Megiddo Message



I want to learn...

To honestly face disappointment without succumbing to self-pity;

To openly face fear without losing trust in the guardianship of my heavenly Father;

To acknowledge when I have been hurt without letting bitterness grow in my heart;

To accept success without letting pride get out of proportion;

To want without coveting;

To admit my own lack of understanding without losing faith in the One who does understand;

To stand firm in my convictions with or without support from others;

To be flexible without being wishy-washy;

To appreciate and enjoy the beautiful and delightful without forgetting the Creator who made them possible;

To be alone without being lonely.

In all I ask Your help. I wish I could learn more quickly, Lord am I trying hard enough? Forgive me when I fail, I pray, and give me another lesson. Yes, teach me, Father, teach me!

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 life, all men, and all things.

We believe

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

We believe

—in Jesus 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 humankind 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 applying the precepts and principles of the Word of God, in this way 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

Unidentified quotations are from the King James Version. Other versions are identified as follows:

NEB-New English Bible

NIV-New International Version

NASB-New American Standard Bible

RSV—Revised Standard Version

TLB-The Living Bible

TEV—Today's English Version

JB—The Jerusalem Bible, Reader's Edition

Phillips—The New Testament in Modern English

Berkeley—The Modern Language New Testament

Weymouth—The New Testament in Modern Speech

Goodspeed—The New Testament translated by

Edgar J. Goodspeed

Moffatt-The Bible, A New Translation

About Our Cover

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Megiddo Message

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MEGIDDO is a way of believing and living, grounded solidly in the Bible as the reliable Word of our Creator. A total view of life, the world and the universe, it sees all events, men and nations moving together toward one God-ordained climax: the Kingdom of God on earth. This has been the plan of God since the beginning. Christ will return visibly, bodily, as King, and the governments of this world will be joined to form a totally new worldwide government. When the task is complete, our earth shall be numbered among the heavenly, glorified worlds and filled with immortal inhabitants. This is the purpose and goal of all creation.

He will not always allow millions to languish in conditions worse than death.

> UR WORLD needs help. Desperately. With all the advances in science and medicine, with all the progress in research and technology, living conditions for millions go on as they have for centuries. While part of the world revels in luxury, another part roams in misery.

> Our world needs rescuing. There is no other solution. Problems beyond human hope or help plague our world. There is only one answer: our rescue God.

> Consider the plight of the refugees. They have been called the walking dead. They are refugees in flight. Thousands of them, having survived genocide, starvation, invasion by foreign armies, disease, and armed attacks stagger from one community to another, seeking refuge, moving in eerie silence. Every few minutes, some of them fall into the mud and die.

> The refugee plight in our world today is a crisis with depth and scope little known or recognized. The number of refugees worldwide is conservatively estimated at 10,000,000. They are persons who were born into the world much like the rest of us, but whose opportunities for a "normal" life were suddenly crushed

(Continued on page 6)

"He will send Jesus, your destined Christ...

"In that day they will say, "Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the Lord, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation." (Isa. 25:9, NIV)

"The fruit of righteousness will be peace; the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever. My people will live in peaceful dwelling places, in secure homes, in undisturbed places of rest."

(Isa. 32:17-18, NIV)

"Instead of bronze I will bring you gold, and silver in place of iron. Instead of wood I will bring you bronze, and iron in place of stones. I will make peace your governor and righteousness your ruler. No longer will violence be heard in your land, nor ruin or destruction within your borders, but you will call your walls Salvation and your gates Praise."

(Isa. 60:17-18, NIV)

"From the west, men will fear the name of the Lord, and from the rising of the sun, they will revere his glory. For he will come like a pent-up flood that the breath of the Lord drives along. 'The Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who repent of their sins,' declares the Lord."

(Isa. 59:19-20, NIV)

"He will defend the afflicted among the people and save the children of the needy; he will crush the oppressor. He will endure as long as the sun, as long as the moon, through all generations. In his days the righteous will flourish; prosperity will abound till the moon is no more. He will rule from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth. For he will deliver the needy who cry out, the afflicted who have no one to help. May his name endure forever; may it continue as long as the sun."

(Ps. 72:4-5, 7-8, 12, 17, NIV)

"They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."

(Isa. 11:9, NIV)

"The nation or kingdom that will not serve you will perish; it will be utterly ruined. 'The glory of Lebanon will come to you, the pine, the fir and the cypress together, and I will glorify the place of my feet. The sons of your oppressors will come bowing before you; all who despise you will bow down at your feet and will call you The City of the Lord, Zion of the Holy One of Israel.'" (Isa. 60:12-14, NIV)

"... Yet he must remain in heaven till the time for the universal reformation of which God told in ancient times by the lips of his holy prophets."

-Acts 3:19-21, Goodspeed

by human mismanagement, human bungling, war, or outright cruelty. And so they are condemned to spend their energies reeling from one calamity to the next, with little or nothing they can call their own—not even their "necessary" food and shelter; their memories blotted by a horrible past, and their only expectation one of uncertainty and dread.

The refugees of the world today, we are told, include some 4.5 million Afghans, 3 million Africans, 2 million Palestinians, a half million Asians, 200,000 Central Americans, and a host of Ethiopians and smaller populations. Add to this an additional 12 million persons who are "internally displaced," uprooted and homeless within their own borders, and it is difficult to comprehend the magnitude of the crisis.

Most people forget that these refugees are "normal" persons like ourselves. They used to have what everyone expects—homes, families, independence, and a reasonable measure of security. They did not leave it all voluntarily. They did not leave the communities in which they and their forefathers had lived for hundreds of years until they had experienced extreme trauma—of civil violence or persecution at the hands of their own government. They are refugees because they prefer survival over death, because they would rather "live" in exile, even if that living be bare existence, than to endure the traumas of their homesteads.

In most refugee camps, mere survival is an overwhelming task. Perpetually thin and overstretched food supplies, overcrowding, and poor sanitation make disease a major problem among refugees. Crime is also common. Days are spent in numbing inactivity, or waiting in line for food and water. For many refugees, survival is further complicated by attacks of soldiers, guerrilla warfare, or aerial bombing.

What is the answer to the refugee problem world-

wide? What is the answer to millions of children growing up in the hopeless environments of refugee camps?

The question is without human solution. But it does have an answer: our rescue God. He who created this earth to be inhabited will not allow it to be forever in the hands of tyrants who mismanage and cause others to suffer. Our rescue God will send help, when the time is right. It is the promise of Sacred Writ: Christ is coming with hope and help, and that promise is just as sure, just as certain as the sunrise tomorrow morning. Long ago God revealed His plans to His servants. These are the words of the Psalmist:

"He will judge your people in righteousness, your afflicted ones with justice. The mountains will bring prosperity to the people, the hills the fruit of righteousness. He will defend the afflicted among the people and save the children of the needy; he will crush the oppressor. He will endure as long as the sun, as long as the moon, through all generations. He will be like rain falling on a mown field, like showers watering the earth. In his days the righteous will flourish; prosperity will abound till the moon is no more. He will rule from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth. For he will deliver the needy who cry out, the afflicted who have no one to help. He will take pity on the weak and the needy and save the needy from death. He will rescue them from oppression and violence, for precious is their blood in his sight. May his name endure forever; may it continue as long as the sun. All nations will be blessed through him, and they will call him blessed" (Ps. 72:2-8, 12-14, 17, NIV).

Christ is coming, and He will teach humankind how to live, how to govern, and how to provide for the world's needs. Hunger, sickness, strife, and all the evils that plague the human race will be eliminated under His righteous rule. The result will be a totally remade world, so completely changed that it will be in every sense "new." This, too, is the promise of the Sacred Word:

"'Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy" (Isa. 65:17-18, NIV).

For the first time in the history of the planet, everyone who lives will have an equal opportunity for a good,

happy, prosperous life.

When the time is right, God will act. Christ will arrive, bringing hope and help. And when He comes, those who wait in silence in refugee camps, as well as all the ends of the earth, shall see firsthand the glory and righteousness of our God.

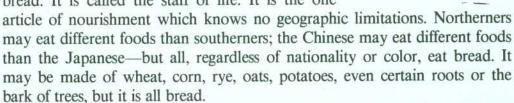
This is not a dream. It is real, it is true. And all who submit to the new order, all who are willing to recognize God and His authority, and live by His laws, will be spared. More than that, they shall have opportunities hitherto unknown.

