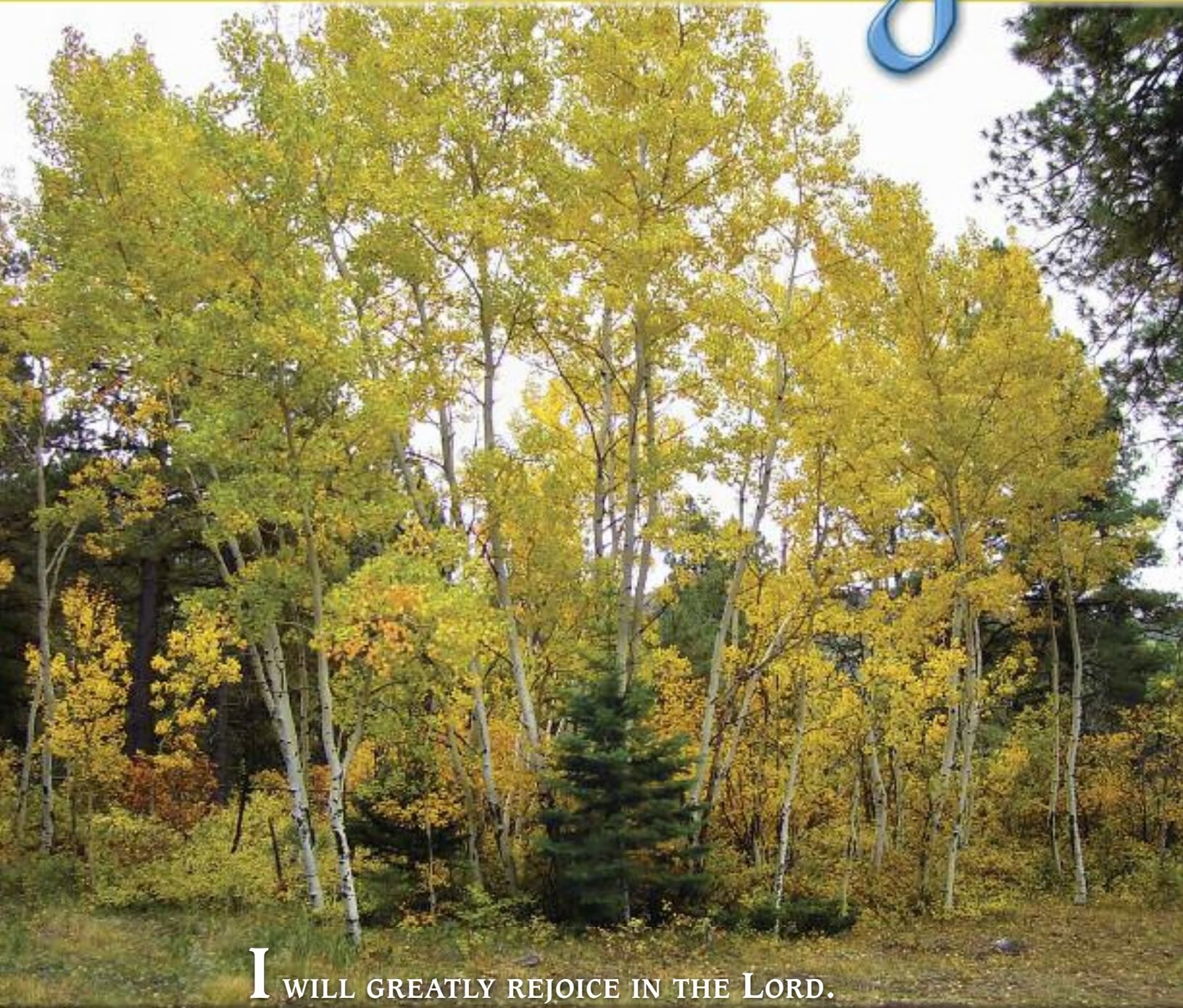


Megiddo Message

Fall 2010



I WILL GREATLY REJOICE IN THE LORD.

MY SOUL SHALL BE JOYFUL IN MY **GOD.** Isaiah 61:10



Regan.

Too COMFORTABLE

God's prophets had a thankless job, judged from a human point of view. Who wants to hear that they are too comfortable? Who wants to be told, "Get moving, change your ways"? Who wants to hear that God hates deceit, and lying, and violence, and abuse, and that He will be giving them what they have given others? Who wants to be told they must give up their feel-good lifestyle of get-all-you-can without regard for the law of God—or disaster is imminent?

But this was the message that Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Amos, Zephaniah and many others were sent to deliver. Why? Because the people had lapsed into the easy life of idolatry, with all the accompanying vices. Worst of all, they really liked their freedom from divine authority (sound familiar?). They really liked doing just as they pleased with no thought of consequences. The Message Bible's wording of one of Amos' prophecies captures the tone for us: "Woe to you who think you live on easy street in Zion, who think Mount Samaria is the good life. You assume you're at the top of the heap... Well, wake up and look around. Get off your pedestal. ... You are rushing headlong to disaster!" (Amos 6:1-3).

Jeremiah changed the simile, but not the message. His words described a nearby nation. *"Moab has been at ease from his youth; He has settled on his dregs, and has not been emptied from vessel to vessel,...Therefore his taste remained in him, and his scent has not changed"* (Jer. 48:11).

Zephaniah's message spelled judgment (1:12): *"And it shall come to pass at that time that I will ... punish the men that are settled on their lees: that say in their heart, 'The Lord will not do good, neither will He do evil.'"* There was a practical atheism: Forget about God, and nothing bad will happen!" (Again, sound familiar?)

Jesus, in His final message sent from heaven, found the same condition in His church in Laodicea. They looked at themselves and said, in effect, "I'm good. I don't need anything. I'm comfortable, thank you."—when in reality they were, in Jesus' view, *"wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked"* (Rev. 3:17). They, too, had *"settled on [their] lees."*

What are "lees"? Lees is the term for the sediment that forms during the fermentation of grapes. This sediment eventually sinks to the bottom where, if left undisturbed, it hardens. Metaphorically, *"settled on their lees"* suggests a leisurely, casual approach to life. In the actual wine vat, the lees harden in time, becoming a picture of an unacceptable, "hardened" lifestyle. A person *"settled on his lees"* is one who, through spiritual idleness, has become morally indifferent, satisfied with his lack of spiritual drive, and ultimately hardened against God. Worst of all, he doesn't even realize it!

What was Christ's reaction to the Laodiceans' complacency? *"I will vomit you out of My mouth"* (Rev. 3:16), and He proceeded to give them good counsel. Buy His gold, the heavenly riches of faith (Jas. 2:5), to be rich indeed. Buy His white raiment, the fine linen which is the righteous deeds of the saints (Rev. 19:8).

The one *"settled on his lees"* is, to use a different simile, a person

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.

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Megiddo Message

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BDAG—Arndt, W., Gingrich, F. W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (1996). A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature; **BDB**—Brown, F., Driver, S. R., & Briggs, C. A.; **DBL**—Swanson, J. (1997). Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains; **EDNT**—Balz, H. R., & Schneider, G. (1990). Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament; **GES**—Gesenius, W., & Tregelles, S. P. (2003). Gesenius' Hebrew and Chaldee lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures; **HAL**—Koehler, L., Baumgartner, W., Richardson, M., & Stamm, J. J. (1999). The Hebrew and Aramaic lexicon of the Old Testament; **LJS**—Liddell, H. G., Scott, R., Jones, H. S., & McKenzie, R. (1996). A Greek-English lexicon; **LN**—Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament : Based on semantic domains; **SHG**—Strong, J. (1997). The new Strong's dictionary of Hebrew and Greek words.

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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).

Front cover photos:
 Taken by Patricia Fleming



COME, SHARE MY

Joy!

—Jesus

Someone has said that joy today is about as rare as the bald eagle. Essayist Charles Lamb said, “I walk up and down thinking I am happy and knowing I am not.” It is estimated that about every 30 minutes someone in the U.S. commits suicide. Sadly, many people who seek happiness in their families, their money, their jobs, are disappointed.

Now turn to the New Testament of your Bible, and you find it ringing with joy! When Jesus is born, the angels come bringing “good tidings of **great joy**” (Luke 2:10). Among Jesus’ final words to His disciples before He was crucified are: “*These things I have spoken to you, that **My joy** may remain in you, and that your joy may be full*” (John 15:11).

After Jesus is taken to heaven, His followers go out preaching. They are suffering, troubled, often persecuted, yet their lives are rich with joy. Beaten and imprisoned, their feet fast in stocks, two of them are singing praises to God at midnight! (Acts 16:25). Persecuted and hunted like a criminal, the great Apostle Paul exclaims, “*We know sorrow, yet **our joy** is inextinguishable!*” (2 Cor. 6:10 Phillips). When he writes to his brothers and sisters in Corinth, he says, “*I am **overjoyed** in all our affliction*” (2 Cor. 7:4 NRSV). The apostle Peter strikes the same chord of joy. “*In [Christ] ... though now you do not see Him, yet believing, **you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory***” (1 Pet. 1:8).

What is this joy? What is its source? Is it still available to us in this 21st century?

What Is Christian Joy?

It is not momentary happiness.

It is not laughter.

It is not banter, or jesting, or flippant remarks.

It is not idle words, or “Lighten up!” or the frivolous talk that the Bible calls “*the crackling of thorns under the pot*” (Eccl. 7:6).

Is it the joy of the Sunday school lyric:

*I’ve got the joy, joy, joy, joy down in my heart
Where?*

Down in my heart!

Where?

Down in my heart!

I’ve got the joy, joy, joy, joy down in my heart

Down in my heart to stay.

No, this joy is usually part of an emotional experience that comes—and goes. It is not the steady, enduring, supporting joy the Bible describes. It is not genuine joy in the Lord.

Most people think of joy in terms of what gives a sensation of pleasure: the smile of a

small child, the loving touch of a companion, the beauty of exquisite color, the savoring of delicious food, the sweet fragrance of flowers, or the sound of rapturous music. The joy of the Lord is an extension of these because it is joy in the prospect of receiving what God has promised His faithful children—eternally. Think about this promise in Scripture: “*Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him*” (1 Cor. 2:9).

Joy Now from Joy Ahead!

Is this daydreaming? Is it denying the harsh realities of life? Is the “*joy of the Lord*” too idealistic and unreal? Not at all! Christian joy overrides all present harshness because it is independent of circumstances. This joy does not depend on any stimuli in this world. It does not depend on present success or the absence of problems.

*“The joy of the Lord
is your strength”*

—Neh. 8:10

Christian joy is present happiness the Christian experiences because he is looking forward to living eternally in Christ's coming kingdom on earth. This is the promise of God (1 John 3:2–3; Luke 20:35–36; Matt. 5:5; 6:10). The coming Kingdom and how one can prepare to live in it was the theme of Jesus' preaching (Luke 8:1). The prospect of living in that ideal, coming, new world brought joy to God's people in all ages. With that reality in view, they could endure any hardship, any pain, any disadvantage, knowing that if they proved faithful, immortal life would one day be theirs (1 Tim. 6:17–19; 2 Cor. 4:17–18).

All joy in Scripture has its source in the promises of God to His faithful children. The Bible pictures the reward of the saints in the most glowing terms. Its every aspect is filled and overflowing with joy. It surpasses the ultimate in imaginable satisfaction, even *"exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think"* (Eph. 3:20). In the words of the Psalmist, *"You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore"* (Ps. 16:11). Scarcely could he find words to portray the supreme blessing God has reserved for His faithful children: *"They are abundantly satisfied with the fullness of Your house, and You give them drink from the river of Your pleasures"* (Ps. 36:7–8). Try to picture *"fullness of joy... abundantly satisfied..., river of Your pleasures!"*

The prophet Isaiah described the victorious saints as singing as they walked the high road to Zion *"with everlasting joy on their heads"* (Isa. 35:10). Again, he wrote of those who would have all the earth for their possession, and *"everlasting joy shall be theirs"* (Isa. 61:7).

With such overflowing joy at the very center of God's promises, do we wonder that the New Testament is also a book of joy? It opens with a choir of angels singing *"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill to men."* It closes with the ringing tones of the Hallelujah chorus at the "Marriage Supper of the Lamb." And those who live between these two events share even now a foretaste of the joy of coming delights. It is a joy that this world can neither give nor take away.

Since the whole plan of God will culminate in the everlasting joy of the earth made over new, with no more sin, no more violence, no more trouble, or oppression, or suffering, or pain, or war, or death—in view of all, God's people in all ages, anticipating the delights of

that new world, have been men and women radiant with joy!

