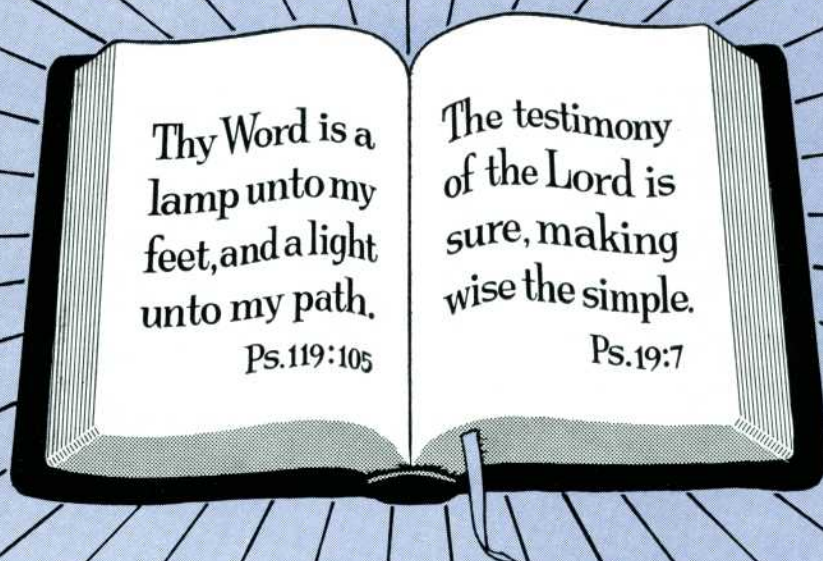


Megiddo Message

DEVOTED TO THE CAUSE OF CHRIST



It DOES Make A Difference

The Third Epistle of John

Our Love to God

What Is Truth? The Great Infidel Discussion

The Poverty of Impatience

WE LIVE in an "instant" age—"instant" foods which require a minimum of preparation time, "instant" Polaroid pictures that develop before our eyes, "instant" credit that makes almost anything ours with just a signature. But in our anxiety to save time, we seem to forget that all of these "instants" may have long-term consequences.

Speedy services have their place, but do we realize how "poor" impatience is? Impatience cannot ripen a green apple, no matter how much we wish it so; to ripen fruit takes time.

Impatience cannot heal a broken bone, or mend the severed flesh. Healing takes time.

Impatience cannot grow a crop and harvest it; growth takes time.

Impatience cannot master an art, or a science, or any disciplining skill; there is no "instant" formula for any such.

Impatience cannot hurry the seasons, the night or the day; the speed of the universe is fixed.

Impatience cannot develop and perfect a godly character; such development takes time.

What, then, can impatience do? Nothing, absolutely nothing, except to make us discontented with things as they are and unhappy with ourselves as we are. In some matters, speed is vital; but there is a point beyond which impatience is poverty. We must surrender our time, along with everything else we have and are, to God; and that means our temporal time clock as well. There are express commands to "wait," even to "wait patiently." David tells how he "waited patiently for the Lord"—and with wonderful results: "He inclined unto me and heard my cry" (Ps. 40:1). And he commands all of us, "Wait on the Lord," submit to His will, His time-schedules, His patterns for growth and development. But this waiting does not imply idleness, only *patience*. "Be patient, therefore, until the arrival of the Lord." "In your patience possess ye your souls." "Steady patience is what you need"

(see James 5:7; Luke 21:19; Heb. 10:36, Moffatt).

Patience is still one of the most precious fruits of the Spirit, and like all other fruits, it requires time to grow and mature. No one has yet developed an "instant" peach or an "instant" grapefruit. Each takes its required number of growing days to mature. And so does patience. Without the full measure of these, the fruit is poor indeed. Perhaps this is the reason for Paul's formula: "We can rejoice . . . when we run into problems, and trials, for we know that they are good for us—they help us learn to be patient. And patience develops strength of character in us and helps us trust God more each time we use it" (Rom. 5:3-4, Living Bible).

Impatience is destined for defeat; patience, for triumph. Do we not read that it is by "patient continuance in well doing" that we may hope for "glory and honor and immortality, eternal life"? Did Christ not promise, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Rev. 2:10)? Did He not promise blessing to those who keep the word of His patience (Rev. 3:10)?

Our triumph is prepared if we persist in the right course—if we are steady in our obedience, fixed in our purpose, and wholehearted in our fidelity. In such company, impatience is poor indeed. ●●

Don't lose Courage! the spirit brave
Mighty is to lift and save.

Don't lose time in vain distress!
Work, not worry, brings success.

Don't lose Hope! who lets her stray
Goes forlornly all the way.

Don't lose Patience, come what will!
Patience oftentimes outruns skill.

Don't lose Gladness! every hour
May yet bloom in happy flower.

Courage, then, against all sin;
Patience, Hope, and Faith will win.

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 (II Cor. 10:4, 5).

We believe

—in God the Creator of all things, all men and all life.

We believe

—in the Bible as containing the genuine revelation of God and His purposes for men, and as being our only source of divine knowledge today.

We believe

—in Christ the Son of God and our Perfect Example, who was born of a Virgin, ministered among men, was crucified, resurrected, and taken to heaven, and who shall shortly return to be King of the whole earth.

We believe

—in life as the gift of God, and in our sacred responsibility to use it for God and His coming Kingdom.

We believe

—in all mankind as providing the nucleus from which a superior, God-honoring people shall be chosen to receive the blessings of immortal life.

We believe

—in ourselves as capable of fulfilling the demands and disciplines given us in the law of God, thus perfecting that high quality of character which God has promised to reward with life everlasting in His heavenly Kingdom on earth.

We believe

—in the promise of God, that a new age is coming—is near—when the earth will be filled with His glory, His people, and His will be done here as it is now done in heaven.

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Megiddo Message

Vol. 66, No. 11

December, 1979

EDITORIAL

2 The Poverty of Impatience

Impatience is destined for defeat; patience, for triumph.

ARTICLES

4 It DOES Make A Difference

The difference is great—it is the difference between eternal life and eternal death.

8 A Certain Disciple Named Ananias

Lessons from the life of an extraordinary ordinary man.

20 Eternal Life Now?

In answer to a subscriber's question.

SPECIAL FEATURES

16 What Is Truth? The Great Infidel Discussion

Third in a Series of Discussions between
Rev. L. T. Nichols and Professor W. F. Jamieson.

BIBLE STUDY

10 The Third Epistle of John

Concluding a series of studies on the Epistles of John

13 Bible Study Hour: *Our Love to God*

REGULAR FEATURES

22 Scriptural Spotlight: "*I Sanctify Myself*"

On John 17:17, 19. Jesus sanctified Himself and in so doing showed us how we may be sanctified also.

27 Our Readers Write

28 Cover Feature: *Aspiration*

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It DOES Make A Difference

AT A POINT where the Northern Pacific Railroad intersects a major highway, a crossing guard was stationed. This was before the days of automatic signal gates and ringing bells, and the duty of this crossing guard was to warn automobiles of the approaching trains.

One night at this particular crossing a terrible accident occurred which took the lives of a young man, his wife, and their five children. The family, on their way home, had driven directly into the path of a speeding train. All were killed instantly.

At the trial the crossing guard was put on the stand. The prosecuting attorney began the interrogation. "Were you on duty that evening?"

"Yes, sir."

"Were you awake?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you see the train coming down the track?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you take your stop sign and your lantern and go to your post in front of the track?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you hold your sign in the air so that it could be seen?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you wave your lantern back and forth?"

"Yes, sir."

With a shrug of the shoulders, the attorney dismissed the guard. "No further questions," he said.

It remained a mystery how the driver of the car could have missed such obvious signals and proceeded onto the tracks. Many years later the crossing guard, now an old man, finally admitted to a close friend. "You know," he said, "that prosecuting attorney missed something. He never asked me if my lantern was *lit*."

The guard had done his full duty, but one thing was missing: the light. A small thing, but what a difference it made!

There are many small particulars in our lives which we may be tempted to overlook and call unimportant. Just a *little* compromise, we tell ourselves, just a little will surely do no harm. Such a small thing surely can't make any great difference.

It may be a matter of questionable vocabulary. True, the Bible doesn't tell us exactly what words we should and should not use. And so we may conclude that the contemporary jargon is not that bad. But are not many words and phrases unbecoming to the cause of Christ—unbecoming even in decent, dignified conversation? Still worse are what may be called "minced oaths," words or phrases derived from that which should be revered as sacred. Does anything questionable ever escape our lips and we dismiss it quietly, telling ourselves that "it doesn't really matter"?

It may be questionable reading material—books, magazines, newspapers, anything which does not edify or inspire the inner life. Still worse, we may be tempted to steal an occasional glance at something we know to be sensational, detrimental, vulgar, or sensual. Again we excuse ourselves; it was just this once, we don't plan to feed upon such.

But is any matter of principle a *small* matter? Is anything that might rob us of eternal life in Christ's Kingdom a small matter? Is anything too small to notice that affects our standing in the sight of God? We know it is not. With Him, it *does* make a difference what words we use, what we read, what we allow our eyes to dwell upon, what we enjoy. Such things, be they ever so small, do make a difference.

At this season of the year it may be the holiday festivities. More than one well-wisher wonders why we are not celebrating. Why don't we go along with at least the "Christian" part of the event? We remind them that the festival was borrowed from ancient Saturnalia-keepers. What difference does *that* make? they ask. Then too, the date is wrong. Everyone knows that Jesus was not born on December 25. True. But surely that is much too small a matter to make any difference. Won't God overlook a simple miscalculation, espe-

Note: "It Does Make A Difference" is available as a church service on cassette. Price: \$3.00.

cially when He didn't reveal the exact date anyway? Besides, who wants to deprive the children (or anyone, for that matter), of the joys of Christmas, the family get-togethers, the spirit of sharing, and all the colorful delights that are part of the tradition? What harm can it do if one's spirit is right? What difference does it make if the date was not originally a Christian festival?

But it just happens that this is *man's* point of view, and not *God's*. And "the Lord seeth not as man seeth."

From ancient times God has forbidden His people having any part with pagan religious rites or rituals. And the command was carried forward from prophet to apostle, and on to us. "Learn not the way of the heathen." "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing." "Love not the world" (Jer. 10:2; II Cor. 6:17; I John 2:15). We have surrendered ourselves—all that we have and are—to serve our God, hence we have neither time, interest, or affection to give that which does not honor Him; it is not ours to give! Nothing about any pagan celebration honors God; neither can *we* honor Him by taking part. We have no right to give ourselves or anything we have to that which God does not approve. It *does* make a difference.

God's Exactness

God is exact. Everything about Him is exact. We see it in His creation. Sunrise is not a hit-or-miss affair; the schedule is predictable and precise. The courses of the stars and planets are set; there is no uncertainty or mishap.

The laws controlling life and motion on earth are fixed. It is by these unvarying laws that astronauts can plot their course to the moon and back. Let there be even a minor change in the pull of gravity, or the speed of light, or the spinning of the earth, and all their efforts would end in frustration.

Our earth travels around the sun. One complete circuit requires a specific amount of time. And it is not sometimes 360 days, sometimes 400, sometimes 340. It is 365 days. And it is not merely this—it is 365.2564 days, never losing or gaining so much as a second. The distance is set, the earth's motion is constant and so the length of the year is unvarying.

Even the simplest things about us operate under unchanging law. A carpenter can build because of the laws of tensile strength that govern his material. Were there no such laws, he could never be certain of the size of the timber to use. The law of gravitation will help to hold his building up if

he builds it plumb; but let him deviate from the plumb line, and gravity will begin at once its downward pull. A small matter, but a great difference may be the result.

Exactness in the Bible

When we look into the Bible, we find the same pattern of exactness. Small matters have always made great differences. In fact, where a command or principle of His law is involved, there is no such thing as a *small* matter.

In the first of the very first book of the Bible we learn this fact. It may have seemed a small matter to Adam and Eve whether they ate of the fruit of one tree or another. The fruit all looked innocent enough—surely it was all good. (Perhaps the forbidden fruit looked even *better*—forbidden things often do!) And they could have reasoned that it was more convenient and seemingly wiser to eat of this particular tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It wouldn't make any difference anyway.

We do not know their thinking, but we do know they yielded to some kind of rationalizing. And we also know the results of their thinking. It *did* make a difference which tree they ate of. Why? Because God had told them specifically to leave the one tree alone. "Thou shalt not eat of it." What made the difference was His command.

When the angel commanded Lot and his wife and daughters to flee from the doomed city, he added one more warning: "Look not behind thee." We might reason that under the stress of such a moment, a person should not be blamed for missing a small command.

But this was no ordinary man speaking. This order came from the angel of the God of heaven, a being who had been living for perhaps billions of ages. He came from the realm of God; He bore the authority of God; He had been sent with a message from God. Should any word from his lips be lightly received? Should any mortal *dare* to think the words of such a being unimportant?

