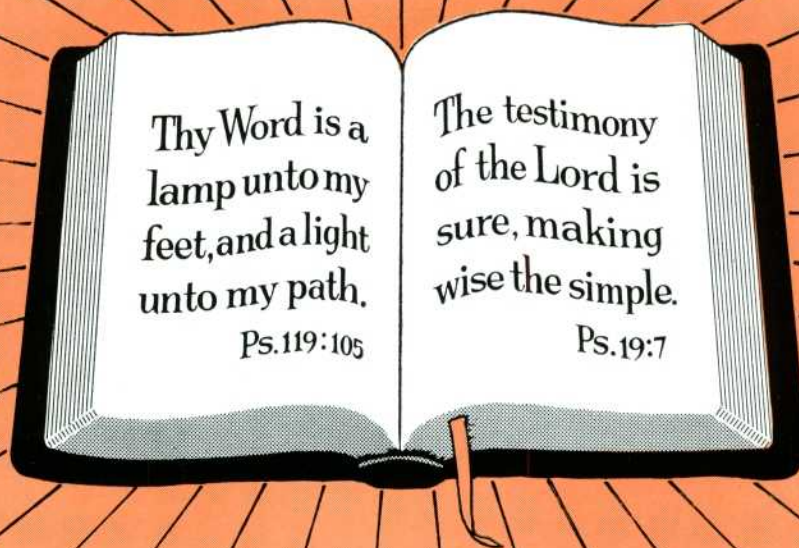


# Megiddo Message

DEVOTED TO THE CAUSE OF CHRIST



**Meditation Is Power**

**What Is Truth? The Great Infidel Discussion**

**Individual Effort--The Key to Life**



# EDITORIAL



## Lord, Is It I?

OUR MINDS go back to the scene of the "Last Supper," when Jesus met with the Twelve on that memorable night. The upper room is warmed with the glow of loving brotherhood in Christ; yet the air is tense. We watch as the searching eye of the Master travels from one to another, and draws from each the heart-searching question, "Lord, is it I?" (Matt. 26: 20-22). All wonder, but only one knows. Jesus had just spoken that awful sentence: "One of you shall betray me."

Living as we are some twenty centuries later, we know, of course, that we cannot betray Jesus as Judas did. But can we say that we have never in *any* way betrayed His cause? Have we that spotless record of loyalty and faith that has never faltered? Have we not at some time shown ourselves less than fully loyal? Have we not ample reason to ask—and frequently—when His divine and searching eye is upon us, "Lord, is it I?"

Webster defines "betray" as, "to disclose in violation of confidence," "to prove false." It suggests unfaithfulness to our sacred covenant, saying and not doing, professing and not living, talking and not walking. Should we not ask, "Lord, is it I?"

There are many small areas where we may betray Him so easily. Jesus said, "Blessed are the meek." Are we meek? Or are we sometimes something less than meek? "Lord, is it I?" We need to look to ourselves, for what we see in others is often only a reflection of our own shortcomings. We know only too well what Jesus had to say about the man trying to pull a splinter out of his brother's eye when there was a plank in his own. Such are far too self-righteous ever to think of asking, "Lord, is it I?"

We are reminded of the prayer of the Pharisee in contrast to that of the publican. The Pharisee thought he was all right and told God all of his good points. Naturally, we want our good qualities known, but are silent about our faults. The

Pharisees were a respectable class of people, while the publicans, or tax collectors, were in ill favor, especially with the Jews. But Jesus did not respect class or station; individuals rated only by their own character. The publican was humble; the Pharisee was far from being meek. The Lord Jesus saw all this and summed up His lesson saying that the publican went home justified rather than the other.

Are we *working* righteousness, or do we merely talk about it? Are we zealous of actual, genuine good works, or are we merely *professors*? Do our words and actions all tell the same story, or is there a conflict? "Lord, is it I?" Perhaps we have just a little bit of ungoverned anger, or passion, or sympathy, or sensitiveness—but it does not take a mountain of any variety of evil to close the pearly gates against us. The smallest sin will act as an electric eye to close instead of open the gates to us.

We have been offered a reward beyond anything which the mind of man can fathom. Its value is measurable only by the God of heaven who holds it. Our utmost effort can never earn it, nor can anything we can do begin to make us truly deserving. However, there are definite conditions stated. It cannot be *earned*, but we must qualify to receive it. Certain definite qualifications must be met and fully. God requires that we desire it above everything else, and that we demonstrate that desire by a consistent, upright, holy life before Him. He wants us to combine our heart and soul and mind and strength in an all-out effort. But can we not afford to do it, for such a reward?

Whenever we are tempted with any of the attractions of this world, whenever we feel a need for gratifying any of the desires of our own natural mind, whenever we are reminded of any of the evils great or small which attend mankind, should we not earnestly inquire, "Lord, is it I?" ●●

## 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*

The use of selected references from various versions of the Bible does not necessarily imply publisher endorsement of the versions in their entirety.

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February, 1980

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The MEGIDDO MESSAGE is a religious magazine devoted to the cause of Christ, and published for the dissemination of Bible truth alone. Official organ of the Megiddo Mission Church. L. T. Nichols, *Founder*; Kenneth E. Flowerday, *President and Editor*.

The MEGIDDO MESSAGE is published monthly (except July) by the Megiddo Mission Church, 481 Thurston Road, Rochester, New York 14619. Second Class postage for the MEGIDDO MESSAGE (USPS 338-120) paid at Rochester, New York. SUBSCRIPTION RATE: One year, eleven issues, \$2.00.

# Meditation Is Power

IN SOME sections of our country there is an unusual sign posted at regular intervals. A small, unadorned triangle, it preaches a one-word sermon: *THINK!* Apparently some unknown highway official thought that drivers would be safer if they did more *thinking*.

This same message is prominently displayed along the highway to Zion. Here, too, it speaks for the safety of the travelers. If we would reach our destination safely, we must think. In fact, there is no possible way to get to our destination without thinking.

Time and again we have been warned, counseled, admonished and advised to *think*. But have we been so impressed that we are making the all-out effort? Do we realize that "to think" or "not to think" is a *life-or-death* matter for us?

How often we have stumbled in our Christian walk, because we did not think! This is nothing new. Ages ago people stumbled for the same reason, because *they* didn't think. Had king Saul *thought* the matter through to its conclusion, he probably would not have disobeyed the command of the Lord and performed the service which Samuel the prophet was commissioned to do. Had Uzzah *thought* of the command in the ancient law, not to touch any holy thing, he would not have disobeyed in putting forth his hand to stay the ark of God. Had Moses *thought* before he struck the rock at Meribah, as he had been accustomed to do, he might have been permitted to enter the Land of Promise. Thinking—or not thinking—made the difference.

Just so can thinking keep *us* from fatal transgression. If we truly think, how can we ever disobey?

Furthermore we have a divine command to think. "Think on these things" was the comprehensive counsel of the apostle Paul, and he enu-

merated those thoughts that may rightly occupy the believer's mind, thoughts that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report (Phil. 4:8). Our thought-life is vital to our spiritual well-being, for as a man "thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Prov. 23:7). What we think about is what we will become.

The first and greatest commandment, as cited by Jesus, includes thinking: We must love the Lord with all our heart, all our soul, and all our mind (Mark 12:30-31). The apostle Paul commissions us to take captive every vagrant thought and make it obey Christ (II Cor. 10:4-5). All these are divine commands and are not to be slighted; they are signboards along the highway that leads to Zion; they have been posted to be obeyed. Are we obeying them?

But as we think seriously about the meaning of these commands, we may feel overwhelmed with the tremendous proposition they lay upon us. It is one thing not to act violently in anger; it is another not to fire angry words at our opponent; it is still another thing not to feel even the slightest ripple or thought of anger within. It is one thing to restrain our hands from an act of retaliation; it is another not to tell our accuser what we think of him; it is still another not to wish the slightest evil upon him in revenge or to feel any satisfaction if he should receive what he deserves. Thoughts run deep; they are like great underground rivers, difficult to follow, difficult to hold back; but sooner or later they always come to the surface. Sooner or later they must be reckoned with in the deeds they motivate.

How many thoughts flit through our minds in a single day—even an hour, or a minute! Must all these be brought into subjection? Must all be ordered by God and holiness? Is it possible? The proposition may seem staggering; but the Word of God demands it; how else can we give Him "all our mind"?

Capturing and directing our thoughts is as

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**Note:** "Meditation Is Power" is available as a complete church service on cassette. Price: \$3.00.

much a part of the law as controlling our temper, or governing our speech. How else can we keep the whole law? How else can we be pure, even as Christ is pure? How can a clean life issue from an unclean mind? How can we think *wrong* and do *right*? How can we be accepted into the company of the saints and angels unless we have learned to think as they think?

But anyone who has made a serious effort to control his thinking knows it is no easy task. Nor is it accomplished in a day. It is a work requiring time, diligence, patience and growth. Most of us must admit with shame that time and again we have tried—and failed. Yet the issue is critical; upon it hinges our right to everything in the world to come. Did not Jesus say, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God”? They, the pure in heart, shall look upon the face of the Great Creator! What surpassing honor and privilege! Shall we forfeit our part in that supreme delight because we lacked the diligence to order our little minds aright? In utmost candor we say, No. But how shall we gain control of our minds so that we may be pure in heart?

#### Thought-Control—How?

The first step is to become conscious of the thoughts we harbor. As our former pastor Rev. Maud Hembree so aptly put it, “Think about where your thoughts are.” Too many hours have we wasted while our thoughts traveled like the waves of the sea, driven of the wind and tossed. Too many hours have we revolved in our minds thoughts that were worse than worthless. Why? Why do we allow it? Do we forget that Christ is coming to “bring to light life’s inner aims and motives” (I Cor. 4:4-5, Moffatt)? Do we forget that “the Lord pondereth the hearts” and that “no thought can be withholden from [Him]” (Prov. 21:2; Job 42:2)? Do we realize that condemnation rests upon each one of whom it may be said, “God is not in all his thoughts” (Ps. 10:4)? Do we forget that God is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart? “I the Lord search the hearts, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings” (Jer. 17:10).

Do we forget these things, or do we simply not *think*? Our minds are not our own to be used as we please; we are accountable for our thoughts. “Guard well thy thoughts,” says the ancient proverb; “thy thoughts are heard in heaven.”

How do we direct our thinking? Again and

again in the course of the day we must confront ourselves with the penetrating question: What am I thinking about? Someone has suggested that we should check ourselves every hour. This may seem laborious and impractical—and still not be enough, for our minds may travel miles in much less than an hour. Thought-tending is not easy; to be effective, it must be constant. The task is tremendous; but is *any* effort too great when we consider that the stakes are eternal life and death?

