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Megiddo Message

*Praise the Lord, all nations!
Praise him, all peoples!
His love for us is strong and
His faithfulness is eternal.*

—Psalm 117:1–2 (GNB)



by RUTH E. SISSON

Do I QUALIFY?

To be part of almost any organization, one must qualify. To be admitted to the bar, one must qualify by passing rigid examinations.

To become a certified public accountant, one must be approved by selected individuals already in the field.

To become a licensed practitioner in any specific area of medicine, one must prove his or her qualifications.

To enter a trade union, to join the working teams of the trades, one must be tested and approved.

Even to enter an institution of higher education, one must pass exams.

If you want to enter a race, you must first pass the preliminary competitions.

If you want a certain job, you must prove that you are competent to do it.

Is it unreasonable, then, that God requires those who wish to live in His Kingdom to prove their qualifications?

The way we live in this world either qualifies us or disqualifies us for life in Christ's Kingdom. To qualify for eternal life, Jesus said, *"Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city"* (Rev. 22:14 NKJV).

Years earlier God's instructions to Israel were, *"What does the Lord your God ask of you but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to observe the Lord's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good?"* (Deut. 10:12-13 NIV). We must meet God's requirements to be eligible for His long-term blessings.

Paul described the conditions in another way in his letter to the Romans. He said that sin results in death, and obedience will lead to righteousness and life. *"Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?"* (Rom. 6:16 NIV).

What is the end of failing to qualify? Jesus said the broad way leads to destruction (Matt. 7:13)—not eternal torment, not eternal misery, not life in a burning inferno but simply nonexistence, death.

To receive the benefits God is offering, we must qualify. We must follow His rules. Life is filled with rules, which are the same for all. If we smash our thumb with a hammer, the immediate response is pain. It is just as absolute, says Jesus, that one who takes the broad way and follows it through will end in destruction, and one who takes the narrow way and follows it through to the end will receive life.

In the natural course of time, all die, whether they are serving God or not, whether they are eligible for eternal life or not. But for those who die in Christ, there is hope of resurrection. This is the teaching of the Word of God. The prophet Daniel wrote, *"And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt"* (Dan. 12:2).

God has arranged that all who serve Him will be judged, and will

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*How we live now
either qualifies
or disqualifies us
to live in Christ's
Kingdom.*

WE BELIEVE...

- ★ **in God, the Creator** and sustainer of the earth, the world, the universes, and all life, in whom we *"live, and move, and have our being."*
- ★ **in the Bible** as our only source of true knowledge about God and His purposes and plans for His creation and for the salvation of humankind.
- ★ **in Jesus Christ**, the Son of God and our Perfect Example, who was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin; who ministered among His brethren, was crucified, resurrected, and taken to heaven and seated at the right hand of the Father, crowned with immortal glory, and who shall shortly return to be King of the whole earth.
- ★ **in the Holy Spirit**, the openly manifest power of God, which God bestowed at various times and in various ways to reveal His knowledge to humankind, to support His spokesmen, to confirm His utterances, and to demonstrate His supreme power and authority.
- ★ **in life as the gift of God**, and in our sacred responsibility to use it for God and His coming Kingdom.
- ★ **in humankind** as providing the raw material from which shall be selected and developed a superior, God-honoring people upon whom God will bestow the blessings of immortal life in His soon-coming Kingdom.
- ★ **in ourselves** as capable, with the help of God, of applying to our own lives the precepts and principles taught in the Word of God, in this way perfecting that high quality of moral character which God has promised to recompense with life eternal in His heavenly Kingdom on earth.
- ★ **in the promise of God**, that Jesus Christ will soon return to rid the earth of all sin and suffering and inaugurate an eternal and worldwide Kingdom of peace and righteousness, until God's will is done here as it is now done in heaven.

Megiddo Message

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BDAG—Arndt, W., Gingrich, F. W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (1996). A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature; **DBL**—Swanson, J. (1997). Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains; **EDNT**—Balz, H. R., & Schneider, G. (1990-). Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament; **GES**—Gesenius, W., & Tregelles, S. P. (2003). Gesenius' Hebrew and Chaldee lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures; **HAL**—Koehler, L., Baumgartner, W., Richardson, M., & Stamm, J. J. (1999). The Hebrew and Aramaic lexicon of the Old Testament; **LSJ**—Liddell, H. G., Scott, R., Jones, H. S., & McKenzie, R. (1996). A Greek-English lexicon; **LN**—Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament : Based on semantic domains; **SHG**—Strong, J. (1997). The new Strong's dictionary of Hebrew and Greek words. **THAYER**—A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (1889).

MEGIDDO MEANS...

"a place of troops" (Gesenius' Hebrew Lexicon);
"a place of God" (Young's Analytical Concordance).
Megiddo was and is a town in Palestine, strategically located, and the scene of frequent warfare. In the spiritual parallel, it is a place where soldiers engaged in spiritual warfare gather to renew their strength and courage (2 Cor. 10:4-5).



In Times Like These

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Cover: Photo contributed by Patricia Fleming.
Autumn splendor at Tip-Top Park, Missouri.

A Steady Faith

IN TIMES LIKE THESE

We are living in critical times. It would seem trite to say that these are stormy days or stirring days, when there is trouble in the Middle East, trouble in the Far East, trouble in Central America, South America, and a hundred other places.

Nevertheless, in light of fulfilled and fulfilling Bible prophecies, these are encouraging days. It is encouraging to know that we are living right at the end of the era of man's rule, right at the time foretold by our Lord, when men's hearts are failing them for fear of the things which are coming on the earth; the time when many of us may live to *"see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory"* (Luke 21:26–27). It is the time when the rightful Heir to the throne of earth shall come to claim dominion and reign from *"sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth"* (Ps. 72:8); with authority to put an end to evil, sin, oppression and violence, and bring health and prosperity worldwide.

All this is part of the prophetic Word of the Lord.

With prophecies like these in mind, we can square our shoulders and declare proudly, *"It's a great time to be alive,"* even though multitudes are meeting life with a mixture of fear, cynicism, and despair.

The author of the book of Hebrews gave some very sound advice based on what lies ahead in the plan of God. First he surveyed the life and fortunes of his church. It was not an easy time to be living, even then. It was an age of active persecution, and the faith of many was being tested sorely. Some were meeting the onslaught of persecution with steady faith, endurance and resolute hearts. Others were living to themselves, having lapsed from their Christian commitment and become indifferent to its claims. *"Do not throw away your confidence,"* was his warm, loving appeal, *"for it carries a great reward. You need endurance, if you are to do God's will and win what he has promised. For 'soon, very soon' (in the words of Scripture), 'he who is to come will come; he will not delay; and by faith my righteous servant shall find life'"* (Heb. 10:35–38 NEB).

He then called their attention to their favored place in the scheme of God—and shall we think ourselves less favored? He says, and we quote again from the New English Bible (Heb. 12:18–20, 22–24):



*"Send forth
your light and your
truth, let them guide
me."* —Psalm 43:3 NIV

"Remember where you stand, not before the palpable blazing fire of Sinai, with the darkness, gloom, and whirlwind, the trumpet-blast and the oracular voice, which they heard, and begged to hear no more;... No, you stand before Mount Zion and the city of the living God, heavenly Jerusalem, before myriads of angels, the full concourse and assembly of the first-born citizens of heaven, and God the judge of all, and the spirits of good men made perfect, and Jesus the mediator of a new covenant." What favor! what privilege theirs—and more especially ours, we who are living right in the era of its fulfillment. In the light of all this, how vital the warning that follows: "See that you do not refuse to hear the voice that speaks. Those who refused to hear the oracle speaking on earth found no escape; still less shall we escape if we refuse to hear the One who speaks from heaven" (v. 25).

It was an awesome audio-visual experience for those at Sinai that day, when the mountain shook and the voice of the Lord resounded like the blast of a trumpet. But that was nothing compared with the display that will accompany Christ's second appearing, the mighty "shaking" foreseen by the prophets of old. That shaking, he says, will strike *"the earth and the heavens"* (both the ruling authorities and the general populace), every part of the present system.

"Now he has promised, 'Yet once again I will shake not earth alone, but the heavens also.' The words 'once again'—and only once—imply that the shaking of these created things means their removal, and then what is not shaken will remain" (v. 26).

"What is not shaken will remain." For people of faith there was an eye of calm at the center of the hurricane, a solid certainty on which they could depend. Everything was not to be shaken. If God, the mighty God of heaven, was their strength, and if they were on His side, they were standing on that which is in the fullest meaning of the term unshakable, and *"the things which cannot be shaken [shall] remain."*

Upon this same unshakable foundation of faith we stand today. And it is just as solid, just as secure as it has ever been. Though God is silent at the moment, His plan is going steadily forward. And we may know that however stormy the nations about us, we have a solid, steady foundation under our feet. Our God is unshakable!

Do we appreciate it? Do we really believe it?

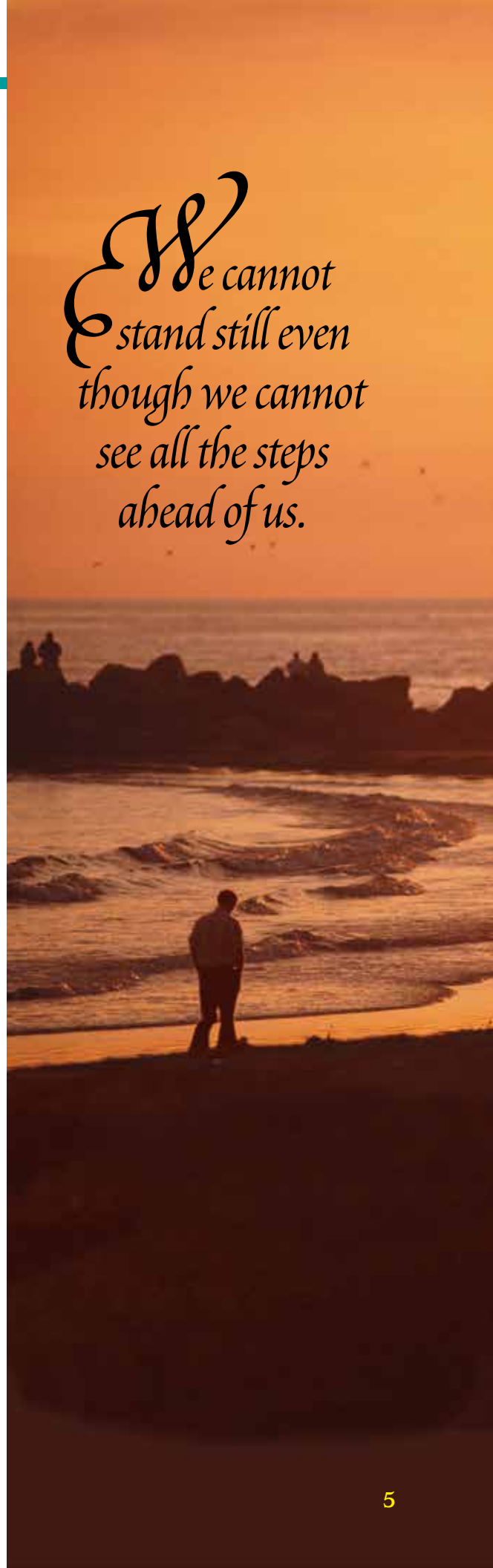
PROPHECY WE CAN TRUST!

There is something strange about us mortals. We do not question the record of past events. But when it comes to what is ahead, we are skeptical, hesitant, slow to believe. We have a right to be skeptical when our information comes from human speculations. But when word of the future comes from the Lord God Almighty, is not the prophecy upon which He puts His signature just as sure as the history He writes? Does He not know the future fully as well—or better—than we know the past? Is not His prediction of an event just as factual and just as dependable as if that event had already occurred?

We have a further problem with our mortal makeup. We believe what we see, and disbelieve what we cannot see; in fact, what we cannot see *isn't!* Going one step further, we tend to believe that what is now will always continue—though we know well enough from our own experience that there is nothing permanent but change. Still the illusion persists.

Here is the test of faith that must be part of the experience of God's people in all ages. Like Enoch, Noah, Abraham and Moses, we must live by faith and walk by faith—and walking means action and progress, going forward. We are not to stand still simply because we cannot see all the

*We cannot
stand still even
though we cannot
see all the steps
ahead of us.*





*"The things that cannot
be shaken shall remain."*

—Hebrews 12:27

steps ahead of us. We must take God at His word and trust Him for what we cannot see, knowing that His promise is as certain as our existence. *"The things which cannot be shaken [shall] remain."* Some shall remain. It is the promise of the Lord, in which we may confidently trust: *"Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe"* (Heb. 12:28 NIV).

What are the things that shall "remain"?

Again we must rely on the promise of the God of heaven: *"For behold, I create new heavens [new ruling powers] and a new earth [new populace]; and the former things will not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; For behold, I create Jerusalem for rejoicing and her people for gladness"* (Isa. 65:17–18 NASB). A whole new heavens and a whole new earth, both of God's creating, fashioned according to His standard of excellence, composed wholly of men and women whom He has approved. Will it not be glorious?