Yet this must have been the unconscious thought of Mrs. Lot. At least she was not sufficiently impressed to remember them. Her natural instinct to look back at what she was leaving behind was stronger than her desire to obey the command of the angel. She looked back, and we know the consequences. It *did* make a difference—she lost her life.

When the Israelites were in the wilderness, Moses was their God-commissioned leader. But he, too, was under leadership—from God. He too had to obey.

The people were camped in Kadesh, and they

had no water. So they came to Moses with their chronic complaint, telling him they would be better off if they were dead. At least they wouldn't be thirsty then.

Moses and Aaron took the complaint to the Lord, and the Lord told Moses to take his rod, assemble the people, and "speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth water: . . . so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink" (Num. 20:8).

Moses gathered the people and addressed them: "Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?" And "Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank" (vs. 10-11). God gave the water, but what about Moses? God had said "speak," and Moses had "struck." Moses had disobeyed.

A small matter, it might have seemed; but it made a great difference. Because of this disobedience, Moses was not permitted to enter Canaan. These were the words of the Lord to Moses: "Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them" (Num. 20:12). Three times Moses implored the Lord to withdraw the sentence, and three times his request was denied. God meant what He said.

What was the reason for the severity? Did it really matter whether Moses spoke to the rock or struck it? In either case it required a miracle to provide the water. But God was showing Moses, and Israel, and all generations to come that He is particular. When He commands us to speak, we are not to strike. In other words, we are never, never to substitute *our* way for God's, our plans for God's, or anything we call "just as good" for what He has commanded.

God Is Particular

God is particular about how we obey Him also. On a variety of other occasions He indicated this. Consider, for example, the time the two eldest sons of Aaron (Nadab and Abihu) disobeyed. Special honors and privileges had been theirs. Nadab and Abihu were called, along with the seventy elders of Israel, to accompany Moses and Aaron into the mountain at the time Moses and Aaron were called to come (Exodus 24). We read, "Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel: and they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clear-

ness"—clearly it was a sight beyond mortal powers of description (Ex. 24:1-2, 9-10). Nadab and Abihu, along with their brothers Eleazar and Ithamar, were chosen by God to minister unto Him shortly after this. They were to minister "in the priest's office" (Ex. 28:1).

But the two eldest had not long to serve. The exact nature of their offense is not clear, but we read that they "offered strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not" (Lev. 10:1). Apparently they preferred to do it *their* way, instead of the way they had been commanded. A small offense, but what happened? Read the next verse: "And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord" (Lev. 10:2). The law was severe, and punishment was meted out immediately. *How* they performed in their ministry before the Lord *did* make a difference. In all probability, they wanted God to be pleased with what they did; but they did not do what would please God. And God was not pleased.

Do we not face similar temptations? The things "written aforetime were written for our learning." Let us not take these lessons lightly. They were written to tell us that God means exactly what He says. When He gives a command, He means just that; nothing less will suffice. Nor will a substitute that may appear all right to us be approved. It is our part to reconcile our ways to God's; He has no obligation to change to accommodate *our* ways.

Every part of the law of the Israelites was exact. For example, the law concerning Sabbath observance: "Ye shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations upon the sabbath day" (Ex. 35:3)—this was the law, and it meant what it said. And the man who thought his tent was a bit chilly and went out to gather some sticks (just a few) to make a fire (just a little fire)—surely it wouldn't make any difference—what happened to him? His transgression was found out, he was declared guilty and put to death.

Achan and his family found the law equally severe. The spoils of Jericho were abundant; surely it would do no harm to take just a little gold, and a few pieces of silver, and just one of the rich Babylonish garments. Surely God would understand that these were things Achan *needed*. But Joshua, speaking for God, had commanded them plainly, "Ye [shall] in any wise keep yourselves from the accursed thing, lest ye make yourselves accursed, when ye take of the accursed thing, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it. But all the silver, and gold, and vessels of brass and iron, are consecrated unto the Lord: they shall come into the treasury of the Lord" (Josh.

6:18-19). Achan knew, and still he coveted and took. And the result is written for our learning.

The experience of Ananias and Sapphira was similar. Surely it would not matter if they kept back part of the money they received from the sale of their land. To plan ahead was only good judgment! It might *not* have mattered, if they had told Peter just what they were doing, if they had explained their situation and been honest and forthright about it. But if they were wrong in holding back a part, they were *more* wrong in *lying* about it. And this *did* make a difference—a difference so great that it cost them their lives.

Why such severity? It was to teach them—and us—that when God orders men to do thus and thus, He means just that; no more, and no less. This is a point which is difficult for us to realize in this age of freedom and license. Obedience is perhaps a greater challenge to us today than it has been in previous days, as most of our discipline must be self-imposed. No one stands over us saying, “You

do this” or “You do that.” Yet we must meet the same standard of perfection; our obligation to God is the same. His requirement of complete obedience has not changed. It is our responsibility to render it, whatever the circumstances in which we find ourselves. God *still* means exactly what He says on all matters of righteousness and life. This is our challenge to meet.

The Standard: Obedience

Jesus is called “the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him” (Heb. 5:9). This would suggest that there is no salvation for those who do not *obey* Him. All hinges on obedience. And it is obedience not according to what *we* think, or what our neighbors think, or what the world around us think, but what God declares. There are bound to be differences in these. God is exact, and some of His commands will cross us. They will

(Continued on page 24)

Let Us Pray . . .

Dear Father of us all, we thank Thee for each day of revealing experience and opportunity. May we not waste the days with things which can neither satisfy nor endure. May we put above gold and all earthly treasure Thy free gifts of health, of friendship, of service, of spiritual blessedness. With all our getting may we get the priceless gift of companionship with Thee, and may our days be filled with gratitude for the simpler blessings which Thou dost continually grant to us. May we cease to lay up for ourselves treasures upon the earth, and wisely gain for ourselves the heavenly treasure that forevermore endures.

We thank Thee for the insight that we have into Thy superior knowledge, for the restraining influence of divine law that can make something of us now in this life, and fit us for a place in Thy eternal Kingdom. Grant that our longing for those joys eternal may be so strong as to impel us to cut loose from everything of the present, and seek first Thy Kingdom.

May our rejoicing be a rejoicing in truth. May we obtain our greatest delight in seeking the pleasures at Thy right hand, the pleasures that can be ours if we now seek Thee with our whole

heart. May it be our chief ambition to become great in Thy sight, and not to obtain the applause and fair speeches of men.

We thank Thee for the words of the apostles, prophets and Jesus. Grant that we may be among the wise ones who will dig deep, beneath the shifting sands of human thought and human standards of right and wrong, building upon the solid rock of reality, believing only the things which Thou dost declare to be the truth, and doing only the things which Thou dost call good.

May we not be among those who say Lord, Lord, and do not do the things commanded us, but may our lips and lives agree, our professions and our actions tell the same story, our light so shining before men that they may see our good works, and glorify Thee in the Day of Visitation.

Give us a stronger faith, and may we ever grow more diligent in every good work, being more anxious to see our own failures than the shortcomings of others. May we willingly take up our cross of self-denial, daily denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and every high thing that exalts itself against Thy knowledge. And may we never be ashamed to have others see that we are becoming crucified.

Forgive us for the sins we have turned from and forsaken, and may we hasten our escape from the windy storm and tempest, that that Day of peace and plenty may be ours. In Jesus' name. Amen.

A Certain Disciple Named Ananias

THERE WAS a task to be done. Someone was needed to do it. The Master looked for someone. He found His man, ready, willing, faithful. That man was Ananias. He was the right man in the right place at the right time; and God used him. The outcome was incalculable blessing.

Ananias is a most inspiring pattern of Christian godliness for all who are called to live the Christian life amid the ordinary circumstances of work-a-day life. How many there are who long to live at their very best, but feel that their circumstances keep them from it.

The ordinary life is often the most difficult. It has the fewest outward stimulants, and therefore requires a deeper, steadier faith from within. We need Christians who will live the ordinary life in a really out-of-the-ordinary way. We should beware of misappreciating or undervaluing the so-called commonplace.

To all who feel that there is a disappointing sense of ordinariness about their life and surroundings, this man Ananias is a silver starlight of encouragement. He is mentioned only twice in the New Testament—in the ninth and twenty-second chapters of Acts; and even in these two places he is introduced in only a rather incidental way. Yet he amply shows us how the glory of the higher world may be brought to shine upon the dismal details of “the common round and the daily task.”

Look, then, for a few moments, at this man, Ananias, and see in him a sparkling gem of Christian discipleship. There are three radiant characteristics which gleam for our inspiration—his readiness, his willingness, his faithfulness. How often we fail because of breakdown in one or more of these areas. Perhaps we may learn much from Ananias.

First, see his *readiness*. We are told three things about him. First, he is simply called “a certain disciple” (Acts 9:10). He was neither an

apostle nor a great preacher; nor does he appear to have been a leader or an official or even an outstanding personality. Likely enough we should never have heard anything about him had it not been for his figuring in Saul’s conversion. But how heartening to know that *God* knew about him. No depth of obscurity can hide a true disciple from *His* gaze. “The Lord knoweth the way of the righteous,” said the Psalmist (1:6).

Second, we are told that he was a “devout man according to the law” (Acts 22:12). That is saying much. See here his devotion to principle. He was so honest and religiously particular that he could endure the microscopic inspection of his life where perhaps others of a more imposing outward profession would wince. He was principled to the last detail. Nothing too small to be morally unimportant with him. This is the way our lives should be. Our devotion to that which is highest should show itself everywhere in our lives.

Third, Ananias had “a good report of all the Jews that dwelt there.” Here we may detect something of discreetness. Such a reputation as Ananias had is not gained in five minutes or nine days. It is evident that he was thoroughly well-known in Damascus; he had probably been there a long while. And he was thought well of by those with whom he lived and worked and transacted business—and that, not for a week or two only, but month after month, year after year. Such men are grand sermons. Such life-sermons are incalculably more telling and convincing than mere lip-advertisements. In one sense, he was a Mr. Nobody; in a far higher sense, he was one of the aristocracy!

But look now at Ananias’s *willingness*. Think you it was an easy thing which the Master asked His servant to do when he said: “Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus”? Be under no such impression. Ananias could not be blamed overmuch had he shrunk away in fear from such an assignment. Was not Saul the most virulent and notorious oppressor of the

Christians in all Judea? Had he not come to Damascus, even at this very time, on a blood-curdling excursion of anti-Christian persecution? How dare Ananias fling himself into the eager clutches of such a one? Could it be of any imaginable use to preach Christ to this hot-blooded, hard-hearted, implacable foe of the Nazarene? Could such an Ethiopian ever change his skin? But the Lord said to him, "Go thy way, for he is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My Name before the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel; for I will show him how great things he must suffer for My Name's sake." Without further demur, "Ananias went his way." He willingly obeyed!

Ananias was obedient as to time, as to place, as to result. He was willing to go just when and just where the Master directed, and to count on his Lord's faithfulness as to the result. We do well to learn from Ananias the lesson of yielding exact obedience.

Now see Ananias's *faithfulness*. In the obedience of Ananias there shines a beauteous triple fidelity—the fidelity of Christian love, Christian loyalty, and Christian humility. Also, his Christian love is seen in his attitude towards Saul. He goes in to the arch-persecutor with the eloquently affectionate greeting "Brother Saul!" Moreover, "he puts his hands on him"—a very gracious act, for whereas Saul had come to lay the hand of violence on Ananias, Ananias now lays the gentle hand of brotherliness on Saul! There is not a trace of resentment in the entire demeanor of Ananias. Christian love displays itself in gracious, fullest victory.

His Christian love is revealed in his attitude towards his Lord. His first word, after saluting Saul, is: "The Lord, even Jesus . . . hath sent me."

See here, also, this good man's humility. He did not obtrude himself into his message. His only reference to himself was the only one needful, that "The Lord, even Jesus . . . hath sent me." He was content to be the faithful anonymous messenger of his Master. This is the kind of servant God always uses.

Some Practical Applications

Christian disciple, never complain that your circumstances render a robust Christian life impossible. Do your difficulties seem like immovable mountains? God says to you through His prophet, "I will make all My mountains a way" (Isa. 49: 11). Does your sky seem all cloudy? Clouds are only dark and drab until the sun glorifies them. In the large majority of cases, circumstances are

only imaginary prison bars. Instead of seeing thorns with every rose, see a rose with every thorn. Let the glad cry of the imprisoned Paul come to our ears from behind real prison bars, "I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me."

Publicity is not an essential either to faithfulness or success. Service in secret often has "house-top" results. We may feel out of sight, but if we are obedient, we are never out of God's sight. He is watching. He may have wider fields of service for us in the future; but the determining factor is our faithfulness in the present.

Refuse to be the slave of circumstance. Through faith and prayer and consecration and a humble walk, transform the difficulties into opportunities. Far more vital than mere busyness is what we *are*. However true and important it may be in other connections, it is most of all emphatic here that *quality* rather than *quantity* is what really tells.