Wouldn't we like to participate in the great work of saving, teaching and helping men and women worldwide? The time to enlist is now. Now is Christ selecting His helpers, His co-rulers, and those who will assist in the great work He will inaugurate. Now is the time to place your name on His list. Now is the time to remake your life according to His pattern, so you can be material He will use in the gigantic renovating He will accomplish.

For more information about the work Christ will accomplish, send for our booklet, Millennium Superworld. Price \$2.00

All Bread

THE most common article of food in the world, known to every people, tribe, and nation is bread. It is called the staff of life. It is the one



Jesus said, "I am the bread of life." He is the universal spiritual nourishment for all Christians, the staff of eternal life. He said, "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven:...he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever" (John 6:57-58).

The bread of life which Jesus gives is His Word, His plan of life, His instruction, His knowledge. This is "living bread" by which we must be sustained, just as Jesus lived by His Father's. As we live by eating this spiritual bread, by keeping His commandments, Jesus will take us into His fellowship and we shall "abide in [His] love," even as He "kept [His] Father's commandments, and [abides] in his love" (John 15:10).

Have you had your bread today?

Prepare to Meet Thy God

"Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel: and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel." —Amos 4:12

We are not free to do as we please. Every action has its consequence, which we shall have to face. We must meet God. T IS the climax of a chapter of neglected warnings. Israel, long hardened in sin that is unfelt, unconfessed and unforsaken, is reaching the end of God's long, long-suffering.

Also vexing the soul of Amos was the fact that the sinful attitude of the people around was tarnishing the religious aspirations of his countrymen. The Lord God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had become just another Baal who could be placated with ritual singsong and prescribed sacrifices. The stern God of the Promised Land had been forsaken for the fleshpots of a new and more insidious Egypt. The hard terms of the covenant had been exchanged for a softer currency of religious accommodation and compromise.

Against this contamination, this compromise, this accommodation, Amos set himself like flint. He could not—he would not—be influenced by it. However the Israelite people transposed the values they had received from their fathers, he would be loyal to his God. As long as he was able he would rehearse God's warnings to them. Yes, they had heard him before, but he must say it again, and again, and again. With each repetition of the warning, his emphasis increased, culminating in this dynamic word: "Therefore thus will I do unto thee. O Israel: and because I

will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel."

It was the oft-repeated warning of divine judgment. It was coming. Already its rumblings could be heard in the distance. Yes, Amos saw the judgment meeting of men and God as the one inevitability in history.

The warning message was incisive and far-reaching. It ought to have pierced like an arrow into the hearts of the people of Amos's day; and it ought to pierce *our* hearts today, telling *us* that a wrong course, persisted in, will likewise bring *us* to ruin.

Amos was not seeking to frighten them but only to awaken and arouse them to action. His main thrust is an all-out attack on carelessness and forgetfulness. If they would survive the oncoming terrors, they cannot continue as they are. They must take action, and now.

"Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel." Here is the stupendous fact: that an omnipotent God is sitting in judgment upon a sinful nation. His displeasure with them has been expressed in bolt after bolt of judgment already hurled—pestilence, famine, and war. And there is more to come. If Israel would have the heaviest artillery of retribution kept out of action, they had better bestir themselves. Neglect of

Note: Prepare to Meet Thy God is available as a complete church service on cassette. Price: \$3.00

Opportunity is not forever. Someday our last opportunity will be past. Someday we shall have lived our last "today."

duty was sure to precipitate disaster.

The Prophet is doing his best to arouse among them a general fore-boding of Divine retribution. Too long have they been heedless, indifferent to the voice which speaks from above. Too long have they parleyed with sin, as though God did not mean what He said. They had not yet come to realize that they were dealing with God, and that this is not at all like dealing with any human being. The great God of heaven is going to judge them, and the sooner they come to their senses and believe it, the better.

At the same time the Prophet's words are a trumpet-like warning to those under the terms of God's covenant in *every* age. *Every* servant of God must sooner or later meet God. So prepare. "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel."

Have we thought about what it means to "meet" God?

To the average or nominal churchmember, this meeting with God is believed to take place immediately at the time of one's death. Assuming that we have an immortal something that departs the body at death and goes to be "with the Lord," many believe that at that point there is a judgment, a meeting with God.

Though the popular belief is wrongly placed and timed, the point of accountability is Scriptural; but the setting is to be the Judgment seat of Christ, and the time is to be the time of His return. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it

be good or bad" (II Cor. 5:10). Those who serve God must know that they shall someday have to meet Him, and give account for what they have done.

It was a reality constantly on Paul's mind. "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God," he wrote another time (Rom. 14:12). And again, "When the Lord comes he will bring into the light of day all that at present is hidden in darkness, and he will expose the secret motives of men's hearts" (I Cor. 4:5, Phillips).

Encounter with the Divine

Meeting God suggests a solemn and awesome occasion, vastly above and beyond anything we have experienced. Literally defined, it is an encountering, and the One encountered is divine. It may refer to a personal meeting with the great God of heaven. Or, more often, it may refer to an encounter with one empowered by His authority. But whichever, the effect is the same. It means we are in the presence of One who is so vastly superior to us that we are as nothing before Him. It means that we are in the presence of One who holds in His hand our life and our eternal destiny.

There is a sense in which we are always in His presence. In fact, all our actions and all our motives are under His Divine scrutiny, if we could only realize it. Nothing escapes His notice. We may deceive others, may even deceive ourselves. But we cannot deceive God. His eye has not dimmed with age. He has no difficulty distinguishing good from evil,

nor will He ever. He sees, He knows, and His recording angel writes just as we dictate.

We are never outside His view. As the book of Hebrews tells us, "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (Heb. 4:13). Whatever we think, what we feel, whatever we desire, God knows. He knows the deepest recesses of our hearts. He knows when we are pressing with all our might, and when we are only coasting along. He knows when we are sincere, and when we are trying to appear what we are not.

We may deceive ourselves into thinking we are all right. We may think self-justifying thoughts so long that we actually feel justified. But when all is said and when all is done, God's verdict will be fair, and it will be just according to what we have done

Do we feel the effect of being in God's presence? Do we feel the reality of it as we ought?

Those who encountered God's heavenly representatives in times past were strongly affected by the experience. Consider what has been recorded for our learning. The great good prophet Daniel "fainted" at the visit of an angel "and was sick certain days" (Dan. 8:27). Manoah and his wife "fell on their faces to the ground"—Manoah even thought that they would die because they had "seen God" (Judges 13:20-22). Moses, at the burning bush, "hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God" (Ex. 3:6).

Do we feel the awe of being in God's presence? Do we feel the reality of it as we should?

Those who witnessed the scene at Mt. Sinai, when God was said to come down to speak to them, were terrified and overawed by the experience. There was so much to see and hear: thunders and lightnings, the thick cloud upon the mount, and "the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud." The smoke ascended "as the smoke of a furnace," the "whole mount quaked greatly," and the "voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder"-so terrifying was the experience that all the people "trembled" and pleaded with Moses that it never happen again. "Speak thou with us," they said to him, "and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die" (Ex. 20:19).

They were not ready to meet God. David might be said to have met God after his sin in numbering Israel. It was a moment of solemn accountability. David had "displeased" the Lord, and he had to face it. God sent His prophet to reckon with David. Humbled and penitent, David had to face the frightful consequences of his sin. His plea to the Prophet reveals his fear in the presence of God: "Let me fall now into the hand of the Lord; for very great are his mercies; but let me not fall into the hand of man" (I Chron. 21:13).

Fear in the Presence of the Divine

Why is meeting God so terrifying, so awesome to us mortals? It is because of our relationship to the Divine; we fear to face Him because we fear to face the facts of our personal accountability, and the solemn reality that we are not all that we should be.

We fear meeting God because we know God is omnipotent. Against

His might the mightiest are as nothing.

Then, too, we fear because we know *God is omniscient*. "He declareth unto man what is his thought." He is the searcher of hearts (Amos 4:13; Ps. 139:2; Jer. 17:10). Nothing eludes His notice, not even our secret thoughts. Our fear, however, comes from our lack of readiness.

