

Megiddo Message



*Teach us how short our
lives really are, so that
we may grow in wisdom.*

—Psalm 90:12, NLT

Vol. 86, No. 2
February, 1999

Leave It to God

A

mong the dominant instincts of the human race is the impulse to retaliate. Something in our too-human nature tells us to give as good as we get, and just as quickly as we can. Watch how easily a small child raises an arm or a fist when another child challenges him. Retaliation does not have to be learned; it is one of the instincts for survival.

Outstanding in the life of our Lord is a quality exactly opposite of this. Of Him we read: *"Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously"* (1 Pet. 2:23). This quality of not retaliating, not threatening is not born in us, nor is it easily acquired. It must be cultivated diligently, carefully, prayerfully.

We would do well to remind ourselves often of the meekness and patience of Christ. What a contrast to our own weak-willed resistance. How quickly when things do not go our way we feel frustrated, impatient or upset. We admire the achievement of Christ, He who endured far beyond what we are called upon to endure, yet spoke no word of impatience. Suffering cruel punishment in the hands of injustice, He had no acrimony to pour upon His injurers, not even a spirit of resentment, only a prayer for their forgiveness. Resentment and forgiveness cannot live together. *"Who when he was reviled, reviled not again."* Even in acute and severe sufferings, He gave way to no impulse of revenge. Although He could have threatened, He did not. He was content to let the will of God be done.

And so He committed Himself to God, along with His cause and the wrong, knowing that God would settle the matter in time.

The Bible forbids *all* revenge. The apostle Paul, himself a champion of virtue, gave this fatherly appeal: *"My dear friends, do not seek revenge, but leave a place for divine retribution; for there is a text which reads, 'Justice is mine, says the Lord, I will repay'"* (Rom. 12:19). The passage is especially meaningful as phrased in the Living Bible: *"Dear friends, never avenge*

yourselves. Leave that to God, for he has said that he will repay those who deserve it."

Among children of God, no vengeance or revenge is allowed, either toward friend or foe. The great conflict is never to be man against any other man but man against evil. It is this: *"Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good"* (v. 21). Here is the only conflict in which we may rightfully engage. As Christians we must be cultivating not the spirit of revenge but the Christlike spirit of love and goodwill, which will find its fullness in the eternal fellowship of the saints in the new world. We must be training now to live then.

Revenge need not be open to be culpable. It is possible to think and plan revenge—but have no way to carry it out. Or simply to harbor a desire for revenge, either expressed or in secret. All are wrong. And whether the would-be object of our feelings of revenge is a friend or foe makes no difference. All revenge is forbidden the Christian.

Who can say that he or she has never felt the desire to "get even"? Who can say that they have not at some time wished ill upon their so-called "enemies," if only a dose of their own bitter medicine? But it is not Christlike, it is not Godlike, and every aspiring child of God must let go *all* desire for revenge.

What do you do, then, when you feel distressed by the treatment you receive? Remember the example of Christ and ask, how much like Christ can I be? This is the time to prove the reality of your faith. Act as a friend, a servant, a subject of Christ. Like Him, answer your accuser with silence and live so that no one can justly find fault.

Does this high standard seem beyond our reach? What has been done can be done. *"For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps"* (1 Pet. 2:21). Jesus could say, *"I have overcome the world,"* and so will we be able to say it, when we have followed Him faithfully to the end. ♦

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 (2 Cor. 10:4-5).

WE BELIEVE ...

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

The Herald and the KING

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

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

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Front Cover: Orchids in the Conservatory at Highland Park, Rochester, New York.
Photo by Mr. & Mrs. David Sutton.

February 1999
Volume 86, No. 2

Megiddo Message

The **Megiddo Message** (USPS 338-120) is published monthly (except March/April and September/October issues) by the Megiddo Church, 481 Thurston Road, Rochester, New York 14619. Telephone: 716-235-4150. Periodicals postage paid at Rochester, New York.

Publication Staff: Ruth E. Sisson, Editor; Gerald Payne, Executive Editor; Newton H. Payne, Senior Editor (emeritus). Artwork and design by Margaret A. Tremblay; Subscriptions Manager, Donna R. Mathias.

Subscription Rate and Renewals: One year (ten issues) \$5.00. Send to Megiddo Church, 481 Thurston Road, Rochester, New York 14619-1697. Or call 716-235-4150.

Address Changes? Be sure to notify promptly of any change in your address. Please include your old mailing label and your new address. Send to Megiddo Church, 481 Thurston Road, Rochester, New York 14619-1697. **Postmaster:** Send all changes of address to Megiddo Church, 481 Thurston Road, Rochester, NY 14619.

URL: <http://www.megiddo.com>. **E-mail address:** megiddo@servtech.com.

Manuscript Policy: Unsolicited manuscripts for publication are not accepted.

The **Megiddo Message** is the official organ of the Megiddo Church, Inc., founded in 1880 by L. T. Nichols. Publication was begun in 1914. Maud Hembree, Editor-in-Chief (1914-1935); Ella M. Skeels, Executive Editor (1935-1945); Percy J. Thatcher, Editor (1945-1958); Kenneth E. Flowerday, President and Editor (1958-1985); Newton H. Payne, Editor (1985-1997).

The **Megiddo Message** is available in microfilm from University Microfilms, Inc., Serials Acquisitions, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106.

Indexing: The Megiddo Message is indexed annually, in December. Combined indexing available, 1944-1996.

Bible Quotations: Unidentified quotations are from the King James Version. Other versions are identified as follows: NEB—New English Bible; NIV—New International Version; NASB—New American Standard Bible; RSV—Revised Standard Version; TLB—The Living Bible; JB—The Jerusalem Bible; Phillips—The New Testament in Modern English; Moffatt—The Bible, A New Translation; NRSV—New Revised Standard Version; NKJV—New King James Version; NLT—The New Living Translation; NCV—The New Century Version.

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We Are Not Alone

by RUTH E. SISSON

To be alone is one of the most dreadful of human plights. To be forced to face life alone through times of pain or suffering or loss, or even joy and success, with no one to care or share, is something everyone wishes to avoid.

To be lacking *human* help is bad enough; to be without God or hope in the world is an incomparably worse plight.

And God be praised, this latter is a situation we can avoid.

Praise God for the companions and friendships He has provided to soften the hard places of life! Thank Him that we are able to care and share with one another. Thank Him for all that He has done to make our lives pleasant and our loads bearable.

But try as we may, we soon realize that we are up against forces and circumstances beyond our control. Try as we may, we cannot assure that our pleasant associations will continue right through to the end of our lives; the best, as well as the worst in this world, is temporary.

However, if we look deeper, if we are able to see our lives in an eternal perspective, these very unwanted circumstances may be the hand of God drawing us to Him, compelling us to trust Him above all, teaching us in very real terms that *"the things which are seen are temporal";* that only *"the things which are not seen are eternal"* (2 Cor. 4:18).

Even if we find ourselves without human support, we can still know that there is no circumstance of life that can separate us from God unless we allow it. *"He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide"*—no question about it, such a one *"shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty"* (Ps. 91:1). And how can we fear if we are within His protecting shadow?

There is no power in the whole uni-

verse that can separate what God has joined—the one who is truly determined to be His, who is seeking His Kingdom, His approval, His righteousness, His rewards above all else.

What does this mean? It means that those who truly love God, who surrender their natural right to trust themselves, who give up their lives to do His will, to speak His words, to think His thoughts, to adopt His pattern of life for us, *are not alone, and no power in the whole universe can ever separate them from Him.*

This was the persuasion voiced by the apostle Paul in that memorable passage in his letter to the Romans. We read: *"I have become absolutely convinced that neither death nor life, neither messenger of Heaven nor monarch of earth, neither what happens today nor what may happen tomorrow, neither a power from on high nor a power from below, nor anything else in God's whole world has any power to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Rom. 8:38–39 Phillips).

This mighty confidence has been the strength and support of God's people in all ages. Circumstances may have seemed against them, but what did it matter, if God was working all things together for their eternal good! Whatever else they might lose, whatever the suffering, whatever the trial they might have to face, it was only for a moment and then all the measureless blessings of eternity would be theirs. With God on their side, they could not be defeated.

This was the spirit in which the prophets of old lived, and which they did their best to infuse into those who heard them.

Too Vast?

There is another cause for a feeling of aloneness which some people today are experiencing. It is a feeling of futility that comes with a realization of the vastness of the creation—of which we are an infinitesimal part.

No doubt about it, as scientists peer deeper and deeper into space, the creation seems to expand, and our part in it becomes smaller and smaller.

Go outside on a starry night and realize that you are gazing into a vastness beyond fathoming. The Hubble space telescope in its brief time has photographed billions upon billions of galaxies, and each galaxy contains billions upon billions of stars. Who can think for a moment that we are alone?

Many scientists are now speculating about the possibility of life on other planets in the vast expanse of space.

In December 1995 the Hubble space telescope stared for 10 days at a small patch of sky near the handle of the Big Dipper—a pinpoint the size of the area blocked by a grain of sand held at arm's length. From within that area at least 1500 galaxies,—many only one four-billionth as bright as the dimmest light the human eye can see—were revealed in a single breath-taking panorama.

Are we tempted to feel alone as we contemplate this immensity?

Let it rather speak to us of the greatness of the God we serve, the magnitude of the power that sustains us, and of the surety of His power to do for us what He has already done for countless beings before us. Yes, *"this God is our God forever and ever."* Even in all this vastness our little lives can count—when we place ourselves on His side.

God has promised His faithful children that He will acknowledge them, to work with them, to preserve them, to remember them, to keep them, and ultimately to reward them with the richest of His blessings, *"even life forevermore."* He has promised to do for them *"exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think"* (Eph. 3:20)—if they will just cooperate with Him, if they will trust their lives to His directing, if they will exchange their ways for His, and their thoughts for His. Those who are doing this *are not alone*. Is it not a most gracious promise?

The Struggle with Worthlessness

We human creatures are so small, so

weak, so powerless of ourselves. We believe with all our heart that the great things God has promised *will* come to pass; yet, with all the disillusionment and despair and disbelief around us, it is not easy to be strong in faith. It is not easy to see the real worth and magnitude of our cause. We need some reassurance, as it were, some message from God, some telegram from heaven to say to us, *"Hold on a little longer—help is on the way!"*


Our age is not the first to experience this struggle with worthlessness, this longing to be and to do, this desire for something great, something open. Years ago a certain people had a similar problem. To strengthen them, the prophet Isaiah addressed some heartening words from which we today can take courage. In fact, they are directed even more precisely to us than to them. They are recorded in the 51st chapter of Isaiah. Let us read the passage from the Living Bible:

"Listen to me, all who hope for deliverance, who seek the Lord! Consider the quarry from which you were mined, the rock from which you were cut! Yes, think about your ancestors Abraham and Sarah, from whom you came. You worry at being so small and few, but Abraham was only one when I called him. But when I blessed him, he became a great nation. And the Lord will bless Israel again, and make her deserts blossom; her barren wilderness will become as beautiful as the Garden of Eden. Joy and gladness will be found there, thanksgiving and lovely songs" (Isa. 51:1-3, TLB).