Think again of that man Ananias. Live for Christ at your very best, just where you are, and one day at a time. Do you seek to live a holy life and find it difficult? Well, do not try to live a holy *life*; live a holy *minute*. Sixty of them make a holy *hour*. As the well-known hymn says, "Take time to be holy." Let us not rashly blurt out that we simply cannot make time, for, remember, we are dealing with GOD. And besides, do we not make time for other things far less important? We cannot do the impossible; but if we were to make the matter one of strict conscience, what a difference there would be in many of us. We would become "vessels unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work" (II Tim. 2:21). It was because Ananias was such a vessel, "prepared," that the Master used him as He did.

If you glorify God today, just where you are, there is no telling how He may glorify you tomorrow. By how we live, by what we do, by words

(Continued on page 26)

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From

John the Elder



The Third Epistle of John

A Study of III John 1-14

John the Elder is writing to Gaius, a member of one of the local churches. While his letter is written to a personal friend, it is divinely inspired and is intended for all believers in all times; it is for us. And whether we be isolated or in regular attendance of the Church, John's letter holds deep lessons for us. John portrays three different church-members in this letter: Gaius, the practical Christian; Diotrephes, the arrogant; and Demetrius, who has a threefold commendation. John's study of the character attitudes of these persons may be beneficial for us all.

The Greeting

"The elder unto the wellbeloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth" (III John 1).

Gaius is called "beloved" four times in this brief Epistle. This form of address was used among believers, "the elect of God, holy and beloved" (Col. 3:12). It is the designation of the children of God and is freely used by the followers of Christ.

Shared faith in God and shared experience establish a fellowship and love as nothing else can.

John very warmly expresses his regard for Gaius: "To the esteemed Gaius whom I truly love" (Berkeley).

"Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth" (v. 2).

These words of John may imply that Gaius has been ill physically, but it is certain that his spiritual health was robust. In his inner-life, Gaius has been traveling the upward way. John is praying that his bodily health may be as good as he knows his spiritual health to be. John was so confident

of Gaius' spiritual health that he could inquire of his physical health by asking how it compared with the spiritual!

Are we prone to measure the maximum good in life by physical health and material prosperity, or is our first thought of the spiritual? Spiritual prosperity is indeed the true measure of prosperity.

God needs more spiritually robust Christians like Gaius.

The Elder's Joy

"For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth" (v. 3).

In this short letter John refers to "the truth" five times. "The truth" denotes the Christian faith, the true gospel. It is the knowledge of God which not only fills a man's mind but clothes his life with good deeds. It makes him godlike.

John delighted in the good news which he continually received about Gaius. This seems to suggest that there were reports of others that were not good. But the brethren were continually reporting of the genuine Christian life of Gaius. "The truth" was in him, and he walked in truth. He not only read and studied, but he put into practice what he learned. Like Gaius, may we always adorn the doctrine that we believe, "the truth" of God.

"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth" (v. 4).

With John the Elder, the small earthly joys had long fallen into their proper places. His heart reached its highest expression of joy whenever he heard that his spiritual children were consistently and sincerely walking in the way of truth. And he was prompt and eager to let them know of this great joy.

Oh, what mutual joy flows in the hearts of those who walk in truth!

There is sometimes in us a carnal tendency that feels a slight disfavor toward those who "walk in truth" when their walking ability surpasses our own. But John has left all such feeling far behind—he has "no greater joy" than to hear that his "children walk in truth."

The Diligence of Gaius

"Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers" (v. 5).

This noble character holds forth the high ideal of a faithful Christian. His outward living certifies his inner profession of faith. He is continually loyal under all circumstances. He can be counted on, come what may.

"Which [the brethren] have borne witness of thy charity before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well: because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles" (vs. 6-7).

Whenever the traveling brethren visited the saints, they returned with an excellent report of Gaius—of his loving and earnest example in the Lord's service. Gaius was hospitable to the brethren, even if he had not seen them before.

Hospitality is part of true Christian ministry. That is how we can be fellow-helpers in the gospel. And John the Elder says we ought to be fellow-helpers with those in the Lord's work. Wherever we are, we can be a partner in His service. There is something we can do for God and for others.

God needs practical-minded Christians. He needs more helpers like Gaius, living examples of His holy precepts.

The Proud Diotrephes

"I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them, receiveth us not" (v. 9).

In contrast to the good example of the beloved Gaius, Diotrephes portrays the proud and domineering mannerisms of a disloyal church member. According to John's letter, all the defects which Diotrephes manifested issue from his desire for pre-eminence.

The word "pre-eminence" comes from two Greek words which mean "to be fond of being first." This sin reaches its extreme limit of ugliness when it is related to spiritual matters. Diotrephes feels he can manage the affairs of the church, and rejects the loving supervision of John the Elder.

And what of us? Is our love for Christ and the church the impelling power of all our work for God, or is some of what we do for self? It has been said that Diotrephes is the father of a long line of sons and daughters who have not learned to distinguish between the love for Christ and the church and the love of their position in it. We can be an offspring of Diotrephes by rejecting the wise counsel of God and following our own ways.

"Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church" (v. 10).

When John comes, he will discuss the things Diotrephes has been doing and saying. With malicious words he was making false charges against John and the faithful brethren. The self-centered Christian who loves the pre-eminence cannot stand anyone who towers above him in spiritual stature. He believes by holding them down he can show himself above them.

Such is not Christian behavior. A man is judged by those whom he attacks, and by what he says, as well as by what he does. Diotrephes is known in Christian history as the man who spoke evil against the revered and beloved Elder John and the faithful brethren in the Church.

This unholy conduct is too prevalent among professed Christians. James in his Epistle says that we underestimate the destructive power of that little member the tongue. By our words we have power to hold men up or cast them down. We can lead others up to God, or bear them down, down to destruction. And as we noted before, John the Elder said these evils issue from a proud heart.

". . . Not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would and casteth them out of the church" (v. 10).

Diotrephes not only spoke evilly but he acted evilly. He shut the faithful brethren out of the Church and forbade others' receiving them.

We are shocked to see how far Diotrephes' ambition for pre-eminence carried him. We do not think we would be like Diotrephes; our situation is different.

But we can take the lesson, even so.

Jesus in His message to the lukewarm Laodiceans said: "Be zealous . . . and repent. . . I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Rev. 3:15, 16, 20).

Jesus is calling to us today through His gospel message. Are we going along in our own way, shutting Him out, or are we humble and repentant, opening our heart's door wide, welcoming Him in, taking Him into all our plans? He will not break open the door; He will not make a forced entry.

Oh, are we hungering and satisfying our hunger with the bread He has to give? If we joy in fellowship with Christ, we will not be like Diotrephes, but like Gaius walking in the truth; we will be faithful through and through.

The Elder Warns

"Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen [known] God" (v. 11).

John's loving exhortation to Gaius is timely: "Follow not that which is evil." Even though Diotrephes' personality be influential and eminent, says John, do not follow him into sin. Take notice: Is his character Christlike? Does he practice brotherly kindness and mercy? Is his conversation holy? Does he really know God? Only those who speak right and *do* right are in fellowship with God.

John the Elder felt the need of warning Gaius of the evil influence of Diotrephes. How frequently we fail to realize the danger of a bad example. Let us seek closer and closer fellowship with God by always following the good.

A Fine Recommendation

"Demetrius hath good report of all men, and of the truth itself: yea, and we also bear record; and ye know that our record is true" (v. 12).

Demetrius, an active Christian believer in the Church, may well have been the bearer of John's letter to Gaius. John commends him as a most excellent person, a person to study and imitate. This godly man had a threefold commendation:

- 1) He had a good report of all men (in the truth);
- 2) "The truth" itself testified in behalf of him; that is, the integrity of his life exhibited the gospel;
- 3) John the Elder added his testimony: "We also bear record."

To all of this John added still one more comment: "I testify to him, too, and *you know my testimony is true*" (RSV).

John the Elder is often called "the apostle of love," but his love was wise and discriminating. So let ours be.

Final Greetings

"I had many things to write, but I will not with ink and pen write unto thee: but I trust I shall shortly see thee, and we shall speak face to face. Peace be to thee. Our friends salute thee. Greet the friends by name" (v. 14).

The Elder had much more to write, but it would be better to talk when he should meet his friends face to face. The Elder knew when to end his letter, and what things to keep for later. His message is complete and concise.

The "peace" John invokes upon his friend is not a mere literary form, it is the peace which comes from a righteous life. It is the same peace that Jesus bequeathed to his disciples when he was facing Gethsemane: "My peace I give unto you."

John asks Gaius to convey his personal greetings to each of his friends. He would like to mention each one by name, but that must wait for some later date. All the friends of John sent their greetings to the faithful brethren that were with Gaius.

What a gathering of the faithful when they and we all meet together! What a greeting day that will be!

Reflections

How delightful when Christians increase and flourish in good works, when their faith shines and their love for the brotherhood is such that it cannot be kept secret. Such was the faith and love of the well-beloved Gaius.

Alas, how grievous are the proud, selfish and domineering as was Diotrephes. They do not do good themselves, nor will they suffer others to.

"Beloved, follow not that which is evil." Demetrius is a person of rare excellence, having a golden commendation from all those walking in the way of truth. "Beloved, follow . . . that which is good."

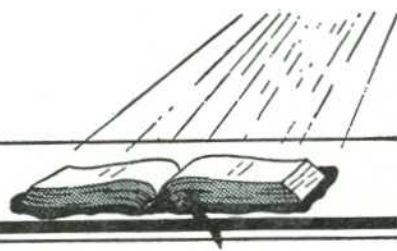
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Gratitude

A colored man of unusual spirit was attending school in Chicago. One day he came to class with a bandaged thumb. When questioned as to the cause, he replied, "I smashed it with a hammer, but praise God I still have my thumb."

On another day this same man had bought a small piece of meat. While walking home his shoelace came untied. Reaching to tie the lace he put the meat down. Along came a dog and snatched the package of meat and ran. "Thank God," said the man, "that I still have my appetite left."

BIBLE STUDY HOUR



Our Love to God

(Part Two)

Q. There is another way in which we show our love for our brother in the faith that we have not mentioned. What is that?

A. By telling him of his faults.

Q. Yes. People in general wouldn't call that "love"—they would probably call it meddling! But we know that this is the highest form of love. Why is it?

A. Because we might save our brother's eternal life by showing him his faults while he still has time to correct them. Our physical life is short compared to eternity, so it means much more to save our eternal life than it does our natural life.

Q. Can we have something from the Bible to show the importance of reproofs in the Christian life?

A. "Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head" (Ps. 141:5). To be smitten, or reproofed, by a righteous man is a kindness.

"Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth: therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty" (Job 5:17). Chastening is another word for reproof, or being told of our faults.

Q. Those are both good, but there is another good one in Hebrews.

A. "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" (Heb. 12:5-7).

Q. If we aspire to be sons and daughters of God, we must have His chastening, for without it we can never be a son or daughter. But God is not here—how does He chasten or correct us? What is the chastening of the Lord?

A. He uses human instruments. When we receive

reproofs from our brethren, that is the chastening of the Lord.

Q. God proves His love for us through His chastening, just as the natural father shows his love for his child by chastening him. The earthly father that neglects to discipline his children does not really love them. We have an opportunity to prove our love to God by accepting His chastening and profiting by it just as the child proves that he loves his parents by obeying them. Could someone comment?

A. If we rebel and do not accept and profit from His chastening, we show that we do not love Him. David gave Solomon some sound advice that would be good for us to remember: "And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind" (I Chron. 28:9). We must serve Him willingly—and from the heart.

Q. That is a good point. What do we mean when we say we should love God from the heart?

A. Jesus said, "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these" (Mark 12:30-31). To love God like that would be to love Him with all we have and are, with our whole being.

Q. Yes. God wants more than lip service. We must be able to say, "I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart" (Ps. 40:8).

What is there about our heart with which we can love God?

A. Our heart represents our life, our whole personality. It is considered to be the center of our affections, our emotions, our passions. To love God from the heart would be to put ourselves into our love, to put feeling into our love, not just render service dutifully.

To love God with all our heart would mean to make him the center of our life. Our heart is the

center of our life; if it ceases, we die. If God is the center of our life, we will make all our plans and all our decisions with Him in mind, being sure we do nothing He would forbid.

Q. If we are to love God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength, does that mean we can love no one else? Are we to save all our love for Him?

A. No, but all other loves must be subordinate to our love for Him. Jesus said, "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me" (Matt. 10:37). It is a case of arranging our priorities.

Q. Jesus said at one time, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple" (Lk. 14:26). What did He mean by that? Must we literally hate our blood relations?

A. No, but we have to be willing to suffer the loss of all that is nearest and dearest to us for His sake if such be necessary. We have to show that our love for Him is greater than our love for our relatives.

Q. Yes, that is the right idea. A footnote in the Jerusalem Bible describes the phrase as "an emphatic way of expressing a total detachment."

