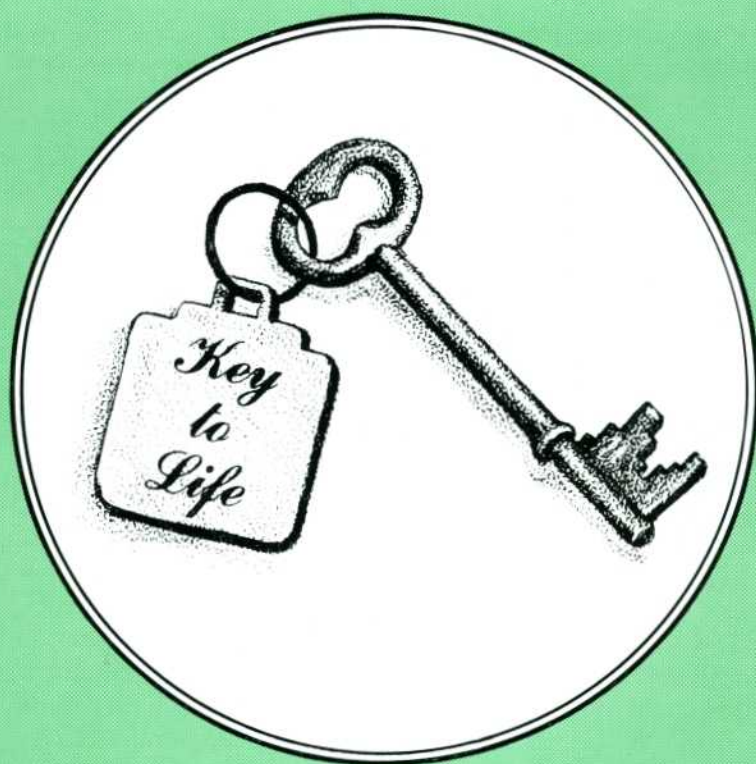


Megiddo Message

Centennial Issue 1880--1980



FOUND: The Key to Life

EDITORIAL



Not Good Enough

IT HAS BEEN said that dissatisfaction is the key to progress. When we become satisfied, we stagnate. It is an inner feeling of dissatisfaction that keeps us reaching, striving, seeking always to improve. We are never completely satisfied with anything. We turn out a piece of work today, but feel compelled to better it tomorrow, and again tomorrow. And so on. Not good enough, we say; we can do better. And often we do.

This attitude seems instinctive in the physical world. We scrutinize our work carefully, critically, seeking ways and means to improve it. How else can we be competitive in a modern world? Are not others doing the same? But in the spiritual realm, where improvement is the only key to success, how is it that we are so slow to speak—or even take—criticism? How is it that we sometimes even resent a suggestion of something that needs improvement? Might we not be much further ahead if we would exhibit an open, honest *longing* for criticism, if we would go after *ourselves* with the same critical eye that we give our temporal work? Wouldn't we be much further ahead if we would stand aside and look for areas that need improving, telling ourselves again and again, "Not good enough, not half good enough"?

The problem is that we are too easily satisfied with ourselves. Furthermore, we like to maintain as good an opinion of ourselves as is possible—and want others to do the same. We are like the little girl whom the minister asked why she so often played alone when there were other children nearby. Her reply was simply, "I like me." We all naturally like ourselves quite well. Improvement? Well, maybe a moderate amount would be good, but we are pretty much all right the way we are. At least we can see a lot of people who are a lot worse!

However, when we set out to please God and meet His standard, when we begin to look at our character through His eyes and evaluate what

He admires, we begin to see quite clearly that we are not naturally "good enough." Improvement is an absolute necessity if we would have His recognition. There is just no other conclusion possible in the face of such plain commands as "Walk before me, and be thou perfect," and "Be ye holy, for I am holy." Though the majority of men think this beyond human reach, still the oracle of God is plain; and far be it from God to require the impossible. He does, however, require improvement to the maximum limit of our possibilities. And to accomplish this we shall find that we need all the criticism we can get, whether it be from ourselves or others. Our one objective is to improve.

We need to develop an eagerness to learn of and recognize our own weaknesses which are a result of carelessness of thought, those failures in character development, that undisciplined behavior. Then we must seize the opportunities which come to us daily and apply corrective measures to overcome these weaknesses. Strength of character, integrity, firmness, fairness—all are essential. All must be perfected with patience. And in the meanwhile, we will have to say often, "Not good enough; we can do better."

A heart motivated, ruled and governed by the law of God is perhaps the strongest tool available to us in the work of character reformation. The strongest personality must be willing to do or be what God admires; hence comes the anxiety to correct a wrong as soon as it can be detected.

Let us who are in this race for eternal life scan and search our lives. Again and again let us check our motives, inclinations, desires. Let us develop that divine dis-satisfaction that is satisfied with nothing short of the full blessing of God. Let us say with the Psalmist, "I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness." Until then, let our motto be, "Not good enough—we can do better!" ●●

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*

Megiddo Message

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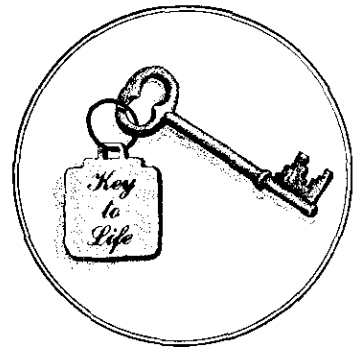
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Found:

The Key to Life



THE ROLLING years have brought us to a landmark in time. It is the centennial of a great event, an event unmarked by the world at large but highly significant to people dedicated to the true gospel of God. Just one hundred years ago a long-lost item was found—a key, a master key. A key to what?

We all know how important a key can be. Imagine yourself outside at night. It is cold, and you have been walking for miles. You come upon a house. You look longingly through the windows. Inside, the house is all aglow with light and life. It is a beehive of activity. You long to enter. You try the door, but it is locked.

This is just the situation we all would be in, spiritually speaking, were it not for the key we hold in our possession, the key that will unlock the door to all of the eternal promises of God. It is the key to life, endless life, life with joy and happiness and love unending. It is the key to membership in God's eternal family and the company of the angels of heaven. It is the key to *everything beyond!*

What is the key?

For centuries men have been proclaiming doctrines that spell out an easy way to salvation. They have said the key was simply one word: *believe*, thinking only mental consent was involved. They have said also that the key was the blood of Christ, that His sacrifice on Calvary was all-sufficient to open to us the portals of eternity. They have said that simply trusting in Him would assure us of His favor and love forever. They have said there was *nothing* to do—in fact, the first thing about the gospel is often to be assured that there is nothing you *can* do to save yourself.

But is this the key to life? What says the Word of God? This is the question our founder, Rev. L. T. Nichols, asked as he pursued his study of the Bible. Salvation is the highest goal of life. Since the matter is as important as life or death, it is surely worth our candid consideration. What saith the Lord? *What is the key?* What if a person

should depend on the blood of Christ as the key to life and arrive at the gate and find that the key does not work—that the door will not unlock!

This is the fear that kept our founder searching in the Scriptures. He could not be satisfied until he had a firm “Thus saith the Lord” for this critical tenet of belief. Truly, he found texts which, upon surface reading would suggest the popular idea. He found many *more* texts, however, which definitely indicated a key of a very different sort. Text upon text indicated that the key was this: *Self-effort*. A strange key? Unpopular? Unacceptable to the majority? Perhaps, but what should be the criteria? Is not the *usefulness* of the key the primary concern? Is not the key *which will work and open the door to life* the key that everyone should want?

The more he studied, the more he read in the Bible, the more he compared Scripture with Scripture, the more convinced he became that the key lay in one short word: *obedience*. Could God be less demanding than what men call “fair”? Could God give a day's pay for a day of doing nothing? Could He say “well done, good and faithful servant” to one who had made no effort to be good or faithful? And what if one should go to judgment depending on the blood of Christ to have removed the guilt of his sins, depending on Christ's good record for his own admittance—and find the door locked?

Further and intensive study revealed the fallacy of the old popular ideas, the keys long fashioned by men. The Bible teaching was plain: there could be no salvation for any apart from *knowing and obeying every commandment of God*. Here was the key, the master key, the key to life! It was—and is—the key to the favor of God and all the blessings that will accompany it forever!

This key is nothing new. It is the key Jesus used. Even Jesus had to apply self-effort to obtain His Father's favor. Even He had to “learn obedience by the things which he suffered” (Heb. 5:

8-9). Even He had to learn to "refuse the evil and choose the good" (Isa. 7:14-15). Even He had to be in all points "tempted like as we are" (Heb. 4:15). Even He had to conform His will to the will of His heavenly Father and do always the things that pleased Him (Rom. 15:3; John 8:29). If He had not, can we think for a moment that God would have accepted Him, rewarded Him, and granted Him the kingship of the world to come?

All the prophets of old proclaimed the necessity of using this one key, the key of obedience. Our founder frequently reviewed the sayings of the great men of God recorded in Scripture which pertain to this great key. In recognition of the great discovery, we are printing the following, an edited version of a written discourse by the Rev. L. T. Nichols. It shows us that obedience is the key, plainly stated in the Bible, and—best of all—it is a key guaranteed by the God of heaven to *work!*

Individual Effort--the Key to Life

by Rev. L. T. Nichols

IT IS WITH joy and pleasure that we embrace the present opportunity to say a few words to enlighten, strengthen, and encourage the hearts of all who are fully determined to make a complete surrender to God. As Christians it is our duty to surrender our entire being, to engage both body and mind with purposeful devotion and gladness of heart to Him who has been so kind as to call us out of darkness into His marvelous light. God has placed our feet upon a firm foundation, giving us time and opportunity to render obedience, whereby we can obtain an endless home together in the bright Elysian fields of glory; a right to pass the pearly gates into the more than wonderful city of God, and pluck with delight the fruit from life's fair tree, and live for evermore. It provides us the key whereby we can have a life free from sorrow, toil and pain, and in their place have constantly increasing joy and pleasure. These blessings will more than repay us for the little we are called upon to give up in this brief life.

Yes, we will be amply repaid for our little labor now before we get half through being introduced to and chatting with good old Noah, who worked at the ark according to the instructions given by the angel, and who was a preacher of righteousness. What a pleasure to listen to him tell how he pegged away at the old ark with hammer, saw and trowel, and between times preached to those

who would listen. And he was preaching the same old blessed gospel of righteousness that we have today. And to think, how few he succeeded in getting to render obedience to the law of righteousness he preached. It is good to think of his time; it should help us to more fully believe.

