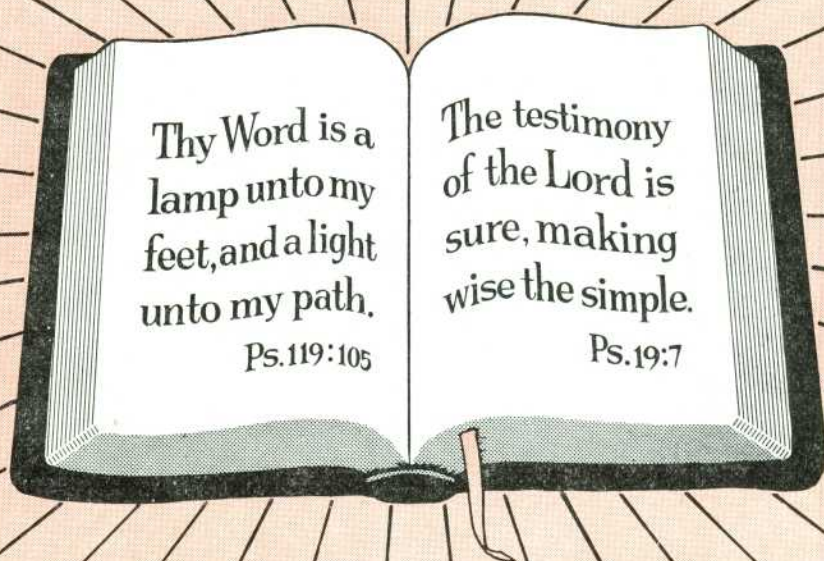


# Megiddo Message

DEVOTED TO THE CAUSE OF CHRIST



**The Trumpet of the Lord vs. Slumber Songs**

**Our Goliaths**

**Self-Denial and Virtue**

**Understanding the Bible**



# Megiddo Message

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The MEGIDDO MESSAGE will

- Strengthen your faith in the Bible
- Answer perplexing religious questions
- Give you courage for these uncertain times
- Help you live above the world's moral corruption
- Reveal to you how to develop a character acceptable to God
- Bring peace and stability to your life

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## Editorially Speaking...

### Are You a Me-ist?

IN the Ohio State University a survey was sent out to every 42nd name in the student directory. Twenty-two popular subjects were listed such as financial security, getting good grades, personal happiness, racism, over-population and nuclear war, etc. The students were asked to check the subject of their main concern from among these topics. Out of the 642 answers that came back, the one that ranked first by far was "personal happiness."

Not all of us are as bold as the young man who, when asked what political candidate he supported replied proudly, "I'm for ME!" But how natural for us all to think first of ourselves and our own happiness as the matter of highest importance. Our own Declaration of Independence expresses the fact that our Creator has endowed us with certain inalienable rights, and "that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

A certain definite interest in ourselves and our own welfare is not to be condemned; indeed, it is vital to our success, both temporal and eternal. The man who is indifferent to his own personal happiness is no candidate for the reward God offers. God is seeking those who are so consumed by their love of life that they desire an eternal duration of it. A self-centered interest? Perhaps, but it is also God-centered. It is a natural human longing controlled and directed.

Me-ism unrestrained is out-and-out selfishness.

The rich young man who came to Jesus inquiring what he should do to obtain life eternal was a me-ist. His answer to Jesus' suggestions showed that he was sold on himself: "All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?" (Matt. 19:20). But this trait alone did not condemn him; it was his unwillingness to follow a course of humble obedience that cut him off from greater spiritual blessings.

True happiness is not attained by selfish accumulation of money, things, or fame. The Bible recipe is to put the Lord first! "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33). And, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength" (Mark 13:30).

Me-ism, restrained and directed, is the Christian ideal. Such a one will be so concerned about getting himself right in the sight of God that he will have no time or interest for the things God forbids. On the other hand, such a man will look not only "on his own things, but . . . also on the things of others" (Phil. 2:4), realizing that no man lives unto himself alone. This is the formula for true and lasting personal happiness. ●●

# The Trumpet of the Lord

## vs. Slumber Songs

### PRAYER

O God, Thou Giver of every good and perfect gift: we thank Thee that in Thy mercy Thou hast given us a place among Thy people, and hast enabled us to come to worship Thee. We thank Thee for the world in which Thou hast placed us, for the works of Thy hand which show forth Thy infinite power and unsearchable wisdom. We thank Thee for Thy gifts of reason, reflection, understanding, and retention whereby we can receive and obey Thy divine law.

We thank Thee for the discipline of life, and for all the experiences that draw us nearer to Thee.

We thank Thee for the knowledge of Thy justice and longsuffering. But help us never to presume upon Thy goodness, or take the attitude that Thou wilt keep Thy judgments forever. May we remember that a Day of Reckoning is coming; that a moment shall soon arrive when our day of grace, our day for growth, will be passed; and if found filthy then we shall forever remain so. O may the seriousness of this prospect create in us a greater concern for ourselves, a quickening of our pace in our journey toward perfection of character.

Deepen the impression, we pray Thee, that sin is dangerous; continuing in it will unfit the sinner for life in the world to come. Thy unequivocal demand is that sin must be banished, hence Thy command, "Hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me."

Father, alert us to our duty as associate watchmen. Each of us is a brother's keeper; we each have a duty, we each must warn the other. Help us always to do our duty.

And grant, Father, that Thy people may be surrendered wholly to Thee. When in the wrong, may they be convicted, warned, corrected, and change their ways.

Forgive us for the sins we have turned from and forsaken, and may we wage a good warfare against the evils of the flesh, that it may be Thy good pleasure to save and bless us, and give us an eternal inheritance in Thy heavenly kingdom upon earth. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

### DISCOURSE

THE trumpet, oldest of the known Hebrew musical instruments, is a fitting symbol for the ringing call of the voice of God. There is nothing vacillating or uncertain about this voice as it comes to us through the medium of the prophets, Jesus and the apostles, recorded for us in the Bible. The Word of God is not "yea and nay," but "yea" and "Amen," said the apostle Paul (II Cor. 1:18-20). Again he said, "If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?" (I Cor. 14:8). If the prophets spoke one gospel, and Jesus Himself another, and the apostles still another, one would not know what to believe. But they all speak the same, and with authority. God's Word is a trumpet: it speaks clearly, distinctly, commandingly, leaving no room for doubt. The Bible is not a Book that asks of us a cowardly defense, but it speaks plainly and with undisputed authority.

"Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins," was the Lord's command to the astute Isaiah (58:1), and it is the right course for us to take today. If sin is to be corrected, it must first be recognized. Recognition of our individual failings is difficult, for "every way of a man is right in his own eyes" (Prov. 21:2). Therefore the Almighty foreknew that drastic measures would be necessary to reveal to man the error of his ways. The facts were not to be merely hinted, or tacitly implied. They had to be sounded in the ears of the transgressor as the blast of a trumpet. Let me quote again Isaiah's words, "Lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins." We must be prepared to play the whole score of the Lord's song in a strange land.

Christ gave many practical demonstrations of how the trumpet of the Lord should be used. One example is recorded in Luke 13. "There were present . . . some that told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye

that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (vs. 1-5). Evidently the conversation had focused upon the atrocious crimes and resulting judgments upon two certain groups of bad men. But Jesus shifted the focal point with His characteristic swiftness and, speaking with trumpet-like clarity, said, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." When our Lord uttered that hard saying no one present thought it resembled a flute-like warble; it was then, as it remains today, an unequivocal trumpet call.

Jesus' teachings did not appeal to the masses. They were "astonished at His doctrine, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes."

### Hearing the Facts Often Hurts

In the world of economics today, credit buying and the assuming of debt, both public and private, has gotten out of hand. Yet the rank and file of the people give no serious thought to it or even care to hear the facts. One writer said of the apathetic public: "Their favorite music consists of slumber songs, and when 'the dawn comes up like thunder,' their dreams [will be] rudely interrupted by the inexorable demands of a new day which they are unprepared to meet."

This same indifference plagues people in matters of religion. The trumpet of the Lord sounds forth forceful and direct. It demands a thorough cleansing of the heart and soul. It pictures a narrow, difficult way leading to life, with comparatively few travelers. The trumpet of the Lord declares: "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well." "O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved. How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?" "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (Isa. 1:16; Jer. 4:14; Gal. 5:17).

The trumpet of the Lord demands that we work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. Such a program is too strenuous to appeal to the average person, hence the majority prefer the painless and easy way to salvation prescribed by a large segment of the religious world—salvation

through substitution. Typical of this belief are the lines of the old familiar hymn:

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

With such "slumber songs" sounding soothingly in their ears they are kept in such a stupor that they give no thought to the demands of the new day which will dawn at Christ's coming, and when that day arrives they will be totally unprepared to meet it.

### Few Listen to the Trumpet Call

The divine forecast for these last days is that few will listen to the piercing call of the trumpet of the Lord. Noah, preacher of righteousness and builder of the ark, spent many years preaching to the antediluvian world, warning them of the flood that was to inundate that portion of the globe. Yet they were not prepared for that drastic change when it arrived. They persisted in listening to the slumber songs of Noah's critics, surrendering to the misconception that as things were, so they would remain, and no flood was coming.

And at the present time, in fulfillment of Peter's prophecy, the indolent covenant-makers are saying: "Where is the promise of his [the Lord's] coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" (II Pet. 3:4). Jesus knew that only few would be listening to the call at the time of His second coming. He asked: "Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" He said again: "As it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed" (Luke 17:26-30).

The sound of the trumpet of the Lord was not popular then, and it is not popular now. Again Jesus said: "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man" (Luke 21:36). Yet people in general do not give the future a serious thought.

## The Trumpet Calls to the World of Believers

During the days of the patriarchs the trumpet began sounding. Adam was the first man to hear the trumpet. He was called from the darkness and superstition of that world of the ancients into the service of the Eternal. Abel, Enoch, Abraham and others listened to the sound of the Lord's trumpet. These early servants of God also were exposed to the drugging effects of the slumber songs. The world of the ungodly in Noah's time kept singing the slumber song: "There will be no flood. God will not destroy that which He has created with His own hands." The slumber song had taken such an effect in the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah that when Lot pleaded with his sons-in-law to escape from the doomed city, his words seemed to them like idle tales.

During succeeding centuries the trumpet was sounded persistently by the prophets, Jesus and the apostles, but the listeners were always few and those who were alerted to action were still fewer. After the close of the Apostolic Age the trumpet continued to sound, but with ever diminishing volume, until during the seventh century, it was completely silenced. No one would listen. Then followed the long dark night of the Apostasy when not a man on earth possessed a knowledge of the saving truth; all mankind were turned away from the truth to fables (II Tim. 4:3-4). In Matthew 25 Jesus foretold this night of darkness by a parable of ten virgins going out to meet the bridegroom: while He tarried they all slumbered and slept, fore-showing that during this time none would listen to the trumpet of the Lord. The slumber songs were so effective that all mankind were lulled into an all-pervading stupor.