Joy in Spite of Difficulties

King David's life was filled with tumult, but through it all he had joy because His confidence was in God. His psalms reflect his struggles, but they also ring with joy. *"My soul shall be joyful in the Lord; it shall rejoice in His salvation..."* (Ps. 35:9) *"I will be glad and rejoice in Your mercy..."* (31:7). *"When I remember these things, I pour out my soul within me...with the voice of joy and praise"* (42:4) *"Then I will go to*

The SOURCE of Christian Joy

Christian joy is not dependent on circumstances. It is joy in the hope of future life that is real despite difficulties. It is the spirit of the apostle Paul who wrote, *"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us"* (Rom. 8:18).

Christian joy overrides moods and emotions because it sees present challenges as temporary, and future happiness as eternal bliss. This is why Jesus was not seeking pleasure as He went through life. He was not looking for self-gratification, or the approval of men, or even the normal satisfactions of life. He had joy in the prospect of what His Heavenly Father had promised Him (Heb. 12:2). Nothing else really mattered.

What would happen if we took Jesus for our pattern? If our whole purpose in life was to please our heavenly Father, what would be our reaction to failing health, loss, failure, crisis? Would our joy be shattered by a loss of money, or security, or position in this world? If so, then our heart was not set on His goals; we were living for ourselves, and not to please God.

the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy" (43:4).

The Prophet Jeremiah, in a life of trial and difficulty, said that the word of God was the joy and rejoicing of his heart (Jer. 15:16). The words of God were his source of joy because God had promised to be with him and bring him safely through.

The apostle Peter wrote to his brethren,

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Joy & Great Joy

The New Testament uses two primary words for joy. The first is *chara*, which comes from *chairō*, and means “cheerfulness, calmness, calm delight, joy. It is also used as a salutation, on meeting or parting, as “be well, farewell, be glad” (SHG, DBL, and LN). *Chara* describes the joy of knowing and serving God. It is used of rejoicing in one’s faith (Acts 8:39), and in the hope that faith gives (Rom. 12:12). It is even used of rejoicing in suffering because that suffering is a sharing in Christ’s sufferings—in prospect of the glory to be revealed (1 Peter 4:13).

This joy is a present happiness that is a result of one’s faith and hope in God, and in sharing that faith with fellow believers. The apostle Paul used *chara* many times speaking of his joy in seeing the spiritual progress of his brethren (2 Cor. 2:3; 6:10; 7:7–9, 16; Phil. 1:18; 2:28). He used *chara* again when he wrote to the Philippians, “*Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!*” (Phil. 4:4). A few times he used it as a general command: “*Rejoice evermore*” (1 Thess. 5:16). He also spoke of himself as “*sorrowful, yet always rejoicing*” (2 Cor. 6:10). And he wrote to his brethren, “*Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep*” (Rom 12:15).

The apostle John rejoiced when he saw his children “*walking in truth*” (2 John 4; 3 John 3).

Jesus used *chara* to describe the joy His followers could have now in serving God (see Matt. 5:12; Luke 6:23; John 4:36; 14:28).

The New Testament has a second word for joy which is a superlative form. It is literally a combination of the Greek word for “much” plus the word for “jump up, leap, bubble up, spring up” (SHG). This joy is

Joy lies not in the absence of trouble but in the surety of God’s promises.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

who were facing severe persecution, “*that the genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold which though perishable is tested by fire, may redound to praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Without having seen him you love him; though you do not see him now you believe in him and rejoice with unutterable and exalted joy*” (1 Pet. 1:7–8 RSV), or as phrased in our common version, “*Yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory.*”

The apostle John was filled with joy because his children walked in truth (2 John 4)—because it was the way to the “*full reward*” they were working for (2 John 8).

In the Lord Jesus we see the height of genuine joy. The night of the Last Supper, He told His disciples that He wanted to share His joy with them. Imagine! Jesus, knowing that by that time the next day he would have been crucified, had joy **to share!** “*These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full*” (John 15:11). He was

over and above the “normal” joys of life because it is joy *in anticipation of future joy*. The word is *agalliao*, and means “to be exceedingly joyful, exult, be glad, overjoyed; to experience a state of great joy and gladness, rejoice exceedingly” (SHG; BDAG; LSJ). It is even used as an adverb along with *chairo* to express an exceedingly great joy. It appears that the Hebrew scholars who translated the Old Testament into Greek (the Septuagint) in the second century BC recognized the source of the joy of God’s people and adapted this word to describe something not known in the ancient world. It was joy in celebrating and extolling “the help and acts of God,” to “indicate either joy in God or joy before Him,” especially the “perfect joy in rejoicing characterizing the future world” (TDNT). Many times in the Psalms, the translators of the Septuagint used *agalliao* to describe joy in God’s salvation, in hope, in anticipation of future glory (see Psalm 20:5; 31:7; 35:9; 35:27; 40:16; 67:4; 89:16; 90:14; 96:11,12; 145:7; 149:2,5, and many more). The New Testament writers, being familiar with the Septuagint, continued its use when describing the supreme joy of those who were anticipating life in God’s coming new world.

Is this super, overflowing joy an idealism that is unreal? Not at all. In fact, even this exceedingly descriptive word for joy cannot adequately describe the emotion of one anticipating a future that is beyond our grandest imagination!

Agalliao is the type of joy captured in the angels’ song of Revelation 19:7, which they address to the faithful bride at the marriage supper of the Lamb. We read: “*Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready*” (Rev. 19:7). The apostle Peter uses *chairo* to describe the joy we feel even now as “*partakers of Christ’s sufferings*,” that when He comes in His glory, we may be “*glad also with exceeding joy*” (1 Peter 4:13). Peter again uses *agalliao* to describe the joy that believers experience now, even though for the moment “*grieved by various trials*.” Why *agalliao* now? Because of their solid confidence in the salvation Christ will bring when He returns! In prospect of that joy, Peter says, we can even now “*rejoice with joy that is inexpressible [agalliao] and filled with glory*” (1 Peter 1:8).

Bible scholar G. Kittel (author of TDNT) observes the consistent association of this “*exceeding joy*” with believers who had a solid confidence in the working out of God’s plan of salvation on this earth (eschatology) when Jesus Christ would return to set up His kingdom.

When Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, “*Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake*” (Matt. 5:11), He followed His statement by using both of the primary words for joy. He said first, “*Rejoice [chairo]*” and then “*be exceedingly glad [agalliao]*.” Why? “*For great is your reward in heaven*” (vs. 12). The supreme joy was in prospect of the rewards Jesus would bring when He returns from heaven (Rev. 22:12). Jesus described Abraham as sharing this same supreme joy when

*The source of the Christian’s joy is
the prospect of receiving future, eternal
rewards when Jesus returns.*

he “*rejoiced to see My day*”—again, the joy was in anticipation of the Day when he would be resurrected, when Christ would return as king over the whole earth (John 8:56; Zech. 14:9; Isa. 40:10).

After Jesus sent out the seventy and they had returned, telling of their great success, Jesus said to them, “*Do not rejoice in this [their present success]...but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven*” (Luke 10:20)—to be read in the great Day of the dispensing of the rewards, when the “*Son of man*” should return “*in the glory of His Father with His angels*” to “*reward every man according as his works shall be*” (see Matt. 16:27).

Always, the source of joy was the prospect of future, eternal rewards after the resurrection at Christ’s return—“*glory, honour and immortality, eternal life*” (Rom. 2:7). ♦

radiant with joy. What was Jesus’ source of joy? It was the confident faith by which He could see beyond the suffering to the joy ahead. The Book of Hebrews says it exactly: He, “*for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame*” (Heb. 12:2). Jesus was looking beyond the cross to the glorious resurrection, the journey to His Father’s throne, the crowning with immortality in His Father’s presence, to be followed by some two millennia in the environs of His Father and the heavenly family; then ultimately to return to earth as King all-glori-

ous, and share the kingship with His faithful disciples. It was enough to overwhelm any human mind—and sustain Him through any suffering that lay between. Here was a source of joy that even the horrors of crucifixion could not touch.

Can’t we imagine that the early Christians’ radiant, unconquerable joy distinguished them

*The worst circumstance could not kill
the believer’s joy in the Lord.*

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WHAT WILL *Immortality* BE LIKE?

What would it be like to be changed into the likeness of Christ (Phil. 3:20–21; 1 John 3:2), a shining immortal being? How would it affect our lives?

First of all, it would remove our instinctive dread of death because immortal beings cannot die (Luke 20:35–36). Try as we may now, we cannot escape the knowledge that we are mortal, and that in the course of time we all will die. To immortal beings, the future is all life, life and more life!

Then too, being made immortal would remove all fear of sickness, debilitating disease, pain, and suffering, because God as promised to wipe away “all tears,” along with all sickness and pain (Rev. 21:3–4). As the years go by, we would no longer be constantly reminded of our mortality as our eyesight, our hearing, our teeth, and on and on, begin failing with no possibility of full restoration. As a matter of fact, immortal beings no longer “grow older.” The millenniums just pass one after the other while they go from “glory to glory” (2 Cor. 3:18). This is a whole new avenue of thought: to no longer “grow older.” But it is very real—because immortal bodies have absolutely nothing to wear out. They are always new, fit and strong. As time passes, their minds grow wiser, stronger and more attuned—just the opposite of mortality!

Then, being immortal would put us on the “other side” of the Judgment—we are accepted for a place in CHrist’s eternal kingdom! No longer need we have any fear of sin, or of displeasing God. Having received His stamp of approval, we are His forever. No chance of failing or falling short.

Then, too, as immortals we would no longer have to fear for the temporal side of our planet—for the depleting of the natural resources on which we are so dependent. We would no longer have to spend the greater portion of our conscious moments—acquiring food, clothing, shelter and medical care. We no longer would have to be concerned that we get enough exercise, that we eat the right kinds of foods and not overindulge. No longer would we have to be concerned for our homes, keeping them in repair and protecting them from flood, fire and storm.

There are many things that cause discomfort in this life that are necessary for survival—such things as hunger, thirst and fatigue. Putting on immortality will eliminate any need for such.

Add to all this another of God’s promises, that of “*everlasting joy*” (Isa. 35:10). “*They shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.*”

What will immortality be like? Picture the happiest moment you ever experienced going on ... and on ... and on ... and on ... from joy to joy, with never a pain, or sorrow, or worry to mar that pure, rapturous joy. The delights of immortality will surpass even that, for in the words of the inspired Prophet, mortal eye has never seen, mortal ear has never heard, and mortal mind has never imagined what God has prepared for those who truly love Him (1 Cor. 2:9).

Why not give God our very best now—so that He may share the delights of His wonders with us, world without end? ♦

*Those who are counted
worthy to attain that age...
are equal to the angels...
neither can they die anymore.*
— Luke 20:35–36

from their non-believing neighbors? Like their great example Paul, those early believers learned to be content with or without what the world could give, because their hope of future life in Christ's Kingdom was sure. Their inner joy was not the result of a pious wish but was a permanent, all pervasive part of their very being. The worst this world could throw at them was only for a moment, after which they would be resurrected, judged and crowned with immortality in God's new world. Let their enemies trample them, rend and hurt them—their triumph would be short.

Read the Book of Acts, and you will see the same spirit of joy. The Apostles had received a commission from Jesus to go and teach *"all nations,"* wherever the Spirit guided them (Matt. 28:19–20; Mark 16:16–20). They were men on a mission to fulfill it. Were the hardships intolerable? In their hearts was an unconquerable gladness. Even when they had been beaten and shamefully treated, we read that they *"departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name"* (Acts 5:41).

See Paul and Silas in the Philippian jail, their feet fast in stocks, their backs bleeding from the merciless beating they had received. What were they doing? They were singing hymns of praise to God at midnight (Acts 16). The worst of circumstances could not suppress their joy in the Lord.

One might think that the opposite of joy is sorrow, but Christian joy is different. For this special brand of joy can co-exist with sorrow. Said the apostle Paul, *"we are never far from death, yet here we are alive, always going through, yet never going under. We know sorrow, yet our joy is inextinguishable"* (2 Cor. 6:9–10, Phillips).

Do we wonder that the pagans who knew them were perplexed? These Christians couldn't be tempted by pleasure, or frightened by terror. They had something *"out of this world,"* something not known in normal life, something that their enemies' deadliest terrors could not touch. Were they missing the "normal" pleasures of life? Perhaps, but anticipation of future glory gave them real joy. Did Caesar's pleasures make the rigors of life tolerable? Their joy in the promises of God created an atmosphere that could not be clouded. They saw earth's finest pleasures as a bubble soon to burst; their joy would be enduring.

"Rejoice in the Lord Always"

The apostle Paul said it. Could he have possibly meant what he said?

How could Paul rejoice *"always"*? Wasn't he in prison, beaten, and shipwrecked?

If joy depends on present satisfactions and getting what we want in life—good friends, good health, good success, fame, wealth—*and the absence of trouble and suffering*, we would have to admit that something is wrong. Forget the *"always"*—rejoicing would be only an occasional outburst, because everyone knows that life is not all pleasure. But the impossibility vanishes when we realize that he was rejoicing *"in the Lord,"* not in the problem. Paul's joy was not dependent on circumstances. Even when everything seemed against him, he could still *"rejoice in the Lord"* knowing

A Burst of Joy!

