

Megiddo Message

*At daybreak You listen for my voice;
At dawn I am waiting to hear You,
My King and my God! Psalm 5:3*

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I Promised the Lord... And I Can't Break It

This theme is taken from the words of Jephthah the Gileadite to his only daughter. "...I have promised the Lord..." (Judg. 11:35, Beck). This was Jephthah's reason *why* he could not do what the impulse of the moment seemed to dictate, and it is mine, too. Here is reason enough. My own sacred vow to God is my commitment; I have given my word. I have opened *my* mouth unto the Lord, and that is *that!*

Jephthah's vow came at a time of desperate need; so did mine. I had delayed long enough. The evidence had been weighed, the cost considered. *I gave my word*, and now I must have respect for it. "I made the Lord a promise, and I can't break it." My word is at stake, and *I must* keep faith with myself.

Then, too, I must keep faith with my friends. Others are depending on me to be faithful. Others are watching for my example, and are depending on me to make good. I have told them that it is possible to live a life pleasing to God—I must *show* them. How can I fail them?

No, *I promised the Lord...and I can't break it.*

Then, I must keep faith with those I have helped and encouraged. Many of them I do not know personally, but to fail them might be a blow to their young and tender faith. Furthermore, it would put the Gospel I represent in disrepute. It would show that I myself did not really believe what I had told them.

No, *I have promised the Lord...and I can't break it.*

Then, I must keep faith with myself. At best, I have not many more years to live. Life is short, and to turn back at this point would deprive me of all that I have invested in the cause of Christ. I have sacrificed and labored. I know I have

more work yet to do, but considering the miles I have covered and the miles ahead, what folly to even think of breaking my promise!

There is also the imminent possibility that Christ will arrive, and interrupt the steady course of history. It is the plan of God. It shall be. When? I do not know. But what shame upon me if He should come and find me unfaithful, a deserter—or even a slacker!

No, *I have promised, and I cannot break it.*

All of the above are ties that hold me, commitments that strengthen me, facts that create within me a horror of breaking my word. I rejoice in all these valuable aids.

But none of these alone are strong enough to hold one through life's most trying hours. In fact, the combined influence of all of them is not enough. Over and above all is the one anchor which holds me steady: My personal promise *to God*. Beside this, all the others are at best auxiliary supports and might fail at any time. What if my friends should lose faith in the cause; what if those I have taught and encouraged in the Word should desert it—have I not said and sung a hundred times, "What though all men should forsake Thee"—? For family and friends *may* forsake, and what then?

This is why Jesus reminds us not to place too much confidence in anything earthly. This is why He declared, "If any man come to me, and [be not willing to suffer the loss of] his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26). When Jesus said this, He was preparing His followers for all the possibilities. In a clash of claims, *He*

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

Soon-coming events ...

THE HERALD AND THE KING

OUR PLANET will soon witness the greatest events in its history. For centuries God has been silent. But that silence will soon be broken by the arrival of Elijah the prophet, who comes to herald the Second Advent of Jesus Christ. "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: ...lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (Mal. 4:5-6).

Then shall follow the King of kings and Lord of lords, to begin His momentous work of transforming our world into the glorious and eternal Kingdom of God.

The Bible pictures all events, all men and all nations moving together toward this one God-ordained climax, when "the kingdoms of this world" will become "the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ" (Rev. 11:15), a kingdom in which all will enjoy the blessings of peace, equity and prosperity. When the task is complete, our earth shall be numbered among the heavenly, glorified worlds and filled with immortal inhabitants, bringing to reality the promise of our Lord in His prayer: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."

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Breaking the Silence

Between the Old and New Testaments was a period of some four hundred apparently silent years. During this time there were no writing prophets, no angelic visits, no new revelations. Judah had indeed become the dry ground out of which the Messiah was prophesied to come (Isa. 53:2). The scepter seemingly had departed from the house of David and the glory of Solomon's kingdom had faded.

During these silent centuries many people quietly laid aside their belief in a coming Messiah. Yes, He still might be coming, but *when!* What was there to inspire faith in the ancient prophecies? And so the majority forgot them and lived only for the present.

But others clung to their faith. God had spoken, and He would *do* it. But even they were sometimes puzzled by the long, long silence. When? When would He break the silence and fulfill His Word?

What we know, and what they

should have known, is that God's ways are not ours, nor His time ours. He was waiting for the fullness of time to come. And when it came, so did the Messiah. Suddenly the silence was broken by a "multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

Christ's birth was like a flash of lightning in a midnight sky. Then events moved rapidly forward. His youth, His ministry, then crucifixion, death, resurrection, and He was on His way to the Father, leaving His disciples to carry on the work He had begun.

During the next half century the apostles, aided by the Holy Spirit power, accomplished their God-assigned tasks. They completed the writing of the Sacred Scriptures; they preached the gospel to the limits of the then-known world.

Then once again, silence.

Nearly two millennia have passed since God spoke audibly and openly to men through the coming of Jesus Christ, through vision, miracle or revelation.

In the meantime, doubt and

uncertainty have taken a heavy toll. For many the effulgent glory of God has faded. Darkness has descended upon the earth, and men are groping, reaching out to touch the hand that doesn't seem to be there, straining to hear the voice that doesn't seem to speak.

But we who have the privilege of learning from the revealed Word of God know that the plan of God is going steadily forward, that even in the silence *God is working*, and soon that silence will be broken—dramatically! God will speak—thunderously!—and everyone on earth will hear Him! "The Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake" (Joel 3:16).

Any moment God may break the silence and begin to speak. Any moment may appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven, His forerunner, Elijah the prophet, to begin his momentous work of turning the children of darkness to the fathers of light, "lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (Mal. 4:5-6).

We are living in critical times., in the closing hours of an age. The present silence of God is but the prelude to the lightning bolt that soon will flash across the leaden

sky and He who shook the earth once will shake it again. He has promised, "Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain" (Heb. 12:26-27).

One of these days the silence will be broken. "Our God [Christ, Emmanuel, "God with us"—Matt. 1:23] shall come, and shall not keep

silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him" (Ps. 50:3). This prophecy was spoken by David, and in a context clearly prophetic of the Second Advent. The very fact that His coming *breaks* the silence ("Our God shall come, and shall not *keep* silence") shows that a long silent period has preceded the event.

The silence will end, and once again God will speak and act visibly and powerfully in the affairs of

men. This time the sky will be split by the light of Christ's arrival: "For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Matt. 24:27). He will come with vengeance for those who do not accept the gospel. But He will come also with an overflowing measure of blessing for His saints who have been diligently preparing during His silence for the unveiling of the Lord of hosts.

MM

Lord? How Long?

"Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil" — Eccl. 8:11

When will the great change come? How long shall this holy ground be desecrated by godless feet, by the immoral, the sensual, the violent, the obscene; those who deny Him and profane His name?

"Lord, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph?" (Ps. 94:3). How long shall it be until the "wickedness of the wicked come to an end"? (Ps. 7:9).

Our longing hearts cry out to God for retribution, judgment, deliverance; the time when the Lord will take to Himself the governing of the earth and execute judgment and justice to all people; when there shall be officers of peace and exactors of righteousness, and "all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God" (Isa. 60:17; 52:10); when "violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise (Isa. 60:18); when "the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteous-

ness quietness and assurance for ever" (Isa. 32:17).

The Day is near, very near, when "the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first" (I Thess. 4:16).

The time has been fixed "when iniquity shall have an end" (Ezek. 21:25; 7:6). Along with that end will come an end of strife, violence, injustice, suffering, hardship, oppression, and "all shall know the Lord...from the least...even unto the greatest" (Jer. 31:34). It will be a time of universal prosperity, when "they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands" (Isa. 65:21-22). And God will be their

ready helper: for "it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear....They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord" (Isa. 65:24-25).

Beautiful is the picture, peaceful the scene, inspiring and uplifting the promise.

One day soon, Jesus Christ Himself will be walking here upon this earth. With Him will be multitudes of angels from the heavenly realm. And no more shall there be anyone or anything to hurt or destroy, harm or cause suffering, "because the former troubles are forgotten" (Isa. 65:16).

How long, Lord? No one knows, but it cannot be long. The prophecies for the last hour are shouting that the time is at hand.

The great question with us is, Are we ready? For the great Day will not always wait. When the time is right, it will arrive.

Whether we are ready or not. MM

*Lord God of Eternity,
whose wisdom never diminishes,
whose light is everlasting,
whose law is perfect and just,
and whose rewards to the upright are magnificent
above anything we can think or imagine:*

I praise You for Your goodness in revealing Your Word to the children of earth, for making known Your law of life and Your plan.

I praise You for giving me life and breath that I may seek You; and seeking You, may serve You; and serving You, may by a dedicated life please You and merit eternal blessing in the Kingdom that You will soon establish here on earth.

I praise You for the knowledge that earth will soon be joined to heaven, that Your heavenly Kingdom will come and everyone who lives will glorify Your name.

At the same time, Lord, I see my failings. When I search beneath the surface of my too hasty days, I find motives so suspect that I am speechless. In thoughtless word and compulsive deed, I have bartered the faith I claim and denied its expression.

