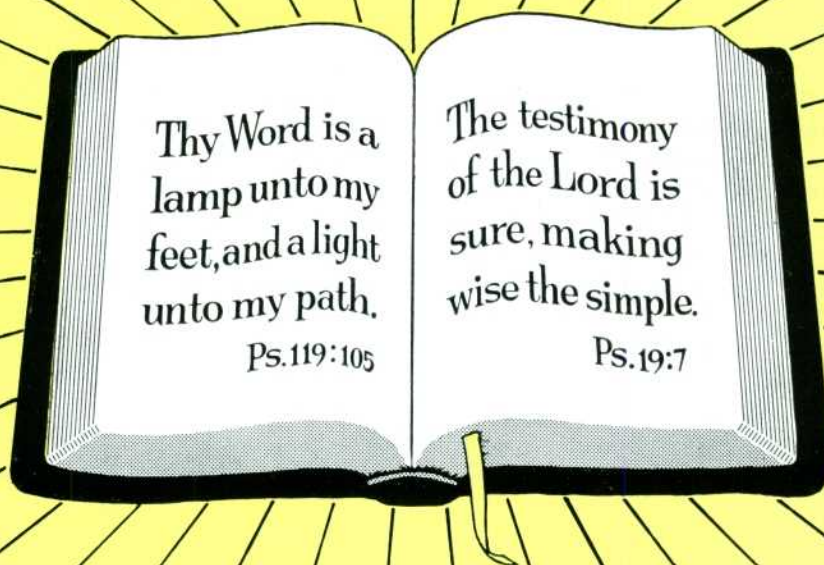


Megiddo Message

DEVOTED TO THE CAUSE OF CHRIST



What Will It Be to Be There!

Test the Spirits

The Way to Salvation

How About Divorce and Remarriage?

"Love Not the World"

WORLDLINESS is the natural instincts within us seeking first place in our lives. It shows itself as men and women seek to satisfy their desire for change, for romance, for excitement and adventure.

But the following words have been left in the Divine Record: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. . . for the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (I John 2:15-17). The inspired rule of conduct given us here by the apostle John is among the most sublime in Scripture, and is worthy of much more than a casual reading.

The true Christian recognizes and admits that the spirit of the world, the love of the world, the friendship of the world, the world itself is enmity against God. In every decade of every century this has proven true. We today conform to the spirit of the world only at our spiritual peril and to the detriment of the cause of Christ. If we surrender to worldliness and find ourselves in difficult circumstances, we cannot blame God; we ourselves were the creators of those circumstances.

Nothing is more needed in Christian life today than genuine Christian conviction and the moral courage to carry out, in spirit and in letter, a separation from the world. If our devotion to Christ leaves room for worldly desires and the will to indulge them, what kind of devotion do we have? When we walk in the Spirit and enjoy the fruits of the Spirit, we have no place in our lives for worldliness.

Worldliness must never be ignored or taken for granted. All that belongs to the world that is not helpful to the spiritual life is dangerous, and may be definitely and seriously harmful, as the beloved John writes, "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof."

Indulging in worldliness is entirely opposite to doing God's will. We neglect to insist upon separation from the world at our peril.

Ours should be a feeling of other-worldliness. Those who come into contact with us should know by our appearance, our interests, our attitudes toward life that our affections are set on things above and not on things of the earth.

Let us then, because of what we are and what we profess, be free from purposes and pursuits that can be even remotely construed as worldliness. We want no part in the system that is passing away.

Separation is possible, however, only as we build defensive measures against it. At the same time we must be building up our love for God by thinking on those things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely and of good report (Phil. 4:8), letting no corrupt communication proceed from our mouths but only that which is good to the use of edifying (Eph. 4:29). Only in this way can we meet the requirement to "Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of [our] mind," that we may "prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God" (Rom. 12:2).

This means a distinct separation between the Christian and worldliness—a separation we shall be very glad for when the world passes away, with all the lusts thereof, and he who has done the will of God abides forever. ●●

"COSMOMORPHISM"

Someone has designed this word to mean "having the form of the world," the present cosmos. The word may be new, but its threat to godliness is ancient.

Love of the present world, its riches, honors, comforts, pleasures, are the thorns that choke out the good word of the Kingdom. Love of the world, "cosmomorphism," is one of the prime causes of fruitlessness of soul. It kept Demas from a fruitful life. It kept Ananias and Sapphira from bearing the fruits of sincerity and truth. It will keep you and me from bearing fruit unto everlasting life.

Beware of cosmomorphism.

MEGIDDO means

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

We believe

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

We believe

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

We believe

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

We believe

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

We believe

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

We believe

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

We believe

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

Bible Quotations in this issue:

Unidentified quotations are from the King James Version.

Other versions are identified as follows:

NEB—*New English Bible*

NIV—*New International Version*

NAS—*New American Standard*

RSV—*Revised Standard Version*

TLB—*The Living Bible*

TEV—*Today's English Version*

Phillips—*The New Testament in Modern English*

Berkeley—*The Modern Language New Testament*

Weymouth—*The New Testament in Modern Speech*

Moffatt—*The Bible, A New Translation*

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What Will It Be to Be There!

Rev. L. T. Nichols

WE HAVE gathered this evening to encourage and invigorate our minds, to help each other become so stimulated in the inner man that we will enter into the work before us with all our forces and make all we have and are subservient to the will of God. He is indeed good, and He will be a stronghold in the day of trouble to all who have shown that they really trust in Him.

Who among us are in reality becoming so energized that they are found at all times performing this God-given work, serving Him with all their mind, might and strength? To answer this query, we should look not for words only, but also for works, works of righteousness. We should be inquiring daily as to our every thought, feeling and act, inquiring to know what we must lay aside in order to be found unto praise and honor and glory at the coming of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

The nearness of the coming of our Master should cause us to enter into this inquiry with greater longings and with more true heartfelt desire than ever before, to know our real standing before God. It should cause us to have a growing desire to find it, to fully see and know ourselves just as God sees and knows us. We should be searching out and driving from our heart every evil.

There is plenty of searching, but alas! it is for ways to cover up—instead of uncovering and declaring our iniquity and being sorry for our sin. How few in the language of the 38th Psalm are saying, "I will declare mine iniquity; I will be sorry for my sin." A new leaf must be turned before we can hear the voice of our Master sounding forth in accents of love, saying to each faithful one, Come, enjoy sweet rest with Me in our eternal home; thou hast been faithful in a few things; thou hast purified thine heart from every evil, now I will do the rest; I will make thee free from every physical ailment, from every sorrow and danger, and fill thee with immortal vigor and every conceivable pleasure.

TO HAVE a right to the tree of life—what a blessing! To have a right to enter that world, and compose a part of that happy throng that will glow with grandeur and beauty, thrilling with joy and gratitude as we meet and greet upon eternity's shore! Such blessings are too wonderful for the human heart to conceive of! They are beyond, yes, says Paul, "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." No wonder Peter styles them "exceeding great and precious promises" (Eph. 3:20; II Pet. 1:4).

Oh, how they swell the goodness of God into a fathomless ocean! How they should keep our hearts filled with constant gratitude and deep settled devotion to the mighty and everlasting God; so much so that we will ever be found reverentially bowing in meek submission to His loving, sovereign will. It should cause every one to willingly and joyfully draw near to the Omnipotent One who has revealed His goodness in promising us such wonderful bliss and pleasures forevermore, and all upon such easy terms. He only asks us to seek the good and refuse the evil; He only requires us to perform that which will make us noble in His sight, that will make us better even now and in the end secure to us the triumphant joys of eternity's shores. There each move, each turn, each moment will increase our joy and comfort, as we are introduced, perhaps by a Gabriel, to new worlds on high, and are permitted to view their wondrous beauties. We will be led to exclaim in grand, happy amazement, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints" (Rev. 15:3).

What a right, what a pleasure to be granted, to be one that will utter those words in glory and hear the great multitude of many waters saying in reply, "Alleluia: for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth."

Is it not enough to cause us to do as we have been commanded, to seek the Lord early and daily,

yea, continually long for His ways to be carried out in our lives? As we go over and over these things, our longing for God will be increased until we will delight to do His will, until we will exclaim from the inmost recesses of our hearts, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart . . . crieth out for the living God" (Psalm 84:1-2).

OH, that future home in glory, filled with resplendent beauty; surrounded with bliss, peace and happiness; laden with more than every conceivable comfort, embellished with the beauty of Jehovah—we will look until our eyes glisten in rapture, as we see them painted in all the streaming colors of the mighty rainbow of His righteousness. Oh, the glory, the glory that will surround this blessed throng! Yet, notwithstanding all this, only few will in reality go to work and take the pains to increase their faith so as to fully believe that such a gladsome future is in reality awaiting the God-fearing ones.

It is one thing not to dispute these undeniable facts and quite another to take them into our very being so as to have them a working force within, regulating all our affairs in life, impelling our every thought, act and feeling.

But there are those who will let their ungodly lusts become the moving power, directing them to things unholy. How foolish! I trust there will be a few who will cast down vain imaginations and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

Blessed be God, we know a few will thus do; and it is such that God is laboring for. We have our choice: to serve our God now in humility and joyfulness of heart, and reap in the end the endless beatitudes of glory in the world to come, or to serve our flesh, and at the end reap dismal gloom and solitude. It would seem that every sane, enlightened mind would make choice of the former, and would conduct himself so as to produce that inward joy that will repay us a thousand times for all our effort. To enter through the pearly gates, into the Elysian fields of bliss, where we can enjoy forevermore the fruit of our labor, at home with the blessed throng of immortal ones. To be at home in such a company, to realize we are indeed a part of this stately band, will be pleasure beyond our farthest capacity to fully realize. Nothing short of experience will ever cause us to grasp it.

IT IS now in our power to go to work and become so energized that our whole being will

spring forth in preparing to form a part of that holy throng which will ascribe "blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might . . . unto our God for ever and ever." And as the great "Amen" is pronounced, each heart will be filled with such power and ecstatic joy that the happy Amen will break forth from every heart in such thundering tones that many a world on high will hear. And as they hear, their joy will be increased, for the loving sound will be familiar and they will realize that another new world has been born into the celestial family of Him from whom all blessings flow.

The happy inmates of other celestial worlds have enjoyed their delightful homes for a long, *long* time, and many times have their hearts been stirred with joy as more members were added to their innumerable family of happy ones. Once more they will hear, and then they will return the echo, as John the Revelator was caused to hear in advance in Revelation 19:6 and 7. So grand will be the response that it will cause every soul to abound with greater joy and pleasure as "the voice of many waters, and . . . the voice of mighty thunderings" says, "Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready."