As we become conscious of our thoughts, we may be astonished at their very unholy tendencies; our thoughts are not all that they could or should be. Perhaps we find our minds going over and over some trivial incident that does not deserve even a second thought, to say nothing of an entire hour. Perhaps we review and re-review a light comment we heard, which contains no profit or edification. Or it may be a word of criticism that stung, or a slight injury we felt,

*Thought-tending is not easy; the task is tremendous. But is any effort too great when we consider that it is preparing us for eternal life?*

or an unkind attitude or expression. It settles in our minds, and we go over and over it until the passing thought has become a plague—we have succeeded in making ourselves miserable! Just think how much better we could be, how much surer in faith, how much stronger in principle, if that same amount of thought-power had been focussed on something constructive, upbuilding, edifying!

But constructive thinking is not natural; hearts that are described by the Prophet as “deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked” do not instinctively produce good (Jer. 17:9). Before all our thoughts are wholesome, elevating and spiritual, our minds must be directed, disciplined, trained. How can this be done? The formula is simple: Replace every evil thought with a good thought. This was another suggestion of our former pastor, Rev. Maud Hembree, and the best part of it is that it really works!

However, applying the formula means constantly, consciously supervising our minds. We must literally tell ourselves what we shall and shall not think about. When we are working, we

must direct our minds to concentrate on the task at hand. When we relax, we must seize the opportunity to think about the most important business in our lives, the King's business. Wherever we are, whatever we do, whether we are alone or in a crowd, whether we walk by the way, or lie down, or rise up, our one supreme interest must possess our minds.

This kind of thought-directing requires discipline, but think what it does for us! It entirely closes out large areas of misery where our minds naturally dwell. It leaves us without place for those disturbing bits of gossip that float on the air; we have no time to rehearse a grudge or a hurt or bitter feeling—where can they get a foothold if not allowed in our minds? Complaints will find no soil in which to grow, nor will we have place for any evil imaginations about

another. Pride will be without an abiding place—if we do not think more highly of ourselves than we ought, pride will never trouble us. Our minds will likewise be closed against thoughts of malice, slander, or envy; if the space is already filled with that which is good and wholesome and spiritual, these deadly evils will not have a chance to disturb us. What glorious freedom will be ours, the freedom of a controlled mind.

### **The Highest Thinking: Meditation**

As we learn to crowd out evil thoughts, we will find our minds reaching out into a nobler, deeper type of thinking that will draw us into the company of the holy men and women of old and make us part of the family of God. Let us consider this highest type of thinking; it is what

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## **Let Us Pray . . .**

Loving Father, we rejoice that once more we can appear in Thy presence, in Thy house, to be strengthened and built up in our most holy faith.

Help us during these trying days to bear our own burdens manfully; to remember that when we have done our best we may confidently leave the rest with Thee; that the major responsibility for this beautiful but shadowed world is with Thee; and long before we came into it Thou wert at work on Thy age-long purpose. All that Thou dost ask of us is to put our lives on the highest level we can reach and resolutely keep them there, meeting life's problems with all the intelligence and courage we possess.

Father, we rejoice to know Thy law is so perfect, Thy testimonies so sure, Thy commandments so uplifting, and Thy rewards so magnificent. In view of these undeniable facts may we have the wisdom to engage wholeheartedly in Thy program of self-improvement, assured that whatever Thou hast promised Thou art able, abundantly able to fulfill. All creation is at Thy disposal and nothing is too hard for Thee. Thou hast the potential to do for us exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. We have Thy promise, and that cannot fail. Every life that meets Thy specifications will be rewarded with immortality in the world of tomorrow.

May we accept Thy divine promises, build

upon our brilliant prospect of life in the world to come, and make every move count in our effort to prepare for it. Help us to employ every aid so mercifully provided for us. May we read and study Thy Word, believe what we read, meditate upon the great things Thou hast in store for the faithful, using meditation as a power for good in our lives, and permit nothing to come in that could weaken our faith, or prevent the gospel from being the power with us Thou hast designed it to be.

The thoughts build the character; as we think in our hearts so shall we be. Help us then to think victory, think thoughts of strength not of weakness, to double and re-double our efforts to completely transform ourselves, that we may be new creatures through and through, our whole purpose in life being to qualify for life in the world to come.

We pray for endurance that we may never grow weary in well doing, never faint by the way, never tire of a constant vigil, that we may merit a place of honor in Thy soon-coming Kingdom when it is established upon earth, and with all the good and faithful merit the "Well Done" of the great Judge.

We pray for the strength never to grow weary in well doing, never to faint by the way, that a place in the world to come may be our happy eternal lot. And may the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, our strength and our Redeemer. Amen.



the Scriptures call "meditation."

To meditate means, in a general sense, "to take care of, that is, revolve in the mind: think about." But this is not a complete definition. The word from which "meditate" is derived, as used in Scripture, reveals more meaning. It pertains to a matter to which we give deep concern, interest, care, even anxiety. Meditation suggests that the matter meditated upon is so meaningful as to stay constantly upon the mind. Hence, "Meditate upon these things" means "be deeply concerned with them, be anxiously careful for them; give them your whole interest as you revolve them constantly in your mind." In the words of Paul, as rendered in the Jerusalem Bible, "Think hard about all this, and put it into practice" (I Tim. 4:15).

What is this meditation? How can *we* practice it in *our* lives?

We may read the Word of God; reading provides us with many a thought on which to meditate, but reading itself is not meditation.

We may study the principles of our beliefs, finding many points for meditation, but study is not meditation.

We may discuss the Word of God and seek to understand it, but discussion is not meditation.

Reading, study and discussion all bring us into contact with the Word of God; but none of them can be considered meditating. Meditation is thinking about heavenly things not to learn them but to *love* them. Meditation is letting our minds revel in the midst of heavenly realities; it is deliberately relating our lives to the Infinite. When we meditate, we involve our heart, our emotions, our will, our innermost being, in the heavenlies.

Meditation has been called the life-breath of the new creature. In another metaphor, it has been called the fan of the divine life whereby the spark of holy fire, kindled by God, is not only kept alive but raised into flame.

Meditation is to the mind what digestion is to the body; it makes heavenly thoughts a part of us, converting them into power to nourish our souls and to supply energy to our spiritual muscles, giving us vitality to live and be and do—for God.

Meditation, at its highest and best, is the heart stayed on God, the affections set on things above, the will finding delight in the will of God, the whole mental environment saturated with thoughts of God. It is heart and soul and mind all working together for the enriching of the spiritual life within.

*Meditation is thinking about heavenly things not to learn them but to love them.*

Meditation is "alone with God, the world shut out, and all with Him shut in."

### Meditate: Why?

Why do we concern ourselves with meditation? Because divine meditation is a command. The Lord said to Joshua, "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night" (Josh. 1:8).

The great, good man pictured by the Psalmist in Psalm 1 is a man of constant meditation. "His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night" (Ps. 1:2).

Meditation was the apostle Paul's fatherly advice to Timothy: "Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. . . . Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all" (I Tim. 4:13,15).

God's people in all ages have found strength and renewal in meditation. Nothing specific is said about Abraham's meditating, but the strength he showed in obeying God is evidence that he thought great thoughts about God. We read that Isaac "went out to meditate in the field at the eventide" (Gen. 24:63). Forty years in the Midian desert gave Moses ample time to meditate and grow.

In the silence of the pastures of Bethlehem, David meditated; the Psalms are rich with his meditations. "Oh how I love thy law!" he wrote. "It is my meditation all the day" (Ps. 119:97). Again he said, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee. . . . I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways. I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word" (Ps. 119:11, 15-16).

Mary the mother of Jesus kept all the words of the angel and "pondered them in her heart" (Luke 2:19). Jesus Himself spent much time in meditation, withdrawing frequently into the wilderness, or to the mountaintop, or to the sea, to be alone with His Father.

All these people of God needed the strength they could find in meditating; think we that we can get on without it?

*(Continued on page 23)*

Kathy  
Kantor's  
Korner

### The Best Gift

KATHY pursed her lips thoughtfully as she folded the letter and returned it to the envelope. It was from her sister-in-law Karen. Karen had mentioned a problem they were having with Christy—and did Kathy have a suggestion?

"A letter from Karen," she said aloud to Brenda when she became aware that Brenda was looking questioninglly at her. "They hope to be here this weekend."

"Wonderful!" exclaimed Brenda. "It's been a long time!"—and she was off to share the good news with the rest of the family.

Excitement ran high the next few days as everyone tried to catch up the little "extras" in preparation for the expected guests. By Saturday morning all was ready.

"Come right in!" welcomed Neal as Dick, Karen, and family trooped in out of the biting cold.

Nine-year-old Christy headed straight for her Aunt, her eyes dancing with excitement as she held aloft a large and beautifully wrapped box. "It's just for *you*! I made it—all by myself!" Christy jumped with joy, then added in a stage-whisper, "I know you'll love it!"

"Thank you, dear," said Kathy, her voice kindly but quiet. "Put it on the table. . . . Perhaps I'll have time to look at it later."

Christy's face fell. What was the matter with Aunt Kathy? But she did as she was told, trying hard to hide her disappointment. How carefully she had knitted the bright red yarn into a pillow cover. Then, with all her love she had tried to stuff the pillow just right. Then she had wrapped it in special paper which she was sure was Aunt Kathy's favorite color. "She'll love it," Christy had thought. "Aunt Kathy will love this present that I planned and made just for her!" But

Aunt Kathy didn't seem the least bit interested!

Christy found a chair in a corner of the living room where her sisters and brother and cousins were greeting each other enthusiastically, and sat down to pout. They all tried to draw her into the circle, but Christy was *un*-interested. Brenda tried especially to befriend her, but to no avail. "That's the way she is at home," replied Christy's younger sister. "She's all right."

But for Christy, everything was *not* all right. Her whole world seemed to have gone wrong. Those words of Aunt Kathy's—"on the table . . . Perhaps . . . later" kept saying themselves over and over in her mind.

"I worked so hard to make that gift, and she won't even take it or open it!" mumbled Christy to herself, her lips quivering.

Janet and Keith also tried valiantly to cheer the unhappy Christy, but with no success. They looked at their mother, as if to say, "It's your job, Mom," as they returned to enjoy the group.

Kathy's job it was, she knew—because she thought she knew also the cause of the problem. She had been waiting for an appropriate time to approach the girl. Her indifference to Christy's gift had not been a careless gesture but was part of a thoroughly thought-through plan. Karen had written of how excited Christy was to be making a gift for her Aunt Kathy—when she wouldn't so much as run an errand or do some small chore for her parents without sulking and pouting for hours. She had also, just recently, become sassy and defiant. The letter had given Kathy a little time to think. She just might be able to help Christy. At least she had a plan.

