



# Megiddo Message

*He counts the  
number of the stars;*

*He calls them  
all by name.*

*—Psalm 147:4*

Vol. 88, No. 2  
February, 2001





## It Isn't Worth It!

Seven days of leprosy. Seven days outside the camp, just because you challenged the authority God had given your brother Moses. Was it worth it, Miriam? Was it? We understand how you felt—it was the same jealous spirit we have felt wrangling in our hearts. It seemed as though your brother had too much authority; at least part of it should be yours—weren't you his senior by quite a few years? One day you vented your feelings. But was it worth it, Miriam?

You must have thought it would feel good, Achan, to have for yourself and family that silver, wedge of gold and costly garment from the accursed city of Jericho. Yes, the Lord had said, "Thou shalt not." All valuables were to go into the treasury of the Lord. But who would ever know? As you tried to sleep that first night, with those treasures hidden in your tent and knowing you had disobeyed God, did you wonder? Did you still feel it was worth it?

We know you were anxious to get on with the battle, Saul. Samuel the prophet had said he would make the sacrifice when he returned, but you couldn't wait. Getting that sacrifice accomplished so you could get on with the battle looked so much more important than keeping your place and trusting in the Lord and obeying the words of Samuel. Surely you thought Samuel would understand. So you went ahead. You probably gained a little advantage on the advancing enemy (which the Lord could have subdued at a single stroke). But was it worth it, Saul? Was it worth all it cost you?

You knew better, David. You knew you were doing wrong that night you let the lust of your eyes lead you into sin. Yes, you were the king. But Bathsheba belonged to another man. To take her you added one dreadful sin to another. Was it worth it? Was it worth all it cost you—in self-respect, in integrity, in favor with God? We know you found out; you learned the painful price of sin. Was it worth it?

And you, Peter. We can hardly blame you for wanting to look out for your own safety that fear-filled night when Jesus was being condemned and you felt your own life was in danger. When you were asked if you were His disciple, you denied that you even knew Him. Three times you denied your Lord! We understand. You felt at the moment that you had to, if you were to survive. But was it worth it? Was the short-term feeling of

security you gained worth the shame of having denied your Lord, Peter? When that cock crowed and your Master turned to look at you, why did you weep bitterly? Because you could not retract those words. Oh! the galling bitterness of sin. It wasn't worth it.

You really thought you had it figured out right, Ananias, didn't you? You thought no one would know that you had sold the land for a higher price than you were giving to the apostles. You wanted people to think that you were giving your all, but you were really acting a lie. You were keeping a small reserve of your own, just in case. But how terribly expensive that reserve turned out to be! Was it worth losing your life because of it?

They all shout from their experience that it was *not* worth it!

Lessons, lessons, lessons. We could add a few of our own. We were born with the same human instincts that are sure to bring grief.

Maybe our issues are smaller. We indulge in some small thing we know we would be better off without. Our eye falls upon the printed page, and we let ourselves read on and on—instead of halting at once when we realize it is not the best food for our minds. We tell ourselves we only want to know how the story ends. But is it worth it?

Or we say what we think. There is some paltry satisfaction in giving another a piece of our mind—when we have no "peace" to give. There is some mite of pleasure in proving ourselves "right," or in having the last word in an argument, or getting "even" with someone who has wronged us. A sharp retort that puts another in his place gives us a feeling of momentary triumph. But it is soon gone, and we have to face the consequences. And the question remains: is it worth it?

We want it our way. Our ideas or thoughts are superior to others, so why seek counsel? So, we go our own way not concerned that it may lead away from God. Is it worth it? No!

Why not look at the longer-term value of that word, that action, that choice, and give up the petty, momentary satisfaction in exchange for the far greater good—of having our names written in the book of Life. Here is true worth! ♦





by RUTH E. SISSON

Go outside on a moonless night, under a truly dark sky in the desert or the mountains, far from the light pollution of the cities, and look up. The spectacle is awesome.

Look through one of several large telescopes on our planet—in California, or Germany, or Australia—and what do you see?

And the discoveries continue. Just this January astronomers reported finding “what may be the largest structure in the observable universe—an immense concentration of quasars and galaxies clustered across more than 600 million light years.” The structure which, say the scientists, “would include billions upon billions of stars like the sun, is 6.5 billion light years away.” Said a researcher at NASA’s Goddard Space Flight Center in Maryland, “We have found nothing bigger in astronomy literature.”

How many galaxies are there? Estimates range from 100 billion to 250 billion to a literally infinite number. And each galaxy is a vast star city containing billions of individual stars.

### ***One Divine, eternal purpose***

The Great Creator is working according to one eternal, ongoing purpose. The Bible tells us what that purpose is with relation to our own planet, and when we apply this same purpose to the vast creation, we see beauty and glory overwhelming.

What is His purpose for our earth? The prophet

Isaiah tells us “*he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited*” (Isa. 45:18).

Who will be those inhabitants? They are defined by literally hundreds of passages of Scripture. Jesus described them as those who “*do his commandments*” (Rev. 22:14). The Psalmist said that each one has “*clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation*” (Ps. 24:4–5). The Lord Himself described them as “*His glory*” in these words to Moses: “*But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord*” (Num. 14:21). In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus describes them as the “*meek,*” “*the pure in heart,*” those who “*hunger and thirst after righteousness*” (Matt. 5:3–13). He said further, “*Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven*” (Matt. 7:21).

How does the Creator select from among humankind those who will have a part in His eternal creation? Actually, He has designed a plan whereby they select themselves—by their faithfulness, their obedience, their loyalty and love. The apostle Paul says that God will give “*immortality, eternal life*” to those “*who by patient continuance in well doing seek*” for

*continued on page 5*



# Megiddo Message

February 2001  
Volume 88, No. 2

## EDITORIAL

### 2 **It Isn't Worth It!**

## FEATURE ARTICLE:

### 3 **Look Up and See!** *by Ruth E. Sisson*

## POEM

### 6 **They Call It "Home"** *by Ruth E. Sisson*

## ARTICLES

### 8 **Faith and Works**

### 9 **When Trouble Comes** *by Russell Hamby*

### 10 **Is It Right to Take Life?** *by Gerald R. Payne*

### 12 **You Must Prime the Pump!**

### 14 **"I Go Straight for the Goal"** *by Eva Goertzen*

### 15 **Go For a Serenity Walk** *by Edward Shayler* A personal account

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### 17 **Do You Believe in Perfection?**

## QUIZ QUESTIONS

### 18 **Know Your Bible**

Who...What...Where? • Bible Texts to Remember  
• Which Prophet • From the Psalms

## BACK COVER

### 20 **The School of Life** Basic Rules

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*Note: If you wish to remove label on cover, warm with hair dryer and carefully peel off.*

## 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.

## Look Up and See!

*continued from page 3*

it (Rom. 2:7). For this selection process He has allotted seven thousand years, at the end of which His creative work on earth will be finished.

God set in motion certain laws of life. Those laws operate without His direct oversight, and individuals are free moral agents to choose what they will do. All are given this life free, without so much as asking for it. But this is all they will get, unless they use the knowledge He has supplied to qualify for more life, i.e., an eternal life in God's new and eternal world.