Halt a moment and ask: Would any human mind ever have conceived or thought of recording that of all the multitudes of humanity at the time, and in that portion of the world, only Noah and his house would have been spared at the time of the Flood? But as now, they would not listen. They did not want to hear of something to do. They did not want to hear that righteousness is the only basis for salvation. They wanted to hear that it mattered not how vile they had been, if only at the last they looked up and simply said, "Lord have mercy," all would be well.

What a contrast between man's ideas and God's. Man says, Be as vile as you wish and do anything you please, just say "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner" at the last and you will be saved. But God through His prophet Micah declares what He requires of us: "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Mic. 6:8).

This is the way God talks, and it demonstrates beyond all dispute that the Bible was not written by man, nor according to the ideas of man. Listen also to Deuteronomy 10:12, "What doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul." No wonder Noah, a preacher of such righteousness as this, succeeded in getting only his own household to comply with the God-given demands. With the fulfillment of the words of our Master before our eyes, how can we help but believe? He said, "As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the coming of the Son of man."

As we look around and see how utterly destitute people are of this old ancient gospel, how it should cause us to the more fully realize the truthfulness of the Bible and also the absolute necessity of entering into the service of Jehovah with our whole mind and strength. If we do not, we will never be welcomed by Jesus and the angels into the grand summerland of love. This is the old gospel of righteousness, preached by Noah. What a contrast, what a consolation to know that we can by this same righteousness obtain the same salvation! How it should strengthen us and cause our faith to grow exceedingly! How it should

(Continued on page 19)

Priorities--Right or Wrong?

A PERSON is afoot in the desert. He is hot, thirsty, famished. He wants water more than anything else.

Someone is suffering excruciating pain. He wants relief more than anything else.

A miner is trapped in an underground pit, and the supply of oxygen is fast being exhausted. He gasps, and gasps—he wants air more than anything else.

Someone is starving; his one longing is for food.

Each of these situations sets up clear priorities. In each case, one of the basic necessities for life is lacking, and the desire for it is paramount.

If we as human beings were on a par with the beasts of the field, all the important things of life would center around the obtaining of physical necessities. But the great Creator has given our lives another dimension; it is the dimension of intelligence, reason, thought-power, and spiritual desire; it is the ability to appreciate; it is the life of the Spirit. God has given us minds capable of learning about the meaning and destiny of life, its purpose, its Creator. We *have* this larger dimension which gives us possibilities of larger—even *eternal*—attainments. The question is, Are we developing it? Are we giving it top priority in our lives?

To nearly everyone employed in the many segments of an intricate 20th century business world, priority is a word frequently heard and repeatedly stressed. More than one company has suffered economic ruin because management failed to intelligently assess the priorities. Personnel files all too often contain employee termination records indicating that someone neglected to perform in a conscientious manner. In other words, the choices were *there*, but they failed to allocate proper time and attention to things of prime importance. They put in their time, did a fair day's work, but never accepted the all-absorbing challenge of the priorities, never learned to put first things first.

Nowhere does this challenge of the priorities find more serious application than in the life of the aspiring Christian. Indeed, all hope of future

life in a glorious world made over new depends on how well we use our time and opportunities here and now. If this be true—and we know it is—how prayerfully and carefully we should evaluate the things which take up our time, our thought, our interest in life. Could it be that we are putting second things first, that we are giving too much time and thought to non-essentials—when we are racing against time? Our day of opportunity is rapidly drawing to a close. Now more than ever before we are pressed for time; things of prior importance *must* come first.

This is the question facing us today: What are *my* priorities? What comes first in *my* life?

If we could ask this question of the apostle Paul, we would get a ready answer: "This one thing I do." And what was this "one thing"? Was it pleasure, or business, or education, or the pride of this world? No! "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus," he wrote, "if by any means I might attain unto a resurrection of the dead" (Phil. 3:8, 11, 13, 14). Jesus set forth His own personal priorities when He said, "I do always those things that please him"; and again, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work" (John 8:29; 4:34). The apostle John could write, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth"—this was the top priority issue with him. Now these men reached the goal that we are striving for; shouldn't their priorities become ours?

The apostle Paul seemed deeply concerned that his brethren learn to put first things first. "And this I pray," he wrote to the Philippians, with all the fervor of brotherly devotion, "that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment" (Phil. 1:9). These words are tremendously significant: "that your love may abound yet more and more." It is not a soft, sentimental love but a love that teaches, develops, disciplines and directs. It is love that finds its fruition in "knowledge," the knowledge of God; and "in all judgment." This judgment is literally "insight," spiritual discernment, the application of

knowledge. Factual information is not enough; the knowledge of God must be applied to our everyday lives.

Then Paul continues: "That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ" (Phil. 1:10). Here is the purpose and direction of true love, "that ye may approve things that are excellent." "Approve" involves the idea of testing, or proving, for the purpose of approving. It was used in the New Testament times of testing metals and coins to determine those which came up to proper standards.

But notice what the Philippians were to approve: "Things that are excellent." The word translated "excellent" means literally "things that really matter, things that matter most." Here we find our topic for today: Priorities; things that matter most. Paul did not want his brethren absorbed in every passing interest; he wanted them seeking and doing the "things that really matter." And there is yet another thought built into these words. Paul did not want them absorbed merely with distinguishing good from evil; he wanted them to know the difference between what is good and what is *best*. He knew the danger of getting absorbed with colorful nothings. He wanted them to seek "the things that matter *most*."

Here is the fact that makes priorities important. All things are not equal; even all *good* things are not equal. All interests and all goals are not equal. Some are far more beneficial, far more lasting, thus far more important—than others. It is our responsibility to learn to discern, to choose the *best*. We can sense quickly when people mistake temporal values, but do we sense it as easily in ourselves when we confuse our spiritual values, when we put second things first?

The story is told of a certain small-town dairy farmer who preferred to separate the cream from his milk and use it to make butter, rather than to sell the whole milk at the neighborhood dairy, as most farmers were doing. A neighbor, thinking of the great amount of work involved in separating the milk and then churning the butter, and the relatively low market value of the butter, suggested that the family could do better by shipping the whole milk, and save all that work. The farmer agreed that it was a good suggestion, but his wife declared it unacceptable—the reason, "What would we do with the *churn*?"

We marvel at such misplaced values. But how much more seriously do *we* lose when we let go an eternal advantage for some small thing of

the present. It is all a matter of setting up right values and putting first things first.

What comes first in your life—in mine? We would all like to answer that "growing spiritually" is on top. But lest we deceive ourselves, let us ask ourselves three questions:

1. *What do I think about—especially when relaxing?*

The things we think about are usually the things which are nearest our hearts and most important to us. They tend to be the priority issues in our lives.

2. *How do I spend my time, especially time that is not committed to definite activity?*

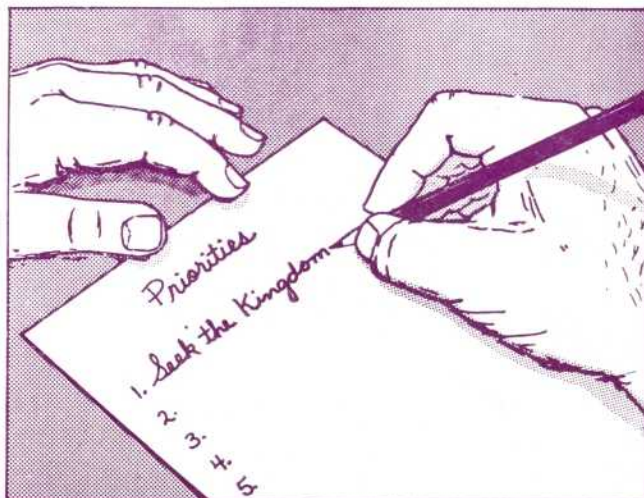
To some extent our time is not our own. Most of us have to work, and there must be time for sleeping and eating. But this is not *all* our time. Do we know how to get the very most out of the remainder—in terms of spiritual improvement?

3. *What do I long for—what do I really love? Comfort, pleasure, convenience, ease—or righteousness, purity, holiness, life? In other words, what am I seeking, the things of this world or those of the world to come?*

These questions honestly answered will tell us much about our priorities. Oh, let us be honest with ourselves—it is a matter of our eternal destiny.

The thought of waste is abhorrent to us. Wasted money, wasted resources, wasted energy—we hate even the thought. But what of wasted time—which is really wasted *life*! Is not this the worst waste of all?

Most of us would declare positively that we are not wasting our lives. But have we considered that putting second things first is really waste—a waste of our prime energies, which are ours only once and which should be given to things that matter *most*? Are there not bits of time here



and there which we can redeem and use for real spiritual invigoration?

Jesus Teaches Priorities

From the familiar life-incident recorded in Luke 10 we may draw an impressive lesson, we who—like Martha—are tempted to confuse our priorities. Martha “was distracted by her many tasks” and could not understand how Mary could spend so much time conversing with Jesus. The answer Jesus gave states the relative value of the choices: “Martha, Martha, you are fretting and fussing about so many things; but one thing is necessary; the part that Mary has chosen is best; and it shall not be taken away from her” (Luke 10:38-42, NEB). What Mary had put first was something that could not be taken from her. Mary had chosen that which would last—that made all the difference.

The lesson is for us. Houses, lands, family, positions, securities, comforts in this world can all vanish in a night. How much are we investing in those things that cannot be taken away?

Jesus devoted a large portion of His very first

sermon to the discussion of priorities. He wanted us to know that some things in life matter very much more than others. Let us read a few passages from Matthew 6 from the Jerusalem Bible: “Do not store up treasures for yourselves on earth, where moths and woodworms destroy them and thieves can break in and steal” (v. 19). Notice the selfish motivation—storing up “treasures for yourselves.” This is the wrong first interest. Why? Not because it is wrong to want something for ourselves, but because we choose the things of earth, things which cannot last, things which are subject to moths, rust, and the processes of decay. What does Jesus recommend? “Store up treasures for yourselves in heaven, where neither moth nor woodworms destroy them, and thieves cannot break in and steal.” This “storing up” is right—because it is *heavenly* treasure, treasure which will endure.

Any value which will not endure the test of time is not true value and is not worthy of our heart’s affections; this is Jesus’ message. We might give first priority to family, wealth, business, or pleasure; but how long can we enjoy it? In the ordinary management of life, it is simple

Let Us Pray . . .