OH, BLESSED be God, we can still prepare ourselves so as to be worthy to hear those gracious words, "His wife hath made herself ready." To think that these wonderful words will soon become a gladsome and happy reality. It seems we would quicken our pace until our entire mind, might and heart would be used to push forward in the work, until we would be lost to the low and groveling world by which we are surrounded and become all absorbed with divine things. To think of hearing those "many waters" say, "His wife hath made herself ready." I would rather have this one pleasure than all the pleasures of this world combined. The pleasures of this world will soon, yes, very soon, come to an end; but the pleasures we will gain by obedience to God will never end. And they will not only last for eternity, but will be ever on the increase, multiplying continually. And as we are busy with the unfolding wonders of that world, wonders that will so expand our capabilities, we will become more and more capable of enjoying ourselves until we will be able to testify from experience that it is indeed "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." We will then be able to realize more fully the promise in Psalm 36:8-9, "They shall be abun-

dantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures."

*No angry passions there will be, or aught to
mar our peace;*

*All, all will dwell in unity, each day will love
increase.*

*Not one temptation there will come, but we
will ever drink*

*Of endless pleasures, great and small, upon
the river's brink.*

*This river, it will be so long, we ne'er will
find its end;*

*All hearts in love and union grand forever-
more will blend;*

Where'er you go on river wide, it will be run-

ning o'er,

*And will be strewn with blessings great along
its peaceful shore.*

*This river, it will wider grow, as years go
passing by,*

*Encompassing the heavenly joys of worlds
that are on high;*

*Great pleasures there we will enjoy upon its
waters wide,*

*Rejoicing there each day the more with joys
that will abide.*

Wonderful promise, to drink of the river of His pleasure! "For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light." There will be no trial, great or small, and no sin to cause our hearts to throb or ache; no hardship, no pain,

Let Us Pray . . .

Our heavenly Father, Thou Mighty One in whom we live and move and have our being, this day brings us under renewed obligation to thank and praise Thee for Thy abundant mercies. We thank Thee for life, for this goodly mortal frame, for the use of our physical powers, for our mind, for the powers of reason and reflection, and the ability to choose between right and wrong.

We rejoice that Thou hast endowed us with human sensibilities so that we can appreciate beauty, love, approbation, profound knowledge, eloquence. Grant that we may harness all these powers to the end that we may be drawn closer to Thee, and develop a keener interest in the raptures awaiting the faithful in the world to come.

May our appreciation of a beauty that will never tarnish, the beauties of Thy heavenly Kingdom, supplant our desire for earthly beauty and any attempt we might otherwise make to beautify ourselves; but may we be satisfied only as we see we are taking on Thy likeness, worshiping Thee in the beauty of holiness.

And may our love be directed away from the things we would naturally love, away from earthly interests, and away from earthborns—only as we see they are conforming their lives to Thy standard of holiness. May our love for Thee, for Thy dear Son and the holy angels be so overpowering that we will have no one in heaven but Thee, and desire no one upon earth beside Thee.

May our desire to be well spoken of be so selective that we will spurn the fair speeches of men with their insincerity, gladly awaiting Thy approbation.

And may our thirst for knowledge carry us far beyond being satisfied with the faulty and ever fluctuating knowledge of our boasted scientific age. May our first concern be to get an insight into the truth about ourselves, so we may cleanse away all that is defiling and in the world to come be introduced to the depths of Thy infinite wisdom, till we can comprehend the grand laws controlling the universe.

And may we realize that no flight of human eloquence could express such rapture as will be the delight of the members of the faithful bride, the Church, when the voice of a great multitude of heavenly beings triumphantly proclaims, "The marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready."

Grant, Father, that we may become more and more absorbed with our great hope. Help us to allow nothing of the flesh to cause us to sin. May we so fortify ourselves against the encroachment of evil that even in the surging tide of sin's most bewitching thrall we can answer a resolute *no* to the flesh.

Be with Thy work in all its forms, with those everywhere who are striving to learn and live Thy saving gospel. Help each of us to be more watchful of all that we do or say, to show a better example for others to emulate, a cleaner life for others to pattern after. And may Thine angel encamp about and protect as Thou hast promised.

Forgive us for the sins we have turned from and forsaken, and help us never to grow weary in well doing but continue steadfast to the end, that at last we may be worthy of an inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away in Thy glorious never-ending Kingdom upon earth. Amen.

no suffering. All will be peace and joy forever.

If we would only let our mind run out and behold this grand river of pleasure, it would seem we could not rest until we had secured a permit to enter Eternity's shores. And to think that all this pleasure is offered upon condition that we become dead to the world and all alive to God. The grand thought of viewing Gabriel some day and listening to his marvelous voice, joined with all the dear old saints of his grand home planet, to hear them sing the wondrous song of their redemption, will make the shores of Eternity ring with joyful, melodious praise until many another world in the celestial family will raise the glad response, "Alleluia! Amen, and Amen!"

What a time, what a meeting, what a joyful meeting, what a happy meeting of the faithful that will be! Words fail to tell of the Day. Yes, that "bright and golden morning when the Son of man shall come, and the radiance of His glory we shall see; When from every clime and nation He shall call His people home, what a gathering of the ransomed that will be!"

DO NOT these things fill your heart with a deep longing to be one of that happy throng, to be one to enjoy its rich blessings forevermore? If they do not, it is because you have hardened your heart so that it is too hard for the wonderful goodness of God to make an impression. You have become hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, through unbelief. The mind has become engaged in the things of this world, so that interest in the high and noble divine things has been lost. So you forget to talk about and constantly meditate upon the wonderful gathering in that summerland of love.

Show me a Christian, and I will show you one who has the wonderful things of God uppermost in his mind. Such will be constantly talking of them. From this abundance in the heart the mouth will be speaking. They will be in constant fear of doing something that will shut them out of that home. They will keep as far away as possible from anything which might contaminate, so that they can better meditate upon the noble and wonderful things of God, so they may be better enabled to crucify self and exalt God. They will be watching every crook and turn for fear they will be found doing something wrong; and when they are overtaken in a fault, they will humbly confess and go to work with renewed zeal to turn from it. They will realize from the depths of the heart the exceeding sinfulness of sin; and viewing sin as a horrible act, however small it is, they will look at it as being deadly. Then, and not until then,

will anyone in reality, in a true and contrite way, turn from it.

A man may lay aside a besetting sin and still not turn away from it; such are waiting to pick it up again the first time opportunity arises. All such are making no progress toward the eternal City of God, but are fast approaching the land of sorrow and shame.

To think of being lost, forever lost, should be enough to stir up every heart so that sin will indeed look dreadful, a deceitful and abominable corruption. For, Jehovah has made no mistake about the matter, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezek. 18:20). Sin will certainly prove our utter destruction, if we keep on in it. How we should realize this, and hasten our escape from the coming storm and tempest.

THIS should be enough to cause every one of us to work with all our mind and might so as to escape the time of trouble, the gathering Euroclydon storm that will soon strike the earth and carry away all the chaff, or wicked. The righteousness which will shelter us from that storm is made up of obedience to every word of God; as Jesus said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." This calls upon us to pay more attention to the Word of the Lord, and less to the things of the world. It will require us to give ourselves wholly to the Lord and be found attending to reading, so that we may become examples in "word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity," yes, examples in "every good word and work." It will require us to study until we have acquired that wisdom from above which is "first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated," until we are filled with good fruits (I Tim. 4:12; Jas. 3:17-18).

When we fully realize that "reproofs of instruction are the way of life" (Prov. 6:23), we will begin to long to be reproved. We will consider that it is indeed a blessing to be told of our faults, until our inmost soul will cry out, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Ps. 139:23-24).

Love will prevail, joy will abound, and union with God and all who belong to Him will be the result. We will delight to walk in the counsels of the godly. If we do this, self will sink into insignificance, and we will consider the words of the Lord's mouth more than our necessary food, more than thousands of gold and silver; they will become the apple of our eye. It will be our chief

delight to be found walking in obedience to them.

Why should not this be the case, seeing God has promised us such wonderful things in the very near future as a reward for right-doing? Just think of being born of the Spirit, having the ability to go with the freedom of the wind; to know the law of repulsion and be able to control gravitation so we can mount up as the eagles. What power! What knowledge! What reward! Indeed, it is far beyond what we can now imagine. It is worth our whole mind and consideration, care and utmost attention to be found ready to be born into incorruption, into far more than every conceivable pleasure.

THE DAY of the Lord is coming, yes it is surely coming. It draws nigh, "it hasteneth greatly"; and we must make haste, must quicken our pace in order to be found ready to enter through the pearly gates, into the bright, shining portals of celestial glory, where we will find rest from every toil and labor. What a sensation it will be! What a feeling of delight! What keen, ecstatic, rapturous joy! Oh, how we will relish these delightful blessings there, safe, secure in port, within the harbor on Eternity's shore, where no tempest will ever come.

O brethren dear, let me entreat of you to all awake,

And clothe yourselves in garments white before it is too late;

O may you from the mighty God receive His mercies great

By walking in the blessed light and reach a righteous state.

Almighty God, we turn to You, and ask for help and aid,

O God, each day and every hour to be the better made;

Amen, amen with heart and voice, amen for each one here,

Oh, may we onward from this time make haste in godly fear.

O will we not from this time on, cry out, "My Father, God,

O come by any means or way, and guide me with Thy rod.

No longer will I disobey, but yield myself to Thee,

So I may in that summerland such glorious beauties see."

And now I close my prose and rhyme, and say to all, Adieu;

Before that glorious Day arrives, may we be made o'er new.



Out
of
the
Archives

The First Epistle of Clement (Part 1)

This epistle was written in the name of the church at Rome to the Church at Corinth. Tradition ascribes it to Clement, Bishop of the Roman Church, who was martyred about 95 A. D. It is possible that the author of this epistle may have been the same Clement who was an acquaintance of Paul (see Philippians 4:3).

Notice the many exhortations to holiness, which are so like those of the Great Apostle.

LET US be lowly-minded, brethren, laying aside all arrogance and conceit and folly and anger, and let us do that which is written. For the Holy Spirit saith, let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, nor the strong in his strength, neither the rich in his riches; but he that boasteth let him boast in the Lord, that he may seek Him out, and do judgment and righteousness; most of all remembering the words of the Lord Jesus which He spake, teaching forbearance and longsuffering: for thus He spake; Have mercy that ye may receive mercy: forgive, that it may be forgiven to you. As ye do, so shall it be done to you. With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured with all to you. As ye give, so shall it be given to you. As ye judge, so shall ye be judged. As ye show kindness, so shall kindness be shown unto you. With this commandment and these precepts let us confirm ourselves, that we may walk in obedience to His hallowed words, with lowliness of mind. For the holy word saith, Upon whom shall I look, save upon him that is gentle and quiet and feareth mine oracles?

