

Megiddo Message



A mighty fortress is our God
A bulwark never failing;
Our helper He amid the flood
Of mortal ills prevailing.

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Can You Stand Alone?

by RUTH E. SISSON

It's easy to do the right thing when everyone around you is agreeable, complimentary, approving, supporting.

But that is hardly a test. And it isn't the reality of life. People don't always agree. And when they don't, how well do we stand for our convictions, our principles, our faith?

Take the Apostle Peter. How strong he stood the night of the Last Supper! The very suggestion that he would deny Jesus was unthinkable! Peter's love for Jesus and his dedication to him were so strong in his mind that Peter was dreaming of the bliss of being with his Master! Nothing could sever the bond between them. Yes, he would go *with his Master* all the way, even to death!

But right there was the weakness in his dedication: he could be strong *so long as he was with his Master*. The test that came was one for which he was *not* prepared, the test of standing true when he was alone.

Could he stand for his Master when he was alone, on his own? He probably hadn't thought about it, much less prepared for it.

The idea of being separated from his Master cut close to Peter's heart. See how he reacted when Jesus was arrested in the Garden and led away. In an instant, everything he had believed in and depended on seemed to be falling apart. Drawing his sword and cutting off the ear of the high priest's servant was Peter's way of trying to stop what was happening. Jesus immediately rebuked Peter and healed the ear.

Jesus was ready to submit, but not Peter.

Suddenly Peter found himself alone, a situation he was not prepared for. He couldn't face it. Peter, strong and robust, was already coming up short.

Then, just a little while later, came a second test. Anxious to see what was happening, Peter found himself waiting near the entrance to the palace, where some strangers were gathered to warm their hands by the fire. Peter joined them. Quickly they turned out to be his interrogators, but quite obviously they weren't looking to be converted when they asked Peter about Jesus. "*Aren't you also one of his?*"

Peter was shaking in his boots. He knew that if he admitted association with Jesus they would think less of him, suspicion him, maybe even arrest him. Here was another test he wasn't prepared for, and he failed it. Rather than risk his own safety, he lied and denied his Lord. Not once, but three times.

Then the rooster crowed, and the reality of what Jesus has said struck him. He went out and wept bitterly.

Can't we feel for Peter in his weakness? We have all felt strong in the presence of the Lord and with

those who are strong for Him. But what about the times we are alone? How well do we do among those who oppose? How well do we do when we must witness to our faith among non-believers? Are we willing to risk their disapproval? Are we able to stand strong for our faith when others challenge it? Or are we afraid of what they might think?

Serving Christ requires courage when we are with others, and when we are alone.

Face the facts: You won't always be in the presence of strong ones. You must be prepared to stand strong and true, with or without them. This is a lesson we can learn from Peter's failure.

Peter was with Jesus throughout His entire ministry, three and one half years. Of the Eleven, Peter was the strong one. When others were forsaking Him, Peter was the one who could speak up and say to the Master, "*You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God*" (John 6:69). Peter was the one who said he could not leave Jesus because without Him, there would be no place to go (John 6:68). Peter was the one who could stand up and say, "*Even if everyone else deserts you, I never will*" (Matt. 26:33).

Yet when Peter came to the test of standing firm and putting his faith into action, his courage faltered. Spiritually, he was too weak, too worried about what other people would think of him, to stand strong for his Master. He had not yet learned what Jesus knew: That the only thing that matters is what God thinks. He had not yet grown to the point where he could say with his Master, "*Your approval or disapproval means nothing to me*" (John 5:41).

What about you and me? Are we ready to stand



*If God is
pleased, nothing
else matters.*

(continued on inside back cover)

Lord, Correct Me!

by KENNETH E. FLOWERDAY
Pastor of the Megiddo Church, 1958–1985

Perhaps no text in the Bible more clearly emphasizes the fundamental truth that God's thoughts are not ours. The cleavage between the ideas and ideals of flesh and spirit is clear and sharp, and we realize that *"What is highly valued among men is detestable in God's sight"* (Luke 16:15), and vice versa. Who wants to be struck! The very idea is repugnant to the natural man, who laps up applause and approval with avidity but who resents anything that might damage his ego.

Nevertheless, the man or woman who wants to live in the eternal Kingdom of Christ, and who realizes that conversion means a complete reversing of every instinct, thought and habit of life to correspond to the character of Christ, to that one, "the correction of discipline is the way to life" (Prov. 6:23 NLT).

The builder does not find his material ready for assembly in forest and quarry; careful preparation is necessary, often involving labor, tools, machinery, even explosives. So the one who would seek God, though naturally opposed to God and righteousness, must submit to the tools of the Almighty, must be hammered, bent, cut, carved, shaped and polished. He must accept the cutting edge of the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17) and the hard blows of the hammer of God's Word (Jer. 23:29); for a stone or timber strong enough to endure in the spiritual temple of God is not soft and pliable by nature.

As the master architect does not hew the stone himself but instructs and deputizes skilled workmen, so the Great Master Builder does not leave His throne to correct us in person. And in this age He does not instruct or warn through inspired visions or angels. His chief agents are human instruments. And, as has been well said, "Aye! there's the rub." From an angel, a rebuke would be something of an honor. From a brother or sister with whom we associate daily, or from a member of our own family, it is something very different.

Psalm 141:5 reads in the New Living Translation:

*"Let the godly strike me! It will be a kindness!
If they reprove me, it is soothing medicine.
Don't let me refuse it."*

If the godly strike me, it is a kindness. It is *"soothing medicine"*—a far cry from our natural reaction.

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"Let the godly strike me! It will be a kindness! If they reprove me, it is soothing medicine. Don't let me refuse it," said the Psalmist of Israel at a moment when his spiritual life was at flood tide (Ps. 141:5 NLT).

*He is not
truly godly who
receives corrections
only from the person
he designates.*

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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.

Lord, Correct Me!

While we are individually responsible for our own salvation, yet we cannot be the godly one to strike ourselves, even though we have the necessary tools. So far as we can see ourselves, we must strike relentlessly; but the Scriptures, and experience as well, teach that no one is apt to see himself as he really is. Some things—many things—are revealed only through the eyes of others. It is a matter of perspective. "O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps," says the astute Prophet Jeremiah (10:23).

Our text speaks of correction or reproof as from "the godly." From other Biblical statements and from our own experience we learn that such is not always the case, and we must be ready to take a deserved rebuke in meekness regardless of the source. King David received two historic rebukes: one from the righteous Prophet Nathan, and the other from the bloody and unscrupulous Joab; yet he received both with humility and immediately acted upon each (2 Sam. 12:1–13; 19:5–8). On one occasion a dumb beast of burden, speaking with a man's voice, reproved Balaam for his error (2 Pet. 2:16).

He is not truly godly who is not willing to receive correction except from the person he designates. The one who truly loves life does not consider by whom he is corrected, whether by a superior, equal, or inferior; whether by one who is good and upright, or by one who is perverse and unworthy. Whatever correction comes to him from whatever source or however frequently, he receives it thankfully as from the hand of God, and regards it as soothing medicine.

AN INVITATION AND A WARNING
In Proverbs 1, God is speaking through the voice of Divine wisdom. "Wisdom is like a woman shouting in the street; she raises her voice in the city squares. She cries out in the noisy street and shouts at the city gates: ...You fools, how long will you be foolish? How long will you make fun of wisdom and hate knowledge?" vs. 21–22. How long will you make fun of wisdom and hate the only knowledge that can

give you eternal life? Then follows some timely advice: "If only you had listened when I corrected you, I would have told you what's in my heart; I would have told you what I am thinking" (Prov. 1:23 NCV). God is always ready to reveal His will to all who will listen.