But Jesus also foretold an awakening. At "midnight" a cry would be sounded, apprising the sleepers of the demands of the approaching day: "Behold, the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him." At this point the trumpet of the Lord began sounding again and it is sounding today. But as in all ages, the masses prefer the slumber songs. Parallel to their demand in Isaiah's day, they "say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits" (Isa. 30:10). Regardless of this desire of the majority to be deluded, all alert life-seekers are determined to know the true facts about themselves; they are straining their ears to catch the commanding voice of the Lord's trumpet.

## The Two Songs Contrasted

The trumpet of the Lord commands: "Cease  
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from anger, and forsake wrath" (Ps. 37:8). "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice" (Eph. 4:31). The suave voice of the slumber-song singer asks: "Why make yourself so much trouble? Oh, do not let anyone make you believe that you will be condemned at Judgment Day merely because you occasionally lose your temper. "Why," they say, "a man who could not get good and angry when occasion seems to demand it lacks individuality. Some situations are so provoking that even an angel would lose his temper."

Again, the trumpet of the Lord demands that we speak the truth every man to his neighbor. "Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds" (Col. 3:9). The slumber song says, No, God will never condemn you because you stretch the facts a little now and then. No story is worth repeating unless colored a little to show individual preference. And if you are a merchant you almost have to boost your merchandise to stay in business. Of course you should refrain from telling any black lies.

But the trumpet of the Lord says, "lie not one to another," and "speak the truth every man to his neighbor."

The trumpet of the Lord speaks out plainly on speech control, warning against indiscriminate use of the tongue. "Jesting" and "foolish talking" are listed among the evils that will "bring down the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience" (Eph. 5:4-6). The command is: "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man" (Col. 4:6). But the slumber song says: Your tongue is your own, just use it in any way that appeals to you. If you are clever enough to employ quips that will amuse your listeners, why not do it?

*(Continued on page 21)*

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## Abib Is Coming!

We are happy to announce the approach of another Bible New Year. The first new moon following the spring equinox this year occurs on April 3; therefore Abib First, the New Year will begin the evening of April 3 and continue through April 4.

Special programs and services will commemorate the dawn of the New Year on April 3 and 4 at the Megiddo Mission Church, at which time we will also commemorate the birth of Christ. Friends and interested readers are cordially invited to join us at this season. ●●

# Timely Topics

**S**LEEP has been defined as “a recurring state of inactivity, decrease of consciousness and decrease in responsiveness to events in the environment” (*Encyclopedia Britannica*), or “a state of rest in which bodily and mental functions are relaxed and free from control of the will” (*New Standard Encyclopedia*). It is a condition which has been common to man and the higher animals as far back as we know. Through the years men have undertaken to study this period of “complete or partial unconsciousness,” desiring to discover and define its secrets. Through observation and experiment, and with the aid of animals, human volunteers and recording mechanisms, numerous theories have been developed. These theories attempt to explain the reasons for and procedures of sleep, what takes place during sleep, and how sleep is brought about. However, many of these theories are already obsolete, and according to the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, “The vagueness of these theories is at once a strength and weakness; it is impossible either to refute them or to prove their correctness.”

## Sleep

The average person does not look upon sleep from such a technical viewpoint. To most of us it is an inevitable occurrence in our day-to-day living which affords rest to the body and renews the keenness of the mind. We welcome it, though we do not understand every scientific aspect of it.

The comparison of spiritual lethargy to natural sleep is one easily understood. In the physical world, most people sleep at night, in the dark; in like manner witness the world at large today, asleep to the call of God, sleeping in the darkness of religious misconception.

This sleep which lulls the world is what should concern every striving Christian. Would that the world could be wakened out of its comfortable drowsiness! But that time is not yet. Thank God that here and there a few are aroused from their beds of indifference.

But Christian, take note! We do not have to sleep the sound sleep which covers the world to be spiritually drowsy. If not extremely careful, the world's indifference will even dull the senses of those work-

ing to be Christlike, and they will be lulled to sleep.

Remember, the day is the time for the carrying out of the usual activities and duties necessary to life; so we must not become sleepy in this the day of salvation, but with alertness tend to our important spiritual duty. “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (II Cor. 6:2).

An interesting point is given in the encyclopedia concerning wakefulness: “Awakening is usually ascribed to a reversal of the changes that produce sleep.” What produces spiritual drowsiness? It is self-absorption, being all taken up with the things of the present, leaving no time for reading, studying and meditating upon God's Word; procrastination; lack of faith; lack of *doing*.

Spiritual awakening, then, is “a reversal of the changes that produce sleep.” It is realizing that self needs God; keeping the mind fixed on the future goal, the Kingdom of God; taking time to read, study and meditate upon God's Word; working to overcome our faults and besetting sins *today*; building up our faith; **DOING**. The apostle Paul's words to the Thessalonians are very timely today: “You are all sons of light, sons of the day, and none of us belongs to darkness or to the night. Let us then never fall into the sleep that stupifies the rest of the world: let us keep awake, with our wits about us. Night is the time for sleep and the time when men get drunk, but we men of the daylight should be alert, with faith and love as our breastplate and the hope of our salvation as our helmet” (I Thess. 5:6-8, Phillips Translation).

Let us take heed. The author of Proverbs warns that even a *little* spiritual slumber can be dangerous: “How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? When wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: so shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man” (Prov. 6:9-10).

“Awake thou that sleepest and arise from the dead” (Eph. 5:14). Here Paul admonishes us to waken from our spiritual sleepiness and arise—a prevention against falling back into sleep. Again he writes, “Awake to righteousness and sin not” (I Cor. 15:34). Why? “Remember,” he says, “how critical the moment is. It is time for you to wake out of sleep, for deliverance is nearer to us now than it was when first we believed. It is far on in the night; day is near. Let us therefore throw off the deeds of darkness and put on our armour as soldiers of the light” (Rom. 13:11-12, NEB).

Wake up! The moment is critical. Christ is coming.  
(Continued on page 26)

# FAITH AND COURAGE

## Scene 4

### Introduction

*"My king, let me but be the champion of the Lord." Thus spoke David the shepherd boy to King Saul, a voice of hope and courage in a chorus of despair; a voice speaking with a boldness incredible, the voice of a sublime faith.*

*And now, on the following morning, we find the soldiers gathered together, listening to the jealous, discontented words of Eliab, David's elder brother.*

ELIAB: A king, ye say? What sort of king may this be that hides in his tent—and listens to the harp of David my brother? I ask you again, soldiers of Israel, is this Saul worthy to be a leader? Shall we fight for such a king? Shall those who play upon the harp be placed above the men at arms? Huh! I say, let us return to our homes.

SOLDIER 1: Methinks Eliab speaks with wisdom—for once. Look! Eliab! Look yonder across the valley! Men stir in the camp of the Philistines. Banners are raised aloft. Perchance Goliath comes forth again! Perchance this day he will not stand and challenge us merely, but will advance and smite us!

ELIAB: Let Saul go forth against him! If he be king, let him fight his own battle!

SOLDIER 2: Aye! Not send *us* out to die! If the giant but come too close, thou wilt see me run. (David enters)

ELIAB: (greeted David) Ho now, David! Art thou still here? Did I not tell thee to return home?

DAVID: I am not beholden to thee, my brother.

ELIAB: Guard thy words, boy! Art thou puffed up, that thou hast played for the king? Dost thou set thyself over me?

DAVID: Eliab, I am not come here to quarrel with thee.

ELIAB: Well! Wherefore hast thou come here?

DAVID: To serve my king, not betray him.

ELIAB: (threateningly) Depart hence, or I shall—

DAVID: Hold thy hand, Eliab. I heard thy words, thy mutinous words. I was ashamed of thee, that thou art my brother.

ELIAB: Ha! Ha! Ha! Perchance, David, thou art

come here to fight the giant—thou and thy sling and thy bag of pebbles! Ha! Ha! Ha! (laughter; a trumpet sounds)

SOLDIER 3: Hold, Eliab! The king cometh forth!

VOICES: The king! The king! (enter Saul, followed by captain and soldiers 4 and 5).

SAUL: Soldiers of Israel: I, your king, come forth once more to place the safety of Israel within your hands; may it not be in vain that I still have faith in you! (mutterings) Ye mutter and turn away. I wonder not, for despair hath struck us all. And yet shall we be conquered by despair? Shall we let Israel fall before the hands of the Philistines, because there is no man among us who will go forth against Goliath?

VOICES from the Army: Go forth to certain death, Saul?

SAUL: Well, shall we be slaves instead? Ye speak of certain death, but perchance this giant can be conquered.

VOICES: Nay! Nay!

SAUL: I thought even as ye do; but last night there came to me a boy, a shepherd lad, unused to war and arms—but had ye half his faith and courage, O men of Israel, ye would be victorious! For he spoke unto me one thing which we have all forgotten: That though the powers of evil fight against us, we have one great ally.

CAPTAIN: What ally is this, O King?

SAUL: The Lord God of Hosts, O Captain. (trumpet) Listen! O men of Israel: The trumpet sounds in the camp of the Philistines. Goliath comes forth again. Who goes out against him? Will not a man among you be the champion of Israel? (pause) My position as king forbids me to fight in person against a common soldier of the enemy, and so endanger your leadership, but surely there is here a man of faith and courage.

CAPTAIN: (points to giant) Look upon the giant, O King, where he advances. What flesh and blood can stand against him?

SAUL: Soldiers! Let any man go forth, and I will give him rich rewards.

DAVID: (arises) O King!

SAUL: Who speaks?

ELIAB: (breaks in) David, hold thy tongue!

SAUL: Nay! Let him speak!

DAVID: O King! I wish not thy reward, but let me go forth against Goliath—

ELIAB: Saul! This lad, my brother, is mad to speak thus. Be still! Be still, David!

DAVID: Nay! Eliab. I will be heard! I mean what I say!

SAUL: David! Thou art but a boy. And this giant is a mighty man at arms. Look upon him, where he advances. What chance wouldst thou have?

DAVID: Nay! O King! let me try my strength against him.

SAUL: But, my lad, this giant will surely kill thee.

DAVID: He is but a man—and he *can* be conquered!

SAUL: Hear this, my men at arms! Harken to this boy! Does he not shame you? Here! Look upon this sword! Who among you dare to take this sword—dare to wield it against yon giant? To him goes a reward beyond his wildest dreams!

