

Megiddo Message

*Who defined the boundaries of
the sea...and said, 'Thus far and
no farther will you come. Here your proud
waves must stop!'—Job 38:8, 11, NLT*

Vol. 85, No. 7
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Is GOD Obligated to ME?

WHAT? The very thought seems preposterous, that the infinite God could be indebted to a lowly mortal being! He who is so mighty, all-powerful and everlasting!

And yet, in a very special sense, it is true—it is true because God is true to His word, and I can depend upon Him. If I am living as He has charged me to live, if I am loyal and true to Him, He is faithful and will keep His promises to me.

God's relation to His human family is a covenant relationship. This is the plan upon which the whole scheme of salvation has operated from the beginning. When a man or woman makes a covenant with God, God in turn makes a covenant with them—that as they do, God will then do. This places one part of the responsibility on us, and the second—and greater—responsibility upon God. This means that if I do on my part and am faithful to my part of the agreement, God is obligated to do on His part and fulfill to me the blessings *He* has promised. God, therefore, is obligated to me.

But the obligation is a contingent one. Its binding power arises from my meeting the prerequisite conditions on which God established His obligation. God devised this system Himself; He created His own obligation and also announced the conditions on which it would be binding.

The Word of God is replete with such contingent Divine obligations. One is found in Isaiah 26:3, where God has promised to “*keep in perfect peace*” who? Who is God obligated to? There is a condition on both sides. God promises to “*keep*” him “*whose*

mind is steadfast” in God “*because he trusts*” God (Isa. 26:3, NIV). Here are both sides of the contract. If we trust, God will keep.

When the mind loses its focus, the heart loses its peace.

There are promises for now and there are promises for the future; but all are contingent on *my* life now. His promises are made on clearly stated conditions and can be realized only if we meet those conditions. For this reason we need to learn the prayer of the Psalmist, “*Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting*” (Ps. 139:23-24). And if we fail to see some of the blessings promised, can we blame God? Should we not look first to our own deficiencies?

God's obligation to me is conditional; however, the promises He has made are true and sure if I do on my part. It is also clear that I am able to meet those conditions, or God would not have signed this compact with me; for He knows my frame, my abilities and possibilities. I cannot back off and say when the going is rough, “I can't do it,” and say it truthfully. I might say it, but it is only a flimsy attempt to cover my own lack of concentrated application.

To more fully understand God's obligation to me, I want to think about what He has promised. He is ready to do on His part; He is able, abundantly able; and He has stated the terms. My task is the performing of *my* part of the agreement.

If I do, I am sure God will be more than willing to fulfill His part. He will *never* go back on His word. □

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).

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.

The Herald and the KING

OUR PLANET will soon witness the greatest events in its history. For centuries God has been silent. But that silence will soon be broken by the arrival of Elijah the prophet, who comes to herald the Second Advent of Jesus Christ. "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: ... lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (Mal. 4:5-6).

Then shall follow the King of kings and Lord of lords, to begin His momentous work of transforming our world into the glorious and eternal Kingdom of God.

IN THIS ISSUE ...

Editorial	
IS GOD OBLIGATED TO ME?	2
Sermon	
LIVING IN THE LIGHT OF THE END	4
Prayer	10
Pondering the Word	12
What About You? • A Ringing Verdict	
Article	
OUR LITTLE CHURCH	13
WHY DISCOURAGED?	14
Story	
THE UNSOLICITED REBUKE	16
Letters	17
Know Your Bible?	
DO YOU KNOW?	18
Find the Misfit	
Article	
HOPE: AN ANCHOR THAT HOLDS	19
Questions and Answers	
CREATION AND THE SABBATH	20
On Baptism • 666? • It Pleased the Lord to Bruise Him?	
Articles	
I WARN YOU	22
Discussion	
DOES THE LAW OF GOD'S ALLOW SELF-DEFENSE?	23
Back Cover	
THE BATTLE WITH ME	28

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Living In the Light of the End

The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray.

Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.

Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.

Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.

If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you.

But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.

If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.

If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler.

However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.

For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God?

And, "If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?"

So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.

—1 Peter 4:7-19, NIV

As the apostle Peter penned his First Epistle to his scattered brethren in the faith, he was not writing merely the thoughts which happened into his mind. His pen was moved by the Divine Mind that inspired him, the Father of the One who years earlier had called him from the fishing nets. Now Peter was himself one of those "holy men of God" who "spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:21).

This means that Peter's message, like all the inspired Scriptures, is no ordinary human document by an ordinary human author. Though the thoughts were put into language by Peter, the true author is God.

Think about the weight that Divine inspiration gives to words. When some man or woman voices an opinion, we may take it lightly, or forget it altogether. When the God of heaven speaks, whatever the medium He uses, even if He speaks through his most obscure servant, we ought to listen, humbly, eagerly, reverently, because we realize WHO is speaking. And let one word from God have more weight with us than all the words of all the men in the world combined. His words must convince and convict—convince us of His supreme authority over us, His right to

command and to correct us; and convict us of our sin, so that we will no longer parley with it. This is the attitude we must cultivate: "I will hear what God the Lord will speak" (Ps. 85:8).

Oh, let us hear; let us be eager, anxious for these messages from heaven, these messages that waken and warn us, that show us what we are and what we need to become before God will recognize us.

We may go along, reasonably satisfied with ourselves and the progress we have made, and assume that all will be well, that God will take us as we are, but someday we shall be rudely awakened from our reverie. Someday we shall have to answer for our negligence, our indifference, our stubbornness, our hard-heartedness and ugly pride. Someday we shall have to explain why we let golden opportunities go by, when we knew the time was short; when we knew we were living right at the time of the end!

This is the focus of Peter's message, as he brings his First Epistle to a close. He writes, as if summarizing all that has gone before: "The end of all things is near." "The end." There is something ominous about these words. What was Peter thinking?

As the aged apostle wrote these

words, he may have had several thoughts in mind. First, he was writing with warmest love and affection to his own children in the faith, those whom he had guided and nurtured from spiritual infancy. These brethren were approaching a singular "end," the end of that wonderful age or dispensation when God was working mightily and openly through a special dispensing of Divine power. Even as Peter wrote, that "end" was perhaps less than twenty years ahead. It had been a time of tremendous spiritual advantage—and responsibility. But its end was near.

Again, Peter may have spoken of "the end" as of the veil of mortality which hangs continually over all in any age. Life for all of us is limited. Silently, slyly it steals away. We may live and plan as though it would always continue, but it will not. The truism that "all men think all men mortal but themselves" is dangerous at best; deadly at its worst. Again and again we need to be reminded that "the end of all things is"—always—for everyone—"near."

There is never a good time to procrastinate.

It is also possible that Peter may have been peering far into the future to those who "shall believe," to those few far-off members of the household of faith who would be holding firm at the very end of the age. They would be a family of believers separated by many centuries from direct revelation, having no direct link with the early stalwarts in the faith. Theirs would be a special test of faith, and God was, through His writing apostles, providing for them... for us!

"The End IS..."?

Whatever the "end" in Peter's mind, he raises a warning finger at any who might be tempted to settle down to a life of complacency and ease. Well he knew that side of human nature which can placidly close its eyes even in the face of crisis.

To all such complacency, Peter's trumpet-like words sound

an awakening reveille. So easily we forget. So easily we become spiritually domesticated. So easily does religion become a business-as-usual affair, a set of holy habits in which there is no heart.

Peter would have us stirred to the depths of our being, living as on the edge of the new, with a sense of crisis ever upon us, gearing our whole life for the consummation. He would have us take our lives very, very seriously, with a vigilant eye to that which is about to break into our existence with the suddenness of a thunderbolt.

"Near"

Yes, the end is *near*! Much as "all things" seem to "continue as they were," they do not! This age will NOT go on forever. One of these days "our God will come, and shall not keep silence (Ps. 50:3)." Elijah will be here, and Jesus will follow, accompanied by His mighty host of angels. That event will be both an end and a beginning. It will be the end of the old order and the beginning of all that God has planned: of deliverance, and salvation, and the making of "all things new."

That end is indeed "near." All human history since the first advent of Jesus Christ has been but an epilogue which is "now." We live in the time of the end, the time of fulfillment. The date has been fixed, though not revealed. "For he has set a day for judging the world with justice by the man he has appointed, and he proved to everyone who this is by raising him from the dead" (Acts 17:31, NLT).

What difference does this awareness make in our lives? What should we do about it?

This is the subject of Peter's Epistle. We cannot truly believe and remain the same. An awareness of "the end" must move us to a complete change in ourselves: in

our minds, in our spirits, in our attitude toward one another, in our service, in our preaching and teaching, in our lives! Living in the light of the end, we have something to DO.

What is it?

What does Peter advise us to do, we who find ourselves in this very time?

Should we lose ourselves in a simple enjoyment of life and the world around us? Or should we be frightened and panic? Never! How about folding our hands in pious inactivity as we wait for the coming of our Lord? No!

Peter advises the believing Christian to maintain a level, controlled frame of mind; a strictly disciplined and governed lifestyle; sound judgment and clear thinking, because "The end of all things is near" (1 Pet. 4:7).

Peter is very specific to tell us that an awareness of "the end" must affect how we live, and how we feel toward one another and toward God. It is this message, found in the fourth chapter of Peter's First Epistle that we want to consider here.

1

End-Time Focus

"The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray" (1 Pet. 4:7).

Be focussed, self-controlled, disciplined. As the end approaches, we must become more and more concentrated in our effort, more serious about our duty to God, more intent on accomplishing our work, more eager to make any sacrifice, any denial, any offering of ourselves, if only we may be READY!

How well are we doing? Are these critical days having a sobering effect on us? Do we realize how very final will be "the end" when it arrives,

The present ills are visible reminders that these are the last minutes of the age.

**True love
is understanding,
sympathetic,
forgiving.**

when it will suddenly become too late to change from the old creature to the new, when "he that is unjust" must forever remain unjust (Rev. 22:11)? If we have had what God deems sufficient opportunity to complete the task He has assigned us, that "end" will seal our record as it stands, and no power in heaven or earth will be able to change it. Here is a thought that should keep us working, sober, watchful, self-controlled.

Another aspect of self-control is "sound judgment."

The controlled person is one who is not affected by surrounding conditions. The controlled person can keep sane and sound, mentally and morally balanced whatever tensions or fears or worries may come.