Therefore it is right and proper, brethren, that

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we should be obedient unto God, rather than follow those who in arrogance and unruliness have set themselves up as leaders in abominable jealousy. For we shall bring upon us no common harm, but rather great peril, if we surrender ourselves recklessly to the purposes of men who launch out into strife and seditions, so as to estrange us from that which is right. Let us be good one towards another according to the compassion and sweetness of Him that made us. For it is written: The good shall be dwellers in the land, and the innocent shall be left on it; but they that transgress shall be utterly destroyed from it. And again He saith: I saw the ungodly lifted up on high and exalted as the cedars of Lebanon. And I passed by, and behold he was not; and I sought out his place, and I found it not. Keep innocence and behold uprightness; for there is a remnant for the peaceful man.

Therefore let us cleave unto them that practice peace with godliness, and not unto them that desire peace with dissimulation. For He saith in a certain place: This people honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; and again, They blessed with their mouth, but they cursed with their heart. And again He saith, They loved Him with their mouth, and with their tongue they lied unto Him; and their heart was not upright with Him, neither were they stedfast in His covenant. For this cause let the deceitful lips be made dumb which speak iniquity against the righteous. And again; May the Lord utterly destroy all the deceitful lips, the tongue that speaketh proud things, even them that say, Let us magnify our tongue; our lips are our own; who is lord over us? For the misery of the needy and for the groaning of the poor I will now arise, saith the Lord. I will set him in safety; I will deal boldly by him.

For Christ is with them that are lowly of mind, not with them that exalt themselves.

The humility therefore and the submissiveness of so many and so great men, who have thus obtained a good report, hath through obedience made better not only us, but also the generations which were before us, even them that received His oracles in fear and truth. Seeing then that we have been partakers of many great and glorious dealings, let us hasten to return unto the goal of peace which hath been handed down to us from the beginning, and let us look stedfastly unto the Father and Maker of the whole world, and cleave unto His splendid and excellent gifts of peace and benefits.

Now all these things the faith which is in Christ confirmeth: for He Himself through the Holy

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Spirit thus inviteth us. "Come, my children, hearken unto me, I will teach you the fear of the Lord. What man is he that desireth life and loveth to see good days? Make thy tongue to cease from evil, and thy lips that they speak no guile. Turn aside from evil and do good. Seek peace and ensue it. The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are turned to their prayers. But the face of the Lord is (against) them that do evil, to destroy their memorial from the earth. The righteous cried out, and the Lord heard him, and delivered him from all his troubles. Many are the troubles of the righteous, and the Lord shall deliver him from them all. And again; many are the stripes of the sinner, but them that set their hope on the Lord mercy shall compass about. ●●

The Bible is crammed full of great fields of beautiful flowers, bouquets and displays of perfection. There is not a weed in all its pages, just the most perfect beauty.

Self-Denial Week

Sunday, February 4, will begin the week of self-denial observed annually by the Megiddo Church congregation and by scattered members who desire to observe it with us. It is one of the ties which binds the family of God together.

During this week, we will limit ourselves to three articles of food at each meal. We shall make our selection from common foods, the selection being varied at each meal if desired. We shall refrain from all specialties, all cakes, cookies, pastries, puddings, and fancy fare.

Our founder, Rev. L. T. Nichols, instituted this self-denial custom many years ago as an aid in bringing the body into subjection and controlling appetite. So let us enter into it with a determination to make it a week of growth, and thank God every day and hour for our many, many blessings.

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From

John the Elder



Seventh in a series on the Epistle of First John

Test the Spirits

A study of First John 4:1-11

JOHN has just spoken of the one spirit that is given of God (I John 3:24). Now he turns to remind his children that there are other spirits at large—false teachers, many of them.

“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (I John 4:1).

The “spirits” John refers to are false ideas, and those who teach them. Error is hydra-headed, and has “many false prophets.” True teaching is one, and must remain one. The holy principles of God have to be guarded constantly; they must not be mixed or polluted with evil. This is John’s warning: “Test the spirits” (I John 4:1, RSV).

The noble Apostle did not wish to see the great truths of God dissolved in Gnostic theory, so common in that day, or any other theory. To him, the spirit of truth and the spirit of error stood out as sharply opposed as day and night. Neither Christian faith nor Christian love is indiscriminate. Hence John warns earnestly, “Don’t trust every spirit, dear friends of mine, but test them to discover whether they come from God or not. For the world is full of false prophets” (I John 4:1, Phillips).

This caution which the aged Apostle administers against too-ready acceptance of strange theories is a caution we still need today. There are still many teachers of false theories, and the Christian believer must beware. Never must a single principle of divine faith be pushed aside by another theory. Our salvation is at stake!

John says these “false teachers are gone out into the world.” They are on the move. And they may be eloquent and fervent; but eloquence and fervor are no guarantee of truth. Every spirit must be tested and tried by the standard of God’s Word.

The Elder then gives a definite test which will prove whether the spirit or teacher be of God. He states it positively, then negatively for emphasis.

“Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God.”

Again John warns against the Gnosticism so popular at that time. The Gnostic theory was that matter is evil; only that which is not matter could be good. Hence the body is evil; whether it be the body of Christ or that of any other man, the body is evil. The Gnostics did not deny that a man named Jesus lived, but they declared that He was not what He claimed to be. Either He “came in the flesh,” as His followers professed, and thus was evil, or He did “not come in the flesh” and so was holy and sinless. He could not have been holy and sinless and have “come in the flesh,” having a mortal body. To have been “holy and sinless” they maintained that he must have been a spirit without human form. Thus they distorted the truth and proclaimed a lie that was deceiving many.

To John and all his faithful followers, all this was unthinkable. Jesus was a man who came in the flesh, and was pure and holy, and there was no reason to believe otherwise. Jesus was the center of their lives. He was the beginning and the end of their faith. He was the Bread of life; He was the Way, the Truth and the Life. He was the Door into the sheepfold. He was the true Vine, the Good Shepherd. He was Lord and Master, their Pattern to follow. He was their Hope and Redeemer, the Messiah.

It was now many years since He had been taken from them, He their risen Lord; and with the many false teachers on the move, there was

imminent danger that doubts might creep into the Churches. Faithful believers must be ever on guard against these "damnable heresies," as the apostle Peter called them (II Pet. 2:1).

John knew that Christ was all He had claimed to be, and all that God foretold He would be. In Him, the "word became flesh" (John 1:14), so perfectly did He live by it. In His body, in His flesh and blood, the Word of God came alive. In His life, Christ proved as never before that the natural man can become holy and sinless. This is a truth which must never be obscured, says John; he who would obscure it is "not of God." Indeed, it is one truth that opens the door to eternal life, where only the holy and sinless may enter. If the natural man cannot become holy, if the body is evil and unchangeable, then none can be saved.

Hence we see the need for John's test, to prove the "spirits." If anyone teaches that Jesus Christ the Messiah is come in the flesh, that teacher (or spirit) is of God. If anyone does not confess this, that teacher is the "spirit of antichrist" (4:3). He is contending against Christ.

While in John's day some denied that Christ had a human form, our day has produced another deeply-rooted error which teaches that Christ was a spirit co-eternal and co-existent with the Father before His birth, that He condescended to embody the human form so that He might die and save sinners. This false teaching also makes the whole gospel of Jesus and the plan of God a lie, saying that Jesus had done our work for us and that we can do nothing for ourselves. Even today this strange teaching is proclaimed, while the whole Bible teaches that we must work out our own salvation, that we must exert ourselves to make our calling and election sure (Phil. 2:12; II Pet. 1:10). Just as the early Christians needed to be warned repeatedly against false teachings, so do we today need to take these warnings to heart.

John then commends the true believers.

"Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world" (I John 4:4).

He is commending brethren who have triumphed. They have not been seduced by the spirit of evil. The faith of God dwelling in their hearts is the source of their strength. The gospel of Jesus Christ and the hope of gaining eternal life meant more to them than anything else in the world. Christ indeed was in them "the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27).

Could this be written of us?

Then John reveals the character of the false teachers:

"They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them" (I John 4:5). "They are of the world, . . . what they say is of the world, and the world listens to them" (RSV).

The worldly-minded speak of worldly things. They seek the present and its enjoyments. And the world loves and listens to them. Like seeks like. The world loves its own (John 15:19). If we were of the world, the world would love us. There is comradeship in evil as well as in good.

But, says John, "we are of God." We have separated ourselves from the world. We are separate in our interests, separate in our goals, separate in our values. We have different thoughts, and different joys.

"We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error" (I John 4:6).

When God speaks and whatever He speaks, His children listen and respond. His children also listen to those who speak the words of God. They listen eagerly, and obey. Jesus expressed the same thought when He said, "He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God" (John 8:47).

How can a man grasp the eternal values when the present things are all that he cares about, thinks about, or worries about? How can he grasp the truth if error appeals to him?

A man can hear only what he has fitted himself to hear. Mortal ears must be in tune with the divine, if man is to hear the voice of God.

John would assure us that this is possible. "We are of God," he says. It is possible to be "of God." It is possible to hear the voice of God above the myriad voices of the world. It is possible—if we listen. Are you listening? Are you listening to Him? This is the test. There may be piety, fervor, and fire, but one cannot hear God's truth without listening to Him. How is your listening? What are you hearing?

The Love of God

Now that the children of God have been clearly distinguished from the world, John turns once again to the subject he loves: Love.

"Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God" (I John 4:7).

The love which John entreats his brethren to have is divine; it is heavenly. Notice that John does not say that everyone who loves—who loves his wife, his children, his friends or his pets—is

of God. A man may have great natural affection toward his kindred, may feel great benevolence toward the poor and needy, and still come short of the love John refers to. The love of God is not governed by natural relationships or mere outward appearance or mannerisms. It is far more than a feeling of compassion or pity. The love which John entreats the followers of Christ to have is that which Christ had for the Church, the members of the family of God. He loved them as His own body, flesh and bones (Eph. 5:30).

Love of God and love of the brethren in the body of Christ are inseparable. Hatred of a brother and love of God cannot exist in the same heart at the same time. If we are of God, if born of God, if we know God, we ought to give proof of it by loving our brother. The sun is heat and light—it cannot send forth cold and dark. No more will we be able to radiate hate if we have the love of God in us.

How is this love made manifest? If we love our brother, we will be eager to help him gain eternal life. We will admonish him if need be, and encourage him in righteousness. We will have concern for his temporal and spiritual welfare.