What does the Bible say about those who try to serve God with a divided heart?

A. The apostle James says that "a double minded man is unstable in all his ways." He also says that the man that wavers "is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed . . . Let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord" (Jas. 1:6-8).

There is one translation of Psalm 119:113 that says, "I hate men who are half and half." That would be a divided heart—trying to serve God and self.

Paul condemned those in the Church who tried to be on both sides. "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils" (I Cor. 10:21). A devil is an adversary, anyone who opposes God or His Word.

Q. Yes, God wants our wholehearted devotion, and He wants us to prove our love by our actions. Can we have some testimonies to back this up?

A. In the parable of the talents, the man that was rewarded was the one who had used the talents given him, not the one who hid his talent to save it. Of course, the talents in the parable represented money, but the parable can be applied to our talents, our money, our intellect, our natural abilities, our spiritual vigor—whatever we have. Whether our abilities be great or small, we must use them to His glory.

Jesus said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). That would be proving our love by our actions.

"Seek ye first the kingdom of God" (Matt. 6:33). Putting first things first would be proof of our love.

"If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (John 13:17). Being happy in doing would indicate willing service, lovingly performed.

Q. The Christian faith was described by the apostle Paul as "faith which worketh by love" (Gal. 5:6).

Can we have something more to show what Paul meant?

A. Faith which works by love is not faith that sits still with folded hands waiting for someone else to move. The man whose faith works by love doesn't wait for things to happen; he makes them happen. He is doing, for "Faith without works is dead."

Good works are the evidence of faith working by love. To be worthy of His love we must have a good record as evidence of our faith.

Q. Love was to be the distinguishing factor of the Christian Church. One of the earliest recorded observations from a historian was, "See how these Christians love one another."

What did Jesus say about this love?

A. "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:34-35). He must have referred to something more than a sentimental love, else it would not have been a distinguishing factor. Their faith working by love set them apart from the world.

Q. Yes, they were all working toward the same goal and shared a mutual hope, hence their desire to help one another.

There is one chapter in the Bible sometimes referred to as the "Love Chapter" which we have not mentioned, I Corinthians 13. This chapter gives us the characteristics of Bible love.

Writing about this love, Paul used a different word than would have been common in Corinth, for Corinth was known for its sensuality and vice, and the Greek word he used was never used of such love. It was a word that signified moral love and was never associated with passion. I would like to read a few comments on agape love: "The word agape signifies moral love; there is a hint of austerity in it. It conveys the idea of good will, of brotherliness, of friendship. There is an element of reverence in it, as indicating what man's attitude toward God and his fellow men ought to be. The love of which the Apostle writes has

MEGIDDO MESSAGE INDEX 1979

Index Key

Article (A); Debate (D), Drama (Dr), Editorial (Ed); Filler (F); Letter (L); Out of the Archives (Ar); Poem (Po); Pro and Con (PC); Questions answered in article form (QA); Questions and Answers (Q); Reader contributions (R); Sermons (S); Scriptural Spotlight (SS); Bible Studies (BS); Understanding the Bible section (UB).

A

Abib Calendar, The (A), Apr, p27
About Manna (A), Nov, p18
Angels (BS), Apr, p13
Are We Only Half Men? (R), by EH, Jun, p20
Are You Still Living in the Tomb? (see *The Tomb Is Empty*)
As Now We See (Po), Mar, p28
 Atonement
 atonement and remission of sins (Q), Feb, p26
 Christ's death a sacrifice or murder? (UB), Feb, p15
 shedding of blood avails? (Q), Feb, p26
 Work necessary? (A), Dec, p23
Awed . . . (R), by DK, Mar, p25

B

Backward Christian Soldiers? (Ed), Apr, p2
Beautiful Fruits (A), by EH, Nov, p19
 Belief, true meaning of (UB), Feb, p14
Beware of Trivia (R), Apr, p12
 Bible
 Bible Is, The (F), Jun, p12
 Neglected Book, The (R), May, p23
 Bible Personalities
 Ananias, (A), Dec, p8
 David (A), by HL, Jan, p20
 Jephthah's daughter (D), Dec, p17
 Demetrius and Diotrophes (BS), Dec, p10
 Eldad, Medad, Amos and Apollos (A), May, p7
 Gaius (BS), Dec, p10
 Moses (A), Nov, p8

Bible Studies on the Epistles of First John, by HEG
 Test the Spirits (John 4:1-11), Jan, p10
 If We Love One Another (I John 4:12-21), Feb, p10
 The Power of the Christian (I John 5:1-8), Mar, p10
 Believe the Greater Witness (I John 5:9-13), May, p10
 Confidence in Prayer (I John 5:14-17), Jun, p10
 Christian Certainties (I John 5:18-21), Jul, p10
 A Second Letter from John the Elder (II John 1-8), Sep, p10
 The Proper Treatment of Error (II John 9-13), Oct, p10
 The Third Epistle of John (III John), Dec, p10

Bible Study Hour

Angels Are Active, The, by LBS, Apr, p13
Get Ready to Meet the King, by LBS, May, p13
God Is Love, by LBS, Sep, p13; Oct, p19
Our Love to God, by LBS, Nov, p10; Dec, p14
Pentecost and Prayer, by LBS, Jun, p13

Breaking All Records (A), Mar, p24
Building Confidence (A), Jan, p23
Building for Eternity (S), by LTN, Jul, p7
Busy Here and There (A), by LMK, Oct, p8

C

Can You Explain? (Po), Oct, p12
Certain Disciple Named Ananias, A (A), Dec, p8
Choosing Our Memories (Ed), Oct, p2
 Christ's Letters to the Seven Churches (see *Seven Churches*)
Clement, The First Epistle of (Ar), Jan, p8; Feb, p8
Concerning Job (QA), by NHP, Sep, p16
Cooperating with the Inevitable (Ed), Jun, p2
 Cosmorphism (F), Jan, p2
Creation or Evolution—Does It Matter? (A), by Jerry Bergman, Feb, p17
 Criticism (A), Dec, p26

D

Daily Dying (A), Jun, p12
 Debate (see *What Is Truth?*)
Dedication To—What? (Ed), Sep, p2
Divorce and Remarriage (QA), by NHP, Jan, p17
Do You Know? (Po), Jul, p12
Does the Bible Forbid Killing? (QA), by NHP, Jul, p18
Doors Do Close (A), Mar, p24
 Drama
 You Are Innocent—Aren't You? Jul, p13

E

Editorials

Backward, Christian Soldiers? Apr, p2
Choosing Our Memories, Oct, p2
Cooperating With the Inevitable, Jun, p2
Dedication To—What? Sep, p2
Grace of Gumption, The, Nov, p2
How to Keep from Going Stale, May, p2
"Love Not the World", Jan, p2
No Competition, Feb, p2
Poverty of Impatience, The, Dec, p2
You Are An Environment, Mar, p2
Eldad, Medad, Amos and Apollos, (A), May, p7
Eternal Life Now? (QA), Dec, p20
 Evolution (see *Creation or Evolution?*)

F

Fighting To Win! (A), by HL, Jul, p20
 Forgiveness (S), Feb, p4
Four Kinds of "Bones" (F), May, p23
Freedom and Law (A), by Roger A. Nicole, Jul, p4

G

Get Out of the Ditch (A), Mar, p21
"God Grant Me Serenity" (see Editorial, Jun, p2)
Got Any Problems? (A), by Ethel Barrett, Jun, p8
Grace of Gumption, The (Ed), Nov, p2
 Gratitude (F), Dec, p12
Grow Up—To Salvation (R), Sep, p18

H

Happiness Recipe (F), Feb, p23
Hardening of the Ardories (A), Mar, p9

Hearts of Oak (R), Jul, p26
How Did the Galaxies Come Into Existence? (A), by George A. Knight, Apr, p17
How God Supplies (R), by ES, Apr, p23
How Long Driven and Tossed? (A), by EEB, Sep, p8
How To Be Perfectly Miserable (F), Oct, p21
How To Keep From Going Stale (Ed), May, p2
How To Triumph (R), May, p12

I

I Call That Mind Free (A), Jul, p2

Illustrations

drawing of Local Group of Galaxies, Apr, p19
 farmer, in silhouette, by MAT, Nov, p1
 man praying in church, by MAT, Apr, p21
 man sitting on talent donkey, by MAT, Feb, p24
 mountain and lake (cover), by MAT, Oct, p1
 photo of Whirlpool Galaxy, Apr, p19
 photographs of L. T. Nichols and W. F. Jamieson, Oct, p14
 snail with teeth, by MAT, Jun, p26
In the Right Spirit (R), Oct, p12
In the Thick of Thin Things (A), by EJK, Nov, p20
Is It I? (Po), Oct, p28
It Does Make A Difference (S), Dec, p4

J

Jephthah's daughter (D), Dec, p17-19
 Jesus Christ, second advent
Preparation (Po), Jun, p21
 Job (QA), by NHP, Sep, p16
 Judgment (S), Sep, p4

K

Keep Stepping (R), by JD, Oct, p21

L

Ladder of Praise, A (S), Nov, p4
Last Call in the Cool of the Day, The (S), Oct, p4
 Last Days, latter times, meaning of (QA), Mar, p17
Learning to Say "No" (A), by EH, Feb, p12
Leaving Our First Love? (A), by HL, Sep, p17
Lessons from the Young David (A), by HL, Jan, p20
Listening? (R), by EH, Apr, p21
 Love
 genuine, creative (A), Sep, p17
 of God (BS), Sep, p13
 our love to God (BS), Nov, p10
 true (A), May, p21
"Love Not the World" (Ed), Jan, p2

M

Man to Admire, A (A), Jan, p23
 Manna (A), Nov, p18
"March" (R), by HL, Apr, p21
Maximum Living (A), by KEF, May, p4
 Meekness (see *Moses, Man of Meekness*)
Moses, Man of Meekness (A), Nov, p8
 Mundane Man (A), Dec, p19
My Lifework (A), Sep, p28

N

Needed: Cool Heads and Hot Hearts (A), Feb, p23
Neglected Book, The (A), by LG, May, p23
 Newness of Life (S), Apr, p7
No Competition (Ed), Feb, p2

"Now the Spirit Speaketh Expressly" (QA), Mar, p17

O

Obituaries

Hutchins, Fanny (L), May, p27
 Knapp, Edward (L), Sep, p27
 Knights, Ethel C. (L), Sep, p27
 Nall, Goldie (L), Nov, p27
Occupy Till I Come (Po), Mar, p27
Others Are Watching (R), Jan, p24
Our Chance to Escape (R), by ES, May, p11
Our Father's At the Helm (Po), Feb, p28
 Out of the Archives
The First Epistle of Clement, Jan, p8; Feb, p8

P

Parable

of the Laborers (S), Oct, p8
 of the Two Debtors (S), Feb, p6
Pentecost and Prayer (BS), Jun, p13
Pessimist's Creed, The (Po), Jul, p6

Poems

A garden is a lovely place, May, p26
 A leper, all filthy and vile, Feb, p12
 A sacred trust my Lord to me has given, Mar, p27
 Always walk carefully, Feb, p23
 A trouble's an ounce, or a trouble's a ton, Oct, p13
 Begin, my soul, the heavenly theme, Dec, p28
 Can you explain the mystery, Oct, p12
 Come, labor on, May, p28
 Do you know the person with whom you rise? Jul, p12
 From all that terror teaches, Feb, p9
 Hark! the voice of Jesus calling, Dec, p15
 His stone am I, set as He shall please, Sep, p21
 How many hours do we spend, Dec, p25
 I asked the New Year for some motto sweet, Apr, p25
 I call that mind free, Jul, p2
 I hear the choir singing, May, p12
 I heard that the Master was coming, Jun, p21
 I stood too close to the mountain, Oct, p1
Is It I? Oct, p28
 Live in my living; think through all my thought, Jun, p28
 Make me a captive, Lord, Sep, p2
 Mend a quarrel, make a friend, Jul, p23
 Not for the eyes of men, Nov, p27
 Not too much time remaining, Lord, Sep, p15
 Our God, to whom we turn when weary with illusion,
 Mar, p28
 Our Lord has told us all to watch, Sep, p25
Pessimist's Creed, The, July, p6
Renew Your Resolutions, Apr, p28
 Share the handful with the stranger, Feb, p19
 So he died for his faith. That is fine—, Mar, p27
 Someone is going forth today, Oct, p28
 Stone door ajar, beckoning entrance, Apr, p4
 The curling waves with an awful roar, Feb, p28
 The spacious firmament on high, Nov, p28
 The year is gone, beyond recall, Apr, p12
 To acquire a thorough knowledge of my . . . , Sep, p28
 Today is all sufficient for, Mar, p23
 Truth never dies. The ages come and go, Jul, p28
 We shall do so much in the years to come, Jan, p28
 What shall we take through the gateway of the year?
 Apr, p21
 What's the use of sunshine? Jul, p6
 When Jesus comes to reward His servants, May, p16