Hear this burst of joy from the zealous apostle Paul. It is taken from the book of Romans (chapter 8):

"In my opinion whatever we may have to go through now is less than nothing compared with the magnificent future God has planned for us. The whole creation is on tiptoe to see the wonderful sight of the sons of God coming into their own.

The world of creation cannot as yet see reality, not because it chooses to be blind, but because in God's purpose it has been so limited—yet it has been given hope. And the hope is that in the end the whole of created life will be rescued from the tyranny of change and decay, and have its share in that magnificent liberty which can only belong to the children of God! ...

"I have become absolutely convinced that neither death nor life, neither messenger of Heaven nor monarch of earth, neither what happens today nor what may happen tomorrow, neither a power from on high nor a power from below, nor anything else in God's whole world has any power to separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord!"

—extracted from Romans 8, translated by J. B. Phillips.

that God was working all things together for his eternal good (Rom. 8:28).

This is why Paul could write, *"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us"* (Rom. 8:18). The bright picture of future glory was *always there*. Whatever the momentary pain or pleasure, the future created

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

a joy so great that nothing here—good or bad—could compare with it.

As Christians we do not have to be Epicureans and pretend that all is well when it isn't. We don't have to be Stoics and deny pain, or sorrow, or adversity. All we have to do is take what comes and make the best of it, trusting God to do what we cannot, and knowing that if we are true to Him nothing can hurt

The FRUIT of Joy

The apostle Paul placed joy among the fruits of the Spirit which we must bear in our lives. The analogy is instructive and thought provoking, because fruit does not come instantly. And fruit does not bear itself. It takes time, diligence, patience, and hard work to make an apple tree productive.

Nor does good fruit come without effort. Often it is the victory over weather, bugs, weeds, poor soil and neglect.

Simply to have the knowledge of God is not an automatic guarantee of joy. Joy is the result of living in the perspective of Eternity, of having a realistic hope of living and learning through the endless cycles of the eternal life God has promised His faithful children in His coming Kingdom on earth.

or hinder our eternal welfare. What more do we need to make us a people of *real joy*!

Serving God doesn't guarantee present happiness but it does guarantee *future joy*. This is why God's people are able to "*Rejoice in the Lord always.*"

Christian joy is a very special, other-worldly commodity. Do we have sorrow? Yes, but we do not sorrow as those who have no hope (1 Thess. 4:16–17). Do we have suffering? Yes, but it is nothing to be compared with the glory "*which shall be revealed in us*" (Rom. 8:18). The Christian life is not an escape from life's harshness but a steadying support *through* it. What happens now is really of little consequence, if only we can reach the glory that lies ahead.

Some misguided preachers try to make Christian joy sound instant and free. Believe,

and you will have nothing but joy. But such is not the gospel of Christ. There is no guarantee of uninterrupted wealth, health and happiness in this life, even to the most godly. Some of the heroes of faith suffered cruel deaths. They lived in caves and holes in the ground; they were men and women of whom the world was not worthy (Heb. 11:37–38). They were mocked and beaten, chained and imprisoned. Happy? hardly. But full of joy? Yes, even in their suffering and sorrows they could still rejoice in the hope of *coming glory*.

That bright hope shined a new light on all of life. It brings a hundredfold of contentment even now. As Paul wrote, "*our trials not only give us hope of future joys—we can be full of joy here and now... these very things will give us patient endurance; this in turn will develop a mature character, and a character of this sort produces a steady hope, a hope that will never disappoint us*" (Rom. 5:3–5, Phillips).

Joy Supreme!

Picture Jesus Christ seated on His throne of judgment, sublime in His majesty, His face glowing with immortal light. Scores of angels surround Him, while thousands more look on in rapt attention. At this moment, a loyal servant of Christ is standing before him. The Master smiles. His words are gentle and approving, loving and filled with admiration: "*Well done, My good and faithful servant: come, enter into My joy.*"

"*Enter into...My joy!*" Yes, enter in! Step into glory, honor, immortality, and real life! It is the reward God has promised for continuing patiently in doing right (Rom. 2:7). What will this be like?

Try to imagine the feeling of knowing absolutely that you will never again suffer pain, never get sick, never get tired, never die! (Rev. 21:3–4).

Try to imagine the delight of being accepted once and for all into the family of the great God of heaven, with the angels for your own brothers and sisters.

Then think about Christ's wedding. One of the great events soon to follow Christ's return to earth will be what the Revelator calls "*the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.*" Try to picture the celestial scene. Think about the music that will accompany that banquet. Imagine that you are watching as the director of the angel choir lifts his hand, and a thousand heavenly voices resound as one. First softly, then growing loud-

er and louder, the music echoes from world to world as each is joined by another heavenly choir, and another, and yet another, until the vast vault of heaven rings with anthems of praise. The Revelator, at a loss for adequate terms to describe what he saw in vision (Rev. 19), compared it to the sound of a "thousand oceans crashing" on the shore as wave after wave of "Alleluia!" echoed from choir to choir. These were some of the words of the anthem he heard: "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready" (Rev. 19:6-7).

This is no dream or idle speculation. God has promised all this and more to those who are true and faithful. This is the grand consummation, crowning day, the beginning of a glory and a joy which will open into broader and yet broader realms of happiness and delight through endless ages to come.

Can you feel the ecstatic joy of being one of those faithful servants who will hear those most gracious, most delightful words of acceptance from the Master: "Well done, My good and faithful servant; enter into My joy!"

"Enter into My joy." That will be "joy indescribable and full of glory"! Amen! ♦

We'll joy and sing forever
In that summer land we'll share;
Joy supernal will surround us,
With bright angels everywhere!

We walk by faith, and not by sight;
More blessed are we by walking right;
And step by step it leads our way
To perfect joy and endless day.

But we never can prove
The delights of His love,
Until all on the altar we lay;
For the favor He shows,
And the joy He bestows,
Are for them who will trust and obey.

Oh promised day of great joy and peace
Within the Kingdom fair;
With hearts united let us strive,
Its glories soon to share.

BLESSED Bible

The strains of sweetest music
Are falling on my ear,
The words of holy Scripture,
To me so very dear.
Through our beloved leader
The Word was made so plain
I find my joy in working
Its promises to gain.

My cup is overflowing
Since Truth became my stay;
My pathway shines the brighter
Unto the perfect day.
Upon the true foundation
My feet securely stand—
The hope of every nation
I'm holding in my hand.

Oh, friend, there is deliverance
For every troubled soul
Who will forsake the evil,
And let the Truth control.
Bring self into subjection,
And peace you'll surely find,
The joy of sweet contentment
When sin is left behind.

I find an invitation
Within the sacred Tome
To every tribe and nation
To enter that sweet home
Where sickness, pain, and sorrow,
And partings are unknown,
Where "Death" has lost its power,
And every care has flown.

'Tis plain that "Whosoever"
Will listen to the Word,
All fleshly longings sever,
With one desire be stirred—
The hope of life eternal—
All such are urged to come
And taste the bliss supernal
Of the New Jerusalem.

The Bible, blessed Bible
Is more than life to me,
For if I keep its mandates
I'll live eternally.
And so, in hopes of sharing
The joys now held in store,
I'm busily preparing
To live ever more.



Jesus was no
ordinary provincial
artisan...

Broader Fields

From the early years of Jesus' life, as they might have been.

Introduction

In Part 1, Demetrius, a merchant from Alexandria enroute from Egypt to Damascus, was having his chariot wheels rebuilt at the village carpenter shop of Nazareth. But as the days went by, he found himself getting more than chariot wheels. It was all so strange, that he, a wealthy, powerful, cultured business man should be spending so much precious time in a hot, dusty, unheard-of little town in the highlands of Galilee, for no better reason than the fascinating influence of a clever young Jewish workman. But here he was.

In two more days the work would be done, the chariot ready for the road. In the gathering dusk the two men met by agreement, the carpenter wondering what the "important business" of the merchant could be. Together they strolled to the edge of the village, to a spot where the cool evening breeze flowed unbroken down the hillside. Seated on a ruined stone wall they watched the dim, scattered lights twinkle out one by one in the valley below.

The evening star glowed in the western sky, while across the Jordan a nearly-full moon was rising. A boy drove a small flock of sheep down the hill, their footsteps soft in the dust of the roadway. The air was filled with the pleasant sounds and scents of a summer evening. Life in the country did have its compensations, the merchant mused.

They talked of commonplaces sparingly. Adroitly the Greek drew the conversation to

ambition, success, power.

"Jesus," he asked abruptly, "are you content and happy here?"

The carpenter thought a moment. "Happy, yes. Very happy indeed. But who could be content, with the world's need so great, its darkness and ignorance and misery so deep?"

It was not the reply Demetrius had expected, but it gave him an opening.

"That is true, my boy. Only a clod could be content. But what are you doing to relieve the world's need and ignorance? I know you are trying to make a good man of yourself, which helps that much; but that is not enough. The world needs leaders, trained men of genius to remake the human mind, and through it, the world."

"Such men are hard to find, are they not?"

"Extremely hard. And in my travels I have for some years been on the watch for promising material, young men who may, with proper training and education, become the world's future leaders. Now this is my purpose in talking to you tonight. To be direct, you have this ability, if I am any judge of men. You have a great mind, and an unsoiled character. All you lack is training and opportunity, neither of which are to be had in the barren hills of a remote province."

"Just what is your suggestion, Sir?"

"Come with me to Alexandria, and I will make you famous. I have no children of my own, and I have wealth; how better can a man use his money for the good of humanity?"

Given in alms, it is soon eaten up and forgotten; given to develop honest and capable leaders, its influence goes on and on. Here there is nothing. Rome is too much concerned with political power and military greatness; Athens is dead, living on the memory of its past glories; only in Alexandria are culture and science and philosophy given room to flower. In Alexandria, East meets West, and out of the mingling of ideas come new systems of thought, new light for the world's darkness. There we have libraries so vast that I cannot even begin to describe them. To its lecture halls flock the most brilliant minds of the Empire. A year or two in the great university will fit you to take your place in the councils of the philosophers; in a few more years the sciences will be yours. Then travel—have you traveled?"

"Only to Jerusalem; twice to Caesarea. Yes, come to think of it, I have been in Egypt. I lived there when a very small child, but I remember practically nothing of it."

"Think of the broadening influence of visiting Rome, Greece, the great cities of Asia, Gaul, Spain. See how other people live, what their problems are. After all, the world is larger than Palestine."

"It could be very enlightening, given the proper circumstances. But—I have other things to consider. I am the principal support of the family, and times are hard."

"I will provide for them," was the merchant's ready reply. "Either here or in Alexandria, if they prefer. The climate is better there, anyway, and far greater opportunities for your brothers. Think of their future, too."

"I have always made my own living," the youth objected, "and the idea of being supported by another does not appeal to me."

"A poor excuse. You are foolish if you let your independent spirit stand in the way of your success. We are in this world to help one another, and the good you will do in the world will more than repay my small investment. Others have helped me; I can help you over a barrier, and you can help thousands upon thousands of your fellowmen—an ever-widening stream. My fortune came from the public; now I have an opportunity to repay my debt to them. Also"—with a self-deprecating laugh—"it will gratify my vanity in years to come to be pointed out as the man who discovered and gave to the world the greatest teacher of modern times: Jesus the Galilean!"

The carpenter was absently tossing pebbles one by one down the slope. At length he spoke deliberately.

"You really think that Alexandria offers broader fields than Palestine? We have produced some great men, you know."

"True, but hardly known and without influence beyond the bounds of your little country, except as your people have emigrated to other parts of the Empire. In Alexandria we produce *world* figures. I might name Archimedes, Aristophanes, Eratosthenes, Euclid, Homer and Herodotus, to say nothing of a host of scientists, philosophers, artists, writers. Even your own countryman, Philo Judaeus, is now one of the bright stars in our sky. You have heard of him?"

"Yes"—shortly and with a trace of disdain, which the Greek pretended not to notice.

"Here, as I said before, there is nothing. You are an excellent carpenter for your age, but carpenters always die poor, and your poverty will be a millstone about your neck as long as you live, preventing the development of your natural abilities. Not that you haven't done pretty well, in spite of your handicaps. Why, they tell me that when you were twelve years old you went to Jerusalem and talked with the rabbis in open discussion. With a start like that, and proper education from now on, the intellectual world would be at your feet in a short time."

The young man threw a handful of pebbles down the hill and stood up.

"I thought perhaps that affair had been forgotten by now. At any rate, it was premature, entirely out of order, and I have never tried it again."