Seven thousand years have been set aside for the completing of this new creation, this new heavens and earth; and these shall remain. In the words of the prophet Daniel, they *"shall stand for ever"* (Dan. 2:44).

The shaking is not to result in total destruction; the destruction is only to remove the opposition and make room for that which deserves to abide, the *"things which cannot be shaken."*

A Comparison from Jesus:

"As It Was in the Days of Noah..."

In the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, Jesus gives us some profound insights into the Divine scheme. It is His temple sermon, the last He preached before He was crucified.

First Jesus pictures the things that can and will be shaken, the authorities of men. He forecasts the cataclysmic shaking of Jerusalem, and its total downfall. Then He foretells the Apostasy, and the end of it. Then bringing us right down to our very own day, He pictures the Second Coming of Christ, comparing it to the *"lightning that comes from the east [and] is visible even in the west"* (Matt. 24:27 NIV).

Then, commenting on our very own day and the time when all these things shall be, He compares the time when Christ shall come to that of Noah. *"As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man"* (Matt. 24:37 NIV).

Perhaps no more fitting illustration could be found than is contained in this comparison of our Lord's. In so many ways Noah's day parallels our own.

First, in the certainty of Divine judgment. As surely as the flood came in the days of Noah, just so surely will the end come in this age. God has spoken, and His word *"shall not return unto [Him] void"* (Isa. 55:11).

Second, in the imminence of Divine judgment. God had given Noah His word, that a flood would come; so has He foretold the end of this age, and we today find ourselves living when that "end" is right upon us.

Lord, help me to be
Cheerful when things go wrong;
Persevering when things are difficult;
Serene when things are irritating.

Grant that
Nothing may make me lose my temper;
Nothing may take away my joy;
Nothing may ruffle my peace;
Nothing may make me bitter.

May I so live that others
May see in me the reflection of the Master.

AMEN.

Third, in its results. The flood resulted in the destruction of a wicked and godless race; and *“so shall the coming of the Son of man [be]”* (Matt. 24:27, 37, 39). And just as surely as eight survived the cataclysm in Noah’s day so surely shall some remain from our day.

Fourth, in its demands upon the believer for faith and courage. End times are times of extreme stress, and bring their own special tests of character.

Jesus made the comparison especially for the benefit of those who would be living in the era of His return. Like the time of Noah, the time immediately preceding His return would be one of special testing, a time that would demand the utmost in unshakable faith.

How did Noah respond to the test? We read in Hebrews 11:7, *“By faith Noah, warned by God about events as yet unseen, respected the warning and built an ark to save his household; by this he condemned the world and became an heir to the righteousness that is in accordance with faith”* (Heb. 11:7 NRSV). Do we wonder that Jesus used Noah as an example to us?

Like Noah in his day, we today confront the test of time. When the Divine hand seems to tarry, there is a strong temptation to lose faith. With the passing of time, the test becomes more acute.

Picture Noah with genuine enthusiasm in his voice and a deep reverence for God in his heart, relaying God’s warning to his people, for we read that *“Noah [was] a preacher of righteousness”* (2 Pet. 2:5). A great flood was coming, and they would die unless they believed Noah’s message and entered the ark.

Of course many ridiculed, disbelieved, and scoffed. But some believed.

God provided the plans for the project, very specific detailed plans, so that Noah knew exactly what to do. Then Noah set the example of faith by immediately commencing work on the ark. And as he worked, he continued to preach. Some listened, and were genuinely glad for the early warning.

But days came, and days went; suns rose and suns set, and....no flood. What was this that Noah had been saying? Was he mistaken?

Days added up to months, and months grew into years. And still...no flood. Surely something was wrong.... And one by one, his followers began to drift away. Generations came, and went. And still...no flood. By this time, some who had believed at first began to wonder.

Wondering led to doubt, and doubt to gross unbelief. Unbelief spread like wildfire. Was there nothing new from the Lord? No update or confirmation of His plans? What if it had been all a dream, all a mistake or misunderstanding on the part of Noah?

And so the doubters gave up one by one and went their way.


But Noah kept on building according to the plan God had given him. *“By faith Noah...built an ark.”* God had said the flood was coming, and Noah knew that when the time was right, it would come. Now was their opportunity—their only opportunity—to get ready, and they should be doing it, or they would die in the flood.

Still the unbelievers doubted. With the sky so clear and the sun so bright—who could worry? Likely some who had once believed lost faith and began to feel sorry for Noah, the poor, deluded old man who had dreamed so greatly and whose years and years of well-intentioned hard work were to be sadly disappointing.

*Do not throw
away your
confidence, for it
carries a great reward.
You need endurance,
‘soon, very soon’ he who is
to come will come;
he will not delay.”*

—Hebrews 10:35–37





Like Noah
we must keep
working even when
others lose faith.

Is not all this parallel to our own day? Wasn't Jesus right when He said that those who should experience the last hours of the day, those who should have the privilege of living to see the Son of man come, would experience tests that would require the strength and faith and endurance of Noah?

What was Noah's secret source of spiritual strength? We read that Noah was "*a just man, perfect in his generations.*" In the midst of that corrupt and desperately wicked people, "Noah walked with God" (Gen. 6:9). No ordinary accomplishment this; and what better example could we have? Do we wonder that he was able to maintain his faith through all those years, despite the scoffs of the multitudes? If Noah could consistently follow God's will in his day, in the midst of that exceedingly wicked world, can we not do it today?

And if Noah was a man of faith, and showed his faith by his actions, can we not share the same steadfast faith today?

Then, too, for Noah, there was the further **test of obedience**. We don't know what Noah did to support himself and his family during his first six hundred years, but when the command came, "*make yourself an ark,*" that had to come first. Noah might have said, Yes, Lord, but when do you expect me to plant my crops, or cultivate and prune my vineyards?

But whatever his accustomed pattern of life, Noah did not hesitate. He "*respected the warning*" and went to work. His first and only concern was to obey God, and in doing this he was preserving his own life and that of his family. For God had said that a flood would come, and Noah believed God.

Then there was the **test of an unknown deadline**—and do we not experience this also? If only we knew, we say; if we only knew how long time as we know it will continue. But we do not know; and Noah did not know how much time he would have to make this ark. There might be plenty of time; but there might not. His whole concern was the completing of his God-assigned task. The Lord had told him he could be safe if—but the rest was his responsibility. And suppose—suppose he had been working too slowly...?

And so he worked—steadily, diligently, lest the flood come before the ark was finished. And while he worked, he preached; Noah was a "*preacher of righteousness*" (2 Pet. 2:5), right-doing. A flood was coming, he said, and the most important thing in the whole world was to get right with God.

The time seemed to tarry. The people asked "When?" Noah himself might have been tempted to ask "When?" Yet Noah knew, for the ark was not yet done.

Noah needed the time; still it was a test.

What of us? How shall we meet this test of time? Will we be able to sustain our concentrated effort over time? Can we keep up our zeal and determination and enthusiasm day after day, year after year, while the Lord seems to tarry?

The ark neared completion; it was almost done, still no flood in sight. This was another **test of faith**, when the task was almost done.

But Noah *did* finish the ark. His family went in—and the angel of the Lord shut the door. Then the rain began. How many were safe inside? Only eight. Only Noah and seven members of his family.

One hundred twenty years of preaching and building, and only eight

believers! Was it worth all the effort, we ask, for such a few? Yes!

Likewise we may ask in our day: Is it worth the effort to keep on, to keep doing the things we have been doing in obedience to the command of the Lord?

The answer is a resounding Yes, it is worth the effort! The salvation of each single individual means just that much to God. Every one is a jewel, a precious treasure, His own son or daughter, and God has planned His whole creation around them (Mal. 3:16–17). Look at the tremendous effort God has expended to enlighten and develop them. It is truly so much for so little; but the work is God's. Besides, all the resources are God's—so what can be lost? And shall we consider anything too small to do for God—especially when the benefit is ours?

If God chooses to have eight million, or eight hundred, or only eight, that is His concern, not ours. We can only pray that we may belong to the things which cannot be shaken, the things that shall remain. For we have the Divine promise: *"the things which cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken..."*

How do we become a part of this Kingdom which cannot be shaken? It is all a matter of character; and the foundation of that character is an unshakable faith in the God of heaven and in His promise to recompense each faithful one.

Is our faith like Noah's? Have we that solid, unswerving commitment that we will be faithful, loyal, wholehearted, come what may? Have we committed ourselves, without reservation, to total obedience? Are we each day renewing the determination that will see us through all the way to the end of this age and into eternity? Have we bound ourselves, steadfast, unmovable, to the things that will remain?

In this time of unrest, let us hear again those words of assurance from the book of Hebrews and, like Noah of old, be warned; be moved with fear, moved to action, we who have been offered *"possession of an unshakable kingdom. Let us therefore hold on to the grace that we have been given and use it to worship God in the way that he finds acceptable, in reverence and fear."* ■



Do I QUALIFY?

continued from page 2

receive just according to what they have done. The apostle Paul wrote: *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, ... whether it be good or bad"* (2 Cor. 5:10). The purpose: to determine whether or not they qualify.

At the end of his life Paul knew that he had qualified. He wrote with confidence, *"And now the prize awaits me—the crown of righteousness that the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on that great day of his return. And the prize is not just for me but for all who eagerly look forward to his glorious return"* (2 Tim. 4:8 NLT).

Do we share this certainty with Paul? Do we long for Christ to come and give us our reward? Do we have a real, sure hope of eternal life? Do we qualify? These are the questions we need to be asking ourselves every day, because God has given us this time in which to qualify, and God forbid that we let it go by unused.

"He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8 NIV). ■



*If God is in the thoughts you think,
The words you speak, the deeds you do;
If from the wrong you truly shrink
That with our Lord you may go through;
If you're a light along life's road
That helps a traveler to see,
Then do not ask to shift your load.
And from your many duties flee.*

*If God is in the way you take,
Though rough sometimes the pathway seems,
If friends of other days forsake,
And former plans fade from your dreams;
If for your talents others bid,
And make fair offers for your time,
Think of the things those others did
That robbed them of the things sublime.*

*Don't sell your soul and all that's grand
For worldly glitter, wealth or fame,
For when before the Lord you stand,
You'll want a noble, spotless name—
When you see Jesus face to face
And He is seated on His throne—
So He who holds for you a place
Can robe and crown you as His own.*

—Selected

Real Belief Includes **ACTION**

“Weren't the jailer and his household in Philippi saved simply by saying 'I believe'? Romans 10:9 says we are saved by confessing with our mouth that we believe.”

Paul's reply to the Philippian jailer has been seized by evangelists for centuries as promising salvation simply by vocalizing, “I believe”—as though the only requirement for salvation was a simple statement of one's belief.

In the light of Scriptural teaching we cannot believe that this is the thought intended.

The account is found in Acts 16. When Paul and Silas had been mercilessly beaten and imprisoned, their feet fast in stocks—the cruelest form of punishment available to the magistrates of Philippi—their songs of praise were heard at midnight. God intervened, causing a mighty miracle by which Paul and Silas, as well as the rest of the prisoners, were released from their confinement, and might easily have fled. The keeper of the prison, awaking suddenly and seeing the prisoners free, was about to kill himself when Paul *“called with a loud voice, saying, ‘Do yourself no harm, for we are all here.’”* Deeply impressed and grateful, the relieved jailer, whose life might have been taken if the prisoners had fled, came *“and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? So they said, ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household’”* (Acts 16:25–31).

Paul's answer to the jailer's question was simple and direct: *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.”* The account tells us that the jailer and his household did express their belief, and that they were baptized. But one fact is often overlooked. The narrative says that they believed, but notice, it does not say that they were saved that night. Paul and Silas said only, *“Believe... and you will be saved”*—future tense. Salvation at any time in the future could have fulfilled that promise. There is no indication that salvation was either promised for that night or was received that night.

Very often in Scripture, the entire plan or picture is not conveyed in a single passage. To understand the Bible teaching on any subject we must compare scripture with scripture.

In Acts 16:31, Luke did not state the time when salvation would be given, nor did he mention the whole requirement for salvation, that as Jesus said, *“he who endures to the end shall be saved”* (Matt. 24:13), or as Paul said, *“if you continue in the faith”* (Col. 1:23), or again, *“Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you”* (1 Tim. 4:16). It is possible that the jailer and his household did continue in their new-found faith, endure to the end, and become worthy of eternal salvation; we are not told. Certainly they made a good start. The jailer took the prisoners to his house and treated them kindly and not as criminals. More than this, he listened to them expound the word of the Lord and was baptized, together with his household.

But according to the Bible, much more than a good start is required if we would be given eternal salvation. As Paul wrote in his letter to the Romans, salvation is *“to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor and immortality”* (Rom. 2:7).