But suppose our head refuses the soothing medicine of reproof? We are refusing the voice of God, the only one who can save us. And what will be His response when we need Him? Listen to His words: "I called, but you refused to listen; I held out my hand, but you paid no attention. You did not follow my advice and did not listen when I corrected you. So I will laugh when you are in trouble. I will make fun when disaster strikes you, when disaster comes over you like a storm, when trouble strikes you like a whirlwind, when pain and trouble overwhelm you." (Prov. 1:24–27 NCV).

Can we picture a worse catastrophe than for God to laugh at our calamity, if in the Day of Judgment we see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and all the righteous in the Kingdom, and we are barred from entering—and all because we refused to listen to the correction He sent us?

Our instincts may tell us that reproof is not good, the person corrected may become discouraged and disheartened. What is the answer? God says correction is good: "the correction of discipline is the way to life." If the godly strike, "it is a kindness...soothing medicine; don't let me refuse it!"

Through the ages God has been calling, calling. Unbelievers have always disregarded His call, and they still do. He arranged for His words to be preserved and the Bible to be written; He watched over it through centuries to

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How Do I Respond To Correction?

RESPONSE	BENEFIT
Reject correction with resentment and anger	NO BENEFIT
"You're all wrong. There is nothing I can do about it."	
"Let me run my own business."	
"Why pick on me? Everybody does it."	
"You're just looking for trouble."	
"You're not perfect either, so leave me alone."	
Accept correction but with self-pity	LIMITED BENEFIT
"I don't deserve this! What about all the good I've done?"	
"I know I messed up, but don't rub it in."	
"You need more patience."	
"I can't help it. It's my bad genes!"	
Accept correction but with resignation	LIMITED BENEFIT
"I'll just get through this one way or another."	
"It was wrong, now let's drop it and go on."	
"So I was wrong. Are you happy now?"	
Accept correction gratefully, for present and eternal good	MAXIMUM BENEFIT
"Thank you for your concern. Let's talk about it."	
"I wasn't aware of my weakness, I'll be more watchful."	
"I was wrong. I am sorry. Thank you for your help."	
"I want to learn everything I can from it."	

Lord, Correct Me!

preserve it when all had turned away from its Divine truths to traditions of men. That same Word is available today, but all do not want to read it, much less take it as their guide for life.

Isn't God fair? Isn't He just and righteous? He gives us opportunity. He pleads with us. Wisdom cries in our ear, and we turn away, as though we did not hear. Is God to blame? And will it be God's obligation to listen to *our* cry when our feet stumble on the dark mountains of death? No, indeed! He says, Because you did not pay attention to my reproof, because you did not follow my advice and listen when I corrected you, I will laugh when disaster strikes you.

God says: "I will not answer when they cry for help. Even though they anxiously search for me, they will not find me. For

they hated knowledge and chose not to fear the Lord. They rejected my advice and paid no attention when I corrected them. That is why they must eat the bitter fruit of living their own way. They must experience the full terror of the path they have chosen" (Prov. 1:28-31 NLT). These scorers hate knowledge and chose not to fear or regard the Lord.

NO COVERING UP

The naturalists say that the popular legend about the ostrich burying his head in the sand and imagining he is concealed, is an insult to the intelligence of the ostrich. If the bird were so stupid, it is said, ostrich hunting would be a tame affair and the species long ago extinct. Possibly an exceptionally naive individual did such a thing once upon a time, giving rise to the legend.

But the reputed action of the bird is so thoroughly characteristic of the same trait in human nature that the myth

survives among our figures of speech. For we have all, without exception, been ostriches in our efforts to conceal our shortcomings, and with about as much success.

That is why the Bible associates hazard with covering up. Proverbs 28:13 reveals God's attitude: "He who covers his sins will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy." The formula is simple: Cover up—and fail (not prosper). Confess and forsake—and find mercy.

We may deceive ourselves—that is easy. All we have to do is to shut our eyes, so to speak, and we can imagine anything. Man is a rationalizing being, rather than a rational one, and seldom is able to know, much less acknowledge, the real motives underlying his actions. In order to save face with himself, he selects a reason which places him in the most favorable light, and proceeds to convince himself that it is



"Let Me, Alone!"

Saying "Let me alone" blocks the road to improvement.

Current religious lecturer Ravi Zacharias told of talking with a business man. It was very late at night, and only a few people were around. The business man was expressing some definite ideas about solving the ills of our society: the drug problem, the AIDS problem, the family problems, the moral problems, and so on. As he was talking through his proposed solutions, a stranger sitting nearby, who had been listening

with obvious interest, came near. When he saw his opportunity, he entered the conversation. "May I apologize—I've been hearing you talk," he said, "and I admire that you are thinking about how to deal with the evil in our society." He paused. "But what I am waiting to hear is: How do you deal with the evil in you?" Not the evil in the world, or the community, or the society, but

"How do you deal with the evil in you?"

Mr. Zacharias said there was such a silence that you could have heard a pin drop. The business man had no answer. He hadn't thought that far.

How easily we talk about the problems around us, others' problems, world problems. But our first and most serious need is: "How do I deal with the evil in me?" God will take care of the evil in the world. My job is to take care of the evil in me, the evil that separates me from God.

The Bible has much to say about this special need. First, it tells us that we do not naturally see ourselves. We can see others' faults easily, but not our own. For this reason James suggests that we

use a mirror, the mirror of God's Word, to see an image of ourselves. And once we have seen that our face is dirty, we can apply the advice in Scripture and "wash" it (Isa. 1:16).

We look in the mirror, and we can see ourselves, but probably an even better way is to see ourselves through the eyes of

genuine. Who is fooled? Usually only the man himself.

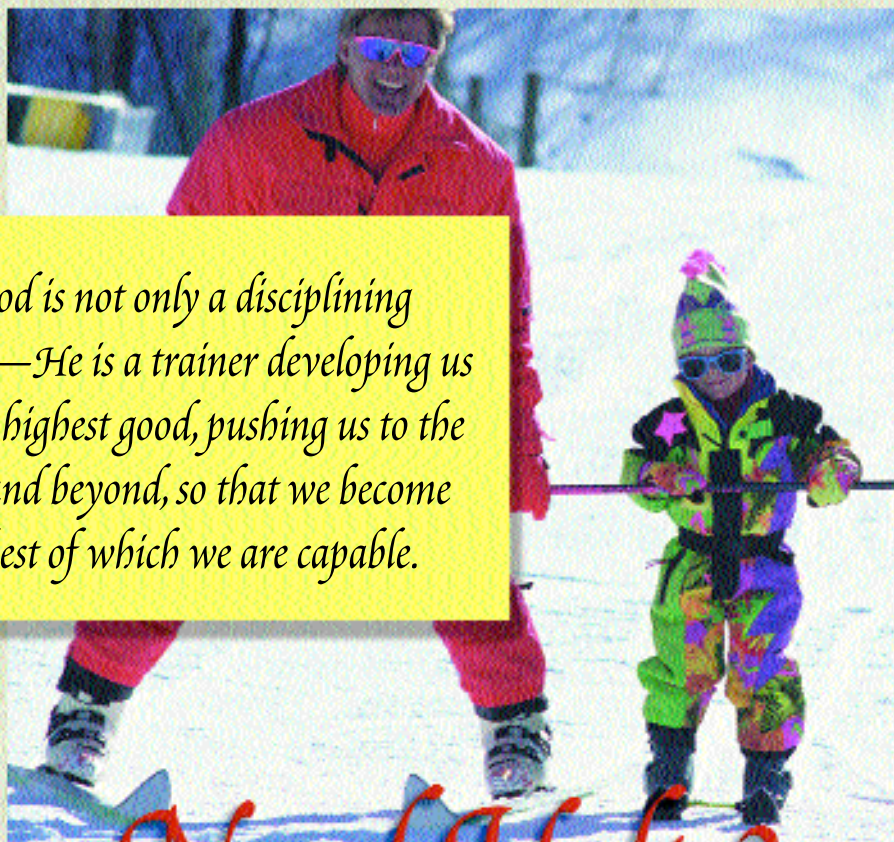
Dispassionate, completely objective appraisal of one's own motives is one of the most difficult tasks in the world.

