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Megiddo Message

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

by RUTH E. SISSON

"I WON'T BE THERE"

Sometimes it's hard to say no. Something in us doesn't like to disappoint others. Even if we know their expectations are not in our best physical or spiritual interests, we still dislike saying no. To take the positive side is so much more gracious, pleasant, and satisfying.

But there are times when we have no other choice, when "no" is the only answer we can give—and be in the favor of God.

A variety of situations confront us. Perhaps it is an invitation from a friend. Our first instinct tells us to accept, but our commitment to Christ will not allow us to follow our instincts. Can we decline—and hold no feeling of envy, no touch of sensitiveness, no whimper of hurt?

Or perhaps our sense of duty tells us to decline. When we are serving Christ, we simply do not have time for all the diversions of this world. Nor do we "fit" in all circles. Though a certain activity was once a highlight on our schedule, now we must decline.

This is painful enough, but when the invitation is repeated, we have to say it again, in one way or another: "I won't be there."

Can we do it bravely, kindly, shamelessly, knowing that we have other and better interests? Does our tone convey the message, that absence is a privilege because better things now absorb us? We have no reason to feel ashamed, no reason to cower from the facts we know we must face. If we hesitate, our "I won't be there" carries an apology of "...but I wish I could be." Shouldn't we be proud to be part of a higher cause, one which gives us higher duties to respect?

Have we registered the message of the Master when He spoke those warning words: *"For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels"*? (Mark 8:38).

There are many times and places in the world from which Christians are honored to be absent. They have nothing in common with those whose first desire is the pleasure of the moment and whatever appetite they can indulge without giving thought or concern to spiritual issues. At such times Christians can say proudly, for all to hear, that such were they in former times, but a change has come into their lives and consequently they aren't what they used to be, that their interests have changed, and they don't go where they used to go. So they "won't be there." It is a sign of spiritual progress, achievement, growth. The Word is plain: *"Go from the presence of a foolish man, when you do not perceive in him the lips of knowledge"* (Prov. 14:7). *"Make no friendship with an angry man, and with a furious man do not go: lest you learn his ways and set a snare for your soul"* (Prov. 22:24–25).

What will I do when the question comes up again? My answer will still be the same: "I won't be there." Why? Because I don't have time. I have accepted an invitation to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, and I am busy getting my clothing ready (Rev. 19:7–8). And of all engagements, this is one I don't want to miss! ■

WE BELIEVE...

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



Megiddo Message

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

MEGIDDO MEANS...

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



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Front cover: A beautiful summer resort at Ogunquit, Maine. The name Ogunquit means "place by the sea". Photo taken by Margaret Tremblay.



GOD Goes Before You

THREE GREAT PYRAMIDS OF GIZA

One of the warmest and most precious of the Divine promises is the promise of God's presence, His guidance, His leading. Wherever His people are, wherever they go, whatever God asks them to do or to be, He goes before them. Did He not give His word: *"I will never leave you, nor forsake you"*? (Heb. 13:5).

It was so with Abraham. Look first at this man, comfortably settled in Ur of the Chaldees, where he expected to spend the rest of his days just as his family had done for generations. But one day there came a message from God, and the next time we see him, he and his family have relocated to Haran. And when the Lord speaks to him again, he says, *"I am the Lord who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans"* (Gen. 15:7).

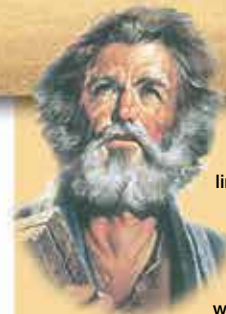
Abraham did not leave Ur alone. God *"brought"* him out. God was leading; God went before him.

The same was true of Jacob. From the day that Jacob left the security of his father's house and set his heart to serve God, everything in Jacob's life, no matter how small or ordinary, was overarched by the high purpose and providence of God. *"Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go,...I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you"* (Gen. 28:15). This was God's promise. God would go before him.

Joseph was equally confident of God's leading. Mistreated by his brothers and sold into slavery when a youth, it would not be strange if for a time he felt the barbs of bitterness in his heart. But as we read the rest of his story, we learn that Joseph was able to see all his life as under God's direction. And near the end, when his brothers, brought to penitence by the severity of famine, confessed their guilt, Joseph showed his great spiritual stature and his unflinching confidence in God when he said, *"God sent me before you to preserve life..."* (Gen. 45:5). Even though it meant hardship and suffering for him, Joseph could accept it because *"God meant it for good."* God went before him.

A Great Follower: Moses

In the book of Deuteronomy, we see another of God's great men following God's leading. Moses is now 120. At one time he had looked forward to leading



Built of massive multi-ton blocks of limestone, the Three Pyramids of Giza were already a thousand years old when Moses was in Egypt. Moses saw firsthand the futility of earthly glory.

The largest of these three rises some 470 feet from a 705-foot wide base.

SPHINX WITH CHEFREN'S PYRAMID



PHOTOS COURTESY OF "BIBLEPLACES.COM"



This Sphinx, now weather and war beaten, is said to be part of the Egypt Joseph knew. Some 60 feet high, it was carved from the limestone of a nearby quarry.

his people into the Promised Land, the “*land flowing with milk and honey*” (Ex. 3:8). But intervening events had changed the picture. God ruled otherwise. Now Moses would be allowed only to view that land of promise from the top of Mt. Pisgah (Mt. Nebo) (Deut. 3:27). He would have to die this side of Canaan.

But Moses is too great a man to be dispirited. He has seen so much of God’s leading and has grown so close to God that his confidence is unshaken. He will carry on triumphantly right to the end. And so he does everything in his power to encourage and support his successor Joshua and to assure both him and the people that God will be with them.

A Time for Change

Moses addresses the people in these words: “*I am one hundred and twenty years old today. I can no longer go out and come in. Also the Lord has said to me, ‘You shall not cross over this Jordan!’*” (Deut. 31:2). But this did not mean that they would go alone. Never! “*The Lord your God Himself crosses over before you; He will destroy these nations from before you, and you shall dispossess them. Joshua himself crosses over before you, just as the Lord has said....The Lord will give them over to you, that you may do to them according to every commandment which I have commanded you. Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the Lord your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you*” (Deut. 31:3, 5–6).

Then Moses turns to address Joshua: “*Be strong and of good courage, for you must go with this people to the land which the Lord has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall cause them to inherit it*” (Deut. 31:7). Reassurance follows assurance: “*The Lord, He is the One who goes before you. He will be with you, He will not leave you nor forsake you; do not fear nor be dismayed*” (v. 8).

Joshua Carries On...

The book of Joshua continues on this same high note of confidence in God. Joshua would have the honor of entering Canaan, along with the solemn responsibility of taking all the people with him.

There they are, sprawled out along the banks of the Jordan as far as the eye can see, a host of them, with their children, and their sheep, and their cattle, all waiting to cross. If you look closely, you see that all eyes are looking in one direction—toward Canaan. They are eager, expectant, almost impatient as they stand there. Waiting. Waiting for the next word of command.

But Joshua is not alone at the head of this great host. At his right stands the new high priest Eleazar, third son of Aaron, who as Joshua’s associate will offer steadfast counsel and spiritual insight to him. And close by is Caleb, that one hundred percent dedicated follower, to offer his support. And—most important of all—*God goes before them*.

God speaks directly to His servant: “*As I was with Moses,*” He says, “*so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you. Be strong and of good courage, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go*” (Josh. 1:5–7). God was guaranteeing to Joshua that he would survive the battles!

It is a message of stirring spiritual support, so simple, yet so startling: “*It is God who shall go before you! It is God who shall fight for you! It is God who, little by little, shall steadily and surely give you victory over your enemies! It is God who shall eventually give you rest! So be strong in His strength!*”

It was not a new lesson. Joshua had already learned that God was faithful. In his mind’s eye he could still see those remarkable times when God had done mighty mir-

Following is an acknowledgment that another knows more about the route to take than we do.

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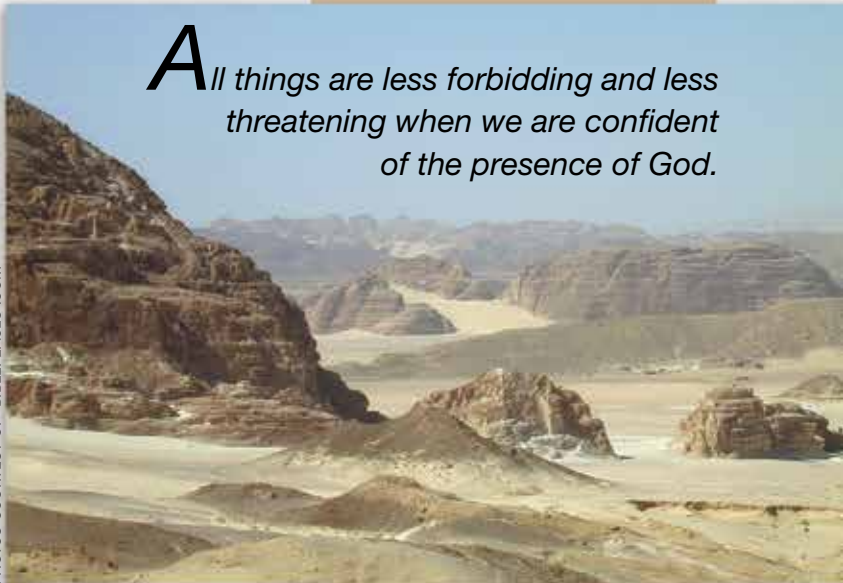


SINAI DESERT NEAR HAZEROTH

By leading the Israelites through desert area as seen in this photo of the Sinai Peninsula, God was teaching them to depend on Him for their needs.

All things are less forbidding and less threatening when we are confident of the presence of God.

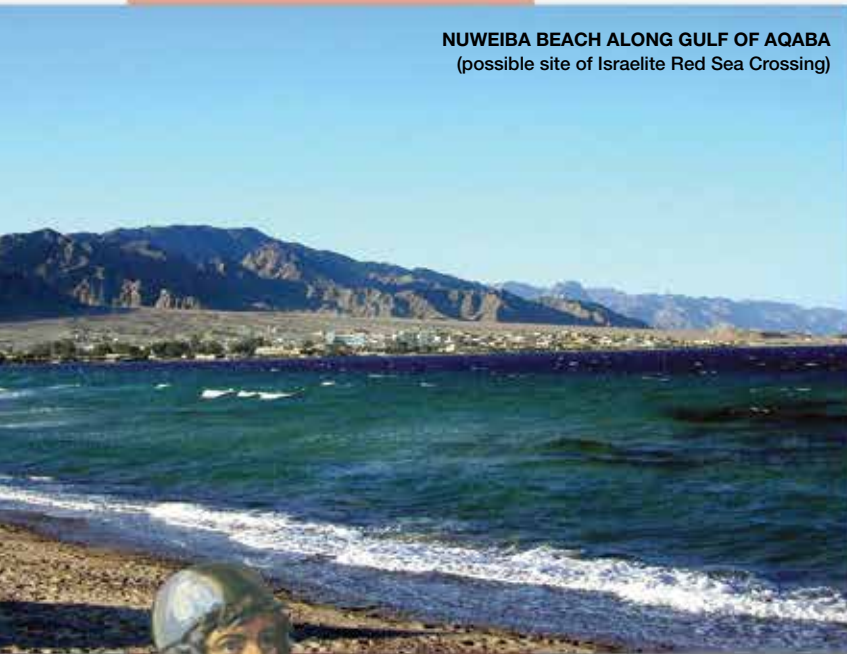
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SINAI DESERT NEAR HAZEROTH

“*You gave them bread from heaven when they were hungry and water from the rock when they were thirsty.*” —Neh. 9:15 NLT

NUWEIBA BEACH ALONG GULF OF AQABA
(possible site of Israelite Red Sea Crossing)



PHOTOS COURTESY OF "BIBLEPLACES.COM"



Joshua was among the people who crossed the Red Sea. Forty years later he was one of the only two original adults to survive the entire forty years in the wilderness, and enter Canaan.

"Then Moses went up to Mount Nebo, which is across from Jericho. And the Lord showed him all the land of Gilead as far as Dan." —Deut. 34:1 NKJV

Just the Same Today

What of us, we who know and serve the same great God? Is it not ours to know and believe today that the God who lived in Jacob's day, or Moses' day, or Joshua's day, is *just the same today*? Is it not the assurance we need, that God goes before *us*, that we are not alone, that we can depend on Him to see us through, all the way to Canaan?