Love is forgiving, patient, kind, considerate. Love takes time, requires sacrifice, and costs much more than words or mere emotion. Love is long-suffering and forbearing. Love is generous, not sensitive; it is appreciative of others, rejoicing in their advancement, their preference. Love is never suspicious, never envious. Love is boundless goodwill. Love seeks the good and rejoices in finding it. Love is enduring.

Truly this is the love of God. It affects our whole being, every word, every act, every thought and attitude, every feeling. It purifies the heart and transforms the whole life. May we be warned; only a speck of hate in the heart will mar every act and deed of our life.

Then John gives another of his striking contrasts:

“He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love” (I John 4:8).

The difference between him that loveth and him that loveth not is as distinct as the difference between light and darkness. Love makes us akin to God; it puts us in close touch with Him, sharing His divine interests. He is our Father, our most intimate friend. He that has no love is completely separated from God. To say we know God when we have no love is as ridiculous as to claim we are enjoying intimate friendship with one whose language we are unable to speak. It is as unthinkable as to claim we were born of parents whom

we do not in any way resemble. Remember John says, “God is love.” May we continually foster this love in our hearts and become more and more like the Father.

“In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him” (I John 4:9).

Verily God’s love was manifested. Notice that John’s words, however, do not say or even infer that God’s love was manifested by sending Christ to die for the sins of the world; he says simply that God sent Him into the world that we might live through Him.

How beautiful and loving is the plan of God! In Jesus Christ, God gave to humanity a perfect pattern of the life that is acceptable to Him. And in Him He showed the perfection of His plan—Jesus was born, He lived, He worked out His salvation, He died, He was resurrected, and He was glorified. As the Father has power to give life, even so He has now given to the Son the authority to judge and give life (John 5:21-27).

Jesus became the author and finisher of our faith. This means that at the consummation of all things He will award all who are worthy with life eternal. Praise God for the wonderful gift of His Son, “that we might live through him.” Praise God for sending Him as the perfect example, to show us the holy and triumphant life, that we by copying Him may also gain life!

“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (I John 4:10).

John’s thought here is the same as Paul expressed in Ephesians 2:1-4, i.e., even when we were dead in trespasses and sins God loved us; He recognized us as prospective material for His eternal plan and arranged circumstances that we might have opportunity to qualify for a place in His eternal Kingdom. God cared for us and protected us, even before we knew anything about Him. Even while we were in darkness, He sent His blessings upon our pathway, His spirit to give strength to our frame and light to our reason. Yes, even before we loved God, He showed love to us. John mentions a special way in which God showed this love—He sent His Son to show us the way, to be the means of our redemption from sin, the “propitiation for our sins.” How?

Many Bible students say that John is here referring to the sacrifice of Jesus, that God gave His Son that He might die for sinners, atoning, or freeing them from the guilt of their sins and thus

(Continued on page 21)

UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God."

The Way to Salvation

JESUS paid it all; all to Him I owe. Sin had left a crimson stain; He washed it white as snow."

This, to the majority, is salvation in a nutshell. Salvation through the blood of Jesus shed on Calvary is the basis of faith for millions. We find it in sermon and song, in prose and in poetry. Old hymnals at hand are filled with songs extolling the blood of Christ as the saving medium, exhorting to faith in His cross. Present day hymnals not only contain the same old hymns, but add new ones echoing the same theme: "Living, He loved me! Dying, He saved me! Buried, He carried my sins far away! Rising, He justified freely, forever! One day He's coming—O glorious day!"

And in poetry it is the same: "*There's not a work for you to do . . . The work has all been done; . . . Upon the cross at Calvary . . . The victory has been won.*"

Salvation through the cross without works. Effortless salvation! Millions believe and trust in it—and no wonder, for it is shouted from the pulpit and aired over radio and TV stations daily. "There at the cross two great things stand out—man's wickedness and God's great love. 'Without the shedding of blood is no remission.' Christ shed His precious blood for the remission of our sins," says the radio preacher.

"Salvation has been provided full and free, but you must believe it. Yea more, you must accept it. The moment you believe, that moment the mighty plan operates for you. That moment all your sins are forgiven and gone. 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.' Believe what Jesus did on Calvary nineteen hundred years ago and accept it as being for you individually. Salvation is by faith and not by human works. Human works can never save."

Gospel tracts in circulation carry the same theme: "You are lost today—this is no reflection upon your character or morality. All are lost. . . . It is serious to be lost today, but you can be saved today. . . . Knowing that you are lost—that Jesus will save you—will you trust your

soul to him right now? If so, He will save you **right now**. Even now, if you have trusted Him, He has already saved you."

Salvation—instant and easy! But is this salvation? Is this deliverance from nonentity and death? Is it safe to trust in the merits of another for deliverance in that great Day soon to come? We are all powerless to save ourselves beyond our mortal span of life. We need salvation—the whole human race needs salvation.

Are all assured of salvation through Jesus' death on the cross? Did God love the world to such an extent that He offered His righteous Son as a sacrifice to save it? Can literal blood cleanse from sin?

Is it true that there is nothing for us to do to merit salvation—that there is nothing we **can** do? Is salvation free upon a mere profession of belief? Does the Bible teach instant salvation? Is there a "saved" person upon the earth today?

These are some of the questions which we hope to answer in this series of studies. Our salvation should be the greatest concern of our lives. Let us not trust blindly in the words of man, but let us learn from God just what salvation is and how we may obtain it. We would not minimize the efforts of others to save people through the use of the air waves and the printed page, but what is accomplished? Unless salvation be sought in the God-appointed way, it will never be found. And the only way to learn the God-appointed way is through our only contact with God today—His Word, the Bible.

I. SALVATION—WHAT IS IT?

As the choir sings softly, "Just as I am, without one plea, but that Thy blood was shed for me, And that Thou biddest me come to Thee—O Lamb of God, I come, I come!", the minister issues the altar call. "Come and be saved right now; come just as you are, confess your sins before God. Accept Christ as your personal Saviour; believe that He died for **your** sins. You can be saved tonight—right now!"

This, to the majority, is salvation. The scene is common in fundamentalist churches and is repeated (perhaps with some variations) at the end of every revival meeting. Each year thousands come forth, profess their belief in Christ, acknowledge that they have sinned, and accept the proffered salvation. They return to their homes rejoicing that they have been saved. Some turn over a new leaf, so to speak, but with the majority the change is hardly noticeable.

The story is told of a common laborer who attended a revival meeting and was "saved." Returning home, he confessed to his wife that he didn't know how to face the men at work for they were not religious. They might make fun of him, he thought. He went to work, and upon returning his wife met him at the door to ask him how things went. "They didn't even notice the difference!" was the quick reply.

Such is the salvation of many—the world doesn't know the difference. But this is **not** eternal salvation! True, there must be a starting point, but the starting point does not determine the finish.

What then is salvation? **Salvation** as defined in the dictionary is "Preservation from impending evil; deliverance from sin and penalty, realized in a future state; redemption; any means of deliverance from danger, evil or ruin."

Salvation according to the Bible is this—and more. It does not guarantee deliverance from all danger and evil in this life, nor is it redemption in the commonly understood way. The salvation of the Bible is more than a pledge made at an emotionally-charged meeting; it is more than a hope of a "spirit-life" in the ethereal realms of heaven. There is not a saved person on this earth today. Eternal salvation, for anyone, is yet future.

The Greek word used for **salvation** carries the idea of deliverance, safety, preservation, healing, and soundness. To be delivered is to be set free, not only from sin, but from all the ills of mortality and even mortality itself, for "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain" (Rev. 21:4). This is the salvation the Bible offers.

Everyone will be safe in that day. Today there is no such thing as a safe place, but then "they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid" (Micah 4:4). This security will also be enjoyed by those who are saved.

Salvation, when attained, is life, unending life free from all ills, and not in some dream world in the clouds but right here on this earth!

A. Salvation—Eternal Life

To be placed beyond mortality is the goal of every life-seeker. That is salvation, the hope of every true Christian. It was the hope of the prophets and apostles, a hope that gave them strength to endure much. Of it Peter said: "Through your faith, God's power will guard you until the salvation which has been prepared is revealed at the end of time. This is a cause of great joy for you, even though you may for a short time have to bear . . . all sorts of trials; so that, when Jesus Christ is revealed, your faith will have been tested and proved like gold . . . and then you will have praise and glory and honor. You did not see him, yet . . . you are . . . filled with a joy . . . and you are sure of the end to which your faith looks forward, that is, the salvation of your souls. It was this salvation that the prophets were looking and searching so hard for" (I Pet. 1:5-10, JB).

Salvation is the end to which faith looks forward—not the beginning. It is ours by promise only: "And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life" (I John 2:25).

This life, with its attendant blessings and its inevitable trials and labor, God gives to all to be used or abused as each individual chooses. But God offers more. He offers life beyond this life, which will be given at the time of the Second Advent of Christ. In the words of Paul, what He offers is such that "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (I Cor. 2:9).

Peter described God's offer of eternal life in equally vivid phrases: "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature" (II Pet. 1:4). To be a "partaker of the divine nature" is to have eternal life, truly an "exceeding great and precious" promise.

Eternal life is by far the greatest of God's promises. Without life in which to enjoy them, all other blessings would be worthless. Jesus said that "those who are considered worthy of taking part in that age and in the resurrection from the dead . . . can no longer die; for they are like the angels. They are God's children, since they are children of the resurrection" (Luke 20:35-36; NIV). Angels were once mortals like ourselves (although not of our world). They became pure and holy like their heavenly Father and were granted eternal salvation, immortality. This is the salvation we seek—a salvation that truly saves.

B. Salvation—A Reward

According to theology, "God, in the New Testament Scriptures, offers to the lost, salvation; and for the faithful service of the saved, He offers rewards. . . . salvation is a present possession, whereas rewards are a future attainment (Scofield Reference Bible)." A careful study of the Scriptures does not uphold this doctrine; it is a product of the thoughts of men, not the Word of God.

Salvation is the reward for a life of faithful service to God, and it is to be given at the end of the Day of Salvation—not at the time the participant enters the race. The words of Peter quoted above prove this true. Salvation is "the end to which your faith looks forward," and it was this same reward for which the prophets labored (I Pet. 1:5-10).

Paul compared the reward for which he labored to a prize to be given to the winner in a race. The prize is not given before the race is run, for the winner cannot be determined until the race has been completed. His meaning cannot be misunderstood: "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. . . . Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run" (I Cor. 9:24-26). The incorruptible crown Paul sought could mean nothing less than immortality, eternal life, for all else is corruptible, that is, perishable. The crown is not a literal crown, but symbolic of eternal life.