This special kind of balance comes only from one source: a solid, unshakable faith in God and His Word. With such solid confidence, in light of the nearness of the end, we will not panic—or fall asleep. Rather, we will live every moment in an attitude of expectancy. The generally disintegrating conditions around us, which show themselves in a thousand ugly and disgraceful forms—like child abuse, drug abuse, AIDS, the breakdown of the family structure, and so on and on—we will take as confirmations of our faith, and grow steadily stronger and stronger, knowing that God is in control and His plan will be realized. The present ills are but our surety, visible reminders that these are indeed the last minutes of the age. Can't we see and feel and know that we are near the end?

2

End-Time Prayerfulness

"The end of all things is near... be clear minded... so that you can pray" (1 Pet. 4:7).

Perhaps as Peter wrote he was remembering that night in Gethsemane, when Jesus was so strong, and he, Peter, had been so weak. He could still hear the disappointment in Jesus' reproving voice: "Could ye not watch with me one hour?... (KJV) "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation" (Matt. 26:41, NIV). He, Peter, had yet to learn to pray. It was as though Jesus had said, Peter, you are not as strong as you think you are. You need help—which My Father and I can give you—through prayer. You have been depending on My presence for strength, but soon you will be on your

own. You must find strength as all the rest of My family find it—through prayer.

We in this end-time need this same link with God—through prayer. Indeed, we have no other connection, for God is not working openly among us. But He is working. Oh, let us not for a moment lose contact with our merciful, gracious, loving God, who has promised us His strength, His guidance, His help for every trial and test.

Yes, "watch and pray." Seek out every opportunity, and respond by meeting it with God, in heartfelt humble prayer. Prayer is our strongest fortification against sin. We are not to face our testings alone.

The life that is securely bound with God cannot be overpowered by temptation.

"Watch and pray." How we need this admonition, especially at this end time. How we need to keep close to God in our inner citadel of prayer. The tensions, distractions and demands of the days may prove too much for us—unless we "watch and pray."

Alternate wordings of 1 Pet. 4:8 suggest that Peter is advising a proper attitude for prayer: "The end of all things is at hand; therefore keep sane and sober for your prayer" (RSV). "Lead an ordered and sober life, given to prayer" (NEB). "Be sober minded and temperate, that you may give yourselves to prayer" (Weymouth). It is as if Peter says, Make God the center of your thinking, the center of your believing, the center of your lives. This is no time for anything flippant or light. There is only time for serious dwelling with God.

Oh, let us take it to heart and get closer to God, closer to our great Source of strength, closer to the only One who can give LIFE! Through prayer let us keep ourselves on the cutting edge of our faith. Let our constant prayer be, Lord, examine me, correct me, chasten me, cleanse me, prove me; give or withhold as You see best—if only I can be right!

There is no situation in life that can prevent the true believer from praying. Without prayer there is no spiritual power—and no victory—because there is no link with God. With it, there can be no defeat.

3

End-Time Love

"The end of all things is near...above all, love each other deeply" (1 Pet. 4:7-8).

Besides our duty to God and to ourselves, we have also a special duty to one another. He says that this duty of showing love to one another comes "above all," it can not—must not—be slighted.

Do nothing you would
not like to be found doing
when Jesus comes.

Say nothing
you would not like to
be found saying
when Jesus comes.

Go to no place where you
would not like to be found
when Jesus comes.

Earlier in this Epistle, Peter exhorted his brethren to show love to one another as brethren (1 Pet. 3:8). Now he says that that love must be keen, fervent. *"Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins"* (vs. 8). The word translated "cover" is *kolucho* in the Greek, and means "to cover by procuring pardon or forgiveness, to procure pardon from God."

The object of this love is the "covering" of one's sin. This is the purpose of all love, and brotherhood, and fellowship—to help one another in covering our sins with a mantle of forgiveness, so that we may secure pardon from God.

Why is this love so important? Because it is a covering which will effectively hide our sins from the view of the Great Judge before whom we all shall have to stand. "Love covers a multitude of sins," and how else can sin be covered unless it be forgiven?

What is the nature of the "deep love" that will "cover sin"? It is that true Christ-like love that seeks one another's good, that loves righteousness and hates evil. It is a love that desires purity and cleansing above all else, and so seeks to help one another in a personal way, pointing to the source of cleansing, working together to become pure and clean.

Believers at the time of the end have a special duty to one another. More than in any other age, they need each other, and they need to help one another. More than ever before, they need the strength of Christian association and fellowship, meeting together, working together, thinking together, praying together, pulling together in the bonds of Christian love and devotion.

This love is not a sentimental feeling or an emotion but a practical and tenderhearted interest in one another's good, as brothers and sisters who have a common goal and purpose in life, who have given up the lesser relationships of life for that which is infinitely greater. Theirs is a love which stimulates and encourages all that is good and right. It is love that says, *You can do it—go ahead!*

This special brotherly love is love that puts iron in the blood and fire in the soul. It is love that heartens with a kind or encouraging word, or a stern reminder of duty. It is love that hurts when there is wrong to correct or evil to remonstrate. It is love that is eager and willing to go the second mile to support and

upbuild. When we have this true brotherly love, we are so conscious of our own spotted record before God that we are slow to condemn another. It is love that can show mercy and forgive, and forgive, and forgive, even until 70 times 7, knowing how much forgiveness we ourselves have needed and yet need. It is love that draws us out of ourselves and our self-centered interests into the circle of the family of God, where His honor, His glory, His interests are all in all.

Why such concern for love? Because time is almost gone, and whatever we would do we must do quickly, for *"the end of all things is near."*

...and Forgiveness

There is yet another thought in this verse. This *"fervent love,"* will "cover a multitude of sins." How is this possible? How can my love for my brother cover my multitude of sins?

Forgiveness is the mantle that will effectively cover our sins. What, then, can I do in loving my brother that will bring me forgiveness?

Jesus explained this in His first sermon, that each of us will be forgiven in proportion as we forgive our brother. When I show the genuine spirit of Christ-like love toward my brother, my sins are being covered—because God has promised to forgive me *as I forgive my brother*. I cannot receive any forgiveness for my sins until I have extended forgiveness to my brother. These are Jesus' own words: *"For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins"* (Matt. 6:14-15, NIV). As I forgive another, my own sins are covered by forgiveness.

The apostle Paul described this same contingent forgiveness in Ephesians 4:32, *"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."*

Would we risk being found with feelings of enmity and strife among us, feelings of bitterness and spite, jealousy and hatred, when "the end of all things is near" and any opportunity could be our very last opportunity to get right? Oh, let the thought of it worm deep into our hearts, and stir us to get ourselves right with God and with one another. Who of us wants to be found with a stain on our record simply because we would not forgive another, because we would not extend to another the same spirit of forgiveness we ourselves have so often needed?

When we withhold forgiveness and compassion from our brother, when we give him an attitude of "if you would just shape up and

The children of God have an uplook as well as an outlook. The outlook may be gloomy, but the uplook is glorious.

be a man you wouldn't have these problems," we are really saying "I am better than you" and by our self-righteous attitude are inviting judgment upon ourselves. For who of us has not needed—and needed desperately—to be forgiven?

If we cannot forgive our brother, we lack just that much of belonging to Christ ourselves.

True love is never vindictive. It never says, "You let me down before so I'll not trust you again." Nor does it say, "If you can't do any better than that, you're not my brother." Nor does it feel superior or self-righteous. True love is understanding, sympathetic, forgiving, taking the attitude of the apostle Paul, who said, "By the grace of God I am what I am."

There is no place in the brotherhood of Christ for any attitude of stomping on one another, or looking down on one another, or being harsh or critical of one another. Whatever strengths we have, we must realize that our brother also has strengths. Whatever weaknesses another has, we must realize we also have weaknesses. And thank God!—our strength and weaknesses are not the same as his, or to whom could we look for help!

Do we wonder that the apostle tells us, "Have fervent love"? It is the old lesson of learning to judge ourselves with rigor and another with leniency; doing to another as we would want to be done by if we were in the other's place, with a foremost desire to be right ourselves.

Are we ever tempted to think that others are in danger but we are safe? Think we for a moment that we shall escape the judgment of God?

Oh, how humble and meek in spirit God's people should be, how cautious, how fearful lest in

**We are
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way to be.**

trying to help another
we condemn ourselves.

We, too, are accountable before God; oh, let all our giving, and all our admonishing, and all our reproving be done in the spirit of meekness, "considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Gal. 6:1-2). We, too, may fall, and in the very spot where we tried to help another. We are all made of the same clay, and the sooner we realize it, the better for our own spiritual good.

Some day we will face our last test. Some day will be our last opportunity to help another. Some day the end will arrive, and where will we stand then?

4 End-Time Hospitality

"The end of all things is near.... Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling"
(1 Pet. 4:7, 9).

Here Peter strikes home. He is not admonishing about good "company" manners but of the general spirit of hospitality we show "one to another"—at home, and among those of "the household of faith." Of course we can give liberally and in good spirit to strangers, but what are we among those most familiar to us? Is there any "grudge" in our giving to them, whether that giving be of our time, our interest, our energy, or our genuine Christian concern? Well Peter knew human nature, that we have plenty of

*"...Kind words for the stranger,
And smiles for the sometime guest,
But for our own, the bitter tone,
Though we love our own the best."*

What do we have for those closest to us? It is something to watch, especially when "the end" is upon us. Let us remind our-

selves often of the message of that simple motto, and check ourselves with: Would I want to be found saying this...when Jesus comes? Would I want to be found doing this... when Jesus comes?

We are not to be kind, says Peter, because we *have* to be, but because it is the only right way to be, because it is part of our obligation and duty as Christians, because in being kind to one another we are being kind to Jesus. And who would not go out of his way, if he had opportunity, to be kind to Jesus?

There is no place for grudging service among followers of Christ. A grudging service is no service at all.

5 End-Time Stewardship

"The end of all things is near.... Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms"
(1 Pet. 4:7, 10).

Peter's fourth admonition for end-time living concerns the proper use of our bodies and minds. We are not free to do as we please, or think what we please, because nothing we have is our own. Nothing. All is a *trust* from God. We are, very literally, God's property, and must use what we have as His. "If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 4:10-11).

In the ancient world a slave or steward was totally responsible to the master of the house. As steward he might dispense everything, but he owned nothing. Even so we are God's stewards. We do not own anything. How preposterous, then, to take credit to ourselves for anything we do. Let us rather work "that God in all things may be glorified." Then He will glorify us.

(Continued on page 11)

FATHER in heaven, You are a Shield to protect us,
A Light to guide,
A Salvation to deliver.

You are the stronghold of our lives: of whom shall we be afraid?

We can have PEACE because You have given us the spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

We can have HOPE because You have entrusted to us Your great and precious promises.

We can have JOY because You have shown us the way to salvation.

We can have REST because You have promised that Your children shall lie down in safety.