You mention the familiar passage in Romans 10:9 that is often quoted to show how simple “being saved” is. Here again we need to remember the apostle did not put everything in one verse. But what he said is very significant. The verse reads in the NKJV, *“that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”*

First let us ask, what does it mean to *“confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus”*? The Greek word translated “confess” (*homologeō*) as defined in the Greek-English Lexicon (BDAG), is *“to commit oneself to do something for someone, promise, assure... to concede that something is factual or true, grant, admit, confess ... Solemnly promise, vow.”* The New Strong's Hebrew and Greek-English Dictionary” (SHG) defines it as: to assent, i.e. covenant, acknowledge:—con (pro-)

*To truly believe,
one must live by his
beliefs.*

fess, confession is made, give thanks, promise." This meaning suggests much more than a mere verbalizing of "I believe." It is a covenant, a promise, a vow, along with a confession of agreement with the laws and mandates of God. And God means us to take our vows seriously. *"When you make a vow to God, do not delay to pay it; for He has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you have vowed—Better not to vow than to vow and not pay"* (Ecc. 5:4-5). When we "confess" with our "mouth the Lord Jesus," we are obligating ourselves to live by His laws and commandments, as Jesus said, *"If you love Me, keep My commandments"* (John 14:15), and again, *"You are My friends if you do whatever I command you"* (John 15:14). When Jesus commissioned His disciples to go out and preach, they were to teach people to *"observe all things that I have commanded you"* (Matt. 28:20).

A careful study of the Scriptures leads us to the conclusion that eternal salvation is not conditioned upon a mere verbal statement of "I believe." To truly "believe" in a Bible sense means to obey; to support the cause in which belief is expressed. Otherwise there is no real belief. The gospel to be believed is a gospel of obedience, and how can one truly profess belief in the necessity of obedience unless he obeys?

Instruction in the Word of the Lord is the first step, but believing in Christ is more than mental assent; it is taking up one's cross and following Him in a life of dedication and self-denial (Luke 9:23). It is becoming like Jesus by following His example of upright character, doing always the things that please the Heavenly Father (John 8:29; 1 Pet. 2:21; 1 John 2:5-6).

Jesus spoke of the necessity of bearing one's cross of self-denial, and being ready to meet Him when He comes. The first commandment, He said, was to *"love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength"* (Mark 12:30). He exhorted His followers to *"Seek...first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness"; "Strive to enter through the narrow gate; for many, I say to you, will seek to enter, and will not be able";* again, *"Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven but he who does the will of My Father in heaven"* (Matt. 6:33; Luke 13:24; Matt. 7:21). These are commands that require much more than a mere vocalized expression of one's belief.

Contrary to popular assumption, Paul did not teach a different means of salvation than did Jesus. His writings are filled with direct

commands that must be obeyed if salvation is to be achieved. He exhorted his readers to *"work out your own salvation,"* to *"be diligent to present yourself approved,"* to *"put off"* the old nature and *"put on"* the new (Phil. 2:12; 2 Tim. 2:15; Eph. 4:22-24). He spoke of the conflict between flesh and spirit, of not doing the things that he would, of a death to sin, of pressing for the prize, of fighting to keep the old nature under (Phil. 1:29-30; Gal. 5:16-17; Rom. 6:10-11; Phil. 3:13-14; 1 Cor. 9:26-27). These are all action words, words that pull us to our feet and start us running. They indicate much more than a mere outward profession of belief in Jesus Christ.

Knowledge is the first step toward belief or faith in Jesus (John 6:45). Before we can really believe in Jesus we must understand what He requires of us. We must study God's Word to obtain a knowledge of His law (2 Tim. 2:15). We cannot say that we believe until we know what to believe.

After we have acquired this knowledge, we must put it into practice, for as the inspired author James writes, *"a man is justified by works, and not by faith only"* (Jas. 2:24). Faith must lead to works of righteousness, for as James says further, *"Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, 'You have faith and I have works.' Show me your faith without your works and I will show you my faith by my works"* (Jas. 2:17-18).

The apostle John went so far as to say, that *"He who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him"* (1 John 2:4). In other words, if we say we believe in Jesus and do not obey His commandments, we are not "saved" eternally—far from it, we are classified as "liars," and according to the Revelator, *"all liars shall have their part in the ... second death"* (Rev. 21:8), death as a penalty for sin, death from which there is no awakening.

Real belief is...action! ■



JOHN BLACKTOP

Imagine that you are at work. Someone tells you that your house is on fire. Your response shows whether you believe the report or not.

Remember...

AND THANK GOD!

Give thanks to the Lord...Remember the wonders he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he pronounced. —Psalm 105:1, 5 NIV

We are all by nature such escape artists. We avoid what we need most. It is so easy to talk about anything—except what really matters. It is so easy to pass the time of day, to talk about idle nothings—but isn't this dishonoring to the God who has done so much for us, in us, and around us, and who has promised so much more? This is why God gave us memory—He knew how desperately we would need it to help and encourage one another!

One way to help each other is to speak of the wonderful works of God in our behalf.

We need to think, too, of what may be His will for us. We need to look back over the day, the week, the year, to see God at work in our

lives, directing, supporting, training us for the tasks for which

He has chosen us. We need to see where we have come from, and where we are going. We need to sort out the things we have done, and the things that remain yet to be done.

We need also a deeper kind of remembering; a remembering that is both a searching and a finding. The process is much like the process of praying, as we seek to learn the truth about ourselves and our lives at their deepest level; to understand, learn, and grow.

We should look back and thank God that by His mercy we have survived to this day. After 30, 40, 60, or 80 years, in spite of all the hazards of our modern world, we have made it to this day and hour! Shouldn't we thank God?

In this way we find peace, peace that comes

from looking back and realizing something we so easily fail to see: that we are never really alone if we belong to God.

This is why David cried out in his great psalm of thanksgiving: *"Give thanks to the Lord...Remember the wonders he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he pronounced"* (Psalm 105:1, 5 NIV).

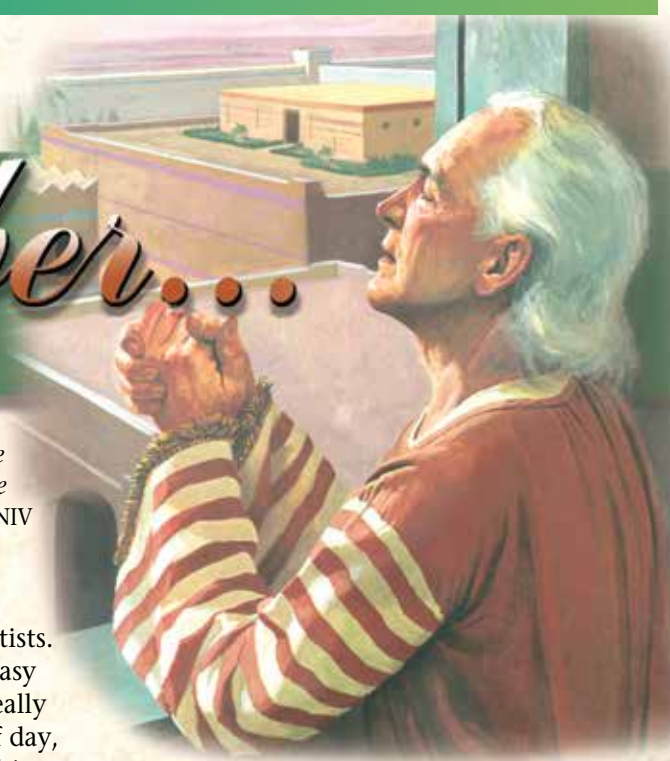
Remember, and thank God.

What Memories!

Remember...and what memories there are—for David, and for us. For David, there were memories of great sins, and great repentances. And triumphing over all was the mercy of God. When David truly repented, God truly forgave. What could give greater cause for thanksgiving! No wonder David sang his exultant song: *"Oh give thanks unto the Lord!... Sing to the Lord, all the earth; proclaim the good news of His salvation from day to day"* (1 Chron. 16:8, 23).

David was grateful for every day through which God had helped him to survive himself, his darkness, his weakness and his folly. He was thankful for every day God had allowed him to go on through thick and thin to the next day, and the next day, and the next. Remembering all, he sang for joy!

We, too, need this time to remember. There has never been a time when God wasn't with His people as the strength beyond their strength, and wisdom beyond their wisdom, and the spirit behind their will. To remember is to realize that each one of us is here today by God's grace.



S*HALL is the word of hope. Only God can say "shall" and mean it.*

We need also to remember what God is doing, and that our whole life is only a second, a second that is preparing us for an eternity of joy and glory and happiness past all comparing!

So David continues his song: *"Let the sea roar, and all its fullness; let the field rejoice, and all that is in it. Then the trees of the woods shall rejoice before the Lord, for He is coming to judge the earth"* (1 Chron. 16:32–33).

"The trees of the woods shall rejoice." **Shall** is the verb of hope. "There shall be" is the promise of hope with certainty. Only God can say, *"There shall...!"* or *"Then shall...!"* and mean it. "Shall" speaks to us of everything that God has promised to do or give. *"There shall be no more*

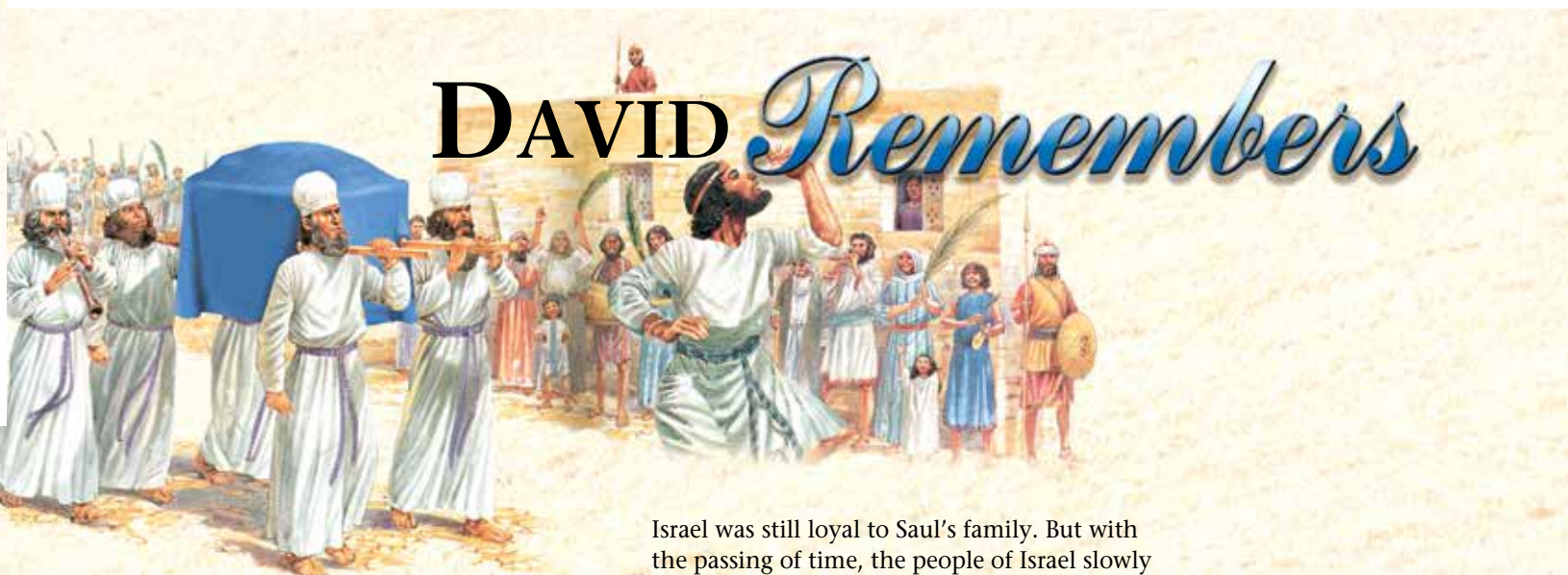
death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Rev. 21:3–4).

God's Kingdom *shall* come, His will *shall* be done on earth as it is in heaven. Then shall the trees of the woods sing for joy, and all near or far rejoice together.

In the meanwhile we want to remember and hope; remember and work; remember and pray; remember and give thanks. We want to remember and look up—gratefully, expectantly, knowing that He who has promised is able—abundantly able—to fulfill.

Truly it is a time to remember—and thank God! ■

Remember and **HOPE**...remember and **WORK**...remember and **PRAY**...remember and **GIVE THANKS**.



The life of King David was a life filled with events to remember. Not events of small consequence, but *great* events—great as seen from God's point of view. For David had linked his life to God, and nothing mattered to David except it mattered also to God. David's life was rich with experiences that drew him closer to God.

Quite near the beginning of David's long reign was an occasion that called for great thanksgiving and great rejoicing. David rejoiced especially because it was a victory for his God.

When David was made king by the men of Judah and set up his headquarters in Hebron, his dominion was small; much of the land of

Israel was still loyal to Saul's family. But with the passing of time, the people of Israel slowly came over to David's side until, after about seven years, all of Israel had transferred their allegiance to him.