Prayer

intercessory (BS), Jun, p11
Prayer (S), Jun p4
Prayer Upon Entering Church (A), Apr, p21
Pro & Con (see *Questions and Bible Texts*)
Procrastination (A), Mar, p24

Q

Questions concerning

angels, nature of (Q), Sep, p24
 Armageddon (Q), Jan, p25
 army of the Lord (Q), Jan, p25
 blood (Q), Feb, p26
 being subject to government (Q), Jan, p26
 children having guardian angels (Q), Feb, p25
 devil (answering texts) (PC), May, p25
 divorce and remarriage (QA), Jan, p17
 eternal life (QA), Dec, p20
 instant salvation (UB), Jan, p16
 Jephthah's daughter slain? (D), Dec, p17-19
 Jerusalem trodden down of the Gentiles (Q), Nov, p26
 Jesus' eating with tax collectors (Q), Apr, p26
 Job (QA), Sep, p16
 justification on own merit (Q), Jul, p26
 killing and eating of animals (QA), by NHP, Jul, p18
 literalism vs. symbolism (Q), Feb, p25
 moral perfection (Q), Jan, p25
 only twelve disciples or apostles? (Q), Apr, p27
 rapture (Q), Sep, p24; Nov, p26
 reincarnation (QA), by NHP, Jul, p19
 resurrection universal? (S), Sep, p7
 Revelation 20 and two resurrections (PC), Mar, p26
 sacrifices (QA), by NHP, Jul, p20
 salvation first or last? (UB), Jan, p15
 what Elijah will restore (Q), Sep, p24

R

Recipe for Happiness, A (PO), Jul, p23
Refinishing Work (A), by EEB, Feb, p24
 Religion Must Work (A), Dec, p23
Renew Your Resolutions (A), Apr, p28
 Resolutions (A), Apr, p28
 Resurrection (S), Apr, p4; Sep, p7
Resurrection Day (Po), May, p12

S

Salvation (see Understanding the Bible)
 Salvation through Christ's death? (UB), Feb, p15
 Sanctification (SS), Dec, p22
 Scriptural Spotlight
 Joshua 14:14, *They Followed Wholly*, May, p22
 Psalm 39:4, *Measuring Our Days*, Jan, p22
 Jeremiah 2:36, *Gadding About*, Jul, p22
 Jeremiah 10:23, *Directing Our Steps*, Sep, p22
 Matthew 6:1, "Otherwise Ye Have No Reward," Nov, p22
 Matthew 26:73, *Thy Speech Bewrayeth Thee*, Apr, p22
 Luke 8:8, *Do You Have Hearing Ears?* Oct, p22
 John 17:17, 19, "I Sanctify Myself," Dec, p22
 II Cor. 10:12, *Unwise Comparing*, Jun, p22
 Titus 2:11-12, *Living Soberly, Righteously, Godly*, Mar, p22
 Rev. 2:7, *Are You Listening?* Feb, p22
Self-Deceived? (R), by LG, Oct, p25

Sermons

Are You Still Living in the Tomb? (see *The Tomb Is Empty*)
Building for Eternity, by LTN, Jul, p7
It Does Make A Difference, Dec, p4
Ladder of Praise, A Nov, p4
Last Call in the Cool of the Day, The, Oct, p4
To Forgive and Be Forgiven, Feb, p4
Tomb Is Empty! Jesus Is Alive!, The, Apr, p4
Waiting In Prayer, Jun, p4
We Are Coming to Judgment, Sep, p4
What Will It Be to Be There! by LTN, Jan, p4
Wholly, Wholly, Wholly, Mar, p4
 Seven Churches, To The
 Introduction (A), Apr, p8

To the Church at Ephesus, by JK, Apr, p8
Lost—Your First Love (A), by JEM, Apr, p9
"I Know Thy Works" (A), by EH, Apr, p10
Repent—or Else (A), by LBS, May, p17
Who Is Knocking? (A), by DH, May, p18
Remember . . . Watch (A), by LMK, May, p20
On the Very Point of Death (A), by EEB, Jun, p17
To Him that Overcometh (A), by SBB, Jun, p18
Spacious Firmament on High, The (Po), Nov, p28
Spending and Saving (R), by EH, Sep, p26
 Spirit
 applications (QA), Mar, p18
 uses of the term (BS), Mar, p12
Stop the Leaks (A), Mar, p25
Striving to Walk Worthy (R), by NT, Nov, p19
Surrendered (R), May, p12

T

"Teeth" on the Tongue (A), Jun, p26
That Little Member? (A), by EEB, Jul, p24
There Am I (R), by RS, Sep, p23
Thoughts . . . on Thoughts (A), by LMK, Nov, p21
To Be Trustworthy (R), by DK, Apr, p20
To Forgive and Be Forgiven (S), Feb, p4
Tomb Is Empty! Jesus Is Alive!, The (S), Apr, p4
True Love (A), May, p21
Trust and Walk (R), by ES, Mar, p24
Turning From, Turning To (R), by WP, Apr, p12

U

Understanding the Bible
 Way to Salvation, The, by LBS, Jan, p13; Feb, p13; Mar, p13
 Universal Resurrection, Universal Salvation (S), Sep, p7

V

Victorious Life, The (A), Oct, p13

W

Waiting In Prayer (S), Jun, p4
Wanted! (F), Jan, p23
We Are Coming to Judgment (S), Sep, p4
We Are What We Allow (A), Sep, p26
We Have It Rather Easy (A), by HL, Nov, p17
We Need Repentance (A), by ES, May, p21
What Have We Done Today? (Po), Jan, p28
What Is Our Labor Worth? (F), May, p24
What Is Truth? The Great Infidel Discussion
 Part One, Oct, p14
 Part Two, Nov, p12
 Part Three, Dec, p16
What the Bible Says About Divorce and Remarriage (QA), by NHP, Jan, p17
What Will It Be to Be There! (S), by LTN, Jan, p4
When It Helps, It Hurts (A), Dec, p26
Whence the Cure? (A), Jul, p27
While We Still Have Time (A), Jul, p27
Wholehearted Commitment (S), Mar, p4
Wholly, Wholly, Wholly (S), Mar, p4
Why Us? (A), Sep, p23
With Determination (A), by LMK, Jun, p21
 Words
 Guard the Tongue (Po), Dec, p25
 That Little Member? (A), Jul, p24
Work To Overcome (A), by MW, Sep, p26

Y

You Are An Environment (Ed), Mar, p2
You Are Innocent—Aren't You? (Dr), by Lon Woodrum, Jul, p13

BIBLE TEXTS DISCUSSED

Deut. 24:1-4 (QA), Jan, p18
 Deut. 28:53 (D), Nov, p17
 Judges 11:14 (D), Dec, p17-19
 II Sam. 24:1 (D), Nov, p16
 Job 1, 2 (PC), May, p25
 Jer. 20:7 (D), Dec, p17
 Ezekiel 33:30 (S), Mar, p4
 Malachi 3:6 (D), Nov, p17
 Matt. 5:31-32 (QA), Jan, p18
 Matt. 17:11 (Q), Sep, p24
 Matt. 18:10 (Q), Feb, p25
 Matt. 18:23-34 (S), Feb, p6
 Matt. 19:6-8 (QA), Jan, p18
 Matt. 20:1-16 (S), Oct, p5
 Luke 21:24 (Q), Nov, p26

Acts 16:31 (UB), Feb, p14
 Rom. 6:23 (UB), Mar, p14
 Rom. 8:8 (Q), Jan, p25
 Rom. 13:1 (Q), Jan, p26
 I Cor. 7:11, 39 (QA), Jan, p19
 Eph. 2:8-9 (UB), Feb, p16
 I Thess. 4:16 (Q), Sep, p24; Nov, p26
 I Tim. 4:1-4 (QA), Mar, p17
 Heb. 9:22 (Q), Feb, p26
 James 1:6-8 (A), Sep, p8
 James 4:7 (PC), May, p26
 I Pet. 5:8-9 (PC), May, p26
 II Pet. 2:4 (PC), May, p25
 I John 2:15-17 (Ed), Jan, p2

I John 3:8 (PC), May, p25
 I John 4:1-11 (BS), Jan, p10
 I John 4:12-21 (BS), Feb, p10
 I John 4:19, 10 (BS), Nov, p10
 I John 5:1-5 (BS), Mar, p10
 I John 5:6-8 (BS), Mar, p12
 I John 5:14-17 (BS), Jun, p10
 II John 1-8 (BS), Sep, p10
 II John 9-13 (BS), Oct, p10
 III John 1-14 (BS), Dec, p10
 Jude 6 (PC), May, p25
 Rev. 1:14 (D), Dec, p19
 Rev. 2:2, 4 (A), Mar, p9
 Rev. 20:1-2 (PC), May, p26

nothing whatever to do with the senses or the instincts; it is an intellectual, moral and spiritual quality."

A. That doesn't sound much like the sickly sentimentality that most people think of as love in our day.

Q. Bible love is much higher than mere affection or infatuation. And as this chapter indicates, it is all important. Can we have verses 1-3?

A. "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."

Q. The word rendered "charity" in our King James Version of the Bible is rendered "love" in all the newer translations. From a human standpoint, we would think that if we could speak with tongues, if we had the gift of prophecy, if we possessed all knowledge and gave all we had to feed the poor—and even offered ourselves as a sacrifice, we would be ready for the Kingdom. But Paul says, Not so. What is lacking?

A. Love—love that issues in obedience. Speaking in tongues does not guarantee salvation, nor did any of the gifts of the Spirit they possessed at that time.

Q. What is this love that is so all-important? Is it our degree of affection for God?

A. It is affection and conviction that leads us to action. The apostle John tells us: "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous." Our obedience to God is proof of our love of God.

Q. Yes, love for God cannot be shown by speaking in tongues or prophesying, and while alms-giving is good, it will not avail to our salvation unless done with the right motive.

Charity, or love, must be genuine and heartfelt. It far transcends the human concept of love. It teaches men to live together in peace and harmony. Paul's words describe it in the superlative in this chapter, but I like some of the newer translations better than our Common Version. Could we have verses 4-8 from the Moffatt Bible.

A. "Love is very patient, very kind. Love knows no jealousy; love makes no parade, gives itself no airs, is never rude, never selfish, never irritated, never resentful; love is never glad when others go wrong. Love is gladdened by goodness, always slow to expose, always eager to believe the best, always hopeful, always patient. Love never disappears." ••

December, 1979

"Here Am I"

*Hark! the voice of Jesus calling
"Who will go and work today?
Fields are white, the harvest waiting,
Who will bear the sheaves away?"
Loud and long the Master calleth,
Rich reward He offers thee;
Who will answer, gladly saying,
"Here am I, O Lord, send me?"*

*If you cannot cross the ocean
And the distant lands explore,
You can find a duty nearer—
It is even at your door;
If you cannot speak like angels,
If you cannot preach like Paul,
You can show them how the Lord lived,
An example unto all.*

*If you cannot be the watchman
Standing high upon the wall,
Pointing out the path to Zion,
Offering life and peace to all;
With your prayers and with your labors
You can do what God demands,
You can be like faithful Aaron,
Holding up the prophet's hands.*

*While salvation's day is lengthened,
And the Master calls for you,
Let none hear you idly saying,
"There is nothing I can do!"
Gladly take the task He gives you,
Let His work your pleasure be;
Answer quickly when He calleth,
"Here am I, O Lord, send me."*

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What Is Truth?

The Great Infidel Discussion



Reverend L. T. Nichols vs. Professor W. F. Jamieson

Part Three

IN THE YEAR 1890, our founder Rev. L. T. Nichols engaged in a series of debates with the great infidel debater Professor W. F. Jamieson. The debates extended through eight consecutive evenings between September 25 and October 2 and centered around the two following theses:

FIRST THESIS:

Resolved, That the Bible is wholly of human origin, and abounds in contradictory, immoral, absurd and inconsistent teachings.

W. F. Jamieson, Affirmed.

L. T. Nichols, Denied.

Six nights were spent discussing the First Thesis.

SECOND THESIS:

Resolved, That the teachings of the New Testament are all moral and elevating.

L. T. Nichols, Affirmed.

W. F. Jamieson, Denied.

The following articles are extracts from addresses by both speakers in the debates, which reflect the opposition our founder encountered and his sincere desire to discover fully the true teachings of the Word of God.

Mr. Jamieson's Third Address

Everywhere in Christendom, among all sects that believe in the Divine origin of the Bible, the teaching is promulgated that the Bible teaches of God and His character, and we are told over and over by Christians everywhere that on account of this revelation of the character of God in the Bible, it is clearly seen that it could not have been written by men. On the contrary, the free thinkers say that the character which the Bible gives of God is that of a fiend, and that this gross view of a gross age, of a barbarious people, goes to prove that the whole record, without exception, was written by men. Furthermore, good things, facts, truths, existing in any book, do not prove that book Divine; else, every book containing truth

would be proved Divine; and on the other hand, every book containing falsity, brutality, vulgarity, indecency, is proved by these very things in it to be wholly human as a book.