Heavenly Father, grant us the grace to worship Thee in spirit and in truth. Thou hast so made us that the glory of our lives is not in things below us that we master, but in the divine above us that masters us. We are elevated by our admiring; we are enriched by our reverence. Grant us an hour of such spiritual wealth, made aware of eternal realities, captured by a vision of a Christlike life and its results, lifted out of our littleness by dedication to abiding values and to Thine everlasting purpose.

Cleanse us from our evils—our ugly egotism, our indifferent apathy, our low ambitions, our sinful lusts—that we may be ready for this transforming experience. Grant us honesty in confronting and confessing our sins, sincerity in making restitution where we have wronged others, humility in seeking Thy forgiveness, and resolution by Thy grace and help to amend our lives.

From a troubled world we come into Thy sanctuary. Here we pray for an hour of spiritual insight that, with thankful hearts, we may see afresh the light which shines brighter and brighter unto that perfect day. For the heritage

of the Christian gospel and the hope that it provides, we thank Thee. For the noble procession of the seers and prophets; for Christ, Thy Son, who hast promised us a kingdom that cannot be shaken; for living friends who renew our faith in goodness and beauty, integrity and love; and for Thee, O God, because of whom our human life need not be a drifting raft, but a ship with a course, a compass, a captain, and a destination—we thank Thee. Marshal within us in these momentous times such resources of Thy spirit, that we will be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

Merciful Father, grant that in all things whatsoever we undertake to do, we may do it to Thy glory and the profit of others. Grant also, that we bestow not so much thought and travail in purchasing those things which pertain to the necessities and comforts of this life that in the meantime we neglect and sluggishly regard heavenly things. May we keep our priorities right, making the seeking of Thy Kingdom the first and foremost quest of our lives.

Warn us of the folly of putting second things first, or of promoting the things that matter least at the expense of the things that matter most, but may we always keep our heart’s affection centered on things above. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

wisdom to buy merchandise that will last, which has quality and permanence. This is what Jesus would have us do: Concentrate on securing those riches that will stand the test of time.

"Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life"—do not be anxious about your life—"what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?" (Matt. 6:25). Jesus is not advocating a shiftless, thriftless, thoughtless attitude toward life. He does not say we are not to go to work and earn our daily bread; but we are to keep our priorities right. Even while we are engaged in temporal work, we can often be living in another world of thought, dwelling with the infinite, as it were; even in the lowliest places of life, we can be laying up treasure in heaven. We can—if our priorities are right.

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33). A lens cannot have two focal points. The universe cannot have two First Causes. A country cannot have two prime ministers. This was demonstrated in ancient Rome when after a bad experience with dictatorship they decided that two heads would be safer—one could restrain the other. But it was only a matter of months and they were back to one ruler—there was not room at the top for two. Neither is there room for two dictators at the top of our lives. Christ can have no rival; where He sits, He will rule, or He will not sit.

Second Things First?

Jesus set the right standard, and we know it is right. But we also know ourselves and our strong instinct to put second things first. It is somewhat ironic that the activities of life which are most crucial to the obtaining of our goal to its eternal dimension are often the events we find it most convenient to put off. Taking time to pray and meditate, for example—we know we should do more of it, but right now we must respond to the demands of this world. Someday we will have more time. There are portions of the Bible which we know would be refreshing and spiritually strengthening to review, or even to commit to memory; but that can be done tomorrow, or next week; right now the house must be cleaned, or the garden weeded, or that special project that has been waiting for months, or—or. We will have more time to give to the spiritual disciplines of life some other time. And

so we rationalize that next week, or next month, or next year we will begin more seriously the task of rebuilding our souls.

Oh let us not undervalue the gravity of this problem. It is yours, it is mine, and time is limited.

So many interests clamor for our attention, so many duties require our time. How shall we decide which should come first? Someone has suggested that we divide them into two groups—the "God-wants-me-to's" and the "I really-want-to's." In other words, we should ask, What does *God* prefer that I do? What does *He* consider most important? It is just possible that something very important to *me* may not be nearly so important to Him; and isn't our *first* duty to please *Him*?

The world is full of smallness, which God abhors, and which may easily entangle us. Small goals and small interests lie very naturally in our hearts. Then, too, it is so easy to set up our own goals in this world and work ardently to achieve them—and at best are they not exceedingly small compared to the great things God has offered?

Then, too, there are those small distractions of everyday that can so easily take too much of our time and heart. Words that do not upbuild; thoughts that do not strengthen; petty absorptions that yield no lasting good—couldn't all these be completely eliminated from our crowded time budget and with great spiritual gain? Oh, how easily we may be overcome with smallness!

A missionary serving in a foreign country was offered an executive position with an oil firm. Impressed by his obvious skills, some representatives of the company offered him a large salary, hoping to secure his services for the company. The missionary refused the offer; so the firm increased the salary. When the missionary refused again, the officials of the firm were amazed. What could the young man want? Was the pay *still* too small? "No," the missionary responded thoughtfully, "it isn't the *pay* that's too small. It's the *job*."

Oh the greatness of the goals to which we have been called! Does not the thought of them make everything of this world seem so small? This is the point we need to remember, if we would keep our priorities right. We must beware of becoming so involved in our small interests that we "cannot see the forest for the trees." We need to keep asking what is the *purpose* in our work, our activities, our life. Where is it all tending? Mere busyness is fruitless.

What Is Prior?

What are the activities and interests which should rightly claim priority in our lives? Let us take our first from Paul's advice to his son-in-the-faith Timothy. The aged apostle, in prison for the last time and aware that his remaining life might be very short, was trying to think of the most pertinent encouragement and advice he could leave. That advice is recorded in the Epistle of Second Timothy.

In this farewell Epistle, Paul reminds Timothy that already the mystery of iniquity was working its deadly work, and that it would continue. He tells him also how hard times were going to be in the last days. There would arise false teachers whose avowed purpose would be deception.

But through it all was a spiritual challenge to Timothy. Whatever came, he could keep himself pure; he could keep himself committed to his high calling and pressing on toward the goal. How could he do it? Paul wrote, "Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (II Tim. 3:14-15).

Paul urged Timothy to continue in the Word. And so should we do today. That should be our top priority. Continue. Do more and more of those good things you are doing the most of. Keep doing them. As you see others fall away and as society sinks further and further into spiritual depression, take your stand for God and grow stronger.

What is the great source of this strength? It is the Scriptures. Paul stressed that it was the Scriptures which had given Timothy his faith; it was the Scriptures that would make him wise concerning salvation (v. 15). It was the Scriptures he should keep continually in mind. Paul was pointing out not only Timothy's lifeline but ours also. In the Word of God we have the key to everything that lies beyond. If we allow this to be crowded out of our lives, what have we left?

Priority Studying

Again in II Timothy 2, Paul urged his son to submerge himself in the Scriptures. Nothing else was so important. "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (v. 15). And Paul did not write this to Timothy because Timothy was newly converted or learning

these things for the first time. Timothy was well-established. From a child he had been taught. Now he was the leader of the church in Ephesus; *still* he should give priority to strengthening himself in the Word of God. Still he should continue learning, meditating, reading, studying, absorbing himself in its truths. If Timothy needed such advice, how much more do *we*, we who have not had the companionship of the apostle Paul, we who have not felt the power of the Holy Spirit in us, we who have not heard and seen all that Timothy was privileged to hear and see. A knowledge of God's Word, a constant dwelling with it and in it is absolutely essential if we would have a faith that will endure to the end. We must study, we must lay up more and more of those thoughts that will build faith and courage in our souls, which will put iron in our blood and holy fire in our hearts. We must, lest we in this last late hour, grow cold.

Priority Thinking

Then there are priorities confronting us as we strive to deal with the complexities of our thoughts. The mind is in constant motion every waking moment of our days, and to control its wanderings will require a supervigilance and a lively exercise of our priorities. We may be aware of many things that are said, or that go on around us; but we do not have to dwell upon them; we do not have to go over and over them in our minds; but how easily we do this. It is because our priorities are not right. Isn't it possible to have our minds so concentrated on the important issues of life that lesser thoughts will be immediately crowded out by thoughts that elevate and purify?

Priority Reading

Priorities also confront us in the things we allow ourselves to read. Into what category of importance does each item fall? Would we change occasionally if we knew Jesus were standing behind us, looking over our shoulder? What we feed our minds is of primary importance. Do we allow ourselves "light" reading when we feel a need for "diversion"—when we could be strengthening ourselves in our most holy faith? Do we devote as much of our free time as possible to reading that which will spur us on to holier living and a deeper understanding of the wonderful things of God? It is all a matter of priorities; we *do* find time for the things we really want

to read. The choice is ours, again and again; oh let us choose wisely.

Priority Praying

There is another priority we should build into our lives—our need for frequent and earnest prayer. I wonder, do we avail ourselves of this blessed privilege as we should? Are we really aware of the tremendous benefits we can derive from communing with our heavenly Father? Is He to us what He was to Jesus—a Father, friend, strength and solace in every time of need? Do we take our burdens, our sorrow for repeated mistakes, our hopes, and our triumphs all to Him in prayer? He will hear, He will answer, if we are in earnest, if we are seeking according to His will. And He will give as He knows is best for us. And let us never forget to listen to that soft, firm voice of an educated conscience which sometimes knows better than our willful determination. Remember the promise of God, "If in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you" (Phil. 3:15). Let us remember, and listen.

Set A Goal

We will find it helpful in our Christian lives to set up definite goals for ourselves. If we do not, we will find ourselves careless in the use of our time and easily swayed by passing events. It may even be helpful to set up long-range, mid-range and near targets. Well-defined, clearly pictured goals give real impetus to progress.

What is our long-range goal? We who have pledged ourselves to God will answer that it is eternal life in Christ's Kingdom. We picture ourselves among the saints, redeemed from the problems of mortality, free to enjoy forever the glorious liberty of the sons and daughters of God; this is our supreme goal.

But this goal is not achieved in a moment, nor is an acceptable character developed overnight. So we need to set up mid-range goals, goals we can reasonably achieve in a space of a month, or two, six months or a year. It might be the controlling of our tendency to become discouraged, to doubt, to criticize, or to complain. It might be the maintaining of a steady, buoyant disposition and a strong, abiding faith. It might be the patient enduring of one who sorely tries us, whose personality does not suit us, or whose mannerisms distress us. The first step to these mid-range victories is to become conscious of

each approaching temptation—so we can mentally fortify ourselves.