Lord, You know how far my pride has carried me, how shabby my example, how impoverished my soul. Forgive me for taking my clues for character from the whim of the moment instead of the Christ of the ages.

Father, I pray Your help:

*When my obedience would falter,
let Your discipline control;
When my trust would waver,
let the evidence of Your faith overpower;
When my courage would weaken,
let hope be strong;
When my understanding would fail,
let mercy apply;
When sorrow comes,
let Your Spirit comfort;
When temptation lures,
let my commitment keep me square and firm.*

In all circumstances may I do what You call right. And may I work untiringly to develop that beauty and strength of character that You can bless and honor now and through all the ages, when Your heavenly Kingdom has come and Your will is done on earth as it is now done in billions of glorified worlds above. In the Name of Your coming glorious King I pray. Amen.



Prayer

We are fast approaching an end. Time is rushing, as it were, relentlessly away from us. And we are caught in the maddened whirl of a modern civilization.

In these last critical moments of this age, thank God we can pray! Thank God, we can seek His strength, His help, His guidance, His protection.

But how? How can we know that we can approach a Being who is all-holy, all-powerful, all-knowing? How can we be assured our prayers will ever reach the throne of grace? How can we know that He will consider, hear, or help us?

First let us consider our situation: We are the temporary inhabitants of a small island in space, a planet we call earth. Yet, by God's creative design and goodness we are living creatures. We can move, and think, and co-ordinate; we can talk and feel and taste; we can plan and organize and relate. How do we do it? Surely we must confess that we did not make ourselves; we are the work of a benevolent Creator.

Can we approach Him in prayer, He who has already given us everything we have and are?

The answer is, Yes! But ... we must follow His rules.

We Pray...But Is God Listening?

All prayer springs from a sense of need. And the more urgent the need, the more intense the prayer. As long as we can get along on our own, we are quite happy to forget God. But let real trouble strike, let life be threatened—by natural disaster, sickness, war, or terror—and instinctively we pray.

When the first attacks of Desert Storm were launched, millions of people were praying.

When those on the Titanic learned that the vessel was doomed, they prayed.

If the facts could be known, probably most of the passengers on any stricken airliner have gone down praying.

To pray is easy, if we define prayer simply as words addressed to the Deity. It is as easy to pray as to talk or to form words in the mind. When in need, we pray...*but is God listening?*

Just as the most sophisticated electrical device is useless—unless connected to a source of power; just as the cries of a hunter lost in the deep Brazilian forest are in vain—unless someone is near enough to hear him; so our prayers are only so much vocal exercise, unless God is listening.

How can we know God is listening? Just because words are addressed to God is no assurance that He hears them.

When God Has Heard...

God *has* heard the prayers of mortals. To this fact testimony is given repeatedly in Scripture.

God heard Jesus. Said Jesus: "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always" (John 11:41-42).

God heard David. Said David: "Verily God hath heard me; he hath attended to the voice of my prayer" (Ps. 66:19). "...Know that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself: the Lord will hear when I call unto him" (Ps. 4:3). "Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud; and he shall hear my voice" (Ps. 55:17).

God heard Elijah, when He sent rain that had been withheld three years (I Kings 17:1; 18:41).

God heard Solomon when, after he "had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the Lord filled the house. And the priests could not enter into the house of the Lord, because the glory of the Lord had filled the Lord's house. And...[when] all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the Lord upon the house, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped, and praised the Lord, saying, For he is

good; for his mercy endureth for ever" (II Chron 7:1-4).

God heard Moses. It is even recorded that the Lord "spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend" (Ex. 33:11).

The Bible is filled with instances where God heard the prayers of His servants: Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Joshua, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Jesus' apostles, and many, many others.

God has promised to hear the prayers of "the righteous." "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry. The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles" (Ps. 34:15, 17).

When God Does Not Hear

But God does not hear all prayer. The simple fact that a prayer is offered by a mortal being is no evidence that God has heard. In fact, the Bible states several conditions which *must* exist before God will hear a prayer. It even says that if these conditions do *not* exist, God will *not* hear.

Speaking of His nation Israel who were perpetuating an empty and meaningless ritual, He said, "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts;...when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean" (Isa. 1:11, 15-16).

Again he stated the real cause of God's failure to hear: "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear" (Isa. 59:1-2). Sin was the barrier.

God even told His prophet Jeremiah *not* to pray for the rebellious and stiffnecked people *because He would not hear*. These are His words: "Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to me: for I will not hear thee...Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up a cry or prayer for them: for I will not hear them in the time that they cry unto me for their trouble" (Jer. 7:16; 11:14). And what was the reason? "Because...I spake unto you [the rebellious people], rising up early and speaking, but ye heard not; and I called you, but ye answered not" (Jer. 7:13). Here is the fatal error: heedlessness, unthinking, inattention, indifference, lack of concern. "Because I called, and ye refused" (Prov. 1:24).

Through His prophet Amos, God again repeated the fact that His ears would be closed to a hard and disobedient people: "Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols" (Amos 5:23).

God's love and concern is not for all people who happen to exist by the laws He set in motion. He reserves His attention and care for those who care for Him. "I love them that love me"; He says, "and those that seek me early shall find me" (Prov. 8:17).

God wants us to pay attention to His words, to listen when He speaks. If we do not, He is under no obligation to hear us. "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh

upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: they would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof" (Prov. 1:24-30).

God Will Hear IF...

To gain an audience in heaven's throne room, we must pray according to heaven's rules. These rules are God-decreed and firm.

Rule #1: To have God listen to our prayer, *we must pray according to His will*. Wrote the apostle John: "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us" (I John 5:14).

Praying within the will of God means that our asking must be within the framework of what God has promised to give. He has not promised a life free from temptation and trial, although He has promised we will not be tempted above that which we are able to bear (I Cor. 10:13). If we should pray for a trial-free life, we would not be praying according to His will and could not expect to have God hear our prayer.

Rule #2: To have God listen to our prayer, *we must be fervent and sincere in our prayer*. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5:16).

To gain an audience in heaven's throne room, we must pray according to heaven's rules.

Rule #3: To have God hear our prayer, *we must have a proper condition of heart and mind*. The Lord spelled out this condition clearly to Solomon at the time of the dedication of the temple: "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; *then* will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land" (II Chron. 7:14).

Then and only then will God hear and help. MM

Pray not that flowers always spring beneath thy feet, lest thou be poisoned with the sting of things too sweet. Commit thy thoughts unto Him with the consciousness that He knows and records thine innermost motives; entreat His aid to be purer in heart.

When The Answer Is "No"

Experience has taught us that we are not self-sufficient. We are not on our own. Human hands fail; human hopes founder. We need God.

We need God even more than this. We need Him every moment, every hour, every day, for "in him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28). Upon Him we depend for every breath of air, every heartbeat, every bite of the food that sustains our life.

We know this because God has given us His Word, a book of instruction by which we can learn about Him and His plan and His creation. Without it we could not know either the Creator or the purpose behind creation. We see all about us the evidence of His work, but without a knowledge of the Book He has given us we would be totally in the dark as to who, or why, or what, or where, or how.

But thank God, *we can know Him*. And thank God, we can pray to Him in our time of need, assured that He is able—abundantly able—to supply our need, to help, to deliver. Has He not promised His faithful servant, "Because he hath

set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name. He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him" (Ps. 91:14-15). Again, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Heb. 13:5). And again, "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness" (Isa. 41:10).

And so we pray. We ask God to give us what is best for us, according to His will. And inwardly we *hope* that He will send help, that He

**When God looks
at us, He sees
the real needs of our
lives, and the real
potential.**

will deliver us from difficulty, that He will make our way easy and smooth, or at least less problematic.

But what about the times God does not seem to answer?

Have we considered that His answer may be "No"?

Something in us wants to make faith in God an automatic release from problems. When everything goes well, we tell ourselves it is because God is pleased with us. When trouble strikes, we expect Him to rescue us immediately, or at least to supply some form of Divine anesthetic which will save

us some of the pain or suffering.

But what if He does not?

The problem lies not with God but with our own misreading of the Divine contract. We are thinking from the wrong premise, we have the wrong expectations. If we are asking for what is outside His will for us, we cannot expect Him to comply with our request.

When we agree to serve God, trust God, obey God, we want the other half of the agreement to be: "I will bless you—NOW," "I will prosper you—NOW," "I will save you from pain, from grief, from disappointment, from hardship, from suffering—NOW." And when these benefits are not immediately forthcoming, we question, doubt, deny, even blame. We forget that disappointment, loss, suffering, sorrow, strain and stress are within the mortal experience of all, even the most dedicated, most serious believers, and that God has not planned or promised to spare us from these. Rather, He has promised to be with us in all these, and to give us the strength to endure them.

When Moses pleaded inadequacy for the great task God was

assigning him, that of leading the host of Israelites out of Egypt, the Lord answered simply, "Go, and I will be with thee" (Ex. 4).

When Moses prayed for release from the Divine judgment upon him because of his own transgression, that God would allow him to enter the Land of Promise, God heard—and the answer was a firm "No." "Thou shalt not go over this Jordan" (Deut. 3:27).