O God, show us today the beauty of HOLINESS, that we may want it more than anything else in the world.

Show us today the ugliness of SIN, that we may hate it as You do, with our whole heart.

And as we love holiness and hate sin, may we practice today to walk with You in beauty, goodness and truth. AMEN.



Let the name of the
Lord be praised, both
now and forevermore.

—Psalm 113:2, NIV

6

End-Time Suffering

The end of all things is near...If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler" (1 Pet. 4:7, 15).

Peter knew that suffering and trial would be the lot of all. For his immediate brethren, it was a trial of persecution, in addition to the normal sufferings of life. But for all there would be suffering and trial. Let them be borne, says Peter, as a privilege of bearing trial "for Christ's sake," as partakers with Him. None can escape the "fiery trial which is to try you"—nor would we want to, if we could see the future as God sees it.

This attitude is not natural, but with an eye fixed on the time of the end—and the glory in view—how can we be other than joyful! However difficult the testing, it is but for a moment; the glory will be eternal.

As Christ's return draws near, faith becomes more and more precious to hold. What if everything seems against us? As long as we are on God's side and He is working for us, we have nothing to fear. The "end" is coming, and it will bring the end of the suffering. And it will be glorious!

7

End-Time Judgment

"The end of all things is near...judgment must begin at the house of God" (1 Peter 4:7, 17).

It is a solemn thought, that the nearer the end, the nearer the Judgment and the day when we must give account. But the nearer also the day of triumph, if we have been good stewards. The thought is glorious, as we think of the vistas of

glory and delight that will unfold through eternity, as we move from glory to glory. But it is also a fearsome thought, if we are not taking our duty seriously, if we are dilatory and delinquent in our service to God. God cannot be true to the good if He does not punish and eliminate the evil.

Living in the light of the end means living in the light of the approaching Judgment. We are coming to Judgment, and the Judgment is coming to us. Every day is bringing us nearer either to eternal bliss or eternal nonentity. Oh, if we would but be mindful of this, how circumspectly we could walk!

8

End-Time Commitment

"The end of all things is near....So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good" (1 Pet. 4:7, 19).

As children of God, we have an uplook as well as an outlook. The outlook may be gloomy, but the uplook is glorious. And what matter the trials of the journey, if only it leads us home!—an eternal, glorious home where pain, sickness and death will never be known.

This is not wild speculation. It is the sure promise of God. The very thought of it should spur us to commit ourselves without reservation, and not fear what may come to us, either to our lives personally, or to the people of God, or to the world. God is in control, He is watching tenderly over each one whom He sees will be one of His,

*In
being kind
to one another we
are being kind
to Jesus.*

arranging so that all things will work together for their eternal good. Is it not a precious thought, that He is concerned about us—if we are truly sincere and earnest about the things He has offered us? However dark our surroundings, God is still on His throne, still caring for His own, still arranging circumstances so that every true, wholehearted one will have every test he or she needs to become pure and holy like Christ.

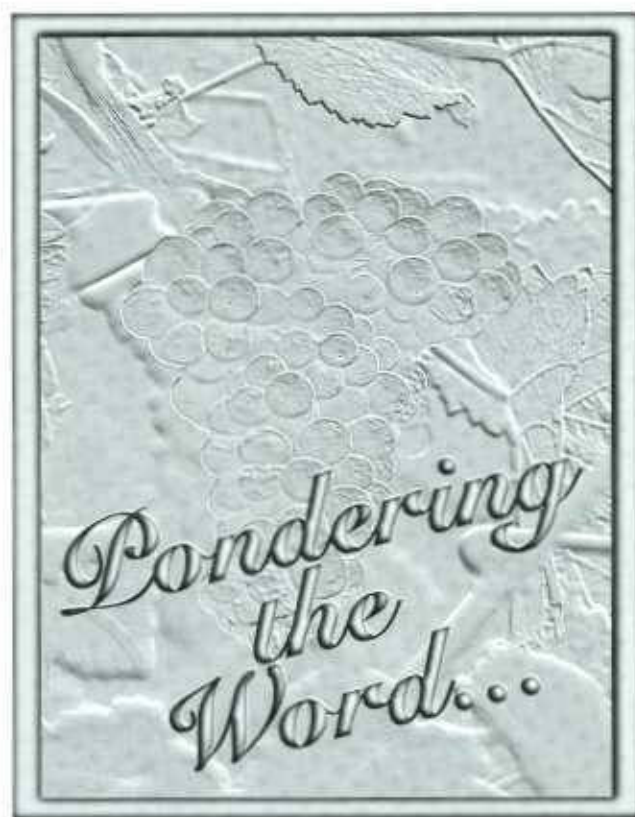
With a solemn sense of the end of all things upon us, how can we live even a single moment as we naturally would had not this saving knowledge of God reached us? How can we forget it for a moment, we who have before us the possibility of living for ever and ever!

Oh, we cannot be too careful, we who find ourselves living in the light of the end. Those words that slip out so quickly when we are not on guard; those hasty judgments we make; those little feelings of spite or anger or jealousy that rise up within us; those thoughts that wander from this to that, when we could be meditating; those concerns which are too much for us, which we ought to offer up to God, for Him to keep and manage—oh, let us be careful! We have no time for anything that might hinder, anything that might distract, anything that might encumber, anything that might stand between us and God.

Let Peter's message touch our hearts: Get right with God, get right with one another, and *do it now*.

For "the end of all things is near!"

There is no such thing as a steadfast traitor. The one who is steadfast has both feet on the ground on the same side of the fence.



WHAT ABOUT YOU?

*Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish...
except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*
—Luke 13:3, 5

We are not told any details of the crime that had just been committed, but Jesus used it as an opportunity to teach a lesson. As always, people were talking about the latest news. It was the same then as now. A murder, a sudden death, an accident will completely engage the minds of thousands. People are ever ready to talk about everybody's business but their own.

But Jesus' words were not idle talk. He used the incident to make a pointed lesson directed to every hearer: "What about you?" Consider your own ways. "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

Real Christianity begins at home. Do we hear of a sudden death or accident? The serious Christian will say to himself, "What if that had happened to me...would I have been found ready?"

The state of our own heart should be always our first concern. Those who had died could not be helped. But every one of His hearers—who felt ever so safe and secure—needed rescuing. Every one of them was destined to die eternally if he did not repent and turn to God.

How strongly our Lord lays down the need for repentance. Twice He declares emphatically, "Except

ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

We are not naturally good. God cannot use us as we are. We must repent, we must believe, we must turn from our ways and toward God. Without this life-changing repentance, not one of us can be saved.

We must first learn to recognize right and wrong. Then, when we sin, we must confess it to God, and repent. Repentance of this kind is a complete turning away from sin and toward God. The result will be God's forgiveness: "Then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin" (2 Chron. 7:14). And God will "abundantly pardon" (Isa. 55:7).

We have heard the message of Christ, and believed it, but have we truly repented? Have we recognized our sin and gone to the throne of grace for forgiveness? Are we every day ceasing to do evil and learning to do right? Have we a hearty hatred of everything that is evil? These are questions that deserve our serious attention, for the subject is no light matter. Our very life—eternal life—is at stake.

If we have already repented, let us go on repenting so that we can escape being among those to whom Jesus said "ye shall all likewise perish."

Why hate sin? Because sin means death. Instead of loving it, cleaving to it, dallying with it, excusing it, playing with it, we ought to treat it as we would treat a deadly viper.

Sin is the great murderer, thief, and destroyer of all goodness. Make no peace with it. Rather, wage a ceaseless war against it. Well did the apostle Paul write, "Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good" (Romans 12:9).

A RINGING VERDICT

Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. —James 1:12

Here is a beatitude that is a ringing verdict. Congratulations from Brother James to every believer who bravely and steadfastly holds on until the trial is over! Such perseverance is the sign of genuine faith. Each test successfully endured adds fresh proof of our fidelity to God and contributes to an approved character.

And the result? "He shall receive..."—even when the test has been passed, the reward is still future. But the future tense does not imply that the reward is uncertain, only that the time for it has not yet come. "When the chief Shepherd shall appear..." the rewards will be dispensed, and not until (1 Pet. 5:4).

What is the reward? It is "the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to them that love him."

Our gracious God has a great reward for those who form an approved character. Such love is the outcome of a faith which produces willing endurance. It is a noble love which prompts the believer to aspire to implicit obedience. □

Our Little Church

A Brief Sketch of Jesus' Followers Then and Now



THE first places used for Christian worship were the homes of converted Christians, and the first idea of a church was the idea of a "house" (Greek, *domus*).

The reason for this lay partly in the necessities of the time, it being impossible for Christians threatened continually with persecution to hold their worship in public places.

One of the earliest meetings of our little Church, often called the Last Supper, was in an upper room with its Esteemed Leader and His twelve apostles. The next recorded meeting of our Church was in a similar "upper room," where the disciples, in obedience to Jesus' command, waited "for the promise from on high" (Acts 1:15-30). And so it happened that "when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place" (Acts 2:1).

As the number of believers grew, often the houses of some of the Christians were dedicated to serve as church meeting places. "Salute Priscilla and Aquila," writes St. Paul, "...and the church that is in their house." "Salute Nympha and the church that is his house" (Rom. 16:3-5; Col. 4:15). But always "our little church" was the people, the loyal believers, not the building.

This little Church is the object of Christ's affection, His spiritual "bride," those select ones whom He loves, and whom He is working "to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, ... holy and blameless" (Eph. 5:26-27, NIV).

In the Roman world of Paul's day our little Church was called a "little sect... everywhere spoken

against" (Acts 28:22). But Jesus called them "friends," His joy, His delight, and His first object of interest.

With great depth of feeling Paul spoke of this little Church. He even gave specific instructions to Timothy, so that in case he himself was delayed, Timothy might "know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15, NIV).

Paul also felt deep concern for their future, as he saw "grievous wolves" stealing in among them, intending only to hurt and harm (Acts 20:29-30). He also warned of others perils that would surround it in the last days. These are his words: "Mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days" (2 Tim. 3:1).

A measure of danger has threatened the true worshipers of every age, but these words of Paul are especially addressed to our little Church in the last days. While prospects of martyrdom and open hostility were rife during the first centuries until our little Church was silenced during the long night of the apostasy, the dangers of indifference and unbelief in our own day are just as threatening.

But this little Church will prevail. What did Jesus say about His church? "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18). The powers of evil cannot overthrow it. As weak and powerless as it may seem, in the end it shall triumph.

How should we feel as we see the forces of evil doing their worst and serious followers of Jesus are only a few? Should we become discouraged? No! Should we despair?