We may also deceive our fellow men in regard to our failings—all of them some of the time and some of them all of the time, as Lincoln said—but again, the deception is seldom as successful as we imagine. It involves us in an endless sequence of embarrassing complications. All in all, we would be much less strained to acknowledge it immediately, if only we had the spiritual gump-tion to do so.

All dissimulations, whether deliberate, habitual or unconscious, are a waste of

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God is not only a disciplining parent—He is a trainer developing us for our highest good, pushing us to the limit and beyond, so that we become the best of which we are capable.



Need Help?

others, because the prophet Jeremiah says, "It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps" (Jer. 10:23). God sent His prophets over and over again to "Shout it aloud, do not hold back. Raise your voice like a trumpet. Declare to my people their rebellion and to the house of Jacob their sins" (Isa. 58:1 NIV).

The situation needed correcting, and so He told His prophets, "Shout it aloud." Don't just whisper, don't speak in a corner but "shout."

Only one problem: Something in us doesn't want to hear it.

In the 1930's, the Rev. Maud Hembree, pastor of the Megiddo Church, preached a sermon called: "Let Me Alone." She borrowed this topic from a magazine article then currently published in the *Christian Century Pulpit*, and read a portion of the article. I would like to quote:

"The small child in the nursery wails its protest, 'Let me alone.' Human nature begins with: 'Let me alone.' The young man is impatient even of a kindly warning and retorts with emphasis, 'Let me alone.' Middle age, set in the frame of its habits says stubbornly, 'Let me alone.' Old age trembling along the final slopes of iniquity says, 'Let me alone.' Indeed the case may become so subtle that we scarcely allow ourselves to interfere with ourselves. Our worst part says to our better part, 'Let me alone.'"

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Suppose you are driving at night on a back road where there is little or no traffic. Your car stalls, and nothing you can do will persuade it to start. There are no houses for miles around. You do not have a cell phone, or any connection with the rest of the world. There is no help in sight.

Then suppose an area farmer comes along and offers to help you. Will you say, "Let me alone!"?

Or suppose you are traveling in an unfamiliar area and your friend is watching the map. He says to you, "Matt, you need to turn here." Would you say, "Let me alone—I'm doing the driving!"? No, because you would realize that the person watching the map very likely knows more about the turns than you do, and that very likely he is right.

If you are lost in the woods, and someone comes along who knows the area and can show you a way out, would you say, "Let me alone"?

If you fell off the deck of a boat into deep water, if someone threw a lifeline to you, would you say: "Let me alone?"

How much more should we appreciate help from our fellow brethren when we want to please God, when the stakes are life and death!

A person who is preparing to compete in a national competition puts in many weeks, months or even years of rigorous training. That person no doubt will hire a trainer who has experience in the field, who can give directions and criticisms. The trainer may say, "Do it this way. Don't do that, or you'll fail." Does the contestant say, "Let me alone, I'll do it MY way"?

Think how we look to God when we refuse His correction, when we say stubbornly, "Let me alone." ♦

Lord, Correct Me!

time and effort, because we cannot deceive God. And, after all, His approval is the only thing that matters.

"Where can I go from Your Spirit?" cried the Psalmist, pursued by dark memories of an unsuccessful attempt to conceal a darker sin, "Where can I flee from your presence? If I say, 'Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me,' even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O Lord" (Psalm 139:7, 11, 12, 3, 4 NIV).

Through Ezekiel the upright, God warned a people unusually prone to double dealing: "I know the things that come into your mind" (Ezek. 11:5).

REJECTING REPROOF CLASSIFIES ONE UNFAVORABLY

If we are offended by a reproof, no matter how severe, we have missed its maximum good. In fact, resisting correction classifies us as outside the family of God—we are not true sons but illegitimate. This is the message from the book of Hebrews: "you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: 'My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son.' Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons...If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons" (Heb. 12:5-8 NIV).

Proverbs 12:1 describes the one who hates reproof as "stupid"—he rejects the very thing that would make him of mature understanding. "Whoever loves

instruction loves knowledge, But he who hates correction is stupid."

Proverbs 15:10 pictures the one who hates reproof as marked for death: "Whoever abandons the right path will be severely punished; whoever hates correction will die" (NLT). He may live out his natural lifespan, seeing no evidences of Divine retribution. The wages of sin may remain unpaid for a time, but we can be sure that they will be paid at Judgment Day. "The wages of sin is death." Refusing correction is a sin, and the penalty is death, eternal death.

Scripture records examples of those who rejected reproof—to their ruin. When a prophet of the Lord rebuked King Asa for his errors, the king "was angry with the seer, and put him in prison, for he was enraged at him because of this" (2 Chron. 16:10). King Asa had many good qualities, but he would not listen to advice or receive instruction.



"Let Me Alone!" continued from page 7

The author applied it to the Louisiana Lottery, which was thriving against the wishes of more conservative Americans (at that time, gambling was illegal in most of the country). Those supporting the lottery did not want to be hindered. The article continued:

"The Louisiana Lottery says 'You don't need to buy our



tickets, but do not be bigoted in stopping the liberty of others to gamble.' You don't have to gamble, but let us alone, let us do what we please.

"The liquor traffic says: 'We do not ask you to come to our saloons, but do not close our doors to others. Let us alone, let us have our own way....'

"All evils thrive on simple neglect. The weeds say, 'Let us alone,' and they capture the acres. Contagions say, 'Let us alone' and they murder the elms and the maples and lay the lovely forests waste. The iniquitous moving pictures say, 'Let us alone,' and they exalt the bandit and the adulteress.

"In all realms where evil works, our neglect means their success. Our noninterference means their interference. The gambling evil is coming on us like a plague, but they all say, 'Let me alone, don't touch me. Let me do what I please, you can do what you please—and we'll all be happy.'"

Every evil says, "Let me alone." That is our natural instinct. But do we realize that when we are saying, "Let me alone" we are really saying to God, "Let me die"—because sin ends in death? As we read in the book of James, "each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death" (James 1:14-15).

When we say "Let me alone, do not correct me," we are asking the Lord not to interfere. We don't want Him (or anyone else) to tell us what is right and what is wrong. We would rather just be left to ourselves, and ignore the consequences.

When Jesus was talking to the Pharisees of His day and they did not want to be interfered with, what did He say to them? Did He say, "Don't worry about it, it won't make that much difference"? No, He said that their attitude of "let me alone" would be fatal: "You will die in your sins" (John 8:21, 24). He said it once, and then He said it again. You don't have to change. You can go your own way and do as you please, but you will "die in your sins."

No correction, no improvement, no future. ♦

God has no use for such. Farther back, Rehoboam rejected the sage advice of the nation's elders in favor of the headstrong advice of his familiars, and lost five sixths of his kingdom. His friends told him what he wanted to hear, and his "ego" was saved, but that was all. He lost ten of the twelve tribes of Israel.

"Great peace have those who love Your law, And nothing causes them to stumble," said the Psalmist (Ps. 119:165). The new man will never refuse this "soothing medicine."

Proverbs 10:17 pictures again the priceless value of correction: *"He who keeps instruction is in the way of life, But he who refuses correction goes astray."*

ACCEPTING REPROOF CLASSIFIES ONE FAVORABLY

We read in Proverbs 19:20: *"Listen to counsel and receive instruction, That you may be wise in your latter days."* Here is depicted the one who accepts reproof as a sincere favor.