"Listen," says the Prophet, *"all who hope for deliverance, who seek the Lord."* To whom does he speak? Is it possible that we may qualify as part of the Israel God will bless? The natural Israelites, of themselves, were few and weak; but they enjoyed a rich heritage in God. They had been cut from a noble quarry. Behind them were great names of faith: Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob. *"And the Lord will bless Israel again."*

May we not be among them, the greater "Israel" whom He has promised to bless in His own good time? Can we not claim this promise, too—if we are His people?

We are not alone if we are on God's side.



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Looking still deeper into this passage, is it not a lesson that God regards quality above quantity? True, "Abraham was only one," but he was one God chose. And when God chooses one, it tells us something about the *quality* of that one. Is not God willing and able to bless and glorify *any* remnant He chooses?

And so the Prophet says: "Look at the Rock from which you have been carved, look at the One to whom you belong, the One who is behind you, supporting you, upholding you, and making you what you are.... Don't worry at being so small and few... You look up to Abraham, and Abraham was only one when I called him, one just like you. It was I who made Abraham great" (TLB). If we are weak and small, that is God's problem, not ours.

Many are the people of God through the ages who would have been overwhelmed but for this steadying, heavenly support.

Look at the life of David. Very early in life, David learned to trust God. Scarcely out of his teens, he had to flee for his life from the jealous Saul. Again and again he was forced to flee, even though he knew he was innocent; even though he was the anointed king-to-be. Again and again he found himself alone, with only the presence of God for company. He was alone, and yet he was not; for the God he served and revered was with him.

Many are the Psalms that David wrote during this time, before he was thirty years of age; and through them all shines his confident trust in the presence of God with him. During those early years he was building the reverence and faith he would need to carry him through the strenuous days of kingship. During those early years he was building the close fellowship with God which he would need to steady him upon the throne.

Read the Psalms and notice how all sufficient the Lord was to David. The Lord was David's buckler, his staff, his stay, his strong arm, his shield, and him that "girdeth me with strength, and maketh my way perfect." God was his salvation, and "thy right

hand holdeth me up, and thy gentleness hath made me great" (Ps. 18:32-35). God was his rock, his fortress, his deliverer, and the horn of his salvation. He was not alone. Hear the prayer he voices: "I have called upon thee, for thou wilt hear me, O God: incline thine ear unto me, and hear my speech. Show thy marvellous lovingkindness, O thou that savest by thy right hand them which put their trust in thee.... Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of thy wings" (Ps. 17:6-8).

To David, the most dreadful of all thoughts was the thought that God might forsake him. To lose God would be to lose everything. "Forsake me not utterly," he pleaded (Ps. 119:8). Even in the most humiliating moments of deepest sin and repentance, his greatest fear was not of punishment but of being cast aside by God. "O Lord, rebuke me not in thy wrath: neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure... forsake me not, O Lord: O my God, be not far from me. Make haste to help me, O Lord of my salvation" (38:1, 21-22). When given his choice of a punishment for his sin in numbering Israel, his only answer was, "let me fall now into the hands of God, for very great are his mercies; but let me not fall into the hand of man" (1 Chron. 21:13).

Look, also, at the prophet Samuel. When he was scarcely grown up, Eli the high priest, who had guided him through childhood, died, and Samuel found himself without any strong support, save his God. We wonder why, yet can we say that God did not know? Was this perhaps God's unique and special way of drawing Samuel to Himself?

A young prophet in Israel, Samuel faced an all but impossible task. Of the first twenty years of his adult career we know nothing, save that he was judging Israel, for we read that Samuel judged Israel "all the days of his life." Through much of it, there seemed to be nothing eventful enough to even make the record. But during this time, Samuel was building a favorable record before God. He was seeking God, serving God, praying, and growing stronger and stronger in the faith of his fathers; we know, because when the crisis hour arrived

and Israel demanded a king—and rejected Samuel—these are the noble qualities of character that shine in Samuel.

It was a dramatic hour. The forces of the Philistines were coming against Israel. The people had gathered not for battle but for revival. But Samuel did not panic. Instead, as was obviously his habit, he turned for help to God, and God responded in a most wonderful way, sending terrifying thunder upon the Philistines so that they turned and ran—and all the Israelites had to do was pursue them. It was a moment of high courage and triumph for Samuel's faith. Samuel was not alone.

Think also of the three Hebrew children, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, refusing to bow down to the golden image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up. Honorable mention is given them in Hebrews 11: they "*quenched the violence of fire.*" And so they did. There is a popular song which runs to their credit: "Wouldn't bow, wouldn't budge, wouldn't burn." And it is true. Tough men were they, these men of God, so tough that no power in earth could make them compromise their conviction. If they had to stand alone, they would still stand, not bow.

Even in the presence of the furious Nebuchadnezzar their determination was unmoved: "*We will not bow down, or worship your gods.*" There was no evidence of any watching Divine presence as they continued to stand, nor was there as the soldiers seized them, roughly bound them with cords, and slung them into the midst of the fiery furnace. The men who threw them into the furnace perished from the intense heat, but the three Hebrew children in the midst of the fiery flames suffered not at all. Here was visible evidence that they were not alone. Suddenly the unseen guardian became visible as a fourth person in the flames. The angel had doubtless been standing with them all the time, but unseen. Now they—and everyone else—knew that they were not alone.

Think of Jesus in the garden. There was no evidence of any helping hand, or sustaining Divine presence at this most critical hour. Yet, when Jesus had stood the test, when He had relinquished the last hold on His own will and could say, "*Father, not as I will, but as Thou wilt,*" there appeared suddenly "*an angel of the Lord, strengthening Him.*" He was not alone.

When the sea was raging angrily, mercilessly tossing a tiny craft, and its precious cargo included the apostle Paul, the beloved Luke, and all who were with them, it was a lonely hour. After two days, their strength was spent. After three days, they lightened the ship, hoping to improve their chances of survival. But for another 11 days the angry sea continued to rage. Nothing but a few thin and cracking boards separated them from an immense, watery grave. All hope that they would be saved was gone. They were alone. Yet they were not alone, for one night the angel of the Lord stood by his beloved Paul, and assured him of His protecting presence. They were not alone.


Years later when this same Apostle stood at last before the heartless Nero to receive his sentence of death, and knew that his hours of mortal life were numbered, what more lonely experience could a mortal face. There was no visible sign of the Divine presence. But the noble, victorious Apostle did not fear. Well he knew that the same angel who had stood by him on the sea was with him now, and nothing the mighty Emperor might do could change it. And even as he heard the fatal sentence, he saw above all the glory of the immortal crown awaiting him—now only a few conscious moments away (in death he would know nothing). He was not alone.

When the apostle John was banished to lonely Patmos, with only the hostile winds and barren rocks

for company, with no human voice to cheer or human hand to comfort, he was indeed alone. Yet we know that God was watching. He was not alone. All unknown to John, the script for the great revelation was even then being prepared for the glorious drama he would soon behold, in which John himself was to be the principal actor, along with Christ and the angels. What glorious company! Truly, he was not alone!

The God Who Remembers

One grand assurance that we are not alone is the endearing promise of God recorded by the prophet Malachi. "*Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and*



God has a gracious
"Never Alone" Insurance plan
for every true believer.

the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him" (Mal. 3:16-17).

Here is presented God's gracious "Never-Alone" insurance plan. It is a promise with a guarantee: "*They shall be mine, ... and I will spare them.*" What are its terms and conditions?

First, the people who can claim this promise are all God-fearing—they fear the Lord and reverence His name. There is a holy awe and regard for His majesty in their hearts and in their lives. It is a wholly dominating attitude of mind. Not for a moment do they forget Him. There are no dark corners in their lives which His light

Are we
tempted to feel
alone as we
contemplate the
immensity of the
creation?...

Let it rather
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greatness of the
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His power to save
and bless.

does not discern, illuminate, and purify.

Then, they are *God-thinking*—they *think* upon His name. And when we realize that His name is called the Word of God (Rev. 19:13), is it not a most wonderful realm in which they roam? They do not leave their minds open to whatever vagrant thoughts may come or go. Consciously they exert the effort and confine their thinking to “His name”: they think “upon his name.” Whatever they are doing, their minds are dominated by this: that they hold God and His law in highest esteem; and here is all their concern, all their desire, and all their thought. They prize it so highly and set such value upon it that it is constantly on their minds. Nothing in life is too compelling or too important to distract them. Everything else is viewed or thought about as through this one holy looking glass.

As a natural result, they are *God-speaking*—they *speak* often one to another about the things that mean the most to them—their God, their glorious hope, and all that pertains to it. The reality of this rich fellowship is constantly with them. Their whole lives are bound up in God, and as a result—and quite naturally—He is the central topic of their conversation. They live and work very much as other men and women, but all the while their minds are drawn to God. All of life is pervaded by their sense of duty to God; all of life becomes a worship and a prayer. Their work is to the Lord; and whatever they do, they use their minds, their bodies, their wills not as *their* property, for *their* gratification or satisfaction, but as God’s. In God is their highest love, their purest joy, their deepest delight.

As a result, they can live *in* the world while being no part of it. In the midst of the grossest spiritual ignorance, they maintain an active, vibrant spiritual life. Wherever they are, whatever they are doing, they are conscious of God and their duty to Him. When alone, they meditate. When together, they converse. Their whole life is flooded with God, rich

in faith and glowing with hope.

So exemplary is their conduct, so fruitful is their rich, disciplined thought-life, and so well-chosen and so distinctive are their speakings one to another that they draw the attention of the great God of heaven: “*the Lord hearkened and heard.*” When they speak, He takes notice; He stops to listen!

Still more, He directs His angel to write down those words that He has heard in a “*book of remembrance,*” to testify to their credit in the Day when they shall be singled out for high honors.

Do *our* words qualify for this distinguished recognition of the great God?

Are our words such that we want the Lord to hear?

What are their words that meet with such ecstatic approval on high?

They are words that reflect the honor and glory we owe to our great God.

They are words expressing to God our heartfelt gratitude and supreme delight for the opportunities He has extended to us, for inviting us to be part of His eternal family.

They are words that strengthen faith and build confidence in God. They are words that feel and say firmly, “I believe... I know... this is of God.”

When we have erred, they are words of humble repentance and regret: “I am sorry, I was wrong.” Again, they are words of firm determination and resolve: “I will *never* stoop to that again.”

They are words by which we seek God’s forgiveness and restoration: “Lord, I pray, forgive my foolish ways.”

They are words that acknowledge our need for God and our total dependence upon God, that say: “Lord, I need You, more than I can ever realize. I need You every moment, every hour.”

They are words of humble submission, by which we give up our will and accept His. They are the heart saying, in the midst of painful testing, “Lord, if it be possible, deliver me from this; nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt.”

They are words by which we encourage and strengthen one another.

er in the Lord. They are words which say, "I can, I must, and I will...."

They are words by which we stimulate ourselves and others to greater and still greater efforts in the Divine life.

They are words that speak of His honor, His praise, His glory, His justice.

They are words that put iron into the blood and steel into the heart.

And they are not words spoken just because they have the "right tune" or "right sound," or because we know they will bring the commendation of our friends. They are words spoken from the heart, to build not our own honor but God's; to defend His cause, His honor, His greatness, His good; that speak His truth without fear of what others may think.

"And the Lord hearkened and heard." He stopped to listen. And He approved.

Have we judged our words by this standard?

"And a book of remembrance was written before him, for them that feared the Lord and that thought upon his name."

What a credit if they are good. But oh, how many words we would never say if we remembered that they were all being written down, one by one, to be read back to us at the Day of Judgment!