"Why do you talk like that? Never sell yourself at a discount. But to go on, there is no denying that opportunities in this little country are very limited. At the very top is the high priesthood, which, of course, would be out of the question for you, since you are not of a priestly family—and also too honest a man. Next is a seat in the Sanhedrin, which is an empty honor, because the Sanhedrin is powerless to act without the approval of the Romans. And even this is very unlikely for you, due to your lack of education. You see, at every turn the untrained man is blocked. Unless you are content to live and die an obscure village carpenter, *this is your opportunity.*"

"I have no intention of remaining in my present condition. When my brothers are able to take over the shop and make the living,

there will be a change. I am fully determined to follow the path predetermined for me, and to leave the world better for my presence in it. I fully believe that my great opportunity will come to me when the time is right. It will come to me, even in Nazareth."

"My boy, this is it. This is your opportunity, knocking loudly at your front door. Don't let it get away. One more argument, and then I will leave you to think it over. Even with equal advantages and preparation, Palestine is not a good place in these days to begin reforms. The Jews have a reputation for sedition, as you know. The Emperors do not understand them, and watch them with suspicion. Ideas and abilities which would bring you fame and fortune elsewhere are more than likely to classify you as a rebel in Judea, maybe even crucify you."

He rose to his feet and stretched his cramped limbs. "Anyway, young man, that's my proposition. I have no selfish interest in the matter, except as I told you. But I do not like to think of your wasting your life and your fine mind in this narrow corner when broader fields lie before you. In all probability I shall not pass this way again. If you decide to accept, I will call on my return from Damascus, before the winter rains begin, and take you back to Egypt with me."

They parted at the gate of the inn. In the darkness of the shop, Jesus the carpenter tested the paint on the new wheels. By morning it would be dry, and the wheels could be assembled with the chariot body that stood on blocks in the alley.

Jesus paused in the doorway of the shop and looked up. There, bathed in the calm moonlight, he gazed into the heavens. Just a few stars twinkled in the fast darkening sky, but they sent the usual thrill through his youthful frame. He believed with all his heart that his heavenly Father had a very special plan for him. In his keen mind God's promises outshined the glories and glamor of this world as the sun outshone the moon. Someday the dull and mundane in his life would give way to his true calling and his heavenly Father's business, but how? and when? That this stranger was part of that plan just didn't seem right...

Quietly Jesus closed the door to the shop and stepped into the now dark streets of Nazareth. As he neared Nazareth's small synagogue, his steps quickened. How often Jesus had made his way to that familiar corner of the synagogue where he would lose himself in the

Scriptures and in prayer. Tonight his soul longed for the reassurance of those Messianic prophecies he knew so well.

The synagogue was dark except for the lamp near the closet containing the sacred scrolls. First he heard a low moan, then the bent form in a dark corner stirred. Old Rabbi Amos, keeper of the scrolls, shuffled forward to see who had entered.

Jesus greeted him respectfully, "Shalom, Rabbi Amos."

The old man greeted the young man fondly, "Ah, it is you, son of Joseph. It has been many a day since you were here to study. Too busy?"

Jesus ignored the question, "The job for the Greek is complete, or rather, will be by dawn."

The old man's head bobbed as he spoke, "Unusual, very unusual for Nazareth to attract a man of such wealth...They say he is well-travelled and learned..." Then peering up into Jesus' face he added, "He has taken a great liking to you, aye?"

Jesus dismissed the last comment with, "Every man likes his money's worth," then went to the point. "Rabbi Amos, could I have the scroll of Isaiah tonight?" Together they went to the closet where the Scripture scrolls were kept. The old scribe was happy to have his beloved scrolls read and the young man was eager to draw strength, inspiration and reassurance from them.

"I'll light the lamp for you before I go," the old keeper offered as he handed Jesus the Isaiah scroll. Thanking him, Jesus reverently carried the large scroll to the study corner.

There in the quiet of the synagogue the young carpenter drew strength and reassurance not only from the Scriptures he loved and knew so well but also from his keen awareness of those Messianic prophecies already fulfilled in him. His mind went easily, intuitively, from one familiar prophecy to another about himself, his Father's future work for him, and its glorious culmination. So much was revealed in these prophecies!

Then he turned to prophecies about John—the voice in the wilderness—his forerunner. He had not seen John for many years. Zacharias and Elisabeth were now both dead and John had gone into the wilderness. John too would be waiting for the right time. But when would that right time be? How would they know?

Having the many folds of the Divine plan vivid in his keen mind, Jesus prayed earnestly to know his Father's will, and to remain in that

will. He knew without a doubt that each promise and prophecy of God would come to pass in its turn just as He had decreed.

Having put everything into God's hands and calm in the peace of complete faith and trust, Jesus slipped out of the synagogue.

The morning was still cool when Demetrius approached the little shop and stared in surprise at the completed chariot. Somewhat early Jesus had called his reluctant brothers James and Joses from their beds to help with the assembling of the chariot.

"Bring on your horses," was the carpenter's cheery greeting to Demetrius. "Let's take it out on the road and see how it runs."

The Greek did so, somewhat surprised that nothing was said about the other matter. When he returned with the horses and driver, Jesus called him aside.

"Leave your man here, if you don't mind I have never driven so fine a team as yours, and I should like to take the reins for a little, with your permission."

The rough road he chose wound up to the crest of the hill, and there Jesus halted. For a long time the two men gazed at the magnificent panorama spread before them, saying little except as the carpenter pointed out places and objects of interest. All about them stretched the great, fertile plain of Esdraelon. The Jordan valley lay dim in the east. To the West the ancient hills of Samaria were sharply defined against the southern sky. Northward towered the snowy heights of Mount Hermon. At length Jesus turned to the older man.

"I presume you are waiting for an answer to your very kind offer of last night." He spoke respectfully. "I wish to thank you again for it—it was kind and generous of you, but I have decided not to accept."

The Greek was not so much surprised as he might have been. He was not surprised at anything this unpredictable young man might do. He looked hard at Jesus, who returned the gaze calmly, but resolutely.

"No?" Then after a pause, "Mind telling me your reasons?"

"Not at all." The carpenter drew a long breath. "It is only fair that I should state them, although it is quite a story, and you may not fully understand. The fact is," Jesus was speaking with assurance. "Alexandria offers too little; the field is too narrow...."

"Too little and too narrow?" The merchant

was incredulous. "What can you possibly mean?"

"I shall try to explain....," he said simply. "Now what I am about to share with you has been kept in strict confidence inside our home...even my brothers and sisters are not fully informed." Jesus paused as though reluctant to proceed. "There is a plan for my future—a predetermined work for me to do in this world; and so far as I can discern, it is my heavenly Father's will that I perform it—or at least begin it—right here. Quite naturally the average aspiring youth would enjoy the sights of Alexandria, the libraries and lecture halls, the contact with brilliant minds, the travel to



far lands, the possibility of fame and fortune; but for me there is something more important than all this. I am afraid—no, I am confident these things would interfere with the things that really matter to me."

"What, in your estimation, are the things that matter?"

"Truth!" The carpenter's dark eyes flashed as his words became more impassioned. "Truth, mercy, justice, and the Kingdom of Heaven."

"The Kingdom of Heaven? I do not understand."

"I know you do not."

"But do not our great scientists and philosophers lead in the search for truth?" Demetrius was again on the defensive, backed into a corner by the younger's personality.

"Truth by their definition, but it is not the truth which will give *life*. Should I follow your plan and attain fame and fortune, what then? Where is Archimedes today?"

"He is dead."

"And Euclid, and Aristophanes?"

"Dead."

"And Herodotus, and Eratosthenes, and Theocritus?"

"Also dead. But—"

"That is just my point, Sir. Life at its very best is too short, and the price of living the life you offer me is too high. I want to *live*."

"But you, too, will die."

"True. That is the natural destiny of all. I may even be crucified, as you warned. But I do not want death to be the end. I want to awake again—to sit at the right hand of my Father—to enjoy glory, honor and power. Indeed, the whole Roman Empire is much too small for me. I was born to be king..."

"King?!! Listen, my boy," the Greek broke in, impatiently, "do you really believe that?"

The carpenter looked him squarely in the eye. Demetrius winced in spite of himself under that clear gaze.

"Sir, unless I believed it, I would be mad not to accept your offer. If you or Alexandria could give me more than I now have in prospect—as I have only begun to tell you—I would gladly come with you. As it is, Alexandria has no appeal to me. To go would rob me of my independence and freedom to follow the light as I see it, for while eating the bread of another I would be under obligation to return favor for favor. No, I shall stay in Galilee until my time comes, preparing to be about my heavenly Father's business.... I hope you understand, Sir."

Demetrius shook his head. He had lost the connection a long way back.

"Young man," he said slowly, "I do not understand. I respect your zeal and your faith, but you aspiring to be a king? It just doesn't make sense.... No, it doesn't make sense."

But that, of course, was what Jesus had expected him to say, so he was not surprised. He took the reins and turned the chariot around.

"The wheels seem to be all right, don't they?" he said, with an engaging smile. "If they are not, bring them back and we will make them good. Your bill is a pound and four shekels. And if you ever come this way again, stop and dine with us. It has been a pleasure to serve you."

A dozen years later, when word reached Alexandria that one Jesus of Nazareth in Galilee had been crucified as a rebel in

Jerusalem, Demetrius wagged his head sagely. He had warned the young man; he had tried hard to make something of him; but he would not listen. A dreamer, a fanatic—that is the usual end of such men. Well, that was the end of that matter. He heard rumors of the Resurrection, too, but he did not believe them. Things like that just couldn't happen. Jesus was dead, and his insignificant following, if he had any, would soon be dispersed. He would forget the whole affair, his conscience being clear. There were other things that really mattered—things like money, learning, power.

Demetrius did forget it, until some few years later quite by accident he met first one, then another, and another of Jesus' followers. Their faces were radiant. They spoke with certainty. Yes, Jesus had been crucified, but he was also resurrected—he was alive again! There was no doubt at all in their minds. They knew it absolutely—his followers had seen him, and talked with him. Jesus had been with them a full forty days after His resurrection. Then, suddenly he had been taken up to heaven. Now, they declared, he was at the right hand of God. But he would be coming back to claim his throne, just as he had promised. His destiny was sure ... a kingdom, dominion, power would be his ... *forever!*

That carpenter from Nazareth a king? Demetrius remembered—that was what that young man had claimed...

His followers, now called Christians, said more: They too would be resurrected and they looked forward, if faithful, to sharing his glory, honor and eternal life.

The traveler from Alexandria wondered. What did it all mean? He pondered deeply the things he heard and saw. He had to admit, at least to himself, that these enthusiastic followers of Jesus had something. For who would live and possibly die for a dead leader? Deep inside he knew the answer had to be None. Never had he seen such faith, such hope, such purpose. "Truly," he told himself, "they serve a different God!"

Suddenly the things he had worked for all his life seemed to sink into insignificance. Money, learning, power—they had not truly satisfied. But whoever expected more? What was this thing the carpenter and His followers called everlasting life? He couldn't get his mind around it. Probably just another fantasy.

Or might it be real? Demetrius never stopped wondering. ♦

SIMON AND THE SINFUL WOMAN:

Who Loved More?

“Why was the sinful woman at the home of Simon the Pharisee trying to do so much for Jesus? I think it was because Jesus had done so much for her. He had forgiven her sins and saved her. Forgiveness is a gift of God’s grace. Her debt was paid in full by Jesus Christ. The woman accepted God’s free offer of salvation and expressed her love openly. Simon rejected it and remained unforgiven.”

This narrative, recorded in Luke 7:36–50, has been the subject of much controversy. The usual conclusion is the one you mention, that her love was so great because Jesus had forgiven her so many sins; that her love won His forgiveness. Yet what did Jesus say to the woman at the conclusion of the story? *“Your faith has saved you”* (Luke 7:50). Her “faith”—not her love—saved her.

Sometimes when reading the Bible it is easy to *assume* that the text is saying something that is not actually stated—because it is taught and popularly believed. This is true of the account of Simon and the sinful woman. Why was the woman trying to show her deep gratitude to Jesus? Was it because Jesus, by dying, paid her sin debt “in full”, which the woman accepted as God’s free offer of salvation? This is the common belief, but the Bible does not say anything about a “free offer of salvation.” And Jesus did not say that accepting His death was the way to secure forgiveness for one’s sins. Furthermore, this incident occurred *during* Jesus’ ministry, *before* He was crucified. How could the woman have received any benefit from Jesus’ death—not to mention paying her “sin debt” in “full”—before He even died?

“Free salvation” is found in theology, but not in the Bible. Nor do we find any Biblical basis for your last statement, that “Simon rejected it [God’s free offer of salvation] and remained unforgiven.” This statement is again based on an assumption and not Biblical teaching.

