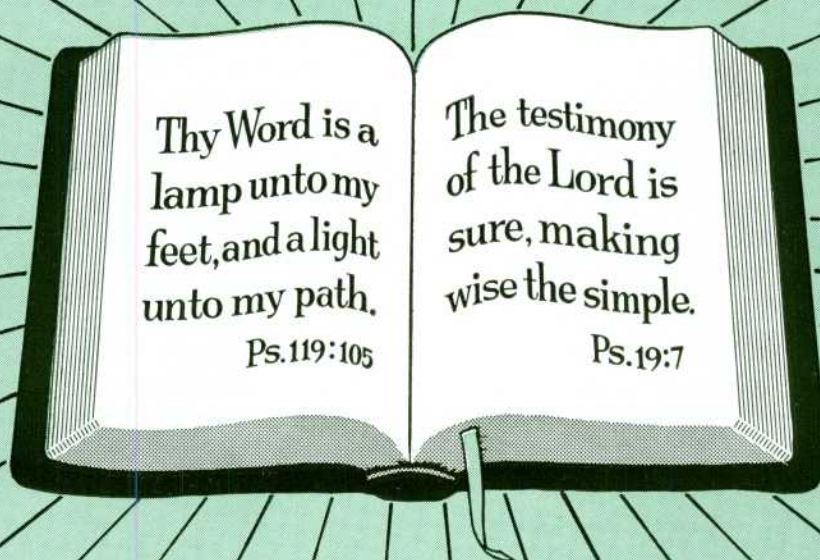


# Megiddo Message

DEVOTED TO THE CAUSE OF CHRIST



**To Forgive and Be Forgiven**

**If We Love One Another**

**The Way to Salvation**

**Creation or Evolution--Does It Matter?**



# No Competition

**C**OMPETITION—selfish, bitter rivalry which has no respect for the interests of others—may make good business, but it does not make Christians. The spirit of competition is completely foreign to the spirit of Christ.

The essence of Christianity is selflessness, living for principle, living for one another, living for God. The essence of competition is selfish—"me first!" Men compete to gain something for themselves and in so doing cause someone else to lose what he might have had. Competition and Christianity are as opposite as night and day. Why? Simply because we cannot be *selfish* and *selfless* at the same time.

Nothing spiritual can be gained in competition. The very idea of struggling *against* another for something eternal is unthinkable. Even in the natural realm, God has provided for His human family so abundantly that each may have according to his need without depriving another. And when it comes to His offers of *eternal* blessings, each may obtain as much as he will fit himself to receive. It is "every man according as his works shall be." No one need receive less because another receives an abundance.

If five men line up on the track for a race, they all know that only one can come in first. Four must lose so that one may win. It is not so in the kingdom of God. Christians do not run *against* each other; they run *together*. And if they run hard enough and fast enough, they may all win together.

The apostle Paul makes this very point in I Corinthians 9. "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize?" The spiritual race is different. Here all may run—and all may *win*.

We can never make any real spiritual progress in competition with a fellow believer. Whatever religious activity can be promoted in a spirit of competition is of the flesh and must perish with the flesh. Yet many an earthly scaffolding of faith has been constructed from motives no higher

than jealousy and personal ambition. All such building is not according to godliness. The eternal glories are above the reach of men who compete and seek glory for themselves—"verily, they have their reward."

How can we get deliverance from the spirit of competition that is born in us, that spirit that wants to push "me" forward at the expense of another, that delights in seeing another set back, if ever so slightly, to give "me" advantage?

Our best corrective is found in going straight to God and seeking His approval, humbling ourselves in His presence and realizing that we are not all that He would have us be. He would have us work not *against* one another but *with* and *for* each other—to complete, rather than compete. If we can combine our efforts to complement one another's work, our Christian effort will be ever so much more effective, and God—not self—will be honored.

In the meanwhile, let us pray in all earnestness after this manner, "Dear Lord, I refuse henceforth to compete with any of Thy servants. Others have more than I; so be it. I rejoice in their success. They have greater gifts. Very well. That is not in their power nor in mine. I am humbly grateful for their greater gifts and my smaller ones. I only pray that I may use to Thy glory such gifts as I possess. I will not compare myself with any, nor try to build up my self-esteem by noting where I may excel one or another in Thy holy work. I hereby purpose to pray for others and to rejoice in their prosperity as if it were my own. And indeed, it is my own if I am Thine, Lord, for then what is Thine is mine and what is mine is all Thine. Amen."

If we can pray according to this spirit, we will find ourselves rising above all envy, all rivalry, all competition, and will be at liberty to serve God as He gives us the power and ability to serve. So shall we escape the tragedy of discovering too late that we have competed—and lost all. ●●

## MEGIDDO means

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

### We believe

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

### We believe

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

### We believe

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

### We believe

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

### We believe

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

### We believe

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

### We believe

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

## Bible Quotations in this issue:

Unidentified quotations are from the King James Version.

Other versions are identified as follows:

NEB—*New English Bible*

NIV—*New International Version*

NAS—*New American Standard*

RSV—*Revised Standard Version*

TLB—*The Living Bible*

TEV—*Today's English Version*

Phillips—*The New Testament in Modern English*

Berkeley—*The Modern Language New Testament*

Weymouth—*The New Testament in Modern Speech*

Moffatt—*The Bible, A New Translation*

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# To Forgive and Be Forgiven

A WELL-KNOWN secular author once wrote of two maiden sisters who lived in Scotland, who refused to have anything to do with each other. "The pair inhabited a single room. From the facts it must have been of some size; but when all is said, it was a single room. Here our two sisters fell out—on some point," he writes, "and fell out so bitterly that there was never a word spoken between them from that day forward. You would have thought that they would separate; but no, they continued to keep house together where they were. A chalk line drawn upon the floor separated the two domains; it bisected the doorway and the fireplace, so that each could go out and in, and do her own cooking, without violating the territory of the other. So, for years, they co-existed in a hateful silence, their meals, their friendly visitors and all, exposed to an unfriendly scrutiny; and at night, in the dark watches, each could hear the breathing of her enemy. Never did four walls look down upon an uglier spectacle than these sisters rivalling each other in unsisterliness."

Such an extreme of unrestrained hatred insults even the animal kingdom; far be it from us to show so unforgiving a spirit. Yet the ugliness of unforgiveness threatens all of us. There is some inner satisfaction in holding a grudge, in feeling superior to another, in putting blame on someone else. Or we feel that by forgiving and forgetting a wrong we are losing something vital to our individualism. Oh, wretched creatures that we are, revelling in another's misery!

Into every life there comes an opportunity—usually many opportunities—to cherish hate, or to extend forgiveness. Our choice at such times is the measure of our greatness of soul. All of us have suffered a wrong at the hand of those we love. Words spoken thoughtlessly or in anger have left deep wounds, or gossip has stained our reputation. It may be only a misunderstanding, yet the pain is deep. We may be completely innocent; we may have done nothing to deserve the treachery of a friend.

But how shall we feel about it?

At times like these, an unforgiving spirit can grow like a choking weed in the soil of our souls. Our strong sense of justice makes us remember the slights and demand retribution. We have a righteous cause, and we want an eye for an eye, tooth for tooth, and slight for slight—or even worse! As we continue to think about it, the injustice grows and grows, until it becomes the consuming passion of our lives. How destructive is such thinking to spiritual growth, and to the spirit of forgiveness!

## Forgiveness Is Divine

"To err is human, to forgive, divine," wrote a sage of yesteryear. Indeed, forgiveness *is* divine, so far removed is it from the realm of instinct. Just *how* divine forgiveness is we shall probably never know until we have been presented "faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy," fully forgiven of every stain of sin forever.

It is said that nothing in this world bears the impress of the Son of God so surely as forgiveness. Forgiveness is Godlike. It belongs to the ethics of heaven. Forgiveness is God condescending to answer the pleas of His repentant, earthly children and blotting out their offenses in His sight. Then, too, there is forgiveness on earth, that spirit of compassion and true love among brethren that is the reflection of the divine virtue. It is the response when heart touches heart within the family of God, and the shame of sin is displaced by the honor of goodness. There is also a vital link between human forgiveness and divine. "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matt. 6:14-15).

We all have sinned. Whether wilfully, or negligently, or ignorantly, we all have sinned many times. And before we can be accepted by the righteous Lord who loveth only righteousness, whose countenance beholds only the upright (Ps. 11:7), we need forgiveness. The God who is of too pure

eyes to behold iniquity with any degree of tolerance will not tolerate evil in you or me, nor will He acknowledge us so long as sin is alive and flourishing in us. We must learn to look upon sin as God does, to hate it, despise it, abhor it, crucify it, even when it touches the dearest longings of our heart. In the sight of God, anything less than absolute holiness or absolute purity is exceeding sinful.

If only we could realize that we lower ourselves in the sight of God each time we sin, how much more carefully we might walk. When we do wrong, we bring ourselves face to face with the fact that we are not all that we should be, or could be, or aspire to be. There is yet work to be done; there is yet evil to be purged; we are not yet as pure and self-controlled as we profess to be—or we would not have sinned. But we *do* sin, and there it stands, an ugly blot on the record we had resolved so solemnly to keep pure. And what shall we do about it?

### An Impossible Theory

This is where theology has postulated the impossible. God the Almighty created man in a perfect state, they say. But before hardly any time at all had passed, this man corrupted himself, and the Ruler of the universe found Himself in a predicament. He had made men perfect, and had somehow failed to make any allowance for human weakness, and, lo! His very first created being on earth disobeyed Him. Just a small sin, to be sure, but one deserving the death penalty. And so the death penalty was passed on to the victim's helpless posterity.

From then on, the story goes, the human race was born in sin, condemned because of Adam's blunder, and hopelessly lost. Lost, that is, until God devised a plan for man's redemption, a plan which resulted some four thousand years later in a solution. What was the solution? God Himself became human flesh, was born and lived among men, and died a cruel death, to pay the penalty that men could not pay for themselves, not being God and not being pure and innocent. By "faith" in Him, they say, the believer may escape the punishment of sin, claiming Christ's sufferings as a substitute for the suffering he himself should have had to endure. Thus Christ became the great expiator of the human race.

### God's Plan for Forgiveness

This theory is the cornerstone of Christianity (falsely so called). But from the very beginning, individual responsibility has been the keynote in

God's plan of salvation, and forgiveness the plan whereby the stain of sin may be removed. How can anyone read Ezekiel, chapters 18 and 33, and not be persuaded of this? How can anyone read the Word of God honestly and not recognize that every man is individually responsible for his own good or evil conduct? These are the words of the prophet Ezekiel: "If the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die. 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" (Ezek. 33:15-16). What need for any atoning blood when one has turned from his evil and "done that which is lawful and right," and is assured that "he shall surely live"?