Peter also described eternal life as a crown to be given at Christ's return: "And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away" (I Pet. 5:4). The only "crown of glory" that will never fade is eternal life, salvation, and it is to be given at Christ's return.

In New Testament phraseology, enlightenment and induction into the way to life is spoken of as being "saved," but this is not to be confused with eternal salvation. Such a one might be "saved" from his former habits, from the hopelessness of this world; but to gain eternal salvation requires more than a good start. Jesus gave the formula for receiving the full salvation: "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Matt. 24:13). He is not saved, but shall be saved.

The person working for eternal salvation receives a certain measure of his reward in this life, as stated by the Master in His reply to Peter's question: "Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee. What shall we have therefore?" Jesus

answered: "Ye which have followed me, . . . shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, . . . and in the world to come eternal life" (Matt. 19:27; Mark 10:30). The hundredfold is the reward to be reaped in this life while perfecting a character worthy of eternal life in the world to come. Truly, as it has been said, "The Christian gets all the cream." The hundredfold is manifold in peace, joy and happiness!

The Bible makes no distinction between rewards and salvation. The reward "is to be brought . . . at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (I Pet. 1:13), and that reward is salvation.

II. SALVATION—WHY DO WE NEED IT?

Why do we need salvation? We have so much of good things, why not be content with the here and now? Why concern ourselves with what happens after death?

Every rational being loves life above all else. He enjoys every minute given him—and he wants more. We are no exception. We realize that we are mortal and subject to death and that we are powerless to save ourselves beyond whatever years God grants us. Hence we turn to God to seek more.

These are valid reasons for seeking salvation—but in the eyes of the majority of theologians, none of them is the real reason. The majority of religious teachers in the world today would agree with the approach that all are born into the world sinners because of Adam's sin. Says a contemporary radio preacher: "We are all the natural descendants of Adam. Because of this, we inherit his sinful nature. . . . As Adam's natural offspring, therefore, we partake of his sinful nature. . . . Because of it, both saints and sinners die. . . . By his [Adam's] decision to disobey God, he dragged us all down with him into an awful gulf, separating us from our Creator. . . . Consequently, we are born dead in sin; by nature we are children of wrath."

The writer continues: "What a foreboding picture! Humanly speaking no relief was possible. Absolutely none! Furthermore, every member of Adam's race is involved. If you are not a Christian, you are under the sentence of death. Not one human being is excluded!"

This explanation of what is commonly called "Original Sin" is taken from the writing of Paul R. VanGorder of the Radio Bible Class, but it is little different than the explanation contained in the manuals of the major churches. Historically, the doctrine originated with Augustine in the fourth century and during later centuries spread throughout all Christendom. The doctrine is drawn

from a few verses in the writings of Paul, but it is counter to the whole teaching of Scripture.

It is notable that Jesus never made mention of Adam and Eve, nor did He once suggest that sin was the consequence of their transgression in Eden. Jesus pointed to the origin of sin as being within each individual: "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed . . ." all these evils (Mark 7:20-23). Evil is devised in the heart or mind, not inherited, said Jesus, and it is this sin that defiles the man, not Adam's sin. Man needs saving from his own sin only, not from the sin of Adam.

Man dies only because he is mortal, not because Adam sinned. He needs salvation to escape death's clutches, not to escape the curse of Adam's sin.

III. SALVATION—HOW DO WE GAIN IT?

"What must I do to be saved?" It was the question of the Philippian jailer, and it is the question of all life-seekers today. Paul's answer to the question still stands: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts 16:30-31).

In asking the question, the jailer took the first important step to obtaining salvation: He expressed a desire for salvation and showed an interest in learning how to gain it. No doubt the jailer had been impressed by the godly character of the two prisoners over whom he stood guard. There is nothing like a good example to win men to Christ.

His question was also an admission that he knew he was not saved and showed that he realized there must be something to do before he could be saved. Paul's answer, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," is accepted by the majority as teaching instant salvation. But is this according to the Scriptures?

A. Saved—In a Moment of Time?

Reading the account of the Philippian jailer, all Christendom, ministers and laymen alike, assume that the jailer went home "saved." And because Paul said ". . . and thy house" it is likewise assumed that his whole family was saved from that time on. But does a mere profession of faith bring instant salvation? Can we say one has won the race when he has only begun to run?

Much misunderstanding surrounds the timing of salvation. Building on the incident in the Philippian jail, evangelists have fashioned their theory of instant salvation. Writes one, "Seeing that He [Christ] died for sinful men, believing on Him we claim this for ourselves personally. Having believed we have the sure word of God that we are saved.

As a result, 1) We are now the children of God; 2) We have eternal life—because 'He that hath the Son hath life.' (present tense, a present possession); 3) We have passed from a state of death into a state of life."

Then the writer asks: "How long does such a marvelous change require? God says 'Look unto me and be ye saved' (Isa. 45:22). Looking is the act of an instant, and in that instant we are saved. Look and live!"

Truly a "marvelous change"—if it were possible.

To say that a so-called "saved" person has eternal life and to make the claim that such a one has passed from "a state of death into a state of life" is to defy reason. All mankind, including those who claim to be "saved," are mortal and subject to death. Our own experience tells us this. Who among us has not lost relatives, friends and acquaintances to the grim reaper? Hence, we must compare the statement with other Scriptures to learn the true meaning.

We have eternal life only by promise. "And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life" (I John 2:25). John was an apostle, beloved of the Lord, and received Jesus' teachings from an intimate association with the Master. He knew whereof he spoke.

Paul said, "For we must be content to hope that we shall be saved—our salvation is not in sight, we should not have to be hoping for it if it were—but as I say, we must hope to be saved since we are not saved yet—it is something we must wait for with patience" (Rom. 8:24-25, Jerusalem Bible). Salvation is our hope as it was Paul's. It was "in hope of eternal life" (Tit. 1:2) that he labored, for he had "not yet apprehended" (Phil. 3:13).

To apply Isaiah 45:22 ("Look unto me, and be ye saved") to prove instant salvation is to take the verse entirely out of context. In verse 17 of the chapter the Prophet, speaking for God, says "Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation." Note that they shall be saved, future tense. Throughout the chapter God is showing that salvation is available only through Him; there is no God beside Him. Only by serving Him and Him only can salvation be obtained. And it is only "he that endureth to the end [that] shall be saved," for the reward will come with Christ at His returning: "Behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me" (Rev. 22:12). These were the words of the Master Himself.

*Reprints of these studies available,
10 cents per copy*

What the Bible Says About

Divorce and Remarriage

Our friend writes:

"I would like to ask concerning the subject of divorce and remarriage. The majority of the fundamental orthodox churches look on it this way; viz., a marriage is considered adulterous if one or both have previous mates still living, and they are Christians at present, i.e., the married couple. But when one or both become Christians, God forgives the adultery and will hold them guilty only if they divorce again and remarry.

"I am surprised how many churches hold this view. I have never been able yet to give credence to it. I understand Scripture to sanction divorce for unfaithfulness but not remarriage as long as the other party (the guilty one) still lives. If the guilty party dies, then the other party may marry again, with God's blessing.

"Preachers are not preaching on this subject, perhaps that is why there is so much adultery even among professing Christians. I know the *Megiddo Message* stands for the truth of God. May God lead you to write upon this subject; it will be very timely and needful."

C. B., Kent, Washington

The subject is indeed timely and needful. In far too many homes today the marriage bond is treated lightly. The latest statistics show that there is almost one divorce for each three marriages, and divorce and remarriage is common. Immoral conduct outside of marriage is even more common and devastating in its effects. Surely our world today bears comparing with Sodom and Gomorrah, where gross immorality ended in destruction. Jesus foretold that conditions prior to His second coming would parallel those of ancient Sodom, and warned that destruction will come just as surely. What we see today is a striking fulfillment of His words. "Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed" (Luke 17:26-30).

Before we can discuss this topic, we need to clarify the meaning of two words commonly associated with it: adultery and fornication. The words differ slightly in meaning, yet sometimes

seem to be used interchangeably. Webster's Dictionary defines the word "adultery" as "voluntary sexual intercourse between a married man and someone other than his wife, and between a married woman and someone other than her husband." "Fornication" is defined as "human sexual intercourse other than between a man and his wife: sexual intercourse between a spouse and an unmarried person, or between unmarried people; used in some translations of the Bible for unchastity or immorality, to cover all sexual intercourse except between husband and wife."

Biblical laws against both adultery and fornication were very strict. In the law of Moses, the command was plain: "Thou shalt not commit adultery" (Ex. 20:14). Violation of this law was punishable by death. Jesus repeated this command and extended the meaning of adultery to include any unlawful sexual lust. He said, "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matt. 5:27-28). The apostle Paul listed adultery and fornication among the fruits of the flesh (Gal. 5:19). *Harper's Bible Dictionary* states that freedom from fornication was one of the four minimum entrance requirements for aspiring candidates to Christian groups in the early centuries.

The reason adultery is considered so serious an offense is because it affects so many people and has such far-reaching consequences. We see these today—broken homes, children left without father or without mother, one parent trying to earn the living and care for the children at the same time, children left at a young age without proper supervision. We fully agree with our correspondent, that ministers as a whole are not preaching against this evil as they should. In fact, too often, the ministers themselves are involved in it.

Closely associated with adultery and fornication are God's laws concerning divorce and remarriage. Let us look first at the law of Moses, which was a civil law given by God.

The law of Moses permitted divorce and re-

marriage under certain limited conditions and within certain bounds. We read, "When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house. And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife. And if the latter husband hate her, and write her a bill of divorcement, and giveth it in her hand, and sendeth her out of his house; or if the latter husband die, which took her to be his wife, her former husband, which sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled; for that is abomination before the Lord" (Deut. 24:1-4). Nothing is said of a wife divorcing her husband, nor is any allowance given for any adultery on the part of either spouse.

From the comment of Jesus concerning this law, that "Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so" (Matt. 19:8), shows that divorce was not God's intended plan for His people. The law was apparently given to control a practice that could not be eliminated. The wording in the Berkeley Version points out this fact. It reads, "When a man has married a wife and comes to dislike her, having found something improper in her, and he writes her a bill of divorce and, putting it in her hand, sends her from his house, and she goes off and becomes the wife of another, . . . in such case, the man who first divorced her, may not take her again to be his wife, for she has been defiled."