David prayed that he might be able to build the temple, according to the former plan. He had the materials and everything in place to do the job. He sought God earnestly, but the answer was "No." "Thou shalt not build a house for my name" (I Chron. 28:3).

Paul the apostle prayed for release from his thorn in the flesh. The answer he received was not what he had hoped for. It was equivalent to "No." Said God, "My grace is sufficient for thee" (II Cor. 12:9). The trial was grievous, for not once but three times he prayed that he might be released from it, and each time the answer was "No."

What was Paul's reaction to the Divine "No"? Hear the ring of triumph in his submission: "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong" (II Cor. 12:9-10).

Now what is the difference between the "No" these men of God received in answer to their prayers and the "No" we receive at times? The difference is that we are living in an age when God is silent. When God answers prayer now, He does not make the mountain blaze with fire, or open a road through the sea, or send His angel to stand

visibly beside His children. Today God works through human instruments and natural means. But the important point is that *He works*. He is not inactive just because He is not seen. He is not ignoring His children just because His audible voice is not heard. He is still working within the limits of His promises.

God hath not promised skies always blue,

Flower-strewn pathways all our lives thru';

God hath not promised sun without rain,

Joy without sorrow, peace without pain.

God hath not promised we shall not know

Toil and temptation, trouble and woe;
He hath not told us we shall not bear
Many a burden, many a care.

God hath not promised smooth roads and wide,

Swift easy travel, needing no guide;
Never a mountain rocky and steep,
Never a river turbid and deep.

What *has* God promised?

One of His outstanding promises is that of "strength for the day." "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be" (Deut. 33:25).

Another revealing promise is found in these words of the apostle Paul: "Bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (I Tim. 4:8). Here is a comprehensive insurance policy.

What does it tell us? The more we ponder this text, the more we appreciate its meaning. Translated into everyday terms, it is a promise of sufficiency of all things physical and spiritual to allow us to fulfill our God-assigned purpose; sufficient life, sufficient health, sufficient strength, along with all that is

How unkind God would be, were He to deprive us of the very experiences that His Divine wisdom is using to fit us for membership in His royal family.

good and needful to prepare us for the future, glorious, abundant life God has offered. That is His guarantee. "My God shall supply all your need..." (Phil. 4:19).

We have yet another promise: that He will go with us, a Divine companion through all our days. Did He not assure Jacob long ago, "My presence will go with thee"? Is it not the assurance renewed to every sincere, true believer, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee"? (Heb. 13:5). He has arranged for this constant protection through His

When this world fails or disappoints us, perhaps God is teaching us to set our affections on things above.

angels, His specially appointed ministers to the future heirs of salvation. "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them" (Ps. 34:7).

Then, too, we have the further assurance that God will not allow us to be overpowered by adversity; that our efforts for the eternal crown will not be thwarted by circumstances beyond our control. For "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (I Cor. 10:13).

What about the times when our needs seem beyond what is available to us? Perhaps we need to reevaluate our needs, to see them through God's eyes.

When God looks at us, He sees the real needs of our lives, and the real potential. He looks for heart qualities which can be developed *through discipline*. He sees the latent spiritual energies which can be converted into mighty spiritual strengths *through trial*. More than what we are, He sees *what we can become*.

When the things of this world disappoint us, perhaps our real need is for a lesson in His scale of values, to teach us to remove our confidence from the things that are "seen" and transfer it to the things that can be seen only by the eye of faith.

When we suffer pain, perhaps our real need is for a vital lesson in humility, patience or endurance.

When someone or something in this world fails us; when stressful situations try us; when circumstances seem destined to defeat us, perhaps our real need is to learn genuine gratitude to God for what He *has* given, even though it is now withdrawn, and to recognize our total dependence upon God and set our affections on things above.

How unkind God would be, how unjust and unmerciful, were He to deprive us of the very experiences that His Divine wisdom is using to fit us for membership in His royal family, to compel us to grow, to mature us to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ!

Our mortal experience is not for naught. If we have bound ourselves in a covenant relationship with God, if we have made an entire commitment of our life to Him, we can know that the whole disposing of our lives is in His hand and that though the schooling be difficult, the rewards will be infinitely more than we can think or imagine. And—glorious promise—He will allow nothing that will prevent our final success. What more could we ask!

What, then, are we to do when God does not seem to answer our prayer?

Only this: to make sure that we are doing all in our power to get ourselves into a right relationship with God, submissive to His will. Then when we pray we can know that He who sees at once the beginning and the end will work all things together for our eternal good, both in this world and in the world to come.

Even though, at the moment, we do not understand; even though, at the moment, He does not seem to answer.

MM

God Answers Prayer

God answers the prayer of the faithful,
Though weary and tested and faint:
He answers the prayer of the penitent;
He answers the prayer of the saint.

He promises answers abundant!
He said in His word—and it's true—
That the truehearted seeker shall find Him,
The answer to carry him through.

Praise God for His answers so gracious,
Beyond human resource or thought!
His wisdom, so vast and unending,
Is ours...if His will we have sought.

Rejoice O my soul, and be thankful
For mercy beyond all compare!
Trust God, He is true to His children,
And is waiting to answer their prayer.

In His last recorded sermon before He was crucified Jesus gave these instructions to His disciples: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full...the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in parables [parables], but I shall show you plainly of the Father. At that day ye shall ask in my name. And...whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you" (John 16: 23-26; 15:16).

Jesus fills a singular role in the plan of God. His God-assigned name was "Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us" (Matt. 1:23). To us He is the instrument of our salvation, our Redeemer, our Savior, our King. Paul's statement to Timothy (I Tim. 2:5) shows one more position He fills, for there is "one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." Jesus is our intercessor, our advocate, our point of contact with the Father, as well as our perfect Example.

There are several occasions recorded in the Bible where a righteous person prayed to God in behalf of sinful people, and God heard and answered their prayer. Several times Moses prayed to God to spare the wayward Israelites and give them another chance. After they were settled in Canaan, on one occasion they fell to worshipping Baalim and Ashtaroth. At that time the prophet Samuel convinced them to put away their pagan gods and serve the true God, and he prayed to God on their behalf. The Lord heard and answered his prayer (I Samuel 12).

Our need for an intercessor arises from the fact that God is "of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity" (Hab. 1:13). If a person or a nation has rejected

"In Jesus' Name We Pray"

God and is living in open violation to His law, unless that person or nation repents and turns to the Lord, the Lord will not hear their prayer. This principle is stated by Isaiah: "Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward...When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood" (Isa. 1:4, 15).

The prophet Isaiah then spells out the remedy: "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well" (vs. 16-17). As soon as we show a desire to repent and change, God will hear and help. But until we reach that point, we must rely on someone who can intercede for us.

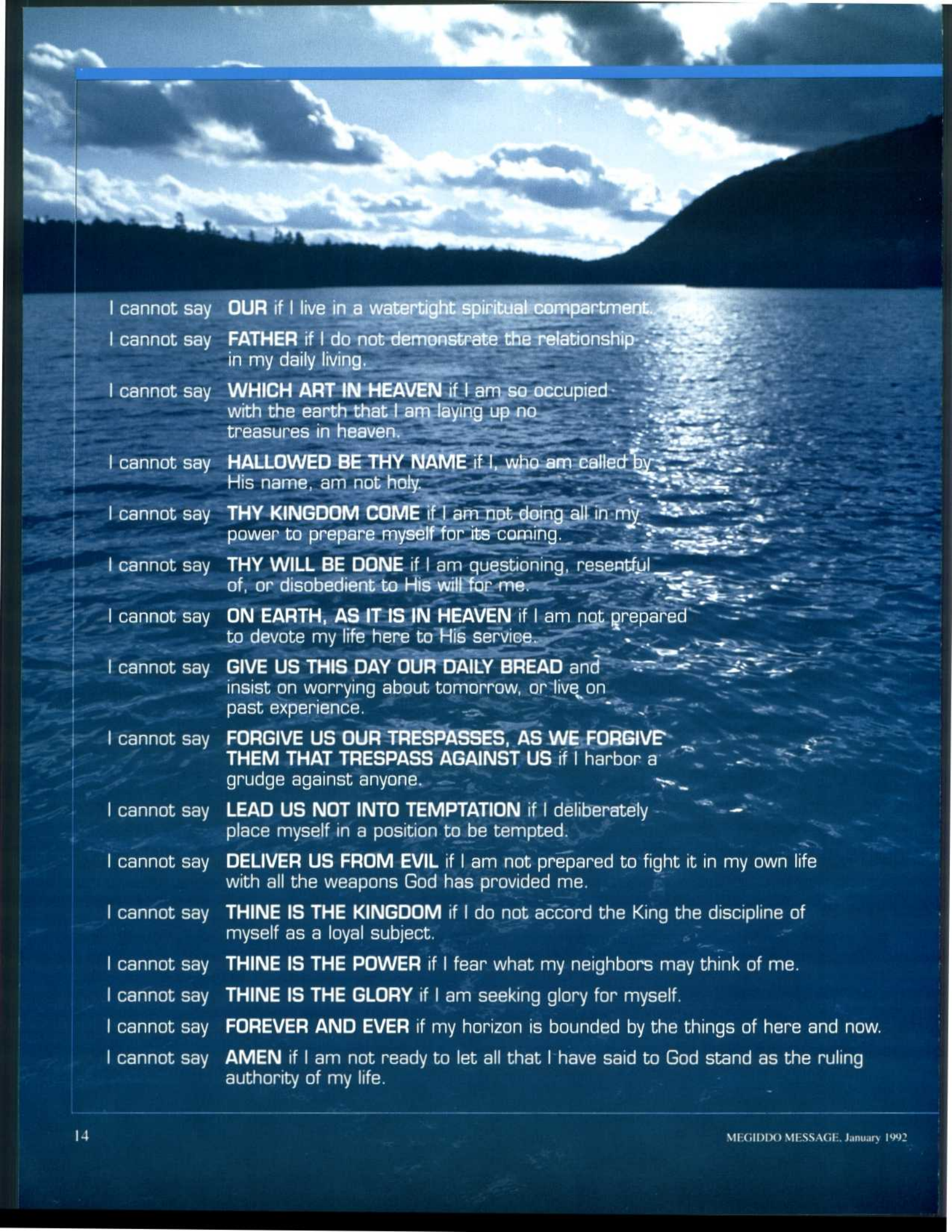
The statement of the apostle John in his Epistle emphasizes that we are