We find this principle of counsel and mutual criticism woven as a principal strand through the fabric of the Christian life. Scripture records many examples of those who followed advice, no matter how distasteful, and prospered.

THE WISE REPROVER AND THE OBEDIENT EAR

Reproof, to be mutually beneficial to reproofed and reprover, must be humbly administered and humbly received. *"Like an earring of gold or an ornament of fine gold is a wise man's rebuke to a listening ear,"* says Prov. 25:12 (NIV). The proper attitude for the reprover is again stated in Galatians 6:1, *"Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted."* If we are the reprover and want to be right with God, we must comply fully with these directions. However, if we are the one reproofed, we should be so concerned about our personal salvation that we will welcome any reproof, no matter how administered or by whom.

In Hebrews 12 we learn that God chastises, not for His pleasure but for our profit. *"My child, don't ignore it when the Lord disciplines you, and don't be dis-*

couraged when he corrects you. For the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes those he accepts as his children" (vs. 5-6 NLT). The human father may chasten his son from an ulterior motive; but God never! Why does He do it? Because He wants to make something of us for His eternal use.

That is why we read (Heb 12:11 NLT), *"No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening—it is painful! But afterward there will be a quiet harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way."* The "afterward" makes it a kindness! The Moffatt Bible translates this text: *"Discipline always seems for the time to be a thing of pain, not of joy; but those who are trained by it reap the fruit of it afterwards in the peace of an upright life."* The "afterward" is *"the peace of an upright life"*—plus eternal rewards in Christ's Kingdom.

When the kindly surgeon sets a broken bone or sutures a wound, even at the cost of excruciating pain to the patient, he is kind. When the physician prescribes a strong and nauseous medicine to overpower a life-threatening disease, he is kind. It is a matter of perspective.

Job 5:17 (NCV) depicts the proper attitude toward correction: *"The one whom God corrects is happy, so do not hate being corrected by the Almighty."* Why? Because He knows it is for our good. Again in the last book of the Bible God restates His purpose in disciplining us—it is an evidence of His love. *"Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent"* (Rev. 3:19).

The correct attitude of the one who truly loves life is well expressed by the Psalmist, *"Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting"* (Ps. 139:23-24).

Does God require a pure heart in those who will be granted a right to pass through the gates into the Kingdom of God? He does. Then let us join the

Psalmist in asking God to search our hearts. Let Him search through the penetrating power of His Word, as described in Heb. 4:12 (NLT): *"For the word of God is full of living power. It is sharper than the sharpest knife, cutting deep into our innermost thoughts and desires. It exposes us for what we really are."*

How can we discern and correct the secrets of our hearts? By being totally honest with ourselves. And how can we be totally honest with ourselves? By letting the Word of God rebuke us, and being humbly submissive to Him and those through whom He is working. Only in this way can we receive the lessons we need to

become pure in heart.

To know if there is any "offensive way" in us should be our foremost concern. Of all fears, the greatest is that we may stand at the Judgment seat of Christ with some evil still lurking within. Our founder once said in a sermon, that if an angel should visit him, the first question he would ask would be, *What am I doing wrong? What still stands between God and me?*

Are you sincerely seeking life in Christ's Kingdom? Then you will appreciate any process that God has arranged to prepare you for it.

God will lead us in the "way everlasting" if we are willing to be led; and we express this willingness by our humility and uncomplaining obedience to His law.

What should I do when I am corrected? I must stop, hold my tongue, and search my heart diligently and impersonally to see if there is not more foundation for the rebuke than I like to admit. If I let it go by, sure that I am right, I stunt my own spiritual growth.

Every advance toward perfection is marked by an increase in humility. So let our attitude always be: *"Let the godly strike me! It will be a kindness! If they reprove me, it is soothing medicine. Don't let me refuse it."* ♦

*If I let a reproof
go unheeded, I
stunt my own
spiritual growth.*



The Thorn Problem

by RUSSELL HAMBY

...To keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me—to keep me from exalting myself! Concerning this I entreated the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness."

—2 Cor. 12:7-9 NASB

The thorn in the flesh that tormented the Apostle Paul stands as a symbol of the way in which God often enters our lives through the back door, so to speak. Whatever the Apostle's affliction, it was not something that he had chosen or invited. In fact, he deeply resented it. He wanted to be free of it. But when he learned that release was not the Lord's will for him and he learned to accept it as a fact of his life, he discovered healing and heard God saying, "My strength is made perfect in weakness."

What the Apostle thought was a negative factor, God was able to use in a very positive and creative way.

As a result of his experience, Paul gained three insights that should become ours also, so that we may perceive how God uses back door entrances into our lives to teach us and encourage our growth into holiness.

Let us examine the first insight:

#1: *God's strength is made perfect through our weakness.*

This is factual because our extremity is God's opportunity. Out of our sense of need we discover the cure for our pride: a deep sense of our dependence on God.

Through Paul's weakness, through his impediment, he would be reminded time and again that his strength is not his own but God's.

Crises happen to all of us, and God uses these as an entrance into our lives, a back door, as it were, because we have

kept the front door locked. In these emergencies we are confronted with our weakness—our dependence upon God—which, when life is moving our way, we ignore. Out of such experiences we can learn one of the most important lessons of life: that we are not in control, and that God is.

Because Paul's weakness was a constant reminder that his power was of God, Paul came to thank God for his weakness. Now he could exclaim, "I had some revelations and evidently God was afraid that I might be puffed up by them; so I was given a physical infirmity, a thorn in my flesh to harass me and prick my pride."

The second insight that the Apostle Paul discovered we need to make our own is:

#2: *God is with us through it all.* Do you recall the answer that came back to Paul each time he prayed that the thorn might be removed? God said, "No, but I am with you, and that is all you need." When we encounter difficulty, disappointment and pain, we often feel that God has deserted us; but that is not so. God is with us through it all.

The assurance of God's presence through all of life's ups and downs is spoken on almost every page of Scripture. This is the message that makes the Twenty-third Psalm live through the centuries. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me."

What is more comforting to us in our life of faith than to be able to live through the circumstances of every day with a sense of the presence of the living God?

What each one needs to take into his or her life every day is a sense of the presence of God. Perhaps through a hymn, a prayer, a message from the Word read, or the Word spoken—any of these can keep us in the presence of God.

And to the Apostle's thrice-repeated prayer that his impediment might be removed, there came back God's answer: "I am with you. That is sufficient."

This leads us to insight three:

#3: *God is present and is saying, "My grace is sufficient for you."* In the presence of difficulty, disappointment, and failure, what we need is not an explanation but strength by which we cannot only survive the ordeal but gain victory in the face of it. Does the God who slips into our lives enter through the back door in some hour of crisis? He comes with the promise of His unfailing resources to help us overcome: "My grace is sufficient for you." What is His grace? It is His precepts and the laws He gives to direct our lives; His promises and all that He has planned for every loving, obedient child. To all of this He adds His eternal guarantee, that if we do on our part, He will do on His part and open to us the eternal riches of His glory. Oh, the depth and breadth of blessing that is available to us through His grace!

If you lock the front door of your life against God, He may knock at the back door through some adversity, saying in the eternity of His love, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he with me." ♦



The Benefits of a Good Slap

by EDWARD SHAYLER

Some years ago, during the Second World War, there was a prisoner of war in a prison camp in Hong Kong who had become ill. In a miserable state with lice, fleas, and bed bugs, he had lost much of his body weight, in addition to being ill from dysentery, pellagra, beriberi, dingo fever, bedsores. Not surprisingly, he was totally depressed.

I was asked to speak to this man. When I went in to see him, I was overcome by the pitiable sight. He was lying in his own filth and refused to let anyone wash him or help him in any way. His only request was to let him die. I tried to talk to him, but he refused to listen. The only remaining option was to summon a doctor, who had become my friend, but commissioned officers had been separated from the men. With much difficulty, arrangements were made for him to come.