The delicious dinner had been served, and all the dishes washed and put away, and the two happy families were gathered in the living room. The precious box still remained on the hall table, untouched. Christy slipped into the hall to give it one more adoring look. She could stand it no longer. She darted into the first bedroom she came to and flung herself upon the bed.

"Aunt Kathy doesn't like me!" she sobbed. "She doesn't like my gift. And I planned it and made it just for her!" Her sobs overpowered her words.

The door squeaked as it opened slowly. "Why, Christy!" Aunt Kathy's tone of loving concern was music to Christy. "What is my girl doing in here!"

Christy's only response was a muffled sob as she tried to hide her tear-stained face.

"What is wrong, my dear?" asked Kathy as



she tenderly smoothed the girl's hair.

Christy tried to answer, but a sob caught in her throat.

Kathy thought she knew what was wrong, but she had not expected her feigned indifference to the gift to have had quite so shattering an effect on Christy.

"Is it about the gift, Christy?" she asked.

Christy nodded. "You . . . you didn't . . . even open . . . it," she managed between sobs.

Kathy gathered the girl lovingly in her arms. "Christy, I really *wanted* to open your gift. I really *wanted* to, but I wanted more to let you know that I really *love* you, Christy."

"You do—? Aunt Kathy—" she broke into another sob.

"Christy, I left your gift there on purpose. You see, I heard something about you that made me feel very sad."

Christy caught her breath as she waited for her aunt to continue.

"Christy, how could I accept such a gift of love from you, when I had heard that you are naughty to those who love you most and do the most for you? How do you think your father and mother must feel to see you so happy making *me* a gift and then pouting when *they* ask you to do something to help *them*?"

Christy was sitting on the edge of the bed now, dabbing her eyes with her handkerchief.

"How much help you could be to your mother every day, Christy. How many steps you could save her. And how much happier you and your whole family would be if you always obeyed with a smile instead of a pout." Kathy placed her arm about the girl's shoulders. "Christy, did you know there is a verse in the Bible which says that children should learn *first* to show *kindness* at *home*?"

Christy still made no comment, but she was listening.

Kathy was thinking fast what she should say next. "Let's think about some of the many, many things your mother and father do for you. First, though, you want to thank God that you have what so many children don't *have*—*both* a father and mother, and both kind and loving to you. Have you ever had to sleep on the sidewalk, Christy?"

Christy shook her head vigorously.

"Have you ever gone hungry?"

Again the answer was "no."

"Was there ever a time when you didn't have enough clothes to wear?"

Again the answer was "no."

"Then you can thank God for a wonderful home, nice warm clothes, plenty of good food—"

"And parents who love and serve God," added Christy, to Kathy's surprise.

"That is something to be especially thankful for, Christy. Now let's think about some of the other things your parents do for you. Let's start with Mother. I wonder how many washings and ironings she has done in your nine years, to keep you and your brother and sisters clean and neat. Let's see, she washes at least once a week, and there are how many weeks in a year? multiplied times nine years?"

"Ooooooooo!" It was a bit bigger arithmetic than Christy was used to.

"Then think of all the meals she has cooked in your nine years—three times a day, three-hundred and sixty-five days a year. And think of all the hours she has spent cleaning so that your house keeps nice and neat and fresh. Plus all the nursing when you are sick, and sewing and—"

"And helping me with my homework."

"But don't forget your father. He works hard, he goes to work week in and month out, whether he feels like it or not, whether the weather is warm or icy. And when he is not in the office, he is working at home, trying to do some of the

(Continued on page 16)

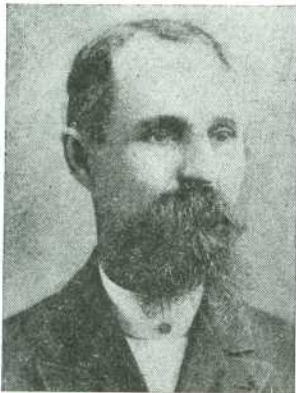
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## Announcing ABIB

The Abib season is approaching again. The new moon following the March equinox occurs this year on April 15. Accordingly, the Megiddo Church will observe Abib First beginning with the evening of April 15 and continuing through April 16, Bible time being counted from evening to evening (Lev. 23:23).

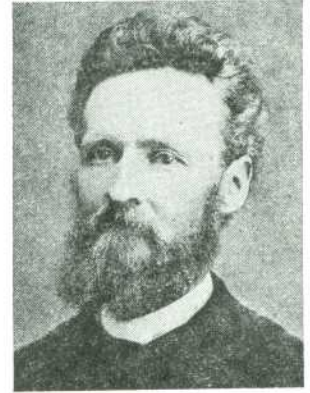
The day will be observed with appropriate services of prayer and praise marking the double holiday—in remembrance of the birth, life, work, ministry and future destiny of Christ, and in welcoming the beginning of another sacred year. All interested friends and subscribers are invited to join us at this season.

Thirteen days later (Abib 13, this year on the evening of April 27) we will meet to observe the New Passover, the anniversary of the Lord's Supper. The morning of April 30 (Abib 15) will be the anniversary of Christ's triumphant resurrection. ●●



# What Is Truth?

## The Great Infidel Discussion



### Reverend L. T. Nichols vs. Professor W. F. Jamieson

#### Part Four

IN THE YEAR 1890, our founder Rev. L. T. Nichols engaged in a series of debates with the great infidel debater Professor W. F. Jamieson. The debates extended through eight consecutive evenings between September 25 and October 2 and centered around the two following theses:

#### FIRST THESIS:

*Resolved, That the Bible is wholly of human origin, and abounds in contradictory, immoral, absurd and inconsistent teachings.*

W. F. Jamieson, Affirmed.

L. T. Nichols, Denied.

Six nights were spent discussing the First Thesis.

#### SECOND THESIS:

*Resolved, That the teachings of the New Testament are all moral and elevating.*

L. T. Nichols, Affirmed.

W. F. Jamieson, Denied.

The following articles are extracts from addresses by both speakers in the debates, which reflect the opposition our founder encountered and his sincere desire to discover fully the true teachings of the Word of God.

### Mr. Jamieson's Fourth Address

My friend spoke about delivering a lecture, and then he proceeded to wind up his half hour as an auctioneer. Now I have just as much right to deliver a lecture as my friend has to auctioneer. The privileges are on these points equal. I concede he has a right to offer counter argument to anything that may have been advanced, but it is his place to follow me point by point, if he can.

Now I can say to you that I want the truth just as earnestly as he can want it, and if he has demolished or set aside a single argument in this debate that I have offered, I will admit I have not seen it. The fault may be my own. I may be obtuse; or I may be, as old Santa Anna, the Mexican said

of old Zachary Taylor, he said he had whipped Taylor five times, but Taylor was such an old fool that he never found it out. Now that may be my fix precisely. My friend may have demolished me, as he intimated in the last speech, but I have not found it out yet.

My friend also found some fault with me for not going to the marginal reading. Why, bless you, I supposed we were to discuss the Bible. Am I to understand from my good friend that the margin is inspired too? He says that I have got a little bit of a Bible here, and he does not believe it has any margin at all. I will own right up; it hasn't much; there isn't much room for it. But, Brother Nichols, look at that book, and tell me whether that is the Bible or not.

Mr. Nichols: That is a King James' version of the Bible.

Mr. Jamieson: That is a King James' version of the Bible? Thank you, sir. I am always glad to get as near to my friend in debate as possible. We are agreed that King James' version of the Bible is what the Christian preachers all over this country are telling the people everywhere is the true Bible from heaven. They will tell us that it is the Word of God. They will tell us Free Thinkers that we are infidels because we do not believe that that small book, with its fine print, is the Word of God. My friend, himself, manifest right here a little skepticism—in fact, a good deal—in his answer. He is almost over on our side of the question. He is afraid to tell us that this is the Bible, and that is just what we have been saying.

Now, sir, when you get the Bible—if this is not the Bible—then we will discuss it. Then we will have something for our proposition. But when we met here to debate the Bible, was it not understood, as the Christian people everywhere are teaching, that this is the Bible? My friend puts his hand on that Hebrew Bible there, and gives me to understand that that is the Divine volume. Is that so? God inspired the Hebrew, did He? Well, it so happens, my dear friend, that the larger part of the Hebrew Bible, God had nothing to do with, if He ever inspired any part of it. For it so turns out, my dearly beloved brother, that the vowels and the accent marks in that Hebrew Bible are, comparatively speaking, modern. The ancient Hebrew—and this is not it—the ancient Hebrew was composed entirely of consonants, running from the right to the left; just opposite from the way that our language reads. And it was those consonants that God inspired, if He had anything to do with any book at all. He did not inspire that book of yours. And the marginal readings are admitted to be the work of man, uninspired men, like Talmud of the Hebrews, the work of a man like Confucius, like the commentaries of Dr. Clark. All the works of men. You might as well bring them in here and foist them upon me as the best to discuss. But, sir, here is the Bible as it is accepted. A translation, it is true, but the best, until recently, that the world has been able to obtain; that is, the English-speaking world. Now, is it possible that God was confined for the revelation of His will to one language, and that the old dead Hebrew language? Are we to understand that we know nothing about God's will unless we have studied Hebrew? unless we can read Hebrew? is that the case? That is the Hebrew dress that my friend has been so diligent and ostentatious in bringing forward here as the last true revelation of the Almighty. If that is the best

you can do, my friend, I won't find any fault, but let me tell you that that kind of argument will never reach the thinking, scholarly people of this age.

Again I find that I have driven my friend out of the Bible into the margin. He is now on the outskirts of the revelation, and how long will it be before he is hanging suspended in mid-air? He says we need not go to the Hebrew at all if we will take the margin for these particular cases he has been speaking about. Thank you. I propose to take the book before an English audience, and one that the audience is acquainted with.

It is all folly for my friend and myself to stand here and talk about this dead language that you are not acquainted with. I wonder how intelligible it would be to you for me to stand here and ask my friend to interpret or translate for me some of my sacred Sanscrit. He has given us a specimen here of the Hebrew. Now can he translate this: "NET LES DISPAJING PETOID GED'S ZEDEM ZERETOID"? Now give us the translation of that.

How can he tell us that this translation was in Hebrew and not in sacred Sanscrit; not among the Hindoos; not among the people of Zoroaster; not among the people that have thirty Bibles in this world? All of them claim alike to be wholly inspired. How am I to know, seeking for the fact, that this particular Bible is the inspired Bible, and that all the others are human and only human? Has he given us any proof for that in the least? He says: "I am prepared with Hebrew dress." Well, we see how that Hebrew dress is turning out. It is tattered and torn. We find upon investigation it is nothing but a dress. Now, sir, what we were proposing here in debate was the thing itself, the inspired volume. Is it possible that the English-speaking millions all these years have had no Bible, that they cannot be saved without the Hebrew Bible?