No! Rather, let us take the words of Jesus to heart: "When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh" (Luke 21:28). Rejoice because our Lord will soon return to take control of the affairs of earth! Rejoice because some members of "our little Church" will be ready to welcome Him when He comes! Said Jesus, "Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them" (Luke 12:37).

The Bible would not be true if "our little Church" were filling the earth now. That time is future, when the people of God, represented as a spiritual tree, "shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the earth with fruit" (Isa. 27:6). That time is coming, but it is not yet. In the meantime, serious believers will be few, so few that He would have to look pretty hard to find us except for our light that will still be shining like a lamp in a dark place (2 Pet. 1:19).

Yes, we have been warned what to expect. All through the years, the members of our little Church have been few. And this is just as Jesus said. "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matt. 7:14). But this fact need not discourage us. Rather, let it make us more determined to be among the members of "our little Church" so that when Jesus returns and gathers His own, He may find us among them. And then "our little Church" will grow... and grow... and grow until it becomes so large that it will fill the earth "as the waters cover the sea." □

Why Discouraged?

Have

we ever
felt like David

did when he wrote:

"Why am I discouraged? Why so sad?" Why, when our troubles are really so small, when things aren't that bad, yet our spirit is still under.

What is the meaning of the restless uneasiness within? For some undefinable reason the sun just doesn't seem to shine so brightly, the sparkle in the eye becomes dull and the step lacks its usual spring. Even prayer seems of no benefit or comfort. Yes, something is wrong. What is it?

We are all well acquainted with the stresses and strains of daily living. Yes, we recognize these as the opportunities we need to convert our mountaintop resolves into opportunities. But in all honesty we have to admit that there are days when there are just too many of these "opportunities." Well-laid plans go awry. The car won't start, an appointment runs late, our four-year-old spills the pitcher of juice, the washing machine breaks down, someone we work with tries our patience, or doesn't appreciate our efforts, or criticizes us for something we didn't do, and—we could go on and on. Small issues all of them, why should they trouble us? Why should they contribute so much to our unrest? But they do.

More than likely, the reason lies deep within the springs of our own behavior. If we survey candidly and honestly the complexities of our own hearts, we probably will be astonished by the variety of disquieting factors that lurk there.

Consider, if you will, the variety of human frustrations, character weaknesses, distressing thought patterns and fears which beat on the door of our minds.

Have you ever been afflicted with an inferiority complex? Giving way to it is the steppingstone to even more damaging thoughts of worthlessness and self-incrimination. We assure ourselves that we can't do right, no matter how hard we try, that we are misunderstood, mistreated, misjudged, mismatched, mismanaged, and... and.... As a result, our faith in ourselves sinks to new lows and we grovel in the quicksand of self-pity.

"Why am I discouraged? Why so sad?" Perhaps it is because we are overly sensitive, easily hurt. Someone makes a comment, and we misinterpret. Our sensitive nature works overtime—in the wrong direction—and hurt feelings creep into our minds. These feelings fester and boil, until we have succeeded in making a huge mountain out of an insignificant molehill. Our bitter and vengeful thoughts completely destroy our peace of mind and make life miserable. How do you do it? Very, very simple. Just let the hurt feeling go around, and around, and around in your mind, adding a little more hurt with each round, and raising the temperature with each additional rub. Wouldn't it be far better to clear up the misunderstanding at the onset than to allow it to snowball, becoming larger with every downward revolution?

Is it that we enjoy being miserable and unhappy?

Worry is another factor to be reckoned with, and one which can contribute much to our discouragement. Now we all know a certain degree of concern is necessary or our existence would indeed be extremely haphazard. But there is a point where concern becomes debilitating worry. Remember, worry won't make it stop storming, worry won't keep the furnace from failing on a bitter cold winter night—or fix it if it does fail. So what good is it?

Worry will never make our aches or



Why am I discouraged? Why so sad? I will put my hope in God! I will praise him again—my Savior and my God!"

—Psalm 43:5, NLT

pains go away. Neither will it help us meet the harsh realities of life. No, indeed, the only thing worry will accomplish is to cripple and completely demoralize us.

So get away, Worry! And let us return to our Psalm: "Why am I discouraged? Why so sad? I will put my hope in God! I will praise him again—my Savior and my God!" (Psalm 43:5, NLT).

"Why am I discouraged?" Perchance my peace is disturbed by the prick of a guilty conscience. What about those secret sins known only to myself and my heavenly Father?

We attempt to convince ourselves that He will understand, while in our hearts we know better. Yet the passing days and weeks find us yielding to the same sin over and over again.

Then there is the uneasiness which is a direct result of mismanaging our free time. We know we should be making the best use of our time, but there are the easy-outs—the all-too-convenient TV program, the monotonous radio, or a not-the-best magazine, all right at hand to save us the trouble of thinking. We give in, if only for a few moments. Is it any wonder we are besieged by a feeling of disquiet?

"Why am I discouraged? Why so sad?" Could it be that we have allowed that insidious troublemaker discouragement to take up residence in our hearts? Have we not yet learned by sad experience its destructive forces? True, we feel we have aimed higher than we can reach, but does that furnish us any plausible

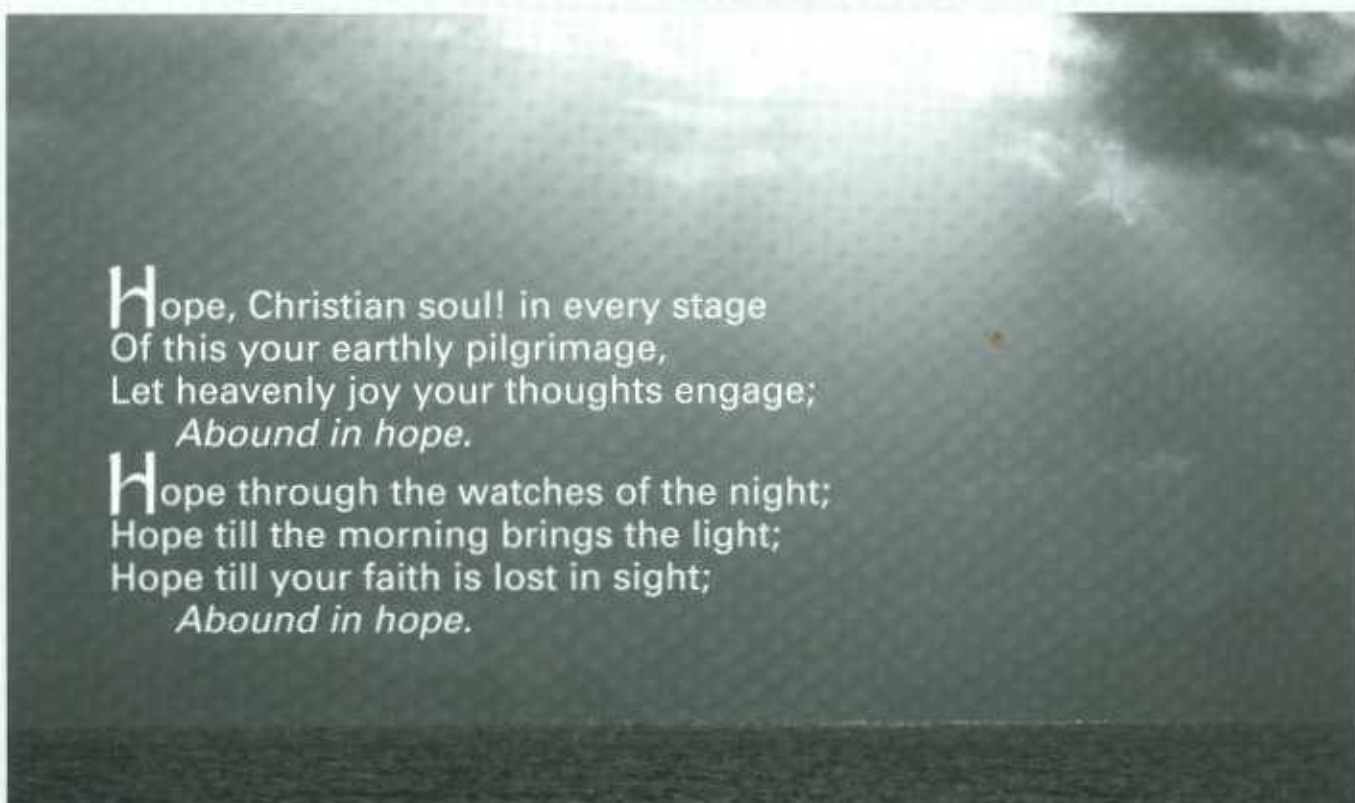
excuse for sitting down in the dust just because we occasionally fall short of our goals? A godly character will not leap upon us, no indeed! It is not the work of a moment. Rather, it is the result of the slow, persistent task of displacing, one by one, every evil with good, whether it be in thought, word or action.

Oh, discouraged one, waste no more valuable time grieving over past failures, but rather, use your failure as the pivot point to higher and yet higher levels of holiness.

Do you think for one minute that King David yielded to all the difficulties he encountered in his stormy lifetime? No, indeed! He learned by painful experience to recognize the dangers and to deal effectively with them. What was the source of his help and ultimate success? Listen to his encouraging advice: "I will put my hope in God! I will praise him again—my Savior and my God!"

There in a nutshell we have the absolute, unfailing answer to successful living. We need not face disturbing problems in our own puny strength when we are only a prayer away from the Infinite. At the throne of grace we can find direction, stability and strength for every experience of our lives. With God beside us, nothing is impossible, no goal too difficult to reach, no disruptive influence too strong to resist.

Let us avail ourselves of the assistance offered. Remember, with God's help we can go forward to the exhilarating heights ahead, even to the moral likeness of Christ. □



Hope, Christian soul! in every stage
Of this your earthly pilgrimage,
Let heavenly joy your thoughts engage;
Abound in hope.

Hope through the watches of the night;
Hope till the morning brings the light;
Hope till your faith is lost in sight;
Abound in hope.

THE UNSOLICITED REBUKE



You don't deserve a job!"

The tall young man who had stood beside Billy Lanford in the office of the Carrigan Construction Company had followed him out and now stood at his elbow in the street, apparently with the sole purpose of delivering his decidedly personal comment.

Billy had just failed to secure the place of timekeeper for which he had applied. He had wanted the place very much indeed, he believed; he had made up his mind to earn money this summer, and the timekeeper at Carrigan's received ten dollars a week for what Billy had understood was only very moderate exertion. Now the sudden sharp criticism from a stranger sounded like an unsolicited insult. Billy flared.

"Well, say!" he began.

"Don't get angry now," interrupted the other, his bright brown eyes holding Billy's. "You thought you could get that job when you went in there, didn't you?"