Luke 7:36–50 (NKJV)

- 36 Then one of the Pharisees asked Him to eat with him. And He went to the Pharisee's house, and sat down to eat.
- 37 And behold, a woman in the city who was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at the table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil,
- 38 and stood at His feet behind Him weeping; and she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head; and she kissed His feet and anointed them with the fragrant oil.
- 39 Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he spoke to himself, saying, "This Man, if He were a prophet, would know who and what manner of woman this is who is touching Him, for she is a sinner."
- 40 And Jesus answered and said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." So he said, "Teacher, say it."
- 41 "There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty.
- 42 And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?"
- 43 Simon answered and said, "I suppose the one whom he forgave more." And He said to him, "You have rightly judged."
- 44 Then He turned to the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head.
- 45 You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in.
- 46 You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil.
- 47 Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little."
- 48 Then He said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."
- 49 And those who sat at the table with Him began to say to themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?"
- 50 Then He said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you. Go in peace."

How did this woman's "faith" save her?* Faith is the result of hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:17). The first prerequisite for faith is knowledge. The apostle Peter says that "*All things that pertain to life and godliness [come] through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue*" (2 Pet. 1:3). It was an established principle in Israel, that "*All your children shall be taught by the Lord*" (Isa. 54:13). As Jesus went everywhere preaching repentance, forgiveness and the coming kingdom of God (Luke 8:1), this woman must have listened. As she listened, her faith in Him and His teachings began to grow. She believed His teaching—which was not the case with the scribes and Pharisees (Matt. 7:29). They heard but were not convinced.

Realizing her new frame of mind, Jesus said her "faith" had saved her. She had learned what Jesus taught and was ready to give a life of obedience in return. Her conviction showed in her loving actions toward Jesus—the hospitality which Simon the Pharisee had withheld from one so far beneath him as Jesus!

What this woman heard from Jesus gave her hope that she could have a better way of life, that she could leave her past life behind and be forgiven. Her response to Jesus' teaching was visible in her desire to show kindness to Him. By her actions she was letting Him know that she had made a serious commitment to change her way of life—as every follower of Jesus must do.

When and how could she show her gratitude to Jesus? With the crowds following Him day after day, she had no opportunity. Why was she able to see Jesus at a dinner at a Pharisee's house? Being a woman, she would never have been invited; Jewish teachers did not speak to women in public, or eat with them in public, even if the woman was a Jewess.

But when Jesus accepted the hospitality of Simon the Pharisee, she saw her chance to get near Jesus. It was apparently customary in that day for wealthy people to entertain guests in an open patio area, not behind closed doors. In this setting, outsiders could hover around during banquets and watch the "important people" and hear the conversation. Since the dining area was out in the open, it is said that they could often come near enough to the banquet to speak to a guest (see *The Bible Exposition Commentary* by W. W. Wiersbe.) This explains how this woman may have had access to Jesus at Simon's house.

*Always in the Bible, salvation (reward of eternal life) is conditioned upon our obedience to God's law (Col. 3:23–24), enduring to the end (Matt. 24:13). The plan is that "*We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ*," so that each may receive for "*the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether good or bad*" (2 Cor. 5:10). Jesus is coming back to "*give every man according as his work shall be*" (Rev. 22:12).

The Bible uses the term "saved" with two distinct meanings. First, a person is said to be "saved" when "rescued" or pulled out of "*this present evil world*," out of a life of hopelessness where he was "*without God or hope in the world*" (Eph. 2:12). Jude speaks of God saving (rescuing) the Israelites out of the land

of Egypt (Jude 5). This "saving" act did not give them eternal life; in fact, most of those originally delivered perished in the wilderness because of their disobedience.

Second, to be "saved" is used of the **full salvation** which is the reward of **eternal life**, the change to the immortal state, which Christ will give to all His true and faithful servants at His return (see 1 Peter 5:4; 2 Tim. 4:7–8; Rev. 22:12, 14). God's plan is to reward each of His servants according to what they have done (Isa. 40:10; 2 Cor. 5:10). That can be determined only at the judgment, after one's term of service, not at the beginning or at one's death. Many of Jesus' parables point up this plan (i.e., the Parable of the Talents, The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard, The Parable of the Wicked Tenants, etc.). Until then (after the resurrection and judgment), those who are said to

be "saved" have only the promise or hope of eternal life (see 1 John 2:25, "*This is the promise that He has promised us—eternal life*"; and Titus 1:2, "*In hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began*"). Hebrews 11 lists many heroes of faith, all of whom "*died in faith, not having received the promises but having seen them afar off*" (Hebrews 11:13). The dispensing of rewards is reserved for the second advent of Christ, when the unfaithful and faithful are separated and rewarded accordingly (Matt. 25:31–40). The plan of God is for all of His faithful servants to be recompensed together (see Heb. 11:39–40).

For further evidence on the subject of salvation, see our booklet, "*What Must I Do To Be Saved?*"

From the Woman's Side...

What are we told about this woman? First, her actions toward Jesus show that she had believed and accepted His teaching. Her tears, her humble attitude, her expensive gift of anointing oil all show that she came to Simon's house with a changed heart and a new hope and direction in life.

Second, this woman did not act on the spur of the moment. She had planned for this act of kindness to Jesus—which reinforces the point that she had come to a point of conviction—which is more than could be said of many others, including Simon. Even though she could not know *when* she would have opportunity to get near Jesus, she had purchased an expensive ointment, which tells us she was willing to sacrifice for Him. Hers was no false pretense or something done to draw attention. She was showing her new-found faith by her actions. She must also have been following Jesus' travels enough to know where He was, so that she could be there to apply the precious ointment when the opportunity presented itself.

What are we not told about her? We are not told anything about the woman's character, other than that she was a "sinner"—in Simon's eyes. We are not told her nationality, whether she was Jew or Gentile. Nor are we told her social status, though it is likely that she was of a low social status, which may account for Simon considering her a "sinner," no matter what her character.

But Jesus was not looking at any of these. He evaluated her "faith, and said her "faith" had "saved" her (Luke 7:50). Did Jesus mean that she had been given eternal life? No, no one of our earthborn race has yet been rewarded with eternal life except Jesus Christ (1 Tim. 6:16). But Jesus had taken her off the path leading to nonentity and set her on the road to life—the same opportunity He gives to every believer.

From Simon's side...

What was Simon the Pharisee's reaction to the woman's unusual conduct? Likely he was embarrassed, both for himself and his guests. Simon immediately drew a negative conclusion about this so called "Prophet" named Jesus. If Jesus was who He said He was, why didn't He know this woman was sinful and keep her at a distance?

But Jesus, more than seeing the character of the woman, knew Simon's unspoken thought, and even replied to it—because Jesus could read Simon's mind! (John 2:25). So while Simon was judging Jesus for allowing one whom he thought sinful to come near Him, Jesus was at that same moment judging Simon—Simon who was blind to the woman, blind to his guest (Jesus), and blind to himself.

Is it possible that describing the woman as "sinful" was largely Simon's viewpoint? Beside the fact that she was a woman, she may also have been a Gentile. A Pharisee who could look down to Jesus could certainly look down on a Gentile woman! In Jesus' view, Simon the Pharisee would have been just as much a "sinner" as the woman—in this case, more so because

Two Anointings of Jesus *Two Different Events*

This incident of the "sinful" woman anointing Jesus' feet (Luke 7:37–38) should not be confused with John's account of Mary, sister of Lazarus, anointing Jesus' feet just before He was crucified (see John 12:3; also recorded in Matt. 26:6–7 and Mark 14:3). The two incidents have nothing in common, except the fact of a woman anointing Jesus' feet and the presence of a person named "Simon."

- | | |
|--|---|
| ◆ The first incident was in Galilee. | ◆ Mary's anointing Jesus was in Bethany near Jerusalem. |
| ◆ The first incident was early in Jesus' ministry. | ◆ At Mary's anointing, Jesus said that this anointing anticipated His death and burial, and Judas Iscariot complained that the money spent on the anointing oil was wasted when it could have been given to the poor. |
| ◆ The first anointing was in the home of Simon the Pharisee (Luke 7:36–38). | ◆ The second was in the home of Simon the Leper (Matt. 26:6–7). |
| ◆ The first anointing was by an unidentified "sinful" woman. | ◆ The second was by Mary, sister of Lazarus and Martha, a family among Jesus' disciples and whom He frequently visited. |

CONTINUED ON PAGE 27

he did not recognize his spiritual deficiencies. We are all “sinners” until we learn what the law of God demands and then obey it.

The Parable

When Simon questioned whether Jesus was a “prophet,” Jesus said to him, *“‘Simon, I have something to say to you’. So he said, ‘Teacher, say it’”* (Luke 7:40).

Then Jesus gave a parable: *“‘There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?’ Simon answered and said, ‘I*

suppose the one whom he forgave more.’ And He said to him, ‘You have rightly judged’” (Luke 7:41–43).

Jesus explained the parable by comparing the non-hospitality Simon had showed Jesus with the whole-souled gratitude demonstrated by the woman toward Jesus. We are not told what Simon thought of Jesus, but actions speak louder than words. Simon did not see Jesus as worthy of his respect and honor. If he had, Jesus would not have spoken to Simon as He did: *“You gave Me no water for My feet...you gave Me no kiss...you did not anoint My head with oil.”* Luke also tells us that the woman in giving these services to Jesus was literally overcome to the point of tears, so deep was her gratitude to Him for rescuing her from her formerly hopeless condition.

Who Loved More?

Why does Jesus say in His parable that the one who was forgiven more (implying the sin-

ful woman) loved “more” than the one who was forgiven less (implying Simon)? Because repentance and a change of heart and life are always the conditions for God’s forgiveness: *“He that confesseth and forsaketh [his sins] shall have mercy”* (Prov. 28:13). The woman’s loving actions toward Jesus show that she had repented of her sinful life, hence had been forgiven more. Of what sins had Simon the Pharisee repented? What forgiveness had he been seeking? We are not told of any.

Jesus’ point was powerful, and He put it straight to Simon: look what this woman did for me—and what did you do? *“Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head. You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in. You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil”* (Luke 7:44–46). What does Jesus say is the result of her actions? *“Therefore I say to you...”*—as a result of what she did, *“her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much”* (Luke 7:47). She was forgiven because her loving actions confirmed her change of heart and life. If this woman had come just for show or during an emotional “high,” Jesus would have known that as quickly as He read Simon’s thoughts, and He would not have commended her for her faith.

What was Simon forgiven of? Even his reply to Jesus’ question in the parable shows that his attitude was superior and aloof. Why should he, a Pharisee, need forgiveness? When Jesus asked, *“tell me,...which of them will love him more?”* Simon answered and said, *“I suppose the one whom He forgave more”* (Luke 7:42–43). *“I suppose”* reveals Simon’s heart. He was a casual observer, unconcerned, uninvolved. He was, like many of the other Pharisees, righteous in his own eyes, and not in need of forgiveness. He was like the ninety-nine “*just persons*” in Jesus’ parable the Lost Sheep, *“who need no repentance”* (Luke 15:7).

The woman’s faith had brought her into the sphere of Christ’s family, so that Jesus could say to her, *“go in peace.”*

Simon was the greater sinner in this story—he both loved less and received less because he was not penitent. God is ever seeking the penitent, not those who never sin but those who are willing to acknowledge their sins and turn from them. This is all God asks of anyone. ♦

WHY DID JESUS EAT “WITH PUBLICANS AND SINNERS”?

“I have a problem reconciling the idea of being ‘separate’ from the world with the example of Jesus. The Pharisees criticized Him because He ate with ‘publicans and sinners’. Shall we say the Pharisees were right and Jesus was wrong? I think the Christian who sits in a tavern with a friend, or goes to the office party is more like Jesus than the one who stays away.”

You are correct that the Bible commands separation from the world. The question is, how are we to apply this command? God told the Israelites through Moses, *“And you shall be holy to Me, for I the Lord am holy, and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be Mine”* (Lev. 20:26). He took His people out of Egypt to be separate from the Egyptians—not because they were Egyptians, but because they worshiped other gods. Non-Israelites went with them, but they had to adhere to the same laws as the Israelites (Ex. 12:49; Num. 15:16, 29), and those laws strictly forbade the worship of any but the one true God of heaven. They were not even to mention the worship of other gods in private (Deut. 12:30; 13:6–9). The Israelites were repeatedly warned to have nothing to do with the worship of other nations; God wanted them to stay completely separate because He knew the power of influence, and how easily they could be led astray—as their history amply proves. The principle of separation is stated repeatedly all through Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation. (See Lev. 10:10; 20:26; Deut. 7:6–7; 2 Cor. 6:17–18.)

Why, then, did Jesus eat with “publicans and sinners”? Was He intentionally mixing with unbelievers? Was He intentionally joining in with them, hoping to draw them into a higher type of life? And in so doing, was Jesus acting directly against the teaching of Scripture?

The Gospels record four different instances of Jesus’ association with “publicans and sinners.” Let us look at each of these.