DAVID: I tell thee, I ask no reward, O King, nor wish I thy sword, since I am unproved in arms; but let me go forth against Goliath with my sling—

ELIAB: (laughs) Thy sling! (laughter)

DAVID: Ah! Thou mockest me, my brother. 'Tis true I am but a shepherd.

ELIAB: A shepherd boy to fight the great Goliath! (laughter)

DAVID: 'Tis true I am no man at arms, but at least I dare to go out against him, which thou dost not.

ELIAB: David, my brother, thou art beside thyself! Shall I return to thy father bearing tidings that I let thee be slain?

DAVID: Eliab, I have faced peril before. I have some cunning with this sling and I believe the Eternal has chosen me to slay this giant. God be with me and guide my hand, this enemy shall be as the lion which attacked my father's flock.

SAUL: David, thou speakest like one filled with the voice of prophecy. And yet I fear for thee.

DAVID: O King, I have waited for this hour. It has come. Deny me not. Let me go forth against the giant.

SAUL: To thy death?

DAVID: The Lord that delivered me out of the jaws of the lion, He will deliver me out of the hands of Goliath. For I fight not alone, O King—the Lord God of Battles fights at my side. (trumpet, distant)

CAPTAIN: Saul! What answer dost thou make to the challenging trumpet of Goliath?

SAUL: Let my trumpet sound. Israel hath found a champion!

(trumpet, near)

SAUL: Go forth, David—for surely thou art filled with the fire of God.

DAVID: O King, ere I go, this word bear to my father, should I return not: That I did heed his counsel, and that when my hour came, I met it—as he would have me. Farewell. (exit David)

SAUL: Look, Captain! where he stoops and finds him a smooth stone. Is that all the weapon he bears to the battle?

CAPTAIN: My lord, 'tis certain death for the lad! Almost I cannot look upon it.

SAUL: I do repent me that I sent him forth! Such faith he had, that I gave my consent. 'Twas more to shame my men than anything.

CAPTAIN: Look, my lord! He doth advance more bravely.

SAUL: Ah! Brave youth, to sacrifice thee so needlessly! I cannot look upon it! (noise) What is that roar?

CAPTAIN: The enemy have seen our champion, and they shout in derision. Ah! Now the lad stops.

SAUL: Perchance he will flee in fear.

CAPTAIN: Nay! Saul! He speaks. I cannot hear all his words, but there is defiance in them.

SAUL: I tell thee, the boy is touched with madness!

CAPTAIN: Look, my lord! The giant doth advance upon him. He lifts his spear.

SAUL: Surely David will flee.

CAPTAIN: Nay! Saul. He stands his ground. My lord—

SAUL: Can't be.

CAPTAIN: The lad hath placed a stone within his sling.

SAUL: A stone cannot pierce the giant's bronze armor, Captain.

CAPTAIN: Nay! My Lord! It cannot! save it strike one place full on the forehead, so small that no archer could strike it with an arrow. I pray he may succeed. I know the sling can be a deadly weapon in the right hands—I remember seeing Egyptian slings in battle, in a fight with the Ammonites.

SAUL: Captain! Hath David launched his stone?

CAPTAIN: Nay! My lord! He stands with deadly coolness, as though to take certain aim... Ah! He throws—(yells, distant)

SAUL: Speak! Captain! Is he down?

CAPTAIN: Aye! He is down—not David, but the giant.

SAUL: Goliath is fallen?

CAPTAIN: He lies upon the ground (yells). His armor-bearer's fled! The whole Philistine host is in motion, running away! David advances, sire—he advances!

(Continued on page 10)



# Our Goliaths

TO us as Christians, the account of David's slaying Goliath means much more than merely a thrilling episode in the early history of the Israelite nation. It means a triumph of right over the forces of evil in a struggle that is just as real and just as much a part of our lives today as it was of the lives of the people living twenty-seven centuries ago. Goliath is always with us, and his mastery always a problem.

The enemies of righteousness in our individual lives may be even harder to fight than the champion of the Philistines, for whereas Goliath came out in the open to make his dastardly challenge to the armies of Israel, our enemy, evil desires, often operates under cover, trying to hide his true identity and minimize his ability to drag us back into evil and defeat us.

Goliath defied Israel and challenged the God who championed their cause. He was a giant in stature with a long and impressive ancestry behind him, and so thought people should be afraid of him. Sin also is a giant, with at least two hundred generations of people behind him who have defied God and righteousness, and who have said to God, "Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways" (Job 21:14). This giant sin also expects—and too often gets—recognition. Building on the precedent of his long—though shady—past record, he strives

to awe us with his importance and stature.

King Saul and the Israelites lacked faith; they seemed to have forgotten the power of the eternal God. They certainly were familiar with the conquering of the seven nations in the land of Canaan under Joshua; with the victory of Deborah and Barak, and the fate of Sisera, captain of the armies of the Canaanites; they knew how God had delivered the host of Midian into the hand of Gideon and his three hundred picked men. Could they have forgotten Jephthah, who delivered Israel from a vastly superior force of Ammonites?

Forgetting is a human weakness, a tendency that we ourselves must constantly guard against, lest in the hour of trial we too forget that the eternal God is as mighty today as He was in days of yore. The flesh may be strong, the desire to give way to temptation may seem to overpower our best efforts to thwart the giant; but let us never surrender, or cry out as if horror-stricken, "The work cannot be done, the flesh cannot be conquered!" The gospel is still the "power of God unto salvation," and His guardian angels still encamp about those who are earnestly striving to transform their lives.

To the armies of Israel the giant seemed an unbeatable foe; and so he was, so long as no one dared march boldly forth and face him; but he did not last long

after David bravely accepted his challenge. Yet David's success was not accidental, nor was his courageous step taken without due preparation. God helps those who help themselves. David had spent hour upon hour in careful practice with sling and stone until, it is said, he could strike a target no larger than a man's hand.

Likewise the most formidable foe in our lives can be conquered, but not without action, not without earnest, prayerful preparation and much application. "Keep the munition, watch the way, make thy loins strong, fortify thy power mightily," is the success-formula given by the astute prophet Nahum (2:1). Whatever our giants, whether anger, pride, deceit, self-esteem, unbelief, or the unruly tongue, if we persistently fortify against them, as certainly as David was able to strike down Goliath with a smooth pebble accurately thrown from his sling, so surely one by one we shall banish these clinging evils from our lives.

David demonstrated his shrewdness in making certain his enemy was dead. Although he was down, he might not be out. He might suddenly revive; so David lost no time in completely severing his head. As a safety measure, we should apply this same realistic precaution in our spiritual life. We should never be too sure of ourselves. It is perilous to discount the recuperative abilities of our

archenemy, flesh. We *could* lose this war with self.

One safeguard against defeat is to build high heaps about the places where we have fallen. Another is to keep as far from the precipice as possible, and never overestimate our moral strength. If there is a place where we have fallen in the past, we should not casually assure ourselves that we are stronger now, so we can take *that* temptation in stride without danger or damage; we should shun it as we would a rattlesnake, flee from it as we would flee from a roaring tornado. The divine command is: "Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away."

Now let us take a lesson from Goliath's mistakes. Goliath thought himself so well protected by his armor that no weapon available to the enemy could harm him. But the final showdown proved his false security. One vital spot—the forehead—was left unprotected, and at this point the stone from David's sling did its deadly work. As soldiers of the Eternal, we too must be especially careful of our armor. Unless wearing the whole armor of God we are certain to be defeated. Every piece of this armor must be kept in position at all times: truth to gird our loins, righteousness as our breastplate, the gospel as a protection for our feet, faith as our shield, the hope of salvation as our helmet, and the Word of God our mighty sword.

David knew the head was the one spot where a flying missile could do the most harm, and so today the darts of the evil one enter by way of the intellect. The first of the thirteen evils enumerated by the Great Teacher was evil thoughts. And Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "I fear, lest as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ Jesus."

Among these corrupting influences are thoughts of despair, of discouragement, sensual thoughts; memories of our former life; that feeling of self-importance; thoughts of self-pity. We may think we are denied pleasures that we should be permitted to have, may think our work is not appreciated, that the sacrifices we have made for the cause of God do not bring us the recognition they should. Then there are thoughts of envy, of jealousy, malice and hatred. Every entrance to our mind must be fortified or our enemy, self, will defeat us.

Goliath repeated his challenge daily for forty days; so the same temptations may confront us times without number. But if we always resist them, earnestly imploring our Heavenly Father for strength to overcome, victory shall be ours.

Israel's shouts of triumph at the death of Goliath

made the heavens ring; but their rejoicing was trivial compared with that which can be ours, if at Judgment Day it is revealed that we have fought sin to a finish, that we succeeded, not only in knocking the giant flesh senseless, but in severing his head completely. Then a great multitude of the heavenly hosts, as the voice of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, shall celebrate that auspicious event with the happy announcement: "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready" (Rev. 19:7).●●

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Many crowd the Saviour's mercy,  
Few receive His cross;  
Many seek His consolation,  
Few will suffer loss,  
For the dear sake of the Master  
Counting all but dross.

Many sit at Jesus' table,  
Few will sup with Him  
When the sorrow-cup of anguish  
Trembles to the brim;  
Few watch with Him in the garden  
Who have sung the hymn.

But the souls who love Him truly  
Both in woe and bliss,  
Those will count their very heart's blood  
Not their own—but His!  
Saviour, Thou who thus hast loved us,  
Give us love like this!

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## Faith and Courage

*(Continued from page 8)*

SAUL: A miracle! God is with us once more!

CAPTAIN: Look! My lord! Look! David advances upon the giant, and with his own sword! Ah! (cries of Ah!)

SAUL: (triumphantly) Goliath's head he holds aloft! Look upon it! O men of Israel! There lies thine enemy—conquered by the faith of one who would not be conquered by despair. Forward now! In the name of the Lord of Hosts! Forward to VICTORY!●● THE END.

# Self-Denial and Virtue

THE greatest achievement any man can make is to conquer himself, to overcome his natural tendencies and correct his inherent weaknesses. "Know thyself" is a good motto; but before you can command yourself, you must know yourself and learn to say "no" to yourself.

One of the most common weaknesses is self-indulgence—gratification. It may be gratification of an appetite, of passion, love of dress, amusement, or whatever, but it springs from the same root—lack of self-control. Children manifest this weakness in many ways—bursts of passion and unruliness, but especially in the childish desire to find pleasure in the spending of money for little gratifications, particularly candy. Many a merchant makes his living from this trait in children, and many parents foster it by too free indulgence in pennies. The boy who gets all the spending money he wants will develop spending tendencies that will last through life. To carry money around and be able to say "no" to the many opportunities that appeal to you to spend it is to develop character, resisting power, reserve and strength. It means that you know yourself and can command yourself.