Again, the words of Isaiah tell God's plan of forgiveness: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Isa 55:7). Here is another definition of forgiveness, yet it is the same. Let the wicked forsake his way, return unto the Lord, and the Lord will "abundantly pardon." What more could one ask than *abundant pardon*?

The same pattern was outlined by the Lord in this message to King Solomon: "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land" (II Chron. 7:14). Here is law and justice and restoration, provided we do on our part. Should we not thank God that He has promised to deal so generously with us, mortal erring creatures that we are? Can we count the times we have transgressed His righteous law and shown ourselves unworthy of His goodness? And yet listen to His promise: "If my people . . . shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin." God will forgive; He will completely remove the last memory of sin, once we humble ourselves and turn to Him and do right. Isn't this mercy? Isn't this abundant mercy from a God whose standard is absolute purity? Even a single broken law will separate us from His favor at Judgment Day, for "whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (Jas. 2:10). In view of this exacting principle, can we not look back on our own manifold transgressions and thank Him who has offered us for-



givenness? Can we not praise God that He has not doomed us to perish? Can we not say with the Psalmist, "If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared" (Ps. 130:3-4). How we need that mercy, that forgiveness, we who have so many times done the wrong when we knew better. How we need that forgiveness that will blot out our sins forever!

The prophet Micah (7:18-19) rejoiced in this same promised forgiveness as he thought back over his own waywardness, and that of his people. "Who is a God like unto thee," he exclaimed, "that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger forever because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." What greater forgiveness could we seek!

How can we consider the great forgiveness God has shown toward us, and then seek revenge upon one another? How can we accept this gracious, heavenly spirit from God in giving us another chance, and another, and another, and not extend the same spirit to our brother?

Truly it is "of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is thy faithfulness" (Lam. 3:22-23). His goodness far surpasses any we could have deserved. "He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities" (Ps. 103:10). As Ezra the scribe declared after the days of Israel's captivity were fulfilled, "After all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, . . . our God hath punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and hath given us such deliverance" (Ezra 9:13).

### How Much Forgiveness?

If God has dealt so generously with us, should not we be able to do so to others? Should we not be longsuffering and forbearing and forgiving with one another? Is not this the command? "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Eph. 4:32).

This was the lesson Jesus was teaching Peter one day. Peter apparently had observed His Master's forgiving spirit and was wondering how much of this spirit he should have to practice. So he asked: "Lord, how many times shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? till seven times?" This was a serious matter to Peter,

for his old Jewish philosophy was something like that of "eye for eye, tooth for tooth, slight for slight." Forgiveness was no part of Jewish law in that day. Jesus' answer astonished Peter and silenced in shame his unforgiving spirit. "I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven" (Matt. 18:21-22).

But Jesus did not stop here. He went on to give an even greater illustration of the truth He was teaching, in the parable of the Two Debtors. The lesson is striking. He told about a slave who owed his king "ten thousand talents." Now a talent of silver, we are told, is the equivalent of about 15 years' wages. If the slave worked his entire lifetime for the king, he could not possibly repay a debt of *ten thousand talents*. And how could a slave work for wages anyway? And even if his wife and children and all that he had were sold, the payment could not be made in full. So the parable reads, "the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt." But what did the servant do, that servant who had received such an enormous measure of forgiveness? He went out and found "one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence." A pence was the wages for a single day of work, so this man's creditor owed him a mere one hundred days of work. "And he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest." He even "went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt." Some translations indicate that the difference in value between the two debts is the difference between \$10,000,000 and something like \$18. Could Peter have missed the point? Is not God's goodness in forgiving us *our* transgressions just that far surpassing any debt our fellowmen could owe us? And should we not be willing to forgive as we have been forgiven—even "until seventy times seven"?

When we consider God's longsuffering toward us, does not any spirit of revenge in our hearts, or any desire to "get even" place us in the category of the servant who was forgiven ten million dollars and refused to forgive his fellowman a mere \$18?

But let us return to the apostle Peter and his lesson. It is not hard to imagine that Peter himself thought of this lesson the Master had given him when he himself became the transgressor and debtor. See him boldly proclaiming that he is ready to die with Christ; then, only a few hours later, see him denying three times that he ever knew Christ! How could he face his Master again? And that same night, as Jesus walked up the steps in the great judgment hall, He turned and "looked"

upon Peter. What a rebuke in that single look! Was not Peter himself desperate for his Master's forgiveness, even until "seventy times seven"?

And when the night was over and next day, and another night, and rumor was spreading that the Christ who had been crucified was alive again, naturally Peter's first thought was of his own shameful sin. Would Jesus accept him again as one of His disciples, he who had such an enormous ugly blot on his record?

But soon word came direct from the women who were early at the tomb that Jesus was alive. More than this, they had been told to give the message to "his disciples and Peter." "Go your way," the angel had said, "tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee" (Mark 16:6-7). Here was the assurance Peter needed. Those words kept turning in his mind. They were Peter's first certainty that Jesus would forgive him. How grateful he must have been that Jesus' forgiveness was not limited to "seven times," for surely he felt his sin seventy-fold.

#### Think of Jesus . . .

The forgiveness of Christ must have impressed Peter deeply, for years later, when he was writing to his brethren, he pointed them to Christ's example of steadfast endurance. He who spent His entire life doing the will of His Father, treating other men fairly, teaching them, helping them, healing them, always kind, loving, forgiving, com-

passionate—what did He receive from them in thanks? An outright rejection, unjust accusation, scorn, even crucifixion. Yet, what did Jesus say to them in return? When they accused Him, "he answered them not a word." And when on the cross, His prayer was, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Think of the stature of the character that could endure so patiently and with such a forgiving spirit. "Who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not"—Peter was challenging his brethren; could any of them suffer so patiently for well-doing as Christ did? And how could Christ do it? Because He "committed himself to him that judgeth righteously" (I Pet. 2:22-23). Christ left all judgment to God, and committed Himself to God also, knowing that God would deal justly with all; hence He could say, "Father, forgive them." He may have known also that some among them would later turn and repent of their awful crime.

Further on in his Epistle, Peter speaks again of this forgiving spirit which every follower of Christ must have: "Finally," he appeals, "be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous; not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing; but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. For he that will love life, and see good days, let him

*(Continued on page 20)*

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## Let Us Pray . . .

Our Father which art in heaven, all glory and honor be to Thy holy name. We approach Thy throne recognizing Thee as the living God, the Eternal Creator and everlasting King.

Help us, Father, to be aware of Thy mercy in forgiving us after so many, many times we have proved ourselves unworthy of that mercy. Forgiveness is a favor that we have all needed and still do need.

To err is human, to forgive is divine; it is one of the qualities of Thee Thyself. There also must be forgiveness on earth; we must be ready to forgive our brother. We all have sinned many times, and are much in need of forgiveness. Anything in Thy sight, O God, anything less than absolute holiness or absolute purity is exceeding sinful.

Father, grant us the honesty to look ourselves squarely in the eye and see ourselves as we actually look to Thee and change our ways where they

need changing that we may be worthy of Thy forgiveness. Thou hast not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. Then may we be forward to forgive each other, that we may show a godly spirit in all our contacts with each other.

We are grateful, dear Father, that Thou hast dealt so generously with us, and help us to be ready to deal generously with our brother, to grant to others the same forgiveness that we demand for ourselves. It is of Thy mercies that we are not consumed, because Thy compassions do not fail; they are new every moment, Thy faithfulness is great.

Come quietly, Lord, while we wait, yielded and still. Help us to open our hearts so Thou canst look deeply within them and see all the corners which we so often try to hide in the shadows. Grant, O Lord, that our hearts may be cleansed of all that should not be there. And after cleansing may they be filled with all that is good and right and holy. In Jesus' name. Amen.



# Out of the Archives

## The First Epistle of Clement

(Part 2)

*The following is more from the First Epistle of Clement, written about 95 A. D. from the Church at Rome to the Church at Corinth. It reflects the thinking of the true Church before it became contaminated with external influences.*

THE FATHER, who is pitiful in all things, and ready to do good, hath compassion on them that fear Him, and kindly and lovingly bestoweth His favours on them that draw nigh unto Him with a single mind. Wherefore let us not be double-minded, neither let our soul indulge in idle-humours respecting His exceeding and glorious gifts. Let this scripture be far from us where He saith, Wretched are the double-minded, which doubt in their soul and say, These things we did hear in the days of our fathers also, and behold we have grown old, and none of these things hath befallen us. Ye fools, compare yourselves unto a tree; take a vine. First it sheddeth its leaves, then a shoot cometh, then a leaf, then a flower, and after these a sour berry, then a full ripe grape. Ye see that in a little time the fruit of the tree attaineth unto mellowness. Of a truth quickly and suddenly shall His will be accomplished, the scripture also bearing witness to it, saying, He shall come quickly and shall not tarry; and the Lord shall come suddenly into His temple, even the Holy One, whom ye expect.

Let us understand, dearly beloved, how that God continually showeth unto us the resurrection that shall be hereafter; whereof He made the Lord Jesus Christ the firstfruit, when He raised Him from the dead. Let us behold, dearly beloved, the

resurrection which happeneth at its proper season.

Do we then think it to be a great and marvellous thing, if the Creator of the universe shall bring about the resurrection of them that have served him with holiness in the assurance of a good faith? For He saith in a certain place; And thou shalt raise me up, and I will praise Thee; and, I went to rest and slept, I was awaked, for Thou art with me. And again Job saith, And thou shalt raise this my flesh which hath endured all these things.

With this hope therefore let our souls be bound unto Him that is faithful in His promises and that is righteous in His judgments. He that commanded not to lie, much more shall He Himself not lie; for nothing is impossible with God save to lie. Therefore let our faith in Him be kindled within us, and let us understand that all things are nigh unto Him . . . All things are in His sight, and nothing escapeth His counsel, seeing that "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament proclaimeth His handiwork. Day uttereth word unto day, and night proclaimeth knowledge unto night; and there are neither words nor speeches, whose voices are not heard."

Since therefore all things are seen and heard, let us fear Him and forsake the abominable lusts of evil works, that we may be shielded by His mercy from the coming judgments. For where can any of us escape from His strong hand? And what world will receive any of them that desert from His service? For the holy writing saith in a certain place, Where shall I go, and where shall I be hidden from thy face? If I ascend into the heaven, Thou art there; if I depart unto the farthest parts of the earth, there is Thy right hand; if I make my bed in the depth, there is Thy Spirit. Whither then shall one depart, or where shall one flee, from Him that embraceth the universe?

Let us therefore approach Him in holiness of soul, lifting up pure and undefiled hands unto Him, with love towards our gentle and compassionate Father who made us an elect portion unto Himself.