The thought that God knows all is a comfort to the righteous. They are glad to know that their unspoken petition, their secret self-denials, their unfulfilled purposes are all recognized by God. In Jesus' parable, the righteous are represented as being surprised at the reward coming to them for acts which they had quite forgotten. They must be shown that "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love" (Heb. 6:10).

Then, too, we fear the judgment of God because we know also that His verdict upon us is so final.

We are so accustomed to another day, another opportunity, another chance. If we stumble today, we assume that we will have another tomorrow. Next time, we say, we will do better. But opportunity is not forever. Someday our last opportunity will be past. Someday we shall

Sin need not be fatal. Any evil can be broken off simply by stopping it.

have lived our last "tomorrow."

In the legal structures of our country, there is always hope of a higher court reversing an unfavorable decision, all the way to the top. But when we are called to stand before the Judgment seat of Christ, His first verdict will be *the top*. There is no higher court of appeal, and nothing we or anyone else will be able to do or say will influence or alter the verdict in the least. His verdict will be final.

How many of Jesus' parables teach this vital truth: that a day of separation is coming when the good will be severed from the evil. It is the lesson in the parable of the good and bad fish in the Dragnet, the Sheep and the Goats, the Rich Man and Lazarus and the great gulf fixed; the Wheat and the Tares, with the garner and the fire; the Wise and Foolish Virgins; the man without the Wedding Garment on. In each case the good are saved, and the bad are cast away.

Imagine being called to a meeting with the highest dignitaries on earth. Many hours and many millions of dollars are invested in preparing for these meetings. But what is it worth? Only one mortal with another, both of whom are as significant in God's sight as dust of the ground. Compare this to a meeting with Divine authority, where we shall realize for the first time that we are standing in the presence of One who knows all about us, to whom the thoughts of our hearts are as visible as the lines on our faces. In the presence of this Being we are as nothing. We have no superior "rights," no authority, nor even any influence. All we have are the terms of our covenant and the record of our lives to witness for or against us.

What shall we have to offer to God when that hour arrives? Will we offer Him the excuses we give ourselves—that the test He allowed was too severe for us, that we simply didn't have the strength to face it? Or shall we say that we did not have enough advantages of one sort or another to do what He asked us to do? Will we try to tell Him that we were not feeling well enough to face the fight, that we were not strong enough to win it?

Or shall we say that His provisions for us were not sufficient, or we were misinformed or misunderstood; or that we were too young, or too old; or too handicapped or disadvantaged. Or maybe we will say that we could not remember, or did not know exactly what He expected of us, or the meaning of what He said. No, our reasonings will be all in vain. No excuses that we might be able to offer will avail. If our record is not all that it should be, or all that we would like it to be, we will have only ourselves to blame.

Do we wonder at the admonition of the Prophet: "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel"?

Our fear of the encountering is compounded even more by our knowledge that when that meeting takes place, our day of opportunity will be over, and we will have no more opportunity to change. It is a responsibility we cannot shrug off or slip onto someone else. What we are when that moment arrives is what we will be. It is the moment when "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still" (Rev. 22:11).

But fear need not be part of meeting God; God is eager to bless and reward—as soon as we take the nec-

Let Us Pray

Dear Father, we thank Thee that once again we are privileged to meet in Thy name and read from Thy blessed Word. Grant that we may have come here to learn, to be built up in our most holy faith, and may our prayer be, "O send out thy light and Thy truth, let them lead me, let them bring me to Thy holy hill and to Thy tabernacle." May we join in this worship experience to be educated in Thy ways, to understand more fully Thy purpose for us.

May we have come here to be conditioned for our work, the task of overcoming self. May we have come to be renewed, to sharpen our awareness of our duty to Thee, to cleanse our motives, to straighten out our sense of values. Lord make us to know the measure of our days, that we may know how frail we are, and apply our hearts to Thy wisdom.

Help us to understand that this experience of worship means everything to us. May we not view it as something we do out of habit, or to favorably impress others. Nor is it a matter of rejoicing in our goodness as we compare ourselves with others. But may we recognize that we are approaching a meeting with Thee, and that if we would meet Thee with joy we must now be preparing for that meeting with all that is in us.

Lord, help us to a fair and honest appraisal of ourselves and our growth into holiness. We are here to condition ourselves for the work which is ours as people of Thine; we are here to be strengthened to run the way of Thy commandments without stumbling. We would be helped to love, to care, to strengthen each other in our most holy faith.

Father, as we join our hearts with those everywhere who are part of Thy eternal purpose, grant that we may strain our hearts to find a meaningful confrontation with Thee even now, however painful or joyful the experience may be. When Thou with rebukes dost correct us for our iniquity, may we take it as an honor, a genuine favor to save us from eternal defeat and destruction. We desire above all to have Thee meet us in blessing, and not in judgment in that coming Day; with joy and not with grief. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

essary steps on our part.

This is why God, from the earliest time, has been warning men of this final inevitability, and pleading with them to turn from their own ways and seek Him now. No sin need bring us to ruin. Any evil can be broken off simply by stopping it. This has been the message of all of God's prophets in every age. Sin need not be fatal.

This was the message of Noah as he preached to the antediluvians. Noah was a "preacher of righteousness." He preached "righteousness"—right thinking, right doing, right living, everything God called right. Israel was constantly exhorted by first one divinely sent spokesman and

then another to, in the words of Isaiah, "Cease to do evil; learn to do well." John the Baptist had as the burden of his preaching this same word: "Repent." In the words of the prophet Amos, "Prepare." "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel."

Prepare, because there is no avoiding it. That judgment is certain to come, because God has already appointed the Day "in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained" (Acts 17:31).

Encounter without Fear

When we have succeeded in breaking the power of sin in our lives, we shall be able to look forward eagerly

to meeting God as to the highest, most glorious, most triumphant moment of our lives. Meeting God holds no terror to the righteous.

Think of Jesus as He was ascending to heaven, being borne aloft by the angel chariot to His Father's realm. Do we think for a moment that He was frightened, terrified, fearful of the meeting that lay ahead, the meeting of a faithful Son with His own loving Father? We know He was not. His work was well done, and He was on the way to the glorification ceremonies, the triumphant crowning in His Father's presence. It was the high moment of victory in His career. And what a meeting it would be, attended by myriads of angels around the throne of God. The trials that only a few weeks before had loomed so large-now they were behind Him forever. Ahead lay glory upon glory upon glory. Oh, the joyous anticipation that must have filled His being as He dreamed

of what awaited Him—or could He, for what can a mortal know or faintly imagine of the glory of immortality!

The honor of being crowned in His Father's presence was singular—it was His own special request. It was a privilege, we might say, for firstborns only. He had lived for it, yearned for it, longed for it, died for it. To receive it in His Father's presence was His own special request on that last night before His crucifixion as He lifted up His eyes to heaven and prayed:

"Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: as thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.

And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self'—here was the request, and we know that it was granted (John 17:1-5).

Can we think for a moment that as He approached the moment of that meeting there was any fear or terror in His heart? Farthest from it!—He was overflowing with joy!

Think of the apostle Paul. As he approached the end of his mortal career, he was actually looking forward to meeting his Lord, when he would receive the "crown of right-eousness, which the Lord, the right-eous judge shall give me at that day"—the joyful anticipation made any intervening trial "light."

Why the difference? It is the joy of being prepared. He knew He was *ready* for that meeting, and no words can describe the joy He felt.

The presence of God is actually the highest ambition of the righteous. It is fear and terror only to the unrighteous.

A Lesson on Preparedness

JESUS made a striking lesson on preparedness in His parable of the Ten Virgins who went forth to meet the bridegroom. Why do we call them "wise" and "foolish"? Anyone watching them go forth that night, their lamps all trimmed and burning, could not have imagined which were which

But as the hours wear on, and on and on,... watch. Some faces are looking anxious. Yes, something is wrong, seriously wrong. One maiden lowers her lamp and carefully, ever so carefully, adjusts the wick. See her watch it, keenly, longingly. If only it would burn a little brighter! Another, then another, adjusts the wick. But alas, the flame burns lower, and lower. It flickers uncertainly, and...goes out. Then another. And another.

What is the problem? No one says, but everyone knows. Some have run out of oil. Who is wise—and who is foolish? Yes, we can begin to know. At first, only those who looked inside the lamp might know, but now anyone can see. The lesson is one word: preparedness.