But it is no time for weaklings or faltering ones; it is a time for courage, a time for strength, a time to turn not to the right or to the left but go straight ahead in the work we have begun.

As we begin our new chapters, face new experiences, and enter unknown tomorrows, we find ourselves beset with a certain feeling of apprehension, uncertainty, wonderment. What are God's plans for us? What next? How long? When will the great Change come? New chapters and new ventures always bring a bit of apprehension.

We need the assurance that has been given to God's people before us. We need the reminder that both God and Moses gave to Joshua. We need to be reminded that there is no cause for fear, because we are not alone: *"God goes before you."* All things are less forbidding and less threatening when we are confident of the presence of God.

WE MUST CARRY ON...

God's aspirations for us are enormous, beyond all we can ask or imagine—not because we of ourselves are a great people, but because we have a great God, who delights to do great things with and for those who will cooperate with Him.

We never have to make our way alone because His truth is the same *"yesterday, today and forever."* He who keeps eternal vigil; He who *"neither slumbers nor sleeps"* (Ps. 121:4), He the Eternal God stands guard over the lives of those whom He has called.

Tasks may seem impossible and tomorrows fearful to face when God is left out. But when we live in the awareness of His presence, there are no impossibles.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 27

DEAD SEA AND MOUNT NEBO

Looking east across the Salt (Dead) Sea toward Mount Nebo, the mountain from which God allowed Moses to view the land of promise before he died.

Four rivers, including the Jordan River, run into the Dead Sea. However, at present the volume of water flowing into the Dead Sea is greatly reduced. It is the lowest point on earth—over 1300 feet below sea level.

In Bible times it was most important as a barrier to travel.

Mount Nebo

Salt (Dead) Sea

PHOTOS COURTESY OF "BIBLEPLACES.COM"

Caleb Takes on a Challenge:

*"Give Me
This
Mountain"*

Read Numbers 14:1–10, 21–24

Canaan had been largely subdued. The coalitions of the Canaanite nations had been broken, as far as they were going to be. The time had arrived to distribute the territory among the war weary tribes so that they could settle down and enjoy their inheritance.

Who would be first to claim his inheritance in Canaan? Would it be the tribe of Reuben, or Ephraim, or Benjamin? No, it was not a tribe at all, but—strangely—an individual. The first claimant was Joshua's faithful colleague, Caleb, a man to whom God had promised a special inheritance.



Caleb was a foreigner

Caleb was not even a full-blooded Israelite. Actually, he was a descendant of Esau's eldest son Eliphaz, who had joined the tribe of Judah by marrying a daughter of Hur. Caleb's father Jephunneh, was a Kenezite (Gen. 36:11).

The fact that Caleb was really a foreigner emphasizes the fact that God does not judge by one's nationality or gifts. Even though God was at this time working with Israel as His chosen nation, He seeks the sincere heart whatever its source. The Lord *"looks on the heart."* Caleb stands as one of the earliest faithful Gentiles in the Divine record.

Unlike most who received an inheritance in Canaan, Caleb's right to inheritance was not through simple lineal descent. His right to inheritance was from God, a special reward for special service. Caleb and Joshua had stood unwaveringly on the side of God and Moses in the face of the fiercest protests, even the threat of death. Then, when the people had had opportunity to show which side they were on, God had declared of the rebellious, hard-hearted host, *"not one of the men who saw my glory and the miraculous signs I performed in Egypt and in the desert but who disobeyed me and tested me ten times—not one of them will ever see the land I promised on oath to their forefathers. No one who has treated me with contempt will ever see it. But..."*

But what? Who? The next statement shows the justice of God. Never does He condemn the innocent with the guilty. He made an exception for His faithful ones. *"But because my servant Caleb has a different spirit and follows me wholeheartedly, I will bring him into the land he went to, and his descendants will inherit it"* (Num. 14:22–24 NIV).

The promise was brief—only a few words; but it was from the Lord. Caleb heard it. *"I will bring him into the land he went to, and his descendants will inherit it."* Caleb heard it, and Caleb remembered it, through 40 years of wandering, 40 years of dwell-

REPHAIM VALLEY VIEWED FROM NORTH

The Rephaim Valley west of Jerusalem is part of the area Caleb asked for when he said, *"I am as strong this day as on the day that Moses sent me. Now therefore, give me this mountain...."* —Josh. 14:11–12.

*Are you thinking
about retiring?
Caleb took on new
challenges at 85!*

PHOTOS IN THIS ARTICLE
COURTESY OF "BIBLEPLACES.COM"



WATERFALLS AT EN GEDI

The largest oasis along the western shore of the Dead Sea, En Gedi was only a few miles east of Hebron. Its fresh water springs have allowed continuous habitation at the site since very early times.

“I FOLLOWED...WHOLEHEARTEDLY”

What an exalted statement: *“I followed the Lord my God wholeheartedly.”* And what an assurance to us that complete obedience to God is possible, that we, too, can feel one day the thrill of victory. We hear it in Paul’s statement, *“I have fought a good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful.”*¹ And the words of Jesus: *“I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do.”*² And the words of the angel to Daniel: *“You are greatly beloved.”*³ Just so Caleb is able to say, *“I followed the Lord my God wholeheartedly.”*⁴ ■

¹2 Tim 4:7, ² John 17:4, ³Dan. 9:23, ⁴Josh. 14:8, var. trans.

**Caleb learned
a most valuable
lesson: to trust God.**

ing with the rebellious host, 40 years of delay because of a sin he did not commit. Many a lesser soul would have been bitter, ready to take God to task for making him waste the best years of his life suffering for a sin he did not commit. Where was the justice in it, or mercy, or kindness? But we hear not a word of complaint from Caleb. As the Lord said, *“My servant Caleb...has a different spirit”* (Num. 14:24), a spirit of meekness, a spirit of patience, a spirit of obedience, and genuine joy in the Lord. Caleb mastered the art of serving God patiently, perfectly, joyfully, even in the wilderness, even when compelled to live in the midst of a wicked and rebellious host.

Do we wonder, then, when the wilderness years are past and the land is conquered; do we wonder that Caleb is the first to step forward and request the inheritance he had been promised, the inheritance he had waited for through forty-five long years?

Closely he watches the conquest of the land winding down to a conclusion. Then, when the time is right, through all the maze of people he makes his way straight to his old friend Joshua, where he spreads his request before Joshua and before the Lord. First he recites a bit of history, which both he and Joshua know only too well. Their minds go back some forty years to the day when Moses the servant of the Lord sent them from Kadesh-Barnea to spy out the land of Israel.

What seemed a simple assignment soon turned into a crisis—and a long-term blessing. For both Caleb and Joshua had stood the test.

And so Caleb tells Joshua: *“You know what the Lord said to Moses the man of God at Kadesh-Bar-*

nea about you and me. I was forty years old when Moses the servant of the Lord sent me from Kadesh-Barnea to explore the land. And I brought him back a report according to my convictions, but my brothers who went up with me made the hearts of the people melt with fear. I, however, followed the Lord my God wholeheartedly” (Josh. 14:6–8 NIV).

There is no pride in these words, no

self-conceit, only an honest stating of his complete obedience, complete devotion, complete integrity.

Caleb associates his receiving an inheritance directly with his total, faithful obedience. *“So on that day Moses swore to me, ‘The land on which your feet have walked will be your inheritance and that of your children forever, because you have followed the Lord my God wholeheartedly’”* (v.9).

Just as God recognized Caleb’s faithfulness, so now Caleb recognizes the faithfulness of God. God has kept His word. At the advanced age of 85, Caleb is still strong and vigorous, and He gives all credit to God. *“Now then, just as the Lord promised, he has kept me alive for forty-five years since the time he said this to Moses, while Israel moved about in the desert. So here I am today, eighty-five years old! I am still as strong today as the day Moses sent me out; I’m just as vigorous to go out to battle now as I was then. Now give me this hill country that the Lord promised me that day”* (Josh. 14:10–12 NIV).

Was Caleb presumptuous in asking for the fulfillment of God’s promise? Not at all. This is only what God would expect. If we show no interest in what God has offered us, no concern, no love or desire for His rewards, what gratitude is there in that? When we have met the requirements, God wants us to seek our reward.



An Inheritance!

Exactly what was Caleb’s inheritance to be? Did he ask for the broad open plain? No, nothing easy attracted Caleb, nothing of the low country. He wanted a certain mountain area. Said Caleb, *“Give me this mountain”* (Josh. 14:12).

At the time Caleb made this request, *“this mountain”* was still the territory of the Anakims, the same giants that had frightened the ten spies forty years before (Num. 13:21–22). Even after five years of fighting in the land, they were still holding out, strong as ever. But Caleb wanted *“this mountain.”* Were mighty giants there? His faith was in a God to whom the mightiest giant was no more threatening than dust. Caleb had no cause to fear. The God who was with him when they spied out the land was still his God today and still able to overcome the enemy. Neither Caleb’s faith or Caleb’s God had weakened with the intervening years. He still possessed the strong spirit

of *"Let us go up at once and possess it, for we are well able to overcome it."*

What was the area of the mountain? It was Hebron, probably the choicest spot in the land of Canaan. And to Caleb it had even more to offer, for Hebron was sacred soil. Here the patriarchs—his "true" family—had spent much of their lives. Here Abraham had built his first altar to the Lord. Beneath its oaks, he had pitched his tents, and its soil had been trod by the angels who visited those tents. Here Abraham and Sarah had heard those blessed words of promise from the angel: *"I will return to you at the appointed time next year and Sarah will have a son"* (Gen. 18:14 NIV). Here Abraham had pleaded with the angel to spare the city of Sodom if ten righteous could be found there. Here Jacob had sojourned, and Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Leah lay buried.

No doubt about it, Caleb wanted *this mountain*—Hebron! He could not be content with the good when by paying the price he could have the *best*.

He was willing to pay the price, even if it involved a heavy conflict. For this was the land God had promised him as a reward for his integrity and faithfulness, and if God wanted him to have it, Caleb would have it! This was the land of which the Lord had said to Caleb, *"His descendants shall possess it"* (Num. 14:24).

All through his life, Caleb showed outstanding qualities of character.

The name Caleb means "all heart." His chief distinction lay in the fact that he never stopped growing. The passing of the years, instead of witnessing a gradual decline, only served to increase his stature and enhance his standing before God. His name is appropriately derived from a Hebrew word associated with the ideals of fidelity, obedience, and alertness—qualities in which he excelled.

Like Moses, Caleb's life divides into three defined periods. Until the age of 40 he was a slave in Egypt. Then, as a leader in his tribe, he was selected as one of twelve to explore Canaan. He spent a second 40 years in the desert, wandering with the children of Israel. During the third period of his life he set out to claim his inheritance. But all the way he was following, obedient, wholehearted, for Caleb *"wholly followed the Lord."*

Caleb's early life is not recorded. The first we hear of him, he is among those

Caleb's biography, though condensed in a few sentences, illustrates two exhilarating truths: first, that it is possible for life's greatest achievement to take place in advanced age; and second, that there is no retirement in God's service. At no stage of life can we say, "I have done all I need to do." As long as God gives us life and strength, we must keep using it.

selected to spy out the land of Canaan. But as soon as he is introduced, his character and conduct stand out as one wholly loyal to God. Qualities like these are not won overnight. Even as a slave in Egypt, Caleb must have been serving God. Even in the miseries of slavery, he must have practiced the godly qualities of patience and faithful endurance. Even in slavery he learned to live close to God. So now, when Moses is looking for special service for God, Caleb is ready.

Of those selected to spy out the land the Lord said to Moses, *"Send men to explore the land of Canaan, the land I am giving to Israel. Send one leader from each of the twelve ancestral tribes"* (Num. 13:2 NLT). Every one a leader: that tells its own story. Leaders do not just happen. But neither are all of sterling character, as the testing of these soon revealed. It all depends on what has been happening behind the scenes, in the everyday tests of life. Of our Lord's 30 years of obscurity, only one incident is recorded, plus the simple fact that Jesus *"increased in wisdom and stature"* (Luke 2:52). But His subsequent years tell us all we need to know about His youth. He was consecrated to God.



Caleb in crises

How did Caleb stand up in crises? The very fact that he was selected to explore Canaan shows that he was a leader among his people. Yet, unlike the others



FLOCK OF SHEEP NEAR BETHLEHEM

Sheep are a common sight in the area just east of Bethlehem in Judah, also part of Caleb's inheritance.