But even such goals are too long-ranged for marking maximum *daily* progress. We also need near targets which we can aim at today and with God's help can *strike*—or missing, chide ourselves severely and try again tomorrow. It is these near targets that assure our long-range success, for "The goal is not reached at a single bound; but we build the ladder by which we climb, From the things of earth to the heights sublime, and we mount to the summit round by round." The harsh word we hold within our lips today, the unkind reaction we restrain, the bitterness we subdue, the anger we silence, the pride we swallow, the sensitive feeling we overpower—these are near targets we can make any day, if such be our determination—and which will assure our long-range success. Each morning we should set up our goals for that day—more patience, more self-control, more kindness, more consciousness of our thoughts, more long-suffering with others, more sympathetic understanding of another's struggles; we should resolve to be more pliable, more submissive, more firm in the face of temptation, more temperate, more full of faith. And we should be the more conscious of our example to others. We should be constantly asking ourselves, Will this or that help me and all those within my sphere of influence *toward the Kingdom*? Will my attitude inspire faith and courage in those around me? Being mindful of these things will help to keep us concentrating on the things that matter most.

What Shall It Profit?

And now let us ask, what shall we gain by all this effort? What shall we gain by concerning ourselves so much with our priorities? Jesus our

(Continued on page 16)

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Where Happiness?

TRUE HAPPINESS may be rare in this world, but it is the priceless possession of all who bear the reality of the Christian hope. "Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help," wrote the sweet singer of Israel, "whose hope is in the Lord his God." There is nothing in this life to produce such happiness; to understand it we must look forward, beyond the present to the eternal future God has promised to them that love Him.

Happiness is part of the hundredfold we receive now when we place our confidence in the trust of the mighty God of heaven. There is no happiness and security in pursuing our own ways. Happiness is the result of sacrifice and surrender to God.

Having established a purpose in life, we possess all the necessary ingredients to combine into happiness. But we will never have it until we have given our all to it. If we are reserving part for the flesh, if we are dividing our loyalty between two interests, we cannot enjoy the fruits of peace and happiness. But as we battle successfully against the evils of our nature, our happiness will increase.

In the tenth century the culminating figure of the proud dynasty of Umayyad, known as Abder Rahman III, ruled in Spain. (This is probably an unheard-of family in an unknown age, so far as most of us are concerned; such is worldly honor.) At the end of his long life he wrote what has been called a "moderate estimate of human life." He said, "I have now reigned above fifty years in victory or peace. . . . Riches and honors, powers and pleasures, have waited on my call; nor does any earthly blessing appear to have been wanting to my felicity. In this situation I have diligently numbered the days of pure and genuine happiness which have fallen to my lot. They amount to fourteen."

This monarch had everything known to human felicity and comfort during fifty years of peace or victory, and yet knew only fourteen

days of happiness! He then concluded his ruminating with this advice: "O man! place not thy confidence in this present world."

How vital that we who profess the name of Christ, who have before us a definite purpose and goal, keep renewing our determination that we *will* obtain it, lest we miss the happiness our knowledge can impart—now and in the future.

"More holiness, more happiness" is a motto fulfilled in the life of every true Christian. The more we grow in holiness, the happier we become. "Happy is the man whom God correcteth." God's correction brings happiness. "Happy is everyone who reveres the Eternal, who lives His life!" If we are living our life in reverence for the Eternal, we will be happy.

Only strict obedience to God's law can bring us lasting, genuine happiness. Though in an unbelieving, scoffing, fearful world, we can be happy. "Rejoice and be exceeding glad." Great will be our reward if we complete our work.

Are you happy? Is your life aglow with spirituality? Is mine? Are we growing in holiness? Now is the only time we will ever have to add to our store of faith and good works. The more virtue we add to our lives, the more happiness we add. God offers "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" to you and me if we will give our all—all our own ways, our pride, our anger, our jealousy, our sensitiveness, our foolishness. As we lay aside each evil our path will grow brighter and brighter, and we will grow happier and happier until someday God rewards us with Life!

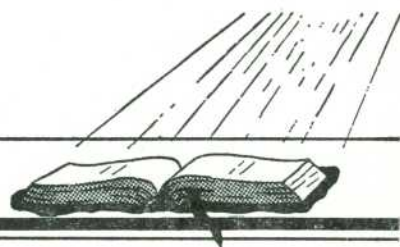
*The more of prayer I cultivate
The more kind seeds I sow,
The more of self I put away,
The happier I grow.*

*More gentleness, more prayerfulness,
I'll live my life for Thee.
More watchfulness, more carefulness,
Brings happiness to me.*

*More humbleness, more willingness,
And thankfulness to Thee;
The more I grow in holiness,
The happier I'll be.*

If we cultivate our faith, it will bud into promise and blossom into fruits of eternal holiness and happiness which our King will rejoice to recompense eternally. ●●

BIBLE STUDY HOUR



The Christian's Hope

PROBABLY there is no emotion more common to man than hope. Life void of all hope would be depressing and not to be desired. For us who live in affluent America it is difficult to realize that in our modern world there is so much of hopelessness. Thousands in the Far East, driven from their homes by the ravages of war, face certain death from starvation, their hopes shattered by enemy guns. Even in our own land, many have lost hope, realizing that our nation's problems are not to be solved by man.

Question. Is the Christian affected by this feeling of hopelessness?

Answer. No, because the Christian's hope does not rest with man. Many of the early Christians faced death at the hands of their persecutors, but they did not lose hope knowing that their enemies could take only their mortal life. The true Christian's hope is sufficient to enable him to see beyond the troubles of today.

Q. How could we describe this hope?

A. The Christian's hope is more than wishful thinking, more than a desire for something better. It is the expectation of obtaining something beyond this life, a promise from God of a future life.

Q. Yes. Man says, "Where there is life, there is hope." But God says there is hope beyond life as we know it. Can we have proof for this from the Bible?

A. Paul plainly stated that he had such a hope. He wrote Titus as "A servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness; in hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised. . ." (Tit. 1:1-2).

Q. That shows that this hope is more than a fanciful dream; it is a part of God's Truth. One of the other apostles also spoke of it as a promise. Who?

A. That was John. "And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life" (I John 2:25).

Q. Paul said in his letter to the Romans that "we are saved by hope." What did he mean by that? Are we saved now because we have this hope?

A. No, but this hope buoys us up to endure the trials of everyday life, to do what is necessary to obtain this salvation. Other newer translations make that passage clearer. I would like to read it from the Jerusalem Bible: "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).

From our Common Version we might get the idea that we are already saved, but newer translations such as this make it plain that salvation is not a present possession but something yet future.

Q. Yes, it is as Jesus taught, "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Matt. 24:13). Our hope is that we shall be saved, not that we are saved already.

What part does Jesus Christ play in the hope of the Christian?

A. It is in the hope of a resurrection. The resurrection of Jesus was God's seal on our hope. Paul pictured it vividly in his resurrection sermon: "If there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith [or hope] is also vain. . . . But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. . . . Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming" (I Cor. 15:13-23).

It is also through His return that we will realize our hope. All hope of a future life is tied to Christ's second coming.

Q. What did Peter have to say about this hope? Is it a dead thing?

A. No, he called it a lively hope. It became a living thing through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Q. Could we have I Peter 1:3-5 from the New English Bible?

A. "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in his great mercy gave us new birth into a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead! The inheritance to which we are born is one that nothing can destroy or spoil or wither. It is kept for you in heaven, and you, because you put your faith in God, are under the protection of his power until salvation comes—the salvation which is even now in readiness and will be revealed at the end of the time."

Q. Why is our inheritance or our hope said to be kept for us in heaven? We understand that we are not going to heaven—Jesus said we were not.

A. Christ is in heaven with the Father, and our hope or reward is with Him. He has promised to bring it to us at His coming.

"Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be" (Rev. 22:12).

"For our [citizenship] is in heaven; from which also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our [lowly] body, that it may be fashioned like his glorious body" (Phil. 3:20-21, Scofield). We cannot receive our reward until He comes and brings it to us.

Q. Some of God's faithful servants entertained this hope long before Christ. Can we mention a few?

A. It was the hope of David, the Psalmist: "But God will redeem my soul [me] from the power of the grave: for he shall receive me" (Ps. 49:15).

It was also Job's hope: "For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another" (Job 19:25-27).

It was the hope of Isaiah: "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise" (Isa. 26:19).

Q. The prophets understood God's plan and knew that their hope lay in a resurrection from the dead. How could they know that the prospect was sure?

A. God Himself is behind it. In the time of the prophets, God revealed Himself to men openly; now We know Him through His written Word.

"Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption" (Ps. 130:7).

"Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his

help, whose hope is in the Lord his God" (Ps. 146:5).

Jeremiah speaking for God, said, "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is" (Jer. 17:7); but "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord" (v. 5).

Q. The Hebrew word translated "hope" had different shades of meaning. "Trust" was one of those meanings, and this verse illustrates it well. It also carried the meaning of "security." Could we have an example of this?

A. It meant security to Job. "And thou shalt be secure, because there is hope; yea, thou shalt dig about thee, and thou shalt take thy rest in safety" (Job 11:18). But we do not have this security unless we do something on our part, for he said in verse 14, "If iniquity be in thine hand, put it far away, and let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacles."

Q. Yes, we will not be secure until we have put away all evil.

Hope also had the meaning of "refuge" in the Hebrew. Can we think of an example of this meaning?

A. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Ps. 46:1). If He is our hope, He will also be our refuge in trouble.

Q. There is a verse that would indicate this—one that concerns Christ's Second Advent.

A. Is it Joel 3:16? "The Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the Lord will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel."

Our hope will be our refuge from that great time of trouble when Christ returns. But unless we honor Him now by keeping His commandments, we cannot have His protection then.

Q. There is something in the New Testament about this hope being a refuge—and more, something that holds us.

A. The writer to the Hebrews called it an anchor of the soul. "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, . . . in which it was impossible for God to lie, [that] we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast" (Heb. 6:17-19).

Q. That verse is clearer in the newer translations. I will read it from the New English Bible: "And so God, desiring to show even more clearly to the heirs of his promise how unchanging was his purpose, guaranteed it by oath. Here, then, are two irrevocable acts in which God could not possibly play us false, to give powerful encouragement to us, who have claimed his protection by grasping the hope set before us. That hope we hold. It is like an anchor for our lives, an anchor safe and sure."

We have had much about this hope, but how do we get it?