All prepared to go forth to meet the Bridegroom, but some were *more* prepared than others. Some brought what seemed an ample supply for the time they expected, enough to "get by." Others had brought an extra supply just in case the waiting should be longer than anticipated.

Perhaps the first thought of the light-out virgins is to blame the Bridegroom. Why does He have to be so long coming! They would have been all right, if He had only come when He was supposed to!

Then they realize that this is not the problem at all. Others were prepared. They could have been, if...

We do not want to allegorize the parable beyond measure; but it has one central beam of light, and that is preparedness. There is a time to prepare, and there comes a time when it is too late to prepare.

The lesson shouts to us. It is the message of the prophet Amos: Prepare...while yet there is time. "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel."

Trouble that Can Be Avoided

There is one more thought in Amos' warning which we should note. There is a threat in it: "Therefore thus will I do unto thee." It is a warning of woe; but the woe *need not be*. It is wholly within our power to make it a meeting of joy—if we will only prepare.

As we prepare, we will actually long to meet Him. We will long to meet Him even now, to have Him speak to us through the means He uses in our day—any means He chooses, so long as we can learn where we are wrong and what we have yet to do to complete our work. For we want above all else to be prepared.

"Prepare to meet Thy God." These words come to tell us that we are not free to do as we please, think as we please, live as we please. We have an obligation of duty upon us. There are consequences we shall have to face, everyone of us. We must meet God!

They tell us also that something can be done, that we need not end in ruin. We need not be hurt by the power of God—if we only prepare.

Do we wonder at the intensity in the Prophet's plea? Is it not the kindest, most loving admonition our God could give? He is seeking to spare us the pain of future disappointment; He is eager to help and aid, if only we will take the warning.

We would not be urged to "prepare" unless we were by nature unprepared or inclined not to prepare. Here is manifest the mercy of our merciful God. The very fact that He warns us to prepare is evidence of His love. And when we think we have prepared and still the time continues, we may be sure we have yet *more* preparing to do.

Looking to Ourselves

How carefully, how diligently, how honestly we need to examine our own hearts and lives. In the words of the ancient proverb, "Know then thyself, presume not God to scan." No, God will not scan. He will not overlook any wrong.

God will search, if we but let Him, and what will He see in me? What will He think of what He sees? What will He approve, or disapprove? These are the questions we need to be constantly asking ourselves. And oh, let us not cover our sins but allow the light of God to search our hearts and reveal what sort of men and women we are. Let "the candle of the Lord" throw its rays into the hidden recesses of our hearts and reveal our bitterness, our double-mindedness, our unbelief; let it show us our deep need for more patience, tenderness, forbearance, humility, love.

Do not postpone the searching, for the day of that auspicious meeting will not be postponed. Our days of opportunity are numbered; and how frightful if we let them slip by unused; if we put off the serious selfscrutiny, the mental discipline, the firm self-control, the whole-souled commitment we know we should make until it is forever too late. How foolish if little irritations continue to rub, and little moments continue to be wasted, and little emotions carry When we meet God, we are in the presence of one who holds in His hand our life and our eternal destiny.

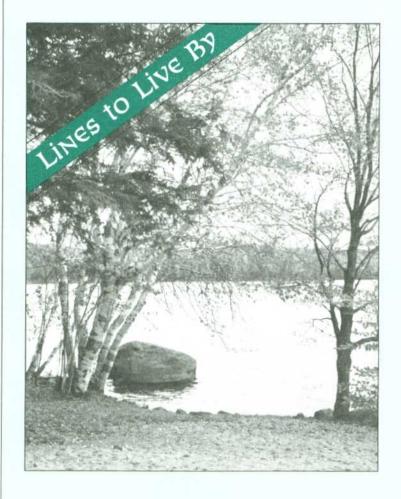
us this way and that while life goes by and the real godly character we had hoped to achieve is still a long way off. For ere our day is ended we shall be called into the presence of God, and oh, the sorrow that will be ours if we are not prepared.

On the other hand, if we consciously apply ourselves to use the time that is granted us; if we keep ourselves constantly in a frame of mind to watch what we are thinking about, our attitudes and every aspect of our lives: if we make a conscious and consistent effort to conform ourselves to the divine requirements and bend to the divine will; if we are determined to "do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with thy God"; shall we not be able to come into the presence of the Most High with holy confidence? And shall we not rejoice to know that all is well between Him and us-that we have done our best?

As we get our hearts right with God, as we become more and more like God in heart and character, we

(Continued on page 21)

As we become more and more like God in heart and character, we shall want above all else to meet Him, to know Him and be known by Him.



The man who sows seeds of kindness enjoys a perpetual harvest.

If you must publish someone's faults, publish your own.

No one ever gets eyestrain from looking on the bright side.

What a different world we would have if people would only magnify their blessings the way they do their troubles.

When you share your joy with a friend, you double the joy.

The man who thinks he has no faults has at least one.

They Have Overcome the World

Written by Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage in the 3rd century, in a letter to his friend Donatus.

This is a cheerful world as I see it from my fair garden, and from under the shadow of my vines. But if I could ascend some high mountain, and look out over the fair lands, you know very well what I would see. Robbers on the highways. Pirates on the seas. Armies fighting. Cities burning. In the amphitheaters, men murdered to please the applauding crowds. Selfishness and cruelty and misery and despair under all the roofs.

It is a bad world, Donatus, an incredibly bad world. But I have discovered in the midst of it a quiet and holy people who have learned a great secret. They have found a joy which is a thousand times better than any of the pleasures of a sinful life. They are despised and persecuted, but they care not. They are masters of their souls. They have overcome the world. These people, Donatus, are Christians—and I am one of them.

With Generous Hand

Do you think your burden heavy?
Other fainting souls are near.
Tell them of the Truth that strengthens,
Pass along a word of cheer.
'Tis the surest way to lighten
Your own burdens day by day;
Shed a beam of hope to brighten
Some discouraged brother's way.

All about us in the darkness
There are those who walk alone.
There are others, sad, disheartened,
By misfortune overthrown.
And your song of hope will cheer them
Like a beacon in the night.
Just to know a friend is near them
May to them be life and light.

Tis the way to hope and courage
For the battles we must fight;
Thus we brighten our own pathway
When we give another light.
As we speak to cheer another
Soon our hearts are all aglow,
And the gladness of our brother
Comes to us in overflow.

Of the precious oil of heaven,
Though you have a scant supply
Share it, for to you 'twas given,
And your cruse will not run dry.
Give it not just for the asking,
Seek some one who is in need
Of the joy in which you're basking.
You can do no better deed.

Tell the good news of the Kingdom
To the weary, worn and sad;
Tell them of our blessed Saviour—
Make their countenances glad.
Tell what we must do to merit
God's salvation in that day
When He gives the Holy Spirit
To all who will now obey.

-Liot L. Snyder

Points for the Month

- Week 1: There is nothing to equal the beauty of a Godlike character.
- Week 2: Drifting is caused not by the wind but by the set of our sails.
- Week 3: We improve ourselves only through conscious, concerted effort.
- Week 4: No glory can compare with the glory of doing right.

A Covenant In Force?

"We would like clarification of when we enter into covenant with God. It seems to us that Heb. 9:16 states we must die to sin before God accepts the contract we are making. By this it seems very few really ever come into covenant, would you agree?"

—F. and P.H., Australia

ENTERING into a covenant relationship with God is God's way of opening an account with a member of the human family. It prepares the way for Him to give us His eternal benefits, and for us to qualify to receive those benefits. It is an official way of saying that each wants what the other is offering. On God's side, God is saying that He will give what He has promised if we meet His requirements, and we promise to meet those requirements.

Exactly when a person comes into a covenant relationship with God is probably impossible for us to determine—it is a matter between that individual and God, and God knowing the heart is able to judge rightly where we could not.

However, it does not seem realistic to conclude that no bona fide covenant relationship exists with God until one has died to sin, else there would be no possibility of unfaithful covenant-makers, which the Scriptures state plainly that there will be (Matt. 25:41-46; Dan. 12:2-3; John 5:28-29; Luke 19:12-27; Matt. 13:24-30). All covenant-makers are not faithful. Hence, to be fair to the Scripture writers we must seek another understanding of Hebrews 9:16.