Now, I will give him some more, and I only need give a little to affirm my position. Take this book and turn to I Kings, chapter 22. This Bible that is in the pulpits of the land, that is called "Holy Bible," that is claimed to be the Bible, that is preached from as the Bible, is read to the millions of Christians as the Bible, that the children are taught is the Bible, what does this book say? It says the Lord "put a lying spirit" in the mouth of his prophets and the prophets spoke evil (v. 23). Now I understood Mr. Nichols was to take the Bible just as it is. If the learned scholars that translated the Bible made a mistake about it, this places the millions of English readers who do not understand Hebrew in a precarious condition.

Is it possible that a knowledge of Hebrew is essential to the understanding of the Word of God?

Doesn't my friend know that Hebrew scholars differ in their understanding of the meaning of Hebrew words? But if they all agreed, which any scholar knows they do not, what proof have we that the Hebrew language was inspired? And as it is impossible to translate one language into another so that the meaning of the original can be perfectly preserved, we must conclude that the millions of Christians who have died ignorant of Hebrew will wake up at the Judgment Day—if there ever should be such a day—to find their title deed to a seat in glory defective. Brother Nichols with his Hebrew Lexicon may be there, but where will his wife be unless she studies Hebrew too? What a foolish idea to make the salvation of millions dependent upon their knowledge of a dead language. Could an absurdity go further?

My dear friend explains the way God commanded the killing of little children. He says, "Why did God do those things?" He does admit God did them. No getting behind a Hebrew hedge fence on this point. As this explanation is one of his greater ones, I will pay attention to it more in detail. Mr. Nichols says those men hated God; were disobedient. Does that excuse God in acting like a savage toward them and torturing them? What had those little children done? Even my friend must confess they had done nothing. Mr. Nichols then makes the astonishing declaration: "I tell you it had been better that some others had been slain in infancy." If you want to make a thorough-going reformation of it, if the orthodox Christian religion is true, it might have been better that none of us had been born. That is the way he gets out of the difficulty.

When I heard that sentence of his about the little children, that it would have been better that some others had been slain in infancy—when I heard that sentence from the lips of my genial friend, I could hardly believe my ears and eyes. He goes on and says, "I do not believe that God slew one innocent person", for I want to be fair with him. "God saw," he says, "what they would become." Then he tells us about 22 little rattlesnakes being killed. Those little ones, he said, would have fangs, and the Almighty, looking into the future, slew those little rattlesnakes. "God saw that they would hate him." That is what my friend said. In this way my friend disposes of me and my argument and exclaims: "Where is his little children argument?" My dear brother, I am sorry it has no effect upon you. Is this a specimen of the divinity of the religion you bring to me? Can it be possible that you really do, right down deep in your heart of hearts, sanction this horrid butchery? Little children, sweet children of their mothers', clinging, frightened, gasping, and you

tell me that God commanded that, and that it serves the little rattlesnakes just right! They had no business to be rattlesnakes. They ought to have been born Jews, and speaking the Hebrew tongue, and then, oh, how God would have loved them! Oh, bring on some more of those beautiful explanations! They will hold water as successfully as a skimmer. If what the Bible says is true, that it is God's way, it is a mighty poor way. That is my judgment. If it is a good way, it will do no harm, will it? If it is a bad way, as I think I have abundantly shown, then it ought to be questioned.

Oh, tell me not that there is any such being in this universe as we have shown you from the pages of that book, that has been believed in by millions of people who had no other revelation to go to excepting King James' translation, as my friend calls it, of the Bible, and here they are without a revelation after all. And when you come to philosophize about it, it could not be even a Hebrew revelation, for a revelation is that which is communicated directly to the individual; and the Hebrew would only be the report of a revelation. And when you find yourself surrounded with mere reports, and not perfect translations of them, what are you to do, if not to trust in your own reason, as we Free Thinkers do, and look to nature for all the truth we can possibly obtain? And those men that have been called Christian men, Christian divines, interpreting the Divine will and believing in the revelation of the Bible, have represented that little children were in hell. Dr. Emmons and others of New England have described these children as "vipers of vengeance which Jehovah would hold over hell in the tongs of his wrath."

## Mr. Nichols' Fourth Reply

I again stand before you with greater pleasure than ever, although I am somewhat astonished at Mr. Jamieson's tactics in this discussion. I would ask this candid, intelligent audience if it is fair for an opponent to call the closing of my last speech an auction? Did it have the sound of an auction? What was I bidding off? Will you pray tell me where were my bidders? Did I offer anything for sale?

Now, my friends, we shall endeavor to deal with the other matters that he has brought before you for your consideration from the Bible. He says he has driven me out of the Bible into the margin, as though he had made a wonderful argument: He has done what he agreed not to do in this discussion, namely, not to attribute any point to his opponent unavowed in this discussion. I have never avowed that a knowledge of the Hebrew language was



necessary that anybody might be saved. I do not believe such a doctrine. I believe that the great and main teachings of the Bible have been so surrounded that they have been handed down to us for our salvation, and they are all to the point in King James' Version of the original Bible. Is that plain enough to understand? Don't misrepresent me any more. And certainly, had he been fair in this discussion, before he would have laid such charges to me, he would have waited until I avowed such a position. What I remarked in reference to those testimonies was that we find between the lids of the Bible objections to the great general teachings, which are contained in King James' translation of the Bible. Is it fair, I ask you, to deal with an argument in that kind of way? We may, however, differ in our opinion as to what fairness is; and undoubtedly we do. I do not attribute anything to Mr. Jamieson intentionally; it may be simply an oversight on his part, and his zeal to cause his theory to stand may urge him to overreach the mark.

And again let me say to you that I never traveled out of the King James translation, only for the purpose of harmonizing the great principles of truth contained in that translation to get the original words in which they are spoken, and then he says, "What do you think of a man going to a dead language?" My friends, Friend Jamieson knows right well that a dead language is the best possible language for us to go to, to arrive at a proper understanding of these discrepancies. Why? Because a living language is constantly changing; a dead language never changes. And consequently it is the best for us to consult, and I am astonished at such an argument as my friend put forward to this intelligent congregation. But I am satisfied that you are now prepared to fairly judge in reference to this matter.

I must tell you that he has misrepresented me again when I referred him to the margin. I told him if he had only read the margin it would have created a doubt in his mind; and last evening I took the position that whenever a criminal is arraigned before a court, he has the privilege, and it is but justice to give him the advantage of all doubts. And if Mr. Jamieson had noticed the margin, and had been as earnest for the truth as he represents to you, it would have created a doubt in his mind and then he, like myself, would have gone to that language to have seen if it was possible to harmonize those testimonies, instead of putting forth all his power to destroy them.

You see, there is a vast difference between our two ways of investigation. I am here for the purpose of upholding what I believe to be the truth of the living God, and I have many reasons for believing it, but I cannot give them to you in this discussion.

May I say only that the Bible is composed of sixty-six books which were written over a period of sixteen hundred years, and notice the union we find throughout its pages.

But I must pass along, and follow my opponent further in his harangue that he has given you, or the evidence that he has endeavored to produce in his last address. I shall call your attention, then, to the same testimony that he called upon our moderator to find for him, and here, too, we shall go to that good, old dead language again, for we are dependent upon the surrounding circumstances and qualifying terms, in order to get the meaning of those words used. That is the advantage of a dead language, as I mentioned before, it does not change. Like a reporter once said at the dinner table: "Our profession is not like other professions," he said. "If you ask a doctor whether he is a good physician, he will tell you to go to his patients; but we must tell you, 'you bet I am!'" Now, in the living language, even fifty years ago, the people would not have comprehended that saying. His intention was to convey to the mind, "you may be certain that I am," that is all; but if it was upon the race course and a man would say, "I will bet a hundred dollars," it has entirely a different meaning. Words have different meanings, and here, my friends, in this little argument that I present to you, is the beauty of referring to a dead language that does not change like our own. If I should say to you, "Why, see that little cleaver cleave to that horse as he runs so fast!" would you think about the same cleaver as if I should say to a butcher, "Where is your cleaver?" Would you expect in the second instance that I referred to the little boy?

You say nay, and consequently, we are dependent upon the surrounding circumstances and the qualifying terms in order to arrive at the proper understanding of the meaning of each word under consideration. I am here for the purpose of upholding this.

I wish now to call your attention to that testimony found in I Kings 22. "And the Lord said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets, and he said, Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also; go forth, and do so. Now therefore, behold, the Lord hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the Lord hath spoken evil concerning thee."

Now, Mr. Jamieson settles that against the Bible because it says the Lord hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of these prophets. I am frank to confess to you that if there was no dead language to go to, I could not, successfully, contend with this passage of Scripture; and I would have been a Free Thinker

long ago. But my hair will grow gray and be as white as the dress in which he intended to dress up Jesus Christ (in that figurative language "as white as wool") before I will turn into Free Thinkism. I have studied the matter, caring not which way I went, only so I arrived at the truth, and that is why I have taken the pains to go to that dead language. I perceive my friend has not taken that pains, or at least he has not manifested anything to demonstrate it to me, for which I am decidedly sorry, for if he had, he would not have been here in this discussion, I am sure. I have some hopes of him turning from his present position, though. He told me today he was once a trans-medium in the spiritual world, or circle, or ring, and he clung to it for ten years; and if he clung to that for ten years and now denounces it as the greatest of folly, I have hopes that he may, after clinging to Free Thinkism as many years more, turn from that.

Now the word "put a lying spirit" in the Hebrew—and here is a Hebrew Lexicon—is *nathan*, and has among its many meanings, "to allow, to permit." Those are two of the definitions given by Gesenius. Is it proper to disagree with this evidence? I challenge Mr. Jamieson to produce evidence to the contrary; he knows he cannot do it. His blast was but a tinkling cymbal and sounding brass, without any evidence whatever by which to aid you in understanding the word of the Lord. When we go to the original dead language in which God caused the Word to be written, we find the definition of the word that permits us to harmonize this passage with the general teaching of the Bible, and all is plain; his objection is removed. As I said before, let him grapple with this matter and pick up my Hebrew Lexicon, and like an honest man either show where I am wrong in this or acknowledge he cannot do it. I am not here to tickle your ear or to move you to laughter; but I am here to deal with true, straightforward, honest argument in this discussion. Mr. Jamieson seems afraid to step down into this dead language and grapple with the matter. If he is after the truth, he will have no fear; he will not be talking then to you about a dead language, and men of learning not agreeing upon the definition of some word. He would leave the impression that they did not agree on any word, by his talk. What other idea could you get?