Seeing then that we are the special portion of a Holy God, let us do all things that pertain unto holiness, forsaking evil-speakings, abominable and impure embraces, drunkennesses and tumults and hateful lusts, abominable adultery, hateful pride; For God, He saith, resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the lowly. Let us therefore cleave unto those to whom grace is given from God. Let us clothe ourselves in concord, being lowly-minded and temperate, holding ourselves aloof from all backbiting and evil speaking, being justified by works and not by words. For He saith, He that



saith much shall hear also again. Doth the ready talker think to be righteous? Be not thou abundant in words. Let our praise be with God, and not of ourselves: for God hateth them that praise themselves. Let the testimony to our well-doing be given by others, as it was given unto our fathers who were righteous. Boldness and arrogance and daring are for them that are accursed of God, but forbearance and humility and gentleness are with them that are blessed of God.

The good workman receiveth the bread of his work with boldness, but the slothful and careless dareth not look his employer in the face. It is therefore needful that we should be zealous unto well-doing, for of Him are all things; since He forewarned us saying, Behold, the Lord, and His reward is before His face, to recompense each man according to his work. He exhorteth us therefore to believe on Him with our whole heart, and to be not idle nor careless unto every good work. Let our boast and our confidence be in Him: let us submit ourselves to His will . . . Yea, and let us ourselves then, being gathered together in concord with intentness of heart, cry unto Him as from one mouth earnestly that we may be made partakers of His great and glorious promises. For He saith, Eye hath not seen and ear hath not heard, and it hath not entered into the heart of man what great things He hath prepared for them that patiently await Him.

How blessed and marvellous are the gifts of God, dearly beloved! Life in immortality, splendor in righteousness, truth in boldness, faith in confidence, temperance in sanctification! And all these things fall under our apprehension. . . What then, think ye, are the things preparing for them that patiently await Him? The Creator and Father of the ages, the All-holy One Himself knoweth their number and their beauty. Let us therefore contend, that we may be found in the number of those that patiently await him, to the end that we may be partakers of His promised gifts. But how shall this be, dearly beloved? If our mind be fixed through faith towards God; if we seek out those things which are well pleasing and acceptable unto Him; if we accomplish such things as beseem His faultless will, and follow the way of truth, casting off from ourselves all unrighteousness and iniquity, covetousness, strifes, malignities and deceits, whisperings and backbitings, hatred of God, pride and arrogance, vain glory and inhospitality. For they that do these things are hateful to God; and not only they that do them, but they also that consent unto them.

[Grant unto us, Lord], that we may set our hope on thy Name which is the primal source of all

creation, and open the eyes of our hearts, that we may know Thee, who alone abidest Highest in the lofty, Holiest in the holy; who layest low the insolence of the proud, who scatterest the imaginings of nations, who settest the lowly on high, and bringest the lofty low; who makest rich and makest poor; who killest and makest alive . . . (who) hast chosen out from all men those that love thee through Jesus Christ, Thy beloved Son, through whom Thou didst instruct us, didst sanctify us, didst honor us. We beseech Thee, Lord and Master, to be our help and succour. Let all the Gentiles know that thou art God alone, and Jesus Christ is Thy Son, and we are Thy people and the sheep of Thy pasture.

Thou through Thine operations didst make manifest the everlasting fabric of the world. Thou, Lord, didst create the earth. Thou that art faithful throughout all generations, righteous in Thy judgments, marvellous in strength and excellence, Thou that art wise in creating and prudent in establishing that which Thou has made, that art good in the things which are seen and faithful with them that trust on Thee, pitiful and compassionate, forgive us our iniquities and our unrighteousness and our transgressions and shortcomings. Lay not to our account every sin of Thy servants and Thine handmaids, but cleanse us with the cleansing of Thy truth, and guide our steps to walk in holiness and righteousness and singleness of heart and to do such things as are good and well pleasing in Thy sight and in the sight of our rulers. Yea, Lord, make Thy face to shine upon us in peace for our good, that we may be sheltered by Thy mighty hand and delivered from every sin by Thine uplifted arm. And deliver us from them that hate us wrongfully. Give concord and peace to us and to all that dwell on the earth, as Thou gavest to our fathers, when they called on Thee in faith and truth with holiness, while we render obedience to Thine almighty and most excellent name. ●●

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#### Prayer

From all that terror teaches,  
From lies of tongue and pen;  
From all the easy speeches  
That comfort cruel men;  
From sale and profanation  
Of honor and the sword;  
From sleep and from damnation,  
Deliver us, O Lord!

—G. K. Chesterton

From

*John the Elder*



Eighth in a Series on the Epistle of First John

## If We Love One Another

### A Study of First John 4:12-21

*"No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us" (1 John 4:12).*

IN John's day there were those who believed the climax of knowing God was to behold Him in mystic vision. Even in our day, when God is not manifesting His divine powers openly, people rise up and claim to have mystical visions. John makes it plain that no mortal eyes have ever seen God. This award awaits the pure in heart, a future blessing that will be coupled with immortality. John is pointing out that we should be more concerned about having God's love perfected in our hearts and not reach out for gifts which God has not promised. He repeats the clue which tells whether God dwells in us—if we love one another. Love is a practical principle; as John said earlier, "Whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected." Love is perfected by exercising it, by placing our wills in line with God's.

As John continues, he unfolds more and more the meaning of perfect love.

*"Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit" (1 John 4:13).*

In our day we do not have the gifts of the Holy Spirit, but we do have the one "spirit of truth," which John mentioned earlier (verse 6). It is the same spirit that Jesus spoke of when He said, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." And we may be sure that if we are bearing the fruit of the spirit (Gal. 5:22-24), God dwelleth in us (1 John 4:12).

*"And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world" (1 John 4:14).*

John finds it necessary repeatedly to counter the

false teachers, those who deny that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Saviour of men. They deny that God sent Him, and that by following His example we may be fitted for salvation. The false teachers did not accept Jesus as the Messiah; they denied that He would come again and bestow eternal salvation upon all who are worthy. And John's counter to their teaching is definite: "We have seen and do testify"—in other words, we *know*.

Impressed with the greatness of God's love in sending Jesus Christ, John states with emphasis, "We have seen and do testify." They knew firsthand; they had been in closest contact with Him. They knew His holy life, the miracles He wrought, the saving gospel He preached. They saw Him crucified and they saw Him living again, the Son of God. They *knew*.

John is not saying in this verse, however, that Jesus will save the whole world. That would be against the plain teachings of Jesus, who declared that only "few" would be saved (Matt. 7:13-14). The "world" which Jesus was sent to save is the world of His believers, His own, those who know, love and obey Him.

*"Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God" (1 John 4:15).*

John is describing the supremely happy condition of the one who confesses that Jesus is the Son of God. Indeed, such a man believes with all his heart the teachings of Christ. By word and deed, he constantly rings out his faith. He lives as Jesus lived. His faith is a quickening power, a strengthening force. It moves him to holy action, to patient endurance and on to victory. He is part of God's family. He is continually with God, and God is with him.

*"And we have known and believed the love that*

*God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him" (I John 4:16).*

John repeats what he has said. He is thrilled with the love of God. He can verify it by his own experience. Those to whom John is writing also can verify it. And we, too, who have come to know God marvel at the great love He has for us. It kindles our spiritual fervor to a burning flame. It is wonderful to be alive! Through Him we have our being. And more, He has given our life meaning and purpose. He has given us marvelous faculties of mind and body. From the dust of human thought we can arise and become a new person altogether, new in every word, thought, and feeling. God has helped us in giving us Jesus, a living and perfect example to follow. He gives His angels charge over us, to protect and arrange circumstances for our good. And if we keep all His holy precepts, He has promised to reward us abundantly. We shall be made like the angels, never to die anymore. If we now love God, we will be in constant union with Him, and He will love to abide with us—what a joyous prospect!

*"Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world" (I John 4:17).*

John is going deeper and deeper into the subject of love. Our love is perfect when we have put away every defilement of sin and are pure and holy as the Father (Matt. 5:48). Then we can face the Day of Judgment with confidence, unafraid. Why? "Because as he is, so are we in this world," because we are living the same life as Christ lived in this world, completely submissive to the Father in every act, every word, and every thought and feeling.

If the Day of Judgment is dreaded on our part, it is evident that there is some deficiency in our love. We are not in harmony with God, therefore ill at ease. If we are living as Jesus lived, we will look forward to the Day of Judgment as the consummation of our hope and the beginning of all the wonderful things we anticipate.

Let us be concerned about our relationship with God and our brethren. Is our love perfect, so that we may have confidence in the Day of Judgment?

*"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear; because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love" (I John 4:18).*

There are two kinds of fear. There is godly fear, an element of love itself, a holy reverence of which the Psalmist speaks, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Ps. 111:10). It is an earnest desire to please God. It is a fear

that warns the conscience of the least deviation from the right. It is not at ease until every cruel word, every inconsiderate act, every unkind thought has been plucked up and cast away. The apostle Paul expressed a similar holy fear when he said, "And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men" (Acts 24:16).

But the fear John speaks of in this Epistle is that fear which is born in the heart of man. It is fear that hath torment; it is a painful and distressing emotion of the flesh. Men fear many things—poverty, losses, bereavement, sickness, death. John speaks here of fearing to stand before Christ in the Day of Judgment. No doubt he spoke from experience when he exclaimed rapturously, "There is no fear in love. . . . Perfect love casteth out fear." If our love is perfect, if all sin is gone, if we have become pure and holy as Christ is (I John 3:3), if we are righteous even as He is righteous (I John 3:7), there will be no need to fear or be ashamed at His appearing (I John 2:28).

We repeat John's words in I John 4:17-18, "This is for us the perfection of love, to have confidence on the day of judgment. . . . And anyone who is afraid has not attained to love in its perfection" (NEB).

*"We love him, because he first loved us" (I John 4:19).*

Indeed, we do love God because He first loved us by providing us His saving knowledge. We too would be out in the cold and darkness of this world if God had not revealed His saving truth to us. "You know its . . . lies, one and all, are alien to the truth" (I John 2:21, NEB). Truth alone can save us.

John now sets forth more powerfully than ever the truth which he has already indicated, that love of God and love of the brethren are inseparable.

*"If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" (I John 4:20).*

According to John, we have just so much love to God as we have love to our brethren; the measure of the one is the measure of the other. Our brother is the one who is trying to please God, struggling to put away all sin. We cannot love God if we harbor hatred or envy toward a single brother. We may deceive others by declaring our love for God, by going through outward motions of devotion, prayer and attendance at worship, etc.



It might all be empty show, however, and our hearts be devoid of love.

If we truly love God, we will love those whom He loves; our friends will be His friends. Our love for God will be evidenced in everything we do. Christian love is a triangular affair, involving God, myself, and my brother. According to John, anyone who claims to love God but is out of fellowship with his brethren, who nurses revenge, or spite, or contempt, or simple indifference toward his brother, any such person is self-deceived. God has given us brethren to show our love to. If we neglect to communicate our love to such whom we can see, there is no profit in proclaiming our affection for an invisible God.