It is good to learn self-denial for its temporal good; there is so much selfishness in the world. But how much more should we deny ourselves the gratifications of sin for such a home as God has offered us. I am thankful I was brought up in self-denial, living as we were where people could not have even what people now call necessities. We should deny ourselves something every day, that we may gain self-control.

There are few people who love candy more than I, but when I was a child, my parents were too poor to indulge the appetite; and when I grew older and could afford it, I realized it was better to save the money to do good to the needy. We must take up our cross and follow Jesus if we would be His disciples. To be able to control self will bring more joy and comfort even in this life. If you do not learn self-control you are like the man described in Proverbs 25:28, "He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down and without walls." He who has not

learned to say "no" to himself is not a Christian. And one way we can learn self-control is to watch our appetite.

For this reason we set aside one week each year for self-denial (this year it is the week of February 4 through 10). We eat to satisfaction of three plain, staple articles of food, omitting all meat, fish, poultry, eggs, and cheese (except cottage cheese); also omitting all pastries and desserts; and make our selection from all varieties of fruits and vegetables (seasoned to taste), bread, butter and milk (no tea or coffee). Exception is made for the ill and aged and those on special diets. But how many people in the world would be glad to have all they wished of even three things!

We fast from Bible principle, because God's people have always fasted in times of distress and need. In Judges 20:26 we read of a time of trouble when "all the children of Israel and all the people went up and came unto the house of God, and wept, and sat there before the Lord, and fasted that day until even." In Ezra 8:21-23 we read of another fast: "Then I proclaimed a fast there, . . . that we might afflict ourselves before our God to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance." Again in Nehemiah we read of a time of affliction, when the people needed help from the Lord; so when Nehemiah heard of this trouble he "sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven" (1:4).

We read of another time of crisis in the Book of Esther (4:14-16). You remember Esther was a Jewess. There was trouble because the wicked Haman was seeking to destroy all the Jews in the land because Mordecai, the cousin of Esther, would not bow to him. Mordecai sent word to Esther that Haman had finally persuaded the king to permit him to do as he would, and that she should go to the king, even at the peril of her own life, to intercede for her people. "For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time," Mordecai said, "then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the

kingdom for such a time as this?" Then Esther returned this answer: "Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish."

We read how Daniel was taken captive by the Babylonians, and the king saw that he and his companions were intelligent young men; so he desired to educate them in the learning and tongue of the Chaldeans. "And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank; so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king. . . . But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself. Now God had brought Daniel into favor and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs. And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your meat and your drink: for why should he see your faces worse liking than the children which are of your sort? then shall ye make me endanger my head to the king. Then said Daniel, . . . Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink. Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants." What was this pulse? The Hebrew Lexicon defines it as "vegetable food such as is eaten in a half fast; opposed to flesh and more delicate food."

The narrative continues: "So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days. And at the end of the ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat. Thus Melzar took away the portion of their meat and the wine that they should drink; and gave them pulse. As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom" (Dan. 1:4-17). It required courage in Daniel to refuse to partake of the dainties of the king's table. But he knew his brain would be in a better condition if he ate plainer food.

We should eat to live, not live to eat. The Spartans were brought up to eat plainly, and they were among the most rugged warriors the world ever knew. Self-denial helps us conquer self; to control the tongue, which the author of the book of James says is "a fire, a world of iniquity." Self-denial helps us to govern our pride so we will not con-

form to the world in dress, actions or conversation. For as we learn to deny ourselves we gain strength to overcome the world that resides right in our own hearts; and this is fruitful: "for the world passeth away, and the lusts thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever."●●

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*From A Reader—*

## Doors

There are doors, literal and symbolic.

We all know the story of Noah and the Ark. God commanded Noah to build the ark. "A window shalt thou make to the ark, and in a cubit shalt thou finish it above, and the door of the ark shalt thou set in the side thereof" (Gen. 6:16). That was the door to life for those people, for only those who entered it could be saved from the impending destruction.

While Noah was building the ark, no doubt some thought of helping him, thinking there might be something to all his preaching, but they never got around to really helping. The ark, however, did get finished, the rains came and God sealed the door tight. What knocking at that door there must have been! but—too late.

The second door is the door of salvation. Jesus, His teaching, and the manner of His life pointed men to that door. He said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not heed them. I am the door: if any one enters by me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture" (John 10:7, 9).

And there is a third door: the door of utterance. This door preaches God's good news. Paul did much to open this door to people who were interested in working for the Kingdom of God.

The fourth and last door is the door of activity. It is a large door, one that will allow us to read, study, speak and live God's way.

—Mrs. E. S., Wausau, Wisconsin

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If we wish to retain "the Word of the Lord" everything depends upon where we keep it. If we just keep it in the mind, a leaky memory may waste the treasure. The best way to remember the Word is to do it. The engraved Word becomes character, written upon the fleshly tables of the heart. We incarnate the Word and it becomes a vital part of our own personality. We live it and it lives in us.



# UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God."

## Original Sin

**F**EW doctrines of the orthodox church have received a more general acknowledgement than that of original sin. Except for minor variations, the general teaching is summarized as "that which refers the prevalence of sin to a fall from a pristine condition of innocence or integrity at the beginning of human history. One consequence of this moral catastrophe was the corruption of our nature in such wise that every individual finds himself, from birth onwards, in an abnormal moral state: a state described as inconsistent with the concept of man, foreign to the Creator's intention: a state therefore displeasing to God, or sinful, and also guilty, or deserving of punishment. This corruption of human nature has generally been represented since Augustine as consisting in a diminution of the freedom of the will and in an acquired, ingrained bias or inclination to evil; and the universal appearance of sinfulness in the lives of men is ascribed to its hereditary transmission by means of natural generation."\*

The doctrine has been variously described as "the most incomprehensible of all mysteries," without which "we are an unintelligible enigma to ourselves"; as "the point from which all succeeding history starts"; "the very kernel and germ of that history, without which mankind would be a book without a title, a book without an introduction." A 19th century theologian cited it as one of the "mysterious truths," and still another classed it as being "truth above reason"; yet the majority still accept it.

The Bible has been described by one writer as "a history of sin." In a certain sense this may be true, since the Bible is a history of man, showing man at his best and man at his worst. Man is human, and human nature at its worst is sinful, willfully doing evil; human nature at its best keeps the law inviolate. And in the Scriptures, as well as in secular history, the worst of human nature

predominates and history is written as a succession of strife between individuals and wars between nations.

Truth above reason? No, it cannot be. That which defies reason is mythology, a figment of the imagination of men. We cannot accept as truth any doctrine that cannot be proven from the Bible. Augustine is considered to be the "father" of the doctrine and that fact alone condemns it because that makes it a doctrine of man. But because it is supposedly of such great importance to man's salvation, we will give the doctrine further study. We will follow our outline:

- III. The Origin and History of Original Sin
  - A. Augustine and Original Sin
  - B. Original Sin after Augustine
  - C. Original Sin Today

Believing that one man should be condemned or punished for the sins of another contradicts our sense of justice. Can we believe a righteous, all-wise heavenly Father to be less just than we humans would be? To believe that an individual could be guilty of a sin before he is born is inconsistent with reason. Can we believe that God who implores us, "Come now, and let us reason together," would sanction an unreasonable doctrine?

### III. THE ORIGIN AND HISTORY OF ORIGINAL SIN

#### A. Augustine and Original Sin

**3. Adam and Eve were not the first humans on earth.** To say that all humanity literally descended from Adam and Eve is to say that they were the first two and only two humans on earth at that time. This is a preposterous assumption. Anthropologists have proven beyond doubt that man was on the earth thousands of years before Adam and Eve. Prehistoric men were mortal, even as man has always been, and the remains of these men that have been unearthed in various places indicate that man inhabited our planet long before Adam and Eve. It is utterly absurd to say that all men were physical descendants of Adam and Eve.

A contemporary writer comments: "It is gen-

\* F. R. Tennant, *The Origin and Propagation of Sin*, p. 4.

erally recognized today that this document [the Creation account] leaves the question about **how** God created man completely open; it limits itself to saying that God **did** create man. The story speaks of the creation of plants and animals as the creation of kinds of beings (not of individuals), and it speaks of the creation of humans in the same way. **Naaseh adam** (Gen. 1:26) means 'let us make mankind.' \*\*

Adam and Eve are but representative. They were a figurative representation of the first humans to be called into God's service on this earth. Neither were they the only persons on the earth at that time, else where did their son Cain find his wife? And for whom did Cain build a city? (Gen. 4:17).

**The guilt of sin cannot be inherited. Such an assumption is contrary to general Bible teaching. God does not condemn anyone for the sin of his progenitors. Every individual is responsible for his own sin. The Bible teaching is plain: Every man shall die for his own sin.** "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezek. 18:20); "Every one shall die for his own iniquity" (Jer. 31:30); "Every man shall be put to death for his own sin" (II Kings 14:6).

A study of Augustine's writings on the subject of original sin reveals that the doctrine was a product of his own theological reasonings and not of the Scriptures. It would be impossible to deny that certain physical characteristics and mental potential are inherited from our ancestors. **But to claim that all men are born sinners because they inherited the quality from the first of the race is an exercise in speculation. It finds no basis whatever in the Bible. Certainly the doctrine was not the outcome of an exhaustive study of the Scriptures.**

## B. Original Sin After Augustine

Since the time of Augustine, volumes of literature have been written on the subject of original sin, but today, more than fifteen centuries later, the doctrine remains largely as he elucidated it. Most present-day Church Manuals contain the doctrine much the same as it was introduced by Augustine in the year 400 A. D.

**1. Pelagius vs. Augustine.** In the year 412 A. D., a man named Pelagius took issue with Augustine's concept of original sin, saying that "God has given man the power of free choice so that he may naturally choose good and evil."\*\*

Pelagius reasoned that since men were able to do good under the Jewish Law, all were not born bad. He explained the sin of Adam's descendants as "nothing more than the following of an example." For Pelagius, "the redeeming influence of Christ

upon man is only that of true doctrine and good example, even as Adam has harmed us only through a bad example. The sin of Adam's descendants is nothing more than the following of a bad example." \*\*

Pelagius also asserted, among other things, that "Adam has been created mortal and would die whether he sinned or not; that Adam's sin has only harmed him, not the human race."\*\*

Pelagius' ideas did not meet with favor among the Church fathers. The Church council, meeting in the years 411 and 416 A. D., published the following:

"Whoever says that Adam, the first man, was made mortal, so that, whether he sinned or whether he did not sin, he would die . . . not because of the merit of sin but by reason of the necessity of nature, let him be anathema."\*\* **Anathema**, as defined in the dictionary, is "a formal ecclesiastical ban or curse excommunicating a person." In other words, Pelagius was banned from the church for his views (which contain a kernel of truth).