Billy wanted to answer sharply and escape. But the very unusualness of the attack waked his curiosity.

"Of course I did!" he answered. "Why?"

Billy found himself at a momentary loss for an answer.

"You told Charlie Johnson, the manager, that you'd had no experience, didn't you?"

"I didn't say any such—"

"No, you only looked it. You were surprised that you would have to stay till six-thirty at night, weren't you?"

Billy stopped answering. He was angry. He felt the blood rise slowly in a hot wave over his cheeks and neck, and found it hard to continue looking up into the brown eyes of his interrogator.

"And you resented the idea that

the timekeeper had to help in the shipping-room when he was off the gate, didn't you?"

Billy backed away against the fence. He wanted to shout a loud denial of this series of charges; but he could not say a word. He knew that there was truth in every one of them.

"Johnson knew how you felt," asserted his unpleasant new acquaintance. "Both he and I saw you were trying to cheat him."

"Cheat him!"

"Certainly. You had nothing to sell, had you? Neither experience, nor knowledge, nor willingness to work. All you wanted was to get his ten dollars a week and get it easy; you had no notion of being worth ten dollars a week, had you?"

The young man stood silent a moment, waiting. Billy Lanford was raging. He was angry enough to strike; but he knew that what had been said to him was not unjust, and that fact held his tongue and hand.

"Do you know what you have done this morning?" asked his accuser. "You've started a reputation!"

Then the man turned away. Billy was left alone, standing with his back to the fence, his hands gripping the pickets behind him, his face and his heart burning as he had never known them to burn before.

A volunteered reprimand from a total stranger! Slowly Billy turned and walked down the street, hardly knowing where he meant to go. It had been bad enough to think of going home and reporting his failure. Now he felt as if he had been whipped, and for something too downright disgraceful to report at all.

Who the man might be, or how he had happened to know about the interview with Mr. Johnson,

Billy did not know. It was very strange that he should have gone out of his way to denounce an action that did not concern him.

The town in which Billy lived was a large one. It seemed improbable that he would ever meet the stranger again. He would likely never again see Mr. Johnson of the Carrigan Construction Company. Billy had heard of the vacant position through a man his father knew in the Carrigan office. That man need hear only that Billy had not secured the place. What did the man mean when he said, "You've started a reputation"?

"A reputation as a cheat!" Billy said half aloud involuntarily. "It's so. They saw; both of them saw through me. I'm a cheap little shirk, not worth any one's ten dollars a week. And they both know it."

The boy's mind was stung to the quick. His conscience was stirred.

"I must go somewhere else now and find work," he thought. "I must! I've got to prove that man wrong."

He hurried on, squirming under the scathing rebuke he had received. Then it occurred to him that the criticism might have had a friendly side.

"He told me where my mistake was," said the boy to himself. "What did he do it for?"

As he remembered it now, there appeared to have been no contempt in the young man's tone, only an earnest effort to convince.

Billy's ideas grew clearer. That last phrase about reputation—he must go back and try to change the impression he had created at Carrigan's.

He was two miles from the construction company's offices when he reached this conclusion. He

remembered Andrew Johnson's shrewd gaze, and shrank from the prospect of facing it again.

But an hour and a half after the talk at the picket fence Billy Lanford stood again at the railing beside Mr. Johnson's desk.

"I came back, Mr. Johnson," he said.

The manager's gray eyes narrowed in puzzled fashion for an instant; then he asked:

"What for?"

"Because I—I'm ashamed of having applied as I did—I was thinking only about the salary, and not about the work. I—a man who heard me talk to you—told me I showed what I was thinking of, by that. And I came back to square myself."

Mr. Johnson leaned back in his chair. "And you came back here to tell me this?"

"Yes, sir," Billy flushed.

"The timekeeper's job was filled this morning."

"I suppose so."

"Then why do I care anything about you or your application?"

Billy felt rebuffed. "I haven't any idea you do," he answered. "But I'd like you to know that I did have a decent idea of earning the money I want to get."

Mr. Johnson wrote a few words on a slip of paper and then pointed to a glass door across the office.

"Take this to Mr. Walter Carrigan, in that room," he said.

Billy took the slip and obeyed the direction. He knocked at the glass door and opened it. Then he stood still with amazement. The man standing by a window was the man who had talked to him in the street.

"Are you—are you Mr. Carrigan?" stammered Billy.

"I'm Mr. Carrigan, Jr.," replied the young man.

"I've come back," said Billy.

"I knew you would if you had any self-respect. That's why I said what I did to you. I thought you looked like a boy who only needed waking up."

Billy stood silent a moment. Then he said, "Mr. Carrigan, I know the timekeeper's job is filled, but I want a chance to—to show you—"

Mr. Carrigan smiled, as Billy hesitated and stopped. "I am quite sure you do," he answered. "That's why you came back. And I think I can find a place for a boy who feels that way." □

LETTERS

Idols Then and Now

The other day I was reading those things which were recorded for our benefit, and to warn us not to set our hearts on evil things as did the children of Israel long ago. And I wondered how anyone could be so foolish and so obstinate as they, to want to have a god that was near, an inanimate object made of silver, gold, or wood; something to worship, installed in house or temple, and to which they could make offerings and sacrifices. As if any idol or image or anything else in this world could take the place of our long-suffering and Almighty God, to whom belongs the heavens, the heaven of heavens, the earth and all that is in it!

He is the God we must worship, must cleave to, and fear, and love, and revere. He is the one we must obey, for our own good.

However, we are by nature like the rest of our race. That is why Brother Paul warned: "If you feel sure that you are standing firm, beware! you may fall."

SOUTH WALES

RUBY BALSDON

A Blessing Disguised

We are reminded daily that we are mortal. How we should long for, hope for and labor for the life eternal which God has promised those who love Him! We may have plenty in this world—wealth, good health, friends and family we dearly love—but everything ends so soon, much sooner sometimes than we anticipate.

I have learned in the last twenty years how fragile life can be. Good health can disappear even when we are young, and overcoming our old nature is even more difficult when we are physically ill. I am not complaining. On the contrary, I think my health problems have been a blessing in disguise. With all I've been through I've learned to be humble and patient. I've also learned that everything this world has to offer is vanity. I might not have learned these things if I had good health. The Lord will not allow us to be tempted above what we are able to bear, but He does try us in ways that will strengthen us.

The way of salvation has never

been easy even for us down in the cool of the Day of Salvation. But when we think of the reward, we can say with the great Apostle Paul, "*Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*" (2 Cor. 4:17).

All that we are asked to do is not a drop in the ocean compared to the pay we will receive if we are faithful. We must love the Lord so much that we will not want to do anything that is contrary to His Word. Nothing else matters.

If we are worthy of eternal crown, we will spend eternity in God's service. What a great reward that will be! We cannot fathom it.

We can rejoice knowing that once eternity begins our hard work is in the past.

TENNESSEE

S. KINCANNON

Sure Protection

Today there are wars going on all over the world at times—all could be avoided if people would just control their animal instincts.

Our battle is with just one person, self. Brother Paul fought this same battle, and he said, "*I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me*" (Phil. 4:13).

If we are doing what Christ demands of us, we are assured of the angels' help in time of need. "*The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them*" (Ps. 34:7). In sickness, in health, or wherever we go, God's angel will protect us if we are fearing God and living by His law.

We can take great comfort in this verse: "*And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose*" (Rom. 8:28). No matter what happens to us, God is still at the helm and with Him at the controls, we know we are safe.

*The man who succeeds in spite of hopes that go astray
Against the odds he's had to fight
as he trudged his uphill way
To gain the Prize that victory brings
with strength and courage stout—
He's had to overcome the things
the quitters whine about.*

OHIO

M WALTON

Know Your Bible?

Find the Misfit

1. *Apostle*—Thomas, James, Stephen?
2. *King*—Solomon, Pilate, Ahab?
3. *Queen*—Ruth, Esther, Athaliah?
4. *Prophet*—Jonah, Malachi, Issachar?
5. *Soldier*—Gideon, Samuel, Joshua?
6. *Writer of Bible books*—John, Philip, Luke?
7. *Fisherman*—Peter, Andrew, Zacchaeus?
8. *Jew*—Paul, Goliath, Eunice?
9. *Missionary*—Barnabas, Elymas, Paul?
10. *Son of Jacob*—Naphtali, Simeon, Judas?

Do You Know...?

1. Who accepted a gift as "an odor of a sweet smell"? _____
2. Who saw a vision of the Lord sitting upon His throne and all the host of heaven standing on His right hand and on His left? _____
3. How was the power of God once demonstrated when a sorcerer sought to turn a country official away from the faith? _____
4. Where in the Bible do we read about "corn of heaven" and "angels' food"? _____
5. Where does it say: "Ye have heard of the patience of Job"? _____
6. Where in the Old Testament is there an incident similar to Jesus' feeding the multitude? _____
7. To whom was it said, "Thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren and to strangers"? _____
8. Where in the Bible is the command given "Be clothed with humility"? _____
9. A great man after having sinned was given a choice of three punishments. Who was the great man and which punishment did he choose? _____
10. Who said, and upon what occasion, "What is truth"? _____
11. Name two persons who were ordered to take off their shoes. _____ and _____.
12. In what battle did the Lord effect a deliverance with hailstones? _____
13. Where in the Bible do we read about some men "whose hearts God had touched"? _____
14. What king attempted to perform one of the priests' rites with very disastrous consequences? _____
15. Paul called a certain woman of the early Church his mother. Identify this woman. _____
16. When every imagination of the thoughts of man was evil continually, what happened? _____
17. A warrior by failing to kill the offending party forfeited a large reward. Name the person whom he would not kill. _____
18. Where do we read about the church in the wilderness? _____
19. Who spoke and where about flattering lips and a double heart? _____
20. What is the end result of a flattering mouth? _____
21. What politician of Old Testament times believed in being totally self-supporting? _____
22. State chapter and verse for the following: "God is not in all his thoughts." _____
23. To what very excellent usage did some priests once put a stream of water? _____
24. Where is the psalm of David which says, "Seek the Lord and his strength, seek his face continually"? _____

ANSWERS ON PAGE 26



An Anchor that Holds Hope

It is said that the anchor is the most ancient of all the Christian emblems. In the very earliest catacomb inscriptions it occurs as the only ornament.

Anchors were very important to ancient sailors. They even used anchors to control the direction of a ship, as well as to hold it steady in storms. During Paul's hazardous journey to Rome, the ship was held in place during the driving storm until they took up the anchors. We read: "They cut off the anchors and left them in the sea. Then they lowered the rudders, raised the foresail, and headed toward shore" (Acts 27:40, NLT).