John closes his chapter by a final reminder that it was Jesus' explicit command "that he who loveth God love his brother also":

*"And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also (I John 4:21)."*

John found it necessary to emphasize this point. And we today are equally in need of this lesson. How does our love for God measure? How much do we love our brother? ●●

NEXT ISSUE: *The Power of the Christian Life*

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A leper, all filthy and vile,  
Once came to a prophet of old,  
To be healed by his marv'ulous pow'r,  
Bringing treasures, silver and gold.  
What were the words of the prophet?  
They teach us a lesson, I ween.  
"Go dip seven times in the Jordan,"  
Go wash in pure water, be clean.

As Jesus was passing along,  
A blind beggar sat by the way,  
Whose vision had never beheld  
The glorious light of the day.  
The Master, with such loving pity  
For the one who sat there alone,  
Anointing his eyes said kindly,  
"Go wash in the pool of Siloam."

If you find in the heart of your flesh  
The vile, leprous spottings of sin,  
Go dip seven times in God's Jordan,  
Go wash in His Word and be clean.  
Obedience to God's holy law  
Is the truest of offerings seen.  
'Tis the Lord's invitation to all  
To wash in the Word and be clean.

We may cleanse the sin-cankering sore  
Of our flesh at the one fountainhead,  
If we will but follow the Master  
And do all the words He has said.  
Is life's way o'er-clouded and dark?  
And with doubts and fears are you rent?  
Then fly to the fountain of life,  
Go wash in the Word God has sent.

## Learning to Say "NO"

THERE is an old Spanish proverb which says, "Take what you want and pay for it." Any thinking person will realize that the price of catering to our old nature is too high, for the wages will be eternal death. We must learn to say no to that which is earthly, sensual, and devilish.

Saying "no" immediately to something we know is wrong sometimes seems difficult to do. We feel we might hurt someone's feelings, or that it won't hurt to do it just this once. "Just this once," we say; "I'll do better next time." Or we are afraid of the consequences.

We have to remember it is no longer our privilege to decide for ourselves which way we would like it, one way or the other. God has set down certain rules and we must follow if we would be His children.

Once we have had our senses exercised to know right from wrong, we are responsible for our actions.

It might be thought of us that we are cruel, thick-skinned, unfeeling, or lacking in love. But these are only judgments by worldly standards, not by God's standards. Some people do not want to believe that Christ taught that whoever did the will of His Father meant more to Him than his own blood relatives. But we have His clear and unmistakable statement in Matthew 12:46-50, when His mother and brothers were standing outside and desiring to speak to Him. What did He say? "Pardon me, friends, I must leave immediately, for my mother and brothers wish to speak with me about some important worldly matter close to my heart." Is this what He said? No, certainly not; but He said, "Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."

If we find ourselves in a position where not to do as others of the world would have us causes them to brand us as "loveless," we need not be troubled; for if the Lord is on our side, who can be against us?

Let us dare to be a Daniel, for he was not afraid to say "no" to the king's provisions, no matter what the results would be, because "Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself" (Dan. 1:8).

—E. H., Minnedosa, Manitoba

# UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God."

## The Way to Salvation

**I**T HAS been said that "salvation is the key word of the Christian faith." True, salvation is what religion is all about. It is the highest goal of the Christian life, and it is the central theme of the Scriptures.

What is salvation? How can we know the right way to salvation? Many men are teaching many ways—all supposedly reaching the same end. To the majority, salvation is to be saved "from sin," to come to Christ, to find Christ. In recent years many automobiles wear bumper stickers with the words "I found it," indicating that the occupant has been "saved."

"Are you saved?" asks the evangelist. "Are you sure you will go to heaven when you die?" Heaven and salvation are thought of as synonymous. "Why not accept Christ as your personal Saviour and be sure of heaven?" is the plea.

The messages are appealing; small wonder that multitudes believe that there is nothing more to do to gain salvation! The way is described as easy and effortless. Some even go so far as to say there is nothing you can do toward your salvation but to accept it.

But this way is in sharp contrast to the way taught by the Master Himself. We do not find Him preaching that the road to salvation is easy. "Who then can be saved?" asked the disciples on one occasion after hearing Jesus' advice to the rich young man. Jesus had told him there was more to do than to keep the commandments contained in Moses' law—he must sell out all and follow Him. And for the young man, this was asking too much; we read that "He went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions" (Matt. 19:16-22). The young man apparently believed in Jesus, but belief was not enough. He had to **do** something.

On another occasion, one said to Jesus, "Lord, are there few that be saved?" And He answered: "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able" (Luke 13:23-24). He had explained the "strait" gate in His Sermon on the Mount: "Enter

ye in at the strait gate: . . . Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matt. 7:13-14).

And at yet another time, after Jesus explained the meaning of the "bread of life" we read that "many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him." "This is an hard saying," they said, "Who can hear it?" Their remarks caused Jesus to ask of the Twelve: "Will ye also go away?" Peter answered: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life" (John 6:60-68).

In each case the lesson is clear: There is no easy way to gain eternal life, no easy way to be saved. Many will seek in their own way but will not be saved because they did not seek in the God-appointed way.

Were the apostles mistaken in thinking that salvation did not come easy? Or has the way to salvation changed since Jesus spoke these words?

We are confident that the way has not changed, that Jesus' teaching on the subject is still valid. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever" (Heb. 13:8). Were He here today His message would be no different. The succeeding centuries have produced theologians whose ideas have overshadowed the words of Jesus. They are "teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" and "laying aside the commandment of God" as did the Pharisees to whom Jesus spoke these words (Mark 7:7-8).

The road to salvation is more than "what Jesus Christ has done for man." Heaven is not guaranteed on the simple condition of believing and accepting Jesus as Saviour. Nor is God in the business of "rescuing" sinners who show no inclination to change their evil ways.

In this issue we will examine some of these teachings concerning the way to salvation, comparing them with our only source of knowledge on the subject, the unerring Word of God.

### III. SALVATION—HOW DO WE GAIN IT?

"We have heard the joyful sound: Jesus saves! Jesus saves!" This familiar old hymn heralds the radio broadcast known as "The Joyful Sound."

Those who sing and those who listen no doubt consider themselves "saved"—but are they? They are not immortal; they are not beyond the reach of change and decay, sickness and sin. Jesus will save when the proper time comes, but as yet, no one on earth has eternal salvation.

Millions have been told that they were saved because they made a simple confession of faith in Christ. But is it enough to simply "believe" in Christ? Evangelists and Fundamentalists would agree that it is, that Paul's statement to the church at Rome asks nothing more: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Rom. 10:9). (Note that the verse says **shalt be saved**, not **are saved**.)

But what is it to "believe"? Is it only to acknowledge Christ? Can it be possible that a person could expect to be saved eternally, placed beyond death with a body like unto that of the immortal Saviour, just for professing belief in Him? Let us go to the Scriptures.

### B. Believe and Be Saved

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts 16:31). Those looking for an easy way to salvation seize upon this text to prove that there is nothing more to do to be saved than simply to acknowledge Christ as their Saviour. "Simply believe on Him as the one who bore your sin, died in your place, was buried and was raised for your justification," says the writer of a Bible tract, "For whosoever, (that includes you) shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved, (shall be, not might or can be, but shall be saved)" (Rom. 10:13).

Mr. VanGorder, before quoted, writes in a similar vein: "You can escape God's wrath. A way has been provided. The Heavenly Father judged His Son at Calvary, for Jesus was being made sin for you and was bearing your sins on the tree. Because of Christ's obedience, you can be released from its penalty and receive eternal life. You may pass from death into life, from darkness into light, from judgment into justification this very moment. Believe, and live!"

Let us compare these ideas with what the Bible has to say about what it is to "believe." Can it be possible that it is enough to merely acknowledge that a man named Jesus once lived on earth, was crucified and resurrected? Does one become a disciple by saying, "I believe"?

Belief is necessary. But what is it to "believe"? First, it requires belief in God the Father: "For

he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb. 11:6). And Jesus said, "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me" (John 6:44-45).

**1. To believe is to know.** Knowledge is the first step toward belief. How can one be a believer without first knowing all there is to know about Jesus' life and His teachings? "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. . . . He that is of God heareth God's words" (John 8:32, 47). "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you" (John 15:3).

Anyone that professes belief in Jesus must have a knowledge of what He taught. Knowledge is a prerequisite of salvation. Paul said that faith comes "by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). Nor is this knowledge to be found entirely in the words of Jesus. "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning" (Rom. 15:4), hence we do well to consult the entire Bible concerning our salvation.

Paul exhorted Timothy concerning the Scriptures: "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (II Tim. 3:14-15). **Only a knowledge of the Bible can lead to salvation. We cannot say we believe unless we first know.**

**2. To believe is to suffer also.** The command to believe is more than a simple acknowledgement. Paul said, "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake; having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me" (Phil. 1:29-30). Belief causes conflict, both internal and external. There is the conflict between the old man and the new, the flesh and the spirit—"These are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (Gal. 5:17).

Jesus knew that His teachings would cause conflicts when He said: "A man's foes shall be they of his own household. . . . For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother . . ." (Matt. 10:35-36). The separation demanded by the Christian life often brings separation even within families.

**3. To believe is to obey.** Knowledge is the first step toward true belief in Jesus. But even this is not sufficient for salvation. Knowledge not acted upon is worthless. "Faith without works is dead,"



said the apostle James. We need both. "A man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works" (Jas. 4:14-18).

To believe in Jesus is to profess our love for Him: and Jesus said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). Nor can we count ourselves His friends unless we obey Him: "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you" (John 15:14). Unless we do what He commands, we cannot expect Him to save us.

### C. Salvation—Through Christ's Death?

Salvation by substitution is accounted by the religious world as one "of the most tremendous truths of the Bible." "Christ died that you might not have to die for your sins. . . . He died for sinful men, and in believing on Him we claim this for ourselves personally and are saved," says a contemporary minister.

The idea is not new. More than a century ago, Dwight L. Moody was preaching the same thing: "My hope is that Christ died for my sins, in my stead, in my place, and therefore I can enter into eternal life. . . . Take that doctrine of substitution out of the Bible, and my hope is lost."

Is this the doctrine of the Bible? Must we depend upon the death of another for our salvation? Is all hope gone without Christ's death on Calvary? The religious world, seeking an easy way to salvation, have pinned their hopes on Christ's death. There are some Scripture texts that, taken alone, seem to say that Christ's death did something to free us from the penalty our sins deserve; but to accept this as truth is to contradict other plain teachings of the Bible.

The statement that "Christ died that you might not have to die" is without Scriptural foundation. Nowhere in the Bible do we find that Christ died that we need not die. The theory that it was necessary for Christ to die to rescue mankind from the curse of Adam's sin is based on the false doctrine of original sin. This doctrine was discussed in our last lesson. Remove this doctrine as a prop and the whole theory falls.