More than a hundred years later, another Church council re-established the doctrine of original sin and again condemned the teachings of Pelagius, even mentioning him by name: "If anyone says that by the offence of Adam's transgression not the whole man—that is, body and soul—was changed for the worse, but believes that the body only is exposed to corruption, he is deceived by the error of Pelagius." And another church canon reads in part: "If any one asserts that Adam's transgression injured him alone and not his descendants, . . . he will do an injustice to God."\*\*

**2. In the Middle Ages.** After the death of Pelagius, there appears to have been little opposition to the doctrine. There had been and continued to be a debate over whether or not infants were guilty of original sin and whether or not baptism removed the guilt of this sin. The same Church council that condemned the so-called Pelagian heresy decreed that infants were indeed born sinful and must be baptized "unto the remission of sins, so that what they have contracted from generation may be cleansed in them by regeneration." This supposedly clarified the doctrine and resolved the debate.

A later Church council further explained the doctrine, distinguishing original sin from actual sin. It was agreed and published in a decree that "the punishment of original sin is deprivation of the vision of God, but the punishment of actual sin is the torments of everlasting hell."\*\*

\* Herbert Haag, *Is Original Sin In Scripture?* p. 77.

\*\* Piet Schoonenberg, *Man and Sin*, pp. 146-162.

3. **The Council of Trent.** Between 1545 and 1563, a general council of the Roman Catholic Church was held in Trent, Italy. The Reformation had started and many splinter groups were separating from the Mother Church. The council was called to condemn the teachings of the rebels and to reaffirm the doctrines of the Church. During an early session, a list of "thirteen heresies about original sin" was read. It contained the doctrines of Pelagius as well as those of other dissidents, including Martin Luther. At the close of the assembly a decree was issued defining the doctrine but containing nothing new. It amounted to a restatement of previous declarations: "Adam, through his sin, lost for his posterity the holiness and justice in which God had established him, and through the offense he led all his descendants into a state of death and sin." The pronouncement further stated that "original sin can be cured only through the merits of Christ applied to us by baptism." And in a final canon, as a sort of afterthought, the council declared, "that it is not its intention to include in this decree, where original sin is treated of, the blessed and immaculate Virgin Mary."

4. **The Reformation period.** The span of years from the 16th through the 18th century is commonly known as the **Reformation**. During this time many broke away from the Catholic Church (which was the only Church in Europe at the time) and various denominations were formed. Among the best known of these reformers were Martin Luther and John Calvin. Both attracted large followings which resulted in the establishment of the major Protestant churches.

These reformers succeeded in correcting corrupt practices of the Catholic Church, but any reformation of doctrine was barely noticeable. Both claimed to use the Bible only as a basis of teachings, but original sin as taught by them does not differ materially from the Catholic doctrine. The Calvinist doctrine, as summed up by Unger's **Bible Dictionary** is "that the sin of Adam was immediately imputed to the whole human family, so that not only is the entire race depraved, but also actually guilty on account of the first transgression. To sustain this opinion it is argued that Adam was not only the natural, but also the representative or federal head of the human race. His fall involved the whole race in guilt."

According to an English theologian, church doctrine was subject to much "speculation during the Reformation period and imagination on such matters as the state of man before the Fall, the consequences of that event, Adam's knowledge, the religion of Paradise, and other such inconsequential

matters scarcely knew any bounds. All were defined in detail by means of speculatively expanded interpretations."\*

The doctrine of original sin as presented by the Church reformers was not any nearer the truth than the original doctrine as expounded by Augustine. Any who tried to insert some truth on the subject were excommunicated and their books were burned.

**The doctrine of original sin is nothing more than speculative theology. It finds no basis in the Old Testament Scriptures.** And concerning the New Testament, we quote the words of a Bible commentator: "How slender is the foundation in the New Testament for the doctrine of Adam's sin being imputed to his posterity!—two passages in St. Paul at most, and these of uncertain interpretation. The little cloud, no bigger than a man's hand, has covered the heavens. To reduce such subjects to their proper proportions, we should consider first, what space they occupy in Scripture; second, how far the language used respecting them is literal or figurative; third, whether they agree with the more general truths of Scripture and our moral sense, or are not rather repugnant thereto; and fourth, whether their origin may not be prior to Christianity, or traceable in the after-history of the Church. And in the case of this and some other doctrines, we should consider whether even poetry has not lent its aid to stamp them in our minds in a different form from that in which the apostle taught them." (Jowett, **Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans**, pp. 180-181)

### C. Original Sin Today

When we compare the teaching of original sin as it is found in the manuals of the leading churches today we find it to be not materially different from the dogma as introduced by Augustine. Children of a tender age are still being taught that the world is evil because their first parents sinned in Eden.

1. **In the Catholic Church.** We will quote from the second-grade level of the **On Our Way Series**, one of the most widely used catechisms written for teaching Catholic grade school children:

"Who committed the first sin on earth?"

"Our first parents, Adam and Eve, committed the first sin on earth."

"Is this sin passed on to us from Adam?"

"Yes, this sin is passed on to us from Adam. I was born with the stain of Adam's sin. This sin in us is called Original Sin. I was not a child of God.

\* F. R. Tennant, *The Origin and Propagation of Sin*, pp. 41, 230.

I had no right to heaven. But when I was baptized . . . baptism washed away the stain of sin."

"What did Baptism do for you?"

"Baptism washed away Original Sin from my soul and made it rich in the grace of God."

Within the last decade the Catholic Church held a council at the Vatican to discuss the problems of the church in our modern world. At the close of the council a book was compiled of all the documents that were covered, "offering further clarification of the Church's thinking." In this book we find our subject, "original sin" mentioned in the preface: "The reality which is called the 'contemporary world' is too complex for a simple and single answer. The Council is positive in its judgments. It does not pre-judge. It is not superstitious or superficial. The Council knows that in the world, that is to say, in our human reality, there are many faults and many evils. It reveals their fatal and radical cause—original sin."<sup>†</sup>

And in a chapter entitled "Original Sin" we find the doctrine outlined as it was introduced by Augustine more than fifteen centuries ago. "In explicit terms the constitution itself in Chapter 1 (The Dignity of the Human Person), referring tacitly to Genesis 3 and the doctrine of the Council of Trent, indicates the first man's sin as the principal source of the moral disorder existing in mankind . . ."<sup>†</sup>

The Council of Trent, as previously referred to in this lesson, was held in the 16th century to try to counter the Reformation. The decrees issued by this council reaffirmed Augustine's doctrines and are the basis of most Catholic doctrine today. Most other major denominations, having been founded by men who were first taught the Catholic faith, hold to a similar doctrine on original sin.

Again we assert that **original sin is the distinctive contribution of theology and has absolutely no basis in Scripture. Augustine's influence has been predominant throughout its history. It is a doctrine of tradition and will not stand the test of "Prove all things." Nothing but "scripture . . . given by inspiration of God, . . . is profitable for doctrine . . ."** We are forbidden to add to the inspired Word by accepting traditions of men.

**2. In the Reformed churches.** John Calvin was one of the reformers who lived at the same period as Luther. He was likewise influential in having many corrections made in the practices of the Catholic Church in the 16th century. But like the other reformers, he carried with him the doctrines

of the mother church. His doctrine on original sin is summarized: "Through Adam's fall the entire human race is corrupted and subject to condemnation; our nature has been weakened, and affected with such a bias to sin that, unless the Spirit of God restores it, man of himself can do nothing good."<sup>\*</sup> Calvin argued that Adam was not only the representative or federal head of the human race, but the natural head as well. Hence, his fall involved the whole race in guilt.

**3. In the Presbyterian Church confession.** The Presbyterian Church doctrines were formulated along the lines of another reformer, Arminian. He was also a reformer, but like the others, a reformer of practices and not of doctrines. His doctrine on original sin runs thus:

"Our first parents, being seduced by the subtlety and temptation of Satan, sinned in eating the forbidden fruit. This, their sin, God was pleased according to his wise and holy counsel to permit, having purposed to order it to his own glory. By this sin they fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, and so became dead in sin and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body. They being the root of all mankind, the guilt of this sin was imputed, and the same death in sin and corrupted nature was conveyed to all their posterity, descending from them by ordinary generation. From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transgressions."<sup>\*</sup>

**To be a messenger you must know the message.**

## MEMORIZE

*When you discuss the subject of original sin, you will find it helpful to be able to quote a few passages of Scripture. Try committing the following verses to memory.*

Ezekiel 18:20, The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.

Deuteronomy 24:16, The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin.

*Reprints of these studies are available upon request.*

<sup>†</sup> *The Catechism of Modern Man*, pp. 10, 651.

<sup>\*</sup> F. R. Tennant, *The Origin and Propagation of Sin*, pp. 161, 162.



# The Sons of God that Married the Daughters of Men

**"AND** it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose" (Gen. 6:1-2).

What message has this text for our learning? First let us accept it for its historic value. A footnote in the *New Catholic Bible* suggests that the sons of God "were the descendants of Seth and Enos, who should have been close to God because of their virtuous ancestors; or it may refer to men in general." A footnote in the *Berkeley Version* comments, "We believe that the sons of Seth's family married daughters of Cain's family; that the home thus became ungodly and children grew up without relating life to God."

Modern interpreters ascribe to the text a multitude of ideas. Taken literally, the passage would have little of spiritual significance to us. It might even suggest the popular pagan idea that heaven's gods made love with mortal women of their choice. Such a thought was the central point of most primitive mythology. In Egypt, the Pharaohs were thought to be descended from the offspring of such a union. But such ideas have no place in the inspired wisdom of God.

In Biblical terms let us try to understand the passage as it would harmonize with the revealed plan of God and the general teaching of the Bible.

First, who are the "sons of God"? From the Bible we learn that no one is naturally a child of God. We are told in Romans 9:8, "They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God." Only by adoption into His family do we become one of His children. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (Rom. 8:14-15). And what is the spirit by which prospective children must be led if they would be adopted? "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto

you, they are spirit, and they are life," said Jesus (John 6:63). By believing and conforming our lives to His words, His teachings, we become adopted into God's family.

James speaks again of the means of our adoption into God's family: "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures" (Jas. 1:18).

Jesus also identifies prospective sons of God: "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John 1:12). These are the same sons of God of whom Paul speaks in his Epistle to the Philippians: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling . . . that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world" (2:12, 15). The sons of God must work out their salvation in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation.

The apostle John speaks also of the sons of God: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (I John 3:1-3).

If begotten by His Word, we are now the mortal sons of God; and if we remain faithful to Him, we shall become His immortal sons in the glorious day of the coming of Christ (Phil. 3:20-21).