Let us review the steps involved in

establishing a covenant relationship with God. The first step is to acquire a thorough knowledge of God's law, what He offers and what He requires. "All things that pertain unto life and godliness" come through knowledge (II Pet. 1: 3).

The second step is to make an honest evaluation of the terms of the covenant, to assess its worth; i.e., benefits versus obligations; value versus cost. Jesus illustrated this very important aspect of covenant-making by two brief parables recorded in Luke 14. Apparently His disciples were becoming more and more aware of the cost, the sacrifice required, and Jesus wanted to underscore the fact that a covenant relationship with God is not something to be entered without due thought and consideration. One must, in His words, "count the cost" and decide whether the reward is worth the effort. These are Jesus words:

"If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first,

and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply. after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, Saving, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26 - 33).

If the result of counting the cost is a decision to go ahead and make the covenant with God, then the third step becomes the signing or sealing, as it were, of that covenant relationship. This may be a step formally taken, as in a Passover service, or it may be a person's private resolve and commitment to God in prayer. God, being able to read the heart, knows each one's intent and decision. In making a covenant, one agrees to do such and such, in return for certain definitely stated benefits from God. In other words, the individual says to God, I promise to give

You my life, to obey fully Your laws and precepts, after which I understand that You will give me the eternal life which You have promised. And God replies, "I will, I give you My word."

From this time forward the covenant relationship exists. However, no benefits of the covenant are obtainable until the covenant-maker has actually fulfilled his or her obligations under that covenant. It is our obedience to the covenant that makes the covenant of benefit to us. And this obedience requires time.

This fulfilling of the terms of the covenant, rather than its signing, seems to be the thought of Hebrews 9:16. Only when the "death" has been completed, the "death to sin," can the one in covenant "receive the promise of eternal inheritance." And actually this is not determined until one has lived his or her full time of probation and been summoned to appear before the Judgment seat of Christ (II Cor. 5:10).

Only then, at the end of our day of probation, is our eligibility for the covenant benefits determinable—and it is all according to our success or failure in meeting the terms of our covenant with God (Rev. 22:12, 11; Eccl. 11:3). If we have fully met the requirements of the covenant, we shall receive God's eternal blessing and life; if we have not, we shall receive the reward of disobedience, or death.

This is the reason underlying the many "if" statements in the Bible: "If ye will obey my voice indeed and keep my covenant,..." or "If ye continue in the faith,..." or "If they obey and serve him...." One's receiving the benefits of the covenant depends on one's obedience to its terms, i.e., the entire law of God.

Let us see how the above thoughts fit into the picture in Heb. 9:16. We should observe that Heb. 9:15 speaks of two different covenant situations,

a "first" and a "new." The "first" covenant spoken of is that of Moses, which is explicitly referred to in verses 18-21. This covenant served as a "pattern" or type of the second or "new" covenant, the law of Christ, also called the law of faith. Throughout the book of Hebrews the author is continually comparing the two.

What are his points in making this comparison? He observes that both covenants are consecrated by a "death." In the time of Moses the people said, "All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient," after which Moses took the blood of the sacrifice and sprinkled it as a symbol of that required obedience (see Ex. 24:2-8). Unless Israel actually did what they had promised, the covenant benefits were void.

Under the law of Christ, the covenant-maker also promises to render a complete obedience, but the "blood" by which he consecrates this covenant is the lifeblood of the old man of sin; only as the covenant-maker completes this spiritual "death to sin" can he become eligible for the benefits of the covenant.

Under the old law, the death of the sacrifice was a symbol of the obedience promised—an obedience which, if rendered, would have made Israel eligible for the benefits of the covenant. Under the new, the death required is the covenant-maker's death to sin, the completing of which makes him or her eligible for the "eternal inheritance" and in this way makes the covenant "in force," i.e., bringing benefits to the one making the covenant. Only when the covenant-maker has fulfilled the conditions of the covenant from the human side are the benefits of the covenant "in force," i.e., "firm, steadfast, sure." As long as there is any possibility that the covenant-maker will fall short of completely meeting the conditions, he or she is not "sure" of the benefits.

We should keep in mind that making a covenant with God is not a guarantee of salvation but only a working relationship, a promise, and an obligation to do what has been promised.

The difference between signing or sealing a covenant and fulfilling its terms might be illustrated by a business contract. When a contractor signs an agreement to construct a building, the terms are carefully spelled out. The contractor must perform according to certain specifications, and then it is agreed that he will receive certain remuneration. But not until certain conditions are fulfilled can the contractor expect any remuneration. The same is true in our covenant relationship with God. We cannot expect to receive the benefits, i.e. the reward, until we have met the conditions. Only when we have done on our part is the covenant, in this sense, "in force," or "sure."

We become "sure" of the benefits of the covenant only as we fulfill all its terms and conditions.

....And although I could rely on my authority in Christ and dare to order you to do what I consider right, I am not doing that. No, I am appealing to that love of yours, a simple personal appeal from Paul the old man, in prison for Jesus I am appealing for my child. Yes, I have become a father though I have been under lock and key, and the Christ's sake. child's name is -Onesimus! Oh, I know you have found him fretty useless in the past but he is going to be useful now, to both of us. I am sending him back to you: will you receive him as my son, part of me? I should have dearly loved to have kept him with me: he could have done what you would have done-looked after me here in prison for the Gospel's sake. But I would do nothing without consulting you first. for if you have a favor to give me, let it be spontaneous and not It occurs to me that there has been a purpose in your losing forced from you by circumstances! him. You lost him, a slave, for a time; now you are having him back for good, not merely a slave, but as a brother Christian. He is already especially loved by me-how much more will you be able to love him, both as a man and as a fellow Christian! You and I have so much in common, haven't we? Then do welcome him as you would welcome me. If you feel he has wronged or cheated you put it down to my I've written this with my own hand: I, Paul, hereby promise to repay you. (Of course I'm not stressing the fact that you might be said to owe me your very soul!) Now do grant me this favor, my brother - such an act of love will do my old heart good. As I send you this letter I know you'll do what I ask-I believe, in fact, you'll do more The state of the s

A Letter from Paul to Philemor

from the Book of Philemon, as translated by J. B. Phillips

The Runaway's Return

Part I

The Book of Philemon has only twenty-five verses. Not much for size, but its principles of living for God in a harsh and violent world are unsurpassable.

Some of the people in this book are only names, and unknown to us. But we know human nature, and we are under the same God they served. When these two facts are taken into account, we can feel that we know considerable about them. When a person submits to being remade and reshaped by the law of God, he or she has much in common with others who are undergoing the same process. We speak the same "language," as it were, face the same struggles, confront the same enemies, and know the same joys of victory. We can even guess how they may react in some of the very difficult situations life presents—those character-building situations so needful to all.

The result is not character alone, it is Christian character—the beautiful material God is using to build His eternal Kingdom on this earth.

One of the remarkable things about developing a Christian character is that neither wealth, genius, great cathedrals, multitudes, nor even freedom, is required. A knowledge of God's will for man and a rock-ribbed determination to live it are the only requirements. This challenge is open to any level or station of life, from the heights of wealth to the depths of slavery. All are brothers and sisters in Christ, one family; all share the same opportunity, and the same high calling. Whatever one's situation, no one can harness his mind; and that is where the new nature is formed, slowly, carefully, thought by thought. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he."

Scene 1

Characters:

Onesimus young household servant of Philemon Androcles middle-aged servant of Philemon Alexander another servant of Philemon

Setting:

This scene takes place in the courtyard of the home of Philemon, a wealthy wool merchant of Colosse. Two slaves are conversing. One, Onesimus, is well dressed and does not bear the signs of hard work. The other, Androcles, is somewhat older, and more roughly dressed. Each wears the Greek initial in red on his breast, as a sign of the household to which he belongs. Androcles carries a garden tool; Onesimus is his master's secretary.

Onesimus: (bitterly) So you think I should smile and sing and dance and be happy! Why? Tell me one thing I've got to be happy about. Just one!

Androcles: What's the matter with you this morning, Onesimus? You're not like yourself. Headache? Something you ate? Coming down with a cold?

Onesimus: That's right—try to be funny about it. You're just as bad off as I am, if you had sense enough to realize it.

Androcles: Well, sometimes it's a good thing to be stupid, aye? But tell me, what is it? Anything I've done? Anything I can do?