**1. Christ's death was murder, not sacrifice.** Christ's death was not a sacrifice perpetrated by His heavenly Father. God condemns human sacrifice. If He sacrificed His own innocent Son, He would be guilty of that which He condemned. Such a thing is unthinkable. Peter testified at Pentecost that Christ's death was murder: "Him, . . . ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" (Acts 2:23), and again before the council, saying that they should obey "the God of

[their] fathers [who] raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree" (Acts 5:30). Stephen seconded Peter's accusation, speaking of Jesus as the "Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers" (Acts 7:52).

That Christ's death was a sacrifice for sins and in some way gives salvation, is a doctrine of theology, not of the Bible. Christ is our High Priest (Heb. 7:17, 26). Under the Mosaic arrangement the High Priest made the sacrifice for the people—but he was not the sacrifice. Likewise, Christ is our High Priest, not our sacrifice. The sacrifice He offered was a living sacrifice, the sacrifice of His own ways, complete submission to the will of His Father. Under the Law, the sacrifice was of a literal animal; in the anti-type, the sacrifice must be spiritual. Every aspirant to salvation must make this same living sacrifice following the example of Jesus, who, "though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Heb. 5:8-9). **Salvation is not in trusting in Christ as a sacrifice for sins, but in obedience to Him. There is no way for a sinner to rid himself of his sins but to stop sinning.**

**2. The hope of the Bible.** The Bible has been said to be a book of hope. But to hope for salvation through substitution is wishful thinking. Our hope is in Christ—but in His life, not His death. After the ascension, the apostles went out preaching the hope of the resurrection—not hope for salvation through substitution.

Jesus Himself commissioned them to "preach repentance and remission of sins" in His name. Nowhere do we find Him instructing them to preach that He died on the cross to save them from their sins. During the forty days between His resurrection and ascension He was "speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3)—the same message He had been speaking from the beginning of His ministry.

We also have hope in His return, for then shall our salvation be realized. It is "unto them that look for him" that he shall "appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Heb. 9:28). And the apostle John, speaking of this same hope, said that "every man that hath this hope in him [Christ] purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:3). **If he had been purified by the death of Christ, what need to purify himself?**

### D. Salvation—"Not of Works"?

A religious tract currently in circulation asks

the question: "What kind of people does God save?" And then it answers: "Surely not the good people, because His Word has told us, 'There is none that doeth good,' and 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, . . . to seek and to save that which was lost.' Lost sinners then are the only kind of people Jesus came to save."

Writes another, "Man cannot lift himself up by his own bootstraps, neither can any human effort save from sin. Outward conformity to rules and regulations does not save. . . . Salvation is a gift."

True, salvation is a gift—it is beyond what we could earn. But to say our own efforts cannot contribute to our salvation, or that God does not save "good people," is neither sensible nor Scriptural.

The theory that there is nothing man can do toward salvation is built on the words of Paul, taken from his letter to the Ephesians: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8-9). To say that Paul meant that there was nothing man could do toward saving himself is to take these verses out of context, and as someone has said, "A text taken out of context is a pre-text."

**1. Saved by grace, and not by works.** According to theology, we are saved by grace. And what is grace? To them it is unmerited favor, specifically God sending Jesus to die on a cross for man's sin. But is this "grace" according to the Bible?

The term grace as used in the Scriptures has more than one meaning. To a certain extent it is favor; God "hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities," said the Psalmist (103:10). But God does not grant undeserved salvation; He rewards every man according to his works (Rev. 22:12).

**a. The grace that saves.** Paul tells us about the grace that saves. "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world" (Tit. 2:11-12). The meaning is too clear to permit misunderstanding: It is not "unmerited favor" that brings salvation. Rather, it is the knowledge of God and its application to our lives.

**2. Salvation by works, not by grace alone.** If we were to accept the theory of the religious world, that we can do nothing toward our own salvation, we would have to deny some very plain statements of the apostle Paul.

In the end, the reward of immortality will come

from God through Christ. We cannot change our mortal nature. But in making ourselves ready for that great reward, there is much that we can and must do. In his different letters, Paul gives many commands; we will mention only a few. These, and many more, all involve **work**.

**a. Press toward the prize.** Paul felt the necessity of doing more than trusting in the merits of Christ. "I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, . . . I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:13-14). With all his previously expended efforts, he still felt the need of pressing on toward his goal.

**b. Put away all evil.** "Let him that stole steal no more: . . . Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, . . . Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, . . . fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, . . . neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, . . . for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience" (Eph. 4:28—5:6). Read Ephesians, chapters 4, 5, and 6 and you will be convinced that Paul did not teach a "done" salvation, but a "do" salvation.

Verse 10 of Ephesians 2 should correct any misconception anyone might have concerning salvation by grace or works. "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." As stated by one writer, "It is precisely good works which are the end product God had in mind from the start. The moral life of Christians is not belittled. It is instead highly exalted in the drama of salvation."

Yes, we are His workmanship, His making, "created in Christ Jesus unto good works." We are not an inanimate object, but we have been given an intellect capable of understanding His laws and He expects us to use our power to make ourselves into new creatures before we can receive His salvation. ●●

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## TEST YOURSELF

1. What does it mean to be "saved by grace"?
2. What is the "belief" that will save us?

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# Creation or Evolution—

## *Does It Matter?*

by Jerry Bergman, Ph. D.

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ONE OF the most powerful arguments for the existence of God has always been the existence of the physical creation. The existence of a creation demands a creator and proves, at least in the minds of most persons, the existence of a creator. Just as a watch requires a watchmaker, and a mess requires a messmaker, so too, according to this argument, a creation requires a creator.

The theory of evolution, carried to its logical conclusions, is an attempt to explain the existence of the creation without acknowledging a creator. In essence, evolutionary theory argues that the entire natural world can be explained without resorting to any influence outside the natural, observable world.

Some argue that the method God used to create was evolution. They feel that God created some "original one-celled animals," which evolved into man through the laws which God placed within the one-celled animals and the environment in which they lived. The major problem with this contention is that once we accept the idea that the entire natural world (excepting those first primordial cells or the first creatures) are a product of evolution, it is not difficult to argue that the formation of the first cell was *also* a product of natural evolution.

As Harlow Shapley, professor Emeritus of astronomy at Harvard, stated, "Formerly the origin of life was held to be a matter for the deity to take care of; it was a field for miracles and the supernatural. But no longer." As T. H. Huxley added, "the doctrine of evolution, if consistently accepted, makes it impossible to believe the Bible."

Western civilization has been, until very recently, a very religious culture. Examination of the newspapers, magazines, books, articles and songs as late as the eighteen hundreds finds that religious themes and a "Christian" morality in general were very pronounced in most areas of society. The typical books used in the schools of the eighteen hundreds overtly displayed traditional Christian values. Today's society has become increasingly secular, and many schoolbooks are indi-

rectly or openly atheistic. A reader of most textbooks finds that "God" is rarely, if ever, mentioned, except in a context of history or philosophy. This secular trend has directly paralleled the wide acceptance of the theory of evolution. This fact has led many historians to conclude that the loss of traditional Christian values, so evident in the recent past in Western society, is a direct result of the acceptance of the theory of evolution. Reality demands belief in God; and evolution, in explaining reality without God, has caused Western man to no longer need God to explain the world around him. Thus, the acceptance or rejection of the idea of evolution is of key importance to Christians.

Unfortunately, many modern theologians have accepted it without criticism. In doing this, they are faced with the problem that there is little basis for faith in the existence of God, if the universe and all in it can be accounted for by purely "natural" means. John Hick, a prominent theologian, in his book *Arguments for the Existence of God*, concludes that there is no "proof" of the existence of God primarily on the hypothesis that the traditional evidence, namely the *design* argument, is inadequate—because, with the theory of evolution, God is no longer "needed." Hick concludes that there are no clear "proofs" of the existence of God, but that it is "nice" to believe in God, and thus one can if he or she wants to. In Hick's words, "the theist (the person who believes in God) cannot hope to prove that God exists; but despite this it may nonetheless be possible for him to show it to be wholly reasonable for him to believe God exists." At the same time, Hick accepts assertions without analyzing the arguments—which is precisely the reason why so many people today have become agnostic.

As Watson, in *The Great Brain Robbery*, stated, "... millions of high school and university students have been turned aside from reading the Bible, because they found in Genesis 1 an impassable stumbling block to faith." This "impassable stumbling block" is essentially the conflict between creation and evolution. And many



students, choosing between the two, choose the evolution explanation because it is seen as more "scientific," and thus, they conclude, the more correct.

A major problem with the theory of evolution is that one word "evolution" is used to describe two distinct ideas, one of which is scientific and supportable, the other of which is unscientific and unsupportable.

"Evolution" is used to describe the process whereby statistical changes in certain traits occur in animal populations. This type of evolution is known today as *breeding*. An example is the cow. Cattle breeders have performed this "evolution" by selecting, for example, cows which produced the best quality milk, and then again, from the progeny of these cows, selecting those cows which produced the best milk. After a number of generations, they have what they call a "pure strain," a group of cows which produce the desired quality of milk.

But this type of breeding is not successful in all aspects at the same time. The milk may have other qualities that are undesirable. It may have a lower level of fat, for example, than the milk of other breeds. In addition, the cows' meat may be tougher, or the cow may be less resistant to disease than other strains. In breeding, we are concerned primarily with one or two traits, and development of one trait may mean the loss of another.

The process of continually selecting the animals which have the characteristics we are looking for enables us, in time, to breed animals which have these traits. This process is scientific, it is understandable, and goes under the name of "genetics." It should be stressed though, that breeding and selecting is not creating a new type of animal; it is only increasing the frequency of an existing trait. Even after hundreds of generations of special breeding, cows are still cows, and dogs are still dogs. Nor is the animal changed in any way; we are simply using existing laws of genetics to produce a strain that has the qualities we want for a specific purpose.

The other type of evolution, which is supposed to create "new" animals, is unscientific and not supported by natural law, though some believe that it is. Evolutionists assume that if we can cause minor variations in animals, i.e., breed cats which are pure white or pure black, we can likewise, given much more time, breed cats from flies or horses from snails. This analogy simply does not hold up. If I can stretch a rubber band an inch without breaking it, it does not mean that I can

stretch it twenty-five inches without breaking it. I may well be able to stretch it five inches, but there is clearly a limit. Likewise, there is clearly a limit in breeding. We are able to breed cows which produce a large amount of high quality milk, but there are limits even here. We may be able to increase the yield at the most by 30 percent; no matter how hard we try we cannot triple or quadruple the yield of milk, in spite of the tremendous economic incentive there is to achieve this.