not alone in approaching God. "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (I John 2:1). Here is a most merciful provision, that while we are still in the sinful state we can have an intercessor or advocate in the person of Jesus Christ. That is why we can pray in His name.

There is another aspect of praying in Christ's name. If someone were doing something *in our name*, this would mean that he would be performing as we would; he would be expressing our aims, our standards, our ideals, and we would be viewed in the light of his performance. Just so, when we pray in Christ's name, we say we are approaching God just as Jesus would have. This means that the major characteristics of Jesus' life must characterize our lives. We must fill our lives with the things that filled His life—in short, we must be Christlike.

If we would pray truly in Christ's name, all our prayers and all our living must follow Christ. Praying in His name is not merely a phrase to repeat but a privilege and a responsibility to live the life distinguished by those things which made Christ the beloved of God. If we do this, we can be sure Christ will intercede for us and God will hear our petition and help us. MM

Praying in Jesus' name makes us responsible to live the life distinguished by those things which made Christ the beloved Son of God.

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- I cannot say **OUR** if I live in a watertight spiritual compartment.
- I cannot say **FATHER** if I do not demonstrate the relationship in my daily living.
- I cannot say **WHICH ART IN HEAVEN** if I am so occupied with the earth that I am laying up no treasures in heaven.
- I cannot say **HALLOWED BE THY NAME** if I, who am called by His name, am not holy.
- I cannot say **THY KINGDOM COME** if I am not doing all in my power to prepare myself for its coming.
- I cannot say **THY WILL BE DONE** if I am questioning, resentful of, or disobedient to His will for me.
- I cannot say **ON EARTH, AS IT IS IN HEAVEN** if I am not prepared to devote my life here to His service.
- I cannot say **GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD** and insist on worrying about tomorrow, or live on past experience.
- I cannot say **FORGIVE US OUR TRESPASSES, AS WE FORGIVE THEM THAT TRESPASS AGAINST US** if I harbor a grudge against anyone.
- I cannot say **LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION** if I deliberately place myself in a position to be tempted.
- I cannot say **DELIVER US FROM EVIL** if I am not prepared to fight it in my own life with all the weapons God has provided me.
- I cannot say **THINE IS THE KINGDOM** if I do not accord the King the discipline of myself as a loyal subject.
- I cannot say **THINE IS THE POWER** if I fear what my neighbors may think of me.
- I cannot say **THINE IS THE GLORY** if I am seeking glory for myself.
- I cannot say **FOREVER AND EVER** if my horizon is bounded by the things of here and now.
- I cannot say **AMEN** if I am not ready to let all that I have said to God stand as the ruling authority of my life.

*T*hroughout all ages prayer has been esteemed by the children of God as a sacred duty, a holy privilege. Prayer was the source of their spiritual vitality, their singleness of purpose, their calm in storm. On the pages of Holy Writ are many confirmations of the fact that the saints of old were often found in sweet communion with their God.

But perhaps no character whose life history is revealed in the Scriptures gives us a deeper understanding of prayer than does that of our Master and perfect Example. His unequaled record of obedience can be attributed directly to His fervency in prayer and His profound reverence for His Father's law.

On the gray hillsides, under the fig and olive trees, in the quiet fields during the heat of noonday, and under the stars of night, He sought solitude and closer communion with His Father. No one can show Christian maturity in the crowded concourse of daily life without lonely musing and silent prayer; and the intensity of this need is in proportion to the greatness of the soul. There were many times during our Lord's ministry when even from the loneliness of desert places He dismissed His most beloved that He might be alone with God, so burning was His desire to possess a deeper sense of Divine wisdom and to attain to the highest levels of holiness.

We can imagine that during those eighteen years of seclusion, when the scenes of His daily toil centered around the carpenter shop, Jesus often trod the path which led to the summit of the hill on which Nazareth was built. There He poured out His heart to the Father. There He made ardent appeals for patience. His Father's business was urgent. The glad tidings of the Kingdom must be her-

alded abroad. The law of life must be presented anew to the Jewish nation, lest they be lost in the hair-splitting inventions created by overzealous rabbis to supplement the Mosaic Law. In addition to all this, a group of individuals had to be taught and trained to carry on after He would leave them. Jesus had the ability; He was conscious of His power to confound the doctors of the Law.

Yet His Father's business must wait. Most urgent was the character development which would insure His own salvation. Now He had to eat the "butter and honey" that He might "learn to refuse the evil and choose the good" in His own daily life. Before He could deal wisely with human nature, He had to learn what is in the human heart by a diligent study and analysis of His own heart. We can scarcely comprehend what vast resources of patience were demanded by the Nazareth school of discipline; and it may have been in His sanctuary at the summit of the hill, in communion with the Father, that these profound lessons were mastered.

During the three years of His ministry, the curtain which veils Christ's hidden prayer chamber is

lifted a little. We read, "He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God"; and again, "Christ...who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death...was heard in that he feared." Further it is revealed, "In the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed" (Luke 6:12; Heb. 5:7; Mark 1:35). The varied settings of these hallowed hours of prayer may have been amid the olives at Bethany, the wilderness of Judea, the solitude of Gadara, the peak of Hermon, or the sacred slopes of Olivet.

Treasured thoughts cluster around our Lord's spiritual retreat at the foot of Olivet, in the garden of Gethsemane. We dare not intrude too closely into this scene. We know only that prior to His arrest and the horrible ordeal which followed, Gethsemane was the scene of the most intense struggle in the life of our Master. There, on bended knee, the final battle was fought and won in a glorious prayer of resignation, "Not my will, but thine, be done."

When Jesus Prayed...

Christ has left us this example of keeping in close touch with the Father, and we should follow in His steps. Living in this high-tensioned

**Christ has left us
this example of
keeping in close touch
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twentieth century, being exposed to the whirl from dawn until dark, we need to *take time* or *make time* to be

holy, to prepare our hearts to seek the Lord. Often "the world is too much with us"; we are overfraught with temporal concerns. Let us steal away in our Master's footsteps to the hilltop of prayer, where we can spread our minds before the Lord—as Gideon's fleece—to be moistened with the dews of Heaven.

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Ps. 46:1). We can, by drawing near to God in prayer, find that "very present help" in every trouble. We separate ourselves from this help by our sins. "The Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from

you, that he will not hear" (Isa. 59:1,2). By removing the great obstacle of sin, we can place God between ourselves and our foe.

Oh, keep the way clear; let nothing come between thy soul and thy God!

God is a "present help" in trouble through the channel of thanksgiving. We may have prayed for patience, and God hems us in with irritating situations. Thank God! Thank Him instantly when confronted with the trial, for "tribulation worketh patience." If a situation arises which would provoke jealousy, thank God for the opportunity to develop unselfishness. If the circumstances would provoke vainglory, thank God for an opportunity to grow in humility.



Pray Without Ceasing

A number of ministers were assembled to discuss difficult questions. Among others it was asked how the command to "pray without ceasing" could be complied with, and one of the ministers was appointed to write an essay to be read at the next month's meeting.

Overhearing the meeting was a maid servant, who exclaimed, "What! a whole month to tell the meaning of that text. It is one of the easiest and best in the Bible!"

"Well, well," said the old minister, "what can you say about it, Mary? How would you understand it? Can you pray all the time when you have so many things to do?"

"Why! yes, Sir," said Mary. "The more things I have to do, the more I pray."

"Let us hear how you do this," said the minister.

"Well," said the girl, "when I open my eyes in the morning, I pray, 'Lord, open the eyes of

my understanding.' While I am dressing, I pray that I may be clothed with righteousness. When I have washed me, I ask for the washing of regeneration. When I begin to work, I pray that I may have strength equal to my day. When I kindle a fire, I pray that God's Word may burn in my heart. As I begin to sweep the house, I pray that my heart may be cleansed from all impurities. When I am preparing and partaking of breakfast, I desire to be fed with the manna and the sincere milk of the Word. When I am busy with the children, I look to God as my Father and pray for the spirit of adoption that I may be His child. And so on all day, everything I do furnishes me with a thought of prayer."

