration be long or short, and whether it be smoldering or explosive in nature.

Ephesians 4:26 is sometimes used to justify an impetuous anger because of the way it reads in our Common Version: "Be ye angry and sin not; let not the sun go down upon your wrath." The first phrase is sometimes taken as a literal (though contradictory) statement: "Be angry but do not sin." And this thought is sometimes combined with the remainder of the verse to give the impression that anger is not sinful if the day does not end with the individual still stirred by feelings of anger. Those who hold to this view distinguish between "anger" which they understand as "provocation, exasperation, sudden and violent," and "wrath" which is a lasting mood.

But such thinking is not consistent with the remainder of Bible teaching, hence cannot be accepted as the true meaning of the words of Paul. As if to avoid any misunderstanding of his words, Paul repeats himself in verse 31, using words beyond question: "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking be put away from you with all malice." Note that it is "*all*" bitterness and wrath and anger that must be put away. This leaves no place for anger—either explosive or long-lasting.

Actually, the first phrase of Ephesians 4:26, "Be ye angry and sin not," is borrowed directly from the Septuagint translation of Psalm 4:4, where it is rendered in our Common Version, "Stand in awe, and sin not." Some Bible scholars prefer the rendering, "Tremble [before God] and you will not fall into sin."

No, anger cannot be justified; and Paul is saying that we must expel it from our hearts and lives before our day of opportunity terminates.

"Please explain the passage, '...until the Son of man be risen again from the dead' from Matthew 17:9. The word 'again' is my stumbling block. Was Jesus raised from the dead previous to His crucifixion?"

Apparently the word "again" in Matthew 17:9 is in error. The companion narrative in Mark 9:9 omits the word "again." Many of the newer versions also omit it (see NEB, American, RSV, Weymouth, Moffatt, and others). ●●



Meditations

On the Word

IT is so easy for us to be mistaken in summarizing our judgment against a brother. The assumed offender may be altogether innocent, and his supposed offense may be the ugly figment of our own imagination.

What monsters we appear when seen through a distorting lens! Therefore, the primary rule of guidance in all presumed offenses is for a man to examine his lens. Is the lens a perverting medium? Am I looking through a magnifying glass and therefore magnifying trifles? Is the whole matter an exaggeration? Is the real fault in my own eye? Let us not leap at conclusions concerning our brother but be sure whether he has sinned.

But assuming there is no distorting lens corrupting our judgment, and the offense is obviously plain, both to ourselves and at least to one or two other witnesses, then what should be our course? The answer is: Rebuke him. "Restore such a one in the spirit of meekness." This, however, is not as simple as it may appear. It is an exercise which requires extreme care and thoughtfulness.

For the majority of people, rebukes generally are accompanied by a burst of anger and much irritation to both parties. Such rebukes are intended only to satisfy the offended. But a Christian rebuke must not be a vent for passion; it must be for the purpose of rectifying the offender. It is to be used, not for the relief of our wound but for the healing of his. The wound of the offended is clean and time will surely heal it, but the wound of the offender is unclean and it may easily fester into something much worse. The purpose of a rebuke must always be to help our brother recover his spiritual health and not to gratify our temper.

A man's finest asset is his integrity, and the best

"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted"

—Galatians 6:1.

contribution he can make to his community is an unblemished character. It is ever a temptation to esteem the wealthy more than the poor; to exalt the showy and dazzling more than the acquired good. We are often fas-

cinated by genius and talent and noble accomplishments. Services rendered toward the furtherance of the Gospel and the improvement of society may be worthy and deserving of much credit, yet all these do not constitute the sterling wealth of a Christian's life. It is character, holy and undefiled, that exceeds all else.

Now if a man has lapsed from moral and spiritual health, if he be "overtaken in a fault," it is the duty of his brother, who is spiritual, to correct him. Regardless of his station, ability or the services he performs, if he breaks a commandment it will bar his entrance to the Kingdom of God. An error cannot go uncorrected even in one of high rank.

We should be concerned about our brother's offense, both for his sake and for our own, and we should be prepared to assist his return to spiritual health. A man who is morally or spiritually defiled introduces uncleanness into the community. We may not be aware of it and at first may disregard it as of little consequence; but the evil influence grows and is certain eventually to infect other members in one way or another.

Therefore, for the sake of everyone, try to get the offender right again. To punish him unduly may aggravate the condition; to use harsh and bitter methods are certain to create more strife. For this cause the Apostle qualified his advice on the subject with the words: "in the spirit of meekness." Do unto others as we would be done by.

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Treat the other person as though we were in his place. Do not attempt to remove the "mote" out of your brother's eye when a "beam" is in your own eye. Do not attempt to rebuke a brother for an offense when you yourself are guilty of that same offense—without admitting your own weakness.

Now, according to the teaching of the Master, if the one who has done wrong realizes his error upon being rebuked, and should ask our forgiveness, what should be our attitude? "If he repent, forgive him." If our rebuke has been in the spirit of meekness, if it has been for the one object of healing the wrongdoer, and not with an inner secret motive of exalting ourselves by humiliating our brother, then we will be ready to go a step further; we shall forgive him. Forgiveness on our part reveals the genuineness and sincerity of our rebuke,

that it is intended for the good of the one who has erred.

Forgiving one another for injuries done is not a natural characteristic in man. More likely we are to hold a feeling of bitterness. But one cannot hope for forgiveness from God for his many transgressions if he fails to forgive others. Jesus taught His disciples to pray, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." He further emphasized the thought about forgiveness by the following words, which no one can improve: "If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." Can anyone say he does not need forgiveness?

The Christian's forgiveness need not be emotional,
(Continued on page 23)

Truth Never Dies

*Truth never dies. The ages come and go,
The mountains wear away, the stars retire,
Destruction lays earth's mighty cities low;
And empires, states, and dynasties expire;
But caught and handed onward by the wise,
Truth never dies.*

*Though unreceived and scoffed at through the years;
Though made the butt of ridicule and jest;
Though held aloft for mockery and jeers,
Denied by those of transient pow'rs possessed,
Truth never dies.*

*It answers not, it does not take offense,
But with a mighty silence bides its time;
As some great cliff that braves the elements,
And lifts through all the storms its head sublime,
It ever stands, uplifted by the wise;
And never dies.*

*As rests the Sphinx amid Egyptian sands;
As looms on high the snowy peak and crest;
As firm and patient as Gibraltar stands;
So truth, unwearied, waits the era blest
When men shall turn to it with great surprise.
Truth never dies.*

—Selected.