The evolution which cannot be supported by scientific method is the theory that the entire universe and all life within the universe is a result of blind chance, and has no purpose, goal, direction or rationale. In other words, everything just happened. The theory is as follows: After the formation of the universe through pre-existing "forces," chance combination of molecules in some ocean of water produced molecules which had the ability to "reproduce" molecules like themselves. These molecules, in time and through "natural selection," developed a clear ability to effectively reproduce themselves. Those that could not reproduce very well "died," and those that were able to effectively reproduce multiplied faster; thus the more successful "molecules" in time became more numerous than the less successful "molecules," and this new population likewise began to have individual differences. These individual differences produced within this new group a "superior" set which, in turn, grew faster than the first set. This third set, in turn, produced another new set, and on ad infinitum, producing molecules which are more and more fit to survive as time goes on. In time, the theory teaches, the molecules evolved to the pinnacle of man.

There are a number of problems with this second theory of evolution. The major problem is that it is simply conjecture and largely unsupported by evidence. No one has ever observed, nor has any one been able to accurately describe, the process by which a group of random molecules is able to become "living." In spite of massive experiments, under thousands of different laboratory conditions, man has been unable to produce what might even loosely be termed a "living" molecule. Scientists have produced millions of combinations of molecules, but all are unable to reproduce by their own "drive." All lack the essential ingredient which causes matter to become "living." Synthetic products (synthetic rubber, synthetic cloth, even synthetic hormones) are common; chemists have produced an unbelievable array of useful products; but as yet none has

produced a group of chemicals which work together in the way that the simplest living organisms work.

Some scientists, though, are optimistic that in the future they will produce a "living" molecule. This, some feel, would prove that life could have originated by "chance" without "outside" (divine) help. Yet, would it? Would this be *proof* that such could have happened by pure "chance," if the most brilliant scientists in the most sophisticated laboratories, using the accumulated knowledge of centuries and incomparable scientific technology, should be able to create simple life in a test tube? Would this at all "prove" that life originally arose by "chance"? Does not the fact that they have not yet produced the simplest form of life argue that the original form of life *did* not and *cannot* come about by chance?

Another problem with evolution is that if the existence of a certain plant or animal was due wholly to its ability to survive and adapt to its environment, it would seem that organisms living today would, generally speaking, be highly adapted to their environment. We would not expect to see the tremendous diversity in life which we see today. Obviously, many animals are *not* highly adapted to their environment, as they should be if they survived according to the theory of evolution. For example, if all depends upon "survival of the fittest," then in time, all animals surviving should be highly resistant to cold, heat, lack of water, lack of space, lack of air, and lack of food, the main factors which determine evolution, according to evolutionary theory.

Another problem is that a high level of success in survival invariably spells doom. For example, if an animal could survive in spite of a lack of food, if it could survive despite great variations in temperature, this animal would soon exist in such tremendous numbers that they would eventually fill the earth, and by so doing would wipe themselves out, having nothing left to eat except each other. This is what happens in the case of many bacteria. When they reproduce to a certain density they begin to kill each other off as they exhaust the existing food and air supply.

In addition, if survival is the key to evolution (which most evolutionists stress is the case), then the most successful animals on the evolutionary scale should be the many forms of viruses and not the so-called "higher forms" of life such as man and mammals in general. Most mammals are extremely poorly adapted to their environments—they have difficulty surviving without special types of food, they have a fairly narrow variation in

temperature, and are susceptible to many types of disease. Many so-called "lower forms" of animals can survive extended periods of time without food and water, and in temperatures which range from ten below zero to ninety degrees above! In order to survive, man (supposedly the *higher* ranking on the evolutionary tree), must have an incredibly narrow temperature range, and incredibly rigid food requirements. Thus, according to the criteria of evolutionary adaption, man is quite *low*.

Another problem with evolution is the problem of "replication." This means, "Can I try out the scientific method myself and prove that it is true?" For example, can one try out the law of gravity, repeat it, and prove it again? The answer is yes; if I have the equipment I cannot only try out the law of gravity but I can know the formula by which this law operates invariably.

The fact that man has not been able to demonstrate evolution in this manner leads one to the conclusion that it is not "true science" but faith in the unseen, that is, faith in what *men believe may have happened* years ago. Every true science must be capable of being proved by repeated demonstration. For this reason, evolution will always remain a hypothesis which requires faith for its acceptance.

A creative mind can easily imagine how the universe and everything came into existence. But it must be stressed that all this is pure imagining, even though it may be clearly understandable, persuasive, and conform to what is presently known about the universe. It is at best still guesswork and far from "proving" anything.

In conclusion, we find the doctrine of evolution lacking, and are forced to accept what the Bible says, that God is the one and omnipotent Creator, and that all existence today finds its source in Him and not in any theory that men have devised. ••

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## On I Kings 17:12, 16

Share thy handful with the stranger;  
Bid the prophet to thy board;  
No resources are in danger  
Whose exchequer is the Lord;  
Daily new demands await thee,  
Daily new supplies are sent,  
He alone who doth create thee  
Can secure thy nourishment.  
—Selected.

## Forgiveness

(Continued from page 7)

refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it."

How can this possibly be done? How can anyone endure evil, suffering wrongfully, and take it patiently? Because he knows that "the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil: and who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" (I Pet. 3:8-13).

Let us lift our hearts in praise to God! for His eyes are "over the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayers." There is no force in the whole universe that can harm him whom God chooses to forgive and accept. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" If God is with us, overseeing, protecting, working all things together for our good, we need never have the slightest feeling of revenge toward anyone. We *must* not have. The feeling of revenge is part of the old animal nature that must be crucified.

### Think of Stephen . . .

The spirit of forgiveness is the only truly Christlike spirit. Think of Stephen, being stoned to death by his persecutors, crying out in a loud voice, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge" (Acts 7:60). We can hardly conceive a nobler devotedness than this; here was faithfulness unto death, combined with a desire that his persecutors be given an opportunity to reform and be forgiven. Here was a man sealing his testimony to the faith with his lifeblood, and with his last breath praying for mercy to be granted his murderers—for among them was a young man who would someday be following in Stephen's footsteps. What farsighted nobleness comes from the forgiving spirit. And what a day that will be when Stephen embraces that man for whom he prayed! What a meeting that will be!

### Think of Paul, and Philemon . . .

Hear the apostle Paul years later voicing that same noble spirit. In his latest letter that we have, the Epistle of Second Timothy, he is telling of the grievous suffering caused him by false brethren and those who forsook him. And what does he say? "I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge" (II Tim. 4:16).

See this same spirit of forgiveness in Paul's appeal to Philemon concerning his runaway slave Onesimus. Onesimus had run away from his mas-

ter and had apparently taken with him some of his master's possessions. He had no doubt drifted from place to place until finally he reached Rome. Here he happened one day to meet a most exceptional prisoner, one who began talking to him about another way of life, about Christ, about hope and salvation. Onesimus listened, and soon the light of the glorious gospel of Christ was shining in Onesimus; he could see life in a new light.

As Onesimus poured out his heart and history to his companion in prison, the apostle Paul, it became evident that Paul and Philemon were close friends. Paul insisted that Onesimus return to his master. The Apostle wrote a letter to send with Onesimus, and it has been preserved for us as the book of Philemon. In it Paul beseeches Philemon to forgive the runaway and receive him now as a brother in Christ, even as Philemon would receive Paul himself.

Listen to his warm appeal: "I am appealing in love, a simple personal appeal from Paul the old man, in prison for Christ Jesus' sake. I am appealing for my child. Yes, I have become a father though I have been under lock and key, and the child's name is—Onesimus! Oh, I know you have found him useless in the past, but he is going to be useful now, to both of us. I am sending him back to you—part of my very heart. I should have dearly loved to have kept him with me: he could have done what you would have done—looked after me here in prison for the gospel's sake. But I would do nothing without consulting you first. . . .

"It occurs to me that there has been a purpose in your losing him. You lost him, a slave for a time; now you are having him back for good, not merely as a slave, but as a beloved brother. He is already especially dear to me—how much more will you be able to love him, both as a man and as a fellow-Christian. . . .

"Now do grant me this favour, my brother. . . . I know you'll do what I ask—I believe, in fact, you'll do more" (Philemon, verses 9-21, Phillips).

Imagine the rich and whole-souled spirit of forgiveness Philemon needed to fulfill Paul's request. Even to receive back a runaway without severe punishment would have required forgiveness far beyond the reach of most Roman slave-owners. But to receive him back as an equal, as a brother in Christ, to receive the returned runaway as Philemon would have received Paul himself—here is the forgiveness that belongs to the ethics of heaven. Here is stature which can only be found in those whose whole desire for personal honor and prestige has been lost in God.



## No Retaliation

Is there anything in the examples of Jesus, or Paul, or Philemon, or Stephen that savors of revenge or retaliation? We know there is not. It has been said that little vicious minds harbor anger and revenge; great minds forgive.

A rather well-to-do man was asked the purpose of his life. He replied bitterly, "To get even!" Someone had wronged him, and he lived his life to pay back the wrong. How foreign is this to the spirit of Scripture, to the spirit of Christ and of the holy men and women of old. Sometimes we say rather pitiously, "I can forgive, but I can't forget *this* wrong!" What we mean is that our memory is at work continually rubbing our hurt feelings to keep them warm. Like a dog with a bone, we keep our minds digging up all the dirt and going back over past faults.

There is a certain pope of whom it is said, "He never forgot such incidents, which was one of his fundamental weaknesses. He might bury the hatchet for a time, but he gave the impression of always carefully marking the spot." Have we ever done this?

The story is told of a mother who interrupted a quarrel between her two young daughters. Said the mother to the older, "Why do you treat your little sister so roughly? You should apologize to her. What if she should die tonight and you could never make it right with her. Wouldn't you feel terrible?" The child thought for a few moments, then addressed her younger sister. "Mother says I should apologize to you, because you might die tonight. So, I'm sorry. But if you're still alive tomorrow morning, I'll get even with you."

Isn't that the spirit we take to one another sometimes? We forgive, but with reservations. Oh, let us outgrow this childish spirit of retaliation. It isn't Christlike; it isn't Godlike. Nowhere does the Bible justify the taking of revenge, great or small. We must not even *desire* it in our thoughts. Revenge is never satisfying. It is like the bread of deceit; it may taste sweet, but its end is sure to be grievous. It doesn't settle anything; nor does it heal any wounds or stimulate any holy aspirations.

Revenge is a matter we must learn to leave totally with God. When the disciples wanted to call down fire from heaven, what was Jesus' reaction? Did He say, "You are right, that is just what they deserve"? No, He replied, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of; for the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them" (Luke 9:54-56). So they went to another village.

How often we need the Master's quietness to reprove our eagerness for retribution. Paul recognized this when he said, "Recompense to no man evil for evil. . . . If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, . . . for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord" (Rom. 12:17-19). Judgment is God's prerogative. When we realize this, we can hold no wrong feelings in our hearts. He knows what has been done, and what punishments should be meted out.