Then comes the richest heavenly promise: *"they shall be mine, says the Lord."* Wonder surpassing wonders, the God of heaven promises to claim these select individuals for His very own, a prized possession, part of His choice spiritual treasure, His jewels! We read, *"And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him"* (Mal. 3:17).

The Day has not yet arrived when the Lord shall gather up these "jewels," but we already know some of them by name...names like Noah, Nehemiah, Elijah, and Malachi from the Old Testament times; names like Paul, Peter, James, John, Mary,

Martha from the New. Shall our name be among them?

It can be; yes, such ordinary persons as we ourselves can be among His shining jewels. All that is necessary is that we meet the qualifications, that we become so enwrapped in our sublime hope and purpose that we fear the Lord, that we think upon His name, and speak often one to another of these things that are closest to our hearts. We, too, can be classified among those men and women *"of whom the world was not worthy"* (Heb. 11:38). We, too, can be "jewels."

Is it not a glorious company to belong to? How can we think for a moment that, in such company, we are ever alone?

Now in this late hour, we need to be living every moment in the awareness that we are not alone; that God has especially appointed angels to minister to our needs, to watch over us as we work and record our lives, so that we may have something to witness for us in the Day to come. They are writing the text that we provide. Every word, every thought is our own.

And at this late hour, when writing time is so limited, should we not be extremely selective of the words we speak, and the thoughts we think?

Soon shall arrive the hour when we shall no longer be able to modify, or edit, or delete from the script. What is written shall be written, and its testimony will witness for or against us at that great and final Day.

Let us never feel that we are alone as we fight our battles against sin. Nor are we the first to encounter the trials that are ours; the road that we are traveling is nothing new and untried. Hundreds, thousands, even millions and billions have traveled it before us—even all the heavenly hosts, for is not God the *"Lord God of hosts"*? And are they not every one a victor? They, too, had to battle with sin; they, too, had to lay aside the weights.

We are not alone, for *God is with us*. However high the waves, how-

ever raging the storm; however difficult the test, if we are doing on our part, God is with us. And now, in this late hour, we need Him as never before.

We need His strong, loving arm to help us.

A man once told how as a young lad he lived with his family on a rocky point that jutted out like a long arm into a deep ocean bay. To get to that point from the mainland, he says, "you had a choice. You could row a boat three miles across the deep ocean bay, or you could walk seven miles by land. Of course, I rowed the boat."

One night as he was on his way home, a fierce storm blew up, and the quiet bay became an angry, raging sea. "The wind was against me," he said. "I was within sight of that point, but my strength was going fast. I was pulling for all I was worth, but I couldn't seem to make any headway. I was losing out, and I knew it. The wind was just too strong. I turned around once more to be sure I could still see the point. And when I turned I saw it. And standing there at the point was my Dad. I pulled harder than ever, to get as close to the point as I could, and when it seemed I could do no more, there was my Dad, wading out into the ocean. With his strong muscular arm he grabbed hold of my boat so it wouldn't be swamped by the waves or dashed against the rocks, and pulled me to safety. I had always believed my Dad loved me, but that night I knew it."

Now that is what God does for us. When we have done all that we can do, and our strength fails, He is there to help us. We can depend on it—He is there, and He will not let us be lost. When human hands fail and human hopes are dashed and the waves would almost overwhelm us, He will be there, and will bring us safe to shore.

This God is our God forever and ever. Even now He is watching. Standing at the rocky points of our lives, He is there. Won't you give Him your hand—now, before it's too late? ♦

Grow In Grace

"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever." —2 Peter 3:18

What is the biggest room in the world? It is room for expansion, room for improvement, room for growth.

There are many passages in Scripture concerned with Christian growth. One key passage is found in 2 Peter 3:18, *"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."* This challenge implies action upon the part of everyone who names the name of Christ.

How do we grow in grace?

We may grow in grace through the process of Christian training received in the home and church. As we learn to discipline our minds to dwell on thoughts Divine, as we challenge ourselves to higher and yet higher levels of obedience, we grow in grace. This growth in favor with God results in a strengthening of our spiritual relationship with God, ever challenging us to higher heights of spiritual maturity and ultimately drawing us into an eternal bond with God.

Peter exhorts us also to grow in the *"knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."* This was knowledge that Peter had learned firsthand from the Master Himself. Doubtless as he wrote these words, deep impressions from the early years with his Master flashed through his now mature mind. There had been lessons aplenty, lessons which disclosed ever so keenly his own deep need to grow. It was all part of the knowledge of Christ as he knew it. There was no doubt in Peter's mind as to

the verity of that knowledge.

This same knowledge of Christ enlarged the heart of the apostle Paul and caused his mind to grow. Notice in all his Epistles that he never argues with matters of faith or confidence. The knowledge is true—God is true—Christ is true. All this is a foregone conclusion. There is absolutely no question. And so with great adoration the Apostle sings, *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ"* (Ephesians 1:3).

Because of this supreme confidence, the apostle Paul is a prime example of a man growing in the knowledge of Christ. Day and night, year in and year out, it was on his mind. Christ had called him with a purpose—he had been planted to grow.

And so with us. How little we naturally know about Him. All we learn we learn by being like Him, following His example. But as we grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, we learn to resist temptation as He did, to pray as He prayed, to work as He worked, to imitate Him in godlikeness as He imitated His Father, what spiritual stature we shall attain!

As we grow in grace and in knowledge, shall we not also grow in love? *"God is love,"* wrote the apostle John, and if we would be Godlike, if we would be Christlike, we too must grow in all the many meaningful aspects of this love—a love that draws us to God and to

what He is offering us and which demands of us a corresponding growth in our love for all that God loves.

The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is also our Heavenly Father. Because of this Divine relationship, we can never be orphans—unless we choose to be. If we cooperate with His plans, we are a part of His paternal—and eternal—purpose. How this thought should fill us with appreciation for our high calling and with a desire to grow to fulfill it.

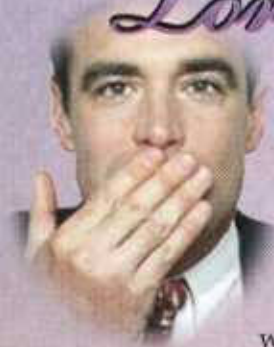
Our spiritual growth results from a conscientious stewardship of all of life, acting responsibly for all the powers of mind and body that God has entrusted to our care. But growth is not automatic. It is only as we apply what we know to our own lives that we will grow in grace.

As we mature in the Christian life we will be able to see that our chief hindrances to growth arise from our own spiritual deficiencies, our lack of faith, and our strong wilfulness as we attempt to think and plan without taking God into all our thoughts.

This is why Peter admonishes, *"But grow in grace."* The greater the spiritual man's growth in grace, the more perfect and complete will be his likeness to Christ and the greater will be his desire to keep reaching for higher and still higher attainments which, ultimately, shall invite him into the very presence of God.

What greater goal could we seek? ♦

Lord Help!—My Words



*L*ord, You have said in Your Word that my words are important. My words are an indicator of what is in my heart.

You have said that life and death are in the power of my tongue, and that I must take the consequences of how I use it. I tremble under the weight of this responsibility.

But Father, I believe that with Your help I can control what I say with my tongue. You have promised that no temptation will come that is more than I can bear, or You will make a way so that I can escape from sin. Thank You, Lord, for that promise.

Help me to be quick to hear and slow to speak. Help me to have my tongue filled with Your words, so that they will be life to those who find them and health to all their being.

Lord, I want to fill my mind with good thoughts, right thoughts, upright thoughts. Then whatever my mouth speaks will be right, for You have said, Out of the abundance of my heart, my mouth speaks.

Jesus said I will be judged for all my idle or empty words. I pray You, then, my Father, to fill my words with faith, hope, love, so that they will never be idle or empty.

Lord, grant me a pure heart and pure words. Take the harshness and sting out of them, so that they will never hurt or harm any of Your children. I choose to speak always for You, words of life, peace, faith, joy.

Help me as I learn to harness my words. I want every word I speak fit for You to hear. AMEN.



KEEPING IN STEP

Among the many regulations and commands a soldier must learn to precision are the marching commands. On a military base it is common to hear...“left, right, left, right...one, two, three, four,...company halt! about face! forward march!” as the drill sergeant, calling cadence to the marching troops, suddenly gives three commands reversing their direction.

The Christian often finds it necessary to reverse direction, sometimes even during a single day. To please God means to turn completely, 180 degrees, from the path of evil. The Psalmist exclaimed: *“I have refused to walk on any path of evil, that I may remain obedient to your word”* (Ps. 119:101 NLT). The path of evil and the path of righteousness lead in opposite directions, one to eternal death, the other to eternal life. If we are heading down the wrong path it is to our best interest to change our course. The sooner, the better.

Whenever we discover that our thoughts or actions are counter to the way of righteousness, let us remember these commands—COMPANY HALT! ABOUT FACE! FORWARD MARCH!

COMPANY HALT!—What does this mean? Whatever wrong you are doing, stop it!

ABOUT FACE!—Turn in your tracks—180 degrees—toward the Master.

FORWARD MARCH! Go ahead and DO what is right.

There is nothing ambiguous about these commands. Each command is concise and to the point—no room for misunderstanding.

What would happen in a military drill if one troop failed to do exactly as commanded? Every soldier would get out of step and start stumbling onto the heels of the one in front trying to march to cadence. The one out-of-step would later be taken aside and drilled, and drilled, and drilled until every command was obeyed to perfection. Whether the new recruit was rebellious or just had coordination problems, the problem would be resolved when after many long

hours of grueling practice he returned to the barracks ready to drop in his tracks.

The words of the apostle Paul take on new meaning as we read: *“Endure suffering along with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus”* (2 Tim. 2:3 NLT). If Paul could endure, so can we.

Christians are soldiers of Jesus Christ. And remember, *“As Christ's soldier, do not let yourself become tied up in the affairs of this life, for then you cannot satisfy the one who has enlisted you in his army”* (2 Tim. 2:4 NLT). All who have agreed to serve Christ the Commander-In-Chief have agreed to obey orders. This requires training, and the Lord has agreed to help in whatever way is needed. Sometimes only His Word is needed to get us back in step. Sometimes the training must be more severe, as that of the new recruit who was out of step.

One other observation should be noticed about these commands—each has two parts (e.g. forward march!). There is first a direction, then a command. While the first part may or may not be a part of the command, it is vital to obey properly the second part. The timing must also be in cadence so all marchers will execute the command precisely together.

Our Commander knows that no amount of commands will do any good unless He first gets the trainee's attention. This is done through the teaching of the Word coupled with discipline. Unfortunately, our Commander never seems to get the attention of the majority. They remain entangled with the affairs of this life and, consequently, never get in step. After many attempts, our Commander sorrowfully leaves them to themselves. Yes, they will perish without proper training.

Have you ever heard of “marching to a different drummer”? This would actually happen in military training if the troops were not properly organized. Suppose it is necessary for a call to arms and there is a massive troop formation and one company after the other marches to a large open place where they hear the Commanding General speak. On the way each company has a drummer and company sergeant

(Continued on page 26)

Know Your Bible?