Can't we take Caleb's request, *"Give me this mountain,"* as our watchword? As our days are passing by, what advances are we making toward the Canaan upon which we have set our hearts? What yet stands between us and a full and complete conquest? What mountain of sin is still hindering us? What mighty Anakim is still wielding authority over us? Is it pride, or bitterness, or self-confidence, or self-love? Is it impatience, or deceit, or envy or ill-will?

Let our earnest plea arise this very day: *"Lord, give me this mountain."* Give me the strength, the courage, and the power to assail it, that I may slay the giants of sin and plant the flag of victory on its crest! I *must* yet stand victor over this mountain. ■



DATE PALM TREES NEAR DEAD SEA

chosen, he was never numbered among the murmurers, nor did he hanker for the lost delicacies of Egypt. His goal was the same, whether leading or following: to serve God wholeheartedly. He trusted his life to God—wholly—and allowed nothing to deflect him.

What qualities distinguished him?

1: Caleb was a man of great moral courage. Doubtless in his early years, his back had felt the sting of the merciless slavemaster's lash. But instead of growing hard and bitter under the mistreatment, Caleb used it to develop great moral courage—the kind he would need when he and Joshua would have to stand alone against the fury of the multitude and even of the other leaders of the tribes.

It takes a strong man or woman to stand alone. This is one of the most stringent tests of life, for who does not crave popularity? It is all too easy to remain silent or to compromise one's position in the presence of fierce opposition.

But Caleb and Joshua did not compromise. They stood firm and courageous in their attitude of faith, in opposition to the popular majority report of the ten spies, when *"the whole assembly talked about stoning them"* (Num. 14:10 NIV). They refused to be intimidated, or to do violence to their convictions, even to save their lives. They were willing to hazard all for God.

2: Caleb showed a robust and unwavering faith in God, another quality which ranks high in the Divine scale of values, for *"Without faith it is impossible to please God"* (Heb. 11:6). His faith was the more remarkable because it grew and flourished amid the unbelieving and rebellious hosts. Caleb was not privileged to grow up and live among those of strong, stalwart faith. He had to be faithful in spite of his surroundings. How easily he could have rationalized that it just wasn't possible to be full of faith among people so unbelieving; or that it wasn't possible to be patient as a mistreated slave. But no excuses for Caleb! He realized that his life was *his* responsibility, and *his* opportunity. It was the only life he would have, and he would make the most *and the best* of it while he could, God helping him.

The magnificent blending of faith and courage that Caleb and Joshua displayed in standing against the popular majority report brought no acclaim from the people. Caleb and Joshua had seen all that the ten had seen. They saw clearly the power of the enemy and the magnitude of the task. Why the difference in their report? The ten matched the strength of the giants with their own grasshopper strength, and were discouraged; while Caleb and Joshua matched them beside the All-powerful, Almighty God. The ten gazed at the giants and wailed, "We can't!"—and true enough, they couldn't—while the two looked up to God and said, "Of course we can, because God is with us!"

Difficulties always dwindle in the presence of God's power. Were there giants in the land? They were bread for them, and as one writer has quaintly put it, "The bigger the giant, the bigger the loaf." Caleb and Joshua trusted a God infinitely greater than the giants.

Unbelief has a notoriously short memory. "We should choose a leader," urged the ten, *"and go back to Egypt"* (Num. 14:4 NIV). How could they say it? Had they forgotten so soon the harsh taskmasters, and the bitter suffering from which they had been delivered? But for Caleb there was no going back, or even thinking back. He countered their fear and unbelief with his own confident statement of faith: *"Let us go up at once and possess the land, for we are well able to overcome it"* (Num. 13:30).

THE TESTS OF MIDDLE LIFE

One may do well in youth. But what about the tests of middle life? Midlife has its own peculiar testings, both in physical and spiritual realms. They may not be so dramatic as those of youth, but some who have soared like rockets in youth have descended like burnt out sticks in middle age.

There are some obvious advantages when we reach this stage of life. Important life decisions have been made. Ideally, our circumstances are settled and somewhat easier. We have arrived at many of the answers to problems and questions we faced in earlier years.

But there are counterbalancing dangers; for often at this stage of life there develops a loss of fervor and a waning of personal zeal and devotion. A lukewarm sense of duty replaces ardent love. In the absence of the driving force of a worthy and absorbing purpose, life becomes insipid and anemic. We are tempted to ease up on our self-denials and self-disciplines.

It is all too easy to stop growing and striving at any age or stage of life, especially after we have achieved some of our Christian goals, after we have mastered some of our most unruly inclinations. It is all too easy to feel we have "arrived," and begin to relax. Let us all take warning and keep renewing our fervency, our zeal, our determination, our love. Let the path of our life be the path of the just one, shining brighter and brighter unto the perfect Day (Prov. 4:18). ■



Caleb at Midlife

Caleb passed the tests of youth with flying colors, but how did he fare in the heavier, drawn out tests of middle life? Someone has suggested that in middle life we need the resources of God more than ever before. How did Caleb draw on these resources?

Caleb *“wholly followed the Lord.”* Someone has said that the hardest part of the journey is the middle mile. There is the enthusiasm of the new undertaking which buoys one at the start, and the thrill of reaching the goal near the finish. But it is the middle mile, where you are a long way from the start and still a long way from the finish, that tests most stringently the mettle of the runner. It is in this middle mile that the true believer needs most that virtue of patient endurance, for it determines the end result.

Few have faced so hard and embittering a lot as Caleb. The sin and unbelief of his contemporaries might easily have doomed him to a life of frustration and disappointment for the 40 years that should have been the best part of his life. And could he not have complained, when the apparent reward of his early faith, courage and devotion was aimless trekking through a barren desert, when his powers were at their peak? Worse still, there were funerals almost daily!

By all normal standards, Caleb would have been justified in being resentful, despondent, and disagreeable. But none of this for Caleb. This stalwart man of God survived the long, sustained test and built his spiritual integrity on the very situations that would have ruined a lesser man. He was one of those rare souls who was not offended with God's way of dealing. Maybe he did not understand, but that did not matter. Caleb had learned that most valuable of all lessons: to trust God.

Then, too, there was the matter with Joshua. When Moses died, it was Joshua—not Caleb—who was chosen by God to be Israel's leader. The two had lived and worked together, shoulder to shoulder, for many years. Together they had shared the lessons of life, and grown because of them. Caleb might have been hurt, deeply hurt, and bitter at God's decision. Was not *he* just as good, and just as qualified as Joshua? Had he not been just as loyal and just as faithful? But in this great man's heart we hear of

A living, working faith has power. It lifts us above the ephemeral and temporary, into the realm of the permanent and eternal. It corrects our perspective because it sees everything in the light of an eternal future. In such a light, even 40 years of desert wandering could be fruitful and fulfilling—because they were 40 years walking with God, 40 years biding God's time.

neither jealousy of Joshua nor resentment against God. Perhaps He realized immediately that Joshua's higher call was not a reward but a duty, a stern duty. After all, who could want to be responsible for that complaining, unbelieving, hard-hearted host?



Caleb in Mature Years

Caleb, who had soared with wings in his youth, now mastered the art of running without growing weary. But what about the next challenge, the adventures of old age? Could he continue to walk without fainting in old age?

No other Bible character presents such an inspiring and optimistic picture of one's mature years. The supreme challenge of his life came when he was 85 years old, the age when most are dreaming only of security and comfort. This hero of 40 is no less a hero at 85, demon-



ALMOND TREE NEAR TELL YALO

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we know that there are yet mountains in our lives to conquer. Help us to renew our steadfastness of purpose, our courage and our fortitude, to be Yours wholly, to do whatever You would have us do and not consult our fleshly instincts or give in to any assault of our lower nature. You give all that we need, if only we will work with You.

Father, we pray for a fresh supply of courage, and may we go forward with faith and not with fear. Remind us that we do not walk alone, that as surely as You were with Your people in the past, so surely You will be with us. We know You are leading; and all who stay on Your side and follow Your instructions will enter the Land of Promise! We seek Your help in this endeavor. Amen. ■

strating to all that advanced years need not mean spiritual deterioration.

William Barclay told of receiving a letter that concluded with, “Yours, 83 years old and still growing.” Such was the spirit of Caleb. To him, old age was but a continued pressing on to grander attainments, not slowly descending the mountain but ready to scale another peak; not senility, but adventure and a desire for

*F*aith gives
perspective to life.

Do we shrink from the rigors of battle? As our years advance let us pick up the spirit of Caleb and attack our enemies with new energy. “The best is yet to be”—the best in spiritual attainment, the best in new heights of holiness, and sincere devotion to God.



WATCHTOWER AT YAD HASHMONAH

Watchtowers were built in Bible times in vineyards and fields to protect the crops from thieves. See Matt. 21:33

FOR US...

Let our conviction ring with the challenge of Caleb: “Give me this mountain.” But remember, with God’s gift comes also a conflict—and the strength and help we will need to overcome it. He does not leave us on our own. He fights for us. He goes before us.

Whatever our mountain, whatever is keeping us from enjoying the hundredfold blessings of Canaan even now and the surety of an eternal inheritance in the future, let us pray God for the strength to conquer, to subdue the enemies that assault us—enemies of selfishness, pride, anger and deceit.

With God to help us, the strength of our convictions, and brotherly comrades to help us, how can we fail?

God will give us this mountain in victory if we but let Him fight for us. The mountain can be conquered, if we face it honestly for what it is, and go forward in the strength of Jehovah. With God on our side, we cannot be defeated. With God on our side, we shall yet enjoy the fullest blessings of Canaan, even life for evermore! ■

new achievement. His life moved steadily forward, not to termination but to consummation.

Caleb’s strength came from the fact that all his life he was clinging to the promise of God. For 45 years Caleb waited patiently for the fulfillment of God’s promise to him through Moses. In his interview with Joshua at the partitioning of the land, five times he refers to the Lord’s promise. It was the one and only certainty in his future, the promise that had carried him through 40 weary desert years and guaranteed him a possession in the land of Canaan. The passing years had only strengthened his faith in God and sharpened his ardent spirit.



Caleb Believed God

Caleb’s faith in God was nourished by yet another promise that had accompanied the promise of an inheritance: that his life would be prolonged until he reached the land of Canaan. This promise grew richer and dearer every day as he saw thousands and thousands of his generation dying in the wilderness. None of us has ever experienced anything like this. Being continually in the presence of death—and death for disobedience—would surely keep one very conscious of his personal accountability. Continued life was part of God’s promise to Caleb. God had said, “...Not one of you (the Israelite people who left Egypt) will enter the land I swore with uplifted hand to make your home, except Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun” (Num. 14:30 NIV). In other words, Caleb and Joshua would come into Canaan. Each day of continued life thus became a reassurance to Caleb that God was being true to His word.

So Caleb trusted God. And do we not have the same strong reasons to trust? Do we not serve

the same God? Do we not have the same assurance that Caleb had, that God is leading us, that He is in full control, and that what He has promised He will fulfill?

The apostle Paul did not have such physical youthfulness in his later years as did Caleb, for he describes himself in one of his letters as “Paul the aged,” at a time when he was probably not even 60 years old. All are not blessed with physical strength and health, but all *can* be strong in spirit. All can bind on their shoes of iron, ascend the mountain and rout the giants of sin. Even as we grow weaker in body we can grow stronger in heart and soul (2 Cor. 4:16).

And so Caleb makes his request. “Give me a mountain, that I may go out and conquer it.” Not an easy, fertile river flat, but a mountain that had held fearsome giants. Caleb asks for the most difficult assignment in the nation! His request revealed the caliber of the man.

The flame of Caleb’s courage had not died down, even in old age.

Caleb was the oldest man in all Israel at this time, because all others his age—except Joshua—had fallen in the desert. And none of the younger men had succeeded in expelling the enemy from the territory. But it is recorded that “from Hebron Caleb drove out the three Anakites,... the descendants of Anak” (Josh. 15:14 NIV). Concerning other Israelites, we read the melancholy refrain, “They did not utterly drive them out....The Canaanites would dwell in the land....” How contrasting the record of Caleb.

What was Caleb’s secret? How did he succeed while the rest of his generation of Israelites failed? Seven words say it all: “I followed the Lord my God wholeheartedly” (Josh. 14:8). His undivided allegiance to God never wavered. There was no swerving from his direct course. “I followed the Lord my God wholeheartedly,” he could testify with a clear conscience.