Mr. Jamieson misrepresented me tonight in another particular. He said that my statement was that there should have been other children slain. I never said any such thing. I said, "It might have been better," and that is quite a different idea from what Mr. Jamieson left upon your minds tonight. I did not say the children were all little rattlesnakes

either. I told you, by way of comparison, that those little rattlesnakes were killed because of the knowledge that we have of them, of what they would become. I then produced the evidence that God declared unto us that He calleth those things which be not as though they were, and it was upon the same principle that Mr. Jamieson or myself would kill those little rattlesnakes. That was the principle upon which the Almighty ordered those killed in the days of old, in the time of the deluge, or any other case we may name from Holy Writ.

I said God never slew an innocent one, and the Divine Record bears me out in this. Mr. Jamieson cannot put his finger on a single text, with the qualifying terms considered, that will dispute this. He has declared that "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren" (Rom. 8:28-29).

Not to be predestinated so as to be damned, or saved, but the testimony tells you that he predestinated them to be conformed to the image of His Son. Don't try to associate me with the view of the Church of England. It had nothing to do with our discussion, and I had the right to call him to order, but I did not see fit to do it. Let me say I do not believe either men or women are writhing in hell in pain or misery, or ever will. I do not believe that the Bible teaches such a doctrine; but I believe that it teaches, as is declared in the third chapter of Matthew, in so many words: "He will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire" (v. 12). Burn it up—not keep it burning and burning through the endless cycles of eternity! Quite a difference! I believe no such doctrine myself and you agreed not to attribute anything to me, Mr. Jamieson, which I did not avow, and you have not kept the word of your honor in this discussion, and I leave it to this intelligent audience, and to our moderators.

And here, by the way, let me remark we have some more of those hieroglyphics or, rather figurative language. He would believe, I suppose, from reading that passage, that Christ stood with a great big fan, and then gathered His wheat into the garner and burned up the chaff with literal fire. I do not believe that a literal fire will ever touch any man. I do not believe this is literal fire. Do you ask what I believe the literal fire is? Why, just exactly what the Bible tells you it is. What is that? Let us turn to the testimony and see what it declares unto us in reference to this matter, and, in this discussion, let

us stand or fall upon what the Bible says. Here is what it says in Revelation 20:14, "And Death and Hell were cast into the lake of fire." What do you suppose it is? Why, the second death; nothing more and nothing less, for the Almighty has told us so. It is the second death, and I do not believe anything to the contrary. "Whose fan is in his hand"—not a literal fan, my friends. He is here representing the Judgment Day, and He tells us that the righteous will be gathered into the kingdom of the Lord, and the wicked ones will be destroyed; for we read that he will "utterly destroy" all the wicked of the land; he will "burn them up," He will "leave them neither root nor branch" (Mal. 4:1-2).

Mr. Jamieson knew right well when he came to this discussion tonight that I did not believe a word of such a doctrine. I speak from authority, because he told me today that he acquiesced with me on my views on the nature of man; that he could not think without a brain, nor see without an eye, nor hear without an ear, or feel without a nerve. He told me today that I was in the right upon the subject; that when a man was dead he knew not anything, as the Bible says; and therefore he knew that I did not believe that man at death, or at any other time, was plunged into a fiery literal lake as the Church of England teaches. He knew it, I say; and when I know a person knows a thing, I say it is not fair for a man to treat an opponent in that way, when he knows he is misrepresenting him. And, my friends, this is the kind of argument, the kind of tactics that my friend has made use of, and I have our reporter, and my wife, and his wife as witnesses that he told me those very things today at our dinner table, and consequently, he knows that he has misrepresented me, and knew that he was doing so when he made his speech to you. I say, however, my friends, that his argument falls bootless to the ground. It falls far short of accomplishing the end for which he invented it. ●●

*(To Be Continued)*

## Look Up!

By continually looking upwards our minds will themselves grow upwards; and as a man, by indulging in habits of scorn and contempt for others, is sure to descend to the level of what he despises, so the opposite habits of admiration and enthusiastic reverence for excellence impart to ourselves a portion of the qualities we admire. Here, as in everything else, humility is the surest path to exaltation.

—Selected.

## To Know

**I need not know just when the Lord will answer,  
I need not know why things look dark today;  
I need not know why God withholds His blessing  
While those who hate Him prosper in the way.**

**I need but know that God is rich in mercy,  
I need but know His love is strong and true;  
I need but know that in His gracious goodness  
Whate'er is best for me, that He will do.**

**I need not know the reason for this test,  
I need but know that He who knoweth best  
Will glorify His holy name in me,  
And that is all I really need to see.**

## Using Our Talents

**WE WILL** not be judged according to how many talents we have been given but according to how we have used them.

A talent is worth only what we do with it. One famous cartoon pictured a plain bar of iron worth \$5.00. The same bar of iron made into horseshoes would be worth \$10.50. If made into needles, it would be worth \$3,285.00. And if turned into balance springs for watches, it would be worth \$250,000.00.

Something of value can be learned from this. If we put our talents to work in this world, they will not accomplish very much and certainly not anything lasting. But if we put them to work for the Lord, they become priceless assets and will gain for us eternal life, if used according to God's rules.

In Jesus' parable, the foolish servant who did not use or develop the talent given him but hid it in the earth is like the undeveloped bar of iron. Matthew 25:21 tells how the faithful servant put his talents to good use, like the bar of iron worked over into valuable balance springs. If we use our talents rightly and make ourselves into a being God can use, one day we will hear those wonderful words spoken to us: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" (Matt. 25:21). ●●

—Contributed.

## **Kathy Kandor's Korner**

*(Continued from page 9)*

many little things that make your home 'homey' and comfortable."

It was a whole new thought to Christy. The moments slipped by—time always went fast with Aunt Kathy.

"There's a little poem, Christy, that is something like this: 'We have kind words for the stranger, and smiles for the some-times guest—'"

"But for our own the bitter tone, though we love our own the best," finished Christy. She understood.

"I don't mean to hurt Mom and Daddy."

"You don't mean to, but that is what you do when you pout and sulk instead of being glad to help them in any little way you can."

"I'm sorry, Aunt Kathy, I'm sorry I've been so mean to them, when they are always so good to me," and her face crumpled in a new wave of tears.

"Christy, I know you are sorry. And I know you are going to do better, aren't you?"

Christy nodded.

"And won't you be sure to tell your parents?"

Christy nodded again, not sure she could trust her voice.

"And now, Christy, I have to see what's in that pretty box that's sitting on the hall table. Come with me."

Christy sprang from the bed and in a moment was down the hall, standing by the table. The precious, gayly wrapped box was still there. Christy picked it up and handed it to her aunt. "Now you can open it."

How pleased Kathy was with the gift Christy had made. She held it up and praised her for her work well done. Then, taking Christy in both her arms, she added, "But the best gift, Christy, is your promise that you are going to be a real good girl at home, and be kind and helpful to your parents. Isn't that right?" ●●

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## **Back Issues Available**

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## **A File Marked Romans 8:28**

"I have a file, a mental file, which I have marked 'Romans 8:28.' Into it go a variety of things. It contains some disappointments. It preserves the record of some 'accidents.' It has a multitude of questions, large and small. In fact, it is filled with things I can't understand.

"But it also has some nice things in it. It has some unexpected windfalls. It has a general sense of fulfillment far beyond anything I could ever deserve. Above all, it has an ingredient described as good, and perfect, and acceptable, and which covers every other item in it, an ingredient which is the will of God.

"There are several fine descriptions of this file in the New Testament, but the best is the one on the label: 'And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.'"

—Selected.

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## **A Sharp Retort? AVOID IT!**

We knew a man named Buster Dade  
Who lived in our home town;  
Sarcasm was his stock in trade,  
His trademark was a frown.

If he could think of something smart,  
No matter how it hurt,  
He'd quickly throw that verbal dart—  
His joy was being curt.

No matter what was said to him,  
He'd have a sharp reply.  
He had sarcastic answers, grim,  
On hand in great supply.

Now Buster pays an awful price  
For words he has unloosed;  
Toward him men are cold as ice,  
His birds "came home to roost."

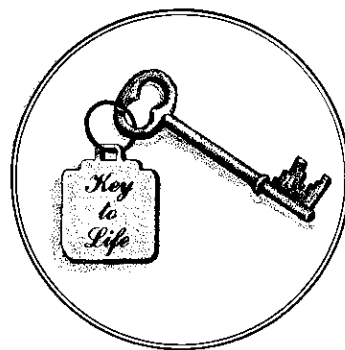
Today he cannot understand  
Why all avoid his door,  
Why from men's circles he is banned  
In shop and church and store.

A sharp retort should be taboo  
And looked upon with dread,  
For even though it's blazing true  
It's better left unsaid.

— Selected.



# Individual Effort--the Key to Life



## Part Two: Evidence from the New Testament

**T**HEOLOGIANS have claimed through the years that the New Testament proclaims a road to salvation altogether different from the Old; that Jesus, and particularly Paul, came with a new doctrine of salvation by grace through faith which was contrary to the practical forthright obedience demanded in earlier ages.

Last month we published a written discourse by our founder, Rev. L. T. Nichols, in which he spoke at length of the various Old Testament writers and the means to salvation which they taught, which was in all cases through individual effort.

Now let us look at the New Testament. Was there indeed a change? Did the coming of Christ alter the plan? Did He accomplish the work in man's stead, leaving men with little if anything really *required* to be done to inherit salvation? Can we sense in the New Testament that individual effort was no longer needed, that obedience was secondary, that the whole essential was now faith and grace?

Let us begin with the Gospels, for these record the teachings of our Lord. Almost immediately we sense the dismay of the Pharisees and scribes, and the astonishment of the multitudes, as they hear Him preaching, and we realize at once that this was no easy, effortless way. "He taught them as one having authority" (Matt. 7:28). Again, His words were called "an hard saying" (John 6:60).

What were these sayings? The Sermon on the Mount is filled to overflowing with strait-forward practical admonitions. There is not even the slightest suggestion that Jesus had come to take away their sins, nor is there any mention of His doing anything in their stead. Each of the beatitudes encompasses a whole way of life. To be poor in spirit, to be meek, merciful, pure in heart, forgiving, to hunger and thirst after righteousness, all these require inner life-changes,

a transformed disposition, a change which no one but the individual himself can do.