KNOW THE PROPHETS

1. What prophet anointed Saul king?
2. Where did Elijah hear the "still small voice"?
3. Who inherited the mantle of Elijah?
4. What prophet compared the nation of Israel to an unfaithful wife? What was her name?
5. What prophet was commanded not to mourn when his wife died?
6. Who told David the story of the one ewe lamb?
7. What prophet foretold the coming of Elijah before the second advent of Jesus?
8. Who was a herdsman of Tekoa?
9. Who said "What doth the Lord require of thee"?
10. During the reigns of what kings did Isaiah prophesy?
11. Which prophet had a secretary to preserve his sermons?
12. What was the secretary's name?
13. What prophet described the proud, carefree young ladies of old Jerusalem?
14. What prophet told Ahab and Jehoshaphat not to fight against Syria?
15. What was the name of Isaiah's son?
16. What prophet was the son of a priest?
17. Who smashed an earthen vessel before the crowd as a sign of the destruction of Jerusalem?
18. Whose lips were cleansed in a vision by a coal from the altar?
19. What prophet did the children call "Bald Head"?
20. Who was put in a cistern of mire and slime?
21. Who told about the valley of dry bones?
22. What prophet had a vision of four chariots?
23. Name four prophets who lived in the eighth century B. C.
24. Who said, "The just shall live by faith"?
25. What prophet went "down to Nineveh"?
26. What prophet challenged the wisdom of God?
27. What two prophets worked hard to motivate the people to rebuild the temple of the Lord?
28. Who wrote the shortest book in the Old Testament?
29. When did the bones of a prophet restore a dead man to life?
30. What prophet used a plague of locusts to describe the defeat of true religion in the nation?
31. What prophet was thrust into a den of lions?
32. What prophet's name is given to the last book in the Old Testament?

FOURS

1. Who was in the grave four days?
2. Who was brought to Jesus "borne of four"?
3. Of what river is it said, "It parted and became four heads"?
4. Who had "four daughters who prophesied"?
5. Who demonstrated his change of heart by saying: "If I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold"?
6. Who divided Jesus' garments into four lots?
7. Who said that there are four things which are little upon the earth, but they are exceeding wise—the ants, the conies (rabbits), the locusts, and the spider?
8. Who tried to trap Nehemiah four times by inviting him to have a conference?
9. Who had a vision of a sheet, held up at four corners, and containing all kinds of four-footed beasts?

FAMOUS FORTIES

1. What "forty" is associated with Noah?
2. What "forty" is associated with Moses?
3. What "forty" is associated with Elijah?
4. What "forty" is associated with these words: "Man shall not live by bread alone"?
5. What "forty" is associated with the Israelites?
6. What prophet proclaimed: "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown"?
7. The three greatest kings of Israel each reigned forty years. Who were they?
8. Of whom, and when, was it said: "Being seen of them forty days"?
9. Who said: "Forty years old was I when Moses sent me to spy out the land"?
10. What great man spent forty years in the land of Midian before God sent him to lead the children of Israel?

ANSWERS ON PAGE 26



Worship Is...

BY GERALD R. PAYNE

"What constitutes a worshiper? Are there things you can't do in worship service? It seems wrong to use musical instruments. There has to be a line drawn somewhere." —J. C., Georgia



WHAT IS WORSHIP?

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, worship is "reverence offered a divine being or supernatural power; also an act of expressing such reverence; a form of religious practice with its creed and ritual." For our purpose here we will confine the subject to Christian worship.



WHAT OR WHOM SHOULD ONE WORSHIP?

Moses, as spokesman for the eternal God, told the Hebrews: "...The Lord is our God, the Lord alone... Do not worship any other gods besides me. Do not make idols of any kind, whether in the shape of birds or animals or fish. You must never worship or bow down to them... I lavish my love on those who love me and obey my commands..." (Deut. 6:4; 5:7-10 NLT). Jesus repeated this same command in the New Testament: "The Scriptures say, 'You must worship the Lord your God; serve only him'" (Luke 4:8 NLT).

What about Christ? Are we to worship Him also? The apostle Peter says yes. "You must worship Christ as Lord of your life" (1 Pet. 3:15 NLT). The wise men from the East brought gifts to Jesus when He was an infant, and worshiped Him (Matt. 2:11). And when He is crowned King of the whole earth He will receive worship from all who live. The book of Revelation records the lofty adoration to be given Him: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing" (Rev. 5:12).

Why is Jesus Christ worthy of worship? Because of the singular place He fills in the plan of God. Even before He was born it was prophesied that He would be called Emmanuel, "which being interpreted is God with us" (Matt. 1:23). Even now He is the firstfruits from the dead, the first of our race to receive immortality (1 Cor. 15:23);

and when He returns, He will conquer the nations and become the supreme ruler of earth. All nations shall *"bow before him, all people shall serve Him"* (see Psalm 72; Phil. 2:9-11).

Since the heavenly Father has committed the destiny of the earth into His hands, can we not look up to Christ reverently in worship?

HOW SHOULD ONE WORSHIP?

When Jesus visited the town of Samaria He declared to the Samaritan woman He met at the well that *"the time is coming and is already here when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. The Father is looking for anyone who will worship him that way. For God is Spirit, so those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth"* (John 4:23-24 NLT).

Here we have Jesus Himself telling us how we must worship God: *"in spirit and in truth."* If we understand these words, then we may know more about the meaning of worship. However, the word *"spirit"* has many and varied definitions. So we must think of these words of Jesus in the context in which they were spoken.

The word *"spirit,"* used in this verse, is from the Greek word *pneuma* from which our English word *pneumonia* and several other words relating to the lungs are derived. The simplest definition for spirit is *breath* or *air*. As used in this verse, the old Hebrew term *to breathe upon* is an expression meaning *speak to*. Just as the words we speak are a reflection of our thoughts, so we are to worship God in thought and in speech—acceptable thought and acceptable speech.

To use acceptable thought and speech in worshiping requires preparation. And a large part of preparation is learning. The worshiper who sacrifices to an idol to appease his god cannot

worship truly because he worships without knowledge of the true and living God. One must acquire a knowledge of God through His written Word before he can form a proper attitude and respect for God. Two people may sit side by side in Church, go through the same motions, give the same percent of their income, join in the same prayers, sing the same songs, yet one may be worshiping God acceptably, the other may be an abomination (Prov. 15:8; 28:9)—because one is worshiping in *"spirit and in truth"* and the other's first interest is far away.

PREPARE TO WORSHIP

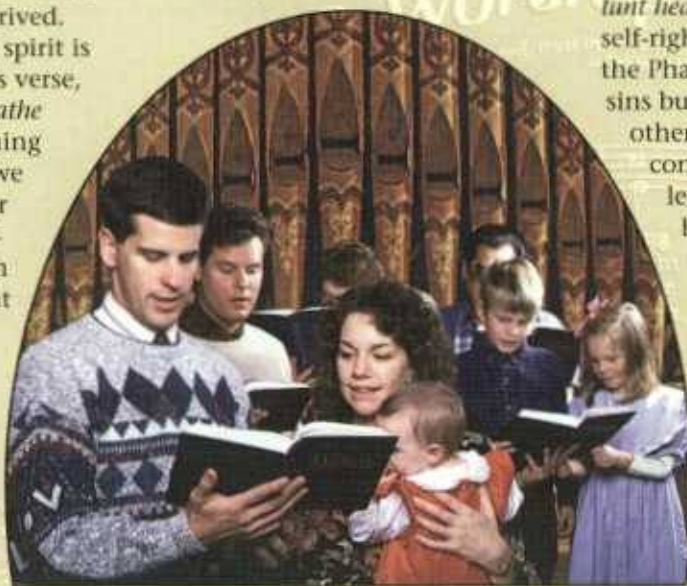
Worship that pleases God requires preparation. To have our worship accepted at the throne of heaven we must put away anything that God classifies as defiling. Jesus gave this illustration: *"If you are standing before the altar in the Temple, offering a sacrifice to God, and you suddenly remember that someone has something against you, leave your sacrifice there beside the altar. Go and be reconciled to that person. Then come and offer your sacrifice to God"* (Matt. 5:23-24 NLT). What is the sacrifice that God desires most? The sacrifice He wants *"is a broken spirit. A broken and repentant heart, O God, you*

will not despise" (Ps. 51:17 NLT).

Jesus also told about those who *"honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me"* (Matt. 15:8 NIV). While their hearts were pursuing the goals of this world, they could not worship God *"in spirit and in truth."*

Jesus told a story about two men, a proud Pharisee and a dishonest tax collector, who each offered a prayer to God. The dishonest tax collector went home justified while the Pharisee was not. Why? What made the difference in their worship? Compare their prayers. The Pharisee prayed: *"I thank you, God, that I am not a sinner like everyone else, especially like that tax collector over there! For I never cheat, I don't sin, I don't commit adultery, I fast twice a week, and I give you a tenth of my income."* Now notice the attitude of the tax collector as he *"stood at a distance and dared not even lift his eyes to heaven as he prayed. Instead, he beat his chest in sorrow, saying, 'O God, be merciful to me, for I am a sinner.'"* Jesus tells us which one was justified and why. *"I tell you, this sinner, not the Pharisee, returned home justified before God. For the proud will be humbled, but the humble will be honored"* (Luke 18:11-14 NLT).

In this little story we have two pictures: one of a *broken and repentant heart*, the other of a proud and self-righteous heart. Not only did the Pharisee refuse to see his own sins but he was quick to accuse others. The Pharisee went home condemned while the tax collector humbled himself before God, confessing his sins and asking for forgiveness. His attitude indicates that he also went one step further—he repented, that is, made a complete change by not repeating the same sins he had confessed. The Pharisee was hypocritical, while the tax collector was sincere.



Abel and Cain made offerings of worship which also illustrate the difference between acceptable and unacceptable worship (see Gen. 4:3-5). Why was Abel's sacrifice accepted while Cain's was not? One thought is that Abel offered a blood offering while Cain's offering was of the fruit of the soil. (Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia; The Teacher's Commentary). But was this the reason? The Lord said to Cain, "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door" (Gen. 4:7). Abel was "righteous" (Matt. 23:35) while Cain was sinful (1 John 3:12; Jude 11). The fault was not with the offering, but with the one making the offering. Many times God accepted offerings that were the fruit of the soil. The Israelites were dutybound by law to make an offering to God of the firstfruit of the grain harvest (Lev. 23:10). Oil, meal (flour) and grain offerings (see Numbers 5:15; Leviticus 2) were all part of the sacrifices loyal Israelites were to bring.

WHAT MAKES WORSHIP ACCEPTABLE TO GOD?

Acceptable worship must begin with a sincere heart instructed in the Word of God and continue daily without interruption in a consecrated life. Our continual attitude and prayer must be that of the Psalmist: "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Ps. 139:23-24).

Worshiping God is not just something we do when we go to church. We are to "Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks" (1 Thess. 5:17-18).

Worship and the conduct of the worshiper cannot be separated. When the Israelites were obeying the laws regarding worship and sacrifice yet were living in disobedience to it, God actually detested their worship. The Lord sent the prophet Isaiah with this stern mes-

sage of warning: "Listen to the LORD, you leaders of Israel! Listen to the law of our God, people of Israel. You act just like the rulers and people of Sodom and Gomorrah. 'I am sick of your sacrifices,' says the LORD. 'Don't bring me any more burnt offerings! I don't want the fat from your rams or other animals. I don't want to see the blood from your offerings of bulls and rams and goats. Why do you keep parading through my courts with your worthless sacrifices? The incense you bring me is a stench in my nostrils! Your celebrations of the new moon and the Sabbath day, and your special days for fasting—even your most pious meetings—are all sinful and false. I want nothing more to do with them. I hate all your festivals and sacrifices. I cannot stand the sight of them! From now on, when you lift up your hands in prayer, I will refuse to look. Even though you offer many prayers, I will not listen. For your hands are covered with the blood of your innocent victims. Wash yourselves and be clean! Let me no longer see your evil deeds. Give up your wicked ways. Learn to do good'" (Isa. 1:10-17 NLT).