“You have wholly followed the Lord,” Moses affirmed (Josh. 14:9). As leader of the nation, Moses had every opportunity to appraise Caleb’s character and devotion to God.

But the most astounding testimony comes from God Himself: “My servant Caleb has a different spirit and follows me wholeheartedly” (Num. 14:24 NIV). What higher eulogy could one seek! ■

KNOW YOUR BIBLE

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



WHERE WAS (WERE)

1. Miriam when she became a leper?
2. Deborah when she judged the people?
3. Ruth when she married Boaz?
4. Mary Magdalene when she first saw Jesus after His resurrection?
5. Mary for three months after the visitation by the angel?
6. Lydia when she was baptized by the apostle Paul?
7. Aaron when he was gathered to his people and died?
8. Joab, David's chief of the army, when he was slain?
9. Solomon when the Lord appeared unto him in a dream by night?
10. Wicked Jezebel when she was thrown to her death from a city wall?
11. Peter, James and John when they witnessed Christ raise a young girl from the dead?
12. Paul when he sent Onesimus home to his master Philemon?
13. Nathanael when Jesus first saw him?
14. Philip when he interpreted the Scripture to the Ethiopian eunuch?
15. Philip when Paul visited him?
16. John, the apostle, when he wrote to the seven churches of Asia?

ABOUT KINGS

1. Who was the king of whom it is said that he "knew not Joseph"?
2. What king received from the Lord the sign of the shadow going backward on a dial?
3. What King of Judah profaned the temple and was punished with leprosy?

4. What Hebrew king killed himself after a defeat in battle? And what was the battle?
5. Who was king of Judaea when Christ was born?
6. What king displeased Elisha by striking the ground only 3 times with arrows? Why did it displease Elisha?
7. What good king of Judah worked with Isaiah?
8. What king dreamed a dream and required his wise men to tell not only what it meant but what it was?
9. What very fat king oppressed the Israelites?
10. What king issued a solemn decree that every man should bear rule in his own house?

WHO

1. Who was told to *"Be strong and of good courage"*?
2. Who prophesied that King Ahaziah would die?
3. Who was loyal to God and was also cupbearer to a foreign king?
4. Who gave the exhortation to *"pray without ceasing"*?
5. Who *"walked with God: and he was not; for God took him"*?
6. Who is called *"the weeping prophet"*?
7. Who wrote a prophecy including a description of a plague of locusts?
8. Who said *"Let patience have her perfect work"*?
9. Who was the father of Noah?

FINISH THE QUOTATION

1. *"For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous"*
2. *"For the law was given by Moses, but"*
3. *"Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and"*
4. *"The fool hath said in his heart,"*
5. *"The fear of the Lord is"*
6. *"This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it."*
7. *"As far as the east is from the west,"*
8. *"The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib"*
9. *"The lines are fallen unto me"*
10. *"Seest thou a man diligent in his business?"*

ANSWERS ON PAGE 27

FAITH in Action



Bible Text: Acts 1:1-14 NIV

Acts 1:1 In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach.

2 until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen.

3 After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.

4 On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about.

5 For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

6 So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"

7 He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority.

8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

9 After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

10 They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them.

11 "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."

JESUS' WORK, CONTINUED

A famous Hollywood producer once said that for a movie to be successful, it should start with an earthquake and work up to a climax.

That wasn't exactly the formula the author Luke followed in the book of Acts, but it comes close. In the first chapter, the disciples see Jesus ascend—bodily—into heaven. Think about that experience. Here is a mortal man you have been acquainted with for some time. Suddenly, as you are walking with Him, He takes leave of you, and starts to rise. And as you watch He is carried up, up, up into the heights of heaven. Isn't an earthquake rather non-spectacular beside this?

In the second chapter of the book, a sound "*as of a rushing mighty wind*" sweeps through the house where they are gathered. No, it isn't a hurricane. But this very special "wind" brings Divine power to each of them, and as a result the waiting disciples are all "*filled with the Holy Spirit, and [begin] to speak with other tongues.*" What a day to remember!

And so the story goes, from one exciting event to the next. Put yourself into the action. Feel it happen. Here is God working with His chosen ones like He had never done before.

"Dear Theophilus"



READ ACTS 1:1-2

The book of Acts is volume two of a work that the author Luke addressed personally to "*most excellent Theophilus*" (see Luke 1:1-4). We don't even know if Theophilus was a believer, but we do know that he was acquainted with what Jesus had been doing and teaching, because Luke said that he was writing about the things Theophilus already knew. Very likely he was a Christian, or at least one carefully studying the Christian faith. His name means literally "dear to God" or "friend of God." We hope he lived up to his name.

The book of Acts is an important link between the Gospels and the Epistles. Without this little book we would not know what happened after Jesus' resurrection. We would have no idea how the Church started. We would read Paul's letters to believers in Rome, in Galatia, in Colosse, in Thessalonica, in

Corinth, in Philippi, and say, "How did the Church get there?"

But we do not have to ask. The answer is in the book of Acts.

Since the Gospel of Luke records what Jesus began "*both to do and to teach*," the book of Acts is a continuation of His work through His followers, His apostles, His Church. And even today their work continues as loyal followers carry on, demonstrating the power of the Gospel in our time.

JESUS IS ALIVE!

"Many convincing proofs"

 READ ACTS 1:3

One point Luke wishes to emphasize is the certainty of Jesus' resurrection. He leaves no doubt that it did happen.

The book of Acts is a post-resurrection chronicle. Without the resurrection there would have been no book of Acts, no Holy Spirit, and no Christian Church.

The Apostles didn't merely *suppose* or *surmise* or *hope* that the resurrection was true. They *knew* beyond all doubt that it was a fact, that Jesus was alive! They knew because His tomb was empty. They knew because they had *seen* the risen Christ. Jesus was with them *forty days* after His resurrection. They were eye witnesses.

Jesus had already pointed out the Old Testament prophecies that spoke of Him (Luke 24:44–49).

Now there were other lessons to be learned, so that they would be ready to launch a new ministry. It was a time of intense preparation.

Luke does not tell us all "*the many convincing proofs*." But we know a few of them.

1. What evidence did the disciples have that Jesus was alive? _____

*When Jesus met His disciples, He even invited them to touch Him.
He ate with them.
He talked with them.
He walked with them (Luke 24:15–17, 38–43). They were convinced.*

Belief in Jesus' resurrection is at the heart of the Christian faith. And it was at the core of their faith also. "*Jesus Christ crucified...resurrected...ascended...and coming again!*" was their Gospel.

The resurrection is absolutely essential to belief in a future life. All of us will die, in the natural course of events. Without the resurrection there is no hope, because "*the dead know not anything...there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave*" (Eccl. 9: 5, 10).

2. How did the Jews who were responsible for Jesus' crucifixion get around admitting His resurrection? _____

The official Jewish position was that the disciples had stolen Jesus' body from the tomb (Matt. 28:11–15). The believers had to refute this as they testified to the resurrected Christ.

The apostles did not suppose Jesus was alive—they KNEW!

About the Author

No personal details are available about Luke, author of The Acts of the Apostles. But major portions of the book are written in the first person "I"—which tells us that Luke was much more than a normal historian. He believed the message he was writing. He was an active participant in their mission. His heart burned for the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Luke is a historian, careful and exact, and thoroughly familiar with the historical data. Scholars consider his history as a primary source of the first order.

Luke also had the rare privilege of being eyewitness to much of what he was reporting. And even when he could not say "we" did thus and thus, he had direct contact with those who were eye witnesses.

The result: a reliable, Divinely certified report that informs, inspires and convinces.



A closer look

Have You Ever Thought...

Have you ever thought what would have happened if Jesus had not risen from the dead? His work would have been limited to one spot, one lifetime, and one small group of disciples who scattered at the time of His crucifixion. When His brief life was over, His ministry would have been terminated. And that would have been the end of it.

How different when we realize that Jesus Christ, the One who was crucified, is indeed alive, and alive for evermore!



Insight

WITNESS

Jesus' disciples were to be His witnesses. A witness does not deal in hearsay. A witness doesn't tell what he thinks or suspects. A witness tells what he knows—because he has actually seen or experienced it firsthand.

The word *witness* is used 29 times in the book of Acts. Peter and John testified that they were speaking only what they had “seen and heard” (Acts 4:19–20).

When we read the Book of Acts, we are not reading fiction but actual testimonies of those who were witnesses of Christ's resurrection, ascension, and power.

Jesus told His disciples to “wait” when they were bursting to act!

★ It is never easy to wait.

Jesus' crucifixion was no secret. It was known throughout Jerusalem, but many did not know that He had been raised from the dead. This was the special mission of the disciples: to preach the resurrected Christ.

3. What was the largest number of believers to see the resurrected Lord at one time? (1 Cor. 15:5–8) _____.
4. The physical resurrection of the body was a belief firmly established long before Jesus was born. Who was the earliest person in Scripture to testify to his personal belief in a resurrection? (Job 19:25–27) _____

“Wait”



READ ACTS 1:4–5

Jesus' last command to His disciples was perhaps the most demanding: “Wait!” “Wait for the gift my Father promised...in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 1:4–5 NIV).

Wait? when they were bursting to speak, teach, travel, anything to fulfill the commission they had been given!

5. *Think about it:* How would you have responded to Jesus' command to “wait”? _____
6. What were the disciples waiting for? _____
7. Why would the disciples of Jesus not naturally choose to wait in Jerusalem? _____

Once the disciples had seen their risen Lord, they no doubt wanted to go back to Galilee. Jerusalem was the last place they wanted to stay. The city was full of enemies of the cause. The scribes were there, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the multitudes who had just rallied to “Crucify Him!” (Matt. 27:20). It was not easy to wait in Jerusalem.

But then, it is never easy to wait. Not as long as we can see something we would like to do. We have drive, ambition, initiative, or plain “get-up-and-go.” This time, waiting was required. Obedience meant waiting.

What was the Holy Spirit they would receive? It would be Divine power to do miracles and to foretell future events, power sent by Jesus for the specific purpose of confirming the message they would be preaching.

THE KINGDOM—WHEN?



READ ACTS 1:6–8

As the disciples walked with Jesus after the resurrection, they sensed that things were different. Would life ever return to normal? When would the Kingdom come?

They had asked this question before, now they asked it again: “Lord, are you going to free Israel now and restore our kingdom?” (Acts 1:6 NLT).

8. What did Jesus' disciples expect Him to do? _____
9. What was Jesus' answer? (Acts 1:7–8) _____

Like other Jews, Jesus' disciples disliked the Roman rulers. They wanted Jesus to free them from the Roman power and become their King.

Jesus did not give them a flat "No." He did not reprimand them for asking. Were they waiting for the Kingdom to be set up? That was the Father's concern, not theirs. And only the Father knew the timing (Mark 13:32). Right now they had a big task ahead of them, a task so great that they were going to be given special "help" from heaven to do it.

10. What were the disciples to do when they received the promised power?

"When the Holy Spirit has come upon you, you will receive power and will tell people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8 NLT).

Instead of enjoying political power, they had work to do. Very soon they would receive power from *"on high"*—power to heal the sick, raise the dead, and teach in tongues which they had never learned. Through them God was going to work mighty wonders, and everywhere they went their message would be confirmed by open demonstrations of the power of God. *"You will be my witnesses,"* He said, borrowing a figure from the Old Testament, where the prophets were called to witness for God and Israel (Isa. 43:10; 44:8).

They were to be *"baptized with the Holy Spirit"* very soon. With this power, ordinary people would be able to do extraordinary things because they would have power from God.

The Holy Spirit was not a luxury. It was an absolute necessity guaranteeing the success of the task to be done.

JESUS ASCENDS!

 READ ACTS 1:9–11

As surely as our Lord ascended into heaven, so surely will He return. *"This same Jesus shall so come...as you have seen him go into heaven"* was the promise of the angels that stood by as He ascended.

A New Message

No sooner had Jesus disappeared from sight than the disciples started talking about His return. And of course it is about 2000 years nearer now than it was then.

11. What effect should the anticipation of Jesus' return have on us? _____

Shouldn't we be keenly interested in this *"blessed hope"*? (Titus 2:13). Should it not motivate us to personal purity, diligence, and faithful service?