Now what about the daughters of men? Who are they? Notice that they are "of men"—they have not become adopted into God's family. They belong to the world at large, the world for which Jesus did not pray (John 17:9).

With this thought in mind, let us read again our text: "And it came to pass when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters

were born unto them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose." What was God's attitude toward this union? He condemned it: "And the Lord said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh. . . . And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth" (Gen. 6:3-7).

The Lord has always condemned the intermingling of His people, His children, with other peoples and strangers to Him. The following command was stressed strongly when the children of Israel were about to enter the promised land of Canaan. The people were not to make any covenant with the inhabitants of the land: "thou shalt make no covenant with them, . . . neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly" (Deut. 7:1-4). Why did God command them not to marry the daughters of men? Because "they will turn away thy son from following me."

The same command is repeated in Joshua 23:11-13: "Take good heed therefore unto yourselves, that ye love the Lord your God. Else if ye do in any wise go back, and cleave unto the remnant of these nations, even these that remain among you, and shall make marriages with them, and go in unto them, and they to you: . . . they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land."

The command was not always strictly observed, to the ruination of the offender. Of King Solomon we read: "But king Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughters of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites; of the nations concerning which the Lord said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love" (I Kings 11:1-2). And just as the Lord had said, "it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father. . . . And Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord . . . and sacrificed unto their gods" (vs. 4-8).

Again in the time of Ezra, the same transgression was disclosed among the returned Israelite

captives. "For [the people of Israel] have taken of their daughters [the Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, etc.] for themselves, and for their sons: so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of those lands: yea, the hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief in this trespass." Ezra recognized the peril: "Now therefore give not your daughters unto their sons, neither take their daughters unto your sons, nor seek their peace or their wealth for ever: that ye may be strong" (Ezra 9:2, 12). On their obedience depended their strength and their prosperity. "Should we again break thy commandments, and join in affinity with the people of these abominations?" (v. 14). The situation was grave, and the only solution, as Ezra saw it, was separation. "Now therefore make confession unto the Lord God of your fathers, and do his pleasure: and separate yourselves from the people of the land, and from the strange wives. Then all the congregation answered and said with a loud voice, As thou hast said, so must we do." (Ezra 10:11-12).

The principle of separation was still in force in New Testament times. We read Paul's words: "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?" (II Cor. 6:14).

The sons of God have always been tempted to unite with the children of earth, the daughters of men, but all such union was and is strictly forbidden. God commands that His people be separate and distinct: "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (II Cor. 6:17-18).

The apostle Paul stated the rule for Christian union: "The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord." Christians were not to marry worldlings, but "only in the Lord."

Thus we can understand how the sons of God married the daughters of men: those who had pledged themselves to obey the law of God united themselves to women who worshiped other gods. This thought is confirmed by the definitions of the original words used in Genesis 6, as given in *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*. We quote the comment on Gen. 6:1-4, "Sons of God; His worshipers . . . (Not angels—an opinion based on a false theory of the passage) . . . Daughters of men, is the appropriate designation for the females of the other race, who were not worshipers of the true God."●●

# Bible A B C's



**K** IS for King David. King David was a man who loved God and learned to keep God's commandments. David's father's name was Jesse. Jesse loved his son and started teaching him about God when he was a small boy. When David was old enough he watched his father's flocks while they were in the pasture. He often sang songs to God thanking Him for His watchfulness and great care over him and for the wonderful blessings He had promised.

When David grew up he became king over the land of Israel, and he began to think of how nice it would be to build a temple for God to dwell in. The ark of God had been kept in the tabernacle for a long time, but the tabernacle was made to be moved from place to place. It was made to be taken apart easily and put together again. Besides this, the tabernacle had been made while the Israelites were wandering in the wilderness; and now they had settled and were firmly established in the land of Canaan. King David wanted a large, beautiful temple to be built permanently in one place where the ark of the Lord

## *K* is for *K*ing David

might rest forever and where the people might go to worship the one true and living God.

King David began to make plans for the temple of the Lord and to gather material together to build it. He could imagine how beautiful the temple would be and just how it would look when it was finished. But then, God spoke to King David and told him, "You are not to build my temple, for you are a warrior. Your son Solomon shall build my temple. If he continues to obey my commandments and instructions as he has until now, I will make his kingdom last forever." How disappointed King David was! But he had learned to obey God, and he obeyed God in this, too.

Before all the leaders of Israel, and all the people, King

David spoke to his son Solomon and said, "I am instructing you to search out every commandment of the Lord so that you may continue to rule this good land. Solomon, my son, get to know the God of your fathers. Worship and serve him with a clean heart and a willing mind, for the Lord sees every heart and understands and knows every thought. If you seek him, you will find him; but if you forsake him, he will permanently throw you aside." Wasn't this very good advice for any father to give to his son?

"Then David gave Solomon the blueprint of the Temple and its surroundings—the treasures, the upstairs rooms, the inside rooms and the sanctuary for the ark. He also gave Solomon his plans for the outer court, the outside rooms, the Temple storage areas, and the treasures for the gifts dedicated by famous persons." King David had stored much gold and silver to be used for the lampstands and lamps, the candlesticks, the tables, the basins, cups and bowls and refined gold for the altar of incense.

Then King David turned to

the entire assembly and said, "I have gathered as much as I could for the building—enough gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood and great quantities of onyx, other precious stones, costly jewels and marble. And now, because of my devotion to the Temple of God, I am giving all of my own private treasures to aid in the construction. This is in addition to the building materials I have already collected. These personal contributions consist of \$85,000,000 worth of gold from Ophir and \$20,000,000 worth of purest silver. . . . Now then who will follow my example? Who will give himself and all that he has to the Lord?" (*Berkeley Version*).

Then the leaders of the people and officers of the king pledged \$145,000,000 in gold; \$50,000 in the foreign currency; \$30,000,000 in silver; 800 tons of bronze; and 4,600 tons of iron. They also contributed great amounts of jewelry. Everyone was excited and happy for the opportunity of service, and King David was moved with deep joy.

Then King David praised the Lord, saying, "Everything in the heavens and earth is yours, O Lord, and this is your kingdom. . . . Riches and honor come from you alone and you are the Ruler of all mankind. . . . But who am I and who are my people that we should be permitted to give anything to you? Everything we have has come from you and we only give you what is yours already! O Lord our God, all of this material that we have gathered to build a temple for your holy name comes from you! It all belongs to you! I know, my God, that you test men to see if they are good; for you enjoy good men. I have done all this with good motives, and I have watched your people offer their gifts willingly and joyously."

What a great lesson King David teaches us! He gave everything willingly to the treasury to be used in building the Temple for the Lord, and when his people saw him giving so generously and willingly they followed his good example.

Do we realize that everything we have belongs to God and He has only loaned it to us; and when we give things to Him, it is only what He already owns? King David did not pout and find fault when God told him he could not build the temple. He still did everything he could to get things ready for the beautiful building he had planned. ●●

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*The gracious Lord ever strengthens the will that is willing. He transforms the frail reed into an iron pillar and makes trembling timidity bold as a lion.*

*"Mighty Father, strengthen me;  
I myself would mighty be."*

*A Story for Children—*

## **From Crossville**

### **to Thankful Town**

"COUSINS aren't always so kind an' nice—an' I don't see why Myrtle has to talk 'bout me. I heard her sayin' to herself, quietlike, 'Guess Barbara has moved to Grumble Street.' Course I was in the other room, an' she didn't know I heard what she said."

Napoleon, better known as Nappy, raised himself slowly from the rug, stretched one leg, then another, yawned, and lay down again.

"O Nappy, you sleepy cat, I s'ppose you're just like the others, an' don't care. Anybody would be grumpy if they couldn't have the bee-u-tee-ful sweater in the window at Parker's store—an' had to take care of a cross-patch little brother—an' wipe dishes 'most every single night."

Baby was crosser than ever that morning, after Barbara had taken care of him for a while. And no wonder; for babies are quick to smile when they see a smile, and frown when those about them are frowning.

Cousin Myrtle had been watching a small face covered with frowns, a little mouth puckered in a pout. She put on her thinking cap, and in a few minutes had made up her mind what she would do.

At supper, a certain small girl was heard to mutter under her breath, "Soup again—an' potatoes—an' puddin'; no cake—nothin' nice."

As the plates were turned, Barbara was surprised to see a little envelope under hers, with her name neatly written on it. And under her name were the words, "Do not open until you are alone in your own room."

Somehow, as Barbara tore open the letter, she had a guilty feeling. This is what she read:

Barbara Frown,  
Grumble Street,  
Crossville.

Dear Friend:

We have found out that you have come to live in our town. We, the citizens of Crossville, are never pleasant and cheerful. We are very careful to live up to the name of our town. We are sure you will be a good citizen; for people never come



here until they have learned to grumble as much as we do.

Yours with sour wishes,  
Committee of Crossville

Barbara read the letter through several times, and a tear stole down her face. She brushed it away quickly, saying, "My name is not Barbara Frown, an' I don't want to live in their old town, an' they needn't write any letters to me."

A blue envelope lay under her plate at breakfast time. She took it upstairs, opened it, and read slowly:

Cross Barbara:

This is just the sort of weather we like. When it is gloomy outside, we do not see any reason for being pleasant in the house—do you? If you did not have to take care of a baby half your playtime—and if you could have new things when you wanted them—there might be some reason to be cheerful, then. We believe you feel just as we do.

Yours for a blue day,  
Crossville Committee  
(Signed) Mr. B. Mean

Morning, noon and night, for several days, Barbara found a letter under her plate.

"I do like letters," she told Nappy, as they lay on the rug in front of the cheery fire in the living-room. "But I'm sick of the kind I get all the time. I just b'lieve Cousin Myrtle writes 'em; 'cause when I looked at her real hard at dinner time, she began to talk to Grandma, an' wouldn't look at me at all."

Nappy was almost asleep; but he looked up with a start as Barbara suddenly clapped her hands. "I know what I'll do," she cried. "I'll answer 'em!"

At supper, Cousin Myrtle had a surprise. She found a pink envelope under her plate, with her name scrawled in large letters across the top.

"A letter for me!" she exclaimed, picking it up.

"I believe my plan has worked," she said to herself; and she smiled as she read:

*Deer chereful cosin:*

*I hope no more letters will come from crossville. I'm glad for what you and Grandma said about all the things we have to be thankful for and I've been thinking about it. I don't need the new sweater after all. Helen said when we played together that she wished she had a nice baby brother cause they haven't got any baby. So I've been thinking about the other things. I like to get more*

February, 1973

*letters only I wished they would come from thankful town.*

*Your loveing cosin, Barbara*

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## The Trumpet of the Lord

(Continued from page 5)

Gossip is a type of misbehavior indulged in by many people. The slumber song excuses it as a harmless form of entertainment. The Word of God condemns it unreservedly. "Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people" (Lev. 19:16). The slumber song permits one to hate his brother in his heart so long as he doesn't do anything to harm him physically, and professing Christians may carry a grudge against someone during most of their lives without ever being once told that such hatred is "murder" in God's sight. But the trumpet of the Lord says, "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him" (I John 3:15).