"Enough," saith the old minister. "These things are revealed to babes and often hid from the wise and prudent. Go on, Mary, pray without ceasing."

MM

When physical suffering would crush us, when perplexing problems weigh heavily, thank God for the opportunity to prove the almighty strength of His everlasting arms. If temporal privileges are denied us, let us thank God for the reminder to loosen our grasp on the things which are seen; thank God that the things of eternity can still be ours. Yes, "in everything give thanks." Insurmountable difficulties will disappear, adverse circumstances will turn favorable through prayers of thanksgiving.

Begin the day alone with God. Acknowledge your total dependence upon the Heavenly Father. Adore His omnipotence and offer your gratitude for benefits so unworthily received. Cry out with the Psalmist, "Keep back thy servant ... from presumptuous sins"—those willful, premeditated transgressions—"let them not have dominion over me" (Ps. 19:13).

Go through the day alone with God, whether in a quiet home or in life's busy thoroughfare. Seek the Lord and His strength; seek His favor continually, desiring no one on earth beside Him.

Withdraw to the feet of Jesus, there to receive more of His instruction concerning prayer. And, lo, He speaks a parable to this end, that "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint" (Luke 18:1). Prayer allays spiritual fatigue. Again He says, "Pray that ye enter not into temptation" (Luke 22:40). Prayer opens up to us the avenue by which we avoid or escape temptation.

Conclude the day alone with God. When nature sinks into repose, lift up your heart to His abode in gratitude for special benevolence from His munificent hand. If through faithful use of your talents others have been lifted to higher ground, pray that the Giver of the gift and not the creature to whom it is lent may be acknowledged. If your wayward feet, or your sharp tongue, or dullness of comprehension has provoked a brother to evil instead of to love and good works, confess your guilt.

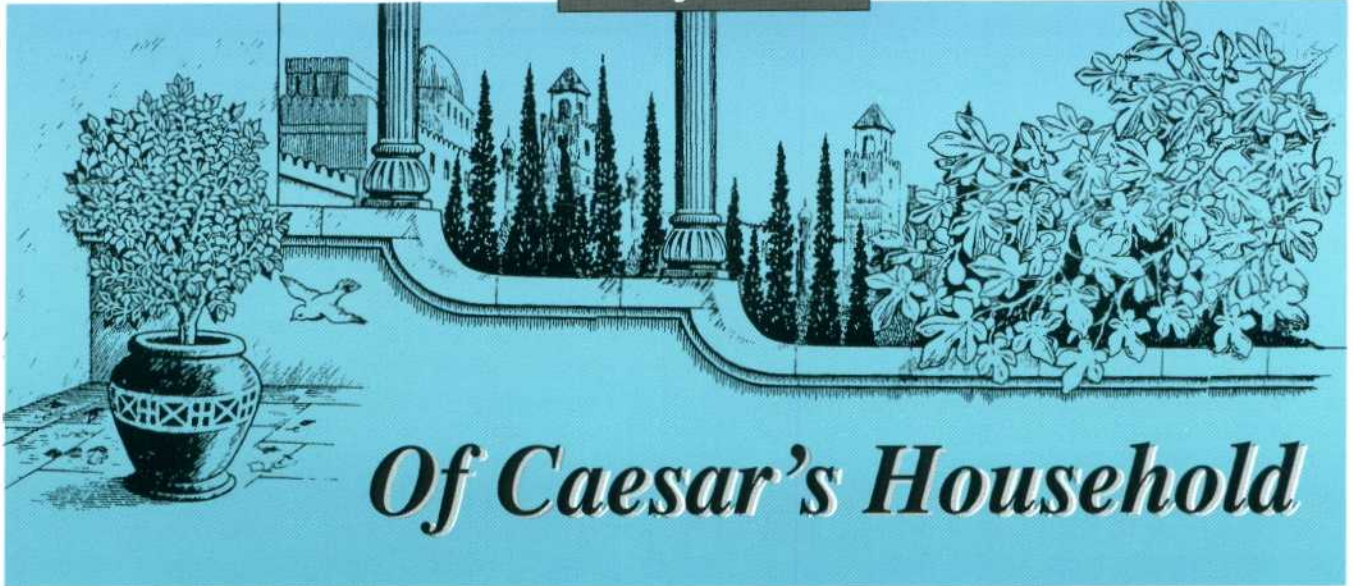
In the silence of the evening hour, from the lips of the Master comes a special message of warning to us who should live in the era of His second coming: "Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is" (Mark 13:33). If He come in the second watch or in the third watch of the night, lest drowsiness overtake us and that Day come upon us as a thief in the night, *watch and pray.*

Prayer and watchfulness will keep us awake, alert till the Day dawns and faith is changed to sight, prayer to praise, and hope to glad fruition.MM

True Prayer Is...

- ◆ **FELLOWSHIP** of God's children with their Father, the Creator, Him "in whom we live and move and have our being," He who knows their needs even before they ask Him (Matt. 6:31-32).
- ◆ **POWER** because prayer brings God into the action. When we pray, we call upon heaven's resources to help us fight our battles upon earth.
- ◆ **SURRENDER** because when we pray we give up ourselves to God. By praying we are identifying ourselves with the Divine will, relinquishing ours and accepting His. By praying we are setting ourselves within the sphere of His influence; we are no longer our own. When we pray, we are no longer on our own, because we have enlisted God to help us, He who has promised never to leave or forsake His children (Heb. 13:5). We are saying, "Take me, use me as it pleases You. Anything, as long as it is within Your will."
- ◆ **EFFECTIVE** because it is a devotional expression by which the Christian lives, because it represents the kind of person he is striving to be. When we pray, we identify ourselves as belonging to "the family"—*God's family.*

All true prayer springs from a sense of need: "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need..." (Matt. 6:32).



Of Caesar's Household

Introduction

Hippo, the imperial ballet-master, paced the marble halls of the palace with a forlorn, preoccupied air. His countenance was not that of a man at peace with the world; he was evidently worried to the point of distress. This Vespasian, the new emperor, was a hard man to please; so different from his predecessors. Times were indeed hard, he reflected. Oh, for the good old days when Nero wore the purple! *There* was a man who could appreciate art—never another like him before or since.

In those balmy days, Hippo had been somebody; such a favorite, in fact, with the court parasites that Nero had released him from slavery, celebrating the occasion with a sumptuous banquet.

As well he might. For who could arrange such truly royal entertainments as Hippo, the Greek freedman? who was so expert in selecting and training the most graceful dancers? who was so quick to detect and develop histrionic talent? who so acute to anticipate the

desires and tastes of his dread master and patron, as well as of distinguished visitors, and to arrange his entertainments accordingly?

With Nero's successors Hippo's fortunes had been varied. Galba and Otho had scarcely time to enjoy even one of his masterpieces; and Vitellius, the good-humored old glutton, had suffered him to remain as a sort of necessary evil, always leaving him with the feeling that his carefully prepared dances and shows interfered with the only recreation worthwhile: eating.

Domitius, the dissolute and pleasure-loving regent whom Vespasian had appointed to reign until he himself could come to Rome, seemed to promise better times, but now all was changed. For now this hard old soldier, with no more taste for art than a barbarian, wore the diadem. At the last banquet his Syrian dancers were almost ignored; the emperor had glanced at them contemptuously and turned away. Worse yet, it was rumored that he might at any time "clean house" to cut down expenses—the wretched old miser! Should such a blow fall, what would become of artists like Hippo?

Well, he would not give up without a struggle; he would devise something new, something magnificent, stupendous, with new performers, new dances, new costumes, new songs, new music. Surely Vespasian would rise to the occasion and praise him in the presence of his guests, a reward dearer to his heart than gold or jewels. For this venture, fresh talent he must have; he *must* keep his eyes open. Oh, for the good old times...!

Slowly, ever so slowly, the heat of the early September afternoon waned. The guards before the palace doors, men of iron but scarcely of asbestos, half broiled inside their gilded armor, counted the laggard seconds until they could retreat to the welcome shade of the barrack-room and free themselves from the torture of helmet and breastplate. Surely the infernal regions could be no worse than this—to stand for three agonizing hours like a statue on the hot, glowing pavement, with the merciless sun reflected in one's face from the dazzling white walls, and in this accursed harness! If only they could witness their officers, especially the

detested, idle, pampered tribunes, forced to do a double stretch of guard duty on a day like this!

Within the palace it was gratefully cool. The heat could not effectually penetrate the thick stone walls, but an air of funereal silence reigned. The occupants had sought relaxation either in sleep or the baths, and only a few slaves and attendants moved languidly to and fro in the endless halls and magnificent banquet-rooms, their sandaled feet almost noiseless on the marble floors. Occasionally an armed officer clanked through, his heavy tread echoing harshly through the corridors. Priceless vases and statues stood in every corner and niche; richly jeweled armor and weapons gleamed from the walls, while rare shawls and thick rugs from the finest looms of Asia were scattered about in dazzling profusion.