***"This same Jesus...
will come back
in the same way
you have seen
him go into heaven."***

— Acts 1:11 NIV

**★ His return is about
2000 years nearer
now.**



Take heed

We want to be thinking about and planning for the Second Coming, and above all letting this belief change our lives, so that we are ready when He comes. This was Jesus' message: *"Therefore be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh"* (Matt. 24:44).

**Can you imagine
how the disciples
felt when Jesus
suddenly was
gone—to heaven?**

***“A cloud received him out of their sight”—
What Was the Cloud?***

At the transfiguration, “there came a cloud overshadowing them: and there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son” (Mark 9:27 YLT)—was this cloud merely a fluffy white mist?

Jesus, speaking of His second coming, said that they would “see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory” (Luke 21:27). He said on another occasion that He would come “with all the holy angels” (Matt. 25:31). Doesn’t this also suggest that “clouds” can be angels?

The transfiguration, the ascension, and His second advent are all accompanied with these special “clouds.” Jesus said later of His second coming, “Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him” (Rev. 1:7).

What was the “cloud that received Him out of their sight”? What “cloud” brought Him safely on His way to the Father’s throne? Here is a cloud that directs, protects and transports. A literal cloud stays very close to the earth, holding earth’s moisture in the form of vapor. Said the Psalmist of the clouds of the Lord, “He makes the clouds his chariots” (Ps. 104:3) and then explained, “The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels:” (Ps. 68:17). The “cloud” that covered the tabernacle in Moses’ day was a cloud of angels (Exodus 40:34).

Yes, God’s clouds are His ministering angels! ■

To be continued next issue



CHRIST HAS NO HANDS*

*Christ has no hands but our hands to do His work today,
He has no feet but our feet to lead men in the way:
He has no tongue but our tongue to tell men how He lived:
He has no help but our help to tell them what He did.*

*We are the only Bible the careless world will read,
We are the sinner’s gospel, we are the scoffer’s creed;
We are the Lord’s last message, given in deed and word;
What if the line is crooked? What if the print is blurred?*

*What if our hands are busy with other work than His?
What if our feet are walking where sin’s allurements is?
What if our tongue is speaking of things His lips would spurn?
How can we hope to help Him, or welcome His return?*

—Selected

*We are not implying that Christ does not have physical hands, only that He is now depending on us to do His work on earth. —Editor.





Easy To Grab, Hard To Let Go

by GARY RICHMOND*

The zoo where I worked had a thirteen-foot giant that to me seemed to be the embodiment of evil. He had a scar over his left eye that made him look mean and, more significantly, kept him from shedding his skin in a normal fashion. At least twice a year we would get the dreaded phone call from the reptile house: "The king cobra shed his skin last week, but the eye cap didn't come off. Looks infected. Suppose you and the doc could come down and clean it?"

A snake's skin includes a clear scale over the eye to protect it from sand and foreign objects. Snakes have no eyelids, so have no way to blink for protection. Since the snake's scar prevented a normal shed, the eye cap needed to be surgically removed.

Only two people at the zoo could take responsibility for grabbing the more deadly snakes, and this was the most deadly. (This snake's venom glands contain enough poison to kill one-thousand adults.)

The next day the curator of reptiles was assigned to grab the head. Two reptile keepers were to steady the body. When the snake was subdued, the veterinarian would begin the delicate surgery. His arena kept him inches from a lethal injection. My job was to furnish scalpel, sponge, hemostat, and anything else to expedite the procedure.

The five of us carefully took our positions: the two keepers on either side of the large cage door, the curator in front of the door, about six feet away. The vet and I stood on either side of the curator, about ten feet from the door. The keepers' only defense was sheer bird nets with two-foot handles.

With a nod of his head, the curator signaled for the door to be opened. Seconds later the king cobra appeared. As soon as he saw us, he stopped, spread his cape, and raised to full stature. The cage was two feet off the ground, so we were all looking at him at eye level.

The cobra was trembling with excitement as he, in turn, stared at each of his five enemies. He seemed to be choosing who would be his prey. The curator was chosen, and with shocking quickness the snake lunged forward, hissing and growling with malevolent rage. With lightning speed, the

skilled keepers placed the sheer nets over the snake's head. And as he pushed to get through, the curator firmly grasped his neck just behind his venom sacs. The keepers grabbed the writhing body, then the curator nodded and said, "Let's get this over with."

The pressure was incredible. The vet's hands were trembling and beads of sweat began to run down the curator's forehead. The curator turned to me and said, "Do you have any cuts or scratches on your hands?"

I looked and said, "No."

"Get a wad of paper towels, quick," he followed in a strained voice. I did so,

"Now, put it in the cobra's mouth."

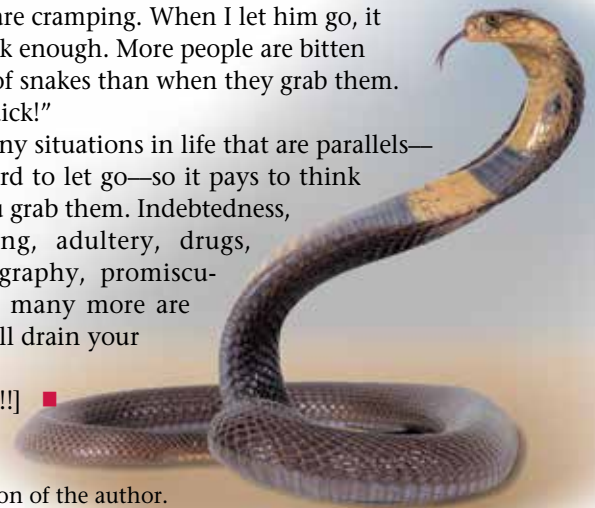
The king watched the paper towels as they were carefully positioned to allow him to bite them. He bit down violently and began to chew. The towels became yellow with venom until they began to drip.

The curator continued, "Did you know that several elephants die every year from king cobra bites? A man could never survive a bite from a full load of venom. That's why I'm having you drain his venom sacs. My hands are sweaty and my fingers are cramping. When I let him go, it may not be quick enough. More people are bitten trying to let go of snakes than when they grab them. You get weak quick!"

There are many situations in life that are parallels—easy to grab, hard to let go—so it pays to think twice before you grab them. Indebtedness, vengeance, lying, adultery, drugs, alcohol, pornography, promiscuity—these and many more are serpents that will drain your strength...

[And kill you!!] ■

*Used by permission of the author.





Purple Loosestrife—Bringer of Death

by EMANUEL BOYER

A recent trip took us through a national wildlife refuge, where a large tract of low marsh looked like a large field of solid purple. An area of perhaps fifty acres or more, it appeared as though it had been painted with the single stroke of a huge paint brush. When a light breeze blew across the marshland, the area looked like a small lake of purple waves.

My first impression was just how beautiful it all looked in contrast to the dull browns and tans of the cattails and reeds that formed its border. As we drove past, I recalled reading an article a few years ago about a problem the Conservation Department was experiencing controlling the spread of a wild flower called *purple loosestrife*, which had been

introduced into the wild marshes of the state. The plant had been introduced for just the reason that it had caught our attention: it was pleasing to the eye. The other side of the story is that purple loosestrife rapidly outgrows many of the native varieties of plants, crowding them out. And since the new plant provides little in the way of food or shelter to other wild inhabitants that would normally live in a refuge of this type, it soon, if left uncontrolled, destroys the small ecological system which formerly supported a variety of living creatures.

As we drove on, I began to see many striking similarities between what was happening on this refuge and in our lives as Christians. We too have been given a refuge, a place to seek protection and grow. The Psalmist wrote, *"I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust"* (Ps. 91:2). And again we read in Prov. 14:26, *"In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence: and his children shall have a place of refuge."* But if we are not watchful, the smallest and most inconspicuous weeds may take root in our garden of character.

We are familiar with Jesus' parable of the wheat and the tares and the final warning it holds. Weeds may come in many forms. Some of them, like purple loosestrife, are well disguised, even attractive, and we welcome them into our gardens. But only when they begin to grow and become rooted does their true identity become obvious. If we do not remain alert, we will find ourselves becoming like the scribes and Pharisees Jesus spoke of in Matt. 23:27, *"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness."* Like the vast field of purple loosestrife that appeared beautiful but brought death to the area, so we must recognize the danger of a pleasing outward appearance. Rather, like the humble brown reeds of the healthy marsh, we must be full of the food of life, so we

may by our example provide life-giving sustenance to those around us.

If we would make ourselves acceptable in God's sight, we must remember that God sees us in a different light than men. As the Lord said to Samuel, *"Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart"* (1 Sam. 16:7).

If we keep our minds clear and do not allow weeds to enter, we will be permitted to remain in God's refuge, where we can grow and bring forth fruit that is acceptable and pleasing to God. Jesus said, *"Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit"* (Matt. 12:33). If we are to be a part of the soon coming Kingdom of God when Christ returns to rule, we must be deeply rooted as true Christians, not allowing our virtues to be crowded out by weeds of corruption. We are given a warning in the Bible that wheat will be allowed to grow with the tares until the harvest; then only the wheat will be gathered into the barn (Matt. 13:30): *"Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn."*

As we travel the narrow path with open eyes and hearts, there are many lessons that can be drawn from our daily surroundings; these lessons help us keep our minds on heavenly thoughts. We can see by the simplest examples how dangerous it is to allow even the smallest (most beautiful) weeds to grow in our gardens.

It is crucial that we keep within the boundaries of God's refuge. *"Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him"* (Prov. 30:5). Let us avoid the shallowness of a beautiful outward appearance lest we, like the purple loosestrife, be found empty and without value in that soon coming Day. ■

Keep to Lose, Lose to WIN!

"He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal" (John 12:25).

If ever there is to be found in the Scriptures a "hard saying," it is this: "Whoever loves his [or her] own life will lose it; whoever hates his [or her] own life in this world will preserve it for life eternal."

Jesus is saying, You can keep to lose, or you can lose to win. The choice is yours.

His words may sound like exaggeration for the sake of effect, like hyperbole or extravagance. But their repetition in the Gospels is striking, and their relevance to the realities of human experience is remarkable.

Self-giving, literally "dying to one's self," is the very essence of the life that is to be saved (preserved and prolonged). The Bible calls it eternal life. Self-indulgence, specifically self-centeredness, is the surest road to disappointment and despair (death).

What did Jesus mean when He spoke of hating life? In no way was Jesus telling people to put themselves down. To use such teaching as a means of labeling men and women "wretches" and "worms" makes a mockery of the Bible, denigrating what God is creating and calling "good."

However, the attachments that men and women sometimes make can be destructive and even dangerous to one's life.

Christ's followers are those who make choice of His way and His truth as opposed to this world's way. And that choice includes relinquishing selfish desires and pursuing instead His high, altruistic aims. It also means foregoing personal glory for the sake of the honor and glory of Christ.

To most of us humans it seems hazardous to our personalities to think of denial, to say nothing of letting go of cherished behavior patterns. Repeated-

ly, however, the spiritual masters tell us that release leads to freedom. Self-forgetting produces fulfillment.

This is what Christ says, and He certainly should know! No one has ever made so much of life as did Jesus Christ. Christ's example is on the side of self-sacrifice, where a person ceases to be one of the world's takers and becomes instead a giver, where he or she lives by letting go, not by pushing and climbing and trying to gain everything for self. It has been written that sacrifice is the salvation of life, just as selfishness is the stultification of life. "He [or she] who loves his [or her] life loses it; and he [or she] who hates his [or her] life in this world will preserve it for eternal life."

In other words, keep to lose, lose to win.

History tells us that the 8th century emperor Charlemagne was buried seated on a throne. On his knee was an open Bible with one finger pointing to the Gospel words that say, "For what is a man profited, if he gain the whole world and lose his soul?"

Any man or woman can gain what seems to be the world's solid and substantial prizes, yet end up throwing away life itself as well as the larger dimension of eternal life. We are in danger of missing the truly big things when all our attention is consumed by things temporal and transitory.

When things at hand threaten, we need to ask, "What would be Christ's verdict in my situation?"

In a very real way we will most likely find it impossible to comprehend the full meaning of Christ's life-sacrifice, His death and resurrection, unless we accept His way of thinking: that *keepers are losers and losers are winners*. There is risk in acting on this insight;

however, there is greater risk in ignoring it. As Jesus Himself said, it is the choice between darkness and light—between loving life selfishly or offering life freely.

Following Jesus is the only way to honor, honor that means blessing and promise, life abundant and eternal.

Why not heed His judgment and get a grip on our own personhood, shaping ourselves even more surely as servants of Christ? The game of life can be won, but only as Jesus demonstrated and commanded.

