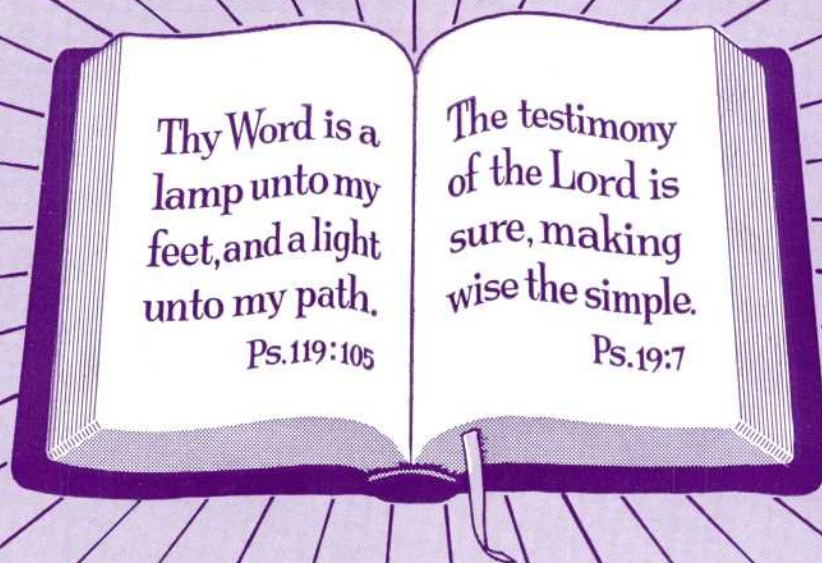


# Megiddo Message

DEVOTED TO THE CAUSE OF CHRIST



**Wholly, Wholly, Wholly**

**"Now the Spirit Speaketh Expressly"**

**The Power of the Christian**

**The Way to Salvation**



# You Are An Environment

THE SIGNIFICANCE of environment as a factor in human life has been widely studied in recent years. In such areas as ecology, child development, education, health, and just about every aspect of existence, environment has a part.

But the word environment also brings other thoughts to mind. It is not that we all live *in* a certain environment, but that we are, whether we choose to think of it or not, we *are* an environment, each one of us. We are an environment for the other people with whom we live, the people with whom we work, the people with whom we communicate. People who come across us or who walk into our presence are all affected to some extent by the environment we make. We produce an environment simply by "being."

Our environment is created by the physical aspects of our lives, by the way we care for our bodies, our homes, our property, our church. It is created by our behavior and our mannerisms. Even beyond these, we create environment by our conversations, our attitudes, our response or lack of response, our hardness or compassion, our love or our selfishness, our joy or dullness, our faith or doubt. Our spiritual values, our personality, our character, our demonstrated trust and faith in God or our continual complaining and despondency, our concern for others or our preoccupation with ourselves in our self-pity—all these contribute to the environment we make. The effect on others is something they cannot avoid. Enthusiasm and excitement affect other people; our expectancy that God will soon show His power, that Christ will intervene and do something in this moment of history, and our *doing* something to show our expectancy—this, too, affects the attitudes other people will have.

To create the right kind of environment for others to live in is a large part of our Christian duty.

Jesus told a parable that illustrates the

importance of creating the right environment. He told of a man who tried to attend a wedding without having put on the prescribed wedding garment. What an environment he would be to the others, were he allowed to stay! The main purpose of the parable is, of course, to illustrate that no one can be received into Christ's Kingdom unless properly clothed with the robe of right-doing, "which is the righteousness of saints" (Rev. 19:7-8). That robe must be perfect, without spot, or dirt, or even a wrinkle. God is particular about the environment He will have in His realm. Jesus said it to Peter in these words: that whatsoever "thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt. 16:19). That is, the environment we create now must be that which will be permitted in the Kingdom of God, and we know that no sin can enter there. So our environment here must be purified. No resentment, no irresponsibility, no disorder, no rebellion can be allowed to remain among the members of Christ's true Church on earth, for none will be allowed in the heavenly realm. It is our task now to meet the standards of heaven.

It is our individual duty to be an environment which is helpful to those with whom we live. What do we drag with us? How do we affect other people and their attitudes toward what we represent?

We are either promoting the work of God on earth, or we are hindering it. True, we shall find there are sacrifices to be made. But sacrifice does not mean ugliness, carelessness with what we have, or a glum and sour disposition that is easily offended.

It goes without saying that the environment which is *YOU* should be an environment in which the heavenly members of God's family would be comfortable, an environment that witnesses to the ideals of the Creator who made us. Nothing less can please Him. ●●

## MEGIDDO means

"a place of troops" (*Gesenius' Hebrew Lexicon*); "a place of God" (*Young's Analytical Concordance*). Megiddo was and is a town in Palestine, strategically located, and the scene of frequent warfare. In the spiritual parallel, it is a place where soldiers engaged in spiritual warfare gather to renew their strength and courage (II Cor. 10:4, 5).

### We believe

--in God the Creator of all things, all men, and all life.