The first instance is immediately following Jesus’ calling Matthew to be one of His apostles. Matthew, of course, was a tax collector (publican). The incident is recorded in three of the Gospels (see Matthew 9:9–13, Mark 2:13–17; and Luke 5:27–32).

Matthew 9:9 reads, *“As Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, ‘Follow Me.’ So he arose and followed Him.”*

The next verse tells us that *“As Jesus sat at the table in the house, that behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples”* (Matt. 9:10). Was Jesus going to a tavern, or a place of entertainment, or even to the home of an unbeliever? No, Luke’s gospel tells us that *“Levi gave Him [Jesus] a great feast in his own house. And there were a great number of tax collectors and others who sat down with them”* (Luke 5:29). Note that the “tax collectors and others” or “tax collectors and sinners” came to Jesus as He “sat in the house”—the house of Levi (Matt. 9:10).

How reasonable that following the conversion of Matthew, some of Matthew’s friends, many of them tax collectors, also were curious about Matthew’s sudden decision to leave a lucrative business to follow a little known preacher. No doubt Matthew was eager for his acquaintances to meet his Guest and hear Jesus for themselves. Whether they came seeking or out of curiosity, we can be sure Jesus spoke and taught about the Kingdom of God in His usual manner, to anyone who would listen. It didn’t matter what their class, gender, nationality or profession, but only that they would listen. God is no “respector of persons” (Acts 10:34–35).

Of course, the Jews criticized. It was an opportunity to find fault with the Man they already strongly disliked. Tax collectors were despised by all, not only because they worked for Rome but because they were notorious for being greedy and unfair. But this may not have been true of all of them. The very fact that Matthew was willing to leave his booth to follow Jesus showed he had an appreciation for values greater than money. Having a tax booth “by the sea” (of Galilee), he had likely seen Jesus’ miracles and heard Jesus many times. He was not making a blind decision. Matthew also knew he was making a decision he could not reverse. For him, it was a radical change of life. Is it strange, then, that his tax collector friends sat at dinner with Matthew and Jesus?

Now, who were the “sinners” that the Pharisees criticized Jesus for associating with? To a Pharisee, “sinners” referred not only to immoral or wicked people but also to common people who were Gentiles, who were not learned in their law and did not adhere to their rigid formalities. For example, to a Pharisee it was a heinous crime to eat with a non-Jew. In their eyes, they (the Jews) were “righteous” and everyone else was a “sinner”—which was the

Jesus was “separate from sinners” (HEb. 7:26). There is no record of Him seeking the company of unbelievers to socialize with them.

Jesus did not even pray for the world (John 17:9) — how could He seek pleasure with them? But when they wanted to learn, He taught them.

Jesus always called His followers to come up to His level; He did not come down to their level or join them in their pastimes and pleasures.

Jesus was in the world, but He was never a part of its social, political, or religious system.

reason for Jesus' response to their complaint: *"I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance"* (Matt. 9:13). Jesus did not come to call those who thought they were righteous, but those who were willing to recognize their sinfulness and repent. Jesus could do nothing for those who were satisfied with their self-set standard of righteousness, who were righteous in their own eyes and regarded everyone else as sinful. Jesus was looking for those who recognized their sinfulness, and were willing to repent (as in His parable of the Pharisee and the Publican—see Luke 18:9-14).

Was Jesus' dinner at Levi's house an indulgence in pleasure with those who did not know God? Not in any way. He looked for those who were seeking. God always makes His knowledge available to those who seek it (see Isa. 55:6-9; Jer. 15:17; John 8:12; Ps. 27:8).

This incident is recorded in Matthew 9:9-11, in Mark 2:15-17 and Luke 5:27-32). His reply to the Pharisees, as worded in Mark's Gospel, is: *"I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance"* (Mark 2:17). He was speaking to the Pharisees, who thought themselves righteous and all others sinful.

A second mention of Jesus associating with tax collectors and sinners is in Matthew 11. Here we do not have an incident but only a criticism from the Pharisees. Jesus is criticized for being a *"friend of tax collectors and sinners"* as He is being compared with John the Baptist. *"For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.' The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' But wisdom is justified by her children"* (Matt. 11:18-19). The parallel passage in Luke 7:33-34 is almost identical. Having no details, we must dismiss this as a typical prejudiced criticism from the Jews; we cannot use it as evidence that Jesus was mixing with unbelievers.

A third mention of Jesus eating with publicans and sinners is in Luke 15:1-2, and here again we have only a criticism from the Pharisees and no evidence that Jesus was socializing with unbelievers. In fact, He did not go to them—they came to Him to hear Him. The text reads, *"All the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him"* (Luke 15:1). Luke's view is also that they came *"to hear Him,"* a legitimate reason for Jesus to be with them and talking to them. Here again, *"the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, 'This Man receives sinners and eats with them'"* (Luke

15:2). But Jesus was only fulfilling His mission, to speak to those who wanted to hear Him. He was not socializing.

A fourth mention of Jesus with a tax collector is in Luke 19, where Zacchaeus, a "chief" tax collector, wanted so much to see Jesus that he climbed a tree to get above the crowds and to see Jesus as He passed by. Jesus, able to read the heart, knew that Zacchaeus was a sincere seeker and said to him, *"Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house"* (Luke 19:5). Again the Jews criticized: *"He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner"* (Luke 19:7). But Zacchaeus was serious about his new faith, and proved it by his promise: *"Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold"* (Luke 19:8).

These are all the recorded instances of Jesus associating with *"publicans and sinners,"* and none of them conflict with the biblical command to *"come out from among them and be separate."* Jesus prayed for His disciples, not that they should be taken *"out of the world"* but be kept *"from the evil"* that is in the world (John 17:15). Jesus also said, *"I do not pray for the world."*

Jesus was and is seeking those who want a higher goal in life, no matter what their present walk in life. He always called His followers to come up to His level; He was not coming down to their level and joining in their pastimes and pleasures. (How could He, and still live a sinless life?) He lived on a higher spiritual plane of life, and asked His followers to do the same. Jesus was in the world, but He was never a part of its social, political, or religious system.

"GROAN" OR "REJOICE"?

"I am reading 2 Corinthians 5, and Paul says we 'groan,' apparently longing for the immortal state. Was Paul complaining? This does not seem like the same Apostle who wrote, 'Rejoice in the Lord always' (Phil. 4:4). I would appreciate your comment."

You are correct that Paul was expressing his longing—a very deep longing—for the change to immortality, to be freed from this mortal body of suffering and pain. When we think about the number of times he had been beaten, stoned, shipwrecked, not to mention the

hunger and thirst he had experienced many times (see his account in 2 Cor. 11: 23–28), we can certainly understand. He writes in 2 Corinthians 5,

“For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life.”

Was Paul’s groaning a complaint? The original word translated “groan” is *stenazo*, and according to various lexicons, it describes very strong emotion, “and is meaningful depending upon the reason or basis for such an expression of emotion” (LN). It can mean, “To be in straights, to sigh, murmur, pray inaudibly with grief, groan, grudge, sigh” (SHG). It is apparently an involuntary expression of one’s emotions in the face of something undesirable, which is why it is sometimes translated as “sigh” or “groan.” It can mean to “complain strongly,” but it can also be the “result of deep concern or stress.”

In Mark 7:34, Jesus is apparently distressed at the suffering of the deaf mute, and “He sighed” (*stenazo*) in an expression of sympathy for the deaf mute.

In 2 Corinthians 5, the context defines Paul’s meaning when, as you say, he is longing for the immortal state. He says that *“If our earthly house, this tent [our mortal body], is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”* Paul is anticipating God’s promise of immortal life in the world to come. That is the life He is describing as *“a house not made with hands”*—because it comes from God. That house is *“eternal,”* and at present it is *“in the heavens.”* Notice that Paul does not say it is *eternally* in the heavens. The word *“eternal”* describes *“house.”* Christ will come and bring the reward of eternal life to each faithful one, according to God’s plan (see Phil. 3:20–21; 1 Peter 5:4; 2 Tim. 4:8; Rev. 22:12).

Then Paul continues (2 Cor. 5:2): *“For in this we groan [we express our deep inner longing, send*

forth a longing cry], earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven,” the immortal state. In verse 4 Paul expresses the same longing again: *“For we who are in this tent [this mortal state] groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life”* (2 Cor. 5:4). Paul is not longing to die, which he describes as being *“unclothed,”* but rather to experience the higher type of life which is not subject to pain, suffering, and death: *“that mortality may be swallowed up by life.”** This was the promise of the Old Testament prophets: *“He [God] will swallow up death forever, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces”* (Isa. 25:8).

In 1 Corinthians 1:7, Paul again said he was *“eagerly waiting for the revelation of Jesus Christ.”* Again in Galatians 5:5, he said that *“we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith”*—wait with intense eagerness. And in Philippians 3:20, he said *“our citizenship is in heaven, from whence we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body”* (Phil. 3:20–21). His *“eager waiting”* was the reason for the *“groan,”* the intense longing he felt to be free from mortality.

Paul’s hope was intense and real. That is what kept him pressing against all odds. And we have no reason to think his *“groaning”* was a complaint. It was a deep, heart-felt longing for deliverance from a body that had been so mistreated that living was burdensome. But Paul’s emphasis was always on the *“glory and honor and immortality, eternal life”* (Rom. 2:7). This is why he was *“rejoicing in hope”* (Rom. 12:12). The more he thought about the glory to come, the change to immortality, the more his longing grew. He could *“groan”* (experience deep, inner longing) and rejoice at the same time!

How real is your hope? my hope? The more we think about the glory to come and the immortal state, the more intensely we will long for it—and prepare for it, so that we can be among those who, with the apostle Paul, receive it when Jesus comes. For Paul, being made immortal was not a dream or an idle fancy but a very real expectation. It can be the same for us. ♦

Paul was longing intensely (groaning) for the change to the immortal state. He was not complaining.

*Paul expresses his eagerness for the change to immortality several times in his letters. In Romans 8 he compares present with future, saying, *“I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us”* (Rom. 8:18). He is longing for the change to immortality, which he describes as *“the earnest expectation of the creation”* (vs. 19). That *“earnest expectation”* is translated from a Greek word which means “to look forward eagerly, hope for;

wait for” (DBL), a word which Paul used several times of his anticipation of the change to immortality. Paul was eagerly waiting for that deliverance from *“the bondage of corruption,”* the mortal state. He said in Romans 8:23, *“We also who have the first fruits of the Spirit [Paul was privileged to have the Holy Spirit power himself], even we ourselves groan [feel an intense longing] within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.”*

1 THESSALONIANS 5

- 16 Rejoice evermore.
- 17 Pray without ceasing.
- 18 In every thing give thanks:...
- 21 Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.
- 22 Abstain from all appearance of evil.



“STAY AWAY from Every Kind of Evil”

Our Common Version reads, “Abstain from all appearance of evil.” Does this verse require us to do the impossible task of refraining from anything that appears “evil” to anyone? Is Paul asking us to set our standard of conduct by someone else’s opinion, be it a different world view or standard, false information, wrong conclusion and beliefs or simply differing priorities? Definitely not!

For example, one who is unsympathetic with Christian values may strongly disapprove of parents homeschooling their children. Someone else may object to praying in public. Others will call those narrow minded who insist on the standard of morality taught in the Bible. Some will say there is good in all religions, you should not condemn any, even though the Bible says “One Lord, one faith” (Eph. 4:5). Many who profess to uphold the Christian faith may view others as antisocial who apply the Bible command to “love not the world” and “come out from the world” (1 John 2:15; 2 Cor. 6:17).

With such varying interpretations, it would be impossible to “abstain from all appearance of evil” if we must let everyone around us define “evil.”

But when we look more closely at the passage, this is not the meaning. The NKJV reads, “Abstain from every form of evil.” The New Living Translation, the NET Bible and New Century Version are similar, substituting “every kind [or form] of evil” for “all appearance of evil.” With this substitution, the passage reads, “Stay away from every kind of evil.” In these renderings, the standard assumed is God’s standard, not the judgment of onlookers. And no meaning is lost because “every kind of evil” includes all shapes and lookalikes—“evil” according to God’s definition.

This thought is reinforced by the meaning of the word behind the original word translated “appearance.” In the Greek, the word for “appearance” or “form” is *eidos*, which means “a view, i.e. form (lit. or fig.):— appearance, fashion, shape, sight” (SHG).

The apostle is not commanding us to avoid what someone else may, without any information, judge as evil, but to avoid what is “evil” as judged the standard of Scripture. We will be obeying the command if we adhere to the unchanging principles taught in His Word. ♦

TOO COMFORTABLE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

straddling the proverbial fence. He has saving knowledge but he doesn’t want to let the world go. Like the Laodicean, he has deceived himself into thinking that he has found the perfect balance. He is convinced that he has the best of both worlds, that he can capture the best of this world and also look forward to being in the Kingdom of God.