A. We get it by reading and studying His Word. "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" (Rom. 15:4).

We accept His promises by faith, and faith gives us hope. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. . . . But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb. 11:1, 6).

This faith comes from the Word, as Paul said: "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God"; or as it is rendered in the New English Bible, "Faith is awakened by the message, and the message that awakens it comes through the word of Christ" (Rom. 10:17).

Q. If we have this hope, will we be sad and long-faced about it?

A. No, we will be rejoicing in it. Paul said we "rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed" (Rom. 5:2-4).

Paul listed "Rejoicing in hope" as a Christian characteristic in Romans 12. We too should rejoice that we know the way to gain eternal life.

Q. What do men naturally take joy in?

A. Prosperity, their families, their homes, their temporal possessions.

Q. Yes, but the Christian rejoices in his hope in the future. He is not denied the other things, but they must take second place. Jesus said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33).

Do we have any proof that Jesus Himself rejoiced in hope?

A. Yes. The writer to the Hebrews described Him

as "the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12:2). It was the joy that He knew would be His that enabled Him to endure that horrible death on the cross.

Q. And it is the same prospect of a resurrection that enables us to endure the little trials of every day.

Just what does this hope consist of?

A. Immortality, eternal life, riches, honor, long life—everything else that goes with it!

Q. Can we have Scripture to prove it?

A. "My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments: for length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee" (Prov. 3:1-2). In this same chapter wisdom is pictured as holding in her right hand length of days, and in her left, riches and honor. Only the wisdom of God can bestow such gifts.

Paul said that eternal life is for those "who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality" (Rom. 2:7). We will never realize our hope unless we work for it.

Q. That is right. Our hope will never be fulfilled except through our own efforts. What did the apostle John say everyone that has this hope will do?

A. "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he [Christ] is pure" (I John 3:3). In the previous verse he said, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

Q. It is certain that no unworthy person will ever be made like Him, made immortal. If we expect to be given a body like His at His coming, we must now purify ourselves from all sin. We must become pure in heart.

We have mentioned the hope of John and Paul. What about the hope of another apostle?

A. You mean Peter. His Epistles have been called "Epistles of Hope." His was a living hope, for he had seen the risen Lord. He knew for a certainty that there was hope of a resurrection and he was willing to devote all his energy to obtaining it. Like Paul, he was "rejoicing in hope."

Q. We have not seen the risen Lord. What do we have to bolster our hope?

A. We have the written Word which they did not have, and we have much fulfilled prophecy.

When we can read so many prophecies and see their fulfillment (some in the Bible, others in history) we can know that those that have not yet been fulfilled will be fulfilled. God's Kingdom, with Christ as King, was prophesied more than any other event in the Bible. God's Word cannot fail; we know Christ will return and the Kingdom will come.

Q. Other promises of God should also serve to increase our faith and reinforce our hope. Can we mention a few?

A. "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them" (Ps. 34: 7). Knowing this should help us to endure to see our hope fulfilled.

We have the promise of physical vigor unlimited. "But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint" (Isa. 40:31). We would all like to escape the physical decline that comes with old age and such a prospect should thrill us.

If worthy, we are promised the earth as an everlasting possession. "The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever" (Ps. 37:29). Such a promise should enable us to "hold fast [our] confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end" (Heb. 3:6b).

In these days of worldwide strife, the promise of an end to war and strife between nations should excite us. The promise is that "nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Isa. 2:4b).

The Christian's hope is truly great—and best of all, it is sure. ••

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Priorities--Right or Wrong?

(Continued from page 11)

future King supplies the answer: We shall live when "God shall wipe away all tears . . . there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain" (Rev. 21: 3, 4). And best of all is this assuring statement: "Write, for these words are true and faithful." There is no question what we shall gain by giving up the lesser. Now we can dream of what it will be to be there. But oh, what will the reality be! Try losing yourself in the thoughts of the future. Visualize yourself there, with this weary day of probation ended forever in a grand and glorious eternal joy and pleasure. Let this priority thinking gain control, and see how much fuller and richer is life even now. Try to comprehend, if you can, an eternal future that will be "exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think." The words are so familiar, let us not miss their meaning. "Exceeding, abundantly above all that we ask or think." It is the homeland where "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).

With so many benefits that can be ours for accepting the challenge of priorities, for putting first things first during this little time, why are we so slow to make the effort? Why are we so slow to let go the things which we know will end in death? Much of the answer lies in our unconverted tastes. We have too much love for the things which do not matter, too much interest, too much desire for perishing Babylon. Oh let us sever it. Let us set our minds to thinking on things that will last, things that will grow more brilliant and glorious as the years of eternity pass; then the things of here and now will grow less and less.

The currency of time can purchase for us the riches of eternity—if we will only use it wisely. Should it then be too difficult to keep our priorities right, to use what God has given as He has directed, so that we may some day inherit His greatest and *everlasting* blessings? ••

Heavenly love makes all things new! It changes duty into delight and statutes into song. It adds the light of heaven and the earthly is transfigured. Love lights everything, for she is the light of life. Let her dwell in thy soul and every room in thy life shall be filled with the glory of the Lord.

Kathy
Kandor's
Korner

Don't Peck!

BREND A, when you think I'm doing something amiss or if I do something that irritates you, please come to *me* and not go talking about me to those Simpson girls down the street!"

I was alarmed at the ice that fringed Janet's voice as she addressed her sister.

I couldn't hear Brenda's reply, but I knew she was justifying her actions from the tone of her voice. And whatever she said, Janet was not accepting it.

"You and those Simpson girls"—Janet's voice was still frigid—"you're always 'pecking' at people, just like they didn't have any feelings at all. You try to find all the fault you can, and— and then you spread it. Just plain gossip, if you ask me."

The discussion ended abruptly as they heard my step on the stairs.

I must confess Neal and I were very much concerned over the latest development in our home. Brenda and Karl exchanged bits of news they heard at their places of employment. When not hindered, they hashed and rehashed all the ins and outs of other people's affairs. Then, too, Kenneth, Janet and Keith persisted in bringing home from school what they felt were juicy tidbits which really added up to more gossip. As a result, they were not only discussing the affairs of others but were becoming increasingly critical of each other.

Now Janet dubbed it "pecking."

I had time for only a few words with Neal before we gathered for our evening Bible time. But Neal understood the problem.

"Instead of our usual Bible reading and study this evening," began Neal as he seated himself in his recliner, "we will have a story. A story with an object lesson."

"Good!" exclaimed Keith, leaning forward

eagerly. Kenneth settled himself on the floor beside his brother with an expression of "Here we go again" on his face. Janet and Brenda both busied their hands in their knitting.

"As you know, I was raised on a farm in North Rose. Well, let me tell you a story that really happened on the farm.

"Now my mother and father did not own the farm. We just worked for the farmer who did. It was my job to feed and water the chickens. My brothers and I were not overly fond of this task, but we did it—every day until I was a young man.

"I learned many things from the farm animals, and one of the things that I remember best was about the chickens. One day I went down to the chicken pens to feed the chicks, and I noticed that one of the fat old white hens had a tiny sore on the top of her head. I didn't know what to do for the hen and it didn't look too bad, so I fed them, gave them fresh water, and went on to the house.

"The next day when I went back to the pens, the hen had a larger sore on her head. It looked as if it had been bleeding just before I arrived. I thought I should mention it to the owner, but I did not see him that afternoon, and after all, it wasn't too bad.

"A day or two more passed, and one afternoon while I was pumping the troughs full of water, I saw one of the other chickens jump on the old white hen and peck at her head. That chicken left and went over to the other side of the yard. A few minutes went by, and another chicken jumped on the white hen. To my surprise, she, too, pecked on the top of her head. Well, that old hen's head was bleeding and she was scratching around cackling and squawking at the top of her lungs. I shooed the chickens away from the hen and went about my feeding. Before I left, one or two more chickens came at the old hen. I could not stay there and drive them away, so I went to the farmer's house and told him what was happening in the barnyard.

"'Son,' he said to me, 'that's the way them chickens are. They kind of remind me of human beings at times.' I couldn't understand what he meant, and said so.

"The wise old farmer looked at me and smiled. 'I don't mean the human beings literally peck at each other, but they *do* peck just the same.' I was eager to find out what he was talking about, so I asked for more explanation.

"He told me that boys and girls, men and women were bad gossipers—gossiping about each other's faults, misfortunes, or whatever. He said as soon as they saw one little thing not quite what

they felt was right, they would tell it to someone else and it would get bigger and bigger and before long, the injured person would be terribly wounded. He knew of folks who had lost their jobs, families and reputations because some one 'pecked' on them. At the time, I still wasn't completely sure of what the farmer was trying to tell me, but as I grew older, I saw what he meant.

"The fat old hen died about a week later because the other chickens kept on pecking at what was once just a tiny little spot.

"I told my mother and father about what the farmer had said, and Father warned our family of the danger of 'pecking' at each other, our friends, and our neighbors. He let us know that if we should see a Christian brother or sister doing something we wondered about, or if we should be unhappy about anything, we should settle it in a Bible manner, and not start gossiping about it. He didn't want any 'pecking Christians' in our family."

Neal looked at each of us, and went on. "It seems to me that usually the folks who do the 'pecking' are the ones that have sores on them already. The Bible says, 'Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?' That would be like one person walking around with something like a telephone pole sticking out of his eye and trying to tell his friend that he had a tiny speck in *his* eye."

"That sounds funny," Keith remarked.

"It is—it's ridiculous, and it is something we should be careful about doing. We don't want to find *unnecessary* fault with others. If someone does something you don't like, think of the many good things he can do. If you feel you can help your friend, do it in a loving way according to what the Bible says. But whatever you do, don't peck! It is a good lesson to learn. Remember the fat old hen who was pecked to death by her neighbors."

When Neal stopped, the family was so quiet, you could have heard a pin drop. Brenda and Karl exchanged knowing looks. Keith and Janet both were staring blankly at the floor.

Neal cleared his throat and continued. "Mother and I feel that our family is developing a very destructive habit. Many of these little incidents would fall of their own weight if someone did not repeat the story. But we tell it, and it grows as it goes. We waste precious hours discussing things which are really none of our business and don't matter anyway."

"You're right," I replied to Neal after a

moment's hesitation. No one else said anything but I'm sure they all understood. At least, I've heard it several times since from the children themselves to one another. "Don't peck!" or, "There you go—peck-peck-peck-a-peck, peck-peck-peck-a-peck!" ●●

Look Up!