When Jesus returns, He will judge and reward those who have served Him and will, with the help of these individuals, subdue the forces of evil and set up a new government which will be worldwide. Under this new government, millions and billions of people will find life happy and satisfying, as they comply with its laws and as they are given the opportunity to prepare to live in Christ's eternal Kingdom. This happy arrangement will continue for a thousand years, at the end of which these individuals will be judged and rewarded for what they have done. All who prove faithful will be changed to the immortal state and be granted an eternal place on the earth glorified, beautified and perfected. All evildoers will be eliminated and the whole earth be filled with His glory. Jesus Christ will be the eternal King, supreme and unchallenged, and through eternity will live with His immortal co-rulers and immortal populace. (*For detailed Biblical support of the above, see our booklet, "These Things Shall Be."*)

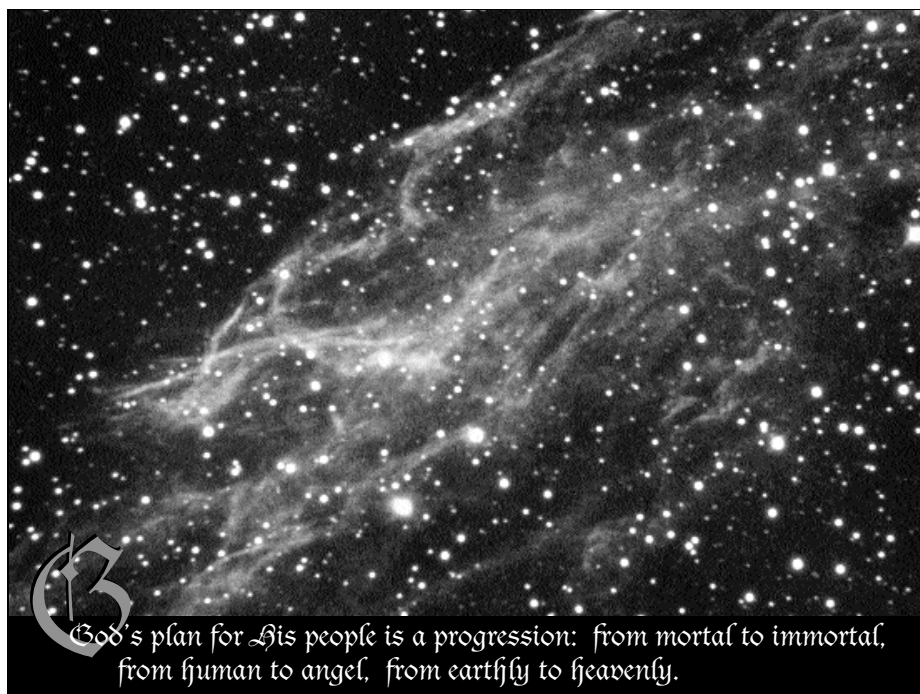
Such, in capsule form, is God's plan for this earth as it is revealed in the Bible. And when we read that His plan for this earth is "*according to his eternal purpose*" (Eph. 3:11), we have an idea of what God is doing all through His vast creation. If His pattern is the same throughout, His plan is to create and populate a world, develop it and transform it into a perfect Paradise of delight, then repeat the process on another planet in some other part of His vast creation, and another, and another *ad infinitum*. He may be working on ten billion planets like ours all at once in other parts of His universe, so limitless is the realm in which He may spread His

mercy! And it may well be the future work of the inhabitants of our finished, glorified planet, to initiate and follow through the same process on another planet, and another, and another—just as the angels have overseen the work on earth (Heb. 2:5; 1:14).

The Bible tells us that the plan of God has been in operation from eternity past, and will continue to eternity future. We read in Psalm 103 that "*the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them*" (vs. 17–18). For God's mercy to

*die anymore; for they are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection*" (Luke 20:35–36).

First Corinthians 15 reveals this sequence: first the "*earthy*," then the "*heavenly*." Our present level of life is not the ultimate; it is only an introduction to life. And "*as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly...Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption...We shall all be changed...for this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality*" (1 Cor. 15:46, 49–53). When Jesus returns, He will "*change our vile [corruptible]*



extend from everlasting past to everlasting future, He must have had living beings upon whom to bestow mercy in a glorious, finished creation.

### First human, then angel

There is constant progress throughout God's creation, from mortal to immortal, from human to angel. Worthy earthborns will one day be physically changed to be made like the angels of heaven, a fact which indicates God's plan of progression: first the human level of life (subject to death), then the higher, angelic level (not subject to death). Jesus said that those worthy to obtain the better life will be made "*equal unto the angels,...neither can they*

*body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body*" (Phil. 3:20–21).

God's work is not limited to one tiny planet in one small solar system in one corner of one galaxy. The God who created us has countless billions of worlds filled with glorified, immortal beings. He has countless others on which He (or His agents) are still at work, and countless others in the beginning stages of creation. It is all one glorious, ongoing plan for the benefit of His living creation.

### "Shine as the stars"

The Bible tells us that immortal beings (angels) radiate light. Stars also radiate light, and the Bible reveals that "*they*

*continued on page 7*



# They Call It "home"

*Heav'n of heavens, orbs of beauty,  
Far-flung worlds of dazzling light —  
We look up, amazed, and wonder  
Whence can come such matchless might.*

*Yet we know in some far region  
Live those shining heirs of light,  
Beings blest, for whom bright glory  
Long has banished shades of night;*

*Beings who, like us, once struggled,  
And were victors in the fight;  
Who put down each form of evil  
And exalted all that's right;*

*Now they're part of God's own glory,  
Shining 'mongst the worlds above;  
Crowned with grand, immortal splendor,  
Fadeless honor, deathless love.*

*Now their world shines forth in beauty,  
With the starry orbs that roam;  
We look up and call it "heaven,"  
They look 'round and call it "home".*

*When someday a new-flung planet  
Bears the likeness of our race,  
People there will look above them  
To a world that angels grace...*

*To our Earth, then part of heaven,  
Shining like the stars of old,  
Filled with happy, blest immortals  
Through God's mercies manifold;*

*And those mortals, awed with wonder,  
Will exclaim about "that star"  
From which angels come to guide them,  
Heavenly beings from afar.*

*As they ponder, we will listen  
While they're feeling quite alone—  
They'll look up and call it "heaven"...  
We'll look 'round and call it "home"?*

—Ruth E. Sisson

*Those who are wise will shine  
like the brightness of the heavens,  
and those who lead many to  
righteousness, like the stars for  
ever and ever." —Daniel 12:3 NIV*



## Look Up and See!

*Continued from page 5*

*that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever" (Dan. 12:3).*

Our earth is now a dark planet; it depends on the sun for its light. But when God's work here is complete, the earth will no longer need the light of the sun (Isa. 60:19). Why? Because *"the Lord will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory"* (Isa. 60:19). So bright will be the radiance that the prediction is for the end of night: *"There shall be no night there"* (Rev. 22:5).

Does it not seem possible that such is the pattern throughout God's vast creation, that the presence of immortal beings is one reason why the stars radiate light? By the definitions to which we are accustomed, light is a release of energy as a result of a change from one state to another. But can we say that all light comes from such a process? Are we competent to say that such is the *only* source of light?

The angels who appeared in Bible times were luminous beings, with natural brightness greater than human eyes could look upon. They also had the ability to diminish that brightness, so that they looked like ordinary "men" (Gen. 17:1; 18:1-2).

Jesus Himself said that *"the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father"* (Matt. 13:43). The prophet Daniel said that the *"wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever"* (Dan. 12:3).

In the book of Revelation we read of the eternal city (a figurative representation of the glorified saints—see Rev. 21:1-10), that *"the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof....And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light"* (Rev. 21:23; 22:5).

When our earth is filled with glorified beings, each one a light in himself, this dark planet will be no longer dark but will shine as the other worlds in God's finished creation.

How many other dark planets throughout the galaxies are in a similar stage of development?

## Who are we?

Who are we, mere earthlings, and where do we fit into this vast creation? Are we vanishing into nothingness in a universe that is immense beyond our power to imagine?