The doctor at once asked the nature of the problem. I explained as best I could, and took him to this deplorable man. Doctor Banfill knelt beside him and began talking to him, then without any hesitation he gave him a HARD SLAP ON THE FACE. I winced! Even doctors needed to be taught a lesson!

But immediately I began to learn how wrong I was. The man suddenly began to be belligerent, and he spent the next while berating the doctor with words far from good English. Then the doctor explained that he had no food or medica-

tion to help the man in his suffering, in fact he could offer nothing, but because of his pitiable state he used the only solution that he thought might be of benefit. Before leaving he gave me these instructions, that no matter how hard the man protested, have some men give him a good washing, clean him up and comb his hair.

It was not hard to find comrades willing to carry out the task, and so the process began. I still remember these wonderful men, and how they proceeded. They took all his filthy clothing away from him, after they had found some nice warm water (I still have not solved the mystery of where they found it). Somehow they came in possession of a sliver of soap. Now the man had changed from abusing the doctor to abusing them. They kept right on anyway with their purpose until he sat there as a beautiful, shining example, for I do not think that those men left a toenail unnoticed. To clean his teeth they ground up some charcoal and mixed it with soap, and used a wet piece of cloth, until he promised to do it himself. While they were doing this, some others were at work, washing and cleaning his belongings. How did they do it? Some of the men made a steamer out of material that defies logic. They stuffed all of his belongings into it, as many as it would hold at a time, and put a small amount of water in the

*The best remedy
is not always the one
that feels good.*



bottom. Then they boiled the water until the steam penetrated and sterilized everything in it. This took time, but eventually even his blanket was processed.

In the meantime the man had quieted down and began to cry. The men waited until he began to want to move about, then they made his resting place as comfortable as possible, and they

I never did see him again after the incident. I often wondered if he had learned the results of HIS SLAP ON THE FACE.

As I think about these experiences, I see a similarity between them and dedicating ourselves to a good spiritual life. Nothing much will happen until we make that first decision. Naturally we feel that we should be left alone, to

genuine CREATOR, we accept the fact that GOD requires discipline, and for the first time in our lives we learn to be HUMBLE. Now life is becoming meaningful. I know that others have tried this, only to become disillusioned; but we are fortunate, because we have come to know the God of truth, and the Word of truth that He caused to be written for our learning. I believe that this is a gift from God.

As we begin to see the results of following His will for us, as we read and practice His purpose in our lives, it becomes a wonderful experience to discover that we really can have EVERLASTING LIFE if...IF we do the work He requires. Our blessings begin to run over, and now the feeling of honest labor is paramount, which gives us more ambition to work harder. One thing that we learn for a certainty, we cannot work too hard, and we will be rewarded for everything we do.

Also like the man in the story, we find that we have willing helpers. Our spiritual larder is filled and running over with a supply of help that keeps us pushing ahead in the spiritual direction continually. We will have no excuse for failing at the time when all must stand at the Judgment Seat. WHAT A WONDERFUL, WONDERFUL, WONDERFUL future is in store for us, one that we would never have known about had we not responded to that first good, hard slap on the face! ♦

I know, O Lord, that the way of man is not in himself, that it is not in man who walks to direct his steps. Correct me, O Lord, but in just measure; not in thy anger, lest thou bring me to nothing. —Jer. 10:23-24 RSV

began to talk to him, telling him that they had done all they could for him and that the rest was up to him. He began to eat some food, however unpalatable it was, and started to get up and move around, and take an interest in himself. As the days passed, he grew stronger and began to gain a little weight. Eventually he recovered from his ordeal of dysentery, and lived to return home after the war. The last time I heard of him he was doing well.

There is another part to this story, and it involves the doctor. One night just after we had been relocated to another prison camp (not the one of the previous incident), it was dark and I could not sleep. I went outside the building and heard someone sobbing. Listening closely, I tried to locate the source of the sound. It was Doctor Banfill. I encouraged him to tell me the reason for his sadness, and he told me that he had just heard that his wife had committed suicide when she learned that he had been made a prisoner of war. Then he shared with me some personal feelings and aspirations he had. If he survived the war, he would come back to China to help some of the very unfortunate people.

live our lives in a situation of our choice, with moral and physical decay. In such a state we know that we are not fit to be presented to our CREATOR, nor have we any reason to expect HIS acceptance of us. Living to be honored by the social system that we are part of, we have found ourselves instead rejected and are living out our lives without HOPE. We wallow in the residue of our own making. We try this, and then we try that, but nothing seems to work, and we begin to feel "Oh, what's the use?" We determine that there is not much in this world to live for. We have paid a nodding glance at religion, and it is full of loopholes. We talk to people who are dedicated to it and hear things like "you're going to fly off to heaven." Then we watch everyone who dies being buried instead, and conclude that there must be something wrong. What a dismal way to exist!

Now is the time for us to accept a good hard slap on the face, and realize that if we want to improve our condition, we must be doing something about it. And so we begin. As we progress, we begin to change our attitude. We find proof that there is a real



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I'm Sorry, I WAS WRONG

by ELVA B. BYERS

What three little words are the hardest to say? They are these: "I am sorry."

Just three little words, but how often we have failed to say them. How much better our day would have ended if we had held back that phrase tinged with bitterness.

How much bickering and strife could be avoided if, when a disagreement arises, we would take a long, hard look at ourselves, accept our share of the blame, and honestly admit, "I'm sorry, I was wrong."

When our temper flies, or that green-eyed monster jealousy turns our life into a sea of misery and we become cold and aloof why not quickly admit, "I'm sorry, I was wrong, very wrong"? What do we gain by holding back? Nothing at all.

Just three little words, "I am sorry," but what Divine power they hold to bless the wounded spirit, to heal the rift caused by an unkindness, or to take the sting out of cold indifference.

When a disagreement arises in a family, who is right and who is wrong? Very often the answer is nebulous. But one answer is always clear: He is greater who is willing to say, "I am sorry," and mean it. Apologizing is a virtue. It is not a weakness but a sign of strength. Small people never apologize; they imagine themselves always right. The person who thinks he knows everything has a lot to learn.

Big, Christ-like people want to apologize so that they can leave their sins behind and become more and more like their Master.

We tighten our family relationships by learning to apologize. In the same manner, we tighten our bond to God's family.

Be Master!

How can we master these three words? Here are a few suggestions:

- * Always take the initiative in apologizing.
- * At the end of the day, stop to count how many times you should have apologized and did not. Think of everything you can: the raised voice, the hasty judgment, the lack of consideration, the overcritical spirit, the act of selfishness.
- * When you apologize, don't try to rationalize or throw responsibility on someone else, or on circumstances. And don't wait for your brother who has something against you to come to you; go to him to make amends (Matt. 5:23-25).

A mature Christian is willing to admit his wrongdoing, then to ask God and others to forgive him. This is the theme of a thoughtful poem entitled "I'm Sorry, I Was Wrong."

*There may be virtue in the man
Who's always sure he's right,
Who'll never hear another's plan
And seek no further light.
But I like more the chap who sings
A very different song,
Who says when he has messed up things,
"I'm sorry, I was wrong."*

*It's hard for anyone to say
That failure's due to him,
That he has lost the fight or way
Because his light burned dim.
It takes a man to cast aside
The vanity that's strong,
Confessing, " 'Twas my fault, I lied,
I'm sorry, I was wrong."*

*Confess your faults, the Bible says;
That humble act makes strong;
You'll honor God and rest your soul
By saying, "I was wrong."*

Humble frankness is not only good therapy for the soul but it also opens the door to renewed relationships. Others are more likely to show compassion and be forgiving if you acknowledge your faults and are willing to say, "I'm sorry, I was wrong." ♦

FAITH in Action

Bible Text: Acts 9:19–27 NIV

19 Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus.