The question now is, does the Bible contain falsity, brutality, vulgarity, indecency? If we find it does, then we establish our proposition.

The Chicago Interior that I quoted last night, a Christian paper, says, concerning the God of the Bible, that "one of the clearest and most convincing proofs of the Divine origin of the Bible is the revelation in it of the character of God." So say all who believe that the Bible is wholly Divine, our friend here included, for he has avowed it.

I see we have a reporter here to report these proceedings; I am glad of it. Will this not be worth

reading, at least by the ministers of our country? They may think to injure us and this debate. That is beyond their reach. I am glad to bear testimony here tonight that in my acquaintance with my friend and his friends I never met people more ready to listen to the sentiments of this speaker, or any other, in opposition to their religion. And however this debate may end, I shall cherish in my heart nothing but the kindest feelings for these people. Here are seventy or eighty of them that have come to your town—that is why we have this splendid audience. I have not met anything like it in all my experience with Christians. They are unusual.

I have read in a book somewhere, "Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty," and if I could find in the synagogues of this land as much of this element, liberty, the glory of our country, then I tell you that I, in common with the great mass of the American people, could not help being with them. As it is now, while we do not have the least feeling of rancor toward them as individuals, we must say that we despise the actions of those who despise liberty.

Oh, how glad I would be if over every church door in Christendom there were these words written in golden characters:

"Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."

As near as I have learned of my friend and his people, that is precisely the stand they take; and perhaps that is why my friend and his people are opposed by the popular churches of a corrupt and a debasing age. It is a compliment to you, sir, that you occupy the stand of independence and of manhood. We may never see eye to eye, but I am satisfied that we can clasp hand to hand and heart can beat responsive to heart in our one united pursuit of the truth. I say, glory to this whole world of ours when mankind generally can come up to this high doctrine, exemplified by my friend and his people.

There is one thing more I want to say in behalf of people generally, that people naturally, instinctively, love fair play; they love to hear both sides. That is fair. It is always unfair for a man, I care not whether he be a preacher or lecturer, to want the whole platform to himself. Let him court investigation.

There is one thing more I want to say in behalf of and perhaps this is one reason why nearly all the debates we hold are largely attended, while the churches present a beggarly array of empty benches.

Mr. Nichols says that it is unfair to quote a passage without quoting also the qualifying words that surround it. I agree with him in that. I am very careful, and try not to do that. But to say, as some do, that a person has no right to quote individual passages of the Bible is unreasonable; and it is now everywhere admitted that it is fair to quote the Bible, any part of

it, bearing upon the point at issue. Preachers in their sermons and controversialists all do this.

God, according to the Bible, authorized lying. Do you want the proof of it? I say, according to the Bible, that God deceives. Jeremiah 20:7, "Oh Lord, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived."

And according to the Bible, if I read it right, He accepted human sacrifice. I will not have time to go over all that ground. And He plotted. Refer to where He accepted a maiden as a burnt offering (Judges 11:14). We can readily believe that, after the other bad things that have been shown, with which the Bible abounds, and which it presents as having been committed by that Being called God.

Some Christians whom I have met, say that God did this to chastise the people. I will attend to that at some future half hour; but reading a little further from the book, I find this description of God. "His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire" (Rev. 1:14). I read further that "out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword" (Rev. 1:16). Perhaps you have never seen the photograph of God? There it is (exhibits picture). It is too small to be readily seen, but anybody that has an interest in the question can see that that photograph tallies exactly with the description just read in your hearing. Now I tell you what He needs is a new dress suit, or a Hebrew cloak.

Mr. Nichols' Third Reply

It is indeed with pleasure that I stand before you tonight to defend that which I cherish above all things on the face of the earth, namely the God of heaven and earth. The forepart of my opponent's lecture, I was well pleased with; but I cannot say the same of the part that he has brought before you in the discussion.

I stand here as an honest man to honestly defend what I believe without any fear whatever, because it is truth, and truth alone, that I desire. And, as I do not wish to have my opponent outdo me in courtesy, I wish to return somewhat the compliments in his lecture. I must say that in my acquaintance with Mr. Jamieson, I have been well pleased; that he has acted the part of an honest man, so far as I am capable of judging; and although we differ as widely as the North Pole and the South, yet I cannot help respecting certain things and characteristics that I see manifested in my opponent. He sets out with me for liberty of speech, and liberty of thought, and I presume will agree with me that we are not at liberty to think as we please. However, I have so much to do upon my side, my little lecture and compli-

ment will have to be short; but take that little and exaggerate it, and take the will for the deed.

As an honest disputant, as an honest debater, it is my duty to follow my opponent wherever he travels in that blessed and most holy book the Bible.

It may do for the clergy and ministers of the day to dodge around these points instead of coming up and endeavoring honestly to grapple with them, and move them fairly out of the way, but, my friends, it will not do for me. And as it is truth that I desire, I care not from whence it comes. I not only came up here for the purpose of teaching, but to be taught. I expected that I would learn something at this discussion, and I have already learned something. I never delivered a lecture in my life but what I was further advanced individually at the end of that lecture than when I began. And now, as I must be honest in this matter, I must as an honest man in some way fairly remove these objections from that holy record of truth, or else acknowledge to you that that Bible cannot be Divine. I have no hesitancy whatever in making this statement, because I do not wish or desire to cling to anything that cannot be subjected to the severest test; but I trust in our investigation that I shall be able to show to this intelligent congregation how easy it is to remove these objections from the pages of Holy Writ when one is in harmony with Proverbs 2:3.

Mr. Jamieson has told you that he wishes me to dress this God up in a Hebrew garb, that he would be glad of it. I hope and trust that he will. I hope and trust, as I remarked to him today, that he will wade in with me upon the Hebrew garb that I gave him last evening, but to my utter astonishment he has kept silent. Remember that I do not take the position that this book was not written by men. I take the position that it was written by and for men, and in language common to men. The position that I take is that that book is wholly Divine. And now I wish to take some of their great arguments, and with the Hebrew language in which that book was written and given to His "pet" people, to show you what the truth is. The reason these people were His pets is the reason given by the Divine Record itself, "because the people loved him and obeyed him."

Now I wish to call your attention to a testimony which Mr. Jamieson has used to declare anew that the God of heaven was a deceiver. And then we will endeavor to place the Hebrew garb upon it. In Jeremiah 20:7 you find these words, "Oh, Lord, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived: thou art stronger than I am, and hast prevailed." Now this is a plain statement, and what are we going to do? Fall under it? Friend Jamieson thinks so, I presume; but why, Friend Jamieson, did you not take the pains to go to the language in which the Almighty caused

those words to be written before you dared to come before an intelligent congregation and charge Him with deception? And if that language in which the Bible is written does not bear us out in this matter, I say, let that Bible go down. Words are signs of ideas, although we, to our own astonishment and regret, many times hear words used for the purpose of covering up ideas. But we shall use these words for the purpose of elucidating and unearthing the facts and bringing them before your mental vision.

That Hebrew word translated "deceived" is *patah*, and you will find in Gesenius' Lexicon the same identical word. Its definition, plainly stated, is "Hast permitted or let be deceived." "Let me be." Now I would like to know if because the Almighty permits a man to be deceived, is that the Almighty Himself doing the deceiving? Mr. Jamieson might permit me to be deceived, but would that be his deceiving me? Would that be anything I could bring against Mr. Jamieson? I tell you nay. The Almighty declared unto us that He sent unto them His prophets, continually telling them of the glorious way of the future; and the testimony declared that they would not heed these sayings, and the Almighty turned against them because they would not listen to His words, or the words spoken by the prophets, and consequently, as a result, He cast that people off, they were no longer His "pets"; they were cast off, and He would no longer listen unto their prayers and petitions, or receive their offerings (Isa. 1:15-21).

He declares unto us that certain conditions are named by which they can return unto the favor of the Lord and become His "pets" once again. "And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea when ye make many prayers, I will not hear." And there are Free Thinkers who are afraid to think. They quote that text just in that way, although Mr. Jamieson may not. However, read the context and all is plain. Just as he quoted a passage of Scripture and never called your attention to the part that explained it (Deut. 28:53), and as far as this audience was concerned, you never would have known unless you had been conversant with that Book, that there were any qualifying terms surrounding that statement.

We will now call your attention to another passage of Scripture, and what does the Almighty do? Mr. Jamieson calls our Deity, the God of the Bible, a fiend because He accepted—what? Human sacrifice? He calls your attention to Judges 11, verse 31, and I am astonished at his carelessness in reading the Bible. I think he had better get a pair of spectacles and put them on so that he can read, and pay more attention to his reading. "Then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the Lord's or I will offer it

up for a burnt offering."

We find that Jephthah passed over unto the children of Ammon, and the first one that met him was his own daughter. Mr. Jamieson wishes to bring this against the God of heaven. But let us read this correctly, and there is nothing in the Bible authorizing human sacrifice, neither in Judges nor anywhere else. Not a word is said about it in any way, shape or manner that Jephthah would have to offer his daughter as a burnt offering. Read for yourself. It tells us here that "it shall surely be the Lord's *and* I will offer it for a burnt offering." But what is the alternate wording supplied by the translators, as indicated in the margin of your Bible? It is "or." Thus it reads, "shall surely be the Lord's, or I will offer it for a burnt offering." If Mr. Jamieson had only turned to the margin of his Bible, he would have found it so. But he has only a little bit of a Bible, and I don't know that it has any marginal reading, consequently he is excusable. I presume this anyway, because of his reading it the way he did. If he had only taken the pains to investigate he would have seen that it said, "It shall surely be the Lord's *or* I will offer it for a burnt offering." That makes quite a material difference, and shows that he did not offer his daughter as a burnt offering. The testimony itself is conclusive. The evidence that we find upon its pages declares unto us in the 39th verse: "And it came to pass at the end of two months, that she returned unto her father, who did with her according to his vow which he had vowed: and she knew no man. And it was a custom in Israel, that the daughters of Israel went yearly to lament (or "talk with," *Margin*) the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite four days in a year." Again we refer to the margin, where we find "to talk with the daughter of Jephthah"; we do not need to go to the Hebrew at all. But here is a Hebrew Bible, and a Hebrew Lexicon, and they read identically.

I also want to call your attention to Revelation 1:14, the text from which he gets his picture of God, and he came here to this hall with a picture of God, that is photographed or printed. He has had a cut made. I did not know the Free Thinkers were in that kind of business, but nevertheless we get disappointed sometimes.

Mr. Jamieson has called your attention to Revelation 1:14 as a part of this picture, trying to show you that his picture has Divine authority. In these words that he used, and in that picture there is no argument. I want to handle real, genuine, straightforward argument, but I care not to handle that which is not argument. I wish to call your attention then to this testimony: "His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire." Let me say, my friends, I do not believe that everything between the two lids of the Bible

is meant to be taken in its literal sense. If I did, I would believe as stated in the ninety-first Psalm that the Almighty has wings and feathers.

The book of Revelation is highly figurative, and these *figures* are brought before us, not that the Almighty in reality, or the one spoken of in reality (which is Jesus Christ) has literal white hair as white as wool, or eyes as a flame of fire and a literal sword proceeding out of His mouth. Do we not use such expressions in our day? We certainly do. Who would think when Mr. Jamieson last evening declared before this audience, "Mr. Nichols, you must not tell me how to shoot, I propose to do my own shooting, and my own loading"—who in this audience thought of construing that Mr. Jamieson had a literal gun here, and he was loading it up and shooting it at this audience, or at me, or anyone else? We find this kind of language is common parlance. So much for all of those testimonies, and we pass them by, having given them a Hebrew dress.

Now, my friends, we believe that the Bible is Divine. We have certain reasons for thus believing, so many reasons I would like to lecture to you many nights to tell you why I believe the Bible to be Divine; but as an honest disputant, it is not my duty to go and prove or bring any argument on my side to prove it Divine. If I remove his objections, it leaves the question in my hand, and he has failed to establish his thesis. ••

Mundane Man

What is the mundane man? Someone has defined him as the man "with a ten-by-twelve capacity and a two-by-four soul." He is the man who believes only what he can see, who dwells on only what he can taste, and loves only what he can put his hands on. He lacks depth. He lacks vision. He is the fellow without a dream.

What is our capacity? What are we putting into that capacity? Have we lifted ourselves above the mundane level? Are we using our minds and hearts to their maximum to appreciate the great things God has done for us and the greater things He has promised to do? Are we making the very most of what He has entrusted to us, so that we may someday have that enlarged capacity that will be able to receive the truly great things He is able to do for us?

Poor eyes limit a man's sight; poor vision, his deeds. ••

Eternal Life Now?

What does the Bible tell us about eternal life? Is it something we have now, or something we must seek for? A friend has written:

"In the *Message* you speak of the 'prospect of eternal life.'