No, positively no! The stars speak of God, His greatness, His magnificence and His eternity. And through His Word we can become acquainted with that God, that Creator, as we see—at a distance—what He has been doing and is doing—and what He will shortly complete right here on earth!



As we look into the wonders of the heavens, we ask: Why are we, mere mortals, being permitted to peer so far into the heavens? Why is God permitting us such a deep-field view into His creation?—or is it still only the surface that we are permitted to see? Perhaps the portion we are seeing is so small that it is insignificant in the Divine scheme.

What is God doing? Perhaps God is counteracting the drugging effects of our faithless and indifferent generation. Perhaps God is providing a means for us to look above the mire and materialism of our world, above its sensuality and vice and its multitude of problems, and see the destiny He has planned for our world.

Perhaps He is trying to boost our faith, our confidence, our zeal for His cause, by giving us a tiny, breathtaking glimpse of His handiwork. Perhaps He is saying, "See what I can do—and believe. Get ready, for I will soon complete my work on earth."

Perhaps He is giving us one last stim-

ulus to prepare for what He has promised, before He breaks into human history and changes the course of life for everyone on earth.

When we think about His Divine purpose and the stupendous opportunity He has set before us, how can we forget it for a moment?

Our faith in God and His Word is strengthened and magnified by the discoveries of science, the Hubble Telescope, and those who are working hard to discover what has not been seen before. All that they find only empha-

sizes the fact that a God of order and design controls the mighty universe. We do not pretend to understand all. Even those who study it intensely are limited by their observations (what they can actually see, which at light years of distance, is limited at best), must constantly revise their conclusions and theories.

But the more they are able to see, the more we realize our extreme smallness, and the more we marvel at the fact that God recognizes us at all! Small wonder that the Psalmist exclaimed, *"When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?"* (Ps. 8:3-4).

Yet this Infinite Creator is inviting us mortals to become part of His eternal creation. Who will turn down such an offer for the small gratifications of this world? Who can think of willfully cutting himself off from such glory, such immensity, such beauty and light?

Jesus is coming to make earth a part

of heaven. To those whom He accepts, the door will be open to explore the vast reaches of creation. Interstellar space travel is common to angels. Eternity will be none too long to survey the length and breadth of it. And as we look at the universe visible to the Hubble Telescope, does not that most precious of all promises become even more meaningful: *"No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him"* (1 Cor. 2:9, NLT)? Our power to imagine grows ever greater—perhaps we can even have a hand in forming and filling other planets with happy, blessed inhabitants.

For when life and opportunity and expansion are everlasting, where is the limit of usefulness to which one may aspire?

We can only say with the great Apostle, *"Oh, what a wonderful God we have! How great are his riches and wisdom and knowledge! How impossible it is for us to understand his decisions and his methods!"* (Rom. 11:33 NLT). ♦

## Announcement

The Megiddo Church will observe the beginning of the month Abib on Sunday evening, March 25, continuing Monday, March 26, Bible time being counted from evening to evening (Lev. 23:32). The day will be observed in recognition of its double significance—as the beginning of the sacred **New Year** and also as the **anniversary of the birth of Christ**. Our foremost purpose is to give honor to Jesus Christ, our coming King and Ruler.

Thirteen days later (Abib 13, this year on Friday evening, April 6), we will commemorate the anniversary of our **Lord's Supper**, and the morning of April 9 (Abib 15) will be the anniversary of Christ's triumph over death and the grave.

Fifty days later (May 28) will be the anniversary of the day of **Pentecost**, when the power of the Holy Spirit descended upon the assembled disciples.



The vital requirements, in order to gain life eternal, are faith and works. For *"without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him"* (Heb. 11:6).

We must read and meditate earnestly in this one true faith of the saints that has been delivered to us, in order to be spiritually strong. However, we might have all faith so that we could remove mountains, and have not charity (or the keeping of the commandments), and it would profit us nothing.

In the words of the apostle James, *"What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?" "Wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?"* (James 2:14, 20). A dead faith will never pull us into the Kingdom.

It has been said that harvest comes when believing is linked with the planting, watering, and the cultivation of the seed. Such works give faith its proper direction. For instance, a man might firmly believe in the laws of nature but never actually plant a seed. He, then, relies on the efforts of another to save him. That is the concept of a darkened world in

regard to their spiritual salvation; God's innocent Son (they believe) having paid the debt they owe.

There was an old gentleman who rowed passengers across one of Scotland's little lakes. This man understood the vital need of faith and works. I am told that he labeled one of his oars "FAITH" and the other "WORKS."

Curious about the unusual labeling, a passenger inquired. Was there a reason?

"Well," the elderly gentleman explained, "when I row with FAITH alone, I go around in a circle, this way." He dropped the WORKS oar and rowed with FAITH. "Then, when I row with WORKS alone, I go in a circle in the opposite direction.

See!" He demonstrated the procedure. "I need both of the oars to row a straight course." As proof, the boatman picked up both FAITH AND WORKS, and dipping them into the water simultaneously, sped across the lake with ease. "It's that way in life, too," the man told his companion.

Our bark may not be a rowboat tossed about on the sea of nations, but if we all bend steadily and persistently to the oars of "FAITH AND WORKS," we will reach Zion's fair shore.

If we will show our faith by our works, we shall be infinitely blessed in this life, and our Heavenly Father will be pleased to open to us the glories of eternity. ♦

—Contributed by Barbara Crum





# When TROUBLE Comes

*"If God be for us, who can be against us?" —Romans 8:31*

by RUSSELL HAMBY

**T**hink for a moment about the inspiring message this text brings.

If we take this text and study it, applying it to our lives, we have a valuable lesson to help us prepare for crises in our lives.

What are we to do when trouble comes like a thief and lays its hand upon our hearts and says, "Like it or not I'm going to walk with you"? Do we reply with words that are hot with anger? That is usually our first impulse, isn't it? Many of us have done that; and when we have, we only got hurt more deeply. In the end, we found ourselves more lonely and more unhappy than before.

What else can we do? What can we do when our hearts are stripped naked by life's hardness and there is nothing left? Can we keep from asking if there is any place where a person can find peace? No, the heart will ask and keep on asking, but the fact is, we should have asked long *before* the dark days came.

There is a terrifying but inspiring sequence of questions and answers in Paul's letter to the Romans. The Apostle's days were filled with troubles which might have destroyed him: tribulation, persecution, hunger, cold, danger, and death. And so he confronts his own self and asks: "*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?*" And he hurls back the answer. It is swift and defiant: "*Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.*"

What I would like to know is this: How could Paul say these things? What is the source of the strength he had found to say that? We need not really wonder, for we know that Paul had prepared himself day by day by letting his spiritual life be as abundant as his earthly life.

If only we would live our spiritual lives daily and not treat religion as though it were an emergency matter! If only we would face God each day, no matter what the day, and talk to Him as casually as we talk to a member of our family; talk to Him any time, any day, in times of joy, at times when something happens, at times when nothing happens, any hour of the day or night. If only we would talk to God as Paul did!

There are people who feel that they have not lived a full day unless they have listened to their favorite radio or TV commentator or read their favorite columnist. If we had that desire to communicate with God, how peaceful and rich our lives would grow spiritually, and how strong and how prepared we would be. The storms would still come, but they would seem different. Like Paul, we would be able to say, "*In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.*"

And again, some might ask by what secret device Paul came to have such inner strength? The answer is again simple. It was not by any secret device but in seeing spiritual meaning in everything that happened to him. We should do likewise.

Paul's days were filled with troubles and yet, looking at them all, he said, "*All things work together for good to them that love God.*" Somehow he felt that in whatever trouble came his way, God had something to say to him. He knew that some good would come of it, some lesson, some benefit; the years would reveal it.