Who will be the players on His team? Will you? Will I? ■





Are the Dead *Only* Asleep?

I have a question. I read in your magazine the dead are only asleep, unconscious.

"Are you taking this from 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18? Is not Paul speaking to believers, not unbelievers?"

The Bible describes death as a "sleep," but it is not sleep as would imply a continuation of life. It is a state of total unconsciousness, oblivion, nonexistence. When the body dies, it ceases to function, it ceases to breathe, and there is no more life. In the state of death one can neither see, hear, taste, smell, feel, or think. There is no memory, personality, or intelligence. The Bible says, *"The living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing"* (Eccl. 9:5). Again, *"That which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again"* (Eccl. 3:19-20).

In fact, the Bible compares the death of persons to that of animals. *"Like sheep they are laid in the grave...man being in honour abideth not: he is like the beasts that perish"* (Ps. 49:14, 12). Both man and beast expire, and when they cease to breathe, they are alike dead. God gives breath, spirit, and life to both man and beast, and when that breath is taken away, when the body ceases to function, they *"die, and return to their dust"* (Ps. 104:29).

This is why the Bible represents death as a "sleep." Many people in the Biblical record are described as having *"fallen asleep"* or *"slept with their fathers"* or *"sleep in death."* The Lord told Moses that he would *"sleep with [his] fathers"* (Deut. 31:15-16). Job said he expected to *"sleep in the dust; and thou shalt seek me in the morning, but I shall not be"* (Job 7:21).

Among the kings of Israel and Judah, whether the king was a believer or nonbeliever, all *"slept"* with their fathers (1 Kings 2:10; 14:8-9, 20). However good or evil their lives had been, their state in death was the same.

Death is the end of thought. Wrote the Psalmist, *"His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish"* (Ps. 146:4).

That is why this advice is given, plain and straight forward: *"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest"* (Eccl. 9:10).

Death is the state of silence. *"The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence"* (Ps. 115:17). King Hezekiah wrote the same: *"For the grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth"* (Isa. 38:18). Only a living being with knowledge of God can praise God. A dead man, with neither body nor brain functioning, cannot learn of God.

Is there any release from this sleep, any awakening possible? Yes. The Bible outlines a plan of resurrection. The prophet Daniel spoke of those *"that sleep in the dust of the earth"* (Dan. 12:2), and said that *"many of them...shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt"* (Dan. 12:3).

Jesus Himself awoke Lazarus from the "sleep" of death. Speaking of Lazarus He said to His disciples, *"Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep"* (John 11:11). The disciples, failing to comprehend His meaning, thought that Jesus spoke only of Lazarus being asleep, as one would sleep at night. To remove their misunderstanding, Jesus said plainly, *"Lazarus is dead,"* showing that the "sleep" to which He referred was the state of death.

In the first letter to the Thessalonians, to which you refer, the apostle Paul wrote *"concerning them which are asleep."* He was speaking of those who had died, and mentions that those who *"sleep in Jesus"* will be resurrected. For *"If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him"* (1 Thess. 4:13-14).

God has planned that at the Second Advent of Jesus, the sleeping servants of God will be resurrected, so that they can be judged and receive according to their works, whether good or evil (2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 22:12).

Are you thinking perhaps that the body dies but the soul lives on as a separate entity from the body?

According to the Bible, the "soul" is the per-

son, the living being. The Hebrew Lexicon defines the word translated “soul” as “a living creature; a person; sometimes applied to animals; life; beast; body; breath; creature; man; mind; one; own; person.” It uses the word “soul” interchangeably with reference to a person. “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul” (Ps. 19:7). Again, “Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness,...they shall deliver neither sons nor daughters; they only shall be delivered” (Ezek. 14:14, 16).

At the time Jacob took his family into Egypt to find food during the famine, it is written that “seventy souls” went down into Egypt. Peter records that “eight souls” were saved in the ark (1 Pet. 3:20), referring to the family of Noah. The book of Acts records that two hundred seventy-six “souls” escaped safely to land following the shipwreck (Acts 27:37).

Souls are individuals, persons. And souls die. Says the prophet Ezekiel speaking for God, “The soul that sinneth, it shall die” (Ezek. 18:20). A living person is a living soul. Death ends all consciousness.

The result of this belief is the Biblical teaching that the body rests in the grave, free from suffering or any consciousness, until it is restored to life by God, until it is resurrected. The idea that we are born with an immortal “soul” or personality or something is not Scriptural. We are not immortal until Christ changes us from this corruptible state to the incorruptible, to be made like the glorified Jesus (Phil. 3:20–21).

◆ SHOULD WOMEN COVER THEIR HEADS?

“I have a question about this passage: ‘For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of man’ (1 Cor. 11:7). Isn’t Paul saying that women should cover their heads?”

To understand this passage, several issues must be considered: the context of the passage, the problem Paul was addressing, and the customs of the time.

The passage in question is part of a letter in which the apostle Paul was addressing specific problems in the Church at Corinth. The problem here was regarding liberties that certain women in the Church were taking. Paul begins the eleventh chapter by commending those who remembered him, and were keeping the standards he had set. Then he says: “I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God” (1 Cor. 11:3). Or, as translated in the New Living Bible, “There is one thing I want you to know: a man is responsible to Christ, a woman is responsible to her husband, and Christ is responsible to God.” (“But I wish you to understand that, while every man has Christ for his Head, woman’s head is man, as Christ’s Head is God”—New English Bible.)

Did Paul teach that women should be subordinate to men? No, he taught that all are equal in Christ. “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28).

What, then, could he have meant in 1 Cor. 11? The problem was the apparent permissiveness of the women of the Church as they would be viewed by those outside the Church. A principle of Bible teaching is “to abstain from all appearance of evil” (1 Thess. 5:22). However difficult this be to interpret, Paul was concerned that the women of the Church not use their Christian liberty in a way that would appear immoral to those outside. At the time, a veil, or wimple (as it was called) was a “headdress worn by women over the head and around the neck, cheeks, and chin. From the late 12th until the beginning of the 14th century, it was worn extensively throughout medieval Europe, and it survived until recently as a head covering for women in religious orders” (1999 *Encyclopaedia Britannica* CD). From ancient times it had been a custom of women to wear a veil (see Gen. 24:65). A woman who did not wear a veil was considered to be of very loose morals, as only prostitutes went without them (*Dake Annotated Reference Bible*, footnote, see also *Wiersbe’s Expository Outlines on the New Testament*).

To be seen in public without a veil was also to disgrace one’s husband, therefore Paul’s comment, “Let her also be shorn.” A shorn head was a punishment for prostitution (*Dake Annotated Reference Bible*, Footnote).

The same principle applied to the observing of Jewish laws. Paul did not tell the Jews not to observe their law. He only told them that obedience to their law could not bring them salvation, that to be saved they had to obey Christ’s law. He even advised believing Jews to cooperate with Jewish customs (this was his underlying reason for circumcising Timothy, because he was part Jew, and Paul would rather remove an occasion for criticism). Never were the Christians in the category of social “rebels.” He had the same attitude toward the observance of the Sabbath. Under Christ’s new law, the keeping of the seventh day was not required. However, believers, who lived in Jewish communities—and Paul when he was traveling—attended the synagogue on the Sabbath day. It was a place to worship God, and God can be worshiped honorably on any day. There is some evidence that believers who were not associated with Jewish customs or communities observed the first day of the week as a remembrance of Jesus’ resurrection.

Was Paul right in viewing Christian conduct in relation to the customs of the times? We can be certain his first obligation was to obey the law of Christ. But if there was no conflict between the law of Christ and the current custom, if following the custom did not result in any transgression of the law of God, it seems that Paul advised that the custom be followed. One example was the institution of slavery. The law of God, with its insistence that all men are equal, would not support the institution of slavery. But neither would believers be in a position to overthrow slavery. So it was prudent for Paul to advise believing slaves to be subject to their masters, and believing masters to treat their slaves as brothers in the Lord, recognizing that they too have a master in heaven (Eph. 6:5–9; Col. 3:22). Even though the basic institution was wrong, believers could honor God by conducting themselves according to His law. ■



AWESOME DESIGNS

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

by GERALD R. PAYNE

AGAINST ALL ODDS

The Determined Salmon



Did You Know...?

- ✓ ...that all species of Pacific salmon hatch in fresh water, live much of their lives in salt water and then return to fresh water to spawn and die?
- ✓ ...that salmon can average 34 miles per day over long distances?
- ✓ ...that each female salmon deposits 3,000 to 30,000 eggs in several gravel nests?
- ✓ ...that only two to ten percent of the salmon's eggs survive to reproduce?
- ✓ ...that salmon find their way to their home-waters by smell?
- ✓ ...that salmon can smell one drop of "home" water (water from where they were hatched) in 250 gallons of water from another source?
- ✓ ...that salmon's sense of smell is hundreds of times more acute than that of dogs?
- ✓ ...that salmon, like other fish, have 300 degree vision?
- ✓ ...that salmon can hear low frequency sound waves?
- ✓ ...that salmon drift backwards when migrating to the ocean?
- ✓ ...that young salmon must undergo many changes before they can survive in the ocean?
- ✓ ...that salmon change to bright colors when migrating up fresh-water streams?
- ✓ ...that salmon can jump over water-falls more than 12 feet high?
- ✓ ...that some salmon travel for two months or more to reach their spawning grounds without taking food?

Around the world, the changing seasons and an indefatigable determination to survive impels many creatures of air, land and water to make an all out do-and-die journey home to the place where they were born. It seems to be part of the Creator's design for a myriad species of fish, animals, birds and even insects. To observe the remarkable ability of these creatures to navigate, often thousands of miles against incredible odds, is to fill His children with awe and praise for His great and awesome designs.

Among such creatures the salmon is champion.

As with most creatures, there are various species of salmon. Most popular is, perhaps, the king salmon. An Atlantic species, this salmon has tipped the scale to as much as 126 pounds. But this is small compared to the fossil record of one which claims a weight of about 500 pounds, a length of ten feet, and is even equipped with fangs for battle. (How would you like a creature like this to swim up beside your boat?)

Change

A salmon's life is one of change. Progressing from an egg, to an "eyed egg," to an alevin, to a fry, and finally to a parr, the salmon is finally ready to begin its incredible preparation for life in the ocean. Adapted for life in fresh water, it would quickly die in the ocean. But the ocean is its destination. Depending on the species, it begins migration to the ocean about a year after hatching (chum and pink salmon begin their migration to the ocean no more than a

week or so after hatching!).

How will it survive when it gets to the ocean? Well, it won't—not without the masterful handiwork of the Creator.

Before reaching the estuary (where fresh and salt water mix), the fingerling undergoes a dramatic change called smolting. The fish become more streamlined, their tails become more elongated and forked, the parr marks (vertical bands on their sides) disappear and turn to a very silvery color. Simultaneously, internal changes take place. The memory and smell centers in the brain grow rapidly. (These are special features, as amazing as it may seem, that the Creator built into the salmon for a special purpose which you will later see.) Also, the salmon's kidneys convert to be able to excrete salt instead of retain it! After reaching the estuary, the young salmon remain for a short time while the final stages of smolting are completed.

Before the juvenile salmon was a fresh-water fish which would quickly die in the ocean. Now the salmon smolt are fully adapted for vigorous and competitive life in the deep salt water. But its traveling days are far from over.

Migration

Traveling in schools the Pacific salmon migrate to the North Pacific Ocean where they remain for one to seven years, depending on the species. For some, it is a long journey of 3,000 to 3,500 miles—actually much further, because salmon do not swim

in a straight line. The Atlantic salmon travel to Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, Labrador, and even to East and West Greenland.

Salmon swim in the ocean an average of 18 miles per day and can maintain a speed of 34 miles per day for long periods.