20 At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God.

21 All those who heard him were astonished and asked, “Isn’t he the man who raised havoc in Jerusalem among those who call on this name? And hasn’t he come here to take them as prisoners to the chief priests?”

22 Yet Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Christ.

23 After many days had gone by, the Jews conspired to kill him,

24 but Saul learned of their plan. Day and night they kept close watch on the city gates in order to kill him.

25 But his followers took him by night and lowered him in a basket through an opening in the wall.

26 When he came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he really was a disciple.

27 But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. He told them how Saul on his journey had seen the Lord and that the Lord had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus.

by RUTH E. SISSON

A NEW START FOR SAUL

 READ ACTS 9:19–25

According to Luke’s account, Saul, who would later be known as Paul, after receiving his eyesight and the Holy Spirit, immediately joined the body of believers in Damascus. No doubt Brother Ananias brought him to the meetings and explained what had happened on the Damascus road, and how Jesus had commissioned Saul to preach in His name.

Saul did not wait to start preaching. Immediately, he went into the places where he had intended to search out the believers and persecute them, and boldly “*preached Christ....that he is the Son of God*” (Acts 9:20). How could he do it? He knew the law; he also knew the prophecies of the Messiah. Plus now he had the gifts of the Holy Spirit to help him. The change was in his perspective. Before, he saw the Messiah as the coming One. Now he saw those prophecies as fulfilled in Jesus Christ, the Christ whose blazing light had struck him down, blinded him, and changed the whole course of his life.

The Christians who heard him were stunned—and skeptical. Was this the same person? Was this the Saul whose very name had struck terror to their hearts? Yes, the name of Saul they knew well, associated with horror, heart-break, suffering, and pain. Now this same Saul was worshiping with them!

The people who heard him in the synagogues were also amazed, almost knocked out of their senses. Was this the Saul who had been their radical ring-leader? Now he was preaching to them, telling them of a better way than following Moses’ law, telling them they must believe and obey the law of Christ to be saved.

The gospel of Jesus Christ was not what they wanted to hear. By preaching Christ, this Saul not only confounded the Jews but also stirred up and agitated them. Now his former kin saw him as a troublemaker, and the persecutor became the persecuted. Apparently Saul’s proof from the Scriptures was not what they wanted to hear—it angered them, just as Stephen’s arguments had done earlier in Jerusalem.

In the interest of survival, and most likely with the encouragement of the Christian brethren, Saul chose to flee for a time to Arabia, which could mean any place east of the Jordan. There he enjoyed three years of peace, three years

of solitude.

Besides finding a safe retreat, Saul found also a period of time, which he sorely needed—time to think things out and think things through, time to refocus, reorient, and restructure his whole life and purpose, to prepare for the new and different life ahead. Were the requirements high for the young Pharisee? His new calling was a total commitment to service, sacrifice and suffering.

Luke does not mention the time in Arabia, but Paul mentioned it himself in his letter to the Galatians, written some years later (Gal. 1:17).

After the years in Arabia, he returned to Damascus, and actively resumed the work to which Christ had called him. Again the Jews were furious, and became so determined to kill him that they would not even let him be seen in public. Once again there was no way but for Saul to flee, this time in the dead of night and over the wall, as though he were being smuggled out like stolen goods (Acts 9:25).

A bit adventuresome? This was only the beginning of a career for Christ during which he would many times face death for the sake of the Gospel.

Back to Jerusalem

 READ ACTS 9:26-27

Can we follow this night-wrapped fugitive making his way from Damascus back to Jerusalem? Thoughtfully he retraces the steps along the same road where, only a few years earlier, he had experienced that 180° turn in his life, when he had been struck with the light from heaven.

Saul could not travel that road without re-living the experience, as if hearing again the voice and seeing again the blinding light. But this journey was different. Then he was surrounded by a band of ardent admirers, who felt honored to be under his command. Now he was alone. But he was not alone. He had made what some would call a tremendous sacrifice, but for him the loss was gain. There were no misgivings in his heart, no desire to look back, no regret, but only an eagerness to push steadily forward in the service of his new Master, Jesus Christ.

1. Why do you think Saul was anxious to go to Jerusalem? _____

What was his reason for going to Jerusalem at this time? No doubt he wanted to meet others of the Apostles, and the church family. But one person stood out. He wrote to the Galatians that it was "to see Peter" (Gal. 1:18). No doubt Saul had seen this big fisherman boldly testifying about Christ before the Sanhedrin. The fiery zeal of Peter angered him then, but now Saul was on his side. Or perhaps the believers at Damascus had told him about Peter, and he was anxious to get acquainted with this brother who had spent three years in Christ's company, and who knew the depths of sin and the joy of heartfelt repentance; this brother who like himself had received a full measure of mercy and forgiveness.



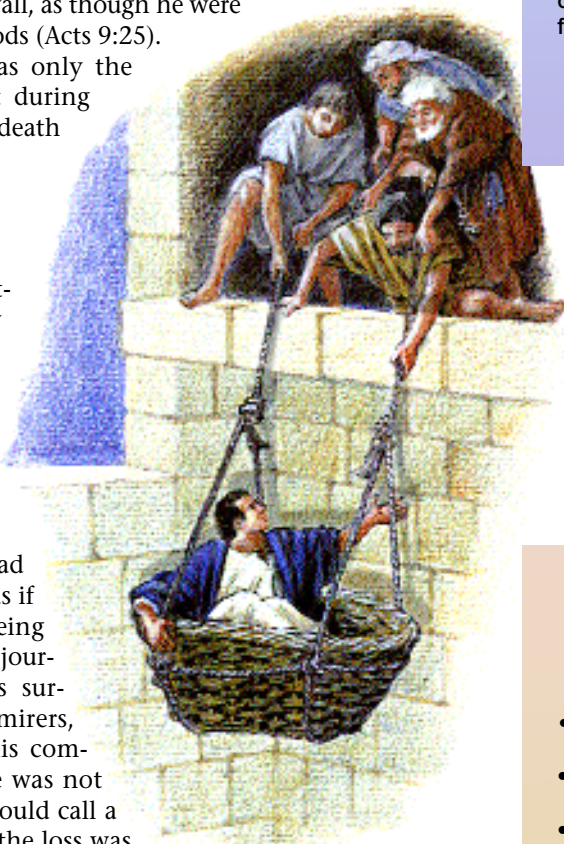
Insight

The Committed One

What did the attack on Paul say about his commitment?

It was a testimony to his courage. Paul knew that his new life would not be easy, and he was prepared to suffer.

It was a testimony to his sincerity. There is a saying that "A wolf never attacks a painted sheep." Counterfeit Christianity is always safe. No one tries to silence one who is ineffective and insincere, who obviously does not matter. To be able to suffer for Christ's sake was the greatest compliment, because it was certain proof that they were genuine and that what they said really mattered.



Chronology of the early events in Saul's life

- He is converted on the Damascus road (Acts 9:5)
- He preaches in Damascus; arouses opposition (Acts 9:20)
- Escapes to Arabia (Gal. 1:17) stays in Arabia for a period of three years
- Returns to Damascus. In Damascus he preaches Jesus with power, and infuriates the Jews; escapes over wall with the help of his Christian brothers. (Acts 9:25)
- He goes to Jerusalem, where Barnabas introduces him to the Apostles, stays 15 days with Peter. (Gal. 1:18)
- He escapes from Jerusalem to Caesarea (9:30)
- He returns to Tarsus (Gal. 1:21), where he had grown up
- Barnabas goes to Tarsus to enlist a helper, brings him to Antioch (Acts 11:25)
- All of Paul's life is not told in the book of Acts. We must glean other points from his epistles, where he drops a word here or there.