We know how deeply Jesus carried this conviction throughout His entire life—from the wilderness where He was tempted all the way to Calvary and the cross. His days were haunted by trouble, but He saw it all as victory because He had His heart fixed on the great goal

ahead of Him, the crown of immortal life He would one day receive in His Father's presence.

Many of us do not feel that way about trouble. Somewhere along the way we have lost the meaning of great words. We still use them, but they have become hollow symbols. When trouble comes, we frantically reach for them as though they were magic formulas, but the meaning has gone.

We still speak of the love of God, but the meaning has been squeezed out of it. We live through our bright days without remembering that they are God's blessing. We still speak of forgiveness, but not knowing what it means we cannot make it part of our lives.

So where does all this lead? It all adds up to our need for faith—faith that is sure confidence in the promises of God, that every good deed we do for Him He will abundantly recompense in the world to come.

When we have this faith and trouble comes knocking, what will happen? Our hearts will grow fearful. We will see the trouble standing there and know it is going to hurt us. But then, if we listen, there is another knock at the door, and as we listen we hear a voice. The voice says, "*Behold, I stand at the door and knock: If any man [or woman] will open unto me, I will come in and I will sup with him [or her].*" Faith has come also.

Trouble never comes alone to the committed Christian; faith always comes with it. They always come together. That is why the Apostle Paul, in the face of trouble, could fling back the answer, "*Nay, in all things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.*" How can that be? Because "*eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things God has prepared for those who love him*" (1 Cor. 2:9). ♦



# Is It Right to Take Life?

by GERALD R. PAYNE

**I**s it right to take life in war under human direction?

The Megiddo Church believes that taking life in war is condemned by Jesus, and therefore we are conscientious objectors to military service and do not serve in any branch of the Armed Forces. However, we do not resist authority or show disrespect to our Government, and as an alternate to military service, we offer to serve under civilian direction in work which our government considers to be of national importance, such as farming, forestry, hospitals, etc.

## Basis of Our Position

Three Bible principles form the basis of our position:

1) *Jesus commanded His followers not to do violence and not to take the sword.*

When a group of soldiers came to John the Baptist and asked, *"What shall we do?"* he answered them, *"Do violence to no man"* (Luke 3:14). And when Peter raised his sword and cut off the ear of the servant of the high priest on the night Jesus was betrayed and tried, Jesus said to Peter, *"Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword"* (Matt. 26:51-52). *"All who take the sword will perish by the sword."* Here is another clear statement of the Divine injunction.

Paul also wrote that we as Christians do not *"war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal"* (2 Cor. 10:3-4)—we are not to fight with carnal weapons. Again he wrote, *"we do not wrestle against flesh and blood"* (Eph. 6:12).

War is the desire to hurt, not help; to tear down, not build up. Jesus taught a gospel of kindness and love,

compassion and healing. If all men and women worldwide were willing to work sincerely for the good of all others, if each esteemed another better than himself, if everyone followed the Bible laws on kindness, compassion, and love, there could be no war nor any need for war. There would be no strife even between individuals, much less between states, governments, or nations.

2) *The Bible disallows all vengeance and retaliation, also all feelings of hate and anger. All vengeance belongs to God.*

The taking of life is not the only aspect of war that the Bible forbids. The Bible does not give any license to anyone to return evil for evil. *"Do not say, 'I will recompense evil'; Wait for the Lord"* (Prov. 20:22). Again, *"Do not say, 'I will do to him just as he has done to me; I will render to the man according to his work'"* (Prov. 24:29).

In Matthew 5 Jesus also spoke against retaliation. He had been contrasting the old Mosaic covenant with the superior law of faith when He came to the point of comparing the force of each. Actually, the law of Moses had been a law restraining retaliation. *"Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth."* The law may seem harsh, actually it placed a rigorous restraint on vindictiveness. A punishment might be so much but no more.

But Jesus went further and forbade all revenge. *"But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also"* (Matt. 5:38-39).

This is a figurative illustration of a general principle. The law of Moses permitted one's worst passions to be vented; Christ's law allowed no feel-

ings of ill. Injuries, even repeated injuries, should not be resented (Matt. 18:22). And one must never retaliate but rather, in Jesus' highly figurative language, *"turn the other cheek"* to the smiter.

The mere fact that a wrong has been done does not give one license to do another wrong.

This is what Jesus practiced as well as preached. We read that Christ *"when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously"* (1 Pet. 2:22-23)—an attitude far from "natural" when His persecutors were taking His life.

Vengeance is the Divine right of God, as the apostle Paul wrote in Romans 12. It is not our prerogative to mete out vengeance. *"Do not avenge yourselves;...for it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord'"* (Rom. 12:19). Our part is to control our own feelings and shame our enemy by acts of kindness: *"Therefore 'If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head'"* (Rom. 12:20). Beyond this we cannot go. Beyond this we must leave it in God's hands.

Farthest from revenge, we must even return good for evil. *"See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone"* (1 Thess. 5:15). *"Not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing"* (1 Pet. 3:9).

Many of God's Prophets recognized the fact that vengeance belongs truly—solely, only—to God. And they rejoiced in this fact. This was their deliverance from the dark powers that overshadowed them. This was the way God would one day subdue evil,



so that good might flourish worldwide. Hence Jeremiah prayed, *"But, O Lord of hosts, You who test the righteous, And see the mind and heart, Let me see Your vengeance on them"* (Jer. 20:12). God Himself said it, speaking through Moses (Deut. 32:35); and the Psalmist said, addressing God, *"O Lord God, to whom vengeance belongs—O God, to whom vengeance belongs, shine forth!"* (Ps. 94:1).

The one who is seriously trying to live by God's law of life is forbidden all the feelings that underlie the war-like spirit, in great or small degree—feelings of anger, hate, strife, greed, jealousy, rivalry, pride, resentment, bitterness and revenge. The Christian can never under any circumstance harbor feelings of anger against anyone. The law is plain: *"Cease from anger, and forsake wrath"*—no exceptions (Ps. 37:8).

3) *We are commanded not to resist authority but to be subject to the government under which we live. "Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves"* (Rom. 13:1–2). Even though we may not at times agree with the actions of our government, we are not to protest or be uncooperative. If we resist our government, we resist God.

If at any point we must disobey our government's orders to be loyal to God, we will do it and take the consequences. For example, if our government should require us to bear arms, we would accept the penalty without resistance in order to fulfill our duty to God to *"be subject to the powers that be."*

Even though we do not take part in any action which may endanger, threaten, or kill our fellow beings, neither are we to take judgment into our own hands and try to hinder those who do. Jesus never taught His disciples to resist the actions of the government under which they lived, but only to behave in such a way that they themselves would be blameless, as far as possible, both before the law of the land and before God.

4) *We do not oppose or condemn our*

*country for going to war.* Because of our commitment to God it is not our place to advise, direct, or be concerned with our government's decisions. We are to leave all matters of state to the state. God has set up the governments of earth for this purpose—to keep law and order. Our duty is to obey God, to live by His laws, and let the officials of our country take whatever action they deem proper, recognizing that *"the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses"* (Dan. 4:25).

We are grateful to our government for administering its national and international affairs so as to give us political security and freedom from strife and war, so that we can serve God undisturbed. We believe God has arranged this, and we can only thank Him, and realize that the end of the age is upon us, that the great Day of the Lord is near, is near and hastens greatly (Zeph. 1:14).

### **There will be war**

War has been part of the human picture in all ages. Said Jesus, not pinpointing any age or time, *"For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom:...And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars"* (Matt. 24:6–7).