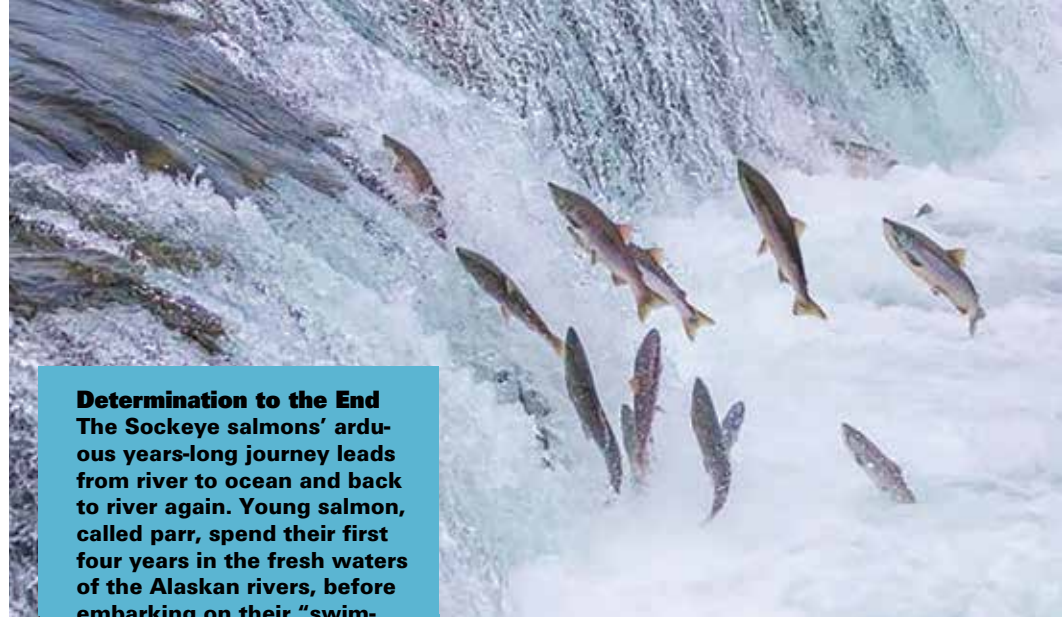
Salmon have a row of sensory pores called lateral lines along their sides which help them navigate. The sensory pores provide a means of hearing low frequencies which help to detect very small ocean currents. They also help to find food and avoid predators. Some Sockeye salmon also use the sun and moon for navigation.

The Atlantic salmon spend different lengths of time in the ocean before returning to their home-rivers for spawning. Some spend one winter, others two, others three winters in the ocean. Could the Master Designer have built in this feature so all the eggs would not end up in one basket?

Incredible journey home

An instinct for procreation so strong that it could only be by the Creator's design, the salmon changes course and heads home.

How can they find their way to the place where they themselves were given life? Remember the rapid growth of memory and smell centers of the brain? Now they put these features to good use. Salmon have a sense of smell hundreds of times more acute than that of a dog. Scientific studies show that they can detect one part per million, which is the equivalent of one drop of their home waters in 250 gallons of water. The Creator not only gave them this



Determination to the End
The Sockeye salmon's arduous years-long journey leads from river to ocean and back to river again. Young salmon, called parr, spend their first four years in the fresh waters of the Alaskan rivers, before embarking on their "swim-athon." Along the way they undergo a major physical change (smolting) to be able to tolerate the salt waters of the Bering Strait. Continuing their migration, they change again as they return to the fresh waters of their home rivers after years at sea, where they fight the current upstream to their ancestral spawning grounds. Reaching "home port," they muster the energy to spawn—and die.

where they were hatched, they fight rapids, and can leap falls more than 12 feet high! When they come to a fork in the river, they know just which one to take—they remember!

Endangered life

The life cycle of the salmon is delicate. The odds against survival from egg to the return to the spawning grounds are very high. Only two to ten percent live to make the journey.

From the time the eggs are deposited beneath the gravel of a stream they must be provided with cold, clean, swift water. Without the swift-movement of clean water the incubating eggs will suffocate due to lack of oxygen. If the water becomes too warm the salmon will become infested with disease. As the climate becomes warmer, and due to deforestation, warming water has become a concern. Many die from this cause alone, and the threat grows every year.

Another threat to salmon is that of predators. Fish and small animals are

ability but also the ability to recognize their home-waters by smell.

After traveling thousands of miles they finally pick up the scent of their birthplace, whether a hatchery or a stream, and they change direction once more. Then come the long, seemingly impossible odds of navigating the rivers upstream. Some of the chum and king salmon of the Pacific swim more than 2,000 miles up the Yukon River and its headwaters. Impelled by a built-in desire to navigate to the site

First Stages of Salmon's Life in Fresh Water:



Very young fertilized salmon eggs. Notice the developing eyes and neural tube.

Newly hatched *alevin* feed on their yolk sacs.



When the *alevin* or *sac fry* have depleted their yolk sac or "lunch box" they emerge from the gravel habitat of their redd (nest) to look for food as *fry*.



The *fry* become *parr*, and in their camouflage stay hidden in the streambed from which they dart out to capture insect larvae and other passing food.



Two to four years later, when the *parr* are ready for migration to the ocean, they become *smolt*. Their scales will be silvery and they will have undergone physiological changes to survive the shift from fresh water to salt water.

always ready to snatch a young salmon during migration. Studies indicate that about 97% of Maine salmon migrate at night to avoid predators as they swim backwards downstream seeking the safety of deep areas. The Pacific king and coho salmon are prized sports fish, and the Maine salmon, now listed on

One last change

When in the salty waters of the ocean they are a bright silver. But when making their way up the rivers other changes takes place, varying according to the species and the inland distance traveled.

The male Pacific salmon gener-

Spawning

The Pacific salmon's life ends with the process called spawning. While the Pacific salmon spawns only once and then dies, the Atlantic salmon may live to spawn three or more times before dying.

Once salmon reach the spawning grounds, the females choose a site and prepare nests (redds) for laying eggs. They lie on one side and rapidly move their tails back and forth over the gravel. Hardly touching the gravel with their tails they create water currents that wash away the gravel. (Some of the gravel can be as large as a fist!) These redds are about 6 inches deep. This process takes up to a whole day. They then deposit from 500 to 5,000 eggs while the males fertilize them. After covering the eggs, they move upstream, where the process is repeated for as many as four more times, until a total of 2,500 to 6,000 eggs have been deposited per salmon, depending on the species. Why so many eggs? The Creator has made this provision for the benefit of many creatures, not the least of which is man. By the time the females have finished spawning, they have lost half their weight.

Through dogged determination, strength and navigational abilities that only an intelligent Creator could provide, they have accomplished their mission. With what strength is left, the adult Pacific salmon guard the site until their death as an instinctive loyal duty dictates. Interestingly, the decaying bodies of these fish form a plentiful food supply for small organisms which are the main food source for the hatching offspring. ■

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A Lesson in DETERMINATION



Is not our journey to the Kingdom against great odds? Even though we have not experienced great physical persecutions as did our first century Brother Paul, could we not express his same determination to fight against the old nature? *"We are pressed on every side by troubles, but we are not crushed and broken. We are perplexed, but we don't give up and quit. We are hunted down, but God never abandons us. We get knocked down, but we get up again and keep going. Through suffering, these bodies of ours constantly share in the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be seen in our bodies"* (2 Cor. 4:8–10 NLT).

While the end of the salmon's struggle is death, our determination to reach our goal of perfection of character, if successful, will bring death—death to sin. But as the salmon's death help to bring life to a new generation, our death to sin will also bring new life—eternal life!

How can we capture the "spirit" of the salmon?

- Be determined to study and obey God (Ezra 7:10)
- Determine not to sin in what I say (Ps. 17:3; 39:1; Eccl. 5:6)
- Determine to follow Christ whatever the cost (Luke 9:23, 57–62; Mark 8:34–38)
- Be determined to pray (Dan. 6:7–13)

God helps those who are that determined (Isaiah 50:7)

the endangered species list, is also a favorite sports fish for fishermen. While in the ocean they are fair game for a variety of predators including seals, porpoises, birds-of-prey, and other large fish. They swim in schools in the ocean for protection, displaying their flashy silver sides to confuse predators. Migrating back up the rivers many are met with hungry bears anxiously awaiting their return.

Before beginning this long and difficult journey, the salmon must be prepared. Why? While making this amazing journey of two months or more and thousands of miles, it is said that they never eat a bite of food! Their one purpose is to reach home and spawn.

ally develop hooked jaws, and their gills turn a bright red as they begin their inland journey in fresh water. By the time they reach the spawning grounds, some of the salmon are bright red, others green, brown, striped, and even purple. These colors are most pro-



Spawning Stage (Male) Pink Salmon

nounced in males. One species grows large canine teeth from which it gets its name, dog salmon.

God Goes Before You

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

All through the wilderness, the Israelites were reminded of the visible presence of God with them. All through those forty long years, the pillar of fire by night and the cloud by day gave silent testimony to the fact that they were not alone. The promise was, *"Behold, I send an Angel before you to keep you in the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared....For My Angel will go before you"* (Ex. 23:20, 23).

We stand today on the very verge of Jordan. Even now we see by faith the shining of the land of Canaan before us. An uneasy feeling comes over us as we look ahead, a feeling that we are alone. But shall we think that we are on our own? No! God still goes before His people. Let us not fear, even for a moment. The God who has been with us and has brought us safely to this hour will not leave us in the wilderness. He will surely see us through. His angels still encamp. *"The angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them"* (Ps. 34:7). If our eyes could be opened we might see this very hour the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night, angels watching over us, ministering to our needs. *"Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who*

will inherit salvation?" (Heb. 1:14). We are not alone. As surely as God was with our forebears, so surely will He be with us. His cause cannot fail.

God is with us because there is yet work to be done. There are yet battles to be fought and won before the land of Canaan is our own. There are yet attitudes to be surrendered, life patterns to be refined, wills to be broken; wandering thoughts to be harnessed; feelings to be controlled; conflicts to be settled; giants of sin to be conquered. But through it all, God goes before us. His promise still stands: *"I will never leave you nor forsake you"* (Heb. 13:5).

Joshua was told emphatically that if he kept God at the center of his concern, he was bound to prosper, conquer, and enjoy enormous success. *"Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go"* (Josh. 1:7).

The same is true with us. We simply cannot overexpose ourselves to God. His guiding precepts at the very center of our lives, the responsibility for careful following rests with us. The positive response of our wills to His depends on us. It is for us to carefully carry out every command and ordinance of our God.

If we do this, we can be certain that He goes before us. It is He who provides the power, the courage, the capacity to conquer. The apostle Paul put it so well, *"that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen"* (Eph. 3:17–20 NIV).

If we stay with Him, we shall yet claim the inheritance we have been promised, even the whole earth for our everlasting home.

"Those who wait on the Lord, they shall inherit the earth" (Ps. 37:9).

"The meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace" (Ps. 37:11).

"For those blessed by Him shall inherit the earth" (Ps. 37:22).

"The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell in it forever" (Ps. 37:29).

"Wait on the Lord, and keep His way, and He shall exalt you to inherit the land" (Ps. 37:34). ■

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON PAGE 13

WHERE WAS (WERE)

1. At the door of the tabernacle (Num. 12:4–10)
2. Under a palm tree between Ramah and Bethel (Judg. 4:4–5)
3. Bethlehem (Ruth 1:19, 4:13)
4. Near Joseph's tomb (Matt. 28:8–9)
5. In the house of her cousin Elisabeth in Judea (Luke 1:36, 39, 40, 56)
6. In Philippi (Acts 16:9, 12, 14, 15)
7. Mount Hor (Num. 20:22–29)
8. The Tabernacle of the Lord (1 Kings 2:28–34)
9. In Gibeon (1 Kings 3:5)
10. Jezreel (2 Kings 9:30–33)
11. In Jairus' house (Luke 8:41, 42; 49–55)
12. In prison (See Epistle to Philemon)
13. Under a fig tree (John 1:45–48)
14. In the chariot sitting beside him (Acts 8:26–35)
15. In his home at Caesarea (Acts 21:8)
16. On the Isle of Patmos (Rev. 1:9–11)

ABOUT KINGS

1. Pharaoh of Egypt (Ex. 1:8, 11)
2. Hezekiah (2 Kings 20:1–11)
3. Uzziah (2 Chron. 26:18–19)
4. Saul, after the battle of Gilboa (1 Chron. 10:1–6)
5. Herod (Matt. 2:1)
6. Joash. He could have completely destroyed the Syrians (2 Kings 13:14–19)
7. Hezekiah (2 Kings 19:14–20)
8. Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 2:1–5)
9. Eglon, the king of Moab (Judg. 3:12–17)
10. Ahasuerus (Esther 1:15, 22)

WHO

1. Joshua (Josh. 1:6)
2. Elijah (2 Kings 1:17)
3. Nehemiah (Neh. 1:11)
4. Paul (1 Thess. 5:17)
5. Enoch (Gen. 5:24)
6. Jeremiah (Jer. 9:1, 10; 13:17; 22:10; 48:32; Lam. 1:16)
7. Joel (Joel 1)
8. James (Jas. 1:4)
9. Lamech (Gen. 5:28–29)

FINISH THE QUOTATION

1. *"but the way of the ungodly shall perish"* (Psalm 1:6)
2. *"grace and truth came by Jesus Christ"* (John 1:17)
3. *"be glorified, even as it is with you"* (2 Thess. 3:1)
4. *"There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good"* (Ps. 14:1)
5. *"the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever"* (Ps. 111:10)
6. *"For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success"* (Josh. 1:8 NKJV)
7. *"so far hath he removed our transgressions from us"* (Ps. 103:12)
8. *"but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider"* (Isa. 1:3)
9. *"in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage"* (Ps. 16:6)
10. *"he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men"* (Prov. 22:29)



"IT'S NOT FAIR"

Returning from a visit to the Reynolds farm, the four oldest Johnson children trooped down the road to Happy Acres Farm. As they neared the vacant Blanchard farmstead, Mark cried out in surprise, "Say, looks like there's some people moving in there!"