This allowance was not given the sons of Aaron. We read, "They shall not take a wife that is a whore, or profane; neither shall they take a woman put away from her husband: for he is holy unto his God" (Lev. 21:17). Also the law for the high priests: "He shall take a wife in her virginity. A widow, or a divorced woman, or profane, or an harlot, these shall he not take: but he shall take a virgin of his own people to wife" (Lev. 21:13-14).

Jesus took Moses' civil law and expanded it for the good of all who would aspire to be children of God. In so doing He set up the perfect standard. It is recorded in Matthew 5:31-32, "It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: but I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery." By calling the remarrying of a divorced person "adul-

tery," Jesus condemned it in very strong terms. Essentially the same command is found in Matt. 19:9. "Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery."

The exception which Jesus seems to allow in these two verses, "saving for the cause of fornication," has aroused considerable discussion through the years. However, it is regarded by most critics as an addition to the original text of Jesus' words. It does not occur in the parallel passages in either Mark or Luke (see Mark 10:11-12 and Luke 16:18). Thus Jesus seems to be saying that a person who has been married is never rightly divorced, in the sight of God, and is therefore never free to marry again. The laws of men may permit divorce, but God does not ever recognize it as freeing either partner from the bond. So far as He is concerned, the marriage vow is insoluble. Marriage which is God-decreed can be broken only by the death of one of the partners. "What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder" (Matt. 19:6). It is precisely this permanence of Christian marriage which leads both husband and wife to do their utmost to make their marriage a success.

This position, that Jesus disallowed all divorce upon whatever grounds, would seem to be the intended meaning for two other reasons. First, if adultery in one partner or the other could lead to the dissolving of the marriage and free both partners from obligation to each other, this would have the effect of making adultery, or the pretence of having committed it, the one way to get rid of a marriage which had become distasteful, and so would put a premium on adultery, which Jesus surely did not intend. Secondly, the Christian teaching of the first three centuries recognized no exception to the strictness of the law of Christ; never was a formerly married partner free to seek another, so long as the first companion lived. The view that adultery may dissolve the marriage bond only degrades the concept of marriage.

We might note, however, that our Lord does not forbid separation; He does not say that the married partners must always live together, come what may. Separation may under certain conditions become a duty. If one partner proves unfaithful, violent, or adulterous, it may be only right and advisable for the other partner not to live with him or her, though each should always be ready to forgive the other when he or she repents. But never does God recognize either partner as free to choose another living companion, so long

as both are living. Only when one partner dies is the other free.

This is what the apostle Paul explained in these words: "Unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband: But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife. . . . The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord" (I Cor. 7:11, 39; see also Romans 7:1-3). Husband and wife are bound as long as both live. The law of God allows only one living companion.

We are aware that much of the world today, whether outside the church or nominally within it, does not take seriously the Christian law of marriage. What a different world we would have if they did! The truth is that the loss of the church's discipline has brought about conditions not contemplated in our Lord's words. Multitudes of marriages among self-styled nominal Christians today are lightly formed and easily discarded, the Christian view of marriage never having been even understood. Then new marriages are formed, perhaps more unsatisfactory than the old ones, and more problems result.

The law decreed by Christ is surely the highest and best law; it is the ideal. However, all people today are not automatically bound by it, only as they place themselves under it. The majority of people are bound only by the law of the land, which does permit divorce and remarriage. People today who divorce and remarry, while committing sin in the sight of God, are not accountable to Him for that sin, nor are they subject to the penalties of His laws, "for as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law" (Rom. 2:12). Only such as sin under law "shall be judged by the law." Sin is "not imputed when there is no law" (Rom. 5:13).

But if a man and woman should divorce and remarry outside the law of God and later place themselves under it, what happens then? They recognize their sin; but that sin having been committed while they were not serving Christ, they are not under the penalty of His law for that sin, if they do not commit it again. Jesus told the woman taken in adultery to "Go and sin no more." King David was guilty of adultery and murder while under covenant to God. God condemned him severely for it, David repented, and God forgave him. This shows God's mercy and justice, but it in no way seeks or serves to promote sin. God wants those who will obey His law; and

that law does not make any allowance for a divorced person to remarry so long as the first spouse lives.

God's laws on divorce and remarriage are exacting, but they are intended to produce individuals of the highest quality. Meanwhile, they keep families intact, children secure, and provide clean, Christian living and the highest morality, all of which make for happiness and well-being in this world. They are the laws by which all people *should* be governed, and by which all Christians *must* be. ●●

Fruitful Fragments



The misfortunes hardest to bear are those which never come.

Many people are challenged by Christ's life, His death, His resurrection and His return. But there is a vast difference between a challenge and a change. That difference is obedience.

Faith must have solid foundation. It must be more than feeling. We are going to have "dry" spells, when we have no feeling. And if our trust has been in emotional experience, we are going to doubt our faith.

The holy life often speaks loudest when the tongue is silent.

Numbers are not of primary concern. You don't count Christians; you weigh them.

If there is no malice in your heart there can be none shown in your actions.

There are various ways of looking at rainstorms of adversity. We can lament our misfortune until our hearts forget the sun ever shone. Or we can meet the challenge, believing that out of the rainy days will come new growth and beauty to our lives.

One thing more: It is what you learn after you think you know it all, that counts.



Lessons from the Young David

"Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied."—I Samuel 17:45

DAVID was God's anointed, but he had a job to do, looking after his father's sheep. He seemed to enjoy that job, but three of his brothers went off to war and David had to stay at home with the sheep.

One day David's father called to him. "I want you to run an errand for me," he said. "Take some food to your brothers."

"Run errands? Who—me, the anointed of God? Not me, I have sheep to look after. Let someone else run your errands." Was this David's reply? No, David was an obedient boy. He willingly did as his father bade him.

You don't get to be anointed unless you are obedient.

Now the enemy turned out to be stronger than was thought. There was one giant of a man, Goliath by name, who was a thorn in the children of Israel's side.

You can call your enemies what you will, either Philistines, or Goliaths, but you always seem to get one that's bigger than any of the rest (or does it just seem like that?). But no matter how big our enemy seems, we have the promise that we shall not be tempted above that we are able to endure (I Cor. 10:13).

Poor David! even his brother Eliab misunderstood him, and accused him of things which were not true, as well as acting spitefully toward him. Let us be wary lest this elder-brother spirit should enter us. It is so easy to jump to conclusions, only to find our conclusions are wrong.

David wasn't the kind of man to let his elder brother's jealousy hinder him from working for God. David had zeal. Who was this who dared defy the armies of the living God? You see, David

had proved God before. He had put his trust in God when the lion and the bear attacked his father's sheep. He fully believed God had helped him slay both those animals; he had proved God to be a living God.

It is only as you and I put our trust in God, only when we start warring against our carnal nature, only when we step out to prove God that we come to the realization that God is truly a living God.

David was able to say to Saul with confidence, "the Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver out of the hand of this Philistine."

One of the dangers of this our fight against self and sin which can discourage us, which can persuade us to slow down in our race towards perfection, is the half-hearted man's spirit, the one who keeps saying, "Oh! I don't think God expects you to be so narrow," or "a little bit of worldly pleasure now and then won't hurt you." So we have Saul saying "The Lord be with you," and in the next breath, "You must put my armor on, you will find that my armor will protect you." Saul started to dress David in his armor, and just for a moment David forgot that God was his protection and girded on Saul's sword himself.

Do you see how easy it is for the half-hearted to weaken you? No wonder God said, "Do not be unequally yoked together." In our fight toward perfection, we have to get rid of every hindrance. When you are in a race, you wear the lightest of clothing; you have to feel free. So David threw off all the worldly hindrance. He threw off Saul's armor. "I cannot go with these," he told Saul. "I haven't proved them. I *have* proved the Lord

God of Israel; I will go with Him."

So we find that David goes out to meet Goliath; he takes just five stones, his sling, and his staff.

David knew he could not win through his own strength. "I come to thee in the name of the Lord," he shouted to Goliath. "All this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord's, he will give you into our hands."

So we today can rejoice in the knowledge that we have a living God whose strength is more than enough to vanquish all our foes, if we will only trust in Him. ●●

Test the Spirits

(Continued from page 12)

saving them for eternal life and blessing. Here we need to remember John's urgent warning at the first of this chapter, "Try the spirits." "Believe not every spirit."

Notice how contradictory such ideas would be to the very essence of John's letter. To be saved, to be worthy of eternal life, John says we must "purify" ourselves, even as Christ is pure (I John 3:3). Our individual obedience is vital to our salvation. "Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. . . . For the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (I John 2:3-6, 15, 17). These are only a few of John's loving exhortations pointing out the importance of individual effort. John in no way meant to convey any idea that Jesus died to set the sinner free from the consequences of his sin.

In fact, if we re-read John's words carefully, we find they do not even suggest such an idea. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." The reading in the New English Bible is clearer. "The love I speak of is not our love for God, but the love He showed to us in sending his son as the remedy for the defilement of our sins." How is Christ the remedy? He has shown us the way, He left the perfect example for us to follow. He showed men how they

can be healed. He freed Himself from every defiling sin, and now it is for us to follow in His footsteps (I Pet. 2:21).

Christ's being sent as "the propitiation for our sins" is misleading to many people. The original word translated "propitiation" is the Greek *hilasmos*, which has several meanings, including "the means of appeasing," also "forgiveness." The word comes from another word, *hilaskomai*, which is the verb meaning "to conciliate, be merciful or gracious, to make reconciliation for."

Indeed God was being merciful and gracious in sending Christ. Christ is our mediator, our point of contact with the Father (I Tim. 2:5; Heb. 2:17-18). And Christ is directly our means of obtaining forgiveness for our sins; it is He who will judge and reward "every man according as his works shall be" (Rev. 22:12).

"Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another" (I John 4:11).

God has shown such great love to us, calling us frail creatures of the dust to become beings to live in the endless ages of glory. He sent forth His Son to be a living Example before us. When He has shown all this love to us, surely we ought to love one another. ●●

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SCRIPTURAL SPOTLIGHT

*"Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of
my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am"*

—Psalm 39:4

THE 39th Psalm is one of David's great prayers. It is a prayer about life and is most timely at this season of the year when we find ourselves thinking seriously about the passing of time. Here is part of what David prayed: "Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am."

This prayer of David's emphasizes two basic facts. First, it tells us this mortal life is measured. It is not an inexhaustible spring that flows on and on and on. When we take down old calendars and put up new, we realize we have passed another milestone of life. The calendar we take down represents a full year of days which will never come again. It is life spent and gone, a milestone passed forever. And there is always one last milestone. About 30 million people who put up calendars for 1978 are not here to put up new ones for 1979. On that same basis, about 30 million who put them up now will not be here to take them down. People die at the rate of two every second around the clock.