As long as the earth is under human management without God's direct guidance, there will be periods of war. Why? Because the basic cause of war is man's uncontrolled greed, avarice, and the desire for power and revenge, plus the accompanying belief that might is right. So long as there is nothing to restrain this law of the jungle, there cannot be peace. If *individuals* cannot work for the good of each other and subdue their selfish, instincts, what can be expected of *nations*? What is there to prevent injustice, aggression, and oppression when one nation is stronger than

another? When there is no superior authority which all governments respect, what is there to prevent a ruler of one nation taking advantage of another, coveting what is not rightfully his, or abusing the rights of his subjects for his selfish ends? What is there to restrain such injustice—and what is there to stop other nations who choose to use their military power to protest and intervene? Picture what the world might be today if no one had gone out to fight against Hitler. Picture what the world would be if all criminals were allowed free reign, if there were no law and order. Yes, sometimes under the present system war is a necessary evil.

### **Historical position of the Church**

The members of our Church have been conscientious objectors through the years. Our founder, the Rev. Mr. Nichols, was the first to take this position during the Civil War more than a century ago. At that time the United States did not protect conscientious objectors, and standing firmly for his convictions in an unfriendly atmosphere nearly cost him his life. Hearing of his resistance to bearing arms, an over-zealous sergeant took it upon himself to act as judge, jury and executioner, and placed Mr. Nichols before a firing squad. Had it not been for the timely intervention of a superior officer, Mr. Nichols would have been executed.

During World War I, the Rev. Maud Hembree, then serving as pastor of our church, wrote an appeal to the President of the United States to recognize our church as conscientiously objecting to war. A delegation from our church also appealed to the Selective Service Headquarters in Washington, and we were given recognition as conscientious objectors. Since then our church's position has been recognized at all times. ♦

*next issue: Self-Defense*

*"Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no Authority except from God." —Romans 13:1*



# You MUST Prime the Pump!



**P**icture a prospector trudging along a desert trail, exhausted, hot, thirsty, canteen empty.

Suddenly he comes to an old pump. Tied to the handle of the pump is an old baking powder can, in which he finds an old, yellowed letter. He takes the letter from the can and reads carefully:

*This pump is alright as of June, 1932. I put a new sucker washer on it and it ought to last for five years. But the washer dries out and the pump has got to be primed. Under the white rock I buried a bottle of water, out of the sun and cork up. There's enough water in it to prime the pump, but not if you drink some first.*

*Pour about one fourth and let her soak and wet the leather. Then pour in the rest medium fast and pump like crazy. You'll git water. The well has never run dry. Have faith. When you git watered up, fill the bottle and put it back like you found it for the next feller.*

*Desert Pete.*

*P.S. Don't go drinking up the water first. Prime the pump with it and you'll git all you can hold.*

What he does after he reads this letter will tell what sort of person he is—a person of faith...or suspicion.

Isn't this a first-class lesson in faith? Just see that exhausted, thirsty traveler looking at a cup of clean,

clear water. And he must not drink it? Not a drop of it? Not if he wants more!

Here is faith applied. The traveler must have faith to use the water in his hands to pull more water from the depths of the well. Otherwise that cup is all he will get.

But how can he stop thinking: Suppose I use this water in my cup to prime the pump, then pump for all I'm worth, and no water comes? I've lost even the water I could have had! What guarantee do I have that Desert Pete is right? What proof do I have that there is any water in the well?

What would you do if you were dying of thirst and came across that pump, Pete's letter, and the bottle of water under the rock? What would I do? I don't know. Certainly I would think it through. What if it were all a monumental hoax? What if the well had gone dry in the meantime?

Yes, I believe I would trust Desert Pete's instructions, because I would have to believe that no man, especially a grizzled old desert prospector who had known the pangs of hunger and thirst, would trick a man to death on those burning sands!

Faith always involves the element of risk.

We who have put our faith in the Word of God have a lot in common with the exhausted traveler who comes to the pump in the desert. We haven't seen anyone before us draw-

ing water from the well. Yet we know that the Word of God will not lie. What God has promised He will do.

Still, we must take that step of faith. We must dump the water that is in our hands (our link with this present world), trusting all to the God who has said, *"I will never leave you nor forsake you."* If we give what we have at hand, He has assured us that we shall have more, abundantly more. His water will be in us *"a well of water, springing up into everlasting life."*

But it takes faith. Everyone who has served God in every age has had to have faith. How much more we who are living right at the time of the end, right at the consummation of the age! We who are living right at the time when Jesus Christ will return to take the reins of government and rule the world in righteousness.

It takes great faith, just like dumping that precious cup of water. Desert Pete was looking squarely at human nature when he added that postscript on his note: *"Don't go drinking up the water first. Prime the pump with it and you'll git all you can hold."* The thirsty traveler had to give up something before he could get something. In the same way, you and I must give up something—our pride, our self-will, our doubts, our love of this world—before we see any returns. But



when the returns come, they will be astounding! Those who receive God's eternal gifts will be *"abundantly satisfied"* as they drink *"from the river of [His] pleasures,"* and those blessings will last *"for evermore"* (Ps. 36:7, 9; 16:11).

Yes, there is water in His well—an abundance of it. Prime the pump, and discover it for yourself!

**H**ere's the issue: Immediate gratification versus future fulfillment. A sure thing versus a wrong venture; security versus compassion; *"Whosoever would save his life will lose it."*

Doesn't Desert Pete have some instruction for Christians? It is the lesson of risk taking which lies at the heart of faith. To use the words of Desert Pete, "You'll git water. The well has never run dry. Have faith. Pour out the little you have—and pump like crazy."

That is, briefly stated, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, a beautiful composite of faith, hope and love. "Pour out the little you have" (give up what you have at hand, what you can see and hold) and "pump like crazy" (work enthusiastically, giving all you have and are—and God will reward you with wealth and satisfaction and joy that will never run out).

To pour out the little you have

"and pump like crazy" is an act of faith because it is following the example of Abel, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and all the others who have gone before us. All these took risks, poured out what they could see in the hope of things they could not see. *"All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth"* (Heb. 11:13 NIV).

To "pour out the little you have and pump like crazy" is faith—faith in things not seen, faith in the process that God is working out, faith in those who loved and honored Him. It is great faith because it involves hope, especially that part of hope which is able to see the unseen because God has promised it. *"If we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it"* (Rom. 8:25).

It seems very likely that that thirsty traveler could not have summoned the courage to pour out the little he had and "pump like crazy" if in the chamber of his imagination he did not hear the gurgling or see the gush of the cool water drawn from the depths by the pump. Likewise, a clear vision of the future is essential if we would truly believe God, and act upon our belief.

Faith encourages us to take risks and depend on what is yet to be.

But we must have more than faith, and more than hope. There must also be the commitment to give ourselves in obedience to God, which is the third word: love. Here is the only force that can move us to give our best. *"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres"* (1 Cor 13:4–7 NIV).

Desert Pete left more than a note: He left the gift of life to any who might be following him through the desert and not be able to make it without water. His message was life. And isn't that the real value of the message God has left us? But like the note from Desert Pete, it must be heeded before one can receive the benefits. We must give up to gain, surrender to inherit, "pour out the little we have."