Insight Be a Barnabas!

When everyone else was steering clear of Saul and expecting the worst, Barnabas took him by the hand and stood for him, introducing him to his fellow believers with confidence. When others were suspecting him of being a spy and an agent, Barnabas insisted that he was genuine.

The name Barnabas means “son of encouragement,” and he was living up to his name. It is generally thought that Barnabas was a Greek-speaking Jew from Cyprus, and it is possible that he came from Cyprus to Jerusalem about the same time that young Saul came from Tarsus to study under Gamaliel, and that they may have met during that time.



Insight Special Training for Special Work

Even before Saul knew what lay ahead of him, God was preparing him for his career. And no doubt he gained more spiritual fitness in Arabia, where he had time to digest the Scriptures he had learned.

Do we wonder why the Gospel came to him with power? It was a power in his own life first. Behind every word that he would speak as he went about preaching, there was the memory of his own experience on the Damascus road, and that voice of his Lord still ringing in his ears, “You are a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles...” What Paul received from the Lord he delivered to us by way of the Scriptures.



A closer look Tarsus...

Tarsus was a city 300 miles to the north, the most important city of Cilicia. A free city and well known for its university, Tarsus was a likely place to preach the Gospel. Saul was needed there. In Tarsus he could work freely, without opposition.

When Saul arrived at Jerusalem, he was disappointed. The disciples treated him with coldness and suspicion. We read that *“they were afraid of him, not believing that he was really a disciple.”* They had a hard time forgetting his dreadful persecutions. What could Saul say or do to convince them that he was now on their side, their brother in the Lord?

Barnabas saw the problem. And to his everlasting credit, Barnabas believed in the sincerity of Saul. Taking him by the hand, he led him to the Apostles and introduced him as his own brother. Perhaps he let Saul tell his own conversion experience, and how he had already preached in Damascus.

Saul Is Peter’s Guest

Whatever Barnabas said, it broke the ice, and the believers accepted Saul. In fact, Saul stayed 15 days in the home of Peter. Can’t we hear them exchanging experiences, each eager to share his profound impressions of Jesus Christ? Can’t we imagine Peter telling Saul about those now precious years with their Master? Wouldn’t you love to have a recording of these conversations, that sharing of experiences, brother to brother, both of them knowing Jesus but from such different vantage points? Wouldn’t you like to hear the big fisherman Peter telling Saul the scholar about Jesus’ miracles, His parables, and all the lessons he must have had from his “Elder Brother”? And imagine Peter telling Saul about that last night before the crucifixion, how he and his fellow Apostles had enjoyed that last Passover meal together, and then all the events of that night. And when Saul was telling about his zealous persecuting of the believers, can’t we imagine Peter saying, “But Brother Saul, I did worse—I was one of them, I was one of the inner circle—and I denied that I even knew my Lord! Aren’t we both grateful for His forgiveness!”

Saul and Peter had much in common. Both full-blooded Jews and fully trained in the traditions of their fathers, they were now intensely devoted to Christ and eager to advance His cause. Each had had a singular experience with Jesus, and each had a full measure of the Holy Spirit power. They were two brothers in the faith, both of them ready to serve, both of them working for a common goal!

Now that the believers accepted Saul, he could move freely among them. But he did not spend all his time with them, for we are told (Acts 9:28) that he was *“with them, coming in and going out at Jerusalem,”* which likely meant that he visited other synagogues, possibly even in the nearby towns and villages.

2. What did Saul and Peter have in common? _____
3. What long-term benefits came from their being acquainted? _____

On to Caesarea...and Tarsus

Saul’s freedom was short-lived because soon the Jews were offended again by his message, and his proofs from Scripture aroused their anger. Wasn’t this the expected response—when they did not have a good answer for his arguments, when they were not able to support their own beliefs?

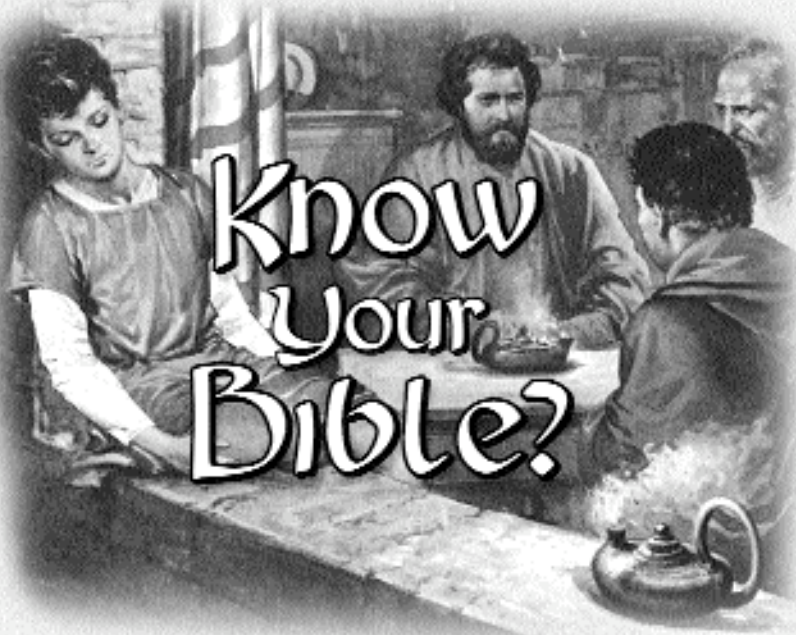
So angry were they that Saul was in real danger. Why did they focus on Saul? Why did they keep trying to kill him? Likely because they considered him a traitor to their cause.

As soon as the Jerusalem brethren heard about the attempts on Saul’s life, they acted quickly. They did not want another Stephen, or another siege of persecution. Better to relocate the zealous Saul. And so they took him and brought him to Caesarea.

Saul left Jerusalem with reluctance. Perhaps he wanted to stay and help those whom he had harmed earlier. Perhaps he wanted to counteract as much as possible the evil he had formerly done there. But this was not the time. There was the wish of the brotherhood to consider, and more especially the command of Jesus, *“Depart: for I will send you far away to the Gentiles”* (Acts 22:17–21).

From Caesarea, Saul took a ship for Tarsus, his native city, and stayed there until Barnabas summoned him back to the work of the Lord in Antioch. ♦

to be continued



Know Your Bible?

11. This man was about to kill himself when he woke up and saw the prison doors open.
12. Jesus described this dead man as "asleep" and said He was going to awake him.
13. He received an interpretation of a dream in a night vision.

SUPPLY THE NUMBERS AND ID

1. "Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, 'Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here _____ tabernacles...'" Identify the occasion _____ Who was present besides Peter and Jesus? _____
2. "The woman answered and said, 'I have no husband.' Jesus said to her, 'You have well said, 'I have no husband,' for you have had _____ husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; in that you spoke truly.'" Identify the woman _____

CAN YOU NAME THESE SLEEPERS?

1. When he woke up, he found that an angel had brought him cake and water.
2. These three (name all three) slept as Jesus prayed: "Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will."
3. He dreamed that he saw a ladder from earth to heaven, with angels climbing up and down it.
4. At least three times he had a message from an angel in a dream.
5. He dreamed that there were three baskets on his head, and that "in the uppermost basket were all kinds of baked goods for Pharaoh, and the birds ate them out of the basket on my head."
6. He went to sleep while Paul was preaching, and fell out the window.
7. This man slept while someone took away his spear and his jug of water.
8. An angel assured him during the night that he would appear before Caesar.
9. While they were waiting for the bridegroom to come, they all slept.
10. Who was awakened due to a severe storm that threatened to swamp the vessel?