The nations of Judah and Israel met their

God-decreed end. The warnings now are sounding for us. Jeremiah, and Zephaniah, and Amos, and Jesus are all telling us, “Watch out! Don’t be too relaxed.”

The way into the Kingdom is by striving. Said Jesus, “Strive to enter through the narrow gate,” and “strive” is not a relaxed word. The original word is *agonidzo*, and means “labor fervently, fight, contend” (SHG); “struggle with an emphasis on effort” (LN). So Jesus said, “Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able” (Luke 13:24). ♦

WHO SAID IT?

Hint: All are women.

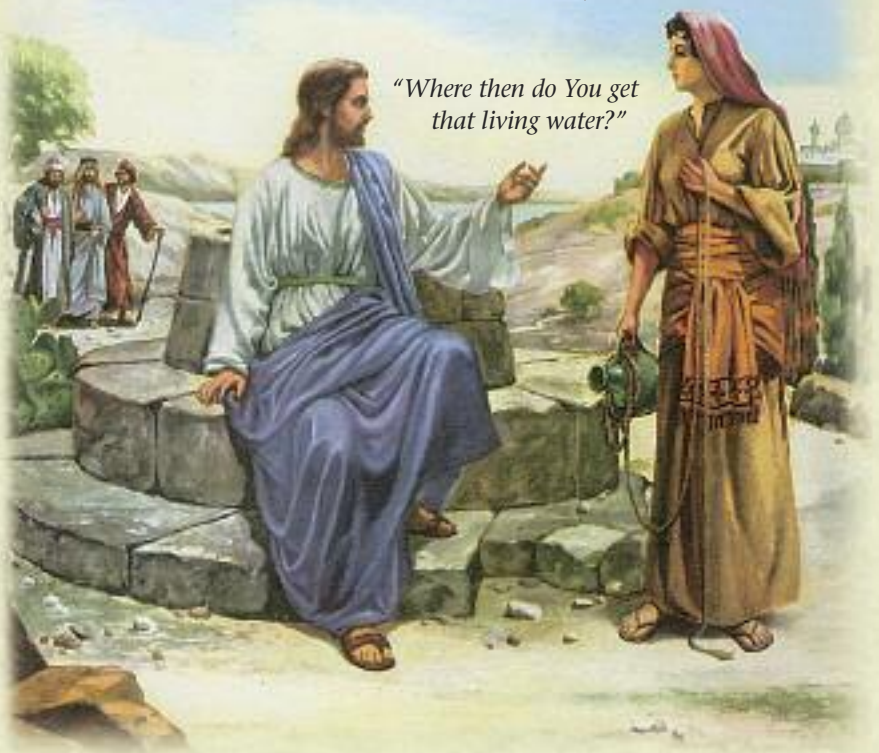
1. "Talk no more so very proudly; let no arrogance come from your mouth, for the Lord is the God of knowledge; and by Him actions are weighed."
2. "God has made me laugh, and all who hear will laugh with me."
3. "When the Lord has done all he promised and has made you leader of Israel, don't let this be a blemish on your record. Then your conscience won't have to bear the staggering burden of needless bloodshed and vengeance. And when the Lord has done these great things for you, please remember me, your servant!"
4. "Don't ask me to leave you and turn back. Wherever you go, I will go; wherever you live, I will live. Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God."
5. "What have I to do with you, O man of God? Have you come to me to bring my sin to remembrance, and to kill my son?"
6. "Now therefore, I beg you, swear to me by the Lord, since I have shown you kindness, that you also will show kindness to my father's house, and give me a true token, and spare my father, my mother, my brothers, my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death."
7. "And so I will go to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish!"
8. "My father, if you have given your word to the Lord, do to me according to what has gone out of your mouth, because the Lord has avenged you of your enemies, the people of Ammon."
9. "Sing to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea!"
10. "So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time."
11. "Why then do you lay a snare for my life, to cause me to die?"
12. "Hear, O kings! Give ear, O princes! I, even I, will sing to the Lord; I will sing praise to the Lord God of Israel."
13. My soul magnifies the Lord."
14. "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!"
15. "Have nothing to do with that just Man, for I have suffered many things today in a dream because of Him."

16. "If only I may touch His garment, I shall be made well."
17. "These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation."

WHICH DISCIPLE(S)?

1. Which disciple didn't believe in the resurrection at first because he had been absent when Jesus appeared to the other disciples?
2. Which disciple cursed and denied that he knew Jesus?
3. Which disciple left John the Baptist to follow Jesus and immediately persuaded his brother to come too?
4. Which two brothers were given the name Boanerges ("sons of thunder")?
5. Which disciple was the first of the twelve to be martyred?
6. Which disciple is referred to as the "disciple whom Jesus loved"?
7. Which disciple did Jesus call "a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false?"
8. Which disciple was a tax collector?
9. Which disciple was the treasurer for the disciples?
10. Which three disciples accompanied Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration?

ANSWERS ON PAGE 27





CHRONOPHAGE KEEPS WATCH

What are we doing while the grasshopper is chomping away the seconds of our life?

If a time-piece should be thought-provoking, British inventor John Taylor's "Chronophage" qualifies exceptionally.

Literally 'time eater' (from the Greek *chronos*, meaning "time," and *phageo*, meaning "to eat"), Chronophage keeps watch outside Cambridge's Taylor Library of Corpus Christi College.

Chronophage is no ordinary clock. A foreboding metal grasshopper with an ominous chomping mouth appears to devour each second with eerie pleasure and constancy. The toll of the hour is marked by the clanging of a chain into a tiny wooden coffin, which then slams shut—the sound of mortality, says Taylor. The pendulum also speeds up sporadically, then slows to a near halt, only to race ahead again as if somehow calculating the notion that time sometimes flies, and sometimes seems to stand still. The invention, according to Taylor, is meant to challenge our tendency to view time as we might view a clock. "Clocks are boring. They just tell the time, and people treat them as boring objects," says Taylor. "This clock actually interacts with you"—striking viewers with the idea that time is nothing to take for granted.

The Christian is seeking at the deepest level something that is not temporal. The Bible tells of the time when there will be no more sick-

ness, no more sorrow, no more pain or death (Rev. 21:3–4). That new world is certain, but it is not here yet. We live every moment within the distinct experience of the present. The promises of God are for the future, when He will send Jesus Christ, and make "*all things new*" (Rev. 21:5). The expectation of that time to come fills us with hope and joy.

What is the connection between the constantly swinging pendulum and the promise of eternity? It is this: that as time marches on, we must be making daily progress toward the character likeness of Christ. This is where John Taylor's menacing grasshopper, ceaselessly chomping each precious second, is a sharp reminder. As time marches on oppressively, unapologetically, we must be making the change, because time is passing by one second at a time, and cannot be recalled. Time is a linear progression, moving onward in precise increments. How we interact with this steadily marching time will determine where we will stand when we are called to account for what we have done.

All around us, time is the setting for dramatic change: an acorn turning into an oak tree, a child becoming an adult, a grassy field becoming a buzzing community. Each needs the element of time.

What are we doing while the grasshopper is chomping away the seconds of our life? The picture is not boring. It is shouting to us, "Do it now! Do it now! Do it now!" ♦

"Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going."

—Ecclesiastes 9:10

EYE PROBLEMS

As I accompanying my husband to the doctor for eye treatment, it came to my mind how many people in the Bible had trouble with their eyesight. When Isaac was old and nearly blind he blessed Jacob instead of Esau because of his lack of eyesight; however this must have been the Lord's plan to produce the twelve tribes of Israel.

Sometimes the Lord opens people's eyes as He did Hagar's, when she and her son were about to die in the desert. Hagar was shown a well of water and she and her son drank and revived.

We also read that the Lord opened Balaam's eyes and he saw an angel standing in the road with his sword drawn.

What thrills me most—and I love to read it—is the account of Elisha and his servant. The servant of Elisha got up early one morning and

found the city surrounded by the enemy army. He cried out to Elisha, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?" Elisha prayed and the Lord opened the servants eyes, and he saw the hills full of angels, which appeared as horses and chariots of fire! (2 Kings 6; Ps. 68:17).

What a lot that servant learned that day, as later Elisha prayed again and the enemy were struck by blindness, and were led away to inside Samaria, where their sight was restored.

There is much more about sight in the Bible, but the most important is our spiritual eyesight, having our eyes open to see the wonders of God's truth, so that we learn to see ourselves as we apply it to our lives. This is how we can become worthy of that eternal life God is holding out for all who faithfully serve and obey Him.

J.T., England

THANK GOD!

The year has rolled around again to a very special time, Thanksgiving. Even though we should be thanking God everyday and hour for His many blessings to us, setting aside a special time to focus on what God has bestowed on us is both an up-lifting time and a humbling time. We are up-lifted when we realize how much God had given us that sets us apart from the rest of the world. He has given us a chance to be part of His glorious heavenly family. We have the most wonderful banquet of Truth to feed on and to take into our minds and hearts. This food is what will cause us to be transformed from a little person with little aspirations to a person that is worthy to live forever with the angels. It is humbling that we of all the people on the earth have been given this opportunity. There are so few that know the true plan of God for this earth and how this plan will be carried

out. We don't know all the details but we know what we have to do to be ready and to be able to be spared when Christ comes to sweep away all evil-doers.

The glimpses that we are given in the Bible of what the Kingdom of Christ will be like are very exciting. Just think no one will grow old! Now every one of us is experiencing what growing old is like and it's sort of scary. Then we shall run and not be weary; in fact, we will mount up like eagles. What a trilling thing that will be! No one will remind us to put our coat on when we go outside so we will not catch cold. We will not get sick, ever! And we will never be afraid of anything again! Everyone around us will be happily doing good and singing praise to God. I have always enjoyed singing, but to sing with the angels is what I aspire to. Praise God from whom all blessings flow.

P.F., Texas

ANSWERS FROM PAGE 25

WHO SAID IT?

1. Hannah (1 Sam. 2:3)
2. Sarah (Gen. 21:6)
3. Abigail (1 Sam. 25:30–31 NLT)
4. Ruth (Ruth 1:16 NLT)
5. Widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17:9, 18)
6. Rahab (Joshua 2:12–13)
7. Esther (Esther 4:16)
8. Jephthah's daughter (Judges 11:36)
9. Miriam (Ex. 15:21)

Picture: Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:9–11)

10. Jezebel (1 Kings 19:1–2)
11. Witch of Endor (1 Sam. 28:9)
12. Deborah (Judges 5:3)
13. Mary, the mother of Jesus (Luke 1:46)
14. Elizabeth (Luke 1:42)
15. Wife of Pilate (Matt. 27:19)
16. Woman with hemorrhage (Matt. 9:21)
17. Slave girl at Philippi whom Paul healed (Acts 16:16–18)

WHICH DISCIPLE(S)?

1. Thomas (John 20:24–28)
2. Peter (Matt. 26:74–75)
3. Andrew (John 1:35–42)
4. James and John (Mark 3:17)
5. James (Acts 12:1–2)
6. John (John 13:22–23)
7. Nathaniel, also called Bartholomew (John 1:44–51))
8. Matthew (9:9)
9. Judas Iscariot (John 12:4–6; 13:29)
10. Peter, James and John (Matt. 17:1–2)

AWESOME DESIGNS

by Patricia Fleming

Unique Equipment:

- ✓ Green blood (it uses hemocyanin to carry oxygen, unlike our red pigment hemoglobin)
- ✓ 3 hearts (one for each set of gills, one for the rest of it)
- ✓ 3 layers of color pigment cells in its skin (for changing colors)
- ✓ 8 sucker-lined arms
- ✓ 2 feeding tentacles that withdraw into pouches under its eyes
- ✓ a funnel under its mouth that can suck in water and squirt it with force
- ✓ 2 large human-like eyes



DID THE CUTTLEFISH “EVOLVE”?

(with Green Blood and 3 Hearts?)

Awesome Camouflage:

The cuttlefish's skin is covered with special cells that reflect light in many different colors. When excited, it can change spectacularly. In less than a second, it can change from yellow to red-orange, or from red-orange to blue-green. It can even change the texture of its skin to blend into the surface below it!



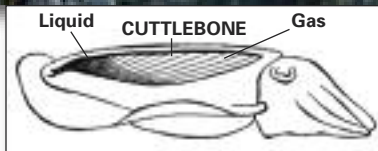
Amazing Baby:

The newly hatched cuttlefish is ready to fend for itself: it hunts shrimp, blends into its background, and can even hide behind its ink screen if threatened.



Amazing Neutral Buoyancy

The cuttlefish hovers near the ocean floor by neutral buoyancy – it neither sinks nor rises. But what is the water gets deeper? Its bony shell (cuttlebone) has many narrow chambers filled with liquid and gas. The cuttlefish can pump liquid in and out of these chambers as needed – more liquid, less lift (less gas). Less liquid, more lift (more gas).