Then the benefits will be eternal. For didn't Jesus say to the woman of Samaria: *"Whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life"* (John 4:14 NIV). ♦

#### ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON PAGE 18

##### WHO...WHAT...WHERE?

1. Jacob (Gen. 28:10–12)
2. Bethlehem (Ruth 1:16–19)
3. Lion, leopard, lamb
4. David (1 Sam. 16:1, 13)
5. Old Testament (Num. 14:24)
6. Ruth
7. No (Samson lived about the 12th century BC, Joseph some 600 years earlier)
8. Blindness (Mark 10:46)
9. Raven and dove (Gen. 8:7–8)
10. Sinai (Ex. 19:11)
11. Stephen's (Acts 7:58–60)
12. Bethlehem, Bethany
13. An angel (Gen. 32:24–30)
14. Joseph of Arimathea (Matt. 27:57–60)
15. Eliphaz (Job 2:11)
16. Gomorrah (Gen. 10:19)
17. Paul and Silas (Acts 16:25)
18. King (Acts 25)
19. A mite (Mark 12:42)

20. Egypt

21. A Roman coin

22. Judges (Judges 16)

23. Zechariah

##### BIBLE TEXTS TO REMEMBER

1. Paul (Eph. 6:10)
2. Simon the sorcerer (Acts 8:9, 20)
3. Jeremiah (Jer. 17:7)
4. Israelites (Ex. 19:4)
5. Paul (Rom. 5:3)
6. Nimrod (Gen. 10:9)
7. Stephen (Acts 6:9; 7:56)
8. Jephthah (Judges 11:30–31)
9. Stephen (Acts 7:59)
10. The fool (Ps. 53:1, Ps. 14:1)
11. Isaiah (Isa. 2:1,5)
12. Jeremiah (Jer. 13:23)
13. Stephen (Acts. 7:59–60)
14. Caleb (Num. 13:30)
15. Nehemiah (Neh. 13:11)
16. Simon the sorcerer (Acts 8:9–10)

##### WHICH PROPHET?

1. Ezekiel (Ezek. 18:31)
2. Elisha (2 Kings 4:40)
3. Hosea (Hosea 10:13)
4. Isaiah (Isa. 49:6)
15. Samuel (1 Sam. 12:1,3)

##### FROM THE PSALMS

1. *"My rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer, my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower."* (Ps. 18:2)
2. *"As for man, his days are as grass."* (Ps. 103:15)
3. David (Ps. 18:1,16)
4. *"I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live."* (Ps. 104:33)
5. *"upon the mown grass, as showers that water the earth."* (Ps. 72:6)
6. *"The trees of the Lord are full of sap."* (Psalm 104:16)
7. *"and from the river unto the ends of the earth."* (Ps. 72:8)





# *"I Go Straight for the Goal"*

—The Apostle Paul

by EVA GOERTZEN

A guided missile is a device capable of being forcefully projected toward, and capturing a distant object. A guided missile has a built-in mechanism which is a "homing" device to the target. When the missile gets even slightly off course, this guidance system makes the corrections necessary to get it back on course so that it will reach its target.

The missile cannot, however, correct its course while it is standing still. It can only correct its errors when it is moving forward toward its goal.

We can learn some valuable lessons from the guided missile. First, everyone needs to have a specific object in life and head directly for it. Because our sites are set on God's eternal salvation, we want our whole life to converge toward it: *"One thing have I desired of the Lord,"* said the Psalmist, *"that will I seek after"* (Ps. 27:4). And said the Apostle Paul, *"This one thing I do...I press toward the mark for the prize"* (Phil. 3:13-14). God's salvation is the highest goal we can pursue. It holds blessings everlasting, life, joy, peace, riches and glory.

Because we ourselves would not know enough to direct our own course to the Eternal City, God in His mercy and goodness has provided us with a guidance system. His Word is a light to our path. But we must be wary. There are so many false guidance systems in the world that will never reach their intended target; they are deceived. How blessed we are to have the true Light to direct our course.

But we have a responsibility to make this true guidance system a built-in device. We must study God's Word and lay it up in our hearts, ready to guide us at all times. Our personal guidance system is like a computer. We must feed the details of our goal directly into the mem-

ory of our computer (our heart or mind). If we diligently feed all the necessary instructions into our memory, our guidance system will be ready to keep us on course.

But while we are moving toward our goal, because of our very human nature we are apt to veer off course, even as the guided missile. For this reason it is highly important that we be able always to recognize our errors and acknowledge them; otherwise we will not—cannot—correct our course. The result: we will miss our goal.

Are we continually moving forward to our goal? The course of the guided missile can only be corrected while it is in motion. No correction can be made when it is idle or dead still. Let us be constantly moving forward, all the while watching for the least error in our course. Our failures need not block us, rather we should use them to speed us on the faster. Every correction we make means a mighty leap forward.

Jesus said, *"I and my father are one."* Because His Father's will was always on His mind, Jesus was able to move rapidly and in a straight line toward His goal.

Are you aiming at just one main goal?

The one-goal person reaches his destination quickly. Time is a factor, and time for us is in short supply.

On, on to our goal we must speed. Now is the only time we will have.

If we are all energized with the saving power of God's truth, if His salvation is our goal, nothing will be able to stop us.

*"I go straight for the goal,"* said the Apostle Paul (Phil. 3:13-14, Phillips Trans.), *"I am fully persuaded that...there is nothing in all creation that can separate us from God"* (Rom. 8:38-39).

We are on the last stretch. Let us like Paul, go straight for the goal. ♦



# Go for a Serenity Walk

## The Difference

God grant me the serenity  
to accept the things  
I cannot change;  
the courage to change  
the things I can;  
and the wisdom to know  
the difference.



### I PROMISED THE LORD...

When we moved into our new home, we were given a present of a wall plaque with the Serenity Prayer on it. We have this plaque in a prominent place. It is a constant reminder and it has become a way of life, but we hope that it will be something that we always accept as a grateful privilege and never take for granted.

by EDWARD SHAYLER

We often take the feeling of serenity to be a living requirement, but it can be elusive and something that we are unaware of in our life. Serenity must be earned and should be a constant companion for the Christian.

I had become accustomed to living without it for much of my life simply because spiritual things interfered with my social system. They hindered my social progress and presented what seemed to be an obstacle to my

final goal of success. Everyone in my world at that time knew that SUCCESS was a large bank account and many, many possessions, someone who could parade himself well in the society page.

What happened? I found myself going backwards in the fast lane. This is a very lonely road to take even if it is filled with others doing the same thing, and makes Jesus' prophetic statement correct (Matt. 7:13-14):

*"Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."*

Once we start the wrong way, it becomes a difficult proposition to make a 180-degree turn. The first



problem encountered is habit, and because we have made our life revolve around our ambitions we must change our ambitions. The longer we delay, the harder it is to concentrate our attention on the fault. It becomes a retraining process, and we find that we have lost our *serenity*.

I had come to a place in my life where I realized I had to make that 180-degree turn, but I had no idea that my stiff-necked attitude also needed a complete overhaul. Then one day (it was Saturday) the person I was working for insisted that I attend the usual Saturday night drinking party. I tried to explain to him that I was changing my habits. The more I tried to explain this, the more he insisted. This dilemma caused me to have a near panic, and I phoned a man for advice. This man was a minister's son who had also left his spiritual life behind, but who had recovered a lot. And here was his advice: GO FOR A SERENITY WALK.

For the first time in years I decided to stand still and listen. But since I hadn't the faintest idea what he was talking about, I said, "How do I do that?" His answer was, "Put one foot in front of the other and say the serenity prayer." I said, "What will I do when I finish that?" And he said, "Put one foot in front of the other and say the serenity prayer."

Well! it sounded rather ridiculous, but I had come this far, and I was desperate. Anyway, I decided to try it. So I went, not caring what the people on the street were thinking. There was a graveyard just a few blocks away, so I went there and sat on a tombstone for some time repeating the serenity prayer, and finally the words became meaningful. Suddenly I felt a calm-

ness, and it became apparent that the only way I could change anything was to continue with my first resolve, which meant there might be a price to pay. And since I had asked God for help I had better try to change things and accept the consequences.