If we would worship God acceptably, our conduct must be a reflection of our worship. Scripture contains many commands of this sort. For example, Paul instructed the church of Thessalonica to "encourage each other and build each other up, ... honor those who are your leaders in the Lord's work. They work hard among you and warn you against all that is wrong. Think highly of them and give them your wholehearted love because of their work. And remember to live peaceably with each other. Brothers and sisters, we urge you to warn those who are lazy. Encourage those who are timid. Take tender care of those who are weak. Be patient with everyone. See that no one pays back evil for evil, but always try to do good to each other and to everyone else. Always be joyful. Keep on praying. No matter what happens, always be thankful, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus" (1 Thess. 5:11-18 NLT).

Paul was constantly "encouraging, comforting and urging" his brethren "to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory" (1 Thess. 2:12). To the Ephesians he wrote, "As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love" (Eph. 4:1-2 NIV).

IS IT WRONG TO USE MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS IN CHURCH SERVICES?

The idea against using musical instruments in the Church arose during the first centuries after Christ. The major cause, according to some scholars, was "Christian resistance to mystery cults, as well as Pharisaic aversion to musical instruments in worship"—A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Church Literature.

There is nothing in the Bible to indicate that God considers the use of musical instruments in Church worship as inappropriate. In fact, we know of no place in Scripture where the use of musical instruments in worship service is spoken against. Musical instruments were in use long before Israel ever became a nation. Early in Genesis it is recorded that Jubal "was the father of all who play the harp and flute" (Gen. 4:21 NIV).

During the time of David both musicians and singers were appointed to function regularly at worship services. The book of Psalms resounds with the music of trumpets, lyres, harps, flutes and cymbals.

Perhaps the greatest concert of music during Solomon's reign was at the dedication of the temple, when "The Levites who were musicians—Asaph, Heman, Jeduthun, and all their sons and brothers" played their "cymbals, harps, and lyres." "They were joined by 120 priests who were playing trumpets. The trumpeters and singers performed together in unison to praise and give thanks to

the LORD. Accompanied by trumpets, cymbals, and other instruments, they raised their voices and praised the LORD with these words: "He is so good! His faithful love endures forever!" We know that God approved this worship, for we read that at the moment when the singers sang and the trumpets sounded, "a cloud filled the Temple of the Lord. The priests could not continue their work because the glorious presence of the Lord filled the Temple of God" (2 Chron. 5:12-14 NLT).

The Lord again showed His acceptance of this worship when, at the end of the dedication, He consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices (2 Chron. 7:1). It was His unmistakable way of saying, "I am pleased."

Even though some believe the New Testament is silent about the use of musical instruments during worship service, this is no sure evidence that they were not used. Paul makes mention of them to the Corinthians in a dissertation on speaking in tongues. "And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped?" (1 Cor. 14:7). While we are not told directly, the context seems to suggest that musical instruments were used in worship service in the early Church because the topic under discussion was the proper use of the gifts of the Spirit in public worship services.

Paul charged the Colossians to admonish "one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Col. 3:16). He also advised the Ephesians to sing and make "melody" in their hearts (Eph. 5:19), which is mentioned as "communication with the Lord by singing and making melody (psalms, singing with a stringed instrument) in the heart" (*The Bible Knowledge Commentary*).

The *Enhanced Strong's Lexicon* defines *psal'-lo* (translated *melody* in most translations) as "1) to

pluck off, pull out; 2) to cause to vibrate by touching, to twang; 2a) to touch or strike the chord, to twang the strings of a musical instrument so that they gently vibrate; 2b) to play on a stringed instrument, to play the harp, etc.; 2c) to sing to the music of the harp; 2d) in the New Testament to sing a hymn, to celebrate the praises of God in song."

It seems likely that the early Christians limited the use of musical instruments in their worship services not because God did not approve of them but because of the imminent dangers they faced. Persecution could be expected any time, and part of the time it was severe. The persecution of the early Church is well documented in the history of the time. The following is a quotation from the *Early Church Fathers* regarding persecution. De Fuga advised: "Lastly, if you cannot assemble by day, you have the night.... Be content with a church of threes" —Volume 4, IX., *De Fuga In Persecutione*. The Church was under severe persecution during much of its infancy.

The most common place of assembly and worship during the first century was the home. We have references to this situation in Paul's writings. If you can imagine the risk of being discovered while holding services in your home, you can easily understand why musical instruments may not have been used in some of the churches during a time when claiming to be a Christian could mean death. It would make a lot of sense to

refrain from anything that might attract attention, even to avoid gathering in large groups. Better to "be content with threes," as De Fuga suggested.

Another thought: If musical instruments were not approved, why will they be used in honoring Christ at His second advent (see Rev. 5:8-9; 14:2-3; 15:2-3)? The book of Revelation also mentions several times that angels will make use of trumpets when Christ returns. Even if the trumpet is totally symbolic, it suggests the use of musical instruments in worship.



CONCLUSION

It seems only fair to acknowledge that the use of musical instruments was accepted as part of worship during Biblical times.

The acceptability of one's worship depends on the purity and sincerity of the heart of the worshiper. There must be purpose in what we do, a purpose which includes a right attitude toward God and the best interests of our fellow beings. As Paul explained, "Whatever...you do, you must do all for the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31 NLT) and "Let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Cor. 14:40). The "all things" must include our worship.

As long as the manner of singing and playing musical instruments is not done to conform to this world (Rom. 12:2), their use in worship services should elevate and inspire the worshipers and honor and glorify God. ♦

Megiddo Message



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"Orpah kissed her mother-in-law good-bye, but Ruth clung to her."—Ruth 1:14 NIV

Ruth and Orpah

started with her on the long journey toward Judah. Naomi loved both her daughters-in-law and was overjoyed to have them with her.

But Naomi was not a selfish woman. Not far from Moab she explained to them that the journey would be difficult and they would face many uncertainties. They ought to return home where they would be among their own people and family.

She blessed them both and kissed them goodbye and all three broke down and wept. They knew that once they had parted they would never see each other again.

"No!" they said, with tears streaming down their dusty faces, "We want to go with you to your people!" At this point there seems to be no difference between the characters of Orpah and Ruth. But this was only the first test.

Serving the Lord was no small decision, and Naomi must be certain that her daughters-in-law were willing to make the sacrifices. "Why should you go on with me?" she queried. "I am old and cannot provide more sons for you. And even if I could, would you refuse to marry until they were grown? Of course not, my daughters!" She wanted them to think seriously of the sacrifice, and, more importantly, of their reasons for going with her. As they again wept together, Orpah

kissed her mother-in-law goodbye and turned back toward Moab.

At this point Ruth insisted on staying with Naomi. But there would be yet another test. "Look," said Naomi, "your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods, shouldn't you do the same?" Ruth replied, *"Don't ask me to leave you and turn back! I will go wherever you go and live wherever you live. Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God. I will die where you die and will be buried there. May the Lord punish me severely if I allow anything but death to separate us!"* (Ruth 1:16-17 NLT)

A severe famine forced Elimelech, accompanied by his wife, Naomi and their two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, to leave Israel and relocate to the land of Moab. While there, Elimelech died, leaving Naomi alone with her two sons. They both married Moabite women, Orpah and Ruth. About ten years later both her sons died. Naomi was now alone, with only two daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth.

Then Naomi heard that the Lord had blessed His people in Judah by giving them good crops again. Bereft of husband and sons, she decided to return to her own country. She announced the decision to her daughters-in-law who loved her very much. Sad at the thought of losing their mother-in-law, they



At this, Naomi urged her no more. There was no more reason to press the issue. She now knew that Ruth's heart was one with hers, with her people, and most important, *with her God!* Here was the cement that would bond their lives together as nothing else ever could. Naomi had shown the wise, loving concern that comes from godliness. She had shown by example her faith and hope even during severe trials. Both her daughters-in-law had seen the strength of faith that had brought her through the dark valleys of life. But it was Ruth who took it to heart and understood its value. "Your God shall be my God," she insisted.

Is our zeal for God as great as was hers?

Ruth and Naomi journeyed on to Bethlehem. It was the time of the barley harvest when they arrived. So Ruth went to the fields to glean behind the harvesters. The owner of the fields, Boaz, was very kind to her. Ruth humbly bowed to the ground and thanked him warmly. "Why are you so kind to me?" she asked. "I am only a foreigner." Boaz replied, "Yes, I know. I also know about the love and kindness you have shown your mother-in-law ever since your husband died, and how you left your father and mother and even your own land to live here among strangers. I know how you have come to trust in the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to trust. May He reward you fully."

"Sir, your kind words are so very comforting to me," she said. "I hope I continue to please you, though I am not as worthy as one of your workers." As Peter said, "God resisteth the proud, and gives grace to the humble" (1 Pet. 5:5). Yes, the Lord would bless Ruth. And He did. She continued to glean through barley harvest and then through wheat harvest. In this way she was bountifully blessed with all the necessities of life.

We reap what we sow, and now Ruth was about to reap another blessing. It was then that she was married to Boaz and had her first son. She took it to her mother-in-law, Naomi, and put it in her arms. Yes, Naomi did indeed have another son in her old age. She took care of Ruth's child as if he were her own. "At last Naomi has a son again!" said the neighboring women. And so they named him Obed, which means "serving." This noble woman, Ruth, became the great grandmother of David, and is of the lineage of Jesus Christ, our soon coming King of all the earth.

And what became of Orpah? She turned back to her own family and her gods. We hear nothing more about her. Her name has forever faded into the past and will, except for this brief mention of her in the Book of Ruth, be forgotten forever.

What of us, you and me? Are we as determined to put our faith in God and come under the shadow of His wings for refuge, as was Ruth? Or, when the road becomes rough will our faith wane and will we be like Orpah and turn back to our old gods of sin where we felt so comfortable?

Have we counted the cost, and are we fully ready to suffer the loss of anything God forbids for the Master's sake? Is our heart fixed upon Christ, bound with cords of faith and determination?

Orpah is heard of no more, but Ruth lives in history and her name is recorded in the "Book of Life." She is awaiting the day when Christ will pronounce "well done" and give her an even greater inheritance than a small space of time we call mortal life.

Yes, there is more, much more for the determined, wholehearted, dedicated servant for life. For those who are willing to give all that is passing away; God will give that which is lasting—even life, unending life. ♦

—Contributed

Daily Inventory

When evening comes, go off into a quiet place and review your day.

Have you been kind and thoughtful, or mean and thoughtless?

Have you kept an even temper, or have you lost your temper when things have gone wrong?

Have you been pleasant, or grouchy?

Have you inspired those whom you have met, or have you depressed and discouraged them?

Have you done something creative and worthwhile, or have you wasted the day with petty things?

Have you been square and fair in what you've done?

Have you increased the happiness-moments in the lives of others, or have you thought only of yourself?