Perhaps this is why the author of Hebrews wrote: "We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure" (Heb. 6:19, NIV). Without this bit of knowledge about Paul's journey to Rome, we might never know the significance of these words. And, "because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath. God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged" (Heb. 6:17-18, NIV).

Could it be that the anchor was a way to remind the Christians of this promise, and how secure it was when their very lives were in great danger?

Pictures of anchors are seen on the walls of the catacombs, those underground tunnels where the early Christians often met and held their services. Why the

connection? Life was cheap, the Christians were "a little sect...everywhere spoken against," and believers could find themselves facing death at any moment. Perhaps at such points of danger they found encouragement in the thought of the ship's anchor.

The word of God is our soul-anchor. We do not face the same dangers those early Christians faced; nonetheless we are in great danger of losing our lives to another enemy, the natural complacency of our own hearts. So there is a lesson in this for us as well: When the tempests are all about us, remember the anchor of hope.

*Do not fail to use this anchor
When the billows toss and roll,
It will save your soul from drifting
To some dark and treacherous shoal.*

If our hearts are anchored firmly to the promises of God, we can remain safe and secure during any Euroclydon storm that may come into our lives.

For surely the storms will come. □

*But if we hope for what
we do not yet have, we wait for it
patiently. -Romans 8:25, NIV*

CREATION and the SABBATH

"I know that you teach that the first of Genesis is about a spiritual creation. Could you tell me, why did God command Moses to keep the sabbath (a literal day) and compared it to the one day in seven during which God rested when He was creating the heavens and the earth in six days (literal days)? Moses was to keep one day out of seven (literal days), yet the comparison is drawn from something spiritual? Read Exodus 20, verses 10-11, where God said, *"But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it."*

If the above passage were the only one we had about the creation, we would have no basis for our position, and no reason to think that the six days of creation in Genesis are not literal.

However, there are other points to consider.

Whenever we study any portion of Scripture we make a decision whether it is intended to be interpreted literally or figuratively.

We believe that there are a number of very solid reasons for thinking that Genesis, chapters 1 to 3 is intended to be understood symbolically rather than literally. (See *Megiddo Message*, July, 1998, pp.14-17). If taken literally, the sequence of the account defies the known laws of science. If taken spiritually there is no conflict.

Why would the author of Genesis use a literal 24-hour day as the basis of an illustration from which the spiritual lesson is drawn? Why is he putting together a story of God creating the heavens and earth in six literal days, if he intends to use it as an illustration of a spiritual truth and not as a basic fact in itself?

If we look elsewhere in Scripture, we see this same method paralleled. What about Jesus' story of the rich man and Lazarus? We do not think of the rich man and Lazarus as being literal individuals in history, who die and experience different rewards. We take it as a story teaching a powerful set of far reaching truths, far beyond the scope of any literal incident.

What about the story of Jonah and the whale? Again, we do not picture Jonah being literally swallowed by the great fish, then vomited up again on dry land. The prophet Jonah was using a graphic illustration to show what would happen to the Word of God in the hands of its enemies, and how it could ultimately prevail.

Though many Biblical accounts used as illustrations were actual historical events, there is nothing to say that all of them had to be.

Another case in point is the account of Job, who underwent enormous suffering, which God used to teach both Job and all who would read his writings about the way God works with His human family, and the scope of His great wisdom and knowledge.

If the above illustrations can be used to communicate lessons from other than literal events, can not the creation narrative of Genesis be taken as a basis of teaching in its literal aspect? In other words, can we not use the story of God creating the heavens and earth in six literal days and resting on the seventh as a basis for commanding Israel to work six days and rest the seventh?

Such an arrangement would be a constant reminder to them of the good things to come, and the work for which they were obligated to God—and their additional obligation to rest according to His pattern. Picture the Genesis creation as an on-going process spanning six periods of time, each one thousand years long, during which the heavens and earth are made. The sixth period will be followed by a symbolic "rest" of one thousand years, during which Christ and the saints will reign over a conquered world, with iniquity bound and righteous government holding sway. The book of Hebrews speaks of this magnificent rest which remains "to the people of God," and he admonishes, *"Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief"* (Heb. 4:9, 11).

◆ On Baptism

"Does your church practice baptism by immersion in water?"

Our church does not practice any form of water baptism. Baptism by immersion was part of the apostolic commission given by Jesus (Matt. 28:19), but we believe that that commission was for a specific purpose and for a limited time only. It was part of the means Jesus designed for the rapid spread of the Gospel throughout the Roman world. They were to go out teaching and preaching, and those who believed were to be baptized, and many were given the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The mission was very successful, and thousands were added to the Church. But the time for this special commission was limited, and it ended with the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the Jewish people (AD 70).

Since that time, like the period before, water baptism is not required. It is, however, a symbol of the inner

cleansing required of all believers in all ages, the complete washing away of sin, which each believer must complete in his or her own life.

Literal baptism in the early church was the means by which new believers were accepted, once they were convinced of the truthfulness of the apostles' message. It was usually associated with the bestowing of Holy Spirit power, which gave them power to heal, to speak in tongues they had not learned, to prophesy. The purpose of this power was to demonstrate irrefutably that God was backing His spokespersons. As a result, many thousands believed, were baptized, and received the Holy Spirit.

Apart from this special commission which was given to the Apostles, the Bible contains no direct command to baptize. The apostle Paul, who was commissioned as an apostle "to the Gentiles," gave relatively small importance to baptism. "For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel" (1 Cor. 1:17). But he did write about the spiritual baptism, being baptized "into death," the complete immersing of one's life in Christ to the point of eradicating all sin. This most thorough cleansing from sin is a baptism binding upon all Christians in all ages. The term "baptism" shows the extent of the commitment required: Its effect must be as total as is the effect of an immersing in water. No part of one's life can remain unaffected. That is why Paul wrote: "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:3-4).

The after effect of being baptized into Christ's death, the death to sin and all sinful practices, is that one must arise to "walk in newness of life."

◆ 666?

"I see the numbers 666 quite frequently in the newspapers and magazines without a clear meaning. Does the Hebrew for 666, the number of the beast, spell the feminine form of man?"

The 13th chapter of Revelation describes in figurative language the Roman power that ruled the church with an iron hand during the Middle Ages, holding full control over all secular and religious thought. No dissent was allowed, and opponents were often condemned to cruel deaths. Your question comes from a summary statement at the end of the chapter: "Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six."

This is the only verse in Scripture where the number appears, and it has been the subject of much controversy. Because it is "the number of a man," it would seem possible that it refers to the same system of darkness that controlled religious doctrine at the time. Very likely it has much more meaning than can easily be discovered. Some modern day religious teachers and evangelists have applied an almost superstitious meaning to the number, and related it to the use of credit cards, UDC codes, bar codes, etc., as though these were indica-

tions of the power of darkness. All such conclusions are only human, and have no Biblical basis.

◆ It Pleased the Lord to Bruise Him?

"I have a question about a passage in Isaiah 53. I understand that the chapter is speaking of the sufferings of Christ and also of those who will compose His faithful bride, but why should it 'please the Lord to bruise him'? I have checked several of the newer translations, and all seem to have the same thought. I would appreciate your comments."

The text in question reads: "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand" (Isa. 53:10).

You are correct in thinking that it is inconsistent with the Divine plan for the Lord to be "pleased... to bruise" His servants, as though He were intentionally arranging for them to suffer. And the translation is changed hardly at all in the newer translations.

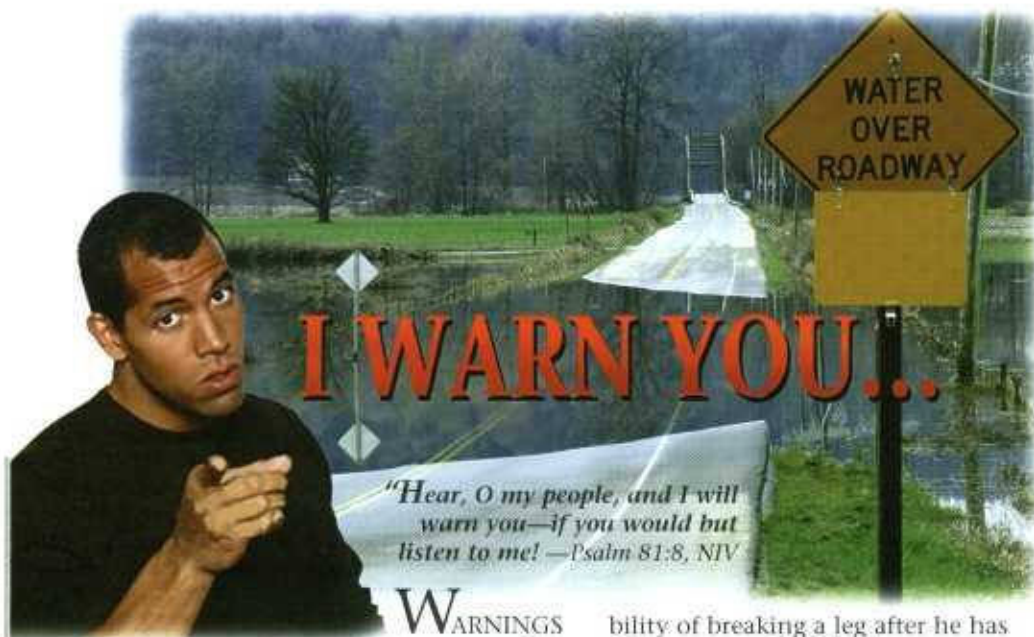
However, the Septuagint Bible, the earliest translation made from the Hebrew into Greek several centuries before Christ, has another thought. The Septuagint rendering of this text is as follows: "The Lord also is pleased to purge him from his stroke. If ye can give an offering for sin, your soul shall see a long-lived seed: the Lord also is pleased to take away from the travail of his soul, to show him light, and to form him with understanding."

The thought of "purge," i.e., cleanse, purify, render clean, is entirely different from the thought of "bruise," yet this is an alternate translation allowed by the original Hebrew. The original word translated "bruise" in our King James Version is *kathandzo* and is defined in Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon as "to make clean, to cleanse;...in a moral sense, to free from the defilement of sin and from faults; to purify from wickedness; to abstain in the future from wrong-doing; to free from the guilt of sin, to purify; to consecrate by cleansing or purifying; to consecrate, dedicate."

The Interpreter's Bible has observed this translation and offers this comment: "For 'bruise him' the Septuagint reads 'cleanse (or 'purge') him,' an acceptable meaning in the Aramaic."