How we should work to conquer the unforgiving spirit that is part of our carnal nature. It is never our right to wish evil upon another. Are we not one united brotherhood in Christ? Do we not share a common desire to be ready when our Lord appears? Should we not, then, be anxious to confess our faults one to another, and pray one for another, and always seek the best spiritual interests of one another?

## The Forgiving Spirit . . . Always

Do we ever feel a wrong was too great to forgive, too intentional, or too undeserved? At such times we need to remind ourselves of our own great need of forgiveness from God. Let us humble ourselves and realize we too need mercy from Him who is the fountain of goodness.

It is written that he shall have "judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy" (Jas. 2:13). Why? Because all who shall be saved are those who have learned to be merciful. "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy."

But being merciful does not mean condoning sin. It means that we must extend to our brother the same long-suffering spirit God has extended to us. And when differences arise, or misjudgments, or misunderstandings, we must be ready to talk them over and not allow any sin to stand before us. Christ is coming, and when He comes, we want to have every stain of sin removed. As our former leader, Rev. M. Hembree said, "If we knew the Lord were coming tonight, I think we would be able to sit down and talk over our differences in a spirit of meekness." Let us not wait until that Day arrives; let us do it now. Then we can forgive one another, and God will forgive us.

I would like to close with this magnificent promise from our forgiving God. It is found in the book of Hebrews: "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more" (Heb. 10:16-17).

Let us do our best to merit that forgiveness. ●●



# SCRIPTURAL SPOTLIGHT

*"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches"—Revelation 2:7*

ONE PENALTY for living in an age of so much talk is the loss of the art of listening. We might call it a casualty suffered in the war of words. News commentators, radio announcers—and many of the rest of us—are at it all day long, talk, talk and more talk. Friends gather; it is not a formal meeting—nobody asks for the floor, so everyone talks at once. How rare it is to find someone who listens.

We will agree that much that is spoken has little value and is not worth listening to. It is just so much patter. But since words are the expression of ideas, there must be words worth listening to, words that come from the prophets, apostles and Jesus of old, words conveyed to us through His written Word. But if we have the instinctive habit of tuning out all other voices but our own, it is almost impossible for us to retain any good idea long enough to let it grow and affect us. Thus good seed may fall on barren ground.

Epictetus, though a pagan slave, was not a fool when he said, "Nature hath given men one tongue, but two ears, that we may hear from others twice as much as we speak." In their eagerness to learn, children will usually be quiet for anyone who will read to them. Is it possible that Jesus may have had some of this trait in mind when He said, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom"?

"He that hath ears to hear, let him hear," said our Lord when He explained the parable of the four kinds of soil. The wayside, beaten down with walking, is unable to hold the seed. It has no capacity to receive what James calls "the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls." This may be the idle mind where ideas lie around until starlings of sin pick them up; or it may be the clever mind that retains the idea long enough to pass it on but not long enough to let it sprout and bear fruit.

The good soil, which retains the seed, is described in the Gospel of Luke. It is "they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience." This is the process by which truth springs up in the heart: "having heard, keep it, and bring forth fruit." This is how "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

Three of the prophets of the Lord—Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel—experienced a measure of frustration because their message was not received. In each book there is the refrain, "Ears have they, but they do not hear." Paul, after preaching to the Jews in the city of Rome, shares Isaiah's feeling (Rom. 11:8). What can you do when people will not listen?

What might these men of God have thought of us had we been in their audience?

Like any other Christian virtue, the ability to pay attention comes by practice. God creates in us a desire, but we must exert ourselves to make it work. In strictly secular matters, people have disciplined themselves so that they could focus their minds on whatever was before them. It was said of Archimedes that he was once so engrossed in his calculations that he was unaware of the fire that threatened to consume him. His attendants rushed into his room and carried him to safety while he continued his studies. Such powers of concentration do not of themselves enable us to hear the voice of God, but a little is a real help in the school of faith.

The Psalmist said, "Mine ears hast thou opened" (Ps. 40:6). Some say that he was referring to the piercing of the ear lobe that he might be marked a perpetual slave to God; but it is more likely that he had asked that the carnal wax be removed that he might hear God and rejoiced that his prayer was answered. Isaiah expressed something of the same: "He wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned." He needed no hearing aid then!

But the help from heaven must find a response on earth. The writer of the book of Hebrews speaks of those "who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." What is possible to the children of light who have gone before us is certainly possible for us. By simple persistence we can bring our wandering thoughts under control and make them obey God, and allow no crying baby or talking adult or side interest of our own to distract us as we listen to the Word of God. We can resolve, under God, to shut out the concern for our families and our business and give ourselves totally to the hearing of that voice which speaks from above—if our desire to hear that voice is above all else to us.

As we practice the art of listening, little aids may be of help: such as taking notes on what we hear. Someone has suggested that we try to anticipate what the speaker will say next. If we hear point one, try to anticipate point two. And if point three is missed, ask the speaker at the close of the service to fill it in. It may take him a few minutes to regain his poise after so startling a request, but he'll survive and preach better because of it.

Our Lord speaks of the general compensation that comes from listening: "Unto you that hear shall more be given"—something will be added to what we have already—more light, more knowledge, more satisfaction, more growth. It will not automatically bring us these benefits, but it will help us. Before we can have more light, more knowledge, more satisfaction, we must open our ears to the Word of God and listen. Happiness, Jesus reminds us, is the portion of those who do what they know; but how can we be doers of the Word if we do not practice listening?

Diligent reading must not be ruled out, for it, too, is helpful to learning. But the ear-gate is still the medium by which most information gets through to us. No wandering thoughts, though, but strictest attention.

What Jesus said to the seven churches is repeated today for us: "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

Are you listening? ●●

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#### Happiness Recipe

Keep your heart free from hate, your mind from worry; live simply. Expect little, give much. Sing often. Pray always. Fill your life with love. Scatter sunshine. Forget yourself, think of others. Do as you would be done by. These are the tried links in contentment's golden chain.

February, 1979

#### *Needed: Cool Heads and Hot Hearts*

In the Christian life there are two opposite dangers to be avoided: a cold heart and a hot head.

The human heart is deceitful by nature and easily becomes cold and indifferent in spiritual matters, unless we learn to take special precautions. The great saints of old were uncommonly poised and self-possessed persons; they were persons of calm and steady judgment and salty good sense. But they also possessed fervor, passionate love and a flaming desire for God and righteousness.

There can never be too much fire in the heart, if it is the true fire of God; and there cannot be too much cool judgment if that judgment is under the jurisdiction of God. But both must be governed.

The hottest fire of God is cool when it touches the true Christian's intellect. It makes the heart glow but leaves the judgment completely calm.

There are bound to be days of turmoil. We do well to remember at such times that "God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." At the same time we must "keep the fires of the spirit burning." Let hope and love and trust burn with increasing fervor, while we bring every act to the test of quiet wisdom. Keep the fire in the furnace where it belongs. An overheated chimney will create more excitement than a well-controlled furnace, but it is likely to burn the house down. The rule must be: a hot furnace, but a cool chimney.

A hot heart, but a cool head. ●●

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Always walk *CAREFULLY*, danger is near;  
Joyfully journey with caution and fear;  
Evils surround thee, temptations within,  
Seeking to lead thee once more into sin.

Always walk *HOPEFULLY*, never complain;  
In the bright morrow, sweet rest thou wilt gain,  
And from the mouth of thy Judge thou wilt hear:  
"Enter thou into great joy, without fear."

Always walk *PRAY'RFULLY*, so not to fall;  
Never forget on thy Saviour to call;  
Safe He will guide through each trial and care,  
At last invite thee His glory to share.

Always walk *CHEERFULLY*, doing no wrong;  
Never once walking amidst the great throng;  
Then will the clouds and the tempest soon pass,  
And thou wilt rest with thy Saviour at last.

Always walk *CAREFULLY*, always walk joyfully,  
Never walk *CARELESSLY*, danger is near!

—L. T. Nichols

# Refinishing Work

**I** HAPPENED to visit our pastor one day recently, and found him in his study. But he was not studying. He was in the process of refinishing the surface of his large, beautifully grained walnut desk. At this point he happened to be rubbing the glossy surface with pumice stone and water. When I commented that the treatment seemed harsh, he explained. "This is to remove all the little particles of dirt and dust that get into the wet varnish when it is applied."

But this was far from the beginning of the project. The old scratched, nicked surface had first been removed and the desk top sanded until it felt like satin. Then a coat of varnish had been applied. Then came the vigorous rub-down, until the shining surface was dull once again. Then came another coat of varnish, and another harsh treatment with pumice stone and water. In fact, the pumice-stone treatment followed each application of varnish until the very last.

Why was all this necessary?

"If you want to bring out the grain and produce a rich luster," he explained, "this is the way you do it."

Have we ever thought that such stringent measures are necessary to deepen the luster and bring out the beauty in *our* lives?

If we are spiritually alert, we know that righteous characters are not formed in hours of ease, when everything is smooth and glossy in our lives. It is just when we think that we have added some new luster that we find ourselves confronting a most irritating circumstance. We may be forced to associate with people whose abrasive personalities rub ours, and we are frustrated to the limit of our endurance.

Here is just the time to add some of the Christlike luster and show the Christlike spirit. *Do* we?

Then comes more "buffing" which, it seems, will never let up.

These constant irritations are foreign to what we would naturally like or choose. Yet, each of us needs them. None can live or shine without them. At the secret center of the most radiant life there was or is always the irritation which, properly used, brings out the rich luster of a godly character.

God knows we need the abrasive. He knows how much pressure to apply, when to bear down, when to let up. As we yield to the abrasive, we will see in ourselves more and more of those rich virtues that are part of every Christian character.

Is jealousy, hatred, resentment or impatience marring the beauty of our character? Are we "touchy" or "moody"? Do we "go to pieces" when things do not go our way? Do we have occasional "flare-ups"? How much is there in us that is not yet in harmony with God's law?

Nothing dulls the rich luster of our character so much as the self-life. By indulging in petty ways, we become dull with non-essentials. We get stained with our own fleshly thoughts.

When things seem to be rough, let us remember that it is the rubbing that brings out the shine. And it is the rubbing that will remove the dents of sensitiveness and the nicks of selfishness. Every disturbance can disturb us upward to a new largeness of life and a new beauty of soul. Trials can work for us; and if they do, can we not work with them?

"When all kinds of trials and temptations crowd into your lives, my brothers, don't resent them as intruders, but welcome them as friends"—helpers to gain for us that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory!

If the rubbing seems harsh, don't fight it. Let God accomplish what He intends. Yield. His hand controls every circumstance; and when the work is finally completed, we will be "perfect and complete, with never a defect" (Jas. 1:1-4, Moffatt)—because we have been fully polished. ●●





# Questions

"Do children have guardian angels in heaven watching over them? See the words of Jesus in Matthew 18:10, 'Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.' What did Jesus mean?"