Have you enlarged your mental horizon, expanded your personality—have you grown larger, or shrunk smaller?

What we do day by day determines what we become. Hour by hour we build our lives for better or for worse. A daily inventory will help to keep us on the right track, headed toward our highest ideals.

—Selected



HONEST... *All the Way*

"Lillian, I've just made the biggest mistake of my life. And I don't know what to do." Jake was just home from work and thoroughly discouraged. "I can't do it, Lillian, I just can't."

"Whatever are you talking about, Jake? What can't you do? What's wrong?"

"I'm through with *something*—it's either my job or my faith. I've come to the point of either-or. It can't be both. If I'm going to insist on being honest, I'll lose my job."

"You don't mean Mason Incorporated wants a dishonest auditor?"

"No, no, that's not it. It's all a matter of honesty. How far do I take it?"

"I'd say honesty *all the way*," Lillian spoke with firmness. "But tell me, Jake, what has happened?"

And the story came. It all started—apparently—from a casual visit with his supervisor Bud Wilson a few days before. (Bud Wilson owned a share of the company.)

Bud happened by when Jake had just discovered a sizeable mistake—nine thousand dollars worth of material the company had received and never been billed for. "There's \$9000 Johnson & Fillmore's would never have gotten if we didn't tell them about it," Jake had commented to Bud.

"You mean you *told them*?" Bud was shocked that Jake would report so fortunate a mistake. "Nobody

reports mistakes in their favor," he had said. "I mean *nobody*."

"Certainly I told them," Jake had replied. "Couldn't think of doing anything else. Wouldn't we want to know about it if we were in their place?"

"We surely would," interrupted Lillian. "That's Jesus' principle. That's the Golden Rule, which everybody likes to think they live by."

"Well, Bud couldn't see it that way. He told me plainly I should have kept quiet and saved \$9000 for our company. And then he left, rather anxious to forget the embarrassing little matter, if I am any judge. I don't think he liked the idea that I was trying to be a little more honest than he felt necessary. But neither did he like my reporting the mistake. So there you are."

"But is that the whole story, Jake?"

"No, I didn't really think too much about the incident until today when the president called me to his office. He said he wanted to brief me on what he called 'company policy.' Reporting mistakes on bills, he told me, was to be strictly a one-way business, always and *only* in our favor. 'We can't afford to keep you on our payroll otherwise,' he said. 'Competition is too keen. We need all the advantage we can take. And,' he assured me when I showed a look of objection, 'there's nothing wrong about it. You'll just be following company rules. Understand?'"

"That's a nice way of putting it," interposed Lillian. "What did you tell him?"

"I told him I understood, and he shook my hand and dismissed me. That's all there was to it. But that's where I went wrong, Lillian. I can't be dishonest in my work and be a Christian, even if the dishonesty is called 'company policy,' can I? What do you think?"

"Never, Jake, never, never!"

"But Lillian, do you realize what this means? If I insist on reporting mistakes and I lose my job—"

"We'll make out, Jake. There is always a way. God will provide—somehow. We're both young and healthy."

"But jobs—especially good, steady ones like this

one—are hard to come by. Especially now."

"Don't worry, Jake, our greatest concern is that we do what is *right*. What God calls right. Why did you agree to go along with the president's policy?"

"It didn't strike me at that moment what it meant. Following 'company policy' sounds innocent enough. But—"

"But there's nothing innocent about it. God calls wrong, *wrong*, whatever name we like to give it. He wants us honest *clear through*."

"I'm going back to the president's office in the morning, first thing."

"And if he says you are through and you lose your job..."

"Well, I'll take the risk. Being right before God is far more important" said Jake. "My job isn't worth anything compared with my integrity, and my prospects of eternal life. And being even a *little* dishonest is far too dangerous a risk."

"You're right!" agreed Lillian. "God wants us honest *all the way*."

Jake's worst fears came true. In the morning he went to the president's office, explained his position, and within an hour was back home. Fired.

But that wasn't the end of it. About two days later as Jake was reading the want ads in the newspaper,

the phone rang. It was a Mr. Lloyd Johnson of Johnson and Fillmore, inquiring for Jake Petril. "It's been a long route reaching you," he said. "I really thought I'd have to give up. About the nine thousand dollars... I just want to deliver my personal thanks to you and your company, not for the money so much as in recognition of your integrity."

Jake was silent.

"You are Jake, aren't you?"

"Yes," replied Jake.

"And you do work for Mason Incorporated?"

"I used to," was the hesitating reply.

"You mean you quit your job?" Mr. Johnson showed his surprise.

"Not exactly," said Jake. "It was just that...that I couldn't do my job the way my boss wanted it done. So..."

"So you're looking for work?"

"That's right."

"I have an opening for a comptroller that I've been trying for three months to fill. Would you be able to come for an interview this afternoon?"

Jake was speechless for a moment as he gathered his thoughts. "Why, why yes. Yes, I would be pleased to come. I'm not sure I have the background you need for that job, sir."

"You have the integrity, that's an important qualification to start with. I'm confident we can work out the rest." ♦

GOING UP?



"Going up!" is the call of the elevator operator, or "Going down!" In most parts of the world, elevator operators have been replaced by buttons and automatic sensors, but one way or another the direction must still be given.

Some people are always going up. They are always looking up. Their aim, their conversation, their aspirations, their outlook, all are up. To spend a few moments in their company is to receive an uplift. They breathe an atmosphere of highest purity and they give us a fresher outlook to carry on our way. In fact, to a few sensitive souls these "elevators" may even be a silent rebuke by their constant energy and stubborn determination to go up.

Why be a negative "elevator"? Why go down when the topmost floor of perfection is beckoning? Happiness and deep-rooted joy come only when we are moving upward! Don't call "Going down" when the mists of doubt obscure the pinnacle. Instead, apply the lens of faith to your faltering vision and speed upward.

Ignore the defeatist's cry, "Going down," when the way seems rugged and steep. Difficult places, uncertainty, heartaches enlarge the soul, broaden our sensibilities and bring out the best that is in us.

Let the echoes of "Going down" die in the low places while you speed up. The upward call may mean going up alone—and yet not alone, for there are a few whose cry is "Going up!" The heights have captured their hearts, their thoughts, their wills, their tongues, their actions, their imaginations. These "elevators" are straining, pressing, reaching, forcing their way upward.

Will you answer the call, "Going Up?" ♦



Always There

Paul came into my office, as he often does, to discuss a business matter. He looked like he could have used a lot more sleep. Could he be having family problems, or could it be his new job?

A few months earlier he had been down to seek my advice on accepting a new position with the company. I assured him that he would do well, but we both agreed that it would not be to his best interest if it imposed on his Bible study or family life.

We had previously worked together on a few assignments and I had been impressed by Paul's high moral character. However, it wasn't until we had to fly out of town to resolve a customer problem that I became better acquainted with him. It was then that I learned he was a Sunday School teacher.

When we arrived at the gate, ready to board the plane, he announced that he had forgotten his Sunday School lessons in the car. As usual, when flying from a very large international airport, it seems that your flight is always at the most distant concourse, and, yes, nearly always the last gate. This time was no different.

"We still have a few minutes," he said. "If I run I think I can make it to the car and back. I really do need to get the material for my Sunday School class so I can be ready next Sunday." I

looked at my watch and then back to Paul and agreed; "If you really hurry, I think you can," though I knew the distance back to the car was not short.

Thirty minutes, no Paul. Then, as the gate attendant picked up the microphone to start the boarding process, I looked down the long hall and saw Paul coming. His shirt was soaked with perspiration. He looked like he might collapse before he got there, but the smile on his face told me he would make it.

Why was Paul looking like he needed a lot more sleep? "Is your new position not working out?" I queried. Paul, wearily replied, "No, it's my two-year-old son."

Then he explained. "Steve is old enough that we thought he should have his own bedroom," Paul began. "So I took him to his new room and read to him until he fell asleep. Then I quietly slipped out of his room and went to bed. But before I could get to sleep, I heard his little voice, almost a whisper, calling, 'Daddy, Daddy.' I thought that if I ignored him he would go back to sleep. Soon he called again, a little louder, 'Daddy, Daddy!' 'He'll be all right,' I thought, so I waited. But the next time he called, 'DADDY! DADDY!' I knew he was scared. So I got up and went into his room and talked to him until he was sound asleep again. After slipping out and getting back in bed, I had no more than dozed off until it started over again. Well, last night was the second night in his own room, but he is getting braver," Paul said with a big smile. "Just before I dozed off to sleep I heard the

pitter-patter of little feet coming down the hall. The bedroom door opened and in came little Steve. He walked up to the bed and ordered, 'MOVE OVER!' So I gave him a big hug, swooped him up into my arms and took him back to his room. I read him to sleep and quietly slipped back into bed."

Here is a good parent, I thought. "You are a good Daddy," I said. "You won't have this problem with Steve very long whereas the father that spansks or threatens his child demanding it be quiet and stay in bed will have a child that will fear sleeping alone for a long time. But you are letting Steve know that you are always there when he needs you."

A few days later, I met Paul again. "You look like you are sleeping well again," I said in greeting. "Oh, yes," he replied with a big smile, "Steve sleeps all night now in his own bed!"

This was a wise parent. Recognizing Steve's fear of sleeping alone for the first time, he did not punish him for his fears. Instead he gently guided and encouraged him in the first steps of independence. He assured the young child that "daddy" would always be there when he was needed. A bond of trust between father and child had been created that would probably last the rest of Steve's life.

This is a good lesson for parents with small children. And yes, for others too. In God's sight every believer is like a child requiring trust and discipline.

Could we expect any less from our heavenly Father? If we are sincere He will be sure to calm our fears and discipline us as needed. And He will be patient with us as the struggles come and the fears mount.

But when we need Him He will always be there. ♦

—Contributed

Announcing... *Abib*

This year the members and friends of the Megiddo Church will welcome the beginning of the sacred New Year on the evening of Friday, April 16, and extending through Saturday, April 17, Bible time being measured from "evening to evening" (Lev. 23:32). The ancient Hebrews, according to the law God gave to Moses, marked the beginning of the sacred New Year with the month "Abib," which is the month beginning with the first new moon following the spring equinox (March 21 this year). The first new moon occurs this year on April 16.

This day has double significance as we commemorate the beginning of the sacred year and also the birth of our great coming King.

Distant members and friends, plan now to join us for this sacred season. New Year services and programs will be held on **April 16 and 17**. The anniversary of the Lord's Supper will be on Wednesday, **April 28**, and the Resurrection on May 1.