In one of the great audience-chambers a dozen white-clad house-slaves were plying broom, duster, and polishing-cloth in more or less leisurely fashion. Since Oarses, the stern and watchful head eunuch, was nowhere to be seen, the slaves alternated work with much chatting and laughter. The only exception was a dark-eyed girl of perhaps seventeen, who with a song on her lips was working conscientiously about the golden throne, removing all trace of dust or tarnish. A strikingly beautiful girl she was, with a wealth of raven curls, a fresh, clear complexion which defied the Italian sun and scorned cosmetics, and, more striking than all, a grace of movement beyond description. Like a deer treading daintily on the heather, like a swan on the placid stream; her humble task was glorified by the rhythm of her motion. Yet in her face was a deeper beauty which transcended mere prettiness, a spir-

itual beauty which has its roots in character.

Irene, the Gallic slave, was not one to serve dishonestly, even in an unjust and galling bondage. Good cause had she for resentment, for she was not born in servitude but was of noble descent, the daughter of a Gallic chief. When he had unwisely raised the standard of rebellion, she had been seized as a hostage, being present in Rome at the time; and upon his defeat and death his estate had been confiscated by Nero and she, the innocent daughter, condemned to perpetual slavery in the palace. The family's citizenship being forfeited, she had no redress; but after the first weeks of anguish and black despair she had renewed her grip on life and determined to make the best of a bad condition, never ceasing to hope for better days.

Handed down from administration to administration like a piece of palace furniture, she had seen much that is not good to see. Since coming to Rome her lot had been cast in a seething caldron of jealousies, intrigues, hatreds, violence, assassinations, and brutality of every description. She had beheld the monster Nero dethroned and the imperial purple worn by three Caesars within a year—men whose deeds were not big enough for the diadem. She had experienced the horrors of civil war and commotion, and had fled for her life over floors slippery with blood on that night of terror when the hired gladiators and the loyal German guard had fought to the death through the halls of the palace, and Vitellius, once the beastly but all-powerful lord of the Roman world, now merely a fat, frightened old man, fell before the swords of his mutinous soldiery.

Through all these scenes of horror and the long days of uncertainty

Irene had caught a glimpse of a God free from human weaknesses and vices, a God who respects only character....

and suspense, Irene was sustained by her sublime faith in a Being who watches over His children and will not suffer them to be tried above their strength. For Irene was a Christian, a member of that despised and persecuted yet ever-growing sect; one of those believers "of Caesar's household." She had in her childhood worshiped the gods of Gaul and Rome, but there came a memorable day when in the old Mamertine prison she heard Paul the Christian, feeble in body but unbroken in spirit and zeal, the fire in his eye undimmed by age or imprisonment. She herself had heard him preaching the "Unknown God" to all who would lend a listening ear.

When the Gallic girl left the place, she was deep in thought. A lasting impression had been made, and a new concept of God implanted in her mind. She had caught a glimpse of a God free from human weaknesses and vices, a God who respected only character, with whom the virtuous slave was greater than his dissolute master. She heard, too, of the Son of God, who while possessing human nature with all its frailty had proved to the world that man can rise above his lower nature to the heights of perfection. She heard of the everlasting Kingdom which He

Of Caesar's Household

purposed to establish on the earth, a Kingdom which should endure after Rome had become but a memory.

Though the teaching was new and bewildering—not at all like her former customs, she found herself hungering for more. In fact, the prison became a favorite retreat for a number of the palace slaves. Eventually she was baptized into the Christian faith—a momentous and courageous step in those dark days when Nero's persecuting fury had not fully spent itself. Since that day she had fought the good fight right valiantly, warring not only against doubts, fears, and external temptations but against her own pleasure-loving, unstable Gallic nature, which she counted her deadliest foe. She had learned an important lesson—the value of godly company; and often when staggering under the blows of daily temptation, beset by fightings within and fears without, she would fly to the motherly arms of Miriam, a Jewish Christian slave of middle age, whose kindly counsel always sent her back to her tasks with renewed courage.

And when actual danger threatened, as it inevitably must threaten a young girl of extraordinary beauty and no legal standing or protection, she always found a strong tower of refuge in Myra, a free woman, wife of a high officer in the Praetorian Guard. The "infection" of Christianity had spread even to this higher social strata in the palace, and all through the preaching of this same Paul of Tarsus. Myra was a zealous Christian, and her influence with her husband, a pagan but kindly and intelligent man, protected the household Christians from many indignities and persecutions. Then there was Elsa the German girl, David the new Jewish boy, Philip the Syrian, and venerable old Telamon the Ital-

ian—all Christians who could be trusted to stand together through thick and thin.

Life was not so hard nor so hazardous now that Nero was gone. Vitellius had given the Church little trouble, and under Vespasian Christianity had become a licensed religion, being officially confused with Judaism; but now that the Jewish revolt had been so long and so stubbornly maintained, the emperor's exasperation was likely to cause trouble for the believers in Rome. A beclouded and uncertain future, however, was no new experience for the early Church, so the concern of the leaders at this time was not great.

So as Irene plied her duster and polishing-cloth on this September afternoon, she sang for sheer joy of faith, a faith which makes life worth while, a great adventure, a stepping-stone to a better and enduring life. In her mind she relived the meeting of the previous evening. No need to assemble stealthily in the catacombs now, but openly in the house of Aquila, the veteran companion and successor of Paul. As she thought of his discourse, the song died on her lips and she felt suddenly depressed. For Aquila had spoken plainly of a matter at which he had hinted many times before—of a great change which was about to take place in the life of the Church. Soon, he said, the whole method of preaching and teaching must be revised, for the Church was to enter upon the Age of Faith. There were to be no more miracles, no more healing, no more prophecy, no more revelations, no more speaking in unknown tongues. Never again would she hear the words of eternal life proclaimed in her dear familiar Gallic speech unless by a preacher of her own nation. In short, the power of the Holy Spirit, which had

been the instrument of conviction in all the missionary work of the Apostolic Age and upon which they had relied so long, was soon to be withdrawn and the believers compelled to carry on with only the strength of what they had already seen and with the guidance of the written Scriptures.

The thought suddenly seemed terrifying. She had known no gospel but that accompanied by confirming signs. Would her faith be strong enough to carry her through another persecution, should one arise? Would the Church, deprived of its most spectacular bond, break asunder and melt away? Unthinkable! Aquila had given them the warning, gravely but without fear, and Aquila would not betray them. Was he not the familiar friend of Paul? And had he not quoted Paul's own words, "Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease..."? Still, as she considered the future, she sighed heavily.

This was the cue for Myrrhina, the Tuscan maid who worked beside her, to break the silence. A striking, red-lipped, dark-eyed girl, born in slavery, possessed of very meager mental equipment, a set of morals truly Roman, and a voluble tongue, she was Irene's special grievance; and now she launched out into the usual channel:

"What's the trouble? Feeling low again? Why don't you act like a human being? Why don't you fix yourself up a little—dress a little snappier and put on some paint and jewelry? Why don't you go to the games once in a while? If you'd make some friends and get out and have a good time on holidays, you wouldn't be moping around like this. Why, with your looks, if you would only make use of them, there's nothing in this palace you couldn't have!"



Flesh vs. Spirit

“Could you please shed some light on Rom. 8:10, ‘If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.’”

Paul spoke frequently of “Christ” as the total embodiment of the knowledge of God and all that it meant to him. “Christ in you” was “the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27). Christ, because of His exemplary life, His total dedication of Himself to God, His perfect example and His all-out achievement became the personification of all of these qualities, and so the Apostles frequently used His name to convey this meaning. For example, “That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith” (Eph. 3:17); again, “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (II Cor. 5:17).

Applying this thought to the text in question, what is Paul saying? “If Christ be in you,” i.e., if all that Christ means, His teaching, His hope, and the prospect of life which it brings to the true believer, if all of this be “in you,” then what is the result?

Paul speaks of two results: 1) The body is dead because of sin; and 2) The Spirit is life because of righteousness.

Paul frequently used terms such as “the flesh,” “the body,” to describe the old nature, our natural selves in our unregenerate

state; likewise he used “the Spirit,” the “new creature,” the “new man” to describe the new nature which is the result of the power of God’s law remaking us into the moral likeness of Christ (see Col. 3:8-10; Eph. 4:22-24).

Accordingly, our “old nature” must become crucified with Christ, that is, dead, because of its sinfulness; at the same time the new nature, the Spirit, will be alive and growing. “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin” (Rom. 6:6).

This is the point Paul is making again and again in Romans 8. As in verse 13: “For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.” Also verse 6: “For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.”

This drastic transformation is the result of “Christ” being truly in us, with all the transforming power of His law, which effectually works in every true believer to produce the “new creature” which God will bless with life immortal. (I Thess. 2:13).

◆ Elijah Not John the Baptist?

“I’d like to express how much I enjoy the Megiddo Message. But there is something I do not understand, that is how Elijah

“Is that so,” was Irene’s indifferent reply. “Well, if you want to know, there’s nothing in this palace that I want. I wouldn’t change places with any one in the building, unless it is—”

She broke off suddenly. She was about to mention Myra and Miriam, but thought it best not to confide even the names of her friends to this fluffy-brained creature. Myrrhina, once started, chattered on:

“You should have been at the games of Ceres, Irene. A hundred and forty-two men killed in one afternoon! They turned a tiger loose on a black slave, and when he made his first spring, from where I stood I could hear the man’s bones crack. In the fighting by pairs, one big fellow got it right below me; I could hear him gurgle as he died. His face was like this.” She contorted her pretty features in imitation of the gladiator’s death-agonies. “You should have seen it—it was too funny for words!”