"Most people when they think of eternal life think of something like insurance money, which they expect to get *after death*; but eternal life is not like this. Eternal life is a *now* possession.

"A few months ago I did a study on eternal life in the Bible, and John 17:3 says, 'And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.' If we know God revealed through Jesus Christ, then we have eternal life *now*. Isn't this right?"

It would be very comforting and pleasant to think that we have eternal life right now, but when we know that we ourselves are subject to sickness or accident or fatal injury at any moment, how can we believe it? Would Christ say we have eternal life now and then let us die?

No, your statement that eternal life is a "now" possession we must classify as erroneous. We can find no passage of Scripture which says this, nor does anything in our experience confirm such an idea. When we are given eternal life, we will not be able to die any more for we will be equal unto the angels (Luke 20:35-36). There are many passages of Scripture which show clearly that eternal life is future, and that it is not to be bestowed until Christ comes to bring it.

Paul looked forward to the time when Christ would bring him his reward—"at that day." He never hinted that he was in possession of it now. He said, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (II Tim. 4:7-8).

In Jesus' parable of the Talents, He likened the Kingdom of heaven to a man traveling into a far country, who called his own servants and

delivered unto them his goods. "After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them" (Matt. 25:14-19). Later in the same chapter Christ pictures the Judgment scene: "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you . . ." (v. 34). Then referring to the wicked, He says, "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire [destruction] . . . And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal" (vs. 41, 46). This is the time when eternal life will be given: at the Judgment seat of Christ.

If eternal life were a "now" possession, there would be no need of a judgment; we would be already in possession of our reward.

But the Bible tells us we do not have it now; in fact, we cannot be sure we will get it until the end of our race. The 18th chapter of Ezekiel gives several illustrations of this point. It tells of a wicked man turning from his wickedness and doing that which is right, thus making himself eligible for life eternal. Verse 24 tells the opposite possibility: "But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die." If eternal life were a "now" possession because of a good beginning in the Christian way, how could God be just and fair? How could such a man die?

Jesus stated clearly that it is one's position at the end of the race that determines one's reward, not his position at the beginning or halfway through but at the end. "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Matt. 24:13).

You quote Jesus' words to His Father just before His crucifixion (John 17:3) to support your position that if we know God and Jesus Christ we possess eternal life now. But the verse does

not use the word "now." The passage reads as follows: "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."

When Jesus spoke of "knowing" God, the word which He used suggests much more than simply knowing God is the Creator or that He exists. It suggests to "understand" and "comprehend." To know God is to know Him as He really is, and all that flows from that. To know God means "to grasp something of his unselfishness, his generosity, his patience, his humility," to adopt a "new standard of measurement, a new scale of values, a new idea of how life should be used," as one commentator phrases it. To know God is to live after God's way, as He intended life to be lived. It is to "break away from the rude tribal connection of mankind and rise to worthier ways and ampler possibilities" which begin here and reach all the way into eternity.

To know God and Jesus Christ is to learn the way to gain salvation, to start in that way, and

to follow it through to the end. It is the first step toward obtaining eternal life.

Another enlightening thought on this subject is found in Romans 2:7, "To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life."

If we possessed eternal life now, there would be no reason for us to seek for it by "patient continuance in well doing."

Titus 1:2 refers to the "hope of eternal life." And in chapter 3 Paul uses the term "heirs, according to the hope of eternal life." An heir is one who expects to receive a possession in the future, not one who is presently in possession of it.

No, eternal life is part of the "inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (I Pet. 1:4-5). It will not be ours until we are proven faithful and Christ comes and gives it to us. ●●

Fruitful Fragments



Reputation is what men and women think of us; character is what God and the angels know of us.

If you have made up your mind that you cannot do something, you are absolutely right!

Some folks are like fences, they run around a lot without getting anywhere.

Those things, dear Lord, that we pray for, give us grace to labor for.

If you want to make an easy job seem mighty hard, just keep putting off doing it.

Some people do not seem to grasp why they were given two ears and only one tongue.

Let us have faith that right makes might, and in that faith let us to the end dare to do our duty as we understand it.

—Abraham Lincoln

'Tis not dying for a faith that's hard, 'tis living up to it.

The mind grows by what it feeds on.

Facts that are not frankly faced have a habit of stabbing us in the back.

Truth when not sought after rarely comes to light.

We rise in glory as we sink in pride.

Genius begins great works, labors alone, and finishes.

Nobility is a matter of character, not of birthright.

He who stops being better stops being good.

Keep out of the suction of those who drift backward.

The future is purchased by the present.

Error is often the sequence of haste.

The winds of God are always blowing, but man must hoist his sail.

How quiet the world would be if men were forbidden to speak well of themselves and evil of others!



SCRIPTURAL SPOTLIGHT

*"Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. . . .
And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might
be sanctified through the truth"*
—John 17:17, 19

THESE are among the words our Lord spoke in His high priestly prayer that night in the upper room before going to Gethsemane. He was thinking of the greatest issues of life; here He spoke of sanctification.

As is well known, the meaning of "sanctify" is to "make holy," or "separate," "set apart for special use." As Jesus uses the word here, it describes a very singular work—it is a process in which God assists; again, it is something that each individual must do for himself. "Sanctify them," Jesus prayed to His Father. How? "Through thy truth." Again He said, "I sanctify myself." It is a work, then, that must be done together—God working with us, we working with God; and all following the example set by Christ who could say, "For their sakes I sanctify myself." God set Jesus apart for His special use, to be separate and holy; at the same time Jesus was sanctifying Himself that He might be able to present to His Father a perfect, clean, holy vessel "sanctified and meet for" His Father's use. In the same way it was of utmost importance that Jesus' disciples become holy, the holy messengers of a Holy Master.

What, again, is the reason Jesus gives here for sanctifying Himself? It is for the example that He is to leave to His disciples who will follow on, "that they also might be sanctified through the truth." The example of a holy life is the greatest proof of the reality of faith. Men may refuse to see the truth of our arguments, may say "it can't be done," but when they can see that it actually has been done and is being done, what can they say to that? Such a life adorns the faith and makes it beautiful, real, vital. Holy living trains the children of God to be part of His family; and the nearer we live to God while we live, the more ready shall we be to dwell in His presence for ever. Holy living is necessary, for there must be

a moral "meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light"; if there is not, it can never be shared.

Let us concentrate for a moment on the phrase "I sanctify myself." This sanctification included every aspect of His life. He was separated first from the confidence and fellowship of His family—"neither did his brethren believe in him." Then, too, He was separated from the comforts of home. He was separated from the confidence of the Jewish clan who held to the old law, because He did not support them in their ostentation. "I sanctify myself" was a continual experience in His life.

But it was not all negative. It was not all separation *from*; there was an equal amount of separation *for*. He was separated to do the will of His heavenly Father. He was separated to leave a perfect example for His disciples to pattern after. He was separated to receive the greatest honor ever promised an earthborn. All this put together meant many things. As we study His life among men, we see Him again and again carefully marking the way for His disciples to go. We see Him again and again taking the hard and rugged way of obedience rather than the easier way of pleasure and pride. The quiet, beautiful home in Bethany among people who not only understood Him but loved Him fervently was not the haven in which He was to spend all His mortal days. More than once as the road was hard and the accommodations poor and the people unreceptive, there must have come the temptation to say, "Pity thyself."

But Jesus did not yield. Resolutely He put all that behind Him and separated Himself from the things of earth to seek the true treasures of heaven. What a battle must have been fought to the finish that night in Gethsemane! But He won. And here He was strengthened by an angel; the Father was with Him in that trying hour. Behold Him in Pilate's judgment hall refusing to

answer in self-defense, while on the cross He refused to call upon angels to come and save Him. Why? Because He was sanctifying Himself; He was submitting to the will of His Father. This is what the apostle Paul so perfectly described when he said Jesus became "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:8). Paul also recognizes that the lesson is for us, for he includes these words: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5).

Another purpose of the sanctification process is told us in the same chapter in John. "And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world" (John 17:19, 18). Jesus was setting the example, pointing the way, revealing to them the secret of separating themselves continually to His service before they could work effectively in ministering to others. The work of preparation was first and primary. Again the lesson comes to us. We must prepare; we must be schooled, disciplined, trained in paths of service and duty before we can be truly "sanctified" or set apart for God. Knowledge is not enough; knowing that we must be set apart is not enough. Even knowledge and complete, correct doctrine are not enough; we must be men and women of a holy passion, a consuming desire for God and His holiness; we must be His willing, eager servants, ready to do whatever He commands, ready to surrender whatever He asks. This is entire sanctification; this is full sacrifice. Are we prepared to think of sanctification as complete separation from all the old ways of our old carnal self? Have we grasped the parallel truth that it also means separation *to* Christ for a life of service, a separation from the good things of this world in exchange for the better things of the world to come?

Let us measure the apostle Paul's own life by the above standard and see if he qualified as one of those who, following Christ, "might be sanctified through the truth." Paul could say, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." Again, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse, that I may win Christ. . . . That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death." Follow him through his ministry, if you will, and see him choose the rugged, narrow way, in the footsteps of His Master. His was no easy, safe life but one of

ceaseless toil and pain until at last he could say with full assurance, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge shall give me at that day" (II Tim. 4:7-8). He knew that he had laid his all on the altar of sacrifice. Does he not indeed pass the test of sanctification?

Have we caught the meaning of that same sanctification as it will affect our lives? Are we ready to listen to the full import of Jesus' words as He said, "And every one that hath left houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and shall inherit eternal life" (Matt. 19:29, RSV)? Are we willing to be sanctified when it means separation from the closest relationships of life when those relationships are hindering our relationship with God? The price is high; yet, does Christ ask more of us than our government? Men leave home, friends, children, lands, for their country; shall we do less for Christ if such be His call?

Will we enlist for the all-out campaign, the entire sanctification? The Master pointed the way: "I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." Through the truth—there is our key, the means to *our* sanctification. We have it in our possession; it is ours to hear and heed. And since our instructor has gone the whole way and has sent word back that He made it, that it is possible, shall we not follow gladly that we may share with Him the glorious life to come? ●●

Religion Must Work

A hired herdsman once defined religion this way: "Lots of people really think they are doing the right thing when they think serving the Lord means shouting themselves hoarse and praising His name."

"Now I'll tell you how I look at that. I'm here because I'm working for Jim. Now, if I'd sit around the house, telling what a good man Jim is, and singing songs to him, and shouting for him and praising his wonderful name, I would be doing just like what lots of religious people do. But that wouldn't suit Jim, and I wouldn't be working for him very long. But when I buckle on my boots and hustle out to round up the cattle off the hills, and bring them into his fields, when I feed them out of Jim's supply and see that none are sick or injured; when I help plant and weed and harvest Jim's crops for him, then I'm serving Jim as he wants to be served. Jim is pleased, and so am I."

It Does Make a Difference

(Continued from page 7)

not seem right, or necessary, or reasonable, or for our good. But before we decide to go our own way, let us stop and think: Who are *we* to judge a Righteous God? And what will be the harm if we do a little more than He requires when there is no clear-cut answer? What will we lose if we give up a little more than necessary—if only we can be sure we have done *enough*!

Only when we have fully accepted God's ways as right and His commandments and judgments as good, whether we fully comprehend the *why* or not, only then are we right in the sight of God. For this reason the apostle John wrote long ago, "Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (I John 2:3-4). The test is not whether we understand every detail but whether we *obey*.

It is easy to obey where we agree and deem it right in our own minds, where our natural thought and that of God's seem to coincide. But the real test of obedience is when we obey because God says so, whether we can rationalize it or not.

Can it be that we are more inclined to obey when it is convenient, but to set God's law aside when we see personal advantage in our own way? And do we ever at such times tell ourselves that it is a small matter anyway and doesn't make any difference?

Jesus' first concern was always the approval of His Father, and He knew that law was exacting. Nevertheless He could say, "I do always those things that please him" (John 8:29). Can we say it? Is this our highest desire? By this same criteria Jesus promised to judge others. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21). "He that doeth"—obedience again. Obedience makes the whole difference.

What did Jesus think about the man who seemed outwardly good, but whose heart was not pure and clean? Would his obedience to outward standards win God's approval if he was, on occasion, slightly dishonest with his neighbor? This was the very lesson Jesus was teaching when He condemned the hypocrisies of the scribes and Pharisees. "Woe unto you," He said, "for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith ("justice, mercy, and integrity," Goodspeed): these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other

undone" (Matt. 23:23). *Every* command, whether large or small, whether demanding outer or inner obedience, was to be obeyed.

The Working of Leaven

Jesus used the illustration of leaven to teach the same lesson. Leaven is a soured and salted substance that produces fermentation, especially in dough. And it takes very little leavening to "raise" a very large amount of dough.