3. "But he who had received _____ went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money." Identify the parable _____
4. "Or what woman, having _____ silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it?" Identify the parable _____
5. "Now there were set there _____ waterpots of stone, according to the manner of purification of the Jews, containing twenty or thirty gallons apiece." Identify the miracle _____
6. "So Jesus answered and said, 'Were there not _____ cleansed? But where are the _____?'" Identify the disease that was cured _____
7. "And _____ of them were wise, and _____ were foolish." Identify the parable _____
8. "And there he found a certain man named Aeneas, which had kept his bed _____ years, and was sick of the palsy." Identify the healer _____
9. "Now when the even was come, he sat down with the _____." Identify the occasion _____
10. "And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained _____ baskets full." Identify the occasion _____

ANSWERS BELOW

CAN YOU NAME THESE SLEEPERS?

1. Elijah (1 Kings 19:1, 6)
2. Peter, John and James (Mark 14:33-37)
3. Jacob (Gen. 28:10-12)
4. Joseph (Matt. 1:20-21, 2:13, 2:19)
5. Pharaoh's chief baker (Gen. 40:16-17)
6. Eutychus (Acts 20:9)
7. Saul (1 Sam. 26:7-12)
8. Paul (Acts 27:24)
9. Ten virgins (Matt. 25:1,5)
10. Jesus (Mark 4:37-39) or Jonah (Jonah 1:4-6)

11. The jailer at Philippi (Acts 16:27)
12. Lazarus (John 11:11-15)
13. Daniel (Dan. 2:19)

SUPPLY THE NUMBERS AND ID

1. 3, the Transfiguration, James and John were with Peter and Jesus (Matt. 17:1-10)
2. 5, the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:9, 17-18)
3. 1, Parable of the Talents (Matt. 25:14-18)

4. 10, Parable of the Lost Coin (Luke 15:8)
5. 6, Jesus' first miracle, turning the water into wine (John 2:6-9)
6. 10, 9, leprosy (Luke 17:12, 17)
7. 5, 5, Parable of the Ten Virgins (Matt. 25:1-10)
8. 8, Peter (Acts 9:33)
9. 12, the Last Supper (The Lord's Supper) (Matt. 26:20 through chapt. 27)
10. 12, feeding the Five Thousand (Matt. 14:20-21)

Announcing... *Abib* 2002

The Sacred New Year and the anniversary of Christ's Birth falls this year on April 13 and 14, 2002.

The ancient Hebrew pattern, according to the law God gave to Moses, was to begin the New Year with the month "Abib" (Ex. 12:2; 13:4) which is the month beginning with the first new moon following the spring equinox (March 20, this year). The first new moon following the Spring Equinox this year is on the evening of April 12.

We extend an invitation to our members and friends to join us for this sacred season.

The anniversary of the Lord's Supper will be on the evening of April 25, and the Resurrection on April 28.

Hymn of Promise

In the bulb there is a flower;
In the seed, an apple tree;
In cocoons, a hidden promise:
Butterflies will soon be free!

In the cold and snow of winter,
There's a spring that waits to be,
Unrevealed until its season,
Something God alone can see.
—by Natalie Sleeth

Ever like the budding springtime
God's own promise waits to be
All that He has said is coming
With His bond of surety.

Every word that He has spoken
Will as surely be fulfilled;
All the earth shall show His Glory—
It will be as God has willed.

Think About These Things

"Whatever is true, ...honorable, ...just, ...pure, ...lovely, ...gracious, ...excellent, ...praiseworthy, think about these things" (Phil. 4:8).

There is no litany in the Book that sings
More tenderly than *"Think about these things:"*
The mighty **truths** of God by which we grow
Are in it, all the verities we know
Of sun and seed, all certitudes of earth;
All honorable, **honest** work and mirth;
Soft whispers of the prayers of all the **just**,
True-hearted folk who make the Lord their trust;
The **purity** that blossoms in white flowers
And children's eyes, and falls in dazzling showers
Of snow, each **lovely** leaf and wing that lifts
Our hearts; each good report of **gracious** gifts
Of love and mercy; every smallest deed
Of **excellent** virtue answering daily need;
And all the constant blessings of our days
Forever **worthy** of our heart-felt **praise**.

All this the Lord our God has given us
To think and meditate upon, and thus
To grow profoundly, fervently aware
Of His unfailing providence and care.
This litany will equip our hearts with wings.
Leave doubt and worry.

Think about these things.

Patience is not passive; on the contrary it is active; it is concentrated strength, not weakness.

If you want to defend Christianity, practice it.

Control Yourself

There is something lacking in the man who can control his dog better than himself. It makes one wonder which one is living the dog's life.

"Like a city whose walls are broken down is a man who lacks self-control" (Prov. 25:28 NIV).

Watch your attitude toward the thing that troubles you. Your attitude may hurt you more than the thing!

"Do what is right and good in the Lord's sight, so that it may go well with you" (Deut. 6:18 NIV).

Your temper improves the more you *don't* use it.

The person who searches for happiness rarely finds it; happiness is a by-product, not a goal.

Can You Stand Alone?

continued from page 2

strong, even if we must stand alone? Or are we so concerned what others may think or say about us that we will compromise our convictions? How committed are we to pleasing the One who has called us to glory and virtue?

Peter's failure that night of the trial was apparently the turning point of Peter's life. When we meet him a few months later, after the day of Pentecost, he is prime spokesman for the Apostles, bold and fearless. He is a new Peter, with new resolves, new direction, new determination. And years later, when he writes the Epistles that bear his name, he is a man of even greater spiritual stature.

Most of us can identify with Peter, because he made the same mistakes we make. But each time he fell, he humbled himself, recognized the wrong, sought help from God, and rose up stronger than before.

Thank God for Peter! We feel that we know you. We, too, know what it feels like to have our courage fail. We, too, have felt so strong and yet fallen. We, too, have felt that inner gnawing fear of "what if they don't like it (me)?"

Our Master knows that we will fail. But He also knows our possibilities. He wants us to get up and try again.

Peter offers the perfect formula in his Epistle: *"Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he will lift you up" (1 Pet. 4:10)*. Yes, Peter, you are speaking to us out of your own experience. When we get down where we belong, humble in mind and attitude, the Lord will be there to lift us up, just as He lifted you. And at that point, it won't matter whether others are pleased or not.

If only He is pleased. ♦

What Would Jesus Do?

*When there's some perplexing problem
That your mind can hardly solve,
And around its right solution
Issues infinite revolve,
When the right course you are anxious
To, without mistake, pursue,
Ask yourself the simple question—
What would Jesus do?*

*When you hear the call for workers,
And the cry of those in need,
When the fields are white for harvest,
And there's none the way to lead,
When you feel that you are helpless,
And somewhat discouraged, too,
Ask yourself the simple question—
What would Jesus do?*

*When the Savior's work needs money,
Time and talent, strength or gold,
And your soul is sorely tempted
To from Him your mite withhold,
Stop and think of all the Savior
Sacrificed for me and you;
Ask yourself the simple question—
What would Jesus do?*

*When the friend you always trusted
Deigns your friendship to betray,
And you feel inclined to murmur
That all friends turn out that way,
And to do some harsh denouncing
Of the one that was not true,
Ask yourself the simple question—
What would Jesus do?*

*When has dawned the time of worship,
And the day is doubly fair,
And some friend, perchance, or neighbor,
Says you need some outdoor air,
"Come with me, and let's go fishing,
Or some other sport pursue,"
Ask yourself the simple question—
What would Jesus do?*

*When at any time you're tempted
From the path of truth to stray,
And you seem to lack an answer,
Hardly knowing what to say,
Ere you yield and lose the laurels
That are only for the true,
Ask yourself the simple question—
What would Jesus do?*

Selected