Our first need here is to determine who are the "little ones" Jesus was speaking about.

In Matthew 18:1-2, Jesus apparently set forth a "little child" (it must have been a well-behaved child) to impress a lesson on His disciples. Note in verse 1 that Jesus was addressing His disciples: "At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus.' Their question, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" caused Jesus to use a child to illustrate the truth He wanted to teach them. Jesus said: "Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (vs. 3-4). Two conditions were necessary to being "greatest in the kingdom of heaven": 1) "be converted," and 2) "become as little children, . . . humble." Often the people of God compared a humble state of mind to child-likeness. Solomon, at the beginning of his career, was described as "but a little child." Jeremiah said of himself that he was not able to speak—"I am but a child" (Jer. 1:6). He did not feel capable of filling the role God was calling Him to fill. It is an illustration of humility, the spirit Christ wanted His disciples to have—and which they, at this time, lacked.

Then in verse 5 Jesus said, "And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me." Drawing the illustration from the lesson He had just given them, Jesus now called His disciples little children. This fact is confirmed by the following verse: "But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me. . . ." Notice it reads "these little ones *which believe in me.*" At this point Jesus must be referring to His disciples as the "little ones," for a child young in stature and in years is not capable of sufficient understanding to be said to "believe in me." The disciples

were the believers Jesus was speaking of; they were Christ's "little ones" when they were humble.

These same "little ones" are the children Jesus speaks about in verse 10, the text in question: "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones"—these "little ones which believe in me" (v. 6). "For I say unto you, That in heaven, their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven."

Guardian angels are part of God's loving provision for His people. As we read in Psalm 34:7, "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them." The angels are God's "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation" (Heb. 1:14). Psalm 91 contains another promise of the same protection: "For he [the Lord] shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways" (v. 11).

These angels have access into the presence of God, as did the angel Gabriel who appeared to Daniel and years later to Mary (see Dan. 9:21; Luke 1:19, 26), and they watch over "these little ones which believe"—true, humble disciples, those who "shall be heirs of salvation."

"I believe that the statements in the Bible are to be accepted *as they are literally stated*. I note that the Word of God is changeless and inerrant, that no less a personage than Jesus Christ stated that His Word will never pass away."

With so much of the Bible written in symbolic language, in parable, and allegory, how can we possibly accept every word as "literally stated"? For example, consider Jesus' saying in John 15, "I am the true vine and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it that it may bring forth more fruit." Certainly Jesus never intended us to think of Himself as a literal vine with His Father taking away literal branches that did not bear literal fruit.

Consider this passage in Revelation 7:14, "These are they . . . which have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Do you think that literal robes could be washed in literal blood and come out white? This is a symbolic representation of the washing which all Christians must do to be arrayed in fine linen clean and white, for "the fine linen is the righteousness of saints" (Rev. 19:8).

Another example of a statement which cannot be taken literally is the following, "And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a

decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed." This phrase "all the world" could mean only the Roman Empire, that part of the world under the jurisdiction of Cæsar Augustus. Surely no one assumes that Cæsar expected to collect taxes from the American Indians, or the Eskimos.

One final example of symbolic language is that found in Matthew 3:12, "Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." We cannot conceive of Christ with a literal fan in his hand winnowing out literal wheat from the chaff, and burning up the chaff with literal fire. The fan represents Christ's power at the Judgment, as He separates the righteous from the wicked. The righteous are rewarded with eternal life and the wicked are destroyed. We cannot interpret the fire as literal, either, unless we take the whole passage literally, which is impossible. Fire is used in the Bible as a symbol of destruction.

Jesus Himself explained the symbolism in many of His parables, showing definitely that He did not mean every part literally.

No, God never intended us to take all of His Word literally. The apostle Paul states the rule in I Corinthians 2:13, "Comparing spiritual things with spiritual." Only in this way can we find reason, clarity and harmony in its words.

"Since we are taught in Hebrews that sins cannot be remitted without the shedding of blood (9:22; compare with 10:17-19), and since Jesus said plainly that his blood would be shed for the remission of sins (Matt. 26:28), why do you not accept his death (the shedding of blood) as the basis on which God remits our sins?"

If Christ's crucifixion, the shedding of literal blood and the killing of literal flesh, were the basis on which God remits sins, then there is profit—great profit—in Jesus' literal flesh and blood; and Jesus said plainly that His physical flesh and blood profit nothing. The Jews were questioning Jesus about His flesh and blood, and Jesus answered, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you" (John 6:53). But He made very clear that it was not His literal flesh and blood that they must eat. "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me" (v. 57). And, "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." Not the shedding of His literal blood

but His words contain the life-giving element. If we live up to the principles Jesus taught and exemplified in His own life, this will make a radical change in our own life and will form the basis for the remission of our sins at judgment.

And this radical change involves the shedding of "blood," but it is not physical blood and it is not Christ's blood. The term "blood" is often used in Scripture as an equivalent term for "life," for the "life of the flesh is in the blood" (Lev. 17:11). Blood must be shed, the life-blood of the old nature which each of us possesses, the life of sin must be put to death. Paul was shedding this blood when he wrote, "I die daily" (I Cor. 15:31), and "I am crucified with Christ" (Gal. 2:20), "always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus" (II Cor. 4:10).

By what stretch of the imagination could the shedding of Christ's literal blood on the cross affect our life, either for good or ill? Has mankind been made any better by Jesus' literal death? If a man lives a life of sin and then at the last moment of life accepts Christ as his Saviour, has it made any change in his life? It has not. If God could miraculously change a sinner into a saint by sacrificing His Son, could He not do the same without taking His Son's life?

The doctrine of the atonement is the most unreasonable, unchristian, untrue, unfounded, unjust doctrine ever devised by man. The prophet Ezekiel states the divine principle unequivocally when he says, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father" (Ezek. 18:20).

We cannot accept Christ's death as the basis on which God remits sin; it is His death to sin, which each of us must copy. Paul makes this plain in Romans 6: "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. . . . Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin" (Rom. 6:1-4, 6, 11). How could our "old man" be literally crucified with Christ? It could not. Paul is referring to the crucifixion of the old nature, the "flesh."

Paul continues: "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof" (Rom. 6:12). We must die to sin as Christ died, "For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God" (v. 10). This is God's plan for the remission of our sins; any other plan may be pleasing, comfortable, and easy, and universally accepted, but not Biblical. ●●

## Our Readers Write...

### Growing Character

If only we could grow as fast and as nicely in the spiritual as the crops are growing at present, we would accomplish much. If we don't grow, it isn't because God hasn't given us the water and sunshine. The fault lies within us. We have two things necessary for growth: an urge within us for development, and second, an environment which makes growth possible.

Our spiritual garden needs much cultivation and pruning if we would produce the lovely fruits of the Spirit. If seeds of purity and right-living are sown, with cultivation and proper training and growth of character, God will send a rich harvest. Eternal growth is a "must" with all of us, so let's not be weary in well-doing; for in due season we shall reap if we do not faint.

It is well for us to look up, trusting in the "Rock that is higher than I," knowing that He will not leave us to perish.

A life minus a daily example of righteousness is like a torch holder without a light. To be of influence it must itself be shining with love and goodness.

*Monrovia, Liberia, Africa*

S. Z.

### No Time to Waste

We seem to be so slow at times to realize the passing of time and to make the most of it. Surely the mind is willing, but the flesh is weak, we being weak frail creatures. We wish we would never waste a single minute of precious time; yet it slips swiftly and steadily by and then is lost, unless we have done our best to redeem it.

Wishing we would never waste time does not help. We must set to work in earnest and redeem it, for these are evil days, days full of danger, days full of immorality, days full of hatred, suspicion and pleasure-seeking. Are not these the last days? Truly, the coming of our great King is at hand, and our redemption draws nigh.

We are commanded to "keep the faith." At times it seems our faith is at such a low ebb. At times it seems that everything works against us, but "we know that all things work together for good to them that love God," and the love of God is the keeping of His commandments (1 John 5:3). The daily keeping of His commandments will safely shelter us in the strong tower of God, while the storms rage and the billows roll.

*Charleston, Mississippi*

R. S.

### Keep Working

What a better world it would be to live in if people would try to do right. The world is so evil. Most everyone you talk with is thinking only about this present life. So one surely has to keep working to keep his mind right. This is why it is a great, great help to have the MESSAGE to read. It opens one's eyes to the truth, so they can understand the Bible, and understand how to live better.

*Moses Lake, Washington*

G. C.

### Forward, Not Back

It is our business to look forward to the greater time coming, a time which will dim all other memories into nothingness because of its wonderment and beauty. Shall the cripple think back on those legless days when he is leaping and running for sheer joy? Will the blind think back on those black surroundings which were his life when he can see the world in all its beauty? Nay! a thousand worlds he will see and a thousand more. What joy will be for those who are willing to put God first in their lives now in these wicked days. We should never be looking back when such great things are in store for us. But they are in store for us only if—if—if.

*Nottinghamshire, England*

H. L.

### The Real Sacrifice

I want to do my best to fulfill my aim through God's power. As Christians we need to be patient, because patience is the backbone of hard work.

The apostle Paul's greatest ambition was to get the churches which he had founded ready for the Master's approval. Note his earnestness, as he writes: "According as he hath chosen us, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love" (Eph. 1:4). Later he wrote that the church should be sanctified and cleansed, that He (Christ) might "present it unto himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:26-27). This is the real sacrifice today; it is the ordinance for this age, to live a blameless life before God. When this is done freely and wholeheartedly, then truly there is cause to praise the name of the Lord. But greater far will be the praises and rejoicing when the Church is completed and prepared as a Bride, spotless pure, undefiled, and Christ the Bridegroom returns to claim her and utters those prophetic words (Song of Solomon 4:7), "Thou art all fair, . . . there is no spot in thee."

A fine Christian character does not consist only in abstaining from the things which no gentleman would think of doing, but in doing those lofty and exalting things which are unlikely to be done except by those who have an intense desire for eternal things.

*Monrovia, Liberia, Africa*

J. D.

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## ***Our Father's At the Helm***

*The curling waves with an awful roar  
A gallant bark assailed,  
And pallid fear's distracting power  
O'er all on board prevailed*

*Save one, the captain's darling child,  
Who steadfast viewed the storm;  
And, fearless, with composure smiled  
At danger's threatening form.*

*"And fear'st thou not?" a seaman cried  
"While terrors overwhelm?"  
"Why should I fear?" the boy replied--  
"My father's at the helm."*

*So when our earthly hopes are reft,  
Our earthly comforts gone,  
We still have one sure anchor left--  
God helps, and He alone.*

*He to our cry will lend an ear,  
He gives our pangs relief;  
He turns to smiles each trembling tear,  
To joy each torturing grief.*

*So turn to Him 'mid sorrows wild,  
When terrors overwhelm,  
Remembering, like the fearless child,  
Our Father's at the helm!*