Look up, ye prisoners of hope,
Who on the summit long to stand;
There is no reason you should grope
In darkness, with an idle hand.
Above the Sun is shining bright,
Your steps to lighten with its rays;
And troubles quickly take their flight
If upward you will lift your gaze.

Look up! there's nothing from beneath
That strengthens you from sin to flee,
And no one there who can bequeath
To you the right of victory.
But from beneath will emanate
All that is low and base and vile,
With nothing to perpetuate
Your life beyond this little while.

'Tis from above that we receive
Sound wisdom, undefiled, and pure,
Which men of reason can believe
As something that will long endure.
'Tis from above that we receive
Encouragement to press the fight
Till we refuse to longer grieve
If things go wrong when doing right.

Look up, ye prisoners of hope,
With eyes upon yon mountain height,
And steadily ascend the slope
That leads from darkness into light.
Look up! and ever press ahead,
Until at last the course is run;
For those by higher motives led
Shall some day see the vict'ry won.

—L. L. S.

God's windings are never wasteful or purposeless. The apparent deviations are always gracious preparations. We are taken out of the way in order that we may the more quickly reach our end. The "short cut" is not always the finest road.

Found: The Key to Life

(Continued from page 5)

cause us to have willing hearts and hands, and put them to work performing the will of Him who has been so good to us.

Let us take another step forward from Noah's to Abraham's day, and see if we can trace this ancient gospel of salvation through righteousness onward through his day. Turn to Genesis 17:1. Here we find Abraham commanded, "Walk before me, and be thou perfect." This time the preacher was a holy angel direct from the high courts of heaven, and he prescribed as a basis of salvation a holy walk before God and a perfect character. The angel certainly is a good preacher to follow. And his first demand of Abraham was, "Walk." Do something. That something was to "walk before God and be perfect." We are distinctly told in the Epistle to the Galatians that "they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham" (Gal. 3:9). We ask what kind of a faith must we have in order to be blessed with faithful Abraham? Let James answer this question: "Wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only" (Jas. 2:20-21, 24).

Let us step forward to Moses's day, and see what message God sent by him to His people. Moses went up into the mount Sinai, and the Lord told him to say to the children of Israel: "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed and keep my covenant"—what did He say? They had something to do. "If ye will *obey* my voice indeed and *keep* my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation" (Ex. 19:5-6). And Moses proclaimed all these words to Israel, thus showing that obedience to the law of faith was pre-requisite to salvation and that a holy people will consummate the grand plan that God mapped out from the beginning.

Again we read in Deuteronomy 6, beginning at verse 4, "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart:

and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates. And thou shalt do that which is right and good in the sight of the Lord: that it may be well with thee. . . . And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always. . . . And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the Lord our God, as he hath commanded us" (Deut. 6:4-9, 18, 24-25).

There are too many such plain declarations throughout the teachings of Moses for us to call your attention to all of them. But what we have cited is quite sufficient to enable us to see that God was—as through Noah and Abraham—also declaring through Moses a doing of the commandments as essential to salvation. Hence, Moses was a preacher of righteousness. And throughout all his teachings the *doing* of the commandments of God is prominent and binding upon each one who would be saved.

When God had used Moses as His preacher of righteousness for forty years, He chose Joshua to be his successor and gave him the same gospel of righteousness to proclaim to those who would be fitted for salvation. Listen to the alarm bell of Jehovah as it sounds forth through the angel to Joshua to prepare him for the mighty work of leading the people: "Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest. This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein" (Josh. 1:7-8). What a charge, what a sounding of alarm. It fully demonstrates that God is the Author of the Book, and should not each of us listen with eagerness to catch every sound of this call to holiness? Joshua had not only to be mindful and to do all that was written, but he had to warn the people and teach them every word. This is just what Joshua did do, as we can see by reading Joshua 8:34-35, "There was not a word of all that Moses commanded which Joshua read not before all the

congregation." In this Joshua did as he was commanded, and the reason he was blessed was because he wholly followed the Lord. And this is the reason that Joshua, or any of his spiritual children, will be given the land of promise, because they wholly follow the Lord. Our chance of inheriting the earth is predicated upon *our* wholly following the Lord.

Just before Joshua's death, Joshua called all Israel, their elders, and their heads, and their judges, and their officers, and charged them "to be very courageous," to keep and do all that was written in the book of the law of Moses; that they turn not aside to the right or to the left. He told them also that if they did not take good heed and obey all that was written, God's anger would be kindled and they would be cursed and destroyed instead of saved and blessed. This declaration was made not only for the benefit of Joshua and those who lived in his day, but also for us.

See **Hannah** rejoicing in the Lord and consecrating herself and little Samuel to the Lord, rejoicing in God's salvation alone, saying that God is a God of knowledge and that by Him "actions are weighed." God chooses the poor of this world, rich in faith, and Hannah was not unfamiliar with this divine arrangement, for she said: "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory" (I Sam. 2:8). But what of those who do not keep the commandments of God? Listen: They shall be "silent in darkness, . . . the adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces."

Listen to **Samuel** as he preached righteousness to the people: "Samuel spake unto all . . . Israel saying, If ye do return unto the Lord with all your hearts, . . . and prepare your hearts . . . and serve him only, . . . he will deliver you." Samuel joins in with all who before him had feared the Lord and declares that we must seek the Lord and serve Him only to be delivered. No half-way work, but the whole heart must be wrapped up in serving the mighty and everlasting God. Turn to First Samuel 12 and read, "I will teach you the good and the right way. Only fear the Lord, and serve him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great things he hath done for you. But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed" (vs. 23-25). But alas! notwithstanding how very plain and emphatic God has spoken, how few believe that He will do just as He has said He will.

We must believe the word of the Lord and obey His commandments, or there will be no salvation for us. The curse will come as certainly as we disobey. God is indeed a God of knowledge, and by Him actions are weighed, and we shall receive just according to our doings. If we obey we shall get the most wonderful blessings; on the other hand, if we disobey, the curse will follow. No wonder we are told so many times to take heed to our every act, word and thought, lest a promise being left us of entering into His rest we come short of it (Heb. 4:1).

Did not **Samuel** say again, "To obey is better than sacrifice" (I Sam. 15:22)? Sooner or later all will know the truthfulness of this saying. "For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry" (v. 23), and if we reject the word of the Lord, He will certainly reject us when our actions are weighed in His balance.

This is the teaching of the entire Scriptures; only those who come up to the full weight, only those who do with all their heart every command of God, will be saved. A narrow way indeed. No wonder only eight were found in Noah's day; no wonder only a few in our day will be found doing with all their heart the things the Lord commands. But, beloved brethren, although there are but few, we may each be among that few, if we will keep the commandments; we each may be among that few and so have the right to enter celestial bliss in the bright forevermore. But in order to have this our happy eternal lot, we must devote our entire attention to the things of God and daily see that we are in reality walking as He has directed. No half-way work will do, but only a full surrender of our entire being, bringing every thought into subjection to the obedience of Christ.

We must not only be preachers of righteousness, we must be *doers* as well. Remember, it is the doers of the word that will be blessed in their deeds. Every doer of the word will be blessed, not only with endless life and happiness in the soon-coming day, but they will receive many additional blessings in this life. See how **Solomon** was blessed when he was following the Lord. Hear him preaching righteousness to the people: "Let your heart therefore be perfect with the Lord our God to walk in his statutes and to keep his commandments" (I Kings 8:61).

Hear **Elijah**, the only prophet of the Lord left in Israel, telling King Ahab that it was he and

his house that troubled Israel in forsaking the Lord. See how **Job** proclaimed righteousness as the basis of salvation. "If iniquity be in thine hand, put it far away, and let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacles. For then shalt thou lift up thy face without spot." "The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger" (Job 11:14; 17:9). Yes, a pure heart and clean hands are absolutely necessary to obtain that salvation that is full of joy and eternal glory.

See the **Psalms** all filled with declarations from God plainly setting forth the necessity of our devoting our entire attention to divine things, demanding pureness of heart and cleanness from sin in order to be saved. Observe the introductory paragraphs of the **Psalms**: "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night." God has not caused these words to be written in vain; but for us to seriously consider and see to it that we are really living out their implied meaning in our every-day life. When we walk contrary to God, we are walking in the counsel of the ungodly, and cannot claim God's blessing. The only way to have any lasting claim on His blessings is to cease to do evil and learn to do well (Isa. 1:16).

There is no way around it; we must do the law of God, and delight to do it. It will not do simply to pass along and sort of mechanically perform the work, but our whole soul must be thrown into it until it is our delight.

Think of being like a tree planted by a river of water, whose leaf shall *never* fade, and whatsoever we do will prosper. Then realize that this good time is indeed coming, it is nigh at hand. And then to know by actual experience that doing makes us more joyous even now—is it not enough to cause us to enter the vineyard of the Lord and work with earnestness? As we progress in this work, the task will grow easier and easier, and we shall experience one continuous season of sunshine in the soul and shall exclaim, "I delight to do thy will, O my God."

Hear the prophet **Ezekiel** sounding forth the same old ancient gospel of righteousness as the basis of salvation: "Walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances and do them, . . . and I will be their God. But as for them whose heart walketh after the heart of their detestable things. . . . I will

recompense their way upon their own heads, saith the Lord" (Ezek. 11:20-21). The Lord being the author of this, we can be sure He will bring it to pass, and the only way for us to escape is to cease having our own ways and turn to the Lord and do His ways with joyful and willing hearts.

Hear the prophet **Daniel** declaring that "the great and dreadful God" keepeth "covenant and mercy to them that love him, and . . . that keep his commandments." **Hosea** utters the same: "Therefore turn thou to thy God, keep mercy and judgment, and wait on thy God continually" (Hos. 12:6). But what about those who do not do this? "I will drive them out of mine house, I will love them no more, . . . my God will cast them away" (Hos. 9:15-17). Therefore, "who is wise, . . . he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein" (14:9).

Hear the prophet **Joel** declare: "Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, gather the people, sanctify the congregation" (Joel 2:15-16). **Amos** heralds forth the same message: "Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live; . . . hate the evil: and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate: . . . but let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream" (Amos 5:14-15, 24). **Jonah** adds: "Cry mightily unto God, yea, let them turn every one from his evil way."