Jesus' whole message was this way. In fact, it was so demanding and so practical that to the majority it held no lasting attraction. Those who called His sayings "hard" turned away (John 6:66). The young man who came inquiring what he should do to gain eternal life and was told to "give up all," "come," "take up thy cross, and follow" went away "sorrowful" (Matt. 19:22). Who could think seriously of loving God with all of one's heart, all of one's soul, all of one's mind and all of one's strength (Mark 12:30-31)? What would be left? Who wanted to serve only *one* master? Does God require that we put Him *first*, even before the members of our own family if they oppose Him? Must a man really be ready to forsake *all* to be a disciple? The answer is yes! Does God care whether we do our good deeds to be seen of men or to be recognized by Him only? Most certainly He cares! Does God care whether we ask forgiveness of Him for *our* sins when we are yet unwilling to forgive *our brother*? Most certainly! Does God require that we give up all, everything of the self-life, and seek Him first? Most certainly! Does He require that we direct even the *motives* of our conduct? He does! In addition to all this, Jesus spoke of building on a solid foundation of evidence to have a spiritual structure capable of standing in the coming storm. He spoke of traveling through the strait gate and in the narrow way, knowing that is the only way to life. He spoke of hearing and *doing*, for many will be those who say, "Lord, Lord, have we not" done thus and so, and He will say, "Depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matt. 7:21-25).

Jesus' exceedingly practical teaching made every interest of life secondary to the one supreme interest for the man or woman seeking God's favor. "If any man will come after me, He said, "let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke 9:23).

And there could be no looking back in that following. "No man having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62). Nor could there be any wavering or indecision. The man who wanted to follow Jesus but first had to return and bury his father was told sternly "Let the dead bury their dead." In other words, if that is all that following Me is going to mean to you, if you're going to start out fettered with other loyalties, you had better not start at all. Individual effort? sacrifice? service? Yes!

There would be a yoke to carry, something definite to be done; yet it would not be too difficult. "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt. 11:28-30). If the yoke should become hard and heavy, Jesus would not be to blame; it would be because of our pulling and stubborn unyielding disposition.

Again Jesus addressed Himself to the practical Christlike life in these words: "But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Matt. 12:36). Is not individual effort inferred here, if not strongly suggested, to escape condemnation in the day of Judgment?

In many of His parables, work and individual effort is implied, if not spoken of directly. In the parable of the Sower, there is a crop to be grown to bring forth fruit; in the parable of the Pearl of Great Price, there is a price to be paid, and that can hardly be done without effort. In the parable of the Talents there is money to be used, invested, put to work; gifts or abilities to be *used* in His service. In the parable of the House on the Rock or on the Sand, there is definite work of building (spiritual) to be done. The builder must "dig deep." In the parable of the Householder, there is labor to be performed (Matt. 20:1-15). Where is there any suggestion that everything is done, or that His coming death would atone for all men's misdeeds, or that purity could be theirs because *Jesus* was pure?

Jesus was the teacher of His apostles, and what did they proclaim?

Read the Book of Acts to learn what they were preaching in the days immediately following Jesus' ascension. What is the message? They were telling men of Christ, His life, His work, His divine commission, His death, His resurrection, ascension, and future Kingdom. Is anything said about His having accomplished our salvation, or having through His death pardoned all men?

First comes the outline of God's workings with men through the ages. Then follows this appeal: "Repent." With all that Christ had accomplished, they had still the need to "repent and be baptized every one . . . for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). Sin was still standing against them and needed to be remitted. The next day, the message was still the same: "Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19). These were the words of Peter.

Perhaps the words of none of the apostles cause so much of the present-day confusion as those of Paul. The last of the apostles, Paul was intensely zealous and practical. He spoke at length of the grace or gospel that saves, the goodness of God in giving such as he an opportunity to serve, an opening into the way of salvation. But the main focus through all his letters is everyday obedience. From the book of Romans: "To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life" (2:7). Also, "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. . . . For the wages of sin is death" (6:11, 23). Again, "For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace" (8:6). Again, "Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (12:2). The entire twelfth chapter of Romans is admonition to upright living, every step of which requires effort. No one by nature will "be of the same mind one toward another," or "let love be without dissimulation," or "abhor that which is evil" and "cleave to that which is good." No one will naturally "be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (12:9, 16, 21). All require effort.

The letters to the Corinthians continue the teaching: "Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (I Cor. 5:8). Again, "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run that ye may obtain." Whoever ran a literal race without expending individual effort? "And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things." Whoever was "temperate in all things" without applying any personal discipline or effort?

"I therefore so run," said the Apostle of himself; "so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away" (9:24-27). There are admonitions to be all of one mind within the brotherhood of Christ, to live and function as one body, to exercise true charity or love at all times, to "be . . . steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (15:58).

The second Epistle to the **Corinthians** is no less emphatic on the need for right living. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature" (II Cor. 5:17), and this is no automatic process. "We then, as workers together with him"—we must work *with* God (6:1), and Paul proceeds to enumerate how that work is done, climaxing with these words: "Wherefore come out from among them [the world], and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (6:17-18; 7:1). Could any command be more definite in requiring individual effort?

The Epistle to the **Galatians** is no less explicit on the need for right doing, even "faith which worketh by love" (Gal. 5:6). Is not this the whole message in a word? A living, vital faith that *works*, and that works by *love*. There are "fruits" of right doing to be borne in everyday life—"love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance"—here is more effort, for what fruit can be produced without effort?

The Epistle to the **Ephesians** opens with in-depth discussions of God's ways and workings in calling men to salvation, but the ending is again intensely practical, the responsibility of every individual. This responsibility includes walking "worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (4:1-3). It includes "speaking the truth in love" that we may "grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ." It includes growth to the point of full maturity in Christ Jesus, even "unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (4:15, 13).

Who can sidestep the effort required to fulfill these words: "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying. . . . That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. . . . Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (4:29, 22-24, 31-32). Here is effort clearly spelled out.

**Philippians** is no less demanding. The Apostle appeals to his brethren that they may be "sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God" (1:10-11). Again, "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" (1:29-30). There was to be suffering and conflict—which they could see also in the apostle Paul. *He* was not exempt—shall *we* be?

In this Epistle, Paul speaks especially of his own work. "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:13-14). Paul him-

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self had not yet attained; he was not yet qualified to receive the prize. He had yet to press on.

His Epistle to the Colossians bears the same message, requiring just as much individual effort: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on

the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. . . . Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry; . . . now ye also put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; . . . and whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him. Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord. Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged. Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh." Here are explicit commands, and are they not part of the "whole counsel of God" which the Apostle preached? "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ" (Col. 3:1-2, 5, 8-9, 17, 20-24).

The letters to the Thessalonians, to Timothy, to Titus, the Epistle to the Hebrews, and the practical book of James are no exception. All proclaim the same message, and the same appeal to right doing; all set forth the same standard of holiness, as the apostle Peter writes, "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy" (I Pet. 1:15-16). Here is one command which covers all. It is for us to actually become holy. It is not something which God does automatically in us, it is something for us to do *ourselves*.

Shall we not accept the challenge and set to work for the "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" that is promised? Can we not afford to give all, to change our tastes and our natures fully in view of the fact that He will reward "every man according as his work shall be"? (Rev. 22:12). Here again is the command that requires effort: "Blessed are they that *do* his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life."

It is a thought that runs all the way through the Old Testament, and all the way through the New. Shall we close our eyes to it and try to imagine how Christ does the work in us, for us, or in our stead, when there are hundreds of testimonies telling of the work which we ourselves must accomplish? Or shall we take God at His Word, recognize that self-effort is the key to life, and someday receive salvation? ●●

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# What Have YOU Done?

LET US beware and not say within ourselves, "We have Abraham for our father," like the Pharisees who listened to Jesus. In the Judgment they would not be able to hide behind Abraham. They could not be saved because Abraham was their ancestor; they had themselves to be worthy of salvation. If they truly repented of their sins and would bring forth fruit worthy of repentance, only then could they be saved. Repentance looks outward toward the future as well as backward toward the past. It was not enough for those Pharisees to admit that they had sinned; it was not enough for them even to mourn sincerely for their sins; it was not enough even for them to cease to do evil; they had also to begin to do well.

An old fable can be of use here to point up the folly of depending on our ancestors for our goodness.

A peasant was driving some geese to town to sell them. The geese did not like to be hurried, and they poured out their complaints to a traveler whom they met.

"Where can you find geese more unhappy than we? See how this peasant is hurrying us on, this way and that, driving us along just as though we were only common geese! Ignorant fellow. He never thinks how he is bound to respect us, for we are descendants of the very geese that saved Rome so many years ago."

"But for what do you expect to be famous?" asked the traveler.

"Because our ancestors—"

"Yes, I know. I have read all about it. But what I want to know is what good *you yourselves* have done?"

"Why, our ancestors saved Rome!"

"Yes, yes, but what have *you* done?"

"We?—Nothing."

"Of what good are you then? Do leave your ancestors at peace. They were honored for their deeds; but you are fit only for roasting."

This is an easy delusion for any of us to fall into, so let us throw high heaps around it. We are delivered—justified—saved—only by our *own* righteousness. ●●

February, 1980

Let not soft slumber close your eyes  
Before you've recollected thrice  
The train of action through the day:  
Where have my feet chose out their way?  
What have I learnt, where'er I've been,  
From all I've heard, from all I've seen?  
What know I more that's worth the knowing?  
What have I done that's worth the doing?

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## Self-Denial Week

THE WEEK beginning Sunday, February 3, will be the annual observance of self-denial week for the Megiddo Church congregation and all scattered members who wish to observe it with us.

During this week we will limit ourselves to three articles of food at each meal. We shall make our selection of these three articles from simple, plain, common foods, the selection being varied at each meal as desired. We shall refrain from all specialties, all cookies, pastries, desserts, and fancy foods.

What is the purpose of this? The practice of physical self-control and self-denial can be an aid to spiritual control which, as followers of Christ, we must perfect. In fact, there is really little comparison; but if we cannot say "no" to ourselves on the lower level, how shall we ever be able to say "no" to ourselves in matters of real consequence? If we cannot control our physical appetites, how shall we ever obey this command from the apostle Paul:

"Put to death those parts of you which belong to the earth—fornication, indecency, lust, foul cravings, and the ruthless greed which is nothing less than idolatry. . . . Lay aside all anger, passion, malice, cursing, filthy talk—having done with them! Stop lying to one another . . . put on the new nature, which is being constantly renewed in the image of its Creator and brought to know God. . . . Then put on the garments that suit God's chosen people, His own, His beloved: compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience. Be forbearing with one another, and forgiving, where any of you has cause for complaint" (Col. 3:1, 8-9, 12-13, NEB).

Shouldn't we be glad to do anything that will help us toward *this* achievement? ●●



# SCRIPTURAL SPOTLIGHT

*"And he said to them all, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it"*

—Luke 9:23-24.