I went back to work and met my employer who asked where I had been. I answered by saying, "Mr. Fenning, you will never know." Shortly after that, my friend came and we left and went home, where I explained to my wife the circumstances and she told me how pleased she was that I had stuck to my decision. Unfortunately, Mr. Fenning and his son committed suicide individually sometime later (after I had left his employment).

I have never lost faith in the power of that prayer and its meaning. Almost every word in it—Serenity, Prayer, GOD, Grant, Accept, Cannot, Change, Courage, Wisdom has a deep meaning.

*Serenity*, according to the Oxford Dictionary, is "clear, fair, calm, weather; clearness and stillness of air and sky; tranquility of mind, temper and countenance."

*Prayer* as defined in the Analytical Concordance is: "To petition, entreat, grace, make supplication, intercede, to judge self."

These are two of the qualities that my wife and I try to keep daily and we find that it leads to one of the most beautiful feelings that we can hope to have and a promise that we are all given in Psalm 119:165: "Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them."

While writing the above, we had the pleasure of listening to a church message, "The Grace of Contentment." This message tells me that

contentment can be the direct result of Serenity and Peace. Great men have written in the records of a wonderful way of life and have given us this advice:

Luke 3:14, "And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages."

St. Paul in Phil. 4:11: "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."

St. Paul in 1 Tim. 6:8: "And having food and raiment let us be therewith content."

St. Paul in Heb. 13:5: "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

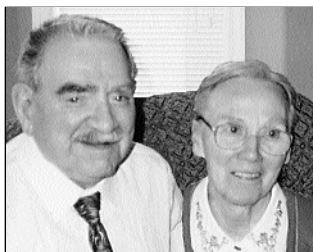
3 John 10: "Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church."

St. Paul in 1 Tim. 6:6: "But godliness with contentment is great gain."

When we read what has been written here, we realize that we have a long way to go to achieve true, godly serenity, because those past habits keep surfacing, but with determination all things are possible.

In Romans 8:38-39, St. Paul said, "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

This could be the fulfillment of the serenity prayer. ♦



*Edward Shayler lives with his wife Lorna in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. Their home is always open to Christian friends, and they are eager to share their daily Bible Study time with anyone who is seriously seeking God through a better understanding of His Word.*



# Do You Believe in Perfection?

***“Jesus told his disciples to be ‘perfect even as your father in heaven is perfect’? Lots of churches do not believe in perfection. If the Bible teaches perfection, such as in Hebrews, how can Christ say to do something that we are unable to do?” (CM)***

Thank you for your interest in this most important subject. Your observations are correct, that lots of churches do not believe in perfection. As you also point out, Jesus did say that we must be perfect. Jesus, in one incisive statement made God’s demands crystal clear. *“Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect”* (Matt. 5:48). James confirms Christ’s command, *“But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.”* Peter apparently understood Christ to mean perfection without even so much as one dark spot on our record, *“Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless”* (James 1:4; 2 Pet. 3:14).

The idea of perfection is not limited to the New Testament. For example, *“And when Abram [Abraham] was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect”* (Gen. 17:1).

Those who do not believe that God requires moral perfection of His human children claim that Christ did not mean to be so exacting. But if this is not His meaning, then what did He mean? Will God approve if I lie as long as it is just a “little one”? Or can I cheat, or commit almost any sin, as long as I don’t “really” hurt anyone? To define the words of Christ in such a way makes His meaning the equivalent of. *“just how much can I get away with,”* and the definition is different for every individual.

Some claim perfection is impossible. But this claim is not supported in the Scriptures. To the contrary, there are examples of those who did meet this high standard. Just a few include Abel

(Matt. 23:35), Enoch (Gen. 5:24), Noah (Gen. 6:9), Job (Job 1:8), and just prior to Christ’s birth, Zacharias and Elizabeth (Luke 1:5–6). The 144,000 accepted ones standing with Christ on Mt. Zion (after His return to earth) are described as having no “guile” [deceit or falsehood] in their mouths, *“for they are without fault before the throne of God”* (Rev. 14:5).

Isn’t it looking back to the pleasures of sin to insist that Jesus would ask the impossible? Jesus makes the comparison to a plowman who begins to plow but keeps looking back. Anyone who has ever tried this will tell you that it is impossible to plow a straight row looking back. *“No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God”* (Luke 9:62). The Christian must maintain a forward look, keeping in sharp mental focus the glories that lie ahead and the goal of perfection, a complete separation from a life of sin to a life of perfect obedience to the commands of Christ.

## Moral perfection through growth

But perfection does not mean that we must live a lifetime without one sin? God understands our human weaknesses and does not require perfect obedience without a slip. Jesus, our greatest example, learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him (Heb. 5:8–9). He had to learn to be obedient, and so must we. Only He did not slip once He knew God’s requirements.

God only asks that we grow into perfection, that by *“speaking the truth in love, [we] may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ”* (Eph. 4:15).

All of us have had habits that stand in the way of perfection of character.

But we have learned by experience that by diligent Bible study, meditation on God’s words, prayer and obedience we can replace bad habits with good ones. The process is not automatic but it is possible. And we are given a wonderful promise in 1 Tim. 4:8: *“For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.”* Isn’t it like a loving Father to allow us time to accomplish a task? If we are *“exercising unto godliness,”* consciously trying to live by God’s higher law of holiness, He will indeed give us the time to perfect our characters.

If honest, we all have to admit that we fall far short of a sinless life. We have sinned many times, even after knowing better. But we can change. Jesus Himself said: *“The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master”* (Luke 6:40). Young’s literal translation is *“A disciple is not above his teacher, but every one perfected shall be as his teacher.”*

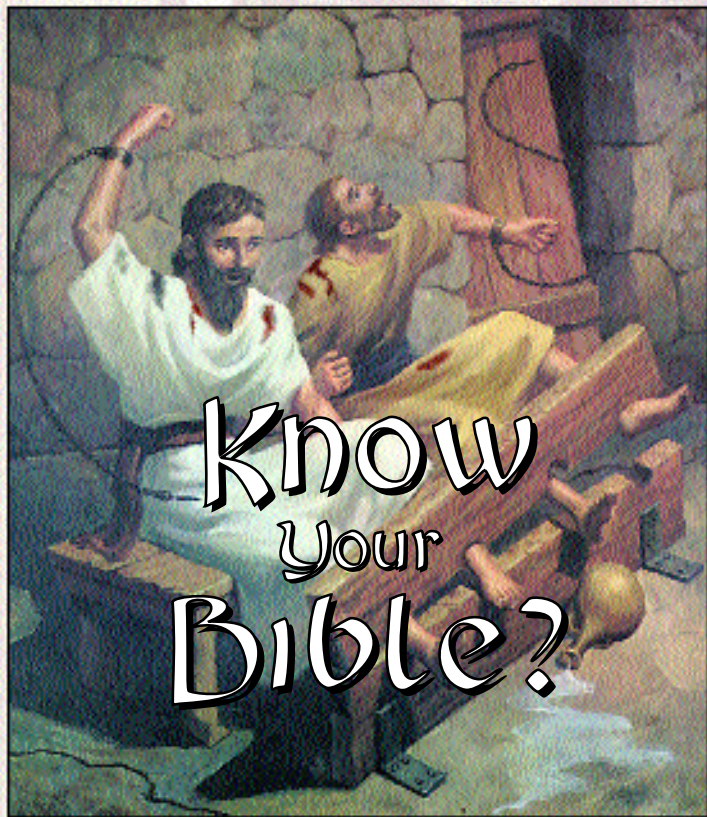
John reiterates these words, *“And everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as He is pure”* (1 John 3:3). When the training is complete every pupil will be perfected like the Master, Christ.