### We believe

--in the Bible as containing the genuine revelation of God and His purposes for men, and as being our only source of divine knowledge today.

### We believe

--in Christ the Son of God and our Perfect Example, who was born of a Virgin, ministered among men, was crucified, resurrected, and taken to heaven, and who shall shortly return to be King of the whole earth.

### We believe

--in life as the gift of God, and in our sacred responsibility to use it for God and His coming Kingdom.

### We believe

--in all mankind as providing the nucleus from which a superior, God-honoring people shall be chosen to receive the blessings of immortal life.

### We believe

--in ourselves as capable of fulfilling the demands and disciplines given us in the law of God, thus perfecting that high quality of character which God has promised to reward with life everlasting in His heavenly Kingdom on earth.

### We believe

--in the promise of God, that a new age is coming—is near—when the earth will be filled with His glory, His people, and His will be done here as it is now done in heaven.

## Bible Quotations in this issue:

Unidentified quotations are from the King James Version.

Other versions are identified as follows:

NEB—*New English Bible*

NIV—*New International Version*

NAS—*New American Standard*

RSV—*Revised Standard Version*

TLB—*The Living Bible*

TEV—*Today's English Version*

Phillips—*The New Testament in Modern English*

Berkeley—*The Modern Language New Testament*

Weymouth—*The New Testament in Modern Speech*

Moffatt—*The Bible, A New Translation*

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# Wholly, Wholly, Wholly

THE PEOPLE were gathering, devout Jews from every part of the heathen city of Babylon. The cheerful communications between them and the bright expressions on their faces showed that they were glad to get together. Once again they were going to hear the Prophet of the Lord, and they were pleased. As they assembled, they talked of him; they liked this man Ezekiel. He was a man of their own tradition, born in the land of Israel, as were most of them; captives living in exile naturally felt a strong sentimental attachment to any link with their ancient traditions. They recalled how the Lord had spoken years earlier to their fathers by other prophets, men like Amos and Hosea, Isaiah and Micah. Many had known Jeremiah, a few could even remember Habakkuk. This young man Ezekiel was one with them.

There was something engaging about this man Ezekiel. They loved him. The flow of his words, the force of his speech, the grandeur of his style, the grace of his diction, the intensity of his conviction—hearing him was like listening to so much beautiful music!

So the people came. And when they were all together, the Prophet stepped forth to address them. They listened. They listened as keenly as ever, with a mixture of curiosity, interest, admiration and pleasure. Yes, it was the same Word of the Lord which they had heard before, the same Word that had been spoken at their holy temple in Jerusalem; it was all good, it was all perfect, it was all true.

The people were satisfied. But the Prophet was not satisfied. Worse still, *the Lord* was not satisfied. Said the Lord to Ezekiel, “Your fellow-citizens . . . talk about you by the walls and in the doorways of the houses” (Ezek. 33:30, NAS). Shallow-minded men and women, they were discussing the messenger rather than his message. There was more street-gossip than heart-searching and personal profit.

“And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people”—yes, to

observe them, you would think them a holy and dedicated people. But reverent gestures and eager listening were not enough, for “they hear my words, but they will not do them.” Here is the problem; they listen, but that is all; they will not *do*. “With their mouth they show much love”—*much* love; yes, they *loved* to listen to the animated young Prophet of the Lord; “but their heart goeth after their covetousness.” It is all words, words, words. The root-evil, the love and lust of other things, is still there, unrepented of and unfor-saken. They gladly listened to the Prophet, but were not committed to his God.

“And lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument; for they hear thy words, but they do them not” (Ezek. 33:30-32).

Ezekiel had an audience, not a congregation. The people came merely to listen; they were not a group of men and women bound together in allegiance to God. Secondly, they listened to him but did not really attend. Most of the time their thoughts were elsewhere. It is one thing to be moved by sacred eloquence and beauty; it is another thing to be filled with true conviction and governed by godly principle. This is where these people fell short. Listening to the sermon was a pleasant experience that did not interfere in the least with their pleasant, Babylonish lives. They had no serious purpose; they were being entertained.

## Looking To Ourselves

This lack of wholehearted devotion to God, this lack of impression when hearing the Word of the Lord, this bland acceptance of that which has the right melody about it, or the right accent or the right rhythm, this hearing which produces no corresponding action, was not limited to the people of Ezekiel’s day. Let us look to ourselves. We should think it a grand privilege to have been in Ezekiel’s audience and heard the Prophet of the Lord directly. And we wonder how those who

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were personally acquainted with a man appointed and inspired by God could have missed the power of his message.

But is not ours the greater privilege, we who can read and compare the words of many of God's prophets and see the plan of God working out just as they foretold? Is not ours the greater honor, we upon whom the ends of the ages are come? How can *we* gather to hear the Word of the Lord and go away unimpressed? "They hear my words, but they do them not." Could this be written of us?

Isaiah had this type of worshiper in his day. "Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but they have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men" (Isa. 29:13).