Onesimus: It's just this, Androcles; I'm sick and tired of being a slave.

Androcles: Why should you be?

Onesimus: Why shouldn't I be? Do you like it?

Androcles: Well, maybe I don't like it, but there are a lot of things in life one doesn't like. What can't be cured must be endured. In the meantime, things could be a lot worse.

Onesimus: What do you mean, "worse"?

Androcles: Look at the master we have. No better master anywhere in the world than Philemon, is there now?

Onesimus: (sullenly) I don't know much about the world, and won't as long as I am a slave.

Androcles: You shouldn't complain. You have it pretty soft. You're educated, you're really somebody! You just sit and push a pen, write the master's letters, keep his books, take his children to school. Why, man, you're just like one of the family.

Onesimus: Yes, but-

Androcles: Now me—I can't write, so I'm just the gardener; I get all the hard work. A strong back and a weak mind. Right now, while Philemon is away, you are practically in charge of the house. You shouldn't complain!

Onesimus: Yes, but who wants to be a slave? I'd like to be free to come and go as I please, and ask no man for permission. I tell you, Androcles, I've about reached my limit. I can't stand it!

Androcles: Look, Onesimus, you can't have everything. There are a thousand men out of work right now in Colosse, walking the streets, hungry. We may be slaves, but at least we're not unemployed—the master sees to that. And we're well fed, and well clothed, and kindly treated.

Onesimus: All right, Philemon is kind to us. But what right has one man to own another, body and soul?

Androcles: I don't know about rights; maybe it is wrong,

but it has always been done, and we can't change it. So I say, let's make the best of a situation that could be worse.

(Another slave, Alexander, passes by and speaks cheerfully.)

Alexander: Good morning, Onesimus.

Onesimus: What's good about it? Go on about your work. (impatiently)

(Alexander stops and stares in surprise. Walks on with a gesture and a shake of his head.)

Androcles: You're really savage this morning, Onesimus. I'm glad you're not the master all the time!

Onesimus: Well, maybe we are well treated, but just suppose Philemon should fail in business; suppose we are all sold—into the mines, maybe, or the galleys.

Androcles: Well... that's an angle I'd rather not think about. But I'm the one that should worry about that, not you. With your education, you'd never go to the mines. More likely into a temple. By the way, you never told me, Onesimus, how you happened to be here. Where did you come from?

Onesimus: Nowhere. I was born right here.

Androcles: Right here?

Onesimus: In this house. My family was free, but my father got in debt and lost his freedom. So the son suffers for the sins of the father. How about yourself?

Androcles: Not so different. My village in Crete picked the wrong side in a rebellion, and the survivors were sold in the market of Antioch. I was thirteen. But to change the subject, do you know—or do you care to tell—why the master has gone to Ephesus?

Onesimus: Wool business, I suppose. He does a lot of business up there.

How Fast Do You Hear?

We need to hear faster and talk slower. Like the Jews of old, we find it quite easy to render quick, superficial judgments of God and of one another, but James would have us "swift to hear" and "slow to speak."

Androcles: But why did the mistress go along, I wonder.
That's unusual for her.

Onesimus: There may be a reason. You know, she's changed her religion several times in the last fifteen years—always looking for something she doesn't find.

Androcles: So she's going to visit the great Temple of Diana in hope of getting some sort of inspiration, I suppose.

Onesimus: No, ... not that. I have heard talk about a Hebrew preacher of some new religion—not the Jews's—who is at Ephesus now. His name is Paul. They say there was a riot over his teachings last month, but he's still preaching. I heard the master inquire of Sosthenes, the captain of the Golden Swan, if he was still there.

Androcles: So that's the attraction! Wonders will never cease. People and religion. Quite a combination. But the master doesn't seem to be very religious, as our religions go, does he?

Onesimus: No, the priests don't seem to have much influence over him. Oh, he sacrifices on special occasions, but he doesn't wear out the temple pavements. Even so, he's more fair and honest than a lot of the very religious characters.

Androcles: (triumphantly) There! I knew you'd have to admit it. Come on, Onesimus, pull yourself together. Look on the bright side. Tomorrow may be better.

Onesimus: (muttering) Tomorrow . . . tomorrow I may be (he turns away)

Androcles: Look here, Onesimus, you're not thinking of going over the hill, are you?

Onesimus: If I was, I wouldn't tell you. But could you blame me if I did?

Androcles: Don't do it, boy. Your master has trusted you, and whatever else you do, never betray a trust. There are some things more important than freedom. If you must run away, do it when he's at home and you have had some trouble with him.

Onesimus: All right, preacher, you've done your duty. Now maybe we'd both better get to work. I'll consider your well-meant advice.

Androcles: You'd better. (exit)

Onesimus: (walking up and down, growing more and more excited, gesticulating fiercely) So I should make the best of it! I should stay here and live and die a slave. We can't change it, eh? We'll see about that. I've had enough. Tonight I leave. Maybe I should wait until Philemon gets home . . . but no, now's my chance, my big chance. Why shouldn't I take it? There's a ship leaving at midnight for Antioch. I'll try my fortune there. Maybe I'll even get to Rome some day . . . Free! free as the birds! This mark of bondage—out with it!

(He rips off his initial and flings it to the ground.)

And why should I go empty-handed? After all these years of faithful service, the master certainly owes me more than food and clothing. It's mine—why shouldn't I take it? He trusted me—yes, even with the key to his vault. It takes money to travel—and I'm traveling. Ah! not only freedom, but riches!

Onesimus, at last you're going to be somebody! (Continued next issue)

Prepare to Meet Thy God

(Continued from page 13)

shall want above all else to meet Him, to know Him and be known by Him. We shall want above all else to be the type of person He seeks for His company. We shall come to long for His presence, His eye upon us, His will to guide us. We shall want more and more to know and feel Him near. We shall want to know that He is with us, and approving what we do. Our highest delight will be to please Him.

We shall be like David who said, "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.... Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee" (Ps. 84:2; 73:25). When pleasing God is our highest desire, we shall court His favor and His love above everything of earth, and His presence will be our supreme delight.

For Israel a meeting in judgment had been long foreshadowed, and was now overdue. It might come any time—it must be soon.

To us likewise, a meeting in judgment has been long foretold. It may come any time—it must be soon. And a surprise it will be to all, even to the most prepared. To some it will mean the highest joy; to others it will spell disaster.

Are we preparing? Are we getting ready? Are we doing all we can, you and I, to be ready to meet God? We cannot afford to do less, for just as surely as God is true, that meeting will come.

And maybe sooner than we think.

Watch Out for Bad Company

"Do not be misled: 'Bad company corrupts good character.' Come back to your senses as you ought, and stop sinning; for there are some who are ignorant of God—I say this to your shame"

—I Cor. 15:33-34, NIV.

THESE words say more than we realize by giving them a simple, cursory reading. The effects of bad company can be devastating. Witness the effects so common in our world today, among the drug addicts, the alcoholics, the immoral, etc.

Though perhaps not so obvious in its maleffects, the situation is the same with those who profess loyalty to Christ. How many have started well, only to become entangled with wrong companions and led astray.

It has always been God's requirement that His people should have no affiliation with individuals, classes, or nations whose practices conflicted with His standards. When the children of Israel passed by certain nations in their wanderings through the wilderness they were commanded to meddle not with them. They were to keep separate from the surrounding nations. Sad indeed have been the endings of those who were led astray by "foreigners," and more than once those of high standing were among the transgressors.

The Christian's lot is such that he must live in an ungodly world and yet be no part of it. He cannot withdraw himself and live isolated from all mankind. Such is not the will of God. Jesus, in His closing prayer for His disciples, said, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil" (John 17:15).

To live *in* an evil world and yet be no part of it may prove a serious test of our faith. It will show whether we will become a part of them or stay separate from all their ungodly practices. The children of Israel had the surrounding nations to try them. Such trials were needed to prove them, whether they would serve the true God or follow after the strange gods of their neighbors.

Nevertheless, our personal company is a matter of our own choosing, and far better it is to be alone than to be in bad company. Just as disease is much more contagious than health, so we are more apt to imitate the vices of others than their virtues. Two apples, a bad one and a good one, placed together for a while, result in the ruin of the good one, not in the improvement of the bad one. The Psalmist knew the result of bad company, and his prayer was: "Incline not my heart to any evil thing, to practise wicked works with men that work iniquity: and let me not eat of their dainties" (Ps. 141:4).