These facts are not to make us somber, but to cause us to think seriously about life while it is ours. We all know life is a very uncertain thing. We say it hangs by a slender thread. This is why David prayed, "Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days." The end of life can be as near as crossing the street, or driving through an intersection, or a thousand simple tasks of life that we have done many times. Tied in with this is the fact that our days are measured. No one lives here very long, even if he lives a century. Time is short for everyone.

In the light of this knowledge, David is praying that he not waste his life. This will be our prayer, also. When we fully realize the shortness of life, then we are ready to live, to live fully each day, to make every day show its maximum of spiritual improvement. If we do not, how can we say we are living fully?

This brings us to the second fact in David's prayer: that life has content. Life is not only measured in length of days. Some people live "longer" in thirty years than others do in sixty. Their reach is greater. They seem to have a larger capacity for life. At any rate, they put more into it and so get more out of it.

Christ's mortal life was short—only 33 years, and yet it was full and complete. Its purpose was met, His career fulfilled, and His virtue complete. He was fully qualified to become the author and finisher of our faith, "holy, harmless, undefiled," our perfect Example. How much more could any lifetime yield? His was the ultimate. His days were few, yet packed to the maximum with content. So fruitful were they that He will reap their benefits through all the ages to come. Why? Because He knew the measure of His days; He knew how fleeting life would be, and so made the most of every day of it.

Length is not the most important consideration of life. We do not judge a book by its length; its depth and content mean far more. Content speaks of quality rather than quantity. And quality is what God is looking for.

What is the measure of your life? That is a good question to ask ourselves as we take down the old calendar and put up the new. What is its worth, its achievement, its content, as God looks down upon it? Does He count you a treasured part of His creation?

*Think on thy way, O thou storm-driven child,
Out on the ocean so dark and so wild,
Far from thy God thou art drifting today,
Think on thy way, think on thy way.*

*Think on thy way, soon the beautiful gate
Ever will close, and 'twill then be too late;
Turn to Him now, all His mandates obey,
Think on thy way, think on thy way.*

WANTED!

More to improve, fewer to disapprove.

More doers, fewer talkers.

More to say "It can be done," fewer to say "it can't."

More to inspire others with confidence, fewer to throw "cold water" on anyone taking even one step in the right direction.

More to get into the thick of things and "do something about it," fewer to sit on the sidelines merely finding fault.

More to point out what's right, fewer to keep harping on what's wrong.

More to "light a candle," fewer to "curse the darkness."

—Selected.

A Man to Admire

The apostle Paul was a great Christian man—so much so that even in early times men were inspired to write of him in praiseworthy terms. John Chrysostom wrote a memorable sentence of him when he said, "Three cubits in stature, he touched the sky." Another writer speaking of Paul said, "The greatest man who ever sailed the Mediterranean was not Alexander, nor Hannibal, nor Caesar, but Paul the apostle of Jesus Christ."

God has revealed great truths to us through the personality of Paul. He was of great intellect, a forceful preacher, a powerful writer and a very successful missionary.

It is not enough, though, to admire the man. Action is required. A prominent high school teacher acknowledges, "We actually give a boy one hundred percent in hygiene who can pass a perfect examination in the subject, even though his teeth are decayed, his hands dirty, and his shoulders stooped. It is no trick at all," he continues, "to teach a boy so that he can glibly recite the evils of cigarette smoking, for instance; but so to train him that he will not smoke cigarettes is another matter."

Paul's religion was a very part of him, so much so that he could say, "I pray night and day."

An Indian once prayed, "Make our religion not like our clothes, for we can lay them aside. Make it like our tattoo marks that are always part of us."

That is what Paul's religion was like, it was always with him wherever he went. Everywhere the record rings with trumpet calls to action. We must not let them go unheeded, for we shall be the losers if we do. ●●

January, 1979

BUILDING CONFIDENCE

EVERY YEAR the leaders of industry and finance try to predict what they think conditions will be during the next 12 months and to plan what they will do. One summary headline reads as follows: "A Year of Work and More Confidence, Period Ahead Calls for Self-Discipline, Alert Management."

What an excellent precept for the Christian. If we are to win in this race for eternal life, this year must be a year of work—not work to better our financial condition but work to increase our chances of winning the approval of God and receiving the great reward He has offered. Our great Example Jesus said, "I do always those things that please him [the Father]" (John 8:29).

A successful person is ever on the alert to please others. Even a child very early in life discovers the benefits which he receives from pleasing his parents. An employee benefits by pleasing his employer. By the same token a business of whatever kind tries to please the majority of its customers if it wants to continue to prosper. A sign in a local food market reads as follows: "We cannot afford one dissatisfied customer."

So during this coming year we as Christians working for a place in God's eternal Kingdom should put forth a special effort to please God. We cannot afford to do one thing which is displeasing to Him. We cannot and must not try to please the world by which we are surrounded, who know not God or His precepts. But it is as we all know a full-time job to live up to the requirements which God has laid down for those who please Him, and it is imperative that we live up to them. Then we will be eligible for that special reward promised by Jesus in John 12:26, "If any man serve me, him will my Father honor."

Working to please God will cause our confidence to increase. We must have confidence. And we should inspire confidence in others. Nothing can be accomplished without it. We have all known individuals who possessed knowledge and ability, but lacking the important requirement of confidence, fail to accomplish what others with lesser ability do *with* confidence.

The first step toward doing a task is thinking we can. If we approach any task with a negative attitude of "I can't," we are defeated already,

for we never will. Confidence is likewise necessary in our spiritual lives. If we say our transgressions and our sins are too large and too many to be overcome, as the people in Ezekiel's day complained, and we "pine away in them," we shall never be victorious. But if we take the attitude of the apostle Paul, "This one thing I do," and keep ourselves doing this one thing, we shall soon find ourselves well along in the work.

On the other hand, overconfidence is a grave error. Confidence that is inspired by wishful thinking or daydreaming is overconfidence. Confidence that is inspired by trusting in our own ideas of right and wrong is also overconfidence. True confidence can only be inspired by successful work. If we overcome one fault, it will increase our confidence in our ability to overcome others. Confidence will increase in direct proportion to our works. If we lack confidence in our ability to conquer our nature, it is evidence that we are not working as we should. If we *have* confidence, it is because we have been working.

There is no characteristic which a Christian must possess with greater care than confidence. Lacking it, we can do nothing. With too much of it we fail utterly. King Solomon is an outstanding example of the latter. With natural ability and even unusual help from God, he made an excellent beginning; but growing overconfident he failed miserably in the end.

The apostle Paul was an outstanding example of the former. With an infamous beginning, even persecuting the true Church, after his miraculous conversion he rose above his own nature and could say with confidence: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13). And he did.

The remaining requirements are Self-Discipline and Alert Management.

The word discipline comes from disciple. If we are disciples of Christ, we must discipline ourselves to follow His pattern. "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." Christ has thousands of so-called followers but very few genuine disciples, who are willing to submit to the strict and regular moral training which He prescribes. This discipline is not the harsh, military type of discipline imposed on a soldier, but a higher type founded on love. It is discipline for our highest good and development.

We discipline ourselves to Christ's standard because we love Him and want to follow Him, because this is required if we are to receive the great reward He offers. The discipline of the Bible is always self-imposed. We have our choice:

we can discipline ourselves, and receive eternal life in His kingdom; or we can drift with the tide and receive His condemnation at Judgment and eternal death in the end.

These special times—and we cannot deny that they are special—require "alert management." To us is committed the task of managing ourselves, our time, our gifts, our energies, all that we have. And as Christians we must be alert. Alert to foes without and foes within. Alert to complacency. Alert to conformity. Alert to indecision. Alert to inactivity and inertia. Alert above all else to our own individual failings. If we can keep these goals before our minds, we should be able to increase our confidence that we will share in the reward that will be abundantly above all that we can ask or think—yes, even more; it will be "*exceeding abundantly above*"! ●●

Others Are Watching

Remember the time you saw someone—whom you thought to be a man of religious principle—pick up a pen and put it in his pocket, without making any effort to find its rightful owner?

Everyone will insist that religious faith should be related to the way a man lives. The problem is that there are always people expressing in words a deep religious devotion which fails to prove itself in appropriate deeds. Such double-mindedness is often carefully disguised, but it is there nonetheless. Within the confines of those who profess the name of Christ are some who are deeply calloused to His way of life. Yes, they are usually loyal to the outward forms of the faith, but they are numb to the meaning and implications of their religious commitments.

The situation was much the same in ancient Israel. They knew themselves to be God's chosen people. And yet this precious election by God became so ritualized that their religion became drained of any real impact on their living. During the eighth century B. C. were some of these "religious untouchables," to whom a layman spoke who was sick of their hypocrisy—and who wasn't afraid to say so! Amos was his name. He thundered forth his three-point message: that God's calling meant responsibility; that religious pretense is a fatal flaw; and that there is hope only if God's people get serious about acting out what they constantly talk up.

It would be well for us to look carefully and critically at who we are and what we are doing. Others are watching us, too! ●●

Questions

"I disagree with your position that God requires us to become morally perfect. I hold to the words in Romans, chapter 8, verse 8, 'So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.' Angels can please God, but men? Never! That is why we need His grace through our Lord Jesus Christ."

We are aware that your attitude is that popularly accepted throughout Christianity, but we cannot find it to be Scripturally supported. Mortal men *have* pleased God (see Luke 1:6; Heb. 11:5-6; Jas. 2:33).

If you will read Romans 8, you will see that the Apostle explains himself in the verses that follow the one you quoted. In verse 4 he includes himself in a group who were even then walking "not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Then he distinguishes between the two: "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit." What is it to be "after the flesh"? It is to be "carnally minded," motivated by one's own natural desires; to be "after the Spirit" is to be "spiritually minded," propelled by the higher interests.

Paul says directly that "ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you." They were all mortal, whether or not they had the Spirit of God dwelling in them; hence, when Paul says that all who are "in the flesh cannot please God," he cannot mean that all who are *mortal* cannot please God, for *all* his brethren were mortal. No, Paul is speaking of those having not "the Spirit of Christ," His life-giving words (John 6:63) dwelling in them, as those "after the flesh," and these "cannot please God." Verse 13 explains even further: "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (Rom. 8:13).

Here is all the more evidence that God wants us to be morally perfect, for "if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die." This is what it means to be "in Christ Jesus," to "walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Rom. 8:1).

"In a recent issue of the MEGIDDO MESSAGE, under the title 'Understanding the Bible,' you stressed that January, 1979

God's great army to participate in the Battle of Armageddon will consist only of the unfaithful class. If this be true, then how should the following Bible verses be taken? Please explain their contents: Psalm 149:4, 6, 9; Isa. 10:17-18; Jer. 51:17, 19-20; Obadiah 18; Micah 4:13; Isa. 13:5; Jude 14-15."