Now, with all of Israel under him, David immediately took two significant steps: first, he removed his capital to Jerusalem, calling it *"the city of David."* And second, he made plans to bring the sacred ark of the covenant to Jerusalem. David wanted to make Jerusalem a center of faith as well as of government. He wanted God to be with him in his chosen city, for David was God's chosen ruler; David ruled *with* God and *under* God.

In the time of Moses, the ark of the covenant had symbolized the presence of God in Israel. Could it not mean the same in the city of David?

Many years had passed since the sons of Eli

*Still today
God means what He
says just as surely,
just as firmly as
ever before.*

had taken the ark to battle with them and the victorious Philistines had captured it. But the Philistines found the ark no charm of good fortune—rather, it was a troublesome thing, demolishing their gods and bringing plagues on their people. Finally, after some seven months of moving it from one place to another, they put it on a new cart drawn by two cows and sent it back to Israel, glad to be rid of it.

For some fifty years the ark rested in the house of Abinadab in Kirjath-jearim. So when David resolved to move the ark to Jerusalem, he went to Kirjath-jearim, some eight or nine miles from Jerusalem, with his company of men.

They loaded the ark onto a new ox-drawn cart, and began the trip to Jerusalem. All went well until the oxen stumbled and Uzzah reached out his hand to steady the ark—and was immediately struck dead by the Lord.

David was stunned. Why was Uzzah smitten? Was God not pleased with David's desire to bring the ark back to Jerusalem? Immediately he called a halt to the moving operation, and made temporary arrangements for the ark to rest in the nearby house of Obed-edom.

Did David—or anyone else in Israel—wonder if the ark was still sacred, or if the ancient laws of God were still binding?

And does not God mean what He says to us today just as surely, just as firmly, as then?

About three months later, David decided to try again, but this time, before he began, he made a diligent study of the law of Moses. David had learned his lesson. "The Lord destroyed us before," he told the Levites, "because we handled the matter improperly—you were not carrying it." This time he would do everything in his power to transport the ark in the proper, honorary manner God would bless. The story is recorded in 1 Chronicles 15.

First he prepared a special tent in which the ark could rest. Then he planned just how the ark should be handled. "No one except the Levites may carry it, for God has chosen them for this purpose; they are to minister to him forever" (v. 2). David told the Levites to sanctify themselves in preparation for carrying the Ark of the God of Israel. They were to carry it "on their shoulders with its carrying poles, just as the Lord had instructed Moses" (v. 15).

In addition to all this, David also instructed the chief of the Levites to "appoint their brethren

to be the singers with instruments of music, psalteries and harps and cymbals, sounding, by lifting up the voice with joy" (1 Chron. 15:16). Then he invited "all Israel" to Jerusalem to celebrate the event (1 Chron. 15:3).

It was a great occasion. At the appointed time the musicians played, and the singers sang, and the Levites lifted the ark to their shoulders. They took six steps. Then they stopped—and waited while their brethren sacrificed seven bulls and seven lambs to the Lord—in gratitude for not destroying them. Then they proceeded, all the way to David's new tent.

"And so," we read, "they brought up the ark of the covenant of the Lord with joy" (v. 28). This time David knew he was not doing it alone; this time the effort had God's blessing, for we read that "God helped the Levites who were carrying the ark of the covenant of the Lord" (1 Chron. 15:26 NIV). Yes, God was helping.

David did all that was written in the law of God, and more. The occasion lacked nothing that David was able to lavish upon it. Even the attire of David and the ministering Levites was specially prepared.

And so "all Israel brought up the ark of the covenant of the Lord with shouting, and with sound of the cornet, and with trumpets, and with cymbals, making a noise with psalteries and harps" (1 Chron. 15:28). It was a time of great joy, a time of great thanksgiving, a time of great remembering.

This day of thanksgiving was significant in another way: it heard the first performance of David's choir, for we read that at this time "David began the custom of using choirs in the Tabernacle to sing thanksgiving to the Lord." Asaph was assigned choir director.

Their first song was especially composed by David for the occasion, and it is one of the most beautiful psalms on record. Notice its exultant mood expressed in its short, rapid, almost staccato phrases. Notice, too, its strong beats of joyous gratitude: "give thanks... call... make known... sing... talk... glory... rejoice." This is the first stanza of the song:


*"Oh, give thanks to the Lord!
Call upon His name;
Make known His deeds among the peoples!
Sing to Him, sing psalms to Him;
Talk of all His wondrous works!
Glory in His holy name;
Let the hearts of those rejoice who seek
the Lord!"* 1 Chron. 16:8-10

It was a time to remember, and thank God! ■



WHAT WILL YOU *Harvest?*

(What did you plant?)



moment will affect our harvest. And we can't put off the planting time. Planting is not a once a year occasion. We are planting every day right up to the end of our day of opportunity!

Referring again to Paul's letter to the Galatians, let us think about another statement of this principle: *"For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life"* (Gal. 6:8). This faces us not only with the basic and central decision of choosing the type of seed we will sow, but at the same time we realize we are choosing our harvest. We are either sowing to the flesh and will reap corruption, or we are sowing to the Spirit and will reap life everlasting.

Did you ever feel like saying, "I don't care what God wants me to do, I will do what I want to"? That is sowing seeds of corruption, no matter how good the thing you intend to do.

Giving in to pride, or malicious gossip, or anger is sowing corruption, and will result in a corrupted harvest unless we dig up that seed by repenting.

Paul at the beginning of the sixth chapter of Galatians states very carefully what one must do who finds a fellow Christian overtaken by a fault. He says: *"Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted"* (Gal. 6:1 NIV).

His word to us as individuals here is very direct. Not one of us is immune to temptation. Not one of us is so sure-footed that we cannot stumble. If we think we are, we have stumbled already. All of us, if not exceedingly careful, can sow the wrong seed and reap the wrong harvest.

Keep On!

What is Paul's advice for keeping on? *"And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not"* (Gal. 6:9).

We read the same thought in Hebrews 10: *"For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry"* (Heb. 10:36-37). It takes patience to go on and on, when we cannot see the fulfillment of the great events we are expecting. It takes patience to wait for the promise of the Lord to be fulfilled, so that we can see the results of our sowing. But Harvest Day will come; every one will reap what he has sown.

What are you and I sowing today, tomorrow? What can we expect to harvest? ■

In many parts of the world harvest time brings changing scenes. Brightly colored leaves, or heavy branches of red, golden, or pink cheeked apples. Rows of brown tasseled corn, or the beauty of grapes hanging in thick triangular clusters. Orchards in the American northwest are filling endless boxes with individually wrapped pears or apples or plums for distant customers, while in the warmer climates people will soon be packing crates of oranges and grapefruit.

But wherever the place of the harvest, the universal answer to the question "What are you harvesting?" is *what you planted*.

There is only one time to determine what the harvest will be, and that is at planting time. Harvest time is not the time to change one's mind and say, "I really wanted corn instead of wheat." Or "I wish I had cabbage and not beans."

God means the yearly time of harvest to remind us of the solemn reality that there is an unbreakable connection between what we plant and what we harvest. He warned clearly: *"Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap"* (Gal. 6:7). It is just that fixed, he says, and don't let any amount of optimism fool you. Your choices of what you do with your days and years are like seeds. They will determine the harvest, and that harvest will be apparent to you and everyone else.

So the most important question of life becomes, What am I sowing? This problem, that decision, this temptation, is a seed planted that will one day bear fruit. Our decision this



by GERALD R. PAYNE

What happened to those who died

BEFORE JESUS WAS CRUCIFIED?

What happened to those who died before Jesus made that sacrifice?

God did not condone human sacrifice; would He require it, or even approve Christ offering Himself?

Before answering this question, we need to consider "that sacrifice." It is commonly believed that Jesus offered Himself a sacrifice on a Roman cross to appease an angry God that we may have forgiveness for our sins. But we must ask, what support do we find in Scripture for the idea that either Christ sacrificed Himself or gave Himself to be offered as a sacrifice?

Shocking as it may be, neither idea is supported in Scripture. Note the following:

■ **Christ did not want to die on the cross.**

A short time before He was arrested, He addressed His Father in great agony, "Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done" (Luke 22:42). He did not offer Himself as a sacrifice, and certainly not for a sin offering for the world. Christ would not even pray for the world. "I do not pray for the world," He said, "but for those whom You have given Me," also for those who "will believe in Me through their word" (John 17:9, 20).

■ **God never once approved human sacrifice.**

The following text shows His thoughts clearly: "And they have built the high places of Tophet... to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire, which I did not command, nor did it come into My heart" (Jer. 7:31; 19:5; 32:35). God's law to Israel prohibited human sacrifice. The offence was punishable with death. "Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 'Again, you shall say to the children of Israel: 'Whoever of the children of Israel, or of the strangers who dwell in Israel, who gives any of his descendants to Molech, he shall surely be put to death. The people of the land shall stone him with stones. I will set My face against that man, and will cut him off from his people, because he has given some of his descendants to Molech...' " If one disregarded the person who sacrificed one of his children, they also were cut off. "And if the people of the land should in any way hide their eyes

from the man, when he gives some of his descendants to Molech, and they do not kill him, then I will set My face against that man and against his family; and I will cut him off from his people" (Lev. 20:1-5). God even said through His prophet Micah that He would not be pleased with one who offered his firstborn for his transgression (Micah 6:6-8). Now let me ask: Would God Himself then do this very thing in behalf of His human family?

The Psalmist prophesied of Christ saying, "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire; My ears You have opened. Burnt offering and sin offering You did not require. Then I said, 'Behold, I come; in the scroll of the book it is written of me. I delight to do Your will, O my God, and Your law is within my heart'" (Ps. 40:6-8). The author of Hebrews recalled this passage when he said in regard to Christ, "Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: 'Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body [body of believers] You have prepared for Me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure. Then I said, 'Behold, I have come—in the volume of the book it is written of Me—to do Your will, O God'" (Heb. 10:5-7).

God "is not a man, that he should change his mind" (Num. 23:19 REB). God did not condone human sacrifice; would He require it, or even approve Christ offering Himself?

No, Christ did not give Himself a sacrifice to appease God; He was murdered by the wicked Scribes and Pharisees who pressured Pilate into having the Roman soldiers crucify Him.

Stephen, addressing his own accusers, said, "Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers" (Acts. 7:52). It was a scathing accusation. They murdered Christ! This statement by Stephen only confirms the fact that Christ did not offer Himself a literal sacrifice for sins.

The fact is, Christ was not the only righteous one to suffer at the hands of beastly mobs, as Stephen said. Hebrews, chapter 11, sums up the life of many of the faithful. They were tortured,

faced jeers and flogging, imprisoned in chains, stoned, sawed in two, put to death with the sword. Others were destitute, persecuted and mistreated (see Heb. 11:35-37).

■ We must be crucified with Christ—a spiritual crucifixion.

The crucifixion of Christ is sometimes used in the New Testament Epistles as a metaphor for total commitment, nothing barred, in obeying Christ. Paul speaks of this crucifixion in Galatians, chapter 5. Paul was very much alive when he said that he and other loyal Christians had died, been crucified with Christ. *“Those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires”* (Gal. 5:24). Just what did he mean? Paul explains what death of Christ he was speaking of as he writes, *“...the death that He [Christ] died, He died to sin once for all [once for all time];¹ but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (Rom. 6:10–11). To be crucified with Christ is to be dead to sin; it is to put to death, not our physical bodies, but our ungodly passions and desires.

Christ had to overcome just as we do. He said in Rev. 3:21, *“To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.”* The writer of Hebrews also spoke of Christ’s need to overcome, *“Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered”* (Heb. 5:8). And that is how we have to do it. *“And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him”* (Heb. 5:9). We put to death our passions and desires by obeying Christ. *“How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?”* (Rom. 6:2).

We know that Paul was not physically crucified with Christ, yet he said that *“our old man”* is *“crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with”* (Rom. 6:6). Being *“crucified with Christ”* is putting away sin in ourselves, not being literally crucified. Paul further defines the *“old man”* as our former conduct: *“put off,*

concerning your former conduct, the old man” (Eph. 4:22). And he even tells us what this former conduct is, *“...put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds”* (Col. 3:8–9). To be crucified with Christ is simply to put away our former way of life, and pattern our life after Christ’s example of total obedience to God, without sin.

The sacrifice Christ made was a lifelong sacrifice of His will, giving up His own desires in total obedience to His heavenly Father, as He said, *“Not my will but thine be done.”* He spoke these words of full surrender during those last hours before His arrest. And Paul said, *“Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ”* (1 Cor. 11:1 NIV). Or as the Moffatt translation has it, *“Copy me as I copy Christ.”* We must be *“conformed to His death”* (Phil. 3:10), His death to sin.

Now if I may rephrase your question:

WHAT HAPPENED TO THOSE WHO DIED BEFORE JESUS WAS CRUCIFIED?

With the exception of Enoch and Elijah, all who were under covenant to serve God, whether good or bad, went to the grave, where they will remain until they are resurrected at Christ’s return. All who were not serving God and did not know God will sleep a perpetual sleep (this evidence will be presented later).