Not without reason the Wise Man warned: "Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away." And again he declares: "Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go: lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul" (Prov. 4:14-15; 22:24-25). The prophet Jeremiah, living among a backsliding and rebellious nation, left a true example. Speaking for himself, he said: "I sat not in the assembly of the mockers, nor rejoiced; I sat alone because of thy hand" (Jer. 15:17).

The Christian's duty is to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. In the company of those who do not have this same aim in life he would be wasting valuable time. It is necessary to remember this and always be alert to the danger, for who knows how much time we still have? and who is he who feels so strong that he cannot be seduced by evil influence?

Very easily we imitate the character of our associates. Furthermore, as light-bearers before the world, we often are judged by the company we keep.

One of the great dangers in this age is indifference. Few care what religious views others have. When we meet with occasional opposition we sharpen our weapons and prepare for battle. At least we try to be ready to give a reason for our faith. When no one cares, we are

apt to get lax and perhaps think ungodly manners and tastes are not so bad after all. This is the danger point; we are not on the watch.

We do not realize the danger of wrong company as we should. For this reason the Apostle exhorts further, "Come back to your senses as you ought, and stop sinning." The command to "Come back to your senses" suggests that some are insensible, spiritually speaking. That is, they are asleep to their own best interests. They are slow to sense the danger, slow to feel the contamination of evil companionship.

Then there is the further point that sleepiness is contagious. When we see someone yawn, soon we yawn ourselves, and our yawning affects still others. The world's indifference will have this same effect on us as believers if we do not keep wide-awake and active.

A case to remember is the great and powerful Samson, who fell into the hands of his enemies through the work of evil company. The fall was sudden, though considerable time had elapsed since sin had begun its deadly work.

The most dangerous hour of a man's life is when he is deceived into thinking that he can secure the eternal riches without doing exactly what the Law of God requires. In this indolent condition he is hopeless. The sins of his nature, the anger, pride, or envy, will never be overcome till he realizes the need of

overcoming them and then works with a will to master himself. If he awakes to this necessity and conquers indolence, he can conquer all the rest of his evils. An evil temper cannot rule the individual who is determined to be kind and gentle in spite of all obstacles, neither will he be swerved by envy or governed by pride if he practices contentment and humility.

In his letter to the Romans, Paul warned of the shortness of the time and the need of keeping wide awake. In such serious times as these, we must deliberate with caution, but act with decision. Then, having made the right choice, we must resist all appearances of evil firmly and submit graciously to His every mandate. MM

Keep me, O God, from any act unkind or rude.

Forgive me if I have

Blamed others for what was my own fault; Been rude, discourteous, or bad tempered, even at home; For being rough, unjust, or unnecessarily critical of others.

Help me to build in my own life the virtues which I admire: Give me wisdom always to know

What I ought to do; What I ought to say; Where I ought to go.

Give me courage

To do what I know is right, even if it is unpopular; To never be ashamed to show that my first loyalty is to You.

Keep me from allowing myself to do anything Which would make it easier for another to go wrong;

Help me always to be an example of purity and self-discipline, In the memory of what You want me to be and do, Amen.



Why the Holocaust?

"Ever since I watched the holocaust story on TV this winter, and even before this, I have been upset, and wondered why this happened. Since I am a German and have close German friends, we talk about this. Knowing your viewpoint will set my mind straight on the matter. I have been a subscriber of your magazine for some time, and value your opinions highly."

There are surely no words to describe the horrors of the holocaust, as it is called, and there is no good answer as to why it happened. The inhumanity of men through the centuries reached its zenith—or perhaps we should say its nadir—at this point.

But there is no act of any human being for which God can be blamed. God sets certain laws in motion, and He allows individuals to be born and live as they choose during this period of time when He is silent. Until such time as He chooses to intervene directly, He is letting events take their course, interrupting only for the sake of those whom He sees as potential material for His eternal Kingdom. And when He interrupts, even then it is by the use of natural means, not open or visible to those looking on.

But perhaps your greatest question centers around the fact that those who persecuted the Jews were Germans, and that you and your friends are also Germans. There is no need for you to feel any share in the guilt of those who committed the horrors, even if you share their nationality. God judges on an individual basis. He does not judge any man or woman by the character of another. He does not condemn any person for the sins of another. He is very specific about this fact: "His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins" (Prov. 5:22). It was part of Israel's earliest law: "The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin" (Deut. 24:16). The principle was repeated by the prophet Ezekiel: "What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge? As I live, saith the Lord God, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him" (Ezek. 18:2-3, 20). The righteousness of one person cannot justify another, nor can the wickedness of one person condemn another. If I were the twin brother of Hitler, this fact in itself would not stand against me in the sight of God—not unless I was sympathetic with what the wrongdoer was doing.

This is God's principle. The only time He condemns one man for the sins of another is when one agrees with the wrongdoer or is doing anything to be part of or promote the wrongdoer in his wrong. This is the thought of "consenting with" the thief, and in this way participating in his sin (Ps. 50:18).

During the days of the Early Church, certain of the Christian preachers, including Stephen and Peter, condemned "the Jews" for crucifying Christ—even when they knew that the Jews they were addressing were not the same people responsible for the crucifixion (see Acts 2:23, 36; 4:10; 5:30; 7:52). But the Jews who heard these preachers shared the guilt because they were sympathetic with those who had killed Christ. Had these Jews spoken out against their countrymen who had done the wicked deed, they would not have been condemned with them.

At the present time, any authority that one man exercises over another, legally or illegally, is beyond the jurisdiction of God. His whole concern at the present time is for the development of His people, until the time when He again takes a hand. And then, righteousness, equity, and justice will prevail worldwide. "And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places" (Isa. 32:17-18). Then

there will be no more injustice, no more cruelty, no more suffering anywhere in the whole world. We look forward to that coming time.

• Who Is the Holy Spirit?

"I read your book on the Sabbath and feel that it is an excellent review of the subject.

"There is one matter that I read on page 44, 'Christ promised that when the Holy Spirit should come, (It) would teach them many things.' Why do you use the pronoun which designates neuter gender? Is not the Holy Spirit a person, one of the personalities of the Trinity? Please explain why this erroneous reference to the Holy Spirit was made. I just can't believe that anyone writing a book like the one referred to above would deny the personal divinity of the Holy Spirit."

What does the Bible say about the Holy Spirit? The Holy Spirit, first of all, is not a person. It is a power. Before His ascension, Jesus told His disciples of the power He would send them after He was taken from them. He said, "And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). They were to receive "power from on high," not a "person" from on high. The book of Acts also identifies the Holy Spirit as a power: "...Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me..." (Acts 1:8). On the day of Pentecost the power came upon them, and they went forth to be His witnesses, "the Lord working with them (by the power of the Holy Spirit), and confirming the word with signs following" (Mark 16:20).

People read in John 14:16-18, and other places, of the "Holy Spirit" referred to as "he" or "him," and immediately think of a person. But we must realize that our wording is derived from the original Greek, which uses pronouns according to the gender of the word to which the pronoun refers. All words in the Greek language have gender (masculine, feminine, neuter); and this gender is often without respect to the word or its meaning. When a pronoun is substituted for that word, it must agree with its antecedent in gender. Thus, the Greek word for "day" (hemera) is feminine, and the pronoun for "day" would be translated literally "she." When referring to "fruit," a masculine noun (karpos), one would say literally "he." The word for "city" being feminine, the pronoun would be literally "she" (when this situation occurred, as in Matthew 10:11, the translators, following our English custom, supplied the word "it").

When Jesus spoke of the "Spirit of truth" in John 14,

He called it the "Comforter," a masculine noun (parakletos). When He used a pronoun referring to it, He used the masculine form. But such a reference by no means suggests that the Comforter was a person, any more than the above-mentioned reference to "city" suggests that the city was a woman. A few of the newer translations, observing this fact, have used the pronoun "it" in place of "he" in John 14:16 and other places (see the Concordant Version, Goodspeed, and the New World Bible; also Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott).

Our only reason for denying the "personal divinity of the Holy Spirit" is that we do not find it taught in the Bible. In fact, the entire doctrine of the Trinity is outside the Bible. The word Trinity is not found upon its pages, nor is the thought of the Trinity.