Sophisticated Propulsion:

The cuttlefish propels itself by a series of spurts. It draws water into a compression chamber which it squeezes, jetting the water out a funnel under its head. To change direction, it swivels the nozzle of the funnel; to increase its speed, it narrows the funnel.



How does it eat?

Is a delectable shrimp or fish passing by? The cuttlefish shoots out two deceptively long feeding tentacles. On the end of each is a pad covered in suckers that grabs hold of the prey and quickly pulls it close to the cuttlefish's mouth. Or using its funnel it blows a hiding shrimp out of the sand with a jet of water, then catches it with its tentacles.



Awesome Defense:

Is a predator too persistent? When camouflage fails, the cuttlefish ejects an inky black fluid called sepia toward the attacker. To the predator, the ink tastes nasty and coats its nostrils. Meanwhile, the cuttlefish, hidden from view, can escape.



Think about it:

How did this slow paced creature survive over millions of years of evolution before it developed its amazing camouflage, its dark black ink, and its jet propulsion? It is another sample of our Great Creator's handiwork, the God who made the sea and “*all things therein*” (Neh. 9:6), the God whom we can worship, honor and serve. ♦

Go Down Deep

STUDY GOD'S WORD

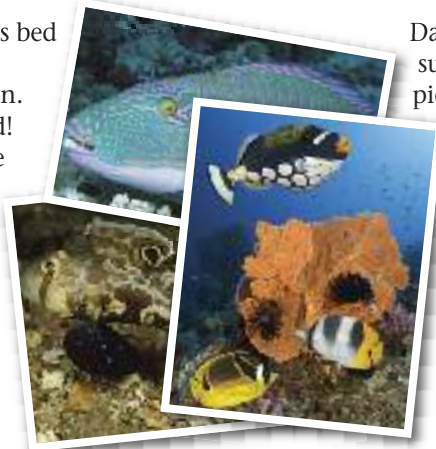
Josh was sprawled on his bed looking at some photographs when Dad looked in. Josh glanced up. "Say, Dad! Look at these pictures!" he exclaimed. "Uncle Jeff took them when he was deep sea diving in Florida. He brought them over this afternoon."

Dad peered over Josh's shoulder. "What unusual plants and animals!" he exclaimed. "They're fascinating. And what vivid colors!"

"Look at this one, Dad," Jeff laughed. "It looks like a clown."

Together they examined the pictures. "God must have a wonderful imagination in order to create such a variety of life forms," added Dad.

Josh nodded. "Uncle Jeff says the farther down in the ocean you go, the more beautiful it gets" He paused and turned to his dad. "Why do you suppose God made such interesting creatures and then hid them down deep in the ocean where most people don't ever see them?"



Dad thought a moment. "I'm not sure," he said, "but when I see these pictures, it reminds me of what a great God we have. And somehow it also reminds me of the riches to be found in the Bible." He smiled at Josh. "I used to think personal devotions weren't important. I figured I'd already heard all those Bible stories in church and Sunday school."

"You probably had," said Jason. "I have, too."

"Well, I'm sure we haven't actually heard all of them," said Dad, "though we have heard many. But Uncle Jeff has seen the ocean many times, and yet he decided he wanted to immerse himself in it and go down deep to see what he could discover. Do you think he was rewarded for his efforts?"

"He sure was!" said Josh as he looked at the pictures once more. Dad nodded. "The point is...if you and I immerse ourselves in God's Word and study it, we will be richly rewarded, too." He put a hand on Josh's shoulder. "God's Word has hidden knowledge, insights, and wisdom to those who are willing to dig deep" ♦

How About You?

Do you ever think that you know all you need to know about the Bible? If you spend more time reading and studying His Word, you will learn more of God's wonderful knowledge and how God wants you to live.

A DISAPPOINTING BIRTHDAY

EXPRESS THANKFULNESS

When Laurie's birthday arrived, she found an envelope addressed to her in the mailbox. She clapped her hands. She knew it would be there. Every year Aunt Joy sent her money, and Laurie could buy whatever she wanted with it.

Quickly, she tore the envelope open and found a beautiful card from Aunt Joy. Laurie opened the card, expecting to see the money inside, but there was none. The card was signed, "Lots of love, Aunt Joy."

"I can't believe this!" Laurie exclaimed, feeling bitterly disappointed. "Mom, I got a birthday card from Aunt Joy, but there's no money in it!"

"I know you're disappointed," Mom said gently. "Aunt Joy told me she was going to leave it out this year."

"But why?" asked Laurie.

"The last few years you never wrote to tell

her you received the money and to thank her for it," answered Mom. Laurie blushed. She remembered the many times Mom had reminded her, but she had never gotten around to writing. "You see, Aunt Joy loves you very much, and she cares what kind of person you become. She doesn't want you to be an ungrateful or unthoughtful person," continued Mom. "Do you remember the story of the ten lepers Jesus healed? It seems to me they must all have been delighted to be healed, yet only one came back to tell Jesus how thankful he felt. Jesus was pleased with that one. It's not enough just to be grateful for a gift; you must show that gratefulness."

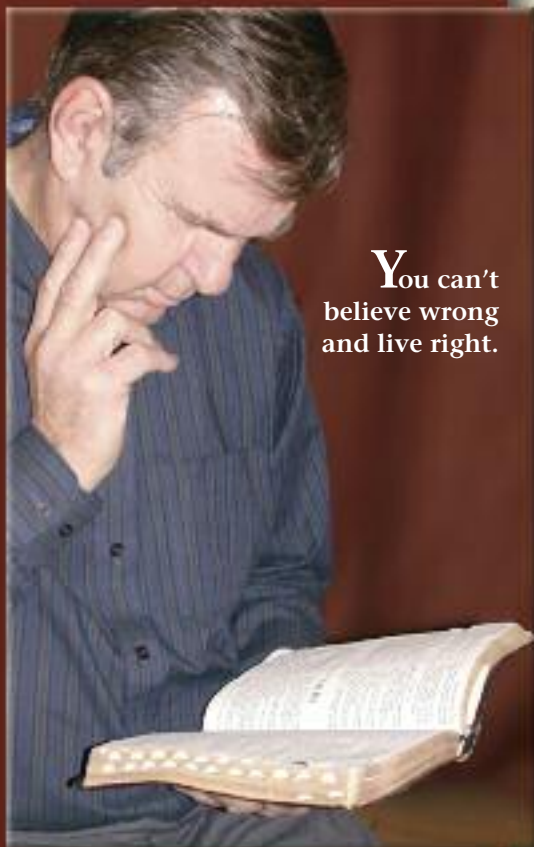
Laurie was very sober as she thought it over. "I was wrong not to write Aunt Joy," she said finally. "From now on, I'm going to be thoughtful enough to thank people for things they do for me." ♦

How About You?

To Think About:

- ◆ Do you remember to thank others when they do something for you?
- ◆ How about thanking your mother for all the washing, cooking, and cleaning she does for you?
- ◆ How about thanking your father for providing a home for you?
- ◆ Be sure to thank God for all He's done for you, too. Don't be numbered with the nine lepers who failed to express their thanks.

The above stories are adapted from *KEYS FOR KIDS* 1997



You can't
believe wrong
and live right.

The Bible is the treasure map that leads us to God's highest treasure, eternal life.

The Bible is not a newspaper
to be skimmed
but a resource library to be
studied and followed.

God is the author of Scripture. Don't
go there looking for your ideas; go there to
search for His.

A steady diet of God's Word over a life-
time builds a healthy soul and mind.

If you only read a recipe but never
cook it, you won't be fed by it.
It is the same with the Bible.
If you only read the words but
never obey them, you'll never get
the benefit.

Kind words never blister the tongue that speaks them,
nor on the ears that hear them.

To be a Christian in a real sense is far more than
wearing a label. It means living a life.

Not failure, but low aim is a crime.

Lord, help me heed Your every word,
Commands that I have read or heard;
As You reveal Your will each day,
Help me to follow and obey.

—Fitzhugh

Center all your thoughts on self, and you will
have no end of misery.

Knowledge and opportunity add
up to responsibility.

Your faith is like your muscle: use it, or lose it.

The Church is God's workshop, where His jewels are
being polished for His Temple.

The idea some seem to have of service is "serve-us."

Lord, set a guard upon my lips,
My tongue control today;
Help me evaluate each thought
And watch each word I say.

—Hess

The purpose of the tests of life are to make,
not break us.

The God touched heart is
a God touched life.

God never alters the robe of righteousness to fit the man. The man must alter the dimensions of his character to fit the robe.

*Sow an act, and you reap a tendency;
Sow a tendency, and you reap a habit;
Sow a habit and you reap a character;
Sow a character, and you reap a destiny.*

There isn't any use trying to shine unless you have taken time to fill your lamp with the oil of truth.

*Make your words count. There is a difference
between having to say something and having
something worthwhile to say.*

True faith is like a bicycle—
when it stops going, it falls over.

IF WE ARE READY

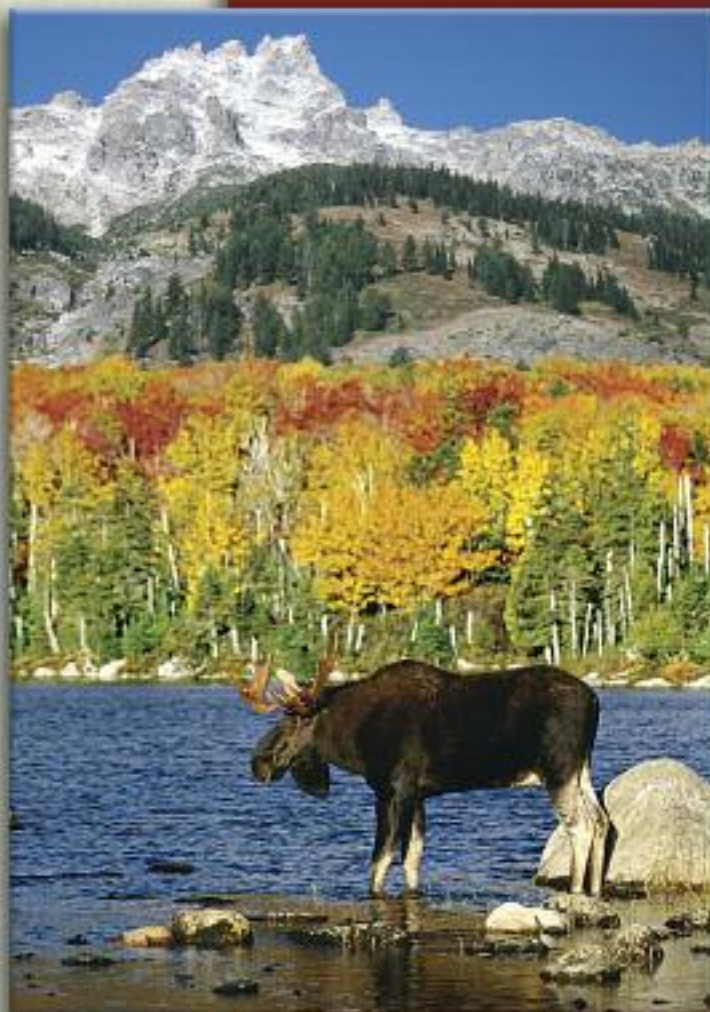
*What though we frequently labored in vain;
What though we suffered through sickness and pain,
Meeting with failure, to try once again,
If we are ready?*

*What though we mounted the rocky ascent
With our ambitions on victory bent,
Only to sacrifice all we had spent,
If we are ready?*

*What though we've worked through the heat of the day;
What though we've fought in the thick of the fray;
What though at times it seemed small was our pay;
If we are ready?*

*What if our trust has been often betrayed;
What if foes mocked at the part we have played;
If we can say, with a heart unafraid,
I am now ready?*

*If we are ready to welcome the King
When He descends with the angels to bring
Blessings untold, alleluias will ring,
Telling we're ready.*



*All that I have seen teaches me
to trust the Creator for what
I have not seen.*

Worry is interest paid on trouble
before it is due.

*You can't make good "hay"
out of wild oats.*

To build a rock-solid life,
follow Jesus' instructions.

*The God touched heart is
the God touched life.*

*Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
his love endures forever.*

*Let them give thanks to the Lord
for his unfailing love and his
wonderful deeds for men,*

*For he satisfies the thirsty and
fills the hungry with good things.*

*Let them sacrifice thank offerings and
tell of his works with songs of joy.*

Psalm 107:1, 8–9, 22



A PSALM OF DAVID

*If you live perfectly, doing what is right, and tell the
truth from your heart,*

*If you don't use your tongue to do wrong to others,
or insult your neighbor,*

*If you despise one whom God rejects but honor those
who fear the Lord;*

*If when you promise you don't change it, even if it
hurts you;*

*If you don't take unlawful or unfair interest on money
you loan, or take a bribe against an innocent person;*

If you do these things, you will never be moved.

Free paraphrase of Psalm 15