We should not deceive ourselves by believing that to resist the sound of the slumber song is easy, for it is not. The voice condoning any type of behavior that we may choose for ourselves is right within us. "Every way of man is right in his own eyes" (Prov. 21:2). Hence, superclear perception is needed to see our ways as God sees them. Self-justification is as natural as to breathe. Self-condemnation is a virtue that must be acquired, and at great cost in humility and self-effacement.

In the fable of the Mariners and the Siren Island, the voice of the sirens was so intriguing that it was next to impossible for the mariners to sail past without landing on the island. Once they landed these fabulous creatures would cause their destruction. One sea captain, determined to sail past, plugged the sailors' ears with cotton batting, then tied himself to the mast. In that way he was able to pass the island. So to make ourselves safe from the beguiling sound of the slumber song we may have to plug our ears with batting and lash ourselves to the mast. But whatever the process, the end will more than justify the means.

### Ezekiel, the Master Trumpeter

In Ezekiel 33 we hear the voice of the Lord rather than the slumber songs that lull into a deceitful sleep. "Again the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, speak to the children of thy people, and say unto them, When I bring

the sword upon a land, if the people of the land take a man of their coasts, and set him for their watchman: if when he seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet, and warn the people, then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning; if the sword come, and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head." No one is excused—we each must be a watchman to warn the other (vs. 1-4).

The prophet then continues to speak in reference to the man who has been warned: "He heard the sound of the trumpet, and took not warning; his blood shall be upon him. But he that taketh warning shall deliver his soul" (v. 5). If only we will listen to the trumpet, a trumpet that does not give an uncertain sound, and take warning, we shall save our lives. "But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand" (v. 6). Two are found guilty; the watchman who failed to blow the trumpet, and the wicked who failed to turn from his wicked way. We all have to warn ourselves first, blow the trumpet to ourselves and then warn others, not sing slumber-songs. We cannot tell ourselves quietly, Go along and do as you please; you are not so bad; it is not so serious if you get angry or impatient once in a while. But to say this is to sing the slumber-song. The trumpet of the Lord cries, "Cease from anger, and forsake wrath"; "let patience have her perfect work." What a contrast between the trumpet of the Lord and the slumber-song.

#### Watchfulness vs. Defeatism

Ezekiel now receives a special assignment from the Eternal: "So thou, O Son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul" (vs. 7-9). And this assignment applies to each of us today. The man who gives the warning, who sounds the alarm, who cries aloud and does not spare, this man has delivered his soul.

In verse 10 we are given another version of the slumber-song, *defeatism*. Notice what the people were saying to Ezekiel in that day: "If our transgressions and our sins be upon us, and we pine

away in them, how should we then live?" People who say this surrender to the defeatist's doleful lament: "I can't, the work cannot be done." They lack willpower, without which the ablest man is as spineless as a jellyfish. They say, We cannot get rid of sin and iniquity, so we may as well not try. We cannot cease getting angry; we cannot put away dishonesty; we cannot live a clean, moral life; we are powerless to control our thoughts and emotions. "If our transgressions and our sins be upon us and we pine away in them, how should we then live?" That is the cry of the sluggard, never of the true soldier of God. A true soldier is courageous. He is watchful, alert, anxious to do whatever God commands.

Then continuing in verse 11 we read, "Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live." What a just God! "Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" This voice of the living God sounds as a decisive trumpet call across the centuries, "Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel? Therefore, thou son of man, say unto the children of thy people, the righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression: as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall thereby in the day that he turneth from his wickedness" (v. 12). What a just, righteous God! If we turn from our righteousness, we will not be spared; and if we turn from our wickedness, we will not suffer for our past sins—"neither shall the righteous be able to live for his righteousness in the day that he sinneth."

When you turn from your righteousness, when you turn from My way, when you do not walk in My fear, keeping My commandments, says God, I will not listen. This is the trumpet of the Lord sounding. When we turn from the right way, the work that we have done will not be credited to us toward eternal life; our evil will bring death.

"When I shall say to the righteous, that he shall surely live; if he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteousnesses shall not be remembered; but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it" (Ezek. 33:13). If he has turned from his right-doing and transgressed, he shall die for the iniquity. "Again, when I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die"—God says to all of us, If wicked you shall surely die. But "if he turn from his sin" and cease to commit iniquity, "none of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him." That is a most merciful provision: "none of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him: he hath

done that which is lawful and right; he shall surely live."

Then he says, "O ye house of Israel, I will judge you every one after his ways." Our sins will not be mentioned in that day if we turn from them. God has always had a just plan to determine merit.

If we do not turn from our evil ways, from our anger, our impatience, our jealous ways, our selfish ways, we shall die for them.

If we are so self-satisfied we think we are all right, we do not see ourselves as we are and we are not growing. We heard about a man who loved to relate how he never had any great besetments, that he was living a life above reproach. "But," he said, "my wife has a terrible temper." He then was just beginning to learn what God requires of us. But he perceived that true Christianity is practical. Well, it turned out that *he* was the one with the bad disposition; he was only self-deceived. Later, when on his deathbed, when he realized what he had failed to do, he said, "If only the Bible had looked to me when I was well and strong as it does now, I would have lived differently, and I would not be in the position I am in now." He realized when it was too late that he had not allowed God's trumpet to awaken him, that he had never been stirred to action and self-searching by its clarion call. And now the shadow of death hovered over him and his feet stumbled on the dark mountains.

We must take the lesson to ourselves: we must change ourselves while we have time and opportunity. We might be able to overcome some minor fault at the last moment, but if we have not been working, the Master will never be able to say to us, "Well done, good and faithful servant." It will be too late to change at the last moment. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil." That is why we need the trumpet of the Lord to wake us up. *Now* is the day of salvation!

The 17th verse of Ezekiel 33 reads, "Yet the children of thy people say, The way of the Lord is not equal: but as for them their way is not equal." They still complain the way of the Lord is not equal, that God is not just. "When the righteous turneth from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, he shall even die thereby." He tells it over and over again so we will remember it. "But if the wicked turn from his wickedness, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall live thereby." My way is just and righteous, says God; why do you say My way is not righteous? It is based upon righteous principles. "Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. O ye house of Israel, I will judge you every one after his ways." I will judge you

because you say and think the way of the Lord is not right. It is a God-given way, a just, righteous way.

Continue in His way and His mercy will flow out, continue in sin and His judgments will come on you.

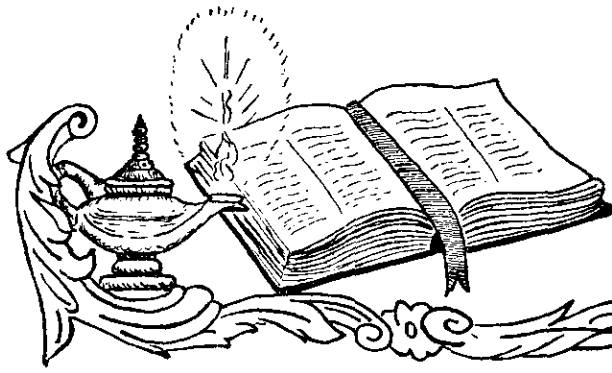
### The Trumpet Call at Christ's Coming

During all the years prior to the second coming of Christ the trumpet of the Lord has sounded only to the few striving to become a part of His Bride or Church. No others would listen. After Christ returns the situation will be reversed: He then will call to all mankind. God is silent now, has been silent for some nineteen hundred years. During all these years no man has heard one word from God; no one has seen an angel or witnessed a single miracle such as Jesus performed. We have not seen the dead raised, the eyes of the blind opened, or the amputated limb restored, and no judgments have been visited on ungodly men and nations. But at Christ's second coming that silence will be broken; the trumpet will be heard the world over. Paul said: "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God" (I Thess. 4:16). Then the proclamation of Isaiah 18:3 will go forth: "All ye inhabitants of the world, and dwellers on the earth, see ye, when he lifteth up an ensign on the mountains; and when he bloweth a trumpet, hear ye." And Rev. 14:7 reveals the nature of that trumpet's demands: "Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come."

During all the years that God has worked with mankind up to Christ's second coming, men have been allowed their free moral agency, complete choice of action. They could listen to and obey the sound of the trumpet, or they could refuse to listen. There was no coercion. But now the tables are to turn. No longer can men stoutly refuse to listen to the voice of God without suffering the consequences. In Isaiah 26 we are given the "before" and "after" picture of the status of the world in relation to God's authority. *Before*: "Lord, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see"; *after*: "but they shall see; and be ashamed for their envy at the people, ... for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness" (Isa. 26:11, 9). And Isaiah 60:12 projects the ultimatum: "For the nation and the kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted."

This is a message from God. And it is a trumpet call, not a slumber song. Turn now, says God, and

*(Continued on page 26)*



# Meditations

## On the Word

WITHOUT a doubt most of us have experienced rare golden moments when our hearts were at rest, in tune with the Infinite and at peace with the world. At such times we are content to lie as clay in the Potter's hands, working together with Him, resting the outcome in His hands in full assurance of faith. But, unfortunately, it has proved difficult to maintain this state of bliss, and for many it remains an ideal, a goal still distant, which is probably what the composer of this beautiful Psalm meant it to be. For the singer of Israel knew a life far from idyllic, and his stormy struggles with his own nature make him one of the Bible characters whom we feel and know and understand.

Still, it is not an impossible ideal, and as a divine standard it assumes the status of a direct command. If we are not like that, we had better be.

The many Bible passages describing the peace and rest which reward the faithful believer form a necklace of jewels of rarest beauty. But let no one think this peace is inborn, or ours for the mere wishing, or in any sense easy to attain. Like every part of the "hundredfold" promised by the Master, it has its price. In its fullness it comes at the end of the battle, not at the beginning. There can be no final peace without final victory.

So when the vision of glory dims and our skies grow dark, when the tempests shake our soul and we long for inward peace and it eludes us, we may well ask ourselves, "Who am I, and what have I done, that I should expect peace?" If we are serious in our quest, we may inquire, What is the barrier between me and my God? What sin hides His face from me? (Isa. 59:1-2). These questions, sincerely asked and followed up, are the prelude to progress,

*"Lord, my heart is not haughty,  
nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I  
exercise myself in great matters,  
or in things too high for me"*

—(Psalm 131:1).

and finally, the "great peace" of true Christians.