Micah declares the same gospel of the Lord: "Do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly? . . . What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" And the prophet **Nahum** witnesses that the Lord "is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble, and he knoweth them that trust in him" (Nah. 1:7). **Habakkuk** also says, The Lord is of "purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity" (Hab. 1:13). **Zephaniah** adds the emphatic note of righteousness that God requires: "Seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth, . . . seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger" (Zeph. 2:3).

Zechariah adds: "Turn ye now from your evil ways" (1:4). And he also warns that if we do not hear God, the time will come when He will not hear us. The prophet **Malachi** unites his voice with all that have gone before and sends forth the same sound of salvation through righteous-

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SCRIPTURAL SPOTLIGHT

"For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"
—Mark 8:36

THERE is a strange fascination in the acquisition of power, or the possessing of great resources, or in adding to one's store of knowledge, or in achieving pre-eminence in one's line of pursuit that occupies all one's time and thought. Men applaud those who through devotion and sacrifice attain to altitudes far higher than the majority ever dream of striving for. It is well; indeed, what the world owes its men of genius, undaunted perseverance and faith only history will record; and even then there is much that will remain in obscurity and pass unrewarded from a material point of view.

But every attainment entails responsibility—with every advance there is a peril—the higher you climb the greater the risk of falling. And we are compelled to notice once again the fundamental laws of life: There can be no advancement without sacrifice; there can be no receiving without giving, no gain without loss. We must always pay the price, whether it be for efforts that will ennoble mankind, or for deeds that push the wheels of progress; whether for good or ill, the price must be paid, and paid at the time of the transaction. There is no discount in Nature's bookkeeping; every action is assessed at its face value and entered into the profit and loss account of each life.

But what is the result of all those entries? This is the point Jesus is stressing in our text. When all of life's losses and gains are tallied, "What shall it profit a man" if he has gained the whole world, if in the process he loses his own soul?

We are in the world as souls in the making. We are not mechanized units; we are here to choose what we shall do with the life that is ours. And everything we do or choose, each thought and act is registered in our book of character and reacts upon our personality, and helps

to mold and fashion us as our own soul extracts from the experience that which will either enrich or impoverish it. Hence the question that should be with us continually: "What shall it profit?"

If only we could realize our potential, we should have some concept of the grim tragedy portrayed in our text. A man climbing to the highest pinnacle of fame, or winning victory upon victory, or vanquishing every enemy, demolishing every obstacle, gaining the whole world—yet losing his own soul. He loses the one thing without which there is no value in achievement; for by every step of the way he has been exchanging the pearl of great price for false gems, selling his birthright for a mess of pottage, giving away his honor and integrity, trampling principle under foot in order to gain the whole world. And what does it profit when he finds that in the process he has lost his own soul? What shall it profit him if life ends in bankruptcy of the inner life?

Is not this one of the gravest warnings against the spirit of domination, against the glory of worldly ambition? What slight comparison is there between the grandeur of finding one's life in the Kingdom of God—and the utter penury of gaining the whole world now? It is the difference between total gain and total loss, for when life is gone, what is there to have?

When success in this world is the central thought of life, when gaining the whole world is man's concept of ultimate profit, the end product is bound to be impoverishment of the inner life, soul bankruptcy, and nothing beyond. This is why Jesus recommended rather, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33). This is the better way—to gain everything beyond, and have everything needful now, besides. ●●

Haste, Make Haste!

*Another day its course has run,
Another rise and set of sun;
Another lying down to sleep,
Another rising up to meet
Life's duties, which, from day to day
Do come and go along the way.*

*Another week, a month is past,
Another year is flying fast;
Soon will the century be gone,
Another cycle rolling on.
Old Time speeds onward with his scythe,
Reaping his harvest as he flies.*

*Remember, man of woman born,
Of strength and beauty soon is shorn,
Remember that his days are few,
And full of weary troubles too.
Like flowers that gratify the eye,
They grow and bloom and fade and die.*

*Remember, time is speeding on,
Remember all the past is gone,
Remember duties wait each day
And wisdom says "Make no delay."
Each passing moment well improve,
By duties done and deeds of love.*

*Remember that to God we owe
The blessings that so freely flow,
Remember His great love so free
To those who walk in purity.
The goodness and severity
Of God may well remembered be.*

*Remember Sodom's ancient story
Her wickedness, her boast and glory;
The high, the low (the fiat just)
Alike are moldering in the dust.
The fire of wrath no man could stay,
Destroyed forever in a day.*

*The lesson comes to you and me:
As falls the tree, so must it be;
Of life and strength forever shorn
No more shall fruit its boughs adorn.
A little space is left to run
And what we do must soon be done.*

*Heed not the heart's deceitful wiles
Heed not the tempter's luring smiles,
Heed not the worldling's look of scorn,
Heed well the voices now that warn
Of traps, and snares, and sinful lust,
Heed well the law of God most just.*

*Another year may not be ours
Another summer, with its flowers
May find us in a dreamless sleep
And true, or false, the angels keep
Our record, and the books will tell
How grew the tree, and how it fell.*

*Remember the cross we all must bear,
Remember the crown we all may wear;
Remember the glorious promised land,
The song of triumph, the anthem grand,
Remember no time is left to waste,
Remember the watchword,*

"Haste, make haste."

—Contributed

Real Freedom

FREEDOM—that is surely what the Kingdom holds for us. Freedom from everything earthly, freedom to develop to our best immortal potential.

Freedom—forever freedom! Freedom from pettiness and peevishness, from angers, and impatiences, and sicknesses, from fears and sorrows and disappointments, from inadequate conversations, from all the influences that draw our

senses away from God and toward the earth, from a decaying environment, from corrupt government and distrust of our fellowman. Freedom—from little things in order to be free for great things.

Freedom—for peace, for victory, for charity, for joy, for communion with angels, for eternal life, for a meeting with God Almighty.

"Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

—D. J., Michigan

Questions

"How is it possible for you to reckon a thing worked for, earned and deserved as a thing to be given you by 'grace'? Romans 4:4 says that it is not possible for a man to reckon a thing worked for as a thing of grace. In other words, one who works for justification by God will necessarily reckon justification by God as his rightful due ("of debt"), will he not?"

Romans 4:4 reads, "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt." What is Paul saying? Simply that when work is done, what is received is compensation for that work; when no work is done, what is received is given as a free bestowal. The religious world, believing that we are saved by nothing except to have faith in Him who did all for us, use this text to buttress their position. They contend that Paul is saying that justification comes by *not* working, *not* earning that reward. However, what is the particular *work* Paul is discussing? And what is the *justification*? Furthermore, what was the "faith" that "saved" or "justified" Abraham? Was it faith without any work or effort on Abraham's part?

We must read the context. In the early chapters of Romans, Paul is discussing the acceptance of the Gentiles into the faith, showing the Jews that they no longer had any special and singular privilege, that the keeping of their law would not save them, that all must accept the faith of Christ. "Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision [the natural-born Jews] by faith, and uncircumcision [the Gentiles] through faith" (Rom. 3:30).

If everything depended on keeping the law of Moses, how could Abraham have been justified? He lived before Moses nearly four hundred years. That is why Paul says, "If Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory, but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is

the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt." Abraham was not saved because he kept the laws of Moses but because of His faith in God—a faith which issued in obedience. What would God have done for Abraham had Abraham proved stubborn, rebellious, and disobedient? Can we imagine that he would still have been the "father of the faithful"?

The word "grace" is used in more than one way in Scripture, but nowhere does it have the theological concept of "unmerited favor." We live by God's grace; He gives us life and the things necessary to sustain it. We are called to be His sons and daughters by His grace; He calls us before we have done anything to merit that call; in these respects His "grace" may be said to be "unmerited." But the grace which saves is grace that teaches us "that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." This is the "grace" that we seek above all else. And it is a grace that tells us to *do* something.

In Romans 4, Paul is discussing the "works" of the Mosaic law. The Jews of his day had a hard time realizing that all their meticulous ritual would not avail to their salvation. They were not willing to believe that it was only a national law and ceased at the death of Christ. In Matthew 23: 4-5, Jesus commented on its worth: "For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do for to be seen of men." These are the "works" that Paul was referring to in Romans 4, as we read in verse 13, "For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law [the law of Moses], but through the righteousness of faith." The promise depended upon "righteousness of faith." The apostle James informs us that "Faith without works is dead" (James 2:17). God's command to Abraham was, "Walk before me, and be thou perfect" (Gen. 17: 1). It was on this basis that Abraham will receive God's promise. What then? Is the reward that is received a reward that has been "earned," as "of debt"? We know that it is not; whatever we are able to do—and *must* do—to qualify ourselves for that reward can in no way *earn* it. Eternal life is a recompense far beyond anything in any way "equivalent" to what we can do. Nevertheless, it will never be ours merely by our saying "I believe." Opportunity to qualify for it is ours wholly by God's grace; but we will never receive the reward unless we do qualify for it. ●●

Teaching

I saw Tomorrow marching by
On little children's feet;
Within their forms and faces read
Her prophecy complete.
I saw Tomorrow look at me
From little children's eyes;
And thought how carefully we'd teach
If we were really wise.

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ness in these words: "If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, saith the Lord of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you" (Mal. 2:1-3). With such a list of plain declarations from the unerring word of the Lord, how can we mistake the purpose of God to save only those who work righteousness?

In Summary

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter, and what is it? "Fear God, and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Eccl. 12:13-14). No other conclusion can we arrive at if we would testify to the truth contained in the Word of God. Righteousness is the only basis upon which salvation is promised.

What is this righteousness? It is the keeping of all the commandments of our God. They must all be kept if we would be found ready for approval at the soon-coming judgment. There every servant of God will render an account of what he has done; and however much we may try to cover up, nothing will be hidden then; even the secret things of the heart shall be made known.

We have noted a few of the prophetic writings of the Old Testament, and we find them to run in one channel, all speaking alike. Although these writers were scattered over a thousand-year period of time, yet they all from first to last sound forth in one grand concert of voices that salvation is by and only by remembering God's commandments to do them. This should carry conviction deep into our hearts and cause us to realize that it was God who impelled all those men to speak and write, inasmuch as all that they say is so in opposition to the ideas of men.

Only few will believe; only few will make their lives subservient to this wonderful cause to obtain the promises which our merciful Father has set before our mental vision. How few, but let us be bound that we are going to be of this few who will be found saying by every act, Lord, from this time on I will, I will be wholly Thine. My head to meditate upon Thy law day and night, my tongue to tell of Thy wondrous works, and to speak of Thy greatness all the day long; my hands to carry this blessed word to others, and my feet to be guided in the narrow way; all my affections to be set on things above and my heart filled with gratitude to Thee for Thy wonderful goodness to the children of men; all I have to spend and be spent to obtain for myself and others this richest of all blessings, life and everlasting glory in the world to come.