Excited over the prospect of having new neighbors just half a mile down the road, the four stared eagerly as they walked by the farmstead which was almost hidden by a grove of trees. They saw a small blue car parked in the weed-grown driveway, and a large van backed to the door of the little brown house.

For five years, since old Mr. Blanchard had died, no one had lived in the little brown house. One of the neighbors had rented the fields and the pasture land of the small farm—and boards had covered the windows of the buildings.

Eager to tell what they had seen, the Johnson children raced home. Stephen was the first to burst into the kitchen and report, "Mom, we're going to have neighbors—down at the Blanchard place!"

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, there's a moving van. We could see them unloading furniture into the house."

Mark and Ann now reached the kitchen, and Melissa came puffing behind them.

"I wonder if there'll be any children in the family. Sure hope there's a boy my age," said Mark.

"And a girl my age," added Ann.

Mom had a puzzled look on her face. "Well, if we're going to have neighbors, we should do something to welcome them. For one thing, I know it will be hard for them to do any cooking the first few days. So we could send them a hot dish or something while they are getting settled."

"I'll take the hot dish over," offered Mark.

"Me, too," said Ann.

"But we don't know how many there are in the family, or if they'll even be staying there tonight—" began Mom.

"I can run over and find out," suggested Mark.

"I want to go over with Mark," said Melissa. So did Stephen and Ann and Paul and Beth.

Mom shook her head. "No, it wouldn't be considerate to have six children barging in on folks trying to get moved into that little house. It will be enough to have just one go. Mark was the first to offer, so we'll let him go."

Mark snatched up the sandwich Mom had fixed, and was off in a flash.

Ann pouted. "Oh, it seems like it's always Mark that gets to go."

"Remember who stayed at home when a certain girl was in town shopping?" Mom reminded her.

Ann nodded. That was the day Mark had broken the lamp chimney.

But she sulked over her sandwich and cookie. When she saw Stephen reach to the cookie



plate and take the last cookie, she scolded, "Mom, Steve's had two cookies—and the rest of us just got one apiece."

"Ann," said Mom, "we can't ever expect to get everything evened up. There'll always be somebody who gets more cookies than we do. And always somebody who doesn't get as many cookies as we do. And as long as we keep counting cookies, and watching that we get whatever somebody else gets, we are not going to be very happy. That's just not the Christian way to live with others. We'll be much happier if we are 'kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another;' (Rom. 12:10). To prefer one another means to put the other person first, to love the other person so that

MEMORY VERSE:
*Love each other with
genuine affection,
and take delight in
honoring each other.*
—Romans 12:10 NLT

you are glad to let him have a cookie—or something that you may not have had yourself.”

“Just think of the fun we had playing secret sister and secret brother—because then we were kindly and affectionate to one to another. I’m sure you won’t be envious.”

Don’t Circulate Evil Reports

Each day one of the Johnson children would run down the road to the Blanchard place to see if the new neighbors had come. But each time there was no blue car parked in the drive, and no one who answered the rap at the door.

No one in the Pleasant Valley neighborhood knew anything about the new neighbors except that Mr. Gordon who had rented the Blanchard farm had learned that the new owner was a man by the name of Charles Turner and that he lived in Minneapolis or St. Paul.

Then one Saturday, Ann and Melissa returned from an afternoon with the Schramm twins—and they had plenty to report about the new neighbors. Melissa was the first to reach the kitchen door, and her eyes fairly popped as she cried, “Mom, what do you suppose? The people who bought the Blanchard place—why, the man is a-a-a-”

“A jailbird,” supplied Ann. “Mrs. Schramm’s cousin from the Cities was there visiting, and she says she knows about the Charles Turners. She said that Mr. Turner has been in jail several times, and she was pretty sure he’d been in the penitentiary, too!”

“Now, now, Ann,” objected Mom, “are you sure you have heard this right?”

“Yes, it is so,” agreed Melissa. “I heard that lady from the Cities say so. She was sure it was the same Charles Turner. And she said we’d just better stay clear of those Turners!”

“Yes,” added Ann, “and Mrs. Schramm says *they* aren’t going to have anything to do with such people. Those Turners have four boys—and Mrs. Schramm’s cousin says they’re all bad boys and they’ll just be jailbirds like their dad. And Mrs. Schramm said, too, that nobody ever saw Mr. Turner come out here to look at the Blanchard place before he bought it, so she’s been suspicious he’s just—”

Mom put her arms around the two excited girls. “I think we’ve repeated enough now about people we really don’t know a thing about. There might well be several Charles Turners living in the Cities. The Charles Turner that is coming to live on the Blanchard place may well be someone Mrs. Schramm’s cousin knows exactly nothing about. Let’s not forget that the Bible says, ‘*You shall not circulate a false report*’ (Exod. 23:1 NKJV). How would you girls like it if folks told bad things about you that weren’t so? Even if it should be true that Mr. Turner has been in jail, or even in the penitentiary, maybe he’s coming out here to live a better life. It wouldn’t be Christian of us to put a stumblingblock in his way (Rom. 14:13) by making it hard for him to live a decent life.”

“Well, what should we do about it?” asked Ann.

“We are not going to repeat to anyone what you have heard this afternoon,” said Mom, very firmly.

“But are we going to keep running over to the Blanchard place to see if they’ve come? I’m scared to now!”

“Don’t worry about that. Dad and I will take care of it.”

That same evening, the Johnsons piled into the old sedan to go for a visit at the Reynolds farm. As they drove past the Blanchard place, Ann squealed with excitement when she spied a blue car parked beside the little brown house. And that little blue car, she decided, looked exactly like the kind of car that a jailbird would drive! ■

TO BE CONTINUED

PRAYER:

Dear Heavenly Father, help me to watch my words. Help me to remember before I repeat a report to ask, Is it true? Is it kind? Is it necessary? Then I will not regret my words. Amen.

The above stories are reprinted from *Happy Acres* by Erling Nicolai Rolfsrud. Published by Tyndale House Publishers, Wheaton, Illinois.

WORDS

Keep a watch on your words, my children,
For words are wonderful things;
They are sweet, like the bees’ fresh honey,
Like bees, they have terrible stings.
They can bless like the warm, glad sunshine
And brighten the lonely life.
They can cut in the strife of anger
Like an open two-edged knife.

Let them pass through your lips unchallenged
If their errand be true and kind,
If they come to support the weary,
To comfort and help the blind.
If a bitter, revengeful spirit
Prompt words, let them be unsaid;
They may flash through the brain like lightning
Or fall on the heart like lead.

Keep them back, if they’re cold and cruel,
Under bar and lock and seal.
The wounds they make, my children,
Are always slow to heal.
May Christ guard your lips and ever
From the time of your early youth,
May the words that you daily utter
Be the words of the beautiful truth.

— Author Unknown

Opportunities multiply as they are seized;
they die when neglected.

*The strongest principle of growth lies in
human choice.*

Language is the apparel in which your
thoughts parade before the public.
Never clothe your thoughts in vulgar
or shoddy attire.

Time flies. It's up to you to be the navigator.

Happiness is an inside job.

*To forgive heals the wound,
to forget heals the scar.*

Payer is the preface to the book of Christian living,
the girding on of the armor for battle,
the pilgrim's preparation for his journey;
and it must be supplemented
by action or it amounts to nothing.

Dead things cannot grow.
Before there can be spiritual growth
there must be spiritual life.

He who gives good advice builds with one hand;
he who gives good counsel and example builds with both;
but he who gives good admonition and
bad example builds with one hand
and pulls down with the other.

When you have been wronged,
a poor memory is your best response.

*You can't have a better tomorrow
if you are thinking all the time about yesterday.*

ARE YOU ABLE...?

- ☆ To **think more about what you can be** than what you can enjoy?
- ☆ To **esteem integrity** above personal gain and
- ☆ To **loyalty to principle** above being well thought of?
- ☆ To **never criticize** what you cannot improve?
- ☆ To **value principle** above appearance, and being above seeming?
- ☆ To **change your opinion** when it has been proven wrong?
- ☆ To **be thankful for what you have** and stop wishing for what you have not?
- ☆ To **close your book of complaints** and open your book of praise?
- ☆ To **stand by your convictions** even though it be at the cost of personal suffering?
- ☆ To **strengthen your moral muscles** by giving up your own ideas?
- ☆ To **put your love of truth and right** above your love of comfort and ease?
- ☆ To **think more of what you can give** than what you can get?
- ☆ To **think more of your character** than of your reputation?
- ☆ To **think first of others**, and second of yourself?
- ☆ To **value eternal gain** above temporal loss? ■



The **BATTLEFIELD** of **GOD**

*Men have fought for fame and glory
Some for gold and silver, too;
But the call of God comes ringing
For the men who dare and do;
There's a cry for willing soldiers
Who with righteousness are shod,
To contend in life's engagements
On the battlefield of God.*

*Let us never shirk our duty,
In His service never tire;
To be up and always fighting
Till the last armed foes expire.
May each fresh assault of evil
Find our feet upon the sod,
Pressing toward the front of action
On the battlefield of God.*

*If we fight in faith undaunted,
Soon will cease the bitter strife;
With the smoke of battle over
We shall gain the crown of life.
May we not disgrace the record
Of this field where saints have trod,
But united raise His standard
On the battlefield of God.*

A **PRAYER** for **INDEPENDENCE DAY**

*I pause to thank you Lord, for what my country means to me.
We abound in Your great blessings. We're a people living free.
Thank You for our founding fathers who would bow on bended knee—
To just one King, a carpenter, who walked the hills of Galilee.*

*We've been a favored nation, dwelling in a favored land,
Gifted with prosperity, protected by Your hand.
You have raised up patriots who paid our freedom's price
Men and women in war and peace, who would make the sacrifice.*

*Forgive us our trespasses when we seek pleasures on this earth.
Revive in us the spirit that gave our nation birth.
Convict our collective conscience when we let selfishness erase
Respect for all our people, regardless of creed or race.*

*As we celebrate together on this Independence Day,
Give us strength for action, not just for words we say.
And until Your Son comes back again, we ask Your help to be
Guardians of our legacy, a people living free.*



I've learned—

*that it takes years to build up trust,
and only seconds to destroy it.*

I've learned—

*that it's not what happens to you
but what you do with it that counts.*

I've learned—

*can get by on charm for about fifteen minutes.
After that, you'd better know something.*

I've learned—

that you shouldn't compare yourself to others.

I've learned—

*that your background and circumstances may have influenced
who you are, but you are responsible for who you become.*

I've learned—

*that you can do something in an instant
that will give you heartache for life.*

I've learned—

*that you should always leave loved ones with loving words.
It may be the last time you see them.*

I've learned—

that you can keep going long after you can't.

I've learned—

*that you are responsible for what you do,
no matter how you feel.*

I've learned—

that either you control your attitude or it controls you.

I've learned—

*that heroes are the people who do what has to be done
when it needs to be done, regardless of the consequences.*

I've learned—

*that maturity has more to do with what types of
experiences you've had and what you've learned from them
and less to do with how many birthdays you've celebrated.*

I've learned—

*that no matter how good a friend is, they're going to hurt you
every once in a while and you must forgive them for that.*

I've learned—

*that it isn't always enough to be forgiven by others.
Sometimes you need to learn to forgive yourself.*

I've learned—

*that no matter how bad your heart is broken
the world doesn't stop for your grief.*