There is one point to remember when we are discussing the executing of a war effort: Every battle has those who fight, and also those who direct, and plan, and command, but do not fight. Few of the great generals in history have gone onto the battlefield and done the fighting hand-to-hand; it is their duty to follow the overall progress of the battle and direct the actions of the men under their command. In this sense they do the fighting, though they are not on the battlefield themselves.

The Bible presents this same situation when it talks about the battle of Armageddon. Christ and His co-rulers, the 144,000 will be the guiding hand behind the army, but they will not be doing the actual fighting. Ps. 149:4, which you mention, describes this very situation: Christ and the saints are pictured as doing the directing of the war; they are "executing" the punishments upon the people. In their hand is a "two-edged sword," an illustration representing those who will actually do the work, that is, the unfaithful. The text reads, "Let the saints be joyful in glory: . . . let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a twoedged sword in their hand; to execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; to execute upon them the judgment written: this honour have all his saints" (Ps. 149:5-9). The saints are directing, but the actual work is accomplished by the "sword" in their hand, which is the unfaithful servants under their direction.

Revelation 19:15 speaks of this same "sword," as proceeding from the mouth of the Rider upon the white horse: "And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations." The language of this verse is symbolic. It would be physically impossible for a man to have a literal sword proceeding from his mouth. Revelation 3:16, speaking of the unfaithful Laodiceans, says "I will spue thee out of my mouth"—suggesting the possibility that they may be among the members of that "sword" that proceeds from His mouth if they do not amend their ways.

Jeremiah 51:17, 19 and 20 point out the same fact, that the unfaithful will be used as the "sword." Verse 17 describes the class as "brutish,"

they are "vanity, the work of errors: in the time of their visitation they shall perish" (v. 18). Verse 20 continues with, "Thou art my battle axe and weapons of war: for with thee will I break in pieces the nations, and with thee will I destroy kingdoms"—with "thee," the workers of evil are the instrument.

Both Obadiah 18 and Isaiah 10:17-18 speak of Israel being "a fire" or "a flame" which shall devour the wicked as stubble. Again the language is symbolic, and surely the power of God is behind the devouring flame or fire; the wicked perish, but there is no reference made to His "sword" in these texts.

Micah 4:13 also pictures the time of Judgment: "Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion: for I will make thine horn iron, and I will make thy hoofs brass: and thou shalt beat in pieces many people: and I will consecrate their gain unto the Lord, and their substance unto the Lord of the whole earth." Again, the "daughter of Zion" is in command, but this does not say the members of that daughter are personally doing the fighting. The language again is highly symbolic. Isaiah 13:5 speaks plainly of the "weapons of his indignation" as "the host of the battle" which the Lord "mustereth" to "destroy the whole land." Such a term could be fittingly applied to the unfaithful servants.

It may be comparable to our American fighting forces, where the Commander-in-chief and the joint chiefs of staff plan the overall strategy, but the army, navy, air force and marines carry it out.

We cannot imagine Christ and the saints doing the actual fighting. Psalm 91:7-8 reads, "A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand

at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked."

Because most passages in the Bible referring to the future are highly symbolic, it is difficult for us with our limited knowledge to know exactly how the responsibility will be divided. But from the evidence given, it seems to say that Christ and the saints will wield the sword and the unfaithful will *be* the sword, the "weapons of his indignation," his "battle axe."

"Do I understand from you that we as Christians are supposed to obey the laws of non-Christian governments? Does God mean for us to obey governments such as those existing today in Cambodia, Romania, or that of Idi Amin in Africa?"

The apostle Paul wrote that "the powers that be are ordained of God" (Rom. 13:1). We surely do not understand from this that God authorizes and upholds governments that are ruthless and cruel and that have laws contrary to His principles. Nevertheless, we are to be "subject unto . . . the powers that be"; the laws of our country must always be obeyed unless they conflict with God's laws. When such conflict occurs, it would probably be advisable to leave the country peacefully, if at all possible. And if this is not possible, we would have to suffer the penalty for disobeying that country's law; God's law must always be supreme. And never does the Christian have a right to openly rebel, revolt or demonstrate against the government in power.

There are several examples in Scripture where that situation existed. And there is no record of any of God's people revolting or taking up arms against the injustices of their civil government. Jesus Himself was a victim of the unscrupulous Jewish priesthood and the Roman authorities, but He made no effort to fight or retaliate. During the time of the Babylonian Empire, Daniel's three companions made no effort to protect themselves when condemned to the fiery furnace, though they were serving the Babylonian government. The words of the apostle Paul in Romans 12:19 apply: "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord."

We are grateful to live in a country where we have religious freedom; at the same time we are aware that all people in all parts of the earth do not enjoy this freedom. If we were subject to an atheistic regime, we would have two choices: 1) to leave the country, if possible, or 2) refuse to obey laws that conflict with those of God, and suffer whatever penalty might be imposed. ●●

ABIB Is Coming!

The steady onward march of time is bringing us once again to the beginning of the year and another sacred season. The first new moon after the vernal equinox this year occurs on March 27, therefore the evening of March 27 marks the beginning of Abib 1, which will extend through March 28, Bible time being measured from "evening to evening" (Lev. 23:32).

The arrival of Abib means special activities at the Megiddo Church in honor of our Coming King, whose birth we will commemorate at this time, as well as the beginning of the New Year. Distant members and friends, plan now to come and join us at this season! ●●

Our Readers Write...

Desiring More

I'm just not satisfied with myself. I feel that I've got to get a real grip on things, feed my spiritual life more, and be able to live joyfully now no matter where I am, in the prospect of the future life. Where would we be without that hope? There certainly is no meaning in living like the majority, just eating, sleeping, working, talking—everything of and for the here and now. I hate it, and when I find myself being that way, I hate it even more. It creates such a void in me.

It is only the certainty of God's plan and the thought of what life will be in the future, of what lies beyond this small planet earth, and of having a part in it all, that makes life worthwhile and gives it heaps of meaning. There is such darkness everywhere, I wonder how people can even stand to exist without the knowledge of God's plan. But they do, and they don't seem to care. They have no longings or yearnings or depth of soul.

Even the best this life has to offer isn't enough. Only Truth brings real quality to living. I pray I may never lose this desire within me for more. I want to build this desire to the point of real, determined action. Once learning of God's plan, I know I can never be the same again.

Northern Peninsula, Michigan

D. J.

How Valuable?

A story is told about a very valuable cup, worth hundreds of dollars. But when the cup was given closer inspection, it was valued at only a couple of dollars. Why? Because it had a small nick in it. This cup teaches the same lesson as James 2:10, "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all"—that is, as far as eternal life is concerned, because his obedience is not perfect. Or that little nick in the cup might be compared to a little spot on the garment of righteousness. Suppose we each had a spot on our garment. Add them all together and that robe which should be clean and white would look more like a leopard's skin. Surely that is not the way we want it.

Our daily lives will tell the story. A Sunday religion will never do. We must take up our cross daily and carry it to a successful finish. Then the robe of righteousness will be spotless, clean and white. Then when Jesus comes, we will hear the words, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." What a happy day, if—if we are ready.

Fort Myers, Florida

C. B.

Growing?

God wants us to grow in the divine life. He demands much of us. He wants our highest efforts, our minds, our strength, our all. He wants our heart with its evil crushed. He wants our whole being with its evil crushed. He wants us all alive and on fire for His cause. If we are only lukewarm, He will cast us off.

Peru, Kansas

W. R.

To Be Ready

I hope and pray that we may be ready for Jesus' return, and be able to say, "This is the Lord, we have waited for Him."

But if we are to be ready, we have much work to do, some more than others; so we must really put our hearts into the work and let nothing distract us, for our Lord has promised such wonderful things if we obey His commands; and He says "they are not grievous" (I John 5:3).

Paul tells us to "Rejoice in the Lord alway" (Phil. 4:4). If we do this, rejoice *always*, we will be rejoicing when everything is for us, and also when we think it is against us.

When we first received instruction, we were full of fire; but as time goes on are we inclined to let go some of the fire? If we wish to live with Jesus through eternity, this must not be; the fire of our enthusiasm must be with us at all times; we must make our calling and election sure.

We may think as we go along that it is too hard and cannot be done, but it *can* be done, for God never called anyone that could not do the work if they have the will to do so.

We must give our whole heart to God; He will be satisfied with nothing less. Outward motions are of no use to Him, it must be our whole heart. Most of what we get in this life we have to work for; so in the spiritual, if we would have a crown we shall have to work for it.

Swansea, South Wales, England

M. S.

Take Heed

One day we shall see time stand still, if we are faithful, for in eternity time will have no meaning. Life will go on and on, a joyous life, more than we can ever visualize now; no pain, nothing to displease or upset, nothing to worry us, we shall never want this life to end.

For some that wonderful life will never begin, for they will see all the wonders of the future and know that they have failed in this present life and so will never be able to enjoy the fulness of eternity. What a punishment, to have had a taste of God's reward, to have it withdrawn from them because of failure. It behooves us not to take God's warning too lightly. We may think we stand, let us "take heed lest we fall."

Worsop, England

H. L.

Twelve Booklets

HISTORY OF THE MEGIDDO MISSION
THE COMING OF JESUS AND ELIJAH
WHAT MUST WE DO TO BE SAVED?
GOD'S SPIRITUAL CREATION
THE KINGDOM OF GOD
THE GREAT APOSTASY
HELL AND THE DEVIL
AFTER DEATH, WHAT?
TRINITY OR UNITY?
THE HOLY SPIRIT
THE ATONEMENT
THE SABBATH

ALL for \$3.00, Postpaid.

What Have We Done Today?

*We shall do so much in the years to come,
But what have we done today?*

*We shall give our gold in a princely sum,
But what did we give today?*

*We shall cheer the heart and dry the tear,
We shall plant a hope in the place of fear,
We shall speak the words of love and cheer;
But what did we speak today?*

*We shall be so kind in the afterwhile,
But what have we been today?*

*We shall bring each lonely life a smile,
But what have we brought today?*

*We shall give to truth a grander birth
And to steadfast faith a deeper worth;
We shall feed the hungering souls of earth;
But whom have we fed today?*

*We shall reap such joys in the by-and-by,
But what have we sown today?*

*We shall build us mansions in the sky,
But what have we built today?*

*'Tis sweet in idle dreams to bask,
But here and now do we do our task?
Yes, this is the thing our souls must ask:
What have we done today?*