You Can Never Tell

*You can never tell when you send a word
Like an arrow shot from a bow
By an archer blind, be it cruel or kind,
Just where it may chance to go.*

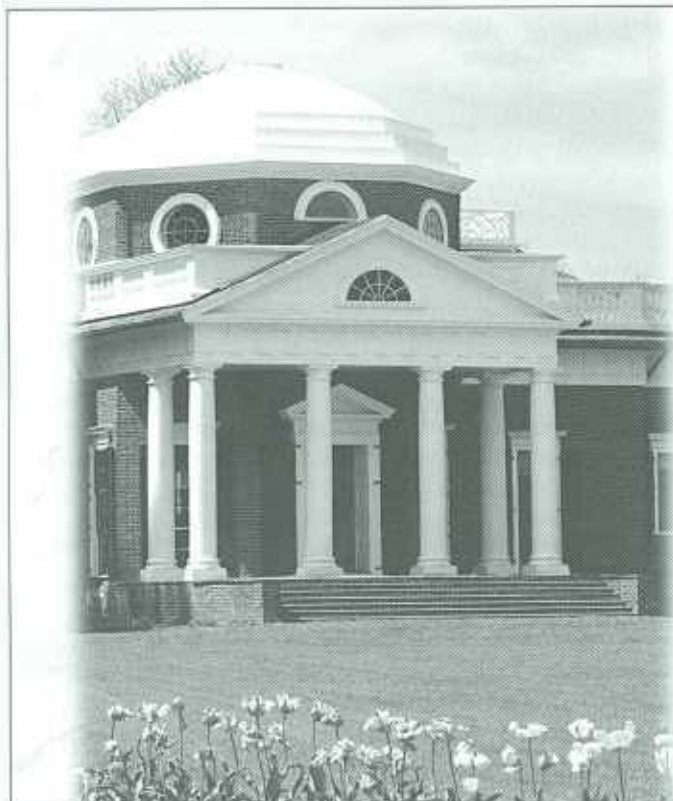
*It may pierce the breast of your dearest friend,
Tipped with its poison or balm,
To a stranger's heart in life's great mart
It may carry its pain or its calm.*

*You never can tell when you do an act
Just what the result will be,
But with every deed you are sowing a seed,
Though the harvest you may not see.*

*You never can tell what your thoughts will do
In bringing you hate or love,
For thoughts are things, and their airy wings
Are swifter than carrier doves.*

*They follow the law of the universe—
Each thing must create its kind,
And they speed o'er the track to bring you back
Whatever went out from your mind.*

—Selected



Where Was the Dispute?

"In the epistle of Jude, verse 9 tells about a contention of Michael the archangel with the devil over the body of Moses. I have read the Old Testament and cannot find where this dispute took place. Can you tell me where this originates?"

The verse to which you refer reads as follows: *"But even Michael, one of the mightiest of the angels, did not dare accuse Satan of blasphemy, but simply said, 'The Lord rebuke you' (This took place when Michael was arguing with Satan about Moses' body)"* (Jude 9 NLT).

Jude, the author of the book bearing his name is believed to have been a brother of Jesus and was no doubt familiar with Bible history having lived much closer to the time than we, but we are confident that the text in question has no reference to Moses' literal body and burial. The death and burial of Moses is recorded in the Bible, perhaps by Joshua and no Satan had any part in it. We read: *"Moses the servant of the Lord died there in Moab, as the Lord had said. He [God, represented by His angel] buried him in Moab, in the valley opposite Beth Peor, but to this day no one knows where his grave is"* (Deut. 34:5-6 NIV).

It seems possible that the characters in the quotation from Jude are representative, that the whole incident is a symbolism rather than an actual event. Michael, which means "one like God, high one, a prince" could represent Moses, the leader of the Children of Israel. Angels are messengers and are not necessarily heavenly angels. An archangel could be simply a messenger of a higher order. Moses was like God to the Children of Israel. The Lord said to him, *"See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh; and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet. Thou shalt speak all that I command thee; and Aaron thy brother shall speak unto Pharaoh, that he send the children of Israel out of his land"* (Ex. 7:1-2). Moses was made a god to them to act in a place of authority; he was acting for God and in God's place. He filled the part of Michael to the elders of Israel.

Who was the devil in this little drama? The devil of the Bible is anyone who opposes God and right, or takes the position of an adversary, an opposer. Pharaoh ably filled this role in his dealings with Moses, so might be termed a devil. The Children of Israel could be the "body of Moses" over which the contention arose. Perhaps the contention referred to was caused by Pharaoh's opposition to allowing the Children of Israel to leave Egypt. In the Scriptures, the church is sometimes called the body of Christ, as in 1 Cor. 12:27: *"Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular."* Just as believers in Paul's day were the "body of Christ," so Israel was Moses' body or church.

♦ Spirit beings seem real

"If there is no devil or demons (spirit beings which are evil), then by what or whose power do the false prophets perform their seemingly wonderful feats? We see a lot of such displays here in Nigeria."

Although the majority of religious organizations believe in a literal devil or a spirit of evil that causes all the evil in the world, Scripture does not support the belief. A study of the use of the terms devil or Satan in the Bible shows that anyone called Satan or referred to as a devil is someone opposing God, or opposing what is right and good. Evil is also personified by the use of symbolic language. Demons, such as those cast out by Jesus, represented an illness or affliction, as opposed to a healthy condition of the body. In the early centuries any one with an illness was thought of as being possessed by a devil or demons, that is, whatever is opposed to a healthy condition of the body. The illness was the opposer.

Because the word "devil" is used to refer to an opposer, it was often used in the Gospels to describe diseases of body or mind. For example, Mark records an incident of Jesus' healing *"a man with an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling among the tombs."* Jesus said unto him, *"Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit...and the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine...and they were choked in the sea."* The fact that the devil entered into the swine and caused them to drown was another miracle, unrelated to the insane man. When the owners of the herd of swine came to see what had happened they came to Jesus and found the man *"that was possessed with the devil, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind"* (Mark 5:2-15). The devil with which he had been possessed was some type of mental illness.

The Bible tells us that the chief source of evil is the human heart. Jesus said, *"For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly"* (Mark 7:21-23 NIV). And do we not see it so? All the terrible evil you see in your country, as it is in ours, is a direct result of wicked men and women. They devise the evil in their own minds; their own thoughts lead them to carry out their evil deeds.

There is no all powerful "spirit of evil" in the world. The idea of a spirit of evil came from sources outside the Bible. The Persians and many other of the ancient peoples believed that the world was controlled by the spirit forces of good and evil constantly warring against each other.

Jesus gave the apostles the power to heal and to "cast out devils." Healing those afflicted with disease was described as "casting out devils," using the terminology of the people of that day and speaking in terms understandable to them. Acts 16 records Paul's experience of healing a slave girl that "earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune telling." Paul was annoyed by her following him and Silas, "so he turned around and said to the spirit, 'In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!' At that moment the spirit left her" (Acts 16:16-18 NIV). The girl apparently was mentally unbalanced and was a fortune teller, which with all forms of witchcraft was forbidden in Israel. When her owners saw that the hope of their money making scheme was gone, they were furious and started a riot.

◆ Why did Jesus curse the fig tree?

"I have a question I would like to have answered: Why did Jesus curse the fig tree when it wasn't the season for the tree to bear fruit? (Mark 11:13-14)."

Jesus, living in an area where fig trees were common, was aware of the nature of fig trees. Figs set fruit before coming into leaf, so one might expect to find a few early-set fruits. The verse reads: "*Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to find out if it had any fruit. When he reached it, he found nothing but leaves, because it was not the season for figs. Then he said to the tree, 'May no one ever eat fruit from you again!'*" (Mark 11:13-14 NIV). God demands fruit from His people in every age.

Some Bible scholars accept the incident as a parable, using the fig tree as an illustration of the barrenness of the Jewish people. They followed Him and heard Him preach, but bore no fruit of righteousness. The lesson is for us as well: If we expect to bear fruit to present to the Master for the harvest at the end of the age, we have to be setting that fruit now so that it may have time to grow and mature before the harvest. If we let our lives slip away without growing fruits of holiness, we will not have a harvest at reaping time. If we have "nothing but leaves" to present at the Judgment, we cannot expect a reward. "*Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire*" (Matt. 7:19 NIV), said Jesus.

◆ What about magic?

"What is magic? And who or what is behind it? How does the Bible explain or expose this mysterious science? How can we explain this phenomenon as portrayed in the Bible in 1 Samuel 28:8-19?"

Magic as you would see it practiced in your country today is but sleight of hand. Magicians learn to make moves so quickly that the average person cannot perceive all their movements. All who practice such arts as palm reading, fortune telling, psychic readings, and

such like are deceivers. Deceit is a sin, one of the seven abominations of Proverbs 6:16-19. The "wonderful feats" you see can only be the work of magicians. They are deceivers, for they have no power from God to perform such acts. As Christians we give them no support or endorsement.

The incident to which you refer in 1 Samuel 28 is quite different from the magic we would call sleight of hand that is used for entertainment. It is closer to Spiritualism. There are three Spiritualist churches here in Rochester. The Spiritualist church originated here in Rochester with two girls attempting to deceive their father. Although they admitted their act was a prank to fool their father, many who heard about it believed it to be true and soon so many were attracted that a church was formed. Those who practice this type of deceit hold what they call "seances," and purport to bring up "spirits" of long dead relatives or friends to converse with the interested party. Of course none but the one conducting the seance can carry on the conversation (more deceit) and relate it to the interested party.

This is what happened in the case of Saul and the Witch of Endor. Spiritualists see in this event support for their belief. Saul's going to the Witch of Endor was nothing more than a seance such as Spiritualists conduct. Because of his transgression, Saul no longer received word from the Lord. Samuel had died, and Saul, seeing the host of the Philistines, was afraid, and desperately wanted help from the Lord, but "*the Lord answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets.*" In a vain attempt to hear from the Lord, he sought out "*a woman that hath a familiar spirit [a sorcerer],*" that he might "*go to her, and inquire of her*" (vs 6-7). The practice of sorcery, or soothsaying, or fortune-telling was forbidden by law in Israel: "*Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord*" (Lev. 19:31; Deut. 18:12). Saul certainly knew the law forbade such, but his servants did his bidding, and he disguised himself and went by night to consult the medium, the Witch of Endor.

Saul's contact with Samuel through the Witch of Endor was no different than seances conducted by Spiritualists in our day. The witch did not actually "see" Samuel. As in present day seances, her identification of "*the spirit coming up out of the ground*" was vague, and left much (most) to the imagination of her client. Notice in the Bible account that neither she nor Saul actually say that they saw Samuel. The witch saw a "spirit" and "Saul perceived that it was Samuel." She wanted Saul to think that he was hearing Samuel, and did everything in her power to make Saul believe it. The woman had learned enough from Saul's answer to continue the conversation, making it seem that Samuel was answering. The witch answered with a prophecy that the Lord would deliver Saul and his

sons and all the hosts of Israel to the Philistines the very next day (1 Sam. 28:19). Since the prophecy was fulfilled, it seems possible that the Lord may have delivered this prophecy through this wicked woman. All His spokesmen have not been righteous people. We learn from 1 Chron. 10:13 that this act of Saul led to his downfall: "So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the Lord, even against the word of the Lord, which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to inquire of it."

◆ What is the hour of temptation?

"Could you help me to identify the time when this Scripture will take place: 'Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth' (Rev. 3:10). What is the hour of temptation?"

Newer translations of this verse make the meaning clearer. The New International Version translates it: "Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth." "The hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world" to test the inhabitants may describe the battle of Armageddon that will engage the nations of the world when they rise up against Christ at His coming. It will surely be a test for those who live on the earth at that time, because it will decide the fate of all mortals. All who submit to the new rule will be shielded from harm; those who do not submit but rebel will be destroyed. The prophet Isaiah graphically describes the scene: "See, the day of the Lord is coming—a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger—to make the land

desolate and destroy the sinners within it...I will punish the world for its evil, the wicked for their sins. I will put an end to the arrogance of the haughty and will humble the pride of the ruthless" (Isa. 13:9, 11 NIV). Those who have kept His commands and have been judged faithful need not fear, for they have the assurance that they will be protected from harm during this worldwide struggle, the Judgments of God Almighty (Dan. 12:1; Joel 2:32). ♦

KEEPING IN STEP

(Continued from page 12)

marching alongside giving orders for the various turns. Each company will be several paces apart. If they weren't, the last soldiers in the first company would be marching to the drummer of the second company, so would be out of step with the rest of their company — literally because they were marching to a different drummer!