This translation is in harmony with general Bible teaching. God does use the events that come into lives—our "stroke," literally "heavy affliction, severe wound, a blow, stripe," afflictions, suffering, that would seem to wound us—to purify and cleanse from sin, to "purify from wickedness." The apostle Paul expressed this same thought in his Epistle to the Ephesians, speaking of Christ's work in behalf of His bride or church: "That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:27).

God's whole purpose in working with His human creation is to perfect and purify, to develop a people that He can use in His eternal purpose. And it is only through "much tribulation" that one can qualify for that honorary role (Acts 14:22). □



WARNINGS have a special message we don't always appreciate. Often an unwelcome interruption in our plans, they tell us that there is a possibility of trouble ahead, trouble which might easily affect us. There are warnings on the highway to help us avoid accidents. Warnings to "SLOW DOWN," "KEEP RIGHT," "YIELD." Warnings of "NO PARKING," "NO STANDING," and "NO STOPPING EXCEPT FOR REPAIRS." All are posted in the best interests of the driver, to give firm, clear warning.

Which is just another way of saying that some accidents—perhaps very serious accidents—can be avoided.

Warnings penetrate every level of activity in our world. By proper warnings, students are made aware of costly mistakes they can avoid. Workers are alerted to possible hazards to life or limb. Parents warn children of almost countless dangers of which they are unaware—things too hot, too hard, too sharp, too cold, too high, too deep. How great is our human need for warnings!

If troubles were unavoidable, warnings would be needless. One does not warn a friend of the possibility of trouble unless the friend is able to do something to avert the trouble.

Again, warnings are issued in advance of trouble, not after the trouble has descended. One does not warn a friend against the possi-

bility of breaking a leg after he has fallen over a cliff. Warnings are issued when trouble is foreseen. Warnings are sounded against approaching hurricanes, floods, and natural disasters so that people may use the time remaining to escape, prepare or find refuge.

Warnings tell us that we are not self-sufficient, that if we wish to avoid trouble we need help. They also tell us that someone else knows more than we do, someone is more aware, more informed, more perceptive—else why bother? In accepting a warning we are recognizing that fact. We are saying, in effect, "You know more than I do, and I'm glad you do—I'll listen."

God also provides warnings. He has promised a new, glorified earth, but He has also warned that a time of trouble will precede it. Before that new world can become a reality, there must be a time of decision, separation, judgment. There will be broad, sweeping changes that will affect every living person on earth. That time will be inaugurated with Judgment for His servants. All who have agreed to serve God will have to stand or fall according to their record. By warning us of that reality, He is saying that there is danger of not standing. He is saying also that there is a sure means of standing, of escaping the dreadful consequences of rejection, that that sure means of escape is a wholehearted dedication right here and now.

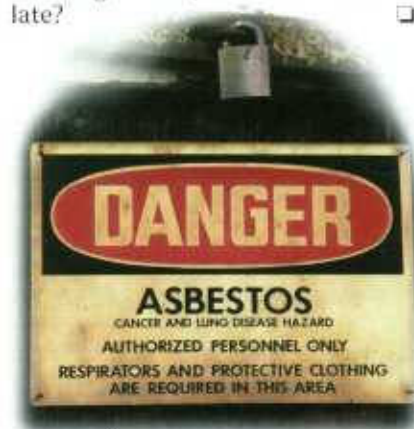
Will we hear the warning? Will we heed it?

Paul also gave warning to his brethren. His first letter to the Corinthians contains many a stinging rebuke. They were deep in sin. They needed to be informed of the error of their ways; they needed also to be informed of the grievous ending of sin, that "the wages of sin is death." This is why Paul wrote them these words: "I am not writing this to shame you, but to warn you, as my dear children" (1 Cor. 4:14, NIV). Notice how warmly he addressed them: as my "dear children." Paul cared for them with a tender, fatherly care. He wanted to see them have the best. But they could have the best only by avoiding the worst. If they continued their present course, they were sure to meet ruin and the worst.

Warnings are given not to be a grievance and a source of complaint, but to be appreciated. A warning sign of "BRIDGE OUT" will be welcomed by the driver who hopes to arrive home safely. The warning tells him there is another way than to plunge into the rocky abyss. Just so do the warnings God has given inform us. They tell us we need not travel the dead-end road. There is another way, a way out, a way to life and happiness.

This is precisely why the Bible has been written and preserved for us, to show us a means of escape—escape from ourselves, escape from evil, escape from the coming time of trouble which will rend the foundations of wickedness, escape from the fate of mortality. Warnings... warnings....

Who will hear and heed God's warnings...now, before it is too late? □



Does the Law of God Allow SELF-DEFENSE?

"I have to comment. Your reply to the reader who wrote about the Church's stand on conscientious objection was such thickly sliced baloney it cannot go without comment. Having Peter raising his sword and cutting off the ear of the servant of the High Priest is a far cry to an intruder in my home harming my wife or little children. I wouldn't be much of a father allowing assault on my family in my home from an intruder.

"...A lot of innocent people are going to die if we are unable to resist with force.

"I respect your opinion but it seems confused and fuzzy with regard to maintaining our freedom, keeping our family safe, and in preserving a future through our maintenance of strength."

—Dr. M., Oklahoma

We agree with your criticism: Peter raising his sword and cutting off the ear of the servant of the High Priest is a far cry to an intruder into your home harming your wife or little children. The problem is, you are confusing two distinct issues: conscientious objection to war, which was the subject of the article to which you refer, and self-defense.

On the subject of self-defense, the Bible does not give us a plain "thou shalt" or "thou shalt not." It does, however, suggest some guidelines worthwhile to consider, especially as we find ourselves in the "perilous times" forecast in Scripture, when "evil men and seducers...wax worse and worse" (2 Tim. 3:1-4, 13).

The human race shares a

strong instinct toward self-preservation. If someone challenges our position, or our opinion, or our property, or our life, something within us springs immediately to the defensive and we are ready to fight for what we believe to be rightfully ours. This instinct is necessary to the continuance of the human family; but the degree to which it should be exercised or restrained is subject to a wide range of interpretation, according to how seriously one regards his privileges and/or rights as an individual.

Aspiring Christians are by no means exempt from the instinct to self-preservation; in fact, the desire for continued life may be even stronger in them than in the average. This is because the Christian has set his goal on the world to come, and he realizes his only hope lies in the opportunities that come to him in this present life. But for the Christian, *the desire for self-preservation must, like every other human instinct, yield to the control of the law of God.* There is no area of life which can remain untouched.

When we speak of self-defense, we are not thinking of the instinctive fighting spirit common to all mankind; nor can we judge an act as it might appear from a human point of view. Our first concern, as candidates for eternal rewards, is, What does God approve? What does He call right? How would He expect me to act in a given situation? We must be exceedingly careful that our view-

point is His, for as covenant-makers we are accountable to Him; He is judging us, whatever we are doing.

Nor is the act itself the whole matter, from God's point of view. God is as much concerned with the attitude, the feeling, the motive behind the act as with the act itself. In fact, a wrong desire not acted upon, because opportunity did not arise, is as wrong in God's sight as the wrong action would be. The apostle John classified he who hates his brother in his heart as a murderer (1 John 3:15); and the author of the book of Proverbs said the "thought of foolishness" is "sin" (Prov. 24:9).

An act of self-defense is usually motivated by, or at least accompanied with, feelings of anger, or hatred, or revenge, or uncontrolled passion, or any combination of these. All of these are animal traits in the sight of God and definitely and absolutely forbidden. *The Christian can never, under any circumstance, harbor feelings of anger against his opponent.* Again the law is plain: "Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil" (Ps. 37:8).

The Christian can never, under any circumstance, harbor feelings of revenge or a desire to retaliate. Again the law is plain: "...avenge not yourselves;...for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord" (Rom. 12:19).

The Christian can never, under any circumstance, pay back evil for evil, or harbor any attitude of "give

The Bible does not condemn an act of self-defense to preserve one's life or the lives of one's people if it is done without any feeling of malice or hate.

him-as-good-as-you-get." Again the law is plain: "See that none render evil for evil unto any man"—no exceptions—"but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men" (1 Thess 5:15). Again, "Recompense to no man evil for evil" (Rom. 12:17).

The Christian can never, under any circumstance, provoke to evil or act aggressively. Once more the law is plain: "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men" (Rom. 12:18). This does not say it is always possible, but it places upon the Christian the duty of doing all he can to promote goodwill and avoid strife.

Jesus both taught and applied in

His own life this spirit of peace-making, of non-retaliation and non-revenge. Such a spirit was in contrast to the law of Moses, which had permitted an "eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." With Christ came the end of that law, as He restated its new form: "But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also" (Matt. 5:38-39). We cannot believe Jesus meant these words to be taken literally, as though when we found ourselves in trouble we should ask for more; but they certainly express the maximum of self-control, a total absence of any feelings of retaliation or revenge, and an active

desire to promote peace.

Such was Jesus' own example toward those who arrested Him and misused Him and crucified Him: "Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously" (1 Pet. 2:23). He left the rendering of all vengeance to God; and so must we.

But assuming that our attitude is only to preserve our own lives; assuming that there is no feeling of ill will or revenge or anger or retaliation within us, and no desire to "get even," does God permit us to take any action to defend our lives against a lawless attack?

The answer is yes.

MEANS OF SELF-DEFENSE

1: Use Verbal Defense

THE first means of defense we might consider is a defense **by words and sound argument**. Is such a defense justified? We find our answer in the example of Jesus. The Jews had accused Jesus of being a deceiver of the people, of being a liar, and of being possessed of what they called a "devil" (John 7:12, 20). Jesus proceeded to defend Himself, showing that He was sent of God, that He spoke only the words of His Father, and that His witness was true. At the same time He told them that they were of their father "the devil," adding, "and the lusts of your father ye will do." Jesus told them the facts. "Because I tell you the truth," He said, "ye believe me not....I honour my Father, and ye do dishonour me. And I seek not mine own glory....If I honour myself, my honour is nothing: it is my Father that honoureth me; of whom ye say, that he is your God: yet ye have not known him; but I know him: and if I should say, I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you: but I know him, and keep his saying" (vs. 8:44-45, 49-50, 54-55). Jesus defended Himself against their false accusations by words and sound argument.

Was Jesus retaliating? No, He was stating the facts plainly; but

there is no evidence that He had any feeling of ill will against them. And as Jesus did, so may we do. We, too, may defend ourselves, provided we are moved by the same motive that moved Jesus, that "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). When we defend ourselves, our words must be without any ill feeling, with only one desire; that our opposers may be told the facts.

2: Use Legal Means

A second means of self-defense of which we find example in the Bible is to **use the courts of the law**. We find example in the experiences of Paul. On several occasions he made his defense before the courts and officers of the law and availed himself of their protection (see Acts 24:10, 22; Acts 25:8; 26:2).