God does not leave us alone. Those who enter into this training are not left to flounder. They become recipients of God’s Divine love. The highest form of parental love is expressed in guidance and discipline. So, the love of our heavenly Father

***Perfection =  
replacing every  
bad habit with a  
good one.***

includes discipline. It is creative, perfecting and tailored to our needs. Jesus said, *“With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible”* (Mark 10:27). With God’s help we can achieve the high standard of perfection. *“For whom the Lord loves He corrects, Just as a father the son in whom he delights”* (Prov. 3:12). ♦





#### WHO...WHAT...WHERE?

1. What Old Testament man dreamed about a ladder?
2. To what city did Ruth and Naomi journey?
3. Name three Bible animals beginning with the letter L.
4. Jesse was the father of what great king?
5. Do we read of Caleb in the Old or New Testament?
6. Name an Old Testament book beginning with the letter R.
7. Was Joseph acquainted with Samson?
8. What was the affliction of Bartimaeus?
9. What two kinds of birds were sent from Noah's Ark?
10. Name a Bible mountain beginning with the letter S.
11. What martyred man's clothing was laid at Saul's feet?
12. Name two Bible cities that begin with the letter B.
13. With whom did Jacob wrestle?
14. Jesus was buried in the tomb of what rich man?
15. Name one of Job's friends.
16. What city is usually associated with Sodom?
17. What two companions sang hymns in prison?
18. Who was Agrippa?
19. What coin is associated with a poor widow?
20. Name a Bible country beginning with the letter E.
21. What is a denarius (penny)?
22. What book tells the story of Samson and Delilah?
23. What is the next-to-last Old Testament book?

#### BIBLE TEXTS TO REMEMBER

1. What great leader said, "Be strong in the Lord, and the power of his might"?
2. To whom did Peter say, "Thy money perish with thee"?
3. Who said, "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is"?
4. Who said, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do"? What was the occasion?
5. Who wrote, "Tribulation worketh patience"?
6. Who was called, "a mighty hunter before the Lord"?
7. Who said, "I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God"?
8. Who vowed, "Whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me...shall surely be the Lord's"?
9. Who cried at the point of death, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit"?
10. Who says, "There is no God"?
11. Who said, "Come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord"?
12. Who said, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots"?
13. Who cried, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge"?
14. Who said of Canaan, "we are well able to overcome it"?
15. Who asked, "Why is the house of God forsaken"?
16. Of whom was it falsely said, "This man is the great power of God"?

#### WHICH PROPHET?

1. What prophet commanded, "Make you a new heart and a new spirit"?
2. To what prophet was it said, "O thou man of God, there is death in the pot"?
3. What prophet said, "Ye have plowed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity"?
4. What prophet said, and about whom: "I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou may be my salvation unto the end of the earth"?
5. What prophet said to his people "Whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded"?

#### FROM THE PSALMS

1. What psalm contains eight names for the Lord? Give the names.
2. What simile does the Psalmist use to express the brevity of life?
3. Who said and where: "he drew me out of many waters"?
4. How long did the Psalmist say he would sing to the Lord?
5. Complete the verse "He shall come down like rain \_\_\_\_\_"?
6. How does the Psalmist describe "the trees of the Lord"?
7. Finish the psalm, "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea \_\_\_\_\_"?

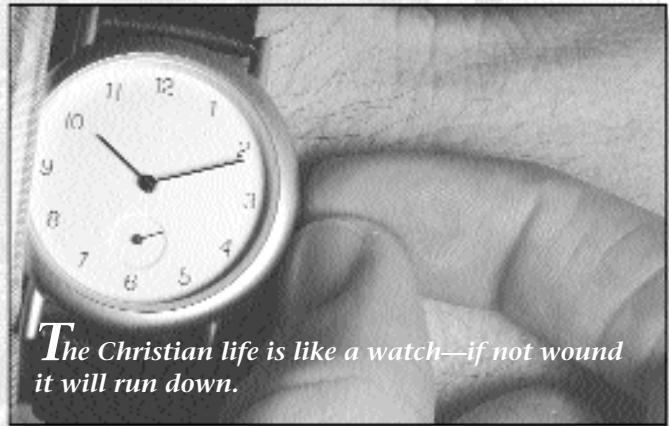
answers on page 13



**A**dversity is never pleasant, but sometimes it is possible to learn lessons from it that we can learn in no other way.

**S**mall deeds done are better than great deeds planned.

**O**ne strange thing about temper is that you can't get rid of it by losing it.



### **Intent or Deed?**

**A** young boy asked his father to solve a riddle. He said, "There were three frogs sitting on a log. One frog decided to jump off. How many were left?"

Dad replied: "Two, of course."

"Wrong," said the boy gleefully. "There were three frogs left. The one frog only decided to jump off—he didn't jump."

This story has a really good lesson for us, because we can decide to do something but if we don't go ahead and do it, it isn't done.

There's a big difference between deciding to do it and actually going through with the decision. The Lord wants us to go through with what we say we will do. It is the difference between intention and action, between the resolve and the deed, between professing and acting, between hearing and doing.

*"Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" (James 1:22).*

**I**f it doesn't affect your hands, feet and heart, it isn't Christianity.

**H**aving your name on the church roll does not make you a Christian any more than owning a piano makes you a musician.

**K**nowledge is knowing a fact. Wisdom is knowing what to do with that fact.

**I**t is impossible to do anything that is worthwhile that does not influence others.

**M**oses and Abraham were not great in the beginning, they were made great by the discipline of their faith.

### **O God Our Father,**

**E**quip us with these gifts today which will help us to live right today and every day:

Grant us the faith which makes it possible to please You, which believes that You are and that You will reward each one who diligently seeks You, and never doubt.

Grant us the hope in Your Word which remains unshaken, even in the dark, and never turns to despair.

Grant us the loyalty which will be true to You even though all others deny You, and which will never stoop to compromise.

Grant us the purity which can resist all the seductions of temptation because You have said *"Strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leads to life."*

Arm our wills with Your strength and our hearts with Your love, so that we may become more and more like our Master and Your Son, in whose name we pray. AMEN.



# THE SCHOOL OF Life

## Basic Rules

1. *You will be given a body and a mind.*  
Like them or not, they are yours to use, keep and care for during the entire period.
2. *You will attend school.*  
When you arrive, you are already enrolled full time in the school called "life."
3. *There are no mistakes, only lessons.*  
Growth is a process of trial and error. "Failed" experiments are as much a part of the process as experiments that "work."
4. *There are no minimum number of lessons which you must complete.*  
Your progress is an individual matter. The more effort you put into your lessons, the more you will progress.
5. *Lessons must be repeated until they are learned.*  
A lesson will be presented to you in various forms. When you have it learned, you may go on to the next lesson, but not until.
6. *New lessons will be presented to you as long as you live.*  
There is no part of life that does not contain lessons. As long as you live, you will be learning.
7. *There is no better place to begin learning than where you are.*  
If "there" looks better than "here," you will only find by moving that another "there" will again look better than "here." If you wait for the ideal situation to begin learning, you may never begin.
8. *What you make of your life is up to you.*  
You have all the tools and resources you need. What you do with them is up to you.
9. *The questions you ask will determine the answers you receive.*  
God has given you eyes to see, ears to hear, and a heart to understand. As you ask questions you will learn.
10. *Master the lessons of life, then you can be ready for life on the higher level, which*  
God is ready to give to everyone of His loving, obedient children.

Anon.