Look at Ecc. 3:20, *“All go to one place: all are from the dust, and all return to dust.”* How can it be plainer? As the Psalmist says, *“You turn men back to dust”* (Ps. 90:3 NIV). And again the Psalmist declares, *“His spirit departs, he returns to his earth; in that very day his plans perish”* (Ps. 146:4). Or, as God’s Word Translation has it, *“When they breathe their last breath, they return to the ground. On that day their plans come to an end.”*

We do not go to heaven at death, because *“There is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going”* (Ecc. 9:10).

The righteous go the grave at death.

Even the righteous go to the grave at death. We have examples in Scripture.

Job said of himself: *“If I wait, the grave is my house”* (Job 17:13)

Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, greeted Daniel with these words *“The command went out, and I have come...for you are greatly beloved”* (Dan. 9:23, also Dan. 10:11, 19). Daniel, a man greatly beloved, was not spared from

To be crucified with Christ is to be dead to sin; it is to put to death, our ungodly passions and desires.

The sacrifice Christ made was a lifelong sacrifice, giving up His own desires in total obedience to His heavenly Father.

¹The phrase “once for all” is taken to mean that Christ died “once for everybody.” But this is an incorrect definition. The phrase “once for all” is from a single Greek word (an adverb), **ephapax**, *ef-ap'-ax*, which literally means “upon one occasion (only)” (New Strong’s Dictionary of Hebrew and Greek Words). Or, “a single occurrence—to the exclusion of any other similar occurrence—‘once and for all, once and never again.’—DBL. As you and I may say in English when we have reached a conclusion, “Finally, **once for all**, the problem is solved!” implying once for all time.

We do not go to heaven at death, because
“There is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going” (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

death and the cold confines of the grave. He would rest in the grave until the end of the days, when he will arise to his inheritance. “*You shall rest, and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days*” (Dan. 12:13).

Peter said plainly on the day of Pentecost, after being endowed with the Holy Spirit power, “*David ... is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. David did not ascend into the heavens...*” (Acts 2:29, 34). All the faithful and unfaithful servants of God remain in the grave until Christ returns. Only Christ has been raised from the dead to immortality and ascended into heaven; then after He returns others will be resurrected. “*Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits [first from among many] of those who have fallen asleep [died, margin]. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming*” (1 Cor. 15:20, 23).

No souls go to heaven

You have likely heard that at death your body goes to the grave but your soul goes to heaven...or it goes to hell where it writhes in pain for eternity. Soul is from the Hebrew word **nephesh** and means “**creature**, being, i.e., an animal of any kind, as a living thing in creation (Gen. 1:20); **person**, i.e., a human being as a living person (Ex 16:16)” — DBL. Numerous passages in Scripture support this:

The following two passages are in a Hebrew poetic form called a couplet, in which a statement is made followed by another statement, in this case, both having the same meaning. “*He keeps back his soul (his whole being) from the Pit [shachath, destruction, the grave], and his life from perishing by the sword*” (Job 33:18). First, his soul is kept from the pit (grave), and second, his life is preserved from the sword. The two statements mean that he is preserved as a living person. The second passage elaborates: “*Yes, his soul (his whole being) draws near the Pit, and his life to the executioners*” (Job 33:22). The soul (whole person) does not go to heaven at death; it goes to the pit or grave.

Isaiah agrees: “*You have lovingly delivered my soul from the pit of corruption*” (Isa. 38:17). The soul (whole person) is put in the pit or grave where it decays, and as we previously saw, goes back to the dust.

The soul dies: “*You have delivered my soul from death*” (Ps. 56:13). Again, “*He did not spare their soul from death, but gave their life over to the plague*” (Psalm 78:50).

The Psalmist prophesied of Christ’s burial

and resurrection, “*For You will not leave my soul in Sheol [Hebrew, grave], nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption*” (Ps. 16:10). Christ’s soul was not left in the grave that He should decay. The Psalmist said, “*You have delivered my soul from death*” (Ps. 116:8). “*He who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul [whole person] from death*” [penal death at Christ’s return] (James 5:20). In each of these verses, the “soul” is destined for the “pit” or the grave, not for heaven. If there was ever any doubt about the state of the soul after death, or the meaning of “soul,” these passages show us that the term soul is used for the person himself, not some separate part of the being that leaves the body at death.

What “spirit” goes to heaven?

It is argued that if the soul does die at death, then there must be something that goes to heaven at death. They go to Ecclesiastes to support this belief, where we read, “*Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it*” (Ecc. 12:7).

What is this spirit that returns to God? Spirit is from the Hebrew word, **ruwach**, which is defined as “**wind, breath, mind, spirit**. The basic idea of **ruwach**, (Gr. **pneuma**) is “air in motion” — Theological Word Book of the Old Testament. **Ruwach**, from Hebrew or **pneuma** from Greek, is understood to be air, breath. Other resources agree: “(1) spirit, breath (a) breath of the mouth” — GES. The Psalmist said, “*You take away their breath, they die and return to their dust*” (Ps. 104:29). When we understand the meaning of the words used, all becomes plain. The breath goes back into God’s vast reservoir of air which God designed, and the body decays and goes back to dust. Also consider that this is a universal statement. **ALL spirits return to God the giver. If this referred to the good people going to heaven, all the bad people would be going there, too!**

DID CHRIST’S DEATH BENEFIT ANY RIGHTEOUS PERSONS WHO HAD DIED BEFORE HIM?

There was no need for any who had died before Christ was crucified to have anyone pay a penalty for their sins to make them “righteous” or “blameless” before God. Each will be judged on the basis of his or her own character, for “*we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad*” (2 Cor. 5:10).

Christ never was sacrificed to cover anyone's sins, or to make anyone righteous, or to pay any penalty in another's behalf.

It is widely taught that none can be righteous without Christ's literal shed blood, but there were men and women who were righteous long before Christ came into the world.

Abel, Adam's second born son, was righteous, and this was after Adam's so-called "fall." We read in 1 John that Cain murdered his brother Abel. Why did he do it? "*Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous*" (1 John 3:12). We also have record of a righteous **Noah** (Gen. 7:1). Jesus said there were "*many prophets and righteous men*" before Him (Matt. 13:17).

Just before Christ was born were **Zacharias and Elizabeth** who "*were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless*" (Luke 1:6). Yet it is preached that no one can obey the commandments of God. Some even go so far as to say that it is a sin to even try to obey God's commandments. And as you well know, God has been dismissed from the courtroom, kicked out of our schools, and is not allowed in public. What does Christ say about this? "*But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven*" (Matt. 10:33). Aren't we denying God and His anointed when we refuse to hear and honor Him? Again, "*If you love Me, keep My commandments*" and "*If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love*" (John 14:15, 15:10). But what about those who do not keep His commandments? "*Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven*" (Matt. 7:21).

Christ will return and sit in judgment over the earth, and He says that "*Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'*" (Matt. 7:22–23). These are the ones who do not understand the Word of God or obey His commandments.

WHAT ABOUT THE PEOPLE WHO HAVE NEVER HEARD OF JESUS?

Those who do not know God or the commandments Jesus taught and lived by certainly cannot keep them. And if they do not keep Christ's commandments, they will have no part with Christ.

This statement may be shocking, but we would say it only because we believe it has the full support of the Scriptures.

The Psalmist described this class as being without understanding. Even though they be honorable people, and do well for themselves in this world, they die "*like sheep*," "*like the beasts that perish*" (see Psalm 49:14, 19–20).

Those who die without knowledge and understanding of God's law simply remain in the grave and sleep a perpetual sleep from which they will not awake (Jer. 51:57). They will "*be as though they had not been*" (Obadiah 16).

This may seem unfair, especially if you were taught that God loves everybody irrespective of character. But it is fair for two reasons:

1. God Himself takes responsibility for informing those who will make use of His knowledge and seek His eternal rewards.

Jesus put it in these words: "*If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine*" (John 7:17). Those who will obey **will know**. He said it again in John 8:12, "*I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness.*" God can know who will use His knowledge and who will not because He has divine foreknowledge—not predestination but knowing in advance what one will do. He knows the "*end from the beginning*" (Isa. 46:9–10). With His divine foreknowledge, not one will ever be lost who will accept the words of Christ and obey them.

Actually, it is God's goodness not to inform those who have no desire for Him. Those whom God knows will not desire His eternal rewards enough to meet His qualifications can have a better, fuller life **without** the restrictions that the law of God would bring into their lives; it is God's mercy **not** to dispense His knowledge to everyone.

2. God cannot allow those who are disobedient (lawless) in His kingdom and at the same time fulfill His promises to the faithful.

If God allowed lawlessness (disobedience to law) in the Kingdom, He would be violating the promise to the faithful that "*there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life*" (Rev. 21:27). Nor could Jesus say, "*Depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!*" (Matt. 7:23).

And, contrary to popular belief, we are not **made** righteous at the judgment, or at death, as Christ tells us in the last chapter of Revelation: "*He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who*

Christ never was sacrificed to cover anyone's sins, or to make anyone righteous, or to pay any penalty in another's behalf.

God Himself takes responsibility for informing those who will make use of His knowledge and seek His eternal rewards.

is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still" (Rev. 22:11).

WHAT ARE YOUR TEACHINGS ON BEING ACCEPTED INTO HEAVEN?

The earth, not heaven, is to be the future home of the righteous.

Jesus is forthright, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" (Matt. 5:5). And recall God's own words, "For thus says the Lord, who created the heavens, who is God, who formed the earth and made it, who has established it, who did not create it in vain, who formed it to be inhabited: 'I am the Lord, and there is no other'" (Isa. 45:18).

Jesus taught us to pray, "Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10). Notice two points in particular. 1) We are to pray that the Kingdom come, and 2) we are to pray that God's will be done on earth **as it is in heaven**. This earth will be inhabited with glorified beings **just as heaven is now inhabited**.

Therefore I must again rephrase your question to "What are your teachings on being accepted into the Kingdom?"

To be accepted into the Kingdom, it is necessary to live by all of Christ's commands. To do this we must become thoroughly familiar with the Scriptures. In fact, this is the purpose for which the Scripture has been given us, because "All Scripture ... given by inspiration of God, ... is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim 3:16-17).

Paul urged the Roman Christians—and us—to "present [our] bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is [our] reasonable service" (Rom. 12:1).

"Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap" (Gal. 6:7).

Some say that you only have to keep the Ten Commandments; while others say even that cannot be done. They do not understand that the Decalogue was part of a temporary civil law and had nothing to do with salvation any more than the laws of State we have to obey today.

What did Jesus say about the laws given the Israelites in the wilderness?

"**You have heard that it was said** to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.' **But I say to you** that whoever is angry with his brother ~~without a cause~~ [the words "without a cause" were added in translation, they were not part of the original text] **shall be in danger of the judgment.**" "**You have heard that it was said** to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' **But I say to you** that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matt. 5:21-22, 27-28, emphasis ours). The apostle Paul refers to this higher, more demanding law as the "law of faith." James calls it "the royal law" (Jas. 2:8-10).

The last two verses of Ecclesiastes summarize God's law for salvation: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil" (Ecc. 12:13-14). ■

ANSWERS TO BIBLE QUESTIONS ON PAGE 21

WHEN

1. Immediately after his conversion (Gal. 1:1, 15-18)
2. When the Israelites reached Canaan, and began to eat of the old corn of the land (Josh. 5:12)
3. On the fourteenth day of the first month (Abib) (Num. 9:5; Deut. 16:1)
4. In His discourse at the Last Supper (John 13:1; 14:26)
5. When his face shone after talking with God (angel) on Mt. Sinai (Ex. 34:29-35)
6. The master thrust an awl through the slave's ear into the door of his house (Deut. 15:12-17)
7. Walking to them on the sea in the storm (John 6:16-20)
8. When Christ foretold His crucifixion (Mark 8:31-32)

FINISH THE QUOTATION

1. "the things which God has prepared for those who love Him" (1 Cor. 2:9 NKJV)
2. "my heart said to You, 'Your face, Lord, I will seek'" (Ps. 27:8 NKJV)
3. "abomination to the Lord: / his delight" (Prov. 11:1)
4. "light excels darkness" (Eccl. 2:13 NKJV)
5. "in the sight of any bird" (Prov. 1:17)
6. "every man a liar" (Rom. 3:4)
7. "Apollos watered; God gave the increase" (1 Cor. 3:6)
8. "the yoke in his youth" (Lam. 3:27)
9. "who brings good news, who proclaims peace, who brings glad tidings of good things, who proclaims salvation, who says to Zion, 'Your God reigns!'" (Isa. 52:7)
10. "fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building" (1 Cor. 3:9 NKJV)

WHERE WAS (WERE)

1. Beersheba (Gen. 21:22-32)
2. In a city in the hill country of Judah (Luke 1:39, 40, 57-60)
3. Nazareth (Luke 2:1-5)
4. In the field watching their flocks (Luke 2:8-9)
5. In Rome (Acts 28:16, 30)
6. At the feast of the Passover, in the upper room (Mark 14:15; John 13:1-2; 26-30)
7. In the land of Moab (Ruth 1:1-5)
8. At Jacob's well in Samaria (John 4:1-7)
9. At a feast in his palace (Dan. 5:1-5)
10. Bethsaida (John 1:44)
11. Hanging in a giant oak tree by his hair (2 Sam. 18:9-14)

KNOW YOUR BIBLE

"Let the wise listen and add to their learning" -Proverbs 1:5



WHEN

1. When did Paul spend three years in Arabia?
2. When and where did the fall of manna cease?
3. When does the passover begin?
4. When did Christ make the promise to send the Holy Spirit to His followers?
5. When was Moses compelled to cover his face with a veil?
6. When a Hebrew bond-servant chose perpetual servitude, what ceremony bound him to it?
7. When did Christ say to His disciples, "It is I; be not afraid"?
8. When did Peter rebuke Christ?