Jesus warned His disciples of the erroneous doctrines and vicious practices of the Pharisees and Sadducees (Matt. 16:6, 12); the corrupt glosses of the law, the traditions which, like leaven, could make a great difference in their lives—in a sour way. The leaven of the Pharisees was something that worked in secret till it had worked its way through one's whole heart and character. A small thing, but such a difference it could make.

The apostle Paul likened sin and sinners to the workings of leaven. Again he was illustrating how small sins, small attitudes of ill, small evils could do great damage. Persons with evil characteristics can pollute a whole society. The comparison is obvious. As a little leaven produces astounding results, so a little sin can grow secretly until the harm it causes is incalculable. Purge it out, says Paul, don't gloss it over, don't conceal it! And he adds, "Let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness: but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (I Cor. 5:8). Paul says malice is like leaven. Its first beginning is so small as not to be worth mentioning. You do not like someone, it may be in school, in the office, in the workshop, in the home. That is the first half-ounce of the leaven of malice. Then your actions and feelings toward that individual and your thoughts and words about him are like leaven at work in your heart. First it is just dislike. But it grows into hatred and from there the way is open for every evil.

Self-esteem may work like leaven. A little does not seem very important, but wait and see. Let the person set out with the lump of self-esteem in his secret heart, and if the collisions of life, together with the grace of God, do not chasten and subdue it, he will end his days full of self-righteousness and pride.

A little leaven of pride—ponder its subtlety for yourself; it does make a difference. A little leaven of anger—think of that as you have seen it in your own heart, as it begins to bubble and boil inside. A little of the leaven of suspicion, or jealousy and envy—think it out as you have seen it in your own experiences. Little things like these *do* make great differences.

When Jesus addressed Himself to the seven churches of Asia, He showed that He was still concerned with the matter of obedience. Sin was still serious. Just as bushels of good food will not counteract the bad effects of a few grains of poison mixed in, so a life filled with good cannot overcome the effect of a few unpurged sins. As Jesus wrote to the church at Thyatira, "I know thy works, and thy charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first"—their good work was even increasing! With such a shining record in their favor, a few little disobediences could surely be overlooked. But not so. "Notwithstanding," said Jesus, "I have a few things against thee" (Rev. 2:20), and those "few things" would spell their ruin, "except they repent of their deeds"; for, said Jesus, "I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works" (v. 23). When Christ searches the reins and hearts and rewards us according to our works, little things, great things, *all* things will make a difference.

Deadly Viruses

We have all heard something about viruses. Probably most of us have at some time experienced some of the miseries a virus can cause. Yet the virus is said to be so small that it would take a half million of them laid end to end to make a line as long as the word "virus," and a full three thousand million billion of them to weigh an ounce. Yet they can cause illnesses ranging from the common cold to fatal fevers.

Are not the sins that beset us like the tiny virus, so small, and yet so deadly? Sin has been called "the virus of the human spirit"—and indeed it is. If allowed to remain, it will take our eternal life.

There is no way to soft-pedal what God says about the seriousness of sin. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." "The wages of sin is death." And nothing is said about the dimensions of the sin that causes death, its size, or weight, or shape, as judged by human standards. It is a simple statement that sin ends in death. We should remind ourselves of this when some temptation comes, and we would like to feel that a little compromise would not make so much difference. Some things seem so trivial—an attitude, an expression, a thought, a motive, an off-hand remark. But in all of these God is weighing us. If eternal life is worth anything at all, isn't it worth our all-out effort, even in these little details of life—those details that can make such a difference?

In Summary

Someday, someday we shall have to stand before our great God and answer for what we have done. The impartial Judge will bring to light "life's inner aims and objects." Then it will be told whether we obeyed; whether we served God out of "a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned" (I Tim. 1:5), or whether we tried to follow our own ideas of right and wrong and obeyed more or less out of convenience. And what a difference it will make, all the difference between a reward of eternal sleep and the "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

Is not ours the greatest incentive to pay attention to the lessons placed on record for our learning?

If we would be entrusted with larger fields of service in the future, with an inheritance of "many things," even riches and honor and life, we must now be faithful in "a few things." Jesus says, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you" (John 15:14)—here is how we can become Jesus' friend, "if ye do." Each time we disobey and excuse ourselves, we place a barrier between ourselves and Him; each time we obey, we are drawn nearer and nearer.

In the great Day that is coming, we shall want to have Jesus for our friend. What joy if we can greet Him when He comes, greet Him as our elder Brother and be unashamed as we stand before

(Continued on page 26)

Guard Now the Tongue

How many hours do we spend
In conversation idle?
Why do we let our tongue run wild
With no attempt to bridle?
Our time on earth is brief enough
For what we have to do
Without the wasted part of all
The parlance we pursue,
Including so much gossip and
The poison plans and patter,
The unbecoming stories and
The words that do not matter.

God made the tongue to praise His name
And spread His gospel great,
To speak of love and brotherhood
And not of vengeful hate;
So let us use it wisely now
As we are on probation,
And guard against the evil and
The idle conversation.

Him, confident that we have patterned our lives after His! What joy if we can know His favor then.

But we cannot have it then if we do not learn to maintain a superwatchfulness in the little things of life now. Little things—what a difference they will make! God's balances are so delicate that a single thought on the wrong side will tip the scale against us.

Serious? Yes, but this means also that every good deed, every good thought, every good feeling, every good intention will also be credited to our account. All these little things will make a great difference, also!

Oh, let us take God at His word and stop making any excuses for our failings. Let us take heed to the advice of the apostle Paul, when he wrote, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith" (II Cor. 13:5). Yes, examine yourselves. I must examine myself, to see whether I am as obedient as a child of God should be, to see whether I am doing all I possibly can to qualify for His everlasting favor. If I do a little too much, I shall never regret it. *But, oh, the danger of not doing enough!*

"Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith." Won't you do it? Won't you commence today to be more careful of all the little things that make up your life? It is a question of where you will spend Eternity. It *does* make a difference. ●●

When It Helps, It Hurts

Most people regard real criticism with about the same enthusiasm a small boy shows in taking a dose of cod-liver oil. This is understandable. It's only human to prefer approval to disapproval, and criticism is usually a form of disapproval. But the fact remains that people seldom learn much from a pat on the back, whereas a solid shake from the shoulders can be highly educational.

We may be tempted to roll the sometimes bitter pill of criticism in a ball of sugar and forget about it. This approach overlooks the fact that the purpose of criticism is usually to effect change, and change is almost invariably a painful personal process. Good criticism forces a stinging self-appraisal which may require the destruction of pet prejudices or easy rationalizations. But the person who can take this kind of criticism without resentment will greatly augment his spiritual stature and will enjoy a kind of self-respect that the approval seeker will never know. ●●

A Certain Disciple Named ANANIAS

(Continued from page 9)

we speak, by looks and tones, by our actions and reactions, by discreet witnessing for Christ, we may be making a contribution to the cause of Christ every hour that we live.

No, a thousand times. A service for Christ does not depend on publicity. The propagation and power of the Gospel depends upon the Ananiases. Let each one say at the beginning of each new day, "Much depends on me today, in the interests of my Lord."

Some years ago a speaker over the radio was telling of his visit to a large munitions factory during the war. He said that the first thing which impressed him as he approached the factory was a word painted in huge, bright letters on the main gate. The word was IADOM. It puzzled him, but he thought no more of it until a little later when he was looking through the interior of the factory. There, on every wall, and in every window, the same word appeared IADOM. "Iadom," he said to himself, "that's a new one." He knew several languages, and could not recall having seen or heard anything like it. He did not like to ask the meaning of it, lest he betray a needless ignorance. However, after his tour of inspection, a typist who directed him back to his car happened to say, "You noticed our motto, of course!" Rather shamefacedly he replied, "Yes." "I suppose you know what it means?" she asked. He was obliged to confess his ignorance. "Oh, it's quite simple," she replied with a smile. "The letters stand for, 'It All Depends On Me.' I. A. D. O. M."

Most biographies we read are of outstanding leaders. But Ananias is an example of the rank and file of our Lord's army. Mark this man. We do well to take a good, long, thoughtful look at him. He can teach us the secret of making the secular sacred, the commonplace beautiful, and the earthly heavenly.

Let Ananias, with his readiness for service, be an example to us. Let his consistent godliness be an incitement to us to live likewise. Let his faithfulness be both a pattern and an inspiration. Thus will the common round and the daily task become transfigured and the means to the great preparation which is before us, that preparation for life in the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord. ●●

Confidence is one of the most important weapons in a warrior's armory. Fear is always wasteful. The man who calmly expects to win has already begun to conquer.

Our Readers Write...

Our Great God

Our God makes life, and He makes life more abundant, for He gives us a oneness of purpose, an aim in life. What does the hymn writer say; "I cannot breathe enough of Thee." How wonderful it is to belong to the King, nay, the King of kings. We are His workmanship if we allow Him to fashion us as the potter molds the clay. Many a time our God finds that He has to break us down and refashion us, for often we try to go our own way; but God knows the end from the beginning, and He knows that if we were allowed to go along our own path we would meet a bitter end.

What a wonderful God we have. We just cannot understand—what does He see in us? What "is man that thou art mindful of him?" We do not deserve all the blessings He bestows upon us.

How true it is that we often worry over the small trials we have—how shall I do this? How shall I pay for that? We underestimate the great things our God can do for us. If only we used a little more faith we might see the glory of a great God in our lives. If there is a failure, the failure is ours, not God's. How can we understand our God who cannot fail, when we are so weak that we constantly fail? He knows our weaknesses, and has made provision for us to be able to come boldly to the throne of grace with one thought in mind—determination to go from strength to strength until we have mastered all those things in our lives where we fail God.

Workshop, England

H. L.

To Meet the Faithful

Summer is past and the harvest past. Soon the last harvest and summer will be here; likewise will the vision speak which is for an appointed time, for it cannot lie. "Though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry." Zephaniah also tells us "The great day of the Lord is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly." So the question, Will we be ready? is indeed a very, very important one. We know that if we are still walking after the imaginations of our own heart and not in God's way, we cannot be saved.

How awful to find oneself in the company of the majority, with the unfaithful ones, at the resurrection. With this possibility in view, let us dwell and meditate on the precious promises of God and all the wonderful things He has in store for the righteous. Let us "Think magnificently about our magnificent God," and strive to be ready and waiting. It would be so wonderful then, so exciting, to be worthy to meet the faithful of Bible times, the faithful of our own day, and all the others we have never heard about, who will make up the 144,000.

Swansea, South Wales

R. B.

December, 1979

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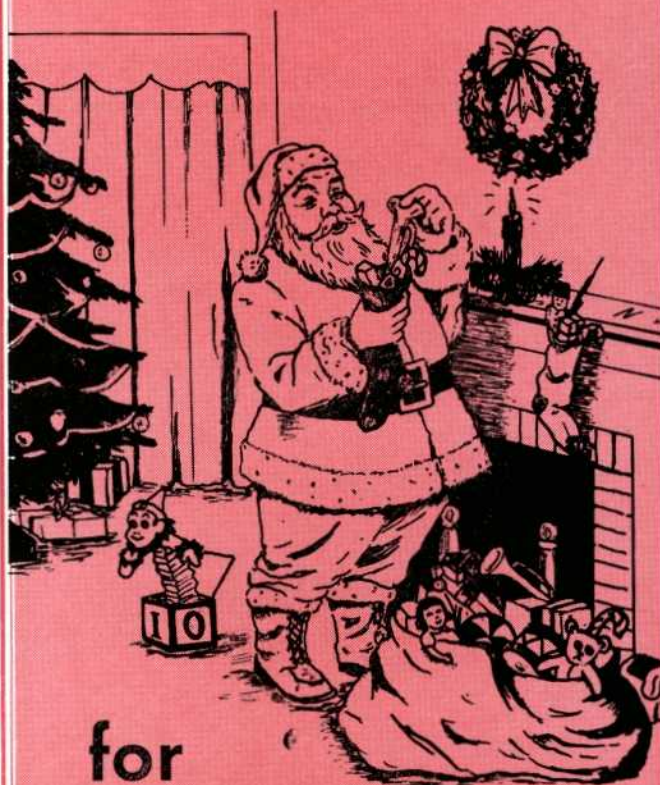
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Aspiration

*Begin, my soul, the heavenly theme,
And speak some boundless thing;
The mighty works, or mightier name
Of our eternal King.*

*Tell of His wondrous faithfulness,
And sound His power abroad;
Sing the sweet promise of His grace,
And the performing God.*

*Proclaim the promise of the Lord,
To mortal dying men,
His hand has writ the sacred Word
With an immortal pen.*

*Engraved as in eternal brass,
The mighty promise shines;
Nor can the powers of darkness erase
Those everlasting lines.*

*His every word of grace is strong
As that which built the skies;
The voice that rolls the stars along
Speaks all the promises.*

*O might I hear Thine heavenly tongue
But whisper, "Thou art mine,"
Those gentle words should raise my song
To notes almost divine.*

—Selected.