Disgusted beyond measure, Irene tried not to hear. The door opened abruptly and Oarses, the Egyptian overseer, stalked into the room. There was a sudden flurry of activity, for in his realm the scowling eunuch was all-powerful, brutal, merciless. Comprehending the big chamber in a searching glance, he approached the Gallic maiden.

“Irene,” he said, “Hippo, the dancing-master, wishes to see you in the hall.”

Startled and apprehensive, she stood as if paralyzed. What could this summons mean?

“Me—?”

“Go at once!” Oarses commanded impatiently. “What are you waiting for?”

With trembling limbs and face deathly pale, Irene obeyed. MM

(To be continued)

fits into the teaching of the Kingdom of God as your Church believes it to be. Who is Elijah? I have belonged to various organizations, I'm very interested in the Bible. Please reply to me.

The Bible clearly teaches that Elijah the prophet will return before the second advent of Jesus Christ. The passage we refer to is found in Mal. 4:5-6, "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."

There can be no question that this refers to Christ's *second* (not first) advent because the very first verse of the chapter speaks of the "day of the Lord" as a day which shall "burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch" (4:1). This clearly was not fulfilled at

Jesus' first coming. Neither was there any great turning of people to the Lord at His first coming (see v. 6). After Jesus' entire ministry, only 120 were gathered in His name to await the power He had promised (see Acts 1).

John the Baptist was the forerunner of Christ's first advent; and after John the Baptist had been beheaded, Jesus still said that "Elias [Elijah] truly shall first come, and restore all things" (Matt. 17:11).

For further information send for our booklet, *These Things Shall Be*.

◆ **Did Jesus Condemn Proselyting?**

"What did Jesus mean when He condemned the scribes and Pharisees for proselyting, saying that those converted were 'two-fold more the child of hell than yourselves' (Matt. 23:15)? Why would the proselyte be a child of hell at all?"

In Matthew 23 Jesus is condemning the scribes and Pharisees on numerous points, most of them being their outward show, overcon-

cern about trifles and their neglect of the really important aspects of faith and obedience. Many of the statements He made are, from a literary point of view, hyperboles, or gross exaggerations to make a hard hitting point. Among other things He called the scribes and Pharisees snakes, blind guides, fools, whited sepulchers, hypocrites.

When He condemned their methods of proselyting, because of the effect it had on the proselyte himself, Jesus was pointing up the importance of the missionary's motives and methods in talking to newcomers. The Pharisees were, from Jesus' point of view, children "of hell," i.e., fit only to be destroyed themselves. The word translated "hell" in this passage is *Gehenna*, which was, literally, the garbage dump outside Jerusalem. Jesus was not inferring any connection with any belief in eternal torment. If we were to take His words literally, how could anyone be a "child of hell"? What children could an infernal region produce?

It seems likely that Jesus was condemning the Pharisees for their overweening self-confidence and self-love, which came across to proselytes as a religion empty, void, and valueless. At its best, Judaism in Jesus' day was a maze of traditions and outward rules which had long since lost sight of the original intent of the law of Moses as given by God.

Jesus' words are a warning to all would be missionaries that all conversions are not sincere, that an enthusiastic convert can be more bigoted and more blind than the person who converted him, totally missing the heart of true religion. But at the same time Jesus was not discouraging missionary zeal, as His own example taught clearly.

MM

*Speak, Lord, for Thy servant hears,
Speak peace to my anxious soul,
And help me to feel that all my ways
Are under Thy wise control.*

*It is not by seeking more fertile regions, where toil is
lighter, circumstances happier, and free from the difficult
complications and troublesome people—but by bringing
the high courage of a determined heart, clear in principle
and aim, to bear upon what is given us, that we make
each day a preparation for the Kingdom of God.
If we cannot work out the will of God where God has
placed us, then why has He placed us there?*

God's Spiritual Creation

The Cursed Ground

We read in Genesis 3:17–19: “Unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.”

Are we to believe that the potato bugs, bean beetles, aphids, and grasshoppers that plague the farmer today are all a result of the curse which God pronounced upon literal ground some 6000 years ago? Strange, isn't it, that these destructive creatures, also the thorns and thistles and purslane, multiply as rapidly on a righteous man's land as in the garden of the worst scoundrel!

The Bible is filled with symbolic language, meaningful illustrations of essential truths. Were we to take them all literally, we would find ourselves lost in a maze of contradictions and impossibilities, missing both the depth of the expression and the beauty of the illustration. But as we study them in the light of more lucid passages of sacred Scripture, we see them as illustrations of Divine and eternal significance.

The Almighty is not engaged in cursing literal ground, nor would a God of justice curse men and women irrespective of character, for it is plainly recorded, “The curse causeless shall not come” (Prov. 26:2).

In defining the symbols which the Genesis allegory employs, the prophets, Jesus and His apostles reveal the ground to be the hearts of men, and the thorns and thistles their evil conduct.

The Parable of the Sower

We find basic information relative to the symbolic ground by examining Jesus' parable of the Sower. He teaches that a sower went forth to sow, and his seed fell into four types of ground; namely, “by the wayside,” “upon a rock,” “among thorns,” and “on good ground.” He explains the seed to be the Word of God, and the good ground the good and honest heart. “That on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience” (Luke 8:15). The seed takes root and flourishes in the good ground and produces the fruits of the Spirit. However, there are many people upon whom the seed or Word of God has little or no effect. Of them Jesus says, “That which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection” (verse 14). Instead of uprooting the thorns—anything which would hinder the expansion of God's Word in their minds and lives—they continue as before, so absorbed in the cares and pleasures of the present that the seed of the Kingdom finds no room in their minds: they bear only the fruits of the flesh.

Such is the ground to be cursed—evil men and women.

The book of Hebrews records information about a class of people in whose hearts the seed of the Kingdom was planted; they were even granted special privileges to promote its growth in their lives; still they persisted in yielding only briars and thorns.

We read, “For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them

God's Spiritual Creation

again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame" (Heb. 6:4-6).

We read further in Hebrews 6, "For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and

The good fruit of good human "ground" will receive God's eternal blessing.

bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: but that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned" (verses 7-8). Considering their abundant blessings, they should have yielded the fruits of the Spirit; those who bore briers and thorns were rejected, and justly so: they were "nigh unto cursing."

Causes of the Curse

It is a principle with God that "the curse causeless shall not come" (Prov. 26:2). Every divinely pronounced curse is a penalty for willful transgression, to fall upon the head of the transgressor himself and not his posterity. In Moses' address to the Israelites before entering the land of Canaan, the terms of God's contract are clearly stated: "Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; a blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you this day: and a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the Lord your God" (Deut. 11:26-28). Such are the terms today, and God will not retract from His position:

Anything short of obedience is disobedience—which inevitably brings the curse.

The proverb says, "The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked: but he blesseth the habitation of the just" (Prov. 3:33). Here the cause of the curse is wickedness.

The law states: "Trust in the Lord," and "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help" (Prov. 3:5; Ps. 146:3). Jeremiah records, "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord" (17:5). Here the cause of the curse is misdirected trust.

Further in Jeremiah we read, "Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully ['negligently,' margin]" (48:10). In this case, deceit or negligence causes the curse.

Paul's letter to the Galatians enumerates the works of the flesh as, "Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like." Then he informs us plainly that "they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal. 5:19-21). Such worthless human "ground" merits only the curse of God.

Further Paul says, "Fornication and indecency of any kind, or ruthless greed, must not be so much as mentioned among you, as befits the people of God. No coarse, stupid, or flippant talk; these things are out of place; you should rather be thanking God. For be very sure of this: no one given to fornication or indecency, or the greed which makes an idol of gain, has any share in the kingdom of Christ and of God" (Eph. 5:3-5, NEB). And he adds, "It is for all these things that God's dreadful judgment is coming upon his rebel subjects. Have no part or

lot with them" (v. 6-7).

These evils—whether it be a foolish thought expressed, strife among brethren, variance with the Word of God, or envy of another's ability or fortune—are thorns and thistles growing in our hearts and choking out the seed of the Kingdom. Unless we as tillers of the soil root out these noxious weeds, our "ground" will be subject to the curse of Almighty God.

Two Pictures, Today and Tomorrow

When prophesying of conditions that would prevail in this age, the prophet Micah gives briars and thorns a place of prominence. We read, "The good man is perished out of the earth: and there is none upright among men: they all lie in wait for blood; they hunt every man his brother with a net. That they may do evil with both hands earnestly, the prince asketh, and the judge asketh for a reward; and the great man, he uttereth his mischievous desire: so they wrap it up. The best of them is as a brier: the most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge" (7:2-4). How forceful are the words of this prophecy, and how exactly it is fulfilled! Men have always done evil with one hand, but what a flood of wickedness submerges the nations as men and women daringly commit iniquity wholesale—"with both hands earnestly."