FINISH THE QUOTATION

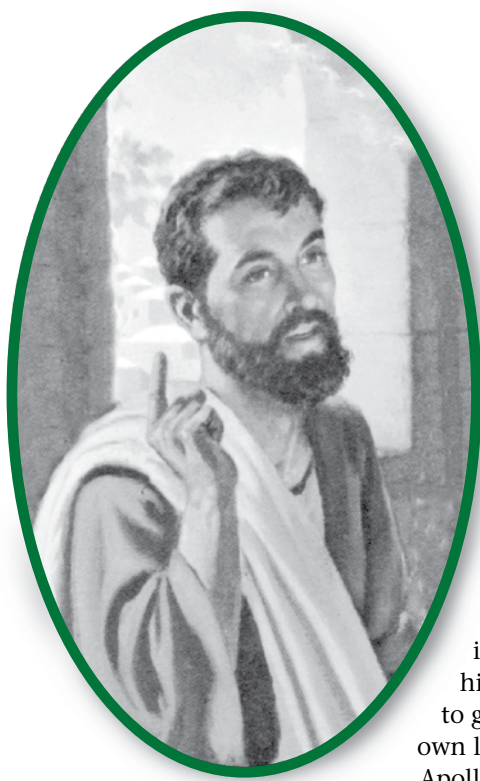
1. "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man _____."
2. "When You said, 'Seek My face,' _____."
3. "A false balance is _____: but a just weight is _____."
4. "Then I saw that wisdom excels folly as _____."
5. "Surely in vain the net is spread _____."
6. "Let God be true, but _____."
7. "I have planted, _____ watered; but God _____."
8. "It is good for a man that he bear _____."
9. "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him _____."
10. "For we are God's _____."

WHERE WAS (WERE)...

1. Abraham when he made his covenant with Abimelech, king of the Philistines?
2. John the Baptist born?
3. Mary and Joseph when the decree went out for all to be taxed?
4. The shepherds of Bethlehem when an angel appeared unto them?
5. Paul when he lived in his own rented house?
6. Christ when Judas took his final leave from Him?
7. Ruth when she met Naomi's son and was married to him?
8. Jesus when He talked with the Samaritan woman?
9. King Belshazzar when he saw the writing on the wall?
10. The native place of Andrew, Peter and Philip?
11. Absalom when he was killed?



ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON PAGE 20



Needed: *More Apolloses*

By H. EVA GOERTZEN

If you had happened to visit the city of Ephesus during the summer of about 54 AD, you might have met a man named Apollos.

Apollos' name appears only ten times in all of the New Testament—twice in Acts, seven times in 1 Corinthians and once in Titus. Yet, what we learn about him in these contexts challenge us to greater accomplishments in our own life.

Apollos was a Jew from the city of Alexandria. It is always interesting to know where a friend has come from. It tells us something about him. It makes us feel better acquainted. Knowing something of Apollos' home city gives us a better appreciation of this zealous brother.

Alexandria, the Egyptian city founded by Alexander the Great, was the second largest city in the Roman Empire at that time.

A center of Greek culture, the site of the largest library in the world at that time, it was an important seaport and the Empire's greatest educational center.

Philo Judaeus, a Jewish philosopher of the first century, estimated the Jewish population of Alexandria at a little less than one million. Repeated dispersions of the Jews had brought these expatriated people to the city. By this time, many had received the privileges of citizenship and everywhere were an industrious, enterprising and successful people—merchants, bankers, or scholars of the first rank.

Situated on the edge of the rich Nile Delta, Alexandria was a prosperous city, busy with commerce, imports and exports. If we can picture a little of the environment in which Apollos grew up, we are in a better position to give him the credit he deserves.

As a schoolboy, he was likely as familiar with Homer and Plato as with Moses and Isaiah. On a holiday he may have walked

out of the city along the seven-furlong pier to the famous lighthouse island, where the sacred Septuagint had received its finishing touches. Often he watched the light from the Pharos lighthouse, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. As a student, he visited the renowned Alexandrian library, in which had been collected the literature of the ancient world and all the best books of Israel as well as the best of Greece and Rome, Egypt and India. For the young, inquiring mind, Alexandria had much that could carry a brilliant young student away from God. With prosperity and ability came more temptation: to astrology, magic, gnosticism.

We are not told all we would like to know about Apollos, but with Alexandria as a background, and his sincere devotion to Christianity as he knew it, this man Apollos was no moral pygmy. He had already stood strong for his faith before he reached the city of Ephesus. Yes, it is heartening to meet this distinguished Jew consecrating his talents to the Lord. Various translators call him "eloquent," "learned," "a gifted speaker," "a man of learning." And he was not speaking the words of Stoics, nor of the Epicureans. He was speaking the things of the Lord.

Some who have much less to boast of tell a great deal more about their homeland, but Apollos was not among these.

And Apollos was more than a great orator. The sacred writer says that he was "mighty in the Scriptures," even to the point of being an authority. If something was in the Scriptures, he knew it, and did his best to understand it. The Scriptures gave his speech power. All the wisdom of Aristotle and Quintillion combined would have left Apollos weak; the wisdom of God made him mighty.

Apollos was also burning with zeal for God. He also had true "spiritual fervor." He was no cold, distant teacher. His was a heart on fire with what he believed.

We are further told that Apollos taught "diligently" or "accurately" (RSV). He was

*Who will
be an Apollos today?*

careful in handling the Scriptures. He recognized their Divine nature, respected their authority, and did his best to convey their meaning accurately.

A careless attitude is detrimental in any field of knowledge. How much more in things spiritual! There was no hesitancy in his tone. Strong in the Lord, Apollos infused courage into the hearts of his hearers. So when this enthusiastic young teacher came to Ephesus, people listened. And they were impressed.

But there were two in his audience who recognized immediately a limitation on his knowledge. With all his eloquence and fine delivery, he *“knew only the baptism of John.”* Exactly what he lacked we are not sure, but he was not fully informed about the way of Christ. Though he was *“instructed in the way of the Lord,”* he did not have the whole picture. Perhaps he had not heard about Pentecost and the giving of the Holy Spirit. Perhaps he had been away from Jerusalem during Jesus’ death and resurrection and had not heard of it. Think what a limitation this would have placed on his teaching!

When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they recognized immediately the gap in his knowledge and acted tactfully. They did not stand up in public and condemn him. They quietly invited him to their home, and, as we read in the Scriptures, *“explained more accurately to him what the way of God really meant”* (Acts 18:26 Moffatt).

How well would we have done had we been in the position of Aquila and Priscilla? Would we have been shifting in our seats and looking at other people, wondering what they were thinking? Before leaving, would we have let a good share of the congregation know what we thought of Apollos? We admire Aquila and Priscilla for their wisdom, their courage and true devotion to Christ. By their example they showed the spirit of Christ in their lives.

Apollos, too, was a noble example. A brilliant young student from Alexandria, he was willing to be instructed by a Christian couple who wove tent cloth for a living. He might easily have looked down his nose at tent makers—what could they know about anything? But Apollos was humble, eager to learn.

We can imagine that Apollos had many more uplifting visits with Priscilla and Aquila,

as they encouraged each other in their common faith.

The Bible tells us that he *“proved a source of great strength to those who believed”* in Corinth. Even more, he took on the task of debating publicly with the Jews, powerfully refuting the arguments of the unbelievers, showing by the Scriptures that Jesus is the Messiah (Acts 18:28). His willingness to be a student made him an even better teacher.

Unashamed herald of the Christian faith, Apollos is a man we would like to meet.

When Apollos decided to travel to Greece, Priscilla and Aquila sent along a glowing letter of introduction, encouraging the believers to give him a kindly welcome. A gifted speaker and eloquent, Apollos very quickly became a verbal champion in Corinth, debating the opponents of the Gospel in public. As has often happened, Apollos’ abilities soon created a problem. Some of the Corinthians began to follow Apollos rather than his message, and considered themselves his exclusive followers. Others reacted by expressing their loyalty to Paul, still others to Peter. A fourth group, considering themselves more spiritual than the rest, named themselves the Christ-party. This created a problem so difficult that Paul had to confront them on their divided spirit. In his First Letter to the Corinthians (chapters 1 and 3) Paul condemned the spirit of division and talked about unity. He made it very plain that he and Apollos and Peter were all fellow-workers in God’s vineyard. Though doing different tasks, they were one in aim and service.

Paul condemned the Corinthians’ party spirit but he had only admiration for Apollos as a fellow-minister of the Gospel. Warmly he wrote of Apollos as the one who had *“watered”* the seeds of the Gospel that Paul had planted.

In a late writing to his beloved Titus, Paul speaks warmly of Brother Apollos. He bids the young bishop to help him on his journey and see that he has everything he needs (Titus 3:13). With the passing of years, Apollos had not grown weary in well doing. He was still enthusiastic and wholehearted.

There is a challenge ringing today: If God be God, serve Him!

Who will be an Apollos today? ■

*A brilliant
young scholar from
Alexandria, Apollos was
humble, eager to learn
about Christ—even
from tent makers.*



AWESOME DESIGNS

"Stand still and consider the wondrous works of God." -Job 37:14

MEET THE Amazing Engineers!

They may not use the same materials you would use in a construction project. And they may not have the same tools or equipment, but you will have to work fast to keep ahead of them. In a single night a colony of beavers have been known to build a dam across a stream, effectively stopping the flow of the water. They have even been known to build dams with two or three tiers upstream from the dam to hold back the force of the water. Then, in the pond that forms behind the dam, they build their lodges.

Beavers are second only to humans in their ability to manipulate their environment. Living in rivers, streams, lakes, marshes, and swamps, beavers take on large-scale construction projects. Masters at dam building, they can completely change the vegetation and animal life of an area.

How do they do it? They are doing what their great Creator—and ours—designed them to do!



In researching this fascinating animal, I came upon many statements that sounded like the beaver made his own choices—i.e., the beaver has a very heavy fur because he needed it to survive. The beaver has very sharp self-sharpening teeth because he must use them to fell trees to survive. I also read that the beaver coated his teeth with iron because gnawing wood is very demanding on the beavers' teeth! (Did our ancestors choose to enamel their teeth with calcium?)

Those who hold to the common views of evolution believe that animals such as the beaver survived because little by little over many years they adapted to their environment. In other words, beavers do well in water because they have lived so long in the water that they have developed the appropriate type of feet, limbs and fur necessary for survival—as though they solved their own problems without intelligent direction. (If so, how did they survive while they were in the adapting process?)

Think about it as you are reminded of some wonders of this singular animal—and give praise to the great Designer, who, the Bible says, *"made...the earth and everything in it"* (Neh. 9:6).

Beavers are designed for the water

Beavers inhabit waterways of almost every state and province of North America. Powerful animals about 4 feet in length and weighing as much as 60 pounds, they are North America's largest rodent. Able to move well on both land and in water, they are best in the water.