For further discussion of the subject of the Trinity, see our booklet, "Trinity or Unity?"

• The Messiah "cut off, but not for himself"

"I have a question about Daniel 9:26, 'Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself.' Does this mean He was cut off 'for us' or 'others'?"

The passage you cite from Daniel is among several prophecies concerning the Messiah. It reads, "And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself" —clearly a prophecy of Christ's death.

What is the meaning of the phrase, "but not for himself"? The text in the Septuagint Bible, the oldest existing translation of the original Hebrew into Greek, translated some time before the birth of Christ, does not include the thought of "not for himself." It reads: "And after the sixty-two weeks, the anointed one shall be destroyed, and there is no judgment in him." We have also checked other translations available to us, and they are as follows:

Moffatt Bible: "The consecrated priest shall be cut off, leaving no successor."

The Smith Translation: "The anointed one shall be cut off, leaving none to succeed him."

The Revised Standard Version: "An anointed one shall be cut off, and shall have nothing."

The Lamsa Translation: "Messiah shall be slain, and the city shall be without a ruler."

The Douay Version: "Christ shall be slain: and the people that shall deny him shall not be his."

The Rotherham Bible: "The Anointed One shall be cut off, and have nothing."

The New Catholic Version: "Christ shall be slain; and the people that shall deny him shall not be his."

The Living Bible: "The Anointed One will be killed, his kingdom still unrealized."

The New American Standard Bible: "The Messiah will be cut off and have nothing."

The New English Bible: "At the critical time,...one who is anointed shall be removed with no one to take his part."

The Jerusalem Bible: "An Anointed one will be cut off—and... will not be for him."

The above would suggest strongly that the thought of "not for himself" is a mistranslation found in our Common Version. None of the above conflict with other scripture teachings, or with history as we know it to have occurred.

Concerning Alexander the Coppersmith

"Do you think Alexander the coppersmith will be resurrected and brought to judgment?"

All we know about Alexander the coppersmith is what the apostle Paul wrote near the end of his second epistle to Timothy. His words, as translated in our common version, read: "Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works: Of whom be thou ware also; for he hath greatly withstood our words" (II Tim. 4:14-15).

It would seem from this comment that Alexander was a former believer who turned against Paul. He had worked in the Christian ministry until, perhaps suddenly, perhaps gradually, he lost faith and began to work against it. We are not told the nature of his offense, or the evil he caused Paul, but it must have been serious, for the Apostle describes it as "much evil"; also, he "greatly withstood" Paul's words and the words of the other apostles; he was one of whom Paul advised Timothy, "be thou ware."

Was Alexander accountable for his misconduct? Apparently Paul thought so, or he would have not have said: "The Lord reward him according to his works." This is the plan by which God has arranged to judge and reward all of His servants, faithful and unfaithful: "according to their works" (see Rev. 22:12, 14; Jer. 17:9-10; Rom. 2:7-10.)

The newer versions read very much the same. "Alexander the metalworker did me a great deal of harm. The Lord will repay him for what he has done" (NIV; JB). "Retribution will fall upon him from the Lord" (NEB).

If we agree to serve God and then turn and work against His cause, God holds us responsible for our disobedience. "When the righteous turneth from his righteousness and committeth iniquity, he shall even die thereby" (Ezek. 18:21-22, 24). This is the plan of God's part of the covenant relationship with us. It entitles us to

receive His blessings, if we obey; it makes us subject to His curses or punishment if we disobey (Deut. 30:15). When Christ returns, all of God's servants who have died will be restored to life and together with the living will be brought to judgment and rewarded according to the record of their lives (Dan. 12:1-2).

This is why the apostle Paul reminded his brethren, "Do not forget that God can be severe as well as kind" (Rom. 11:22, JB). At the judgment, each servant of God will receive for "the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (II Cor. 5:10). None will be condemned for sins they did not commit; nor will any be rewarded for good they did not do. All will be fair and just, for God is a God of justice (I Sam. 2:3; Ps. 89:14). In the words of the wise Solomon, who proved himself unwise: "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Eccl. 12:14). The intervening period of death does nothing to purify or clear a blotted record.

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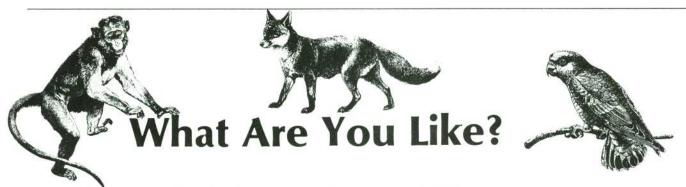
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The Gospel According to You

You are writing a gospel, A chapter each day, By deeds that you do By words that you say.

Men read what you write, Whether faithless or true; Say, what is the gospel According to you?



ONE OF the strangest friendships in history was that between Frederick the Great, king of Prussia and the famous French writer named Voltaire.

Frederick was a selfish and domineering ruler, and Voltaire was a man who had little respect for anyone. But he was so witty and entertaining that the Prussian king invited him to come to his castle at Potsdam and live there as long as he wanted to.

A bright sunny room in a corner of the castle was fitted up for Voltaire's special use and an artist was engaged to decorate the walls. Never before or since has a room had more unusual decorations. All around the paneling in colored wood carvings were figures of birds and animals—Frederick's singular way of illustrating the different traits of Voltaire's personality.

There were monkeys to mock his homeliness, parrots to symbolize his talkativeness, foxes to represent his slyness, peacocks because he was so proud and conceited, and flamingos to stand for his gluttony and love of food.

Most people would have been very upset at such insulting figures, but Voltaire always liked people to be honest in expressing their opinions, and seems to have enjoyed the king's originality. If he didn't like it, he never let anyone know it, and he used the room for nearly two years.

It might be a good thing for us if we could see our characters pictured in such a way that we could know just what other people think about us—and more especially, what God thinks of us. For always He sees us as we are. He never calls evil good, or good evil.

Perhaps we get conceited without realizing it and start strutting around like peacocks, and what excuse have we, any more than the peacock, to justify being so proud?

Or we talk too much and think other people like to hear us, when they are merely too polite to tell us that we sound like a parrot.

Maybe we are tempted to do things which seem smart and clever but which are not quite fair, and our neighbors think of us as sly and sneaky like a fox.

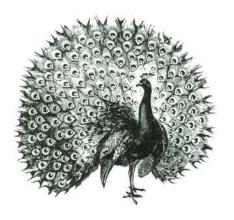
Many persons admire their own looks in a mirror, but they have disagreeable tempers and are so hard to live with that their companions consider them as ugly as monkeys.

How often when we are selfish and want more than our share of the candy or dessert or any other item, our mouths must look as big as the beak of the flamingo. Our friends are too courteous to picture our faults in the way Frederick had the artist picture those of Voltaire. But if they did, what would our rooms look like?

Would our characters be accurately depicted by peacocks, parrots, foxes, monkeys and flamingos, or would they be better represented by creatures spoken of by Bible writers who used the ox for strength, the lamb for gentleness, the dove for purity and the eagle for aspiration?

It's worth thinking about.

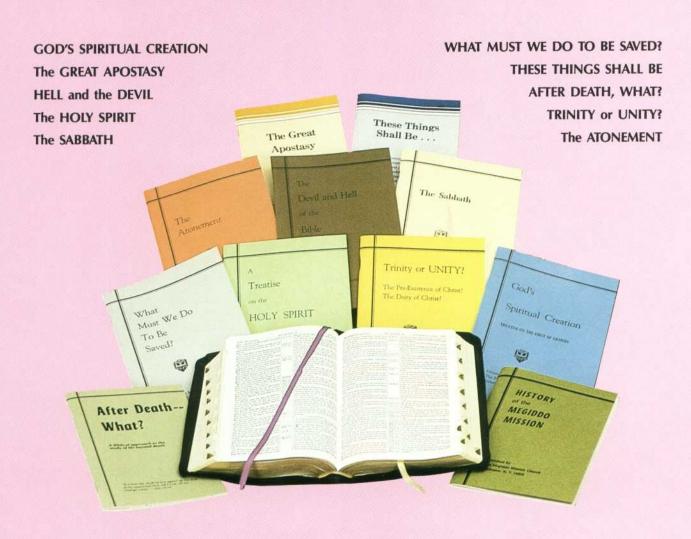
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