This is a situation we as Christians must avoid. We have but one drumbeat to heed, the one that comes from Christ our head. As surely as we listen to another drummer we will be out of step. Isn't this what Christ meant when He said, "My sheep recognize my voice; I know them, and they follow me" (John 10:27 NLT)?

What of us? Let's be sure we are listening carefully for the Master's voice so that we will be able to obey instantly when He gives the commands: *Halt! About Face! Forward March!* ♦

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON PAGE 13

KNOW THE PROPHETS

1. Samuel (2 Sam. 10:1)
2. Mt. Horeb (1 Kings 19:8, 12)
3. Elisha (2 Kings 2:13-14)
4. Hosea (Hosea 1); Gomer
5. Ezekiel (Ezekiel 24:16-18)
6. Nathan (2 Sam. 12:1-7)
7. Malachi (Mal. 4:5-6)
8. Amos (Amos 1:1; 7:13)
9. Micah (Mic. 6:8)
10. Jothan, Ahaz and Hezekiah (Isa. 1:1)
11. Jeremiah (Jer. 36)
12. Baruch
13. Isaiah 3:16 ff
14. Micalah (2 Chron. 18)
15. Maher-shalal-hashbaz (Isaiah 8:1)
16. Jeremiah (Jer. 1:1)
17. Jeremiah (Jer. 19:10-2)
18. Isaiah (Isa. 6:5-7)
19. Elisha (2 Kings 2:22-23)
20. Jeremiah (Jer. 38:6)
21. Ezekiel (Ezekiel 37)
22. Zechariah (Zech. 6:1-3)

23. Amos, Hosea, Micah, Isaiah

24. Habakkuk (Hab. 2:4)

25. Jonah (chapter 1)

26. Habakkuk

27. Haggai and Zechariah

28. Obadiah

29. Elisha (2 Kings 13:21)

30. Joel (chapter 1)

31. Daniel (Dan. 6:16)

32. Malachi

FOURS

1. Lazarus (John 11:17)
2. The man sick of the palsy (Mark 2:3)
3. The river in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:10)
4. Philip (Acts 21:9)
5. Zaccheus (Luke 19:8)
6. The soldiers (John 19:23)
7. Solomon (Proverbs 30:25-28)
8. Sanballat, and other enemies (Nehemiah 6:1ff)
9. Peter (Acts 10:9-16)

FAMOUS FORTIES

1. The flood—it rained for forty days and forty nights (Genesis 7:4)
2. Moses spent forty days on Mount Sinai with God when he got the tables of stone (Exodus 24:18)
3. Elijah was forty days in the wilderness without food to escape the wrath of Jezebel (1 Kings 19:8)
4. Jesus' temptation on the mountain (Luke 4:2)
5. The sojourn in the wilderness (40 years)
6. Jonah 3:4
7. Saul, David, Solomon
8. Of Jesus, after the resurrection, and before the ascension (Acts 1:3)
9. Joshua (Joshua 14:7)
10. Moses (Acts 7:30)

It is the little nibble at selfish desires, the little tamperings with evil that upset our spiritual digestion; the slight hankering after the forbidden fruit; and before we are aware of it the habit is so deeply rooted that it is difficult to break.

Goodness consists not in what we do, but in what we are.

A great thing done for self is small; a small thing done for God is great.

*I wish I were great, oh, the good I would do!
I would use all my powers to help the work through.
Well, how do you know that you would, may I ask?
Just prove it by how you do each little task.*

Don't pray to escape trouble. Pray for strength to be better because of it.

DON'T QUIT

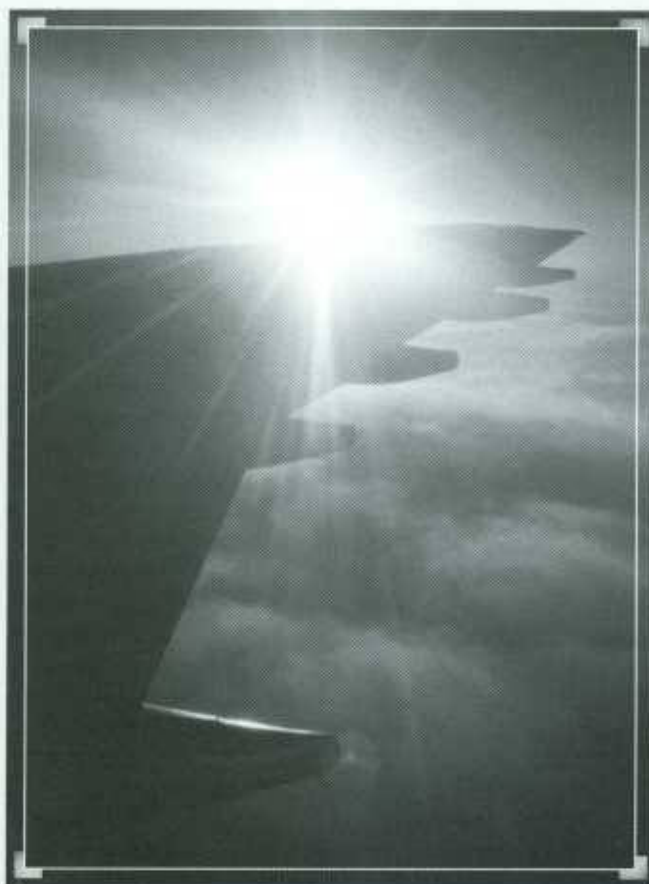
*When things go wrong, as they sometimes will,
When the road you're trudging seems all uphill,
When the funds are low and the debts are high,
And you want to smile but you have to sigh,
When care is pressing you down a bit,
Rest if you must, but don't you quit.*

*Life is queer with its twists and turns,
As everyone of us sometimes learns,
And many a failure has turned about
When we might have won had we stuck it out;
Don't give up, though the pace seems slow—
You might succeed with another blow.*

*Often the goal is nearer than
It seems to a faint and faltering man;
Often the struggler has given up
When he might have captured the victor's cup;
And he learned too late, when the night slipped down,
How close he was to the golden crown.*

*Success is failure turned inside out—
The silver tint round the clouds of doubt,
And you never can tell how close you are—
It may be near when it seems afar;
So stick to the fight when you're hardest hit—
It's when things seem worst that you mustn't quit.*

—Selected



Because a pilot was experiencing difficulty landing his plane due to the fog, the control tower decided to bring him in by radar. As the pilot began to receive directions from the ground he suddenly remembered a tall pole in the flight path and appealed in panic to the control tower about it. The reply came bluntly, "You obey instructions; we'll take care of obstructions."

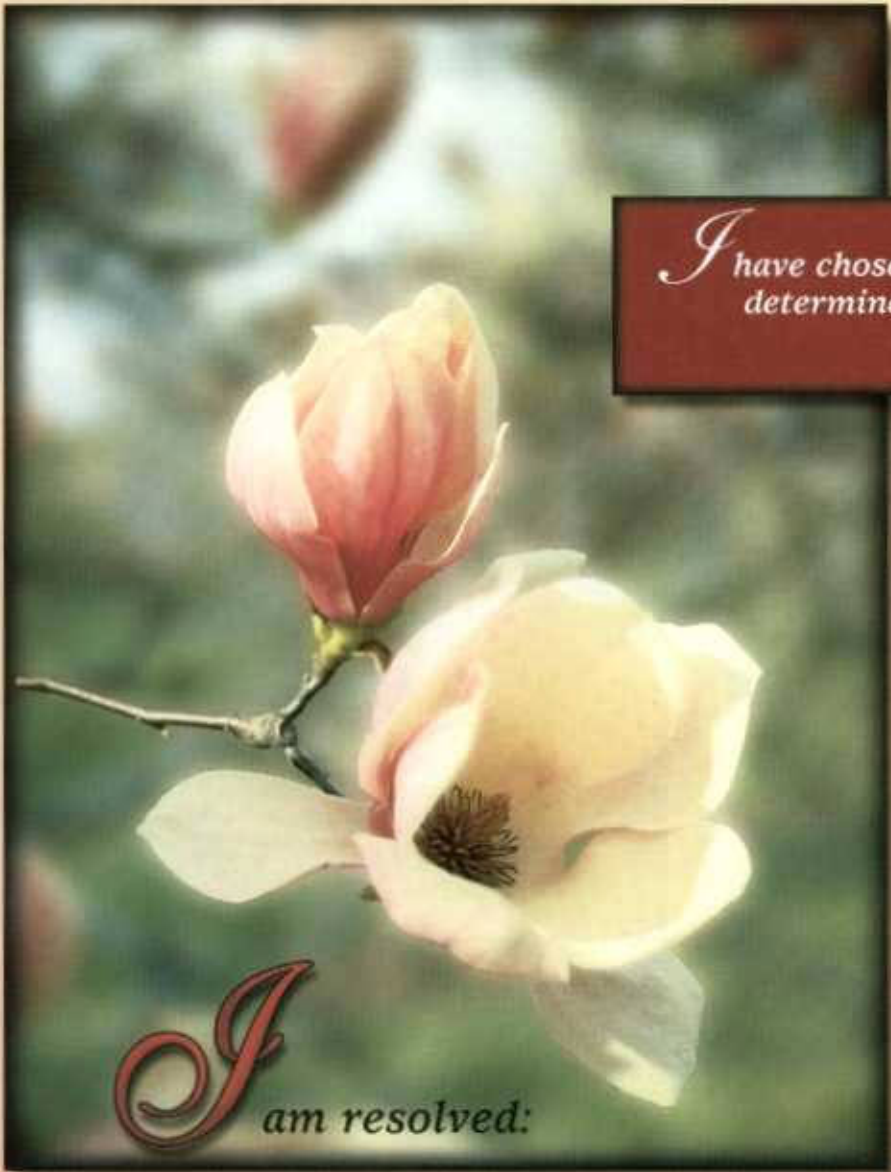
How often do we hesitate to obey God's directions because we think we know more than God. If we only obey, God is capable of showing us how to deal with the difficulties so we can "land" safely.

It is better to climb up the bleak side of the hill than to slide down the sunny slopes of delusion.

There is no true devotion without emotion.

A plant must grow until it matures and bears fruit to be valuable. So to be of value to God we must grow up and bear the fruits of right doing to be ready for God's harvest.

The brook would lose its song if all rocks were taken away.



*I have chosen to be faithful; I have
determined to live by Your laws.*

—Psalm 119:30 NLT

I am resolved:

To put first things first.
To make my work a joy.
To allow nothing to disturb my peace of mind.
To never lose my self-control.

To spend so much time improving myself that I have no time
for criticism of others.

To think the best, promote the best, expect the best.

To be a friend and not a foe.

To stand always for the right.

To be kind.

To be true to my convictions.

To take every disappointment as a stimulant.

To forget past mistakes and press on to greater achievements.

To live on the sunny side of every cloud.

To smile.

To look ahead.

To keep moving forward.

To be faithful to my God.