WE DELIGHT to think of our Savior as the Good Shepherd; we are fascinated to read of Him as the Great Physician going through the streets of Capernaum or by the Sea of Galilee healing the sick, the lame, the blind. But let us also consider Him as the Master Mathematician.

Our initiation into the mysteries of the mathematical world comprised a series of experiments in the problem of addition, and some of us can still remember how we wrestled with the problem; every time we added a column of figures we had the knack of arriving at a different total. Along with addition we learned subtraction, taking one line of figures from another; but in this process we so often had to remember to pay back what we had borrowed, and our answer would differ from the correct one. Perhaps we even learned to subtract by adding—we would do our subtraction and then check it by adding the answer to the amount we had subtracted.

When we come to the Master Mathematician to learn of Him, we find a reversion of the order. Subtraction comes first; after that, addition. "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me." There is another reversal in the next two modes of calculation we must learn—multiplication and division. The Master places division first, then multiplication. "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it, but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's the same shall save it" (Mark 8:34-35).

Let us think about this new divine order and adjust our lives accordingly, that when we present them unto Him for their final audit they may be an exact replica of the way of life which the Master taught, and that they may

receive His signature and His word of commendation: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

How shall we do this?

"Let him deny himself." That is our Savior's first injunction; that is the first problem that confronts us, and it is a very personal problem. Let each deny himself. There is no element of compulsion here, no conscription. It is an appeal for self-sacrifice, self-denial, and for self-conquest. This is the foundation upon which all Christ-like living is based. It was the keynote in the life of our Savior, who pleased not Himself but the Father which sent Him. He literally poured out His life in submission to the divine will.

How much sacrifice are we willing to offer? How much unselfish devotion is there in my life? How much do you deny yourself? Have you learned Jesus' method of mathematics?

The poor widow in the illustration of Jesus teaches an immortal lesson. The rich, according to Dr. Moffatt's translation, gave a contribution out of their surplus. Then came a poor widow who threw in her two mites. And you remember how Jesus audited her account. "This poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: for all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living" (Mark 12:43-44).

How much are we prepared to subtract? How much are we prepared to deny ourselves? For self-denial is the path along which our Savior traveled, and as we follow Him we learn our first lesson in divine mathematics.

But let us remember that this is not done in one isolated act. Each day presents new opportunities to put this injunction into practice: "Let

him deny himself"—divine subtraction; and "take up his cross daily"—divine addition, something to add—a cross. We cannot carry the cross, though, until we have proven ourselves willing to subtract from our lives those things in our nature and disposition that take the room that the Christlike life should occupy. There may be things in life that we can do by proxy, but no one can substitute for us in this matter of taking up the cross. It is so intensely personal because the cross occupies the position previously held by man's will. There is a common ratio between the two. The denial is personal, and so is the taking up of the cross. The denial is a denial of self-will, the taking up of the cross and doing of another's will. Minus self, plus Christ. Self-will gives place to Christ's will.

Following Christ means that anything less would be disloyalty. Taking up the cross is the seal of our discipleship. "Ye are my servants if ye do the will of my Father which is in heaven." The Father did not will the cross; the taking up of the cross is inevitable.

Then Christ goes a stage further. Not only are we to deny ourselves, not only to take up our cross, but we must be prepared to be crucified on that cross for Christ's sake. "Whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's; the same shall save it." The life that is forfeited is transient and worthless; it is the life of our old sinful nature; the life that is gained is life eternal.

There will be subtraction for all; Matthew left behind a life of greed and selfishness for one that was fellowship with Jesus Christ and a place in His future Kingdom. Peter left behind a wavering disposition, a reliance upon self, for a life of implicit faith and trust. Paul left behind a career characterized by a flaming zeal for the church he had known, left behind the authority of that church on the Damascus Road, to be the Apostle to the Gentiles, people who were outside the pale of the Jewish religion. He, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, free born, a citizen of Rome, left all this behind to become the slave of Jesus Christ. That was the cost of his discipleship; that was *subtracting* his life for Christ's sake, and thereby *adding* it unto life eternal.

The cost is still the same today. "Whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:27).

Are you willing? Are you ready to learn the Master's mathematics? Are you willing to subtract and then add? Then come, deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Jesus. ●●

## Meditation Is Power

(Continued from page 7)

Meditation, when directed by faith and centered upon God, can be of priceless value to us in our efforts toward holiness; it can provide a stimulus toward holy living that is nothing short of irresistible. In meditation is power, power that can help us over the hardest places in life, power that can keep us going until we are safely inside the City Eternal. Should we not make the very most of it?

But like any task that gets done right, meditation must be planned, and the plan must be executed. If we are going to meditate, we must have something specific to meditate upon. It may be a passage of Scripture we have committed to memory; it may be a practical lesson we have had, a new insight, or a spiritual thought that has impressed us; or it may be a lesson or example we draw from the Sacred Page. Within its writings are limitless resources for meditation. But we must lay them up in our minds before they can profit us.

### The Possibilities of Meditation

Being bound by the limits of mortality, we suffer from an inherent lack of vision. We see but one moment: now. The future is vague and unreal. But this need not be. God has given us thought-power that can transcend this human weakness. By God-directed meditation, we—mere mortals—can lift ourselves out of ourselves and tread even now in heavenly places. By meditating we can see in things natural the shadow of things spiritual!

Our minds have this remarkable ability to "see" the unseen. Such meditation gives tremendous thrust to our lives here and now; for what we know by faith we can visualize in our minds, and what we can visualize in our minds has unbelievable stimulating power.

By meditating, we can reproduce in our hearts and lives that fine moral sensitivity and spiritual awareness which blazed in the life of Christ. We can think what He might have said, or done, or felt in a given situation, governed by the mandates of His Father, and then go and do likewise.

By meditating, we can find power to improve the quality of our lives. For example: We read in the Bible of the noble virtues we long to acquire, the holiness, the peace, the patience, the deep love that God admires. Then, in our minds, we implant these same qualities in *our* lives,

*By meditating, we can bring God into all aspects of our lives; and what we invite God into is not likely to go wrong.*

and see how they change *our* habits and patterns. We follow ourselves through a typical day, seeing how we would be if we were as patient as Job, or as humble as Moses, or as courageous as Daniel, or as farsighted as Isaiah, or as persevering as Paul, or as close to God as was Jesus. We picture ourselves having these exalted qualities in *our* place of activity, doing *our* work, in *our* homes, among *our* associates. In this way we are able to see beyond the stumbling creatures we are to the entirely new creature we long to be. In this way we are able to feel even now a measure of the joy that holiness brings, the real satisfaction that comes from God, and the thrill that comes from knowing that we are nearing our goal. Such meditation is power that will keep us going until, by diligent effort, we have become what we want to be.

#### Glimpsing the Reward

Our meditations can also give us inspiring glimpses of the reward which will cause us even now to "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Just read the Revelator's account of his preview of the heavenly commencement and coronation ceremonies (Rev. 5:9-14), events scheduled to take place right here on our earth in the not-too-distant future. Picture yourself among the exultant assembly of overcomers, receiving your crown of immortality. Then listen as the angels sing congratulations to you and all your company for your supreme accomplishment, and hear the heavens ring with praises to the new King who shall reign "for ever, even for ever and ever." It is a picture beyond the power of words to describe. It is more than our eyes have seen, more than our ears have heard, more than our minds can conceive (I Cor. 2:9).

The future will be glorious beyond anything we can imagine. Is it not worth our fondest meditations? And the more we think upon it, the more vividly we picture it in our minds, the stronger will be our faith, and the surer we will be of beholding the reality!

Such meditation is power. It is power that can change our obedience from drudgery to delight. It is power that can draw us out of ourselves

and our small world and set us in the very presence of God and His family, spiritually speaking, where we will share new values and new goals, and where our thoughts will be of God, and holiness, and praise and destiny. And the more we dwell in thought in that higher realm, the more we will love to. Oh! let us not slight this high and holy privilege.

#### More Benefits

Meditation will also serve effectively as a barrier between us and sin. With the image of the divine firmly fixed in our minds, what evil can prevail? By meditating constantly, we bring God into all aspects of our lives, and what we invite God into is not likely to go wrong. This is why David wrote as he did, "Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still" (Ps. 4:4). We seldom sin while we are standing in awe of God. If we stop to examine our lives, we will realize that our spiritual slips have come when we were not meditating.

Meditation will draw us nearer to God and farther from the interests of this world. And the nearer we get to God, the stronger will be the attraction we feel toward the heavenlies and the weaker will be the pull of earth. Our minds will be lost to the things of this world, so enwrapped will we be in the higher interests.

And as we draw closer to God in meditation, He will draw closer to us. Ponder the promise on record from "the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy." He says, speaking through His Prophet, "I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones" (Isa. 57:15). God the Almighty and Eternal offers to dwell "with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit," and how can He do this except as we lift our minds to His realm in meditation?

#### ... and Still More

Oh, the benefits of meditation are limitless! Here is power beyond our fathoming. Here is the spur we need to make our efforts toward holiness a glorious success. Here is the thrust that will keep us moving until we are past the finish line—if we will use it. Why? Why do we not use it more and more? Why do we waste any thought on lesser interests?

Our founder, Rev. L. T. Nichols, felt deeply



the need for meditating, and warned against our inborn tendency to slight this noble, spiritual exercise. He said, "We are happy, yet not happy enough. We should be all wrapped up in divine things. If we do not get more interest in them, we shall never obtain the glorious prize.

"We must meditate day and night, pore over and over and over the grand things of the future, momentarily asking ourselves if we are doing right.

"We should meditate continually on the Word, and compare our everyday conduct with it. We should look to ourselves. It is only those who meditate on God's law day and night, those who have a constant meditation on what He has done, who will ever be overcomers. Our minds must be all taken up with these things so we will feed on them all the time, when we rise up and when we lie down.

"Are we getting ready? Are we meditating on the glorious future? Where has our mind been this past week? Have we had that calm, quiet, humble spirit of the Master? When we get angry, we are not meditating, not inditing a good matter. Do we realize this? Let each one take it to himself."

So let us do. Let each of us ask now, How much meditating am I doing? Am I satisfied with the meditations of my heart? How much of my free-thought time do I direct to God? If it could be measured in hours and minutes, its sparsity might shock us. Were we to see a business man spending so little time thinking about his enterprise as we spend thinking about the most important business of our lives, we might wonder how he could ever succeed.

If with all that God has offered us we cannot devote our thinking to it, giving Him primary place in our hearts and minds, do we not show a dire lack of appreciation? Do we not show a lack of desire for the world to come and the great and precious promises He has set before us? Is it not saying by action that we would rather die than live?

If...