Perhaps still more expressive of the corruption, unfairness and cruelty of human administrations today is the passage as translated in the Moffatt Bible: "The devout have vanished from the land, not one honest soul remains; everyone lurks for bloodshed, each man preys upon his fellow. They have quick fingers for foul play; the judge must handle a bribe, the high official acts as he pleases, and between them they baffle justice. The best of them

are no better than briars, the straightest are like thorns twisted in a hedge."

This appalling condition—the increase of crime, the collapse of morals, the disintegration of the home, the overwhelmingly ruinous lawlessness, the national and international disregard of authority—all has its source in the human heart where thorns of evil desire have grown unchallenged and unrestrained.

Looking into the future beyond the coming of Christ, we see another picture unsurpassed in loveliness—no injustice nor oppression, no crime nor violence, no war nor destruction to mar the scene; in fact, there shall be nothing to hurt nor destroy (Isa. 11:9). And why? Evildoers shall be cut off; the thorns that nettle, the briars that sting, shall be eliminated.

The choicest promises in the Book describe this glorious future age. We read in Ezekiel 28:24-26, "And there shall be no more a pricking brier unto the house of Israel, nor any grieving thorn of all that are round about them, that despised them; and they shall know that I am the Lord God....And they shall dwell safely therein, and shall build houses, and plant vineyards; yea, they shall dwell with confidence,...and they shall know that I am the Lord their God." What a blessed time when this fear-ridden, sin-dominated, destruction-threatened world is so transformed that the people of God can "dwell with confidence"—and all because the "pricking brier" and "grieving thorns" are gone.

We find the fate of the cursed ground to be like that of the thorns and thistles. "The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore hath the curse devoured

the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate: therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned and few men left" (Isa. 24:5-6). By Divine decree the physical earth shall endure forever (Eccl. 1:4). The inhabitants, those who transgress God's laws, are the "earth" destined to be destroyed, the cursed ground of the allegory.

Besides foreseeing the cursing of the ground, Isaiah also envisioned the destruction of the thorns at the Messianic Advent. We read, "Wickedness burneth as the fire: it shall devour the briars and thorns, and shall kindle in the thickets of the forest, and they shall mount up like the lifting up of smoke. Through the wrath of the Lord of hosts is the land darkened, and the people shall be as the fuel of the fire" (9:18-19). According to Zechariah the prophet, this is to be the fate of two-thirds of the earth's inhabitants, the incorrigible element (13:8).

The following chapter in Isaiah reiterates the same promise: "The light of Israel shall be for a fire, and his Holy One for a flame: and it shall burn and devour his thorns and his briars in one day; and shall consume the glory of his forest, and of his fruitful field, both soul and body; and they shall be as when a standardbearer fainteth. And the rest of the trees of his forest shall be few, that a child may write them" (Isa. 10:17-19). His destroying the thorns and briars and forests "both soul and body" identifies them as human beings.

In Summary

What was the curse upon Adam? "Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee;...in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground" (Gen. 3:17-19).

These words picture the unhappy fate of all who, like Adam, are disobedient, unfaithful to their sacred covenant with God. At the coming of Christ, they shall receive the curse of Divine disapproval, condemned forever by the Judge of all the earth. They wasted their day of opportunity, growing thorns and

***The evil works of
worthless human
"ground" will merit
only the curse of God.***

thistles where they should have been cultivating righteousness; thus, they shall spend the remainder of their days "in sorrow." They can never partake of the joys of the faithful. Theirs shall be the lot of servitude. They are the "sword" with which He shall smite the nations (Rev. 19:15). Theirs shall be the yoke of iron with which Christ shall subdue all nations, a yoke which they shall wear until they perish (Deut. 28:47-48).

On that auspicious Day when God calls to Judgment all who have agreed to serve Him, when the sheep are separated from the goats, the wheat from the tares, the trees of righteousness from the thorns and briars, all that ground which has not yielded to the full cultivation of the Master Gardener will be cursed. And at the end of the Millennial reign of Christ, when all workers of iniquity are finally removed and only the trees of righteousness remain, the cursed ground of Genesis shall be brought to its final end and only the good ground shall remain, to bring forth fruit in abundance through eternity.

MM.

(To be continued)

Desperately Earnest

"Well done thou good and faithful servant" are words we would all like to hear when we are at the bar of Christ's judgment seat. Every covenant maker will soon appear before the life or death sealing judgment bar. "If we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection" (Rom. 6:5). Very soon we will be called to account.

We have no right to be sluggish but must be desperately in earnest, with fire in our bones, all aflame in doing right. Through the ages God has spurred His workers into denying themselves of every evil doing. Now at this end time, even more so, as we read His Word, we must be all aflame for God and Christ.

In this day of surpassing wickedness, while God is still calling, we who are intent on hearing and doing cannot and must not be negligent. We may not be accomplishing great things but God who keeps a faithful record knows all our deeds. He knows every life, all their

thoughts, their intentions and what they really want, life or death.

New Jersey

L. K.

Truth, A Blessing

What a blessed people we are to have this wondrous truth, and through it the opportunity of gaining eternal life.

Truth is something no thief or robber can take from us. They may take our money or other valuables, but what we store in our hearts or minds, no one can steal. Our founder once said that should we lose all earthly possessions and our health, still we would be fabulously rich in having this glorious truth, the truth that can free us from every evil of our nature, even to changing our dispositions.

If we put our life in God's hand, He will put strength in our heart. Let us do just that.

Newfoundland

D. T.

Precious Knowledge

I was just thinking how precious the knowledge of God is. Are we putting

our all into acquiring as much of the knowledge of God as we can?

How privileged we are to have been chosen to worship the one true God. We have to hunger and thirst after righteousness and let Him mold and shape us into His will.

God's law is perfect, and Christ is the perfect Example. We must live, grow and develop new habits and attitudes. "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4).

Georgia

C. P.



Order Now!

Have you ordered your copy of the *Megiddo Message 1991*? Price: \$15.00, post-paid.

I Promised the Lord... And I Can't Break It

(Continued from page 2)

must be first, and everything and everyone else must take a lesser claim. Yes, His disciples *could* give a total obedience, the final goal *could* be reached. In spite of all, they *need not* break their commitment.

Paul said the same of himself: "For whom I have suffered the loss of all things...that I may win Christ, and be found in him...If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead" (Phil. 3:8, 11). He knew that only Christ could keep him "from falling," that Christ alone could keep that which he had committed unto him against that "day" (II Tim. 1:12). This sense of absolute trust holds one steady when other bonds give way. To trust in any other support is to build upon a foundation which might let us down in a time of crisis.

This is not to imply that we should be without appreciation for human aid. If we fail to appreciate others, we show the smallness of our own soul. But we must be living *for God*, not for the commendations of our peers. The weight of our commitment must be to God and God alone. Our dependence is upon Him. It is to

Him that we gave our word; to Him we made our promise. And only *He* can keep sure His side of the promise: "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Here is the guarantee to all His faithful followers.

With such support, I need not fail. In such faith let me echo the words of the ancient hero, "I have made the Lord a promise, and I can't break it."

I have promised, and that is *final*.

What about you?

MM

Does This Look Familiar?

If you think you saw this continuation of "I Promised the Lord..." in the last issue (and you couldn't find the beginning of the article), you're right. And if you couldn't find the continuation of the editorial on page 2 ("How Long, Lord?"), you are right again!

We discovered it, too—when it was all printed and ready to mail. We wish we could undo it, but all we can do is give you our sincere apologies and thank you for understanding.

"I Will Be With You"

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

*His ev'ry word of truth is strong
As that which built the skies;
The voice that rolls the stars along
Speaks all Thy promises.*

*My hiding-place, my refuge, tower,
And shield art Thou, O Lord;
I firmly anchor all my hopes
On Thy unerring Word.*



The world may never erect a monument to our self-sacrificing labor of love, but God has something far better in store for those who put love into action.

The many troubles of life will edify, purify, and ultimately glorify us, if we face them with God, determined to receive from them all the good which His loving eye can see in them. Offer up all to Him. Do not give way to impatience, do not be put out or discouraged, for He is watching to see how you will take them.

Strive with all your might to obey God in things natural, in things spiritual, so that your whole soul and body with all its members may stand ready and willing to do whatever God has planned for you.

If you want to form a tolerably true opinion of yourself, consider the thoughts of your own heart when you are alone.

*Yield not to temptation, for yielding is sin,
Each vict'ry will help you some other to win;
Fight manfully onward, dark passions subdue,
Look ever to Jesus—He will carry you through.*

How about your appointment with God—your personal time of prayer and devotion? Are they important enough in your life that you lay other things aside and keep them with the same regularity and discipline with which you keep the appointments with mere humans?

There is no getting around it: God calls us to "plan ahead." What is said about planning for things material applies to spiritual things also. "Nobody plans to fail; they simply fail to plan."

Father, instill in me a rugged faith
Which no lesser allure can vanquish.
Let the motives of a pure heart,
The will of a loyal allegiance, and
The ideals of The Master
Purify, pervade, and control my desires.
Help me to serve loyally
That others may see Thy likeness in me
And yield their lives to Thee. Amen.