What a joy to give up all for! What a treasure to have our hearts set upon! What a joy to long after! What a pleasure to be anxious to obtain! What a life to live for! What a home to labor for! What wonderful glories to be enthused over, in glad anticipation of partaking of them so soon! What a company of stately ones to look forward to joining!

What a love, what a greeting, what a time that will be when the few who have been doing the things God has commanded will reach home in glory together to enjoy these blessings for evermore. And seeing that all of God's prophets, Jesus and the apostles have sounded forth the same ancient gospel of righteousness, let us take heed and see that we are daily bringing forth the fruits of righteousness, that we may be saved in the soon-coming day of the Lord.

Soon the Master will come and will He find us watching, ready, waiting for His appearance? A few will be ready; to such my heart goes out in a thousandfold of love, and I feel like pressing you to my heart and saying, Be of good cheer, we'll soon be home in glory where one shake of the hands will give us more joy and pleasure than a thousand worlds like this could ever afford.

Oh, mighty God, we earnestly pray Thee to bless and aid Thy loving, faithful ones to this end. Amen.

COMING NEXT ISSUE: *Evidence from the New Testament to show that God requires individual effort.*

Nothing is so strong as gentleness,
Nothing so gentle as real strength.

Our Readers Write...

In the Light

As prospective heirs of the future blessings, we above all people on the earth should be filled with extreme gratitude to God who has caused the light to shine out of darkness down here in these last days. How thankful we should be that the "light of the knowledge of God" now shines (II Cor. 4:6), thus giving us hope of obtaining that better life which will be revealed at the coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. He will reward us all according to our works, whether good or evil, so it behooves us as runners in this spiritual race, to make our calling and election sure.

As atrocities flow over the earth as a mighty stream, let us never neglect to thank God that we are still privileged to live in a free country where we can be an example of His great glory; and last, but not least, let us ask our kind merciful God to *keep* this country free. We being one spirit, it is our duty to come before His presence with "Thanksgiving" for all things in Christ Jesus, looking not on the things that are seen but rather on the things that are *not* seen.

Kooskia, Idaho

R. B.

God Will Guide, If We Follow

We are surrounded by God's mercies every hour; no matter how hard things seem to be there is always something in a situation to praise God about. He has His reasons for sending each experience.

I have had some extra time lately, which I have been using to read some faith-strengthening things I had not been doing before. Feeding on our own thoughts does not bring us closer to God. We need to commune with Him and let His words sink into our hearts so we have them there when we need them. He is our Guide, but if we don't take time to listen to Him, how will we know where to walk?

Tyro, Kansas

P. F.

Everyday Thanksgiving

It is always a good time to pause and recount our multitudinous blessings. The true spirit of thanksgiving doesn't begin at dawn and end at dusk of one day a year, but should be second nature to us for a lifetime of thankful days. How noble a virtue, but not easy to attain or *maintain*. It's too easy to get bogged down in the pettiness, strifes and cares of everyday living. Then we forget to remember our blessings, and fail to see even our problems and cares as blessings, for they are coming to us for our own spiritual good.

My "old man" is due for a good beating, and won't he shrink from the blows of thankful thinking! It is surely true that our minds will make or break us. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." So whether outward circumstances are good or bad, whether the people around us are pleasant or uncooperative, yet we have no reason to let slip our thankfulness.

Pelkie, Michigan

D. J.

Not Our Rest

Oh, the promises of God are so grand, so beyond our comprehension that it is almost impossible to visualize them even in our most fanciful dreams. Yet they are held in store for the righteous. Some day, our salvation worked out in full, we shall enter into the world of delight. There will be surprises and more surprises, every step of the way more amazing and more dazzling as we behold what God has laid up for them that love Him.

The age we are living in is one of the best. We have blessings that no other people have enjoyed on this planet since the day of salvation began. But let us not get too comfortably settled and forget what we are working for. This is not our rest. This present age gives us many comforts but at the same time holds many dangers to the potential life-seeker. We must be on our guard all the time. Ours is a serious position. We dare not be irked by this or that, when we stop to think how much easier our lives are.

But think of the angels—who would not be like them? On some far-off planet in their day of probation they were given the same opportunity we are now having. They had to go through the same maelstrom of tangled trials and troubles, hopes and dreams. Some of them probably planned big things for themselves and no doubt were stuck with little ordinary things, as we often are. How like human nature to be always wanting something different, rather than what is good for us.

As we aspire to being angels, let us think of them as our fellow-servants, our helpers and the recorders of our every word and deed, good or bad.

Through the great mercy of our God, salvation's day is not yet over. The overcoming of self must be our daily concern. It is of so great importance that without it we shall never enter in. With so much to gain in the world to come, let us make every provision to be there.

South Amboy, New Jersey

L. M. K.

Informative

I have just finished reading your booklet, "The Coming of Elijah and Jesus and the Kingdom of God." I found it informative, and in agreement with the Scriptures. Thank you.

Bloomington, Illinois

A. J. V.

Reasonable Service

There is some real spiritual food on the tapes that we receive from your services. We are told to "present our bodies a living sacrifice unto God, which is our reasonable service." It is very true, it is only reasonable when we think about all that God has done for us. He has given us a hundredfold in this life, and the promise of everlasting life in the world to come. How wonderful when we realize we really are not making any sacrifice, we are getting all the benefit. When we think of those who labored in the heat of the day, how blessed we are. But then, all will be rewarded according to their works. We have been warned to flee out of the doomed city, as was Lot. I think that this old world is getting very close to what Sodom was in the days of Lot. May the good Lord help us to make haste and not look back.

Port Au Port, Newfoundland

G. W.

Watch the Little Things

I look at the calendar, and another month has slipped quietly into Eternity, never to be recalled. Have we made the most of this God-given time, or has it slipped through our fingers in idleness? is the question we should ask ourselves. We are told to redeem the time, as the days are evil.

As we arise in the morning, let us pray that we will watch every word, every deed and action, that we do not let down our guard for one moment. It is the little things that creep in, that we have to watch. A spilled glass of milk on the freshly mopped floor; a garden that you worked so hard for destroyed by pests; the stitches on a garment you have to pull out and start over. Little things, yes, they are little, but they can cause us to lose out on the great reward if we do not use them aright.

We have too much to lose to let these petty things mar our chance for eternal life. God has promised exceeding abundantly above all we can ask. Can anyone of the world offer what God has offered? And He asks so little in return, only love, obedience and the giving up our own ways for His way. It will surely be worth it all when we stand at the Judgment Seat and hear our record read aloud before all the angels of heaven.

Let us keep our record clean that we will not be ashamed in that day.

Carrollton, Ohio

M. W.

Like Being New

Thank you very much for answering my request for your booklet, "The Coming of Elijah and Jesus and the Kingdom of God." I have started really studying it, and I can't tell you how many things it has opened up to me. I used to have real faith in God. Then, somehow, I drifted apart, but your booklet has inspired me to work to my fullest for God again. I just can't explain how full of joy I am. It's like being another person.

Nowata, Oklahoma

C. M.

OBITUARY

Ethel Morrison

On December 3, 1979, death claimed an aged member of our Rochester Congregation, Ethel Morrison. Sister Morrison lived many years beyond the four score which the Scriptures mention as man's allotted span, and death came peacefully after several years of failing health.

Sister Morrison's acquaintance with our church group dated back to childhood, when Sister Hembree, in 1890, visited the family's home town (Vernon, Texas) and stayed at the Morrison home. Later, the Morrisons attended a series of meetings held by our founder in their vicinity. Sister Morrison visited the church about 1936 and joined the Rochester Congregation in 1948.

She is survived by one son, Orion Bird, of Kansas. Services were conducted by the assistant pastor, Brother Newton Payne. Interment was in Mount Hope Cemetery, where others of our beloved dead await the call of the prophet who is coming to herald the great Day of the Lord.

January, 1980

SO WHAT DO YOU KNOW?

Who Said? . . .

1. "I know it my son, I know it."
2. "God meant it unto good . . . , to save much people alive."
3. "If he would give me his house full of silver and gold, I will not go beyond the word of the Lord."
4. "Shout: for the Lord hath given you the city."
5. "But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."
6. "Here am I, send me."
7. "Intreat me not to leave thee, nor to return from following after thee."
8. "How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him."
9. "My father, my father, the chariots of Israel, and the horsemen thereof."
10. "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?"
11. "He that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes."
12. "Where is he that is born king of the Jews?"
13. "Man shall not live by bread alone."
14. "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."
15. "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."
16. "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."
17. "Faith without works is dead."
18. "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God."
19. "Be strong therefore, and let not your hands be weak, for your work shall be rewarded."
20. "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not."

Answers: To check your answers, here are the texts cited:

1. Gen. 48:19; 2. Gen. 50:20; 3. Num. 22:18; 4. Josh. 6:16; 5. Josh. 24:15; 6. Isa. 6:8; 7. Ruth 1:16; 8. I Kings 18:21; 9. II Kings 2:12; 10. Amos 3:3; 11. Haggai 1:6; 12. Matt. 2:2; 13. Matt. 4:4; quoted from Deut. 8:3; 14. Matt. 7:20; 15. Rom. 12:21; 16. I Cor. 10:12; 17. James 2:20; 18. I Pet. 5:6; 19. II Chron. 15:7; 20. Luke 22:31.

He Leads

*He leads us on by paths we did not know;
Onward He leads us, though our steps be slow;
Though oft we faint and falter on the way,
Though storms and darkness oft obscure the day,
Yet, when the clouds are gone,
We know He leads us on.*

*He leads us on through all th' unquiet years,
Past all our dreamland hopes and doubts and fears,
He guides our steps through all the tangled maze
Of losses, sorrow, and o'erclouded days;
We know His will is done,
And still He leads us on.*

*He leads us on till, after weary strife,
After restless fevers of this life,
After the dreariness, the aching pain,
The wayward struggles which have proved in vain,
After our toils are past,
To rest at last.*

*Rest from all of earth that's dark and drear,
Rest in His holy, heav'nly Kingdom here,
Rest where the storms of life are past;
Rest where peace and beauty all shall last;
If we will follow Him,
He leads us on.*