It is a fact taught by sad experience that pride and peace cannot dwell together. "Humility, that low, sweet root from

which all heavenly virtues shoot," is the parent of serenity. The haughty spirit cannot escape its final fall (Prov. 16:18), nor can it avoid a great deal of unhappiness in this life. A head carried too high is sure to get bumped frequently and painfully, and lofty eyes overlook the many stumbling blocks in the way. Pride breeds sensitiveness, and feelings which project too far get hurt.

Pride should never be confused with self-respect, nor humility with the lack of ambition. As a matter of fact, this is too often done. Orderliness of surroundings, neatness of dress and cleanliness of person need not be pride; right motives sanctify them as essential Christian virtues. A dirty, lazy or shiftless Christian is a contradiction in terms. In fact, he is not a Christian at all. While trials are essential for our purification, it does not follow that they should be sought after or taken for granted. A trouble which we bring upon ourselves through willfulness or bad judgment may teach us a valuable lesson; but far better not to have to learn by the hard way.

The line of least resistance is to abandon the struggle, fold our hands piously and say all is for the best. This is the spirit of much "inspirational" reading, but it is not true. Whatever is, is not necessarily right. This present world is filled with innumerable evils which cry out for correction. When God's time comes, it will be different. Then it will be correct to say, "God's in His heaven, all's right with the world."

No trouble which could have been avoided, no



adverse condition which can possibly be remedied, should be accepted as the will of God. It is true that "what can't be cured must be endured" (and that is plenty), but that does not excuse us from at least attempting a cure, with all that is in us. It is true that "God... 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); but this does not signify that we should sit with folded hands waiting for the way of escape to appear. God helps only those who help themselves, and the man or woman who gives up without a warfare against sin, choosing resignation instead, is like the slothful servant in the parable, who hid his lone talent in the earth rather than exert himself to put it to work. The attitude of the man who prays for daily bread and waits for it to descend, ready baked and buttered, is in contradiction to the admonition in Eph. 4:28, "let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good."

It is important, however, for the Christian to know his limitations and work within his sphere. We must, it is true, expand our souls, exalt our aspirations, think high thoughts, fight the "good fight." But there is a point beyond which we cannot go, and to attempt it is to court frustration. The finite mind cannot comprehend the infinite. Eternity of time and infinity of space are definitely beyond our grasp. The self-existent, all-powerful, imperishable nature of God is too high for us. And

for us to question His wisdom or judge His actions by human standards is the sheerest presumption. This is not the road to peace of mind. We should remember Deut. 29:29, "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law."

Individuals of a certain mental type are relatively insensible to the misery of the world, so long as they are not themselves touched by it. Others, less self-centered and more sensitive, are deeply moved; but here again there are various reactions. The one of little faith is likely to worry and despair. Others, confessing themselves inadequate for the task, but strong in the faith that a brighter, glorious Morrow will dawn when the Eternal takes over, can say without selfishness,

"I am glad to think  
I am not bound to make the world go right,  
But only to discover and to do  
With cheerful heart the work that God appoints.  
I will trust in Him,  
That He can hold His own; and I will take  
His will... to be my highest good."

Such are not exercising themselves in things too high for them, but, living one day at a time and doing well the work lying nearest at hand, are quietly preparing themselves for the time when minds will be expanded to comprehend the unfolding wisdom of God. ●●



## How to Succeed

How we need to have our minds stirred up—I need it especially. If our Great Example had to work to bring His mind into subjection, we surely must do the same. It means real work not to speak our own words, think our own thoughts, or have our own way. We cannot do this if we don't know how. The mind must first be reached. The principles of Christianity must be understood before they can be practiced.

I want to keep on trying. We have everything to gain and nothing to lose if we keep trying. It is a great work, but with determination to please the Lord every day of our lives, we can succeed.

Laurel, Indiana

E. M.

February, 1973

## How to Withstand the Cold

Now that winter has come, it is time to cast off all pride and be sensible, to dress warmer in the garments God provides us, so we will be able to withstand all the raw cold winds of trial and testing. We must have on our robe of righteousness to keep out all the cold blasts of doubt and the chilly drafts of self-pity.

Then we can go singing on our way, and our rejoicing will lighten the burden of our work.

Potsdam, N. Y.

O. W.

## Appreciative

I have been reading your literature and wonderful *Mes-sages* for forty-seven years, and I wish to say your writing and composition on Bible subjects are great indeed. Keep up the good work. I am inspired by the character of your founder, which all of us should strive to emulate.

Kansas City, Missouri

J. E.

## God Gives the Best

What lies ahead of us in the coming days we know not. But one thing we do know: whatever the Lord brings to pass will be best for our spiritual development.

Milton, Iowa

E. T.

## Timely Topics

(Continued from page 6)

ing! Be alert to the signs of the times. Stay wide awake to the perils that threaten your spiritual welfare. Awake to your imperfections in God's sight; keep your eyes wide open for the slightest trace of sin and throw it off.

"Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrow, or in the morning: lest coming suddenly he find *you* sleeping" (Mark 13:35-36). ●●

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## The Trumpet of the Lord

(Continued from page 23)

My mercy will flow out. If you want your own way, you may have it; I leave you free moral agents to choose life or death.

The trumpet call sounds; respond by searching the depths of your heart, not just scanning the surface. Awake! do not be deaf. He who has an ear to hear, let him hear, says Jesus.

If we want life, we will hearken. We will awake and watch. We will watch to see how we spend our time, what we are thinking about; if we think right, we will act right. If we just get our mind on higher things, we will be able to conquer our evil traits; we will be able to rule ourselves.

God's trumpet is sounding. Let us bow down our ear and listen! ●●

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## Words to WALK By

The man who has something to boast about doesn't have to boast.

*Look up, look out, look in.*

Don't be like a rocking chair—full of motion but making no progress.

*The man who is set in his ways doesn't get anywhere.*

Don't lean too heavily on things—they might give way.

*To get to the top, start at the bottom.*

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

# QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

**"Did God allow the early Christians to use religious images as aids to devotion?"**

No. Images or idols have never been allowed. God forbade the Israelites to make any graven images or likenesses, and the command was many times repeated. Said the prophet Ezekiel, "Thus saith the Lord God: I will also destroy the idols, and I will cause their images to cease" (Ezek. 30:31). See also Isa. 30:21-22.

**"I have heard some people say that the occurrence of earthquakes, such as the recent disaster in Nicaragua, portend the end of the age and the nearness of Christ's coming. What do you think?"**

Jesus made one statement concerning earthquakes in Matthew 24. "Ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows" (vs. 6-8).

Earthquakes, famines, pestilences are natural phenomena which have occurred since the beginning of time and creation. The *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1968 Edition) states that "about 50,000 earthquakes of sufficient size to be felt or noticed occur annually over the whole earth. Of these about 100 are large enough to produce substantial destruction if their centres are near areas of habitation. The very great earthquakes occur at an average rate of about one per year."

As far as the destructive potential of earthquakes is concerned, the most recent have not been necessarily the most destructive. An earthquake in Lisbon, Portugal in the year 1755 caused an estimated loss of life of 60,000 persons in Lisbon alone, where all large public buildings and about 12,000 dwellings were demolished. Another earthquake in California in 1906 caused a fault (a slippage in the earth's crust) about 270 miles in length. An earthquake that struck Tokyo, Japan in 1923 resulted in a death toll estimated at 74,000.

No, earthquakes are the result of natural causes and bear no relation to the age in which we live.

Note Jesus' words in reference to wars, earthquakes, famines and the like: "all these things must come to pass, but *the end is not yet.*"

"I have wondered for a long time about the pool of Bethesda. Why should an angel have troubled its waters? And why should the first person who stepped into the waters be healed? To me, it sounds more like superstition than divine healing."

The narrative to which you refer is recorded in John 5. The verses read in the King James Version, "Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had" (vs. 2-4).

A number of authorities agree that this passage about the moving of the water and the subsequent healing should not be part of the authorized text. A note in the *New Scofield Reference Bible* says of verse 3: "The oldest and best manuscripts omit 'waiting for the moving of the water', and all of v. 4." *Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott* places these verses in brackets, and comments in a footnote: "This clause is without doubt the addition of some transcriber. Five of the most ancient manuscripts either reject the whole or the principal part of the clause in brackets. Bloomfield says, 'the whole narration savors of Jewish fancy.' Meyer calls it a legendary addition. It is omitted by Mill and Tischendorf, and marked as spurious by Griesbach." *Irwin's Bible Commentary* calls it "an interpolation." Both the *Berkeley Version* and the *Moffatt Bible* place it in brackets; Weymouth, Goodspeed and the *New English Bible* omit the passage.

In a book by Wolfgang E. Pax, *In the Footsteps of Jesus* (copyright 1970 by Otpaz Ltd. Publishing) we read the following comment: "There was a pool by the so-called sheep market; . . . its water was said to possess healing powers and so it was surrounded by a multitude of sick people. Here Jesus healed a cripple, commanding him: 'Rise, take up your bed, and walk' (John 5:8). . . . Here by the pool of Bathzatha we are faced with the interesting fact that pagan rites were probably still being practiced on the edge of the city, though outside its walls, in Jesus' time. It indicates that not by any means was all the population of Jerusalem orthodox, but there must also have been liberal groups, to one of which Herod himself must have belonged. Popular belief always exists as an

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undercurrent to the official religion; here it had gained the upper hand. Simple Jewish people imagined that an angel entered the pool and agitated the water and that this was how it acquired its healing powers; according to pagan belief it was Asclepius who healed people while they slept after having bathed. Jesus always went to find people in their own environment; to him Bathzatha was the place where people with illness and pain from all over the town congregated, and he intervened to alleviate them through his person and through his word."

By intervening in the situation, Jesus did not condone it but used it for His own ends. His object was not to uproot the superstition but to displace it by His God-authorized works and words. It is likely that the spring was of a geyser-like nature and would bubble up from time to time. The ancient people, not understanding the laws of nature, immediately connected the mystery with the works of their gods and their religious rituals, and the superstition grew. ●●

# The Sculptor

*What sculptor carved the arches of a tree...  
And gave the rocks their mossy cameos?...  
Turned the soft-curling eyelids of the rose,  
... And raised the beetling ridges of the  
sea?--Thus the old wonder flashes over  
me, ... When under yellowing domes where  
autumn blows ... Or in the summer wood-  
lands' lulled repose ... I bow before the  
timeless mystery.*

*No answer comes--except this word alone:  
... That Power which scatters stars across  
the dark, ... Notches the hills, and guides  
the firefly's spark--Surely, we may not  
deem it all unknown, ... Nor hold that  
the arm that tends the worm and stone ...  
Leads mankind finally to a dead-sea mark.*

*—Selected*