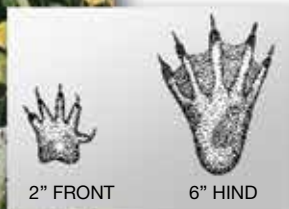
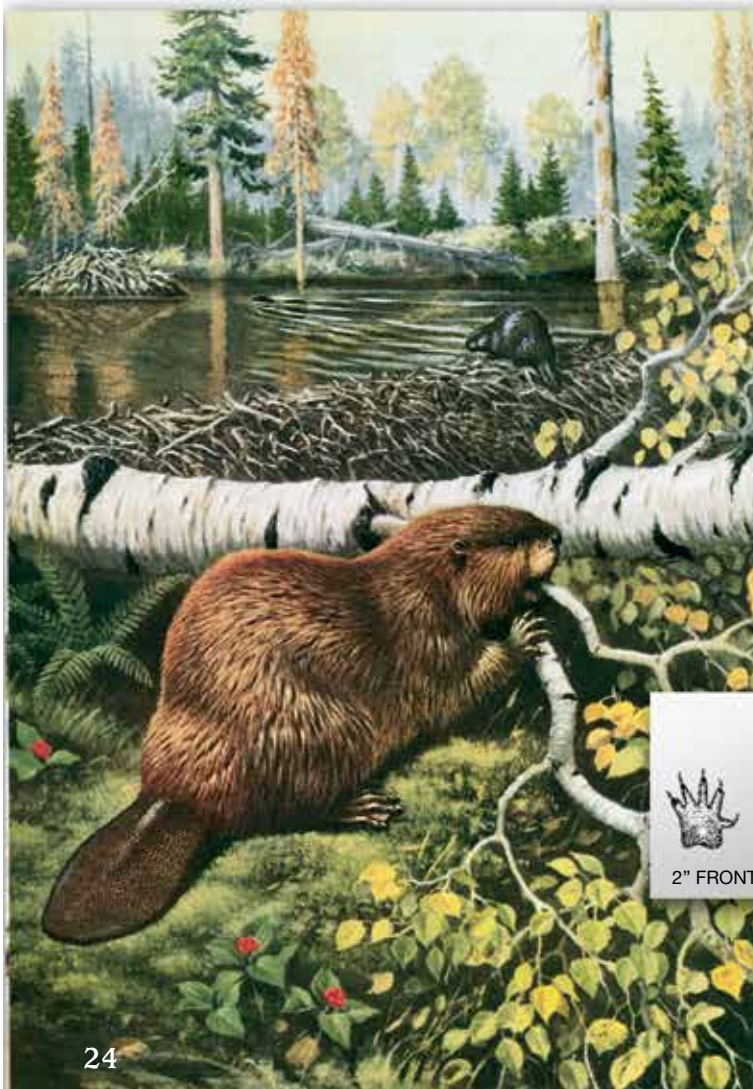
What do beavers need to live and work in shallow, cold water?

□ A waterproof suit?

The beaver has an inch-thick, double fur, fully waterproofed by an oil which the beaver makes and combs into its fur (the beaver has a special split nail on one toe of each of its hind feet to serve as a comb for this purpose).

□ Ability to swim?

The beavers are excellent swimmers—when first born they are able to swim! Their large hind feet, six inches across, give them strong propulsion through the water. (By con-



trast, their front feet are only about 2 to 3 inches across, but are just right to hold sticks and branches while they eat, swim or walk on their hind feet.) Beavers are even designed with their own built-in flippers—their hind feet have webbing between the toes, similar to a duck's.

❑ *Stoppers for ears and nose?*

The beavers have valves in their ears which close to keep the water out when they are swimming. They also have valves in their nostrils which form a watertight seal, so that they do not get water up their noses when they dive or swim under water. And beavers have one more—they have a flap of skin behind their front teeth so that they can cut with their front teeth and keep their throat closed. Useful? Surely is when they need to cut down a tree underwater. Or carry a stick in their front teeth while swimming underwater. (How did Mr. Beaver figure out how to accomplish this?)

❑ *Goggles to protect their eyes?*

The beavers have something better than goggles. Their Designer has equipped them with a transparent eyelid that closes when they enter the water. This special eyelid protects their eyes from nasty debris floating in the water, so that even with their eyes “closed” they can keep swimming and see where they are headed.

❑ *Ability to steer themselves through the water?*

Beavers are clearly built to travel through water. Their broad, flat tails function as rudders, helping the beaver to maneuver large logs and to swim in the direction they intend.

Designed to build

What does one need to be able to build in a woody, wet environment? Our marvelous Designer has equipped Mr. and Mrs. Beaver with a set of tools that go with them wherever they go.

❑ *Sharp cutting tools*

A beaver is said to be able to cut down a willow tree 5 inches in diameter in a minute. (Have you heard the phrase, “working like a beaver”?) How do they do it? Our great Designer has provided the tools: two self-sharpening, chisel-like incisor teeth on each jaw at the very front of the beaver's mouth. It just happens that the upper teeth overlap the lower incisors(!), creating friction that keeps the teeth at chisel sharpness.

Don't teeth wear down from continually gnawing, chop-

ping, and chewing tree trunks, branches and bark? Beaver teeth come with a lifetime warranty—their front incisors never stop growing as long as the beaver lives. (Did the beaver plan or design this feat? Wouldn't we like to grow ourselves a new set of teeth as we age?!)

❑ *Superstrong cutting tools*

The beaver's front teeth are also superstrong. While our teeth are covered with calcium, the exterior surface of the beaver's teeth is covered with iron. The beaver's teeth are built for durability.



A mother beaver in the safety of her lodge nurses three kits while a fourth explores on its own. Gnawed branches, rocks, grass, and other debris were cemented with mud and clay to build the lodge.

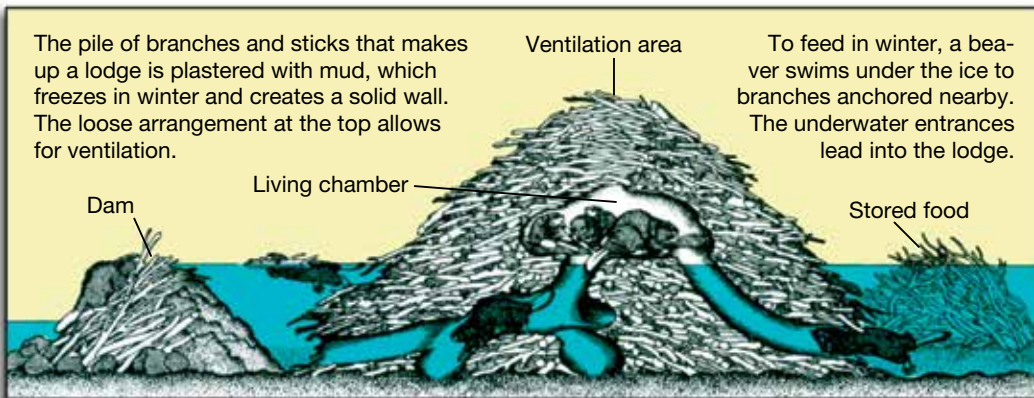
Engineering skills

Often the first evidence of beavers is the sudden appearance of a dam across a river or creek. Quickly the area behind the dam becomes a muddy pond—just what the beavers want. The main reason: their chief predators don't like to walk through muddy, wet areas.

The beaver's engineering skills are amazing. If the water is slow moving, the beaver will build a dam straight across the water. If the water in the stream is fast flowing, they will build the dam on a curve, so that it can withstand the force of water more effectively. Beavers have even been known to slow down the speed of the river upstream by piling in branches to reduce the water's speed so that it won't wash away their home.

In the shallow water above the dam, Mr. and Mrs. Beaver construct their lodge, or sometimes in the bank adjacent to the river or pond. Using small intertangled twigs, sticks, branches, and other debris, they create a large mounded structure. This lodge has one central above-water chamber, usually eight to twelve feet high

CREDIT: ABC'S OF NATURE, ED. RICHARD L. SHEFFEL



The beavers' dam, lodge, and pile of stored food are shown here in a cutaway view.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 29



YOUTH IN CHRIST

"Remember your Creator in the days of your youth." -Eccl. 12:1

PRETTY ON THE INSIDE

Kay and Karen loved visiting Grandma because she had such interesting things to play with. Today it was dressing up. The girls giggled as they awkwardly made their way down the stairs wearing some old silk dresses which were much too long, and hats that grandmother had worn a long time ago, and some fancy shoes they could hardly keep on their feet.

They giggled still more when they heard their mother coming to see what was going on. Their mother laughed, too, when she saw her daughters carefully making their way down the stairs. "How grown up my young ladies look today," she said.

"These were pretty clothes long ago, weren't they, Mama?" said Kay.

"They were probably somebody's prettiest clothes," her mother answered.

"They look funny now because nobody wears that kind any more. Clothes change. But I know a way of dressing up that never changes and never gets old."

"You do?" asked Karen. She wanted to know all about it.

"Yes," her mother explained, "by dressing up on the inside you will always be pretty."

"But how can we dress up on the inside?" asked Karen.

"Well, you see," said her mother, "when God looks at you, He sees more than just the outside of you. He sees your heart or inner self. He sees *why* you do what you do. This part of you, you can dress and decorate by being patient and sweet, honest, and thankful."

"God wants us to dress up by being kind and helpful, too, doesn't He, Mama?" said Kay, beginning to understand.

"That's right, Kay," said her mother. "And because Jesus wants everybody to be pretty on the inside, He will marry the ones who have that special wedding dress on."

"Mama, I want a wedding dress like that," decided Karen.

"Karen," objected Kay, "you can't marry Jesus. Can she, Mama?"

"Well, not just like that. You see, girls," explained Mother "Jesus' bride is His Church. The Bible tells us in Revelation 19:8 that His bride made her dress of '*fine linen, clean and bright*' which '*...is the righteous acts of the saints.*' Peter wrote, '*Don't just decorate yourself on the outside, but be pretty on the inside.*'"

Kay looked at her shoes and dress. "Is it wrong to dress up and be pretty on the outside?" she asked.

"Not necessarily," her mother answered, "For example, when we go to God's house, we wear our best and are neat and clean to show our respect for the Lord. But if we dress to be praised by others, then we are not pleasing God. It's much more important to be beautiful, clean and white on the inside—pretty with virtues like patience, kindness, purity, meekness and love—because that's what God sees." ■



**Don't decorate yourself
on the outside, but be pretty on the
inside.** -1 Peter 3:3-4, free paraphrase



GARY RUN FOR CLASS PRESIDENT?

Interest in the junior class election was gaining momentum, and posters were beginning to appear at strategic points in the halls at the Southside High School. They bore such slogans as "Vote for Hawkins for President, Win with Wilkins—Treasurer."

One day at a table in the school cafeteria, Mike said to Gary, "You ought to run for class president, Gary." The rest of the boys were quick to agree.

"Uh-uh. No politics for *me*," objected Gary. "I'm one of those rare birds who is going to school to get an education."

"That's exactly why you would make a good president," reasoned Mike. "Even though it may not look like it, most of us are serious about getting an education and growing up to be good citizens. But we need capable leaders, and in my opinion a practical joker or a hot-rod enthusiast is not a well qualified class officer."

"Mike!" objected Lee. "You make *politics* sound like it's a dirty word."

"Well, most of the time it is," interjected Duane.

Dan, usually a silent listener, could not keep quiet. "Most politicians *do* have shady reputations, and selfish motives. That's all the more reason why upstanding, honest fellows should step in and take over, whether in school or in government. We need people like you, Gary."

"Exactly! Agreed!" said Mike as he slapped Gary enthusiastically on the back. "We need you, Buddy. It's time to..." The loud buzzer interrupted Mike.

"Let us know tomorrow... Come on.... Be our man," several said as they grabbed their lunch stuff and hurried off to their classes.

The next day the boys at Gary's table were especially noisy. Gary felt relieved that the subject of election might be forgotten. But no, suddenly Mike tapped on the table quietly and spoke in a hushed voice. "We want to hear what Gary has to say, don't we?" All eyes turned to Gary.

Nervously Gary began, "One candidate for our junior class president has promised a winning football team."

"Another wants to push for more class trips. And a jokester has agreed to work for more school holidays and twenty minutes between classes. Personally, I could not support any of those platforms. I don't believe they'll benefit our junior class."

Gary placed copies of the ABC's of Education on the table. "When I started high school, my dad gave me a plaque with The ABC's of Education on it." He said, 'Son, if you follow these guidelines, you will graduate educated, responsible, happy and well loved. I saw the wisdom in it and I pledged to make an honest effort to live up to its standard.'

Gary continued, "I highly recommend The ABC's of Education to anyone who wants a good education and to be a good responsible citizen. But I am certain that most of the juniors (and many teachers) would not go for it. My platform wouldn't be appealing, doesn't sound exciting, and wouldn't get me elected because I will make *only* promises I can *keep*. That's why *politics* is not for me." ■

THE ABC'S OF EDUCATION

Average work is not good enough. There should be continued effort to improve the average.

Broadcasting empty chatter is a waste of time.

Spend your time tuning in to knowledge.

Be **Courteous** to classmates and teachers.

Don't get the wrong kind of exercise by running down your friends, jumping at conclusions, side-stepping responsibility, or pushing your luck.

Be **Enthusiastic** about class projects and completing your assignments on time.

Fences run around a lot without getting anywhere, so don't be a fence.

Keep **Growing**. The one who stops growing soon starts shrinking.

"**Hear** no evil, see no evil, speak no evil" isn't just "monkey business".

Intelligent discussion is constructive, but arguments are foolish.

Join no group that gets pleasure out of hurting others.

Keep your mind alert and your standards high.

Laurel chasing is selfish. Do your best, but share the honors and praise you get.

Make new friends and be loyal to the old ones.

Never pass up an opportunity simply because it wears work clothes.

"**Order** is heaven's first law." There is a right time and place for everything—studies, religion, exercise and social life.

Make **Promises** sparingly and keep them faithfully.

Ask **Questions** intelligently to show interest and alertness.

Rule your emotions, **respect** authority, and **reverence** that which is sacred.

Service is a stride toward success. Step lively, but don't step on others' toes.

Try, try again on things that seem difficult.

Use your mind to solve problems wisely.

Value only that which is good and true.

Work to be worthy of others' faith in you.

X-press sincere thanks and appreciation.