If we truly love our hope of life eternal and the God who is offering it, if we have set our hearts on living through the glorious Millennium and on into the Eternity Beyond, we will be thinking about it; we will have our minds so fixed upon it that nothing will be able to draw them away from it; it will be our constant meditation. Beside our picture of that future, and

*Meditation can be of priceless value; it can provide a stimulus toward holy living that is nothing short of irresistible.*

what we must be doing to prepare for it, nothing of this world will seem significant at all.

Is it possible, with such a goal ahead of us, and such a tremendous work before us, to meditate too much? Is it possible to be too concerned about our eternal welfare? Is it possible to think too dearly of divine things and to speak too much about them to one another? Is it possible to be too interested in our personal prospect of living forever?

Consider the Lord's command: Thou shalt love Me with "all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." How much is *all*? Is it possible to give too much of our minds? Never! Why should any of us risk giving what might be not quite enough—and so miss out on the blessings of eternity!

The day will come when the gate into the Kingdom will be open, and all the faithful will enter in. Who will be ready to enter—shall you? shall I? This should be our constant meditation.

Time is passing. What are we thinking about, you and I? What are we forming in our minds, that will become a part of our lives in the days to come? What are we doing with the mighty force of thought-power that God has given us?

Would we build our faith so strong that nothing can ever make it quiver?

Would we feed ourselves that strong meat which is truly the "rapid-grow" of the soul?

Would we make the law of God a part of our innermost being? Would we unite ourselves to the glorious company of saints and angels forever?

Would we see ourselves as we really are in the sight of God?

Would we realize more fully the magnitude of the reward God has set before us, realize it so deeply that we will have it continually upon our mind and judge everything we do in relation to that supreme goal?

Then let us meditate. Let us think growth, think faith, think advancement in the divine life, think victory. Meditate upon these things. So will these qualities become a part of us and the glorious heavenly wonders we have meditated upon will be ours to enjoy forever. ●●

# Our Readers Write...

## Convinced

It is a shame that many people today still cling stubbornly to the old, long-held doctrines of men when the Bible evidence is clear and often to the contrary.

I humbly confess that I, too, clung to such, but I have been enlightened on quite a number of points, such as the immortality of the soul, hell, the fall of man, etc. I could never accept what I was taught about hell, as it did not seem reasonable.

The more I study the Bible and get a clear concept of its teachings, the more I am convinced that it is the only true way. The Bible, when properly understood, takes away confusion. Jesus said, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

I pray that I can continue to grow and follow the steps of Christ as much as possible, as He is our great example. We need to press on and lay aside every weight and the sin that so easily besets us. When God's Word points out something wrong in our lives, we must forsake it. I trust that when Jesus comes, He will find our robes washed clean through the Word. We must now accept the way and live it as much as we can. We never know how long we have, and that's why we should be vigilant and fight a good fight so we may be counted worthy of our inheritance to come—eternal life.

*Stanley, Virginia*

R. C.

## Time to Work

One of the most important parts of our Christian lives is daily reading of the Word. Here is a thought I read recently: "Using your Bible as a roadmap keeps you off the detours of sin." And, "The man who only samples God's Word occasionally will never acquire much of a taste for it."

We must redeem the time now, for the days are evil. We are surely blind if we do not discern the signs of the times and work as never before to be worthy of living in that wonderful coming Kingdom.

One of these days we will reach the end of the road. Then what will be our condition? If we didn't stand the tests along the way, there will be no second trial. It is time to work with all our mind, might and strength.

*Davenport, Iowa*

W. P.

## Comparing

Thank you for the booklets you have sent me. I have read most of them and found them to be quite revealing in light of the things that I was taught in church. By comparing Scripture with Scripture I can see that I have been believing many things that were not in the Bible. I am interested in learning more.

*Bloomington, Illinois*

A. V. N.

## Making It Sure

I often wonder, where would I be if I had not heard the call, and responded? And having been called, I intend making that calling and election sure. There's nothing finer to do, nothing so important, and as Brother Paul said, so I want to say: "This one thing I do." Everything else is secondary, all must follow.

What an offer, and from the All-wise God, Creator of heaven and earth and all upon it. Sometimes I ask myself, what have I done to deserve it all? And what can I render in return, seeing He has need of nothing? Our all, yes, whether it be the widow's mite or one talent, so long as it is our all.

I truly claim to be the happiest person in Crewe. And as for bounteousness, the windows of heaven never close. The cassettes have built up my faith daily. I never tire of them. All are a wonderful help in keeping in the narrow way. And to think where it will lead if followed until the end! Who could ask for more? It is that "penny" that will last through eternity, worth far, far more than serving man could ever bring.

Still, time is short, we need to be up and getting ready every day. I'm pressing on, in the running, and striving to be found worthy.

*Crewe, England*

N. T.

## Get Rid of the Miry Clay

God is faithful and true, so we know His plan will most definitely materialize, whether we think it seems to tarry or not. But it is not tarrying, really, so we should get busy without delay, working to overcome all selfish and worldly desires, etc., so that we may be ready at the appointed time.

We are so grateful to be out of the "horrible pit," but we cannot say we are patiently waiting if there is still some "miry clay" adhering to us.

I cannot help feeling sorry for those people with heavy crosses to bear, who have no hope of anything better than what this world can offer. However, I feel no sympathy for the children of Israel. How miserable they made themselves by so much complaining and murmuring, when they could have possessed so much. May we learn a lesson from their folly, and pray for a stronger faith.

What a privilege it is to know about the wonderful reward of eternal life, which we can receive if we accept and bear our cross with thankfulness, triumphantly. The fight against temptation and trial is a challenge, but very rewarding, and makes for happiness, too.

*Swansea, South Wales, Great Britain*

R. B.

## A Death Trap

It is a big work to merit the reward. The sins which cling so closely are those only known to us and God, secret sins; they tangle our feet, so to speak—which puts me in mind of the sticky fly paper that we used in the past. The unwary flies would be attracted by the sweet aroma and make a landing upon it, only to be stuck and unable to get away. It was a death trap.

The sins that entangle us can be a death trap if we do not overcome them.

*Wausau, Wisconsin*

E. S.

## It Calls for Courage

Isaiah tells us, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near." The prophet knew that there cannot be any postponing. Time plays an important role in the undertaking of mending the old self and in perfecting a new creature. This work cannot be accomplished in a day, a week, or a month, but requires a lifetime of conditioning. It calls for every ounce of our courage, fortitude and willingness to stand against the wiles of sin. If righteousness is to prevail, we ought to search our hearts and see whether our prime endeavor is in pleasing God.

Monrovia, Liberia

S. K. N.

## No Ordinary Days

All too soon our day of probation is drawing to a close. What needs to be done must be done now, every day, every hour is working time. Our Lord's longsuffering cannot last forever. The roaring of the nations is getting increasingly loud. Jesus said when these things "begin" to come to pass we are to lift up our heads because our redemption is drawing nigh. These are no ordinary days. Every day should find us more and more on the watch against the evils of our own particular nature, for we all are beset by some propensity that needs to have a double-guard put on, lest we give in to it and our day sees no improvement.

The December *Message* is exceptionally good. Every article is fraught with spiritual lessons. To read it once is not enough, it must be read over several times in order to retain and hold the practical food, to do our souls any appreciable good in the divine life.

I realize more than ever how thoroughly we must become acquainted with the Lord's requirements to be able to run the way of His commandments without sinning. The sermons on tapes are constantly reminding us that obedience is the essential thing. It is not the "Lord, Lord this . . ." and "Lord, Lord, that . . ." but what the Lord commands us to do, to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God.

South Amboy, New Jersey

L. M. K.

## Deceased

Just a few lines to let you know that my mother, Phosa Dirkes, passed away the 29th of this month [December]. It seemed to have been without any pain and suffering, for which I am thankful. But nevertheless I feel a great emptiness within, as I hated so much to lose her. But still I realize it was God's will, otherwise He would have spared her life.

My mother experienced so much happiness in reading the *Message* papers and the letters she received from the various ones at the Church. They impressed upon her mind that better life to come, when God's people will be free from sickness, sorrow, pain and death, and every other thing that tends to defile.

Kooskia, Idaho

Mrs. Rita Bedard

Sister Dirkes had been a subscriber to the *Megiddo Message* since 1926. She made several trips east to visit the Rochester Congregation and was a regular correspondent as long as health and strength permitted.

Sister Dirkes is survived by three daughters, one of whom is Sister Rita Bedard.

—EDITOR.

February, 1980

## SO WHAT DO YOU KNOW?

### Bible Mountains:

Sinai	Horeb	Hermon	Moriah
Ararat	Gilead	Ephraim	Gerizim
Seir	Nebo	Carmel	Hor
Olivet	Ebal	Tabor	Zion

Choose the right mountain to answer each of the following:

1. On what mountain will Jesus Christ descend? \_\_\_\_\_
2. The mountain where Moses saw the burning bush (called by two names) \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_
3. Jesus and His disciples sat upon this mountain, which overlooks Jerusalem \_\_\_\_\_
4. The range of mountains on which the ark came to rest after the flood \_\_\_\_\_
5. The mountain on which there was a great contest between the prophets of Baal and the God of heaven \_\_\_\_\_
6. The mountain where Joshua was buried \_\_\_\_\_
7. Moses viewed the Promised Land from the top of this mountain \_\_\_\_\_
8. Abraham was commanded to take his only son and offer him as a sacrifice upon this mountain \_\_\_\_\_
9. Moses received the ten commandments on this mountain \_\_\_\_\_ (also called \_\_\_\_\_)
10. Barak and his army descended from this mountain when attacking Sisera's army \_\_\_\_\_
11. In what mount did Esau live? \_\_\_\_\_
12. The mountain from which Jesus ascended into heaven \_\_\_\_\_
13. There were twin mountains in Palestine; one bore the blessings, the other the curses \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

Here are the texts that give the answers to each question:

1. Zech. 14:4; 2. Ex. 3:1; Acts 7:30; 3. Matt. 24:3; 4. Gen. 8:4; 5. I Kings 18:19; 6. Judges 2:9; 7. Deut. 34:1; 8. Gen. 22:2; 9. Ex. 19:2-20; 10. Judges 4:14; 11. Gen. 36:8; 12. Acts 1:12; 13. Deut. 11:29





## *Now*

*There is no use in looking back  
To any yesterday;  
For what is gone is over and  
Forever put away.  
And there is nothing to be gained  
From dreaming of tomorrow,  
Because there is no future time  
To beg or steal or borrow.*

*But only as we live today  
Can we attain our goal  
And build a better life on earth  
With courage in our soul.*

*It is the present time that counts  
And all that we should treasure,  
To do the very best we can  
According to our measure.  
So let us use this moment well,  
And every next one too,  
To serve our God with diligence  
To make our dreams come true.*