Paul not only defended himself in the courts but he took advantage of the law by asking his persecutors if it was lawful for them to scourge a Roman uncondemned. This made them afraid. Paul was using his legal rights as a Roman citizen to protect himself. And he was justified in doing this. But even in this there was no spirit of revenge or ill will, only a desire to

protect his own life and well being that he might be able to proclaim the Gospel and fulfill the commission God had given him.

3: Escape

There may be times, however, when words and sound argument have no effect upon our opponent; and legal means may not be available when we need it most. At such a time we might try to **flee from our opponent**, using any means of escape we could find. Here again we have an example in the apostle Paul, who escaped by being let down over the wall of the city when the Jews were watching the gates of the city day and night to kill him (Acts 9:23-26). Paul did not sit down and wait for an angel to come to his rescue; he, with the help of his friends, did all he could first, and escaped in safety to Jerusalem.

4: Use Force

If argument fails or will not be of any use, and we have no legal means at hand, and we can see no way to escape, our only remaining alternative in self-defense is to **employ force of arms** in an effort to overpower our opponent if possible—either to find someone who is able to defend us or to defend ourselves.

EXAMPLES IN SCRIPTURE

HAVE we any example of self-defense in Scripture? Look at the experience of the apostle Paul. After Paul had made his defense before the council, the rabble cried out, *"Away with such a fellow from the earth; for it is not fit that he should live."* Then Paul appealed to the law: *"Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?"* (Acts 22:22, 25). This only angered the Jews; and so Paul employed a different strategy: He referred to himself as having been a Pharisee. This set the Pharisees against the Sadducees (for Paul had perceived that both were present) and they fell to wrangling among themselves. A group of soldiers, under the orders of the chief captain, took Paul by force from among the people and brought him into the protection of the castle.

Then came a boy, Paul's nephew, informing Paul that forty men had vowed "neither to eat nor drink until they had killed" Paul. Paul directed the young man to the chief captain, who took immediate steps to insure Paul's safety. The action of the chief captain involved elaborate defense for Paul, including 200 soldiers which should accompany him to Caesarea and seventy horsemen and two hundred spearmen during that night. Had Paul not believed such measures for his defense were right, or needful, he could have protested. But he did not. He

accepted gratefully. And he knew full well the purpose of the defenders: Had any of the forty men attacked, these soldiers and spearmen would have killed in Paul's defense; such was their commission, and Paul knew it.

Was Paul accepting a service from them which he would not have performed for himself, had it been in his power? We cannot believe that he was; Paul realized it was right to take steps to defend himself, and it was right whether he did it himself or whether others did it for him. If it had been wrong for Paul to defend himself, it would have been wrong for him to accept the protection offered by the chief captain. It is just as wrong for us to engage someone to steal for us, as it is to steal ourselves. It is just as wrong to hire someone to commit a crime for us as to commit the crime ourselves. Likewise, it is just as right to do something for ourselves as to get someone to do it for us. The defense of the soldiers was Paul's last resort against the lawless men who had threatened to kill him. Paul could not have stood against them alone; he had to have help.

Had self-defense been wrong, Paul should have said to the chief captain, "I have faith; I do not believe in taking any life; God will deliver me. Let these men go their way." But Paul did not. He accepted the men who were hired to

defend him, and who were ready to fight if it had proved necessary.

Did Paul have in this means of defense any ill feeling, or desire for revenge upon the forty who threatened? There is no evidence whatever that he did. He was defending himself in a manner that was pleasing to God.

Jesus said something about this type of defense when talking to His apostles the last night before He was betrayed. When He had sent them out under a special commission some two years previous, He had told them they would need to take nothing with them. God would provide for their physical support and protection. But now as He addressed them He told them this commission had ended; now they should be on their own. Lacking Him and His supporting power, they would need money, provisions, even a means of defense against possible aggressive attack. He said: *"When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye anything? And they said, Nothing. Then said he unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one"* (Luke 22:35-36). There had been a change. No longer would Divine power protect them from every foe; they should be prepared to defend themselves where they could.

NOT PACIFISM OR STOICISM

GOD never sponsored pacifism, stoicism or a calm acceptance of whatever might come. And He always rated human life on a definite scale of value, according to the use the individual was making of his life. Whole nations to Him are *"less than nothing, and vanity"* if

they give no heed to His laws and statutes (Isa. 40:17), hence may be dealt with accordingly. On many occasions God fought openly for His people, frequently destroying those who opposed His purposes and/or were of no significance in His longer-range plans. Sometimes

His angels fought, other times He used human instruments to remove opposers, or He called upon His people to rise up and defend themselves.

But all this was under God's direction, and underlying all actions was His knowledge of the

value of each individual involved. Lacking this open Divine direction and this Divine ability to know and properly judge, and being commanded not to be become entangled in the "affairs of this life" (2 Tim. 2:4), committed followers of Christ today have no right to join any effort to take up arms and wage war under human direction. We must not fight against other men, or other governments, because Jesus said, "All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword" (Matt. 26:52).

There are still other reasons why we cannot fight and kill in war. War is filled with feelings of greed and hate and vengeance and passion, all of which are strictly forbidden the Christian. And beneath the whole effort of war there is usually a strong belief that one's own nation is superior to all others; that aggressive action is as justifiable as defensive; and that all other governments should recognize and respect the superior authority and force of one's own nation—all of which is contrary to God's man-

ner of judging men and nations. When we join armed forces, we are under their jurisdiction, to do whatever we are told, hence are making ourselves subject to a system of defense which, as committed Christians, we cannot uphold.

Self-defense is different. When defending oneself, one is the commander of himself and may control his own feelings and act only so far as he deems necessary. Furthermore, in defending oneself, one is not fighting against organized governments (which would be wrong) but only against a lawless element which civil government seeks to control. God never required His people to suffer at the hands of rebels against authority if there was something they could do.

There are times, however, when all measures of self-defense are unavailing. In such circumstances the early Christians frequently found themselves at the mercy of the law and its unjust authorities, outnumbered and overpowered. At such times there was nothing to do but trust God to allow to happen only

what was for the best, and to accept whatever might come in the right spirit. Thus they went to the cross, the stake, or the lions without doing anything to defend themselves—because they had no ways or means of self-defense. What could their ounce of physical force do against the iron hand of Rome?

Jesus' willing submission to His persecutors was in the knowledge that such was the Father's will. He had prayed: "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless..." and He submitted. In the midst of the ordeal He could have called upon twelve legions of angels to intervene in His defense, if such had been the Father's will; but it was not. However, the fact that He made this statement shows that self-defense may be justified, if it be within the will of God. Jesus had no power to defend Himself against the force of the Jews and the rabble; the angels could have—and would have. But God said no. However, had any and all measures of self-defense been wrong, Christ would not have said this. □

Life is like a bank. You cannot take out what you haven't put in.

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON PAGE 18

Do You Know...?

1. Paul (at the hand of Epaphroditus from the Philippian brethren). Phil. 4:18
2. Micaiah (2 Chron. 18:18)
3. The sorcerer was smitten with blindness by Paul (Acts 13:11)
4. Psalm 78:24, 25
5. James 5:11
6. 2 Kings 4:42-44
7. Gaius. 3 John 5
8. 1 Peter 5:5
9. David; he chose to fall into the hand of the Lord. 2 Sam. 24:14; 1 Chron. 21:13
10. Pilate. Christ's trial. John 18:38
11. Moses and Joshua. Ex. 3:5; Josh. 5:15

12. In Joshua's defense of the Gibeonites. Josh. 10:11
13. 1 Samuel 10:26
14. Uzziah. 2 Chron. 26:18-19
15. Rufus' mother. Rom. 16:13
16. God sent the flood. Gen. 6:5-7
17. Absalom. 2 Sam. 18:10-12
18. Acts 7:38
19. David. Ps. 12:2-3
20. "A flattering mouth worketh ruin" Prov. 26:28
21. Nehemiah. Neh. 5:14-15
22. Ps. 10:4
23. Brook Kidron used for removing filth from the temple. 2 Chron. 29:16
24. 1 Chron. 16:11

Find the Misfit

1. Stephen
2. Pilate
3. Ruth
4. Issachar
5. Samuel
6. Philip
7. Zacchaeus
8. Goliath
9. Elymas
10. Judas

Yesterday's experience plus today's action can make tomorrow a great day.

Live your life as an exclamation, not an explanation.

God gives His very best to those who leave the choice to Him.

Speak kind words and you will hear kind echoes.

One of the most difficult things to give away is kindness... it is usually returned.

No Money Changers!

Jesus drove out of the temple the money changers, and those who sold oxen, sheep and doves.

Commercialized religion has had much to do with bringing about the state of irreligion in the world today. The preachers preach for hire; in many of our fashionable churches every position from the pastor down is filled by persons who are working for the salary they receive.

Even among those who profess sincere, heartfelt service there is always the danger of esteeming the deed above the motive behind it, the ritual above the more important daily living. We want to traffic in some little way or idea of our own instead of making a complete surrender to God.

Remember the money changers: their place was *outside* the temple.

*What a beautiful thing is the morning
After the long, dark, night,
When we open our eyes in its dawning
And our hearts thrill anew with delight
And none of us know what's before us:
In duties and hopes, and fears:
It may be laughter and kisses:
It may be showers of tears.*

*On the birth of a summer bright morning,
As we step on the threshold of day
We can spend every hour at random
And fritter life's gold sand away—
Or we'll listen to wisdom's voice warning
That nought is so silent as time,
That our hearts if they hover round pleasure
We'll miss the great glories sublime.*



*I've got a heap of troubles
and I've got to work them out.
But I look around and see
There's trouble all about.
And when I see my trouble,
I just look up and grin,
And count up all the troubles
That thank God, I'm not in.*

The words we speak, the songs we sing, the doctrines we teach...will have their greatest meaning when we practice what we preach.

Your faithfulness is the yardstick of your faith.

Opportunity never comes, it is here.

Nine tenths of wisdom consists of being wise in time.

Never let a difficulty stop you: it may be sand in your track to prevent you from slipping.

*Only one life, so live it well
And keep thy candle trimmed and bright;
Eternity alone will tell
The radius of that candle's light.*

The Battle with ME

*Today I had a battle,
The fight was hard and long;
My opponent was so stubborn,
And I knew him to be wrong.
We didn't need a referee
Because, when we were through,
The decision was unquestioned,
Nor did we start anew.
I never did like fighting,
And yet I fail to see
How I could help but cheer a bit
When I had conquered ME.*

— Selected