Yield to authority, and yield to others' opinions when it is apparent you are wrong.

Zealously pursue the goals you have chosen.

GROWING IN PATIENCE

by MELVA WALTON

Have you ever felt that your patience was tested to the point of endurance? Mine was today at the laundromat.

First, I must say how grateful I am to a very kind friend who provides my transportation. When she dropped me off at the laundromat, we agreed that she would pick me up in just one hour. That should provide me ample time to do my small amount of laundry.

As I walked around the room at the laundromat, I quickly realized that just about every washer was full.

"Be patient," I said to myself.

Looking all around the large room, I discovered only two unused machines, one of which was marked "Out of Order."

More patience.

Needing two machines and having only one hour of time, I located the lady proprietor to express my dilemma. The lady pulled out her keys and went immediately to check the sick machine, commenting that the people who had all the washers in use had gone out "on errands."

Still more patience.

Opening the coin box on the non-working machine, she pulled seven unused quarters from the coin slot and dropped them into my hand. "It's all yours now...should work fine." Apparently the previous operator had not put enough quarters into the money slot to activate it.

Success!

So in addition to having the two washers I needed, I was paid for being patient! And when my friend came by, I was ready and waiting.

It takes practice to overcome our faults, but aren't we better in every way when we learn self-control? We can't put the blame on any other person; each of us is responsible for his own deeds.

Every day has a special opportunity, if only we look for it, an opportunity to grow in patience. God has not promised us a bed of roses. But we can change ourselves if we will. We don't have to be the easily irritated, quick-tempered person we started out to be. And when we change, others may be encouraged to do the same. We never know who is watching us!

Lord, help me to grow in patience. ■



Sister Melva Walton, now age 91 and confined to a wheel chair, resides in the local County Home in her town, where she is a sunbeam to everyone she meets. She carries on a regular correspondence with all of her Church friends, encouraging them and being encouraged. She delights in reading her Bible, counting her blessings, and encouraging others to do the same. Her letters show her sunny, thankful spirit:

"God is so good to give us people to care for us in our old age. Praise His wonderful name!..."

"Now is my time to improve my virtues and let God's light shine in the little corner He has put me in...."

"I am so thankful I am here where I get good

care, good nurses and a clean environment."

"We have 6 nurses who remember to give us our pills at the right time, aids and a superintendent who are always kind, and cooks who are always surprising us with new things.... I get a whirlpool bath every 4 days, 3 meals a day, clean laundry every day, and a comfortable bed. When I can't push my wheelchair to the dining room because of too much pain, someone pushes it for me...."

"It is so great to know we serve a wonderful God and He controls all our tomorrows. I am trying to memorize as many of the Psalms as I can, for they are such a help to say...."

"Now I have more time to enjoy the Bible where its quiet in my room...."

"I thank my wonderful God for all He does for me. I can't thank Him enough." ■

DON'T SAY IT!

My friend Carol told of a conversation between herself and her husband John about remodeling their home. He said he wanted to buy a set of "How To" books he saw advertised and with the help of his brother, they could do much of the work themselves. "For a brief second," Carol said, "knowing how unmechanical both my husband and his brother were, I was about to make an unkind remark, like, 'So you want to have 'the house that Jack built'? We'd better look into better insurance coverage.'" But she held her tongue. "For once in my life," she said, "I *thought* before I *spoke*. I said to myself: Will this benefit John?" Of course, the answer was no. So after being quiet for a moment, she responded in a much more beneficial way.

We all have a big job to do to be always kind, thoughtful, and wise with our words. The book of James says that we are "perfect" when we have full control of our tongue (James 3:1–2).

We can all think of times we should have been more gentle, more encouraging and more understanding, keeping in mind that "...by [our] words [we] will be justified, and by [our] words [we] will be condemned" (Matt. 12:37).

We can all think of times when we should have said—or not said—something that came immediately to mind. Ecclesiastes tells us that there is a time to keep silent as well as a time to speak. Sometimes we can accomplish more by not saying anything.

And sometimes we must speak. There are times when to keep silent is to communicate the wrong message.

But when we're tempted to say something critical, or damaging, or confidential, or boastful, or whiny, or self-exalting, or patronizing, we need to stop and think about the effects of it.

Yes, there's a time to speak and a time to keep silent. There's a time to say it, and a time to remember: "Don't say it." ■

If you hold your tongue now you won't have to eat your words later.

MEET THE AMAZING ENGINEERS! CONTINUED FROM PAGE 25

and three feet wide. All the entrances are submerged—an ingenious design to keep unwelcome predators (like eagles and wolves) out of the beaver lodge.

In the fall of the year, the beavers plaster the outside of their lodge mound with mud, making a concrete-like layer that no predator can easily break through. This also makes the lodge waterproof—except for the peak, which is left open to allow air and light to enter.

In addition to building very cozy lodges, the beavers also dredge out underwater channels—grooves in the bottom of the lake, likely connecting their favorite eating places.

Who taught the beaver these highly specialized techniques of construction?

Dinner and snacks

Beavers are vegetarians, feeding primarily on the inner bark, leaves, and shoots of woody plants. They eat the bark, buds, stems, and twigs of trees such as aspen, maple, willow, birch, black elder, and black cherry. They really like soft

plants, too, and grasses, mushrooms, ferns, and the roots of water plants are favorite snacks.

When fall comes, the beavers start stockpiling winter food supplies. They sink large amounts of branches into the mud close to the entrances of their homes, so that even during a severe winter they have plenty of food just outside the door.

Can we think that a beaver just happened? This amazing animal that is capable of organizing its work, and planning its construction projects—can we think that this little animal developed by chance, without any intelligent guidance? Can we think that its nose flaps and ear flaps, and its remarkable ability to stay submerged for as long as 15 minutes just happened? Did the beaver design its own front teeth and coat them with iron so that they would be super sturdy? Did the beaver's teeth start growing continuously during its whole lifetime just because they were needed?

Such awesome designs, we can only exclaim with the Psalmist, "I will praise You, O Lord, with my whole heart; I will tell of all Your marvelous works" (Psalm 9:1). ■



Thanksgiving is good,
thanksliving is better.

The art of thanksgiving is thanksliving.

It is gratitude in action. It is sacrifice and service.

It is thanking God for the gift of life by living it triumphantly.

It is thanking God for your talents and abilities by accepting them as obligations to be invested in the highest good for you by doing things for others.

It is thanking God for opportunities by accepting them as a challenge to achievement.

It is thanking God for happiness by striving to make others happy.

It is thanking God for inspiration by trying to be an inspiration to others.

It is thanking God for health and strength by the care and reverence you show your body.

It is thanking God for the creative ideas that enrich life by adding your own creative contributions to His cause.

It is thanking God for each new day by living it to the fullest.

It is thanking God by giving hands, arms, legs, heart and voice in a thankful spirit.

*It is adding to your prayers of thanksgiving the acts of *thanksliving*.*

Be thankful for what you have received and also for what you have escaped.

*If I bear the fruits of righteousness,
their sweet fruits my life will bless.*

Gratitude to God should be as regular as our heartbeat. How else could we “pray without ceasing”?

*Lord of the harvest, Your liberal hand
Bestows new plenty o’er the land,
When sounds of music fill the air.
We too will raise
Our hymn of praise,
For we Your common bounties share.*

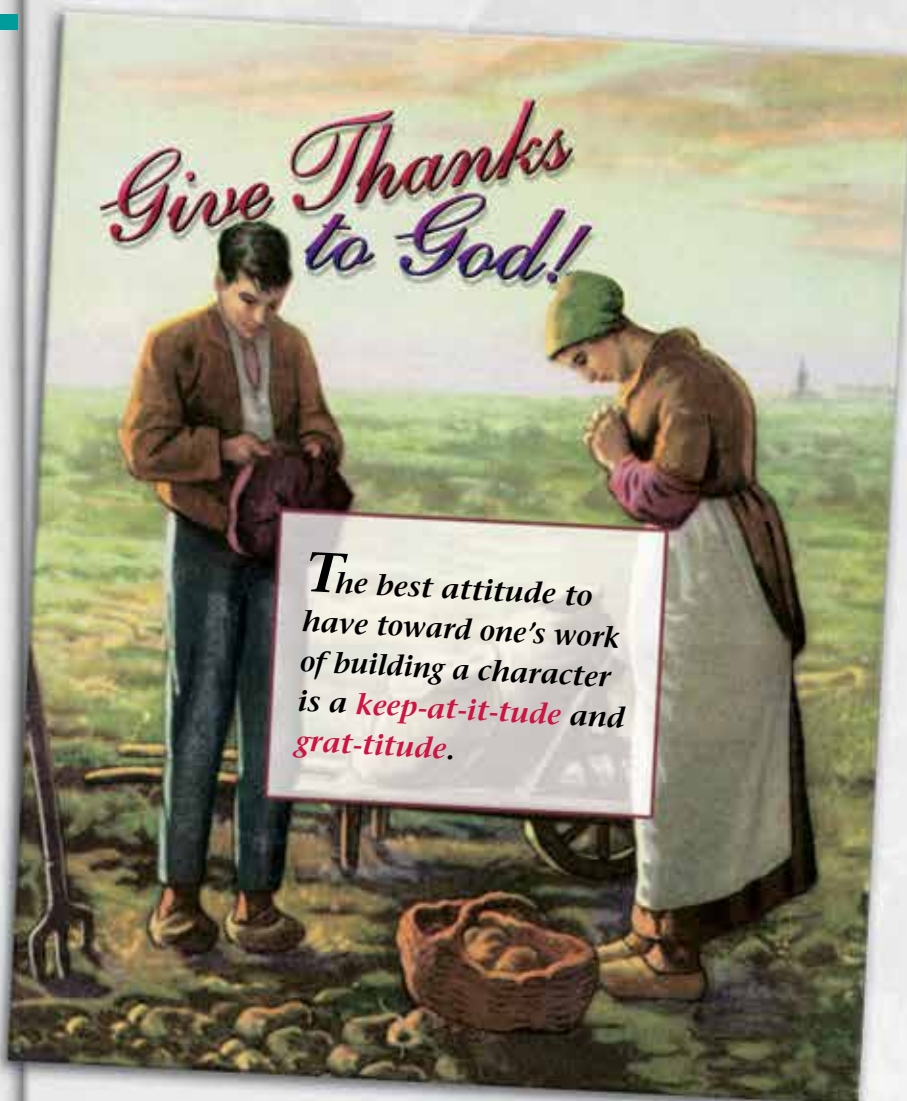
*Lord of the harvest, all is Thine:
The rains that fall, the sun that shines,
The seed once hidden in the ground,
The skill that makes our fruits abound:
New every year,
Your gifts appear;
New praises from our lips shall sound.*

Be thankful if your job is a little harder than you like. You can’t sharpen a knife on a piece of rubber.

*Thankfulness puts life in perspective.
It helps us to see how dependent we are—
on God, our families, friends and
others—past present and future.
We can’t make it alone.*

A handful of good living
is worth a bushel of good learning.

*Thankfulness doesn’t depend on what we have.
We can be content with little and
miserable with much.*



You will never outgrow reasons to be thankful...

- ◆ for the earth that gives you a place to stand,
- ◆ for the sun that gives you warmth and light,
- ◆ for the tree that gives you shade,
- ◆ for the air that lets you breathe,
- ◆ for the sprouting seeds that give you food,
- ◆ for friends who walk by your side and hold your hand,
- ◆ for the God who gives you life,
- ◆ for Jesus Christ who left you a perfect example,
- ◆ for the Bible that gives you direction and hope,
- ◆ for the fellowship of the Church that gives you strength,
- ◆ for the hope of future life that takes the tragedy out of death,
- ◆ for countless other blessings.

You will never outgrow the reasons to be thankful. For you are a dependent being, and that dependency will last a lifetime



*We Will
We Had
Wish
Given Him More!*

***H**ow much will we do for our Master,
You and I in the vineyard today?
What worth do we place on the Kingdom?
How much are we willing to pay
To share in its glories supernal,
We who cling to this substance of clay?
How much will we gladly surrender
To dwell in its portals for aye?*

***T**he disciples who followed the Master
Were strangers to this world and time;
They went with Him preaching the Kingdom,
And learned of that New World sublime.
Inspired by the view from Faith's mountain,
Their eye on the prize held in store,
They gave all they had, and still dreaming,
They wished they could give Him yet more.*

***W**hat of us as our footsteps push forward,
As our longings mount up to the skies?
May the hard roads ahead never daunt us,
Our eye on the glorious prize!
Praise God, who the plan has designed,
Praise Christ our Redeemer and Friend,
And to all who have gone in His footsteps
Be honor forever, Amen.*

***A**nd when we see Christ in His beauty,
When the faithful all meet friend with friend;
When the joys of the New World are opened,
And the cares of this age have an end,
And we enter His presence forever,
All safe on that heavenly shore,
Our sorrows and toils all forgotten,
We will wish we had given Him more!*

—Ruth E. Sisson

***By this My Father
is glorified, that you
bear much fruit; so you
will be My disciples.***

— John 15:8