Jesus knew more of the same type in His day. He even quoted the words of Isaiah to describe them: "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. 15:8-9). And what did Jesus call them? "Hypocrites."

This is why James wrote these warning words to his brethren—and to us: "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only"—and what extra danger comes with hearing and not doing? Self-deception. "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" (James 1:22). How wary we should be of self-deception. We hear, and it sounds so good that it makes us feel as though we have done our duty, when we have done nothing at all; we are self-satisfied, and self-deceived.

James explains it further: "For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was" (Jas. 1:23-24). To hear and not to do is just as worthless as looking at yourself in a mirror, seeing that your face is dirty, and doing nothing about washing it. You go your way, and even *forget* that your face is dirty. "For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was." But then follows the picture of the *doing*-hearer. "Who-so looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed" (v. 25). The man who hears and *does* is like the man who looks into the mirror, sees his dirty face, and immediately sets about to wash it. "He being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer

of the work"—he goes to work so quickly he does not give himself a chance to forget!—"this man shall be blessed in his deed."

It is the same lesson Jesus taught in the parable of the house built on the sand. "He that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great" (Luke 6:49). Why did it fall? Because it had no proper foundation; it was built on the sand. And just as perishable, just as sure of utter ruin is that faith which is built upon pleasant feelings, grand styles, graceful manners and rhythmic utterances. The conviction is not there; the depth is not there; the commitment is not there; the foundation is not there, and in time the house will surely fall.

"But he who heareth my sayings, and doeth them, . . . he is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock." What made this house different? Its builder digged *deep*—he dug below the surface impressions that absorbed Ezekiel's listeners; he dug below the pleasure and emotions of the moment, and built his structure on the solid rock of faith and obedience; and his house stood firm. It is an illustration of the man who hears and *does*.

### Hearing and Doing

This, then, is the focus of our thought this morning; hearing *and doing*; practicing what we know, making an application of the words we hear to our individual selves until we are wholly committed to His will, wholly devoted, wholly true. This was the constant concern of our founder, that we would not take these matters seriously enough and apply the lessons to ourselves. Well he knew the tendency of human nature to let good words and warnings come and go as pleasant melodies, making no lasting impression. The Bible is a high and holy Book; and the truth it reveals is almost more wonderful than we can comprehend. But if it does not compel us to a full commitment, changing us from the old creature we are to the new creature God can bless, we shall miss all the benefits. There is no way to "glory and honour and immortality, eternal life," except by a patient continuance in well doing (Rom. 2:7). And this means a full surrender. Said the apostle Paul, "Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them" (I Tim. 4:15).

How frequently we should remind ourselves of



this command, for it is so easy to give less. It is so easy to get absorbed in a routine of externals and miss the real depths of the wisdom God has given us. It is so easy to go through meaningless rituals obediently while our hearts are unmoved and far away. It is so easy to come with body but not with mind, as Ezekiel's brethren did, to lift our hands when they support no heart. We need the command Jesus emphasized as being one of the two greatest in the law: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength" (Mark 12:30). And notice that this is not an optional request He stated; it is a totalitarian demand. It is a call for commitment which recognizes God's sovereignty over every dimension of our experience: enthroned in our heart, Lord of our mind, Director of our life.

## With *All* the Heart

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." This is where Ezekiel's listeners fell short. They listened, but their heart was not in their listening; they served, but their heart was not in their service. Their heart was far away, running "after their covetousness," after lesser interests and gods of this world. They heard, but did not take it to themselves. It all sounded good and right, but it did not affect them.

Someone has diagnosed this common human malady as spiritual heart trouble. The ears hear, the mind registers, but the heart is untouched.

What is the heart? The original word translated "heart" more than 500 times in the New Testament means, in its non-physical sense, "the center and seat of spiritual life, the soul or mind, as it

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## Let Us Pray . . .

Our loving Father, Thou mighty Being who hast formed the earth and created man upon it, who giveth life and breath to all, we thank Thee that it is as well with us as it is, and that in spite of our negligence and indifference the days of our salvation still are extended, and that we have a chance to improve our record and get right with Thee. Grant that the reading of Thy Word, the reading of the things written aforetime for our learning and instruction, may reinforce our faith and warm our hearts, and send us forth on our way singing whatever may come.

We thank Thee for making known to us Thy sublime plan for the earth and mankind. We rejoice to know that a better Day is destined to arrive when the kingdoms of this world shall become Thy Kingdom, and Christ and His faithful associates shall reign over a conquered world in peace. Then peace, plenty and Thy will shall fill the earth as the waters fill the sea. Help us to use every energy of our body and mind to prepare for that Day. May we believe with all our hearts that it is coming, and now seek first Thy Kingdom and make every move count in getting ready.

May we never procrastinate, or join in the coward's doleful lament, the work cannot be done, the evils of my nature cannot be conquered, but may we declare over and over to ourselves, the work must be done, the work can be done, and it is within my power to do it.

Help us to be wholly committed to Thee. May we

gladly surrender our right to act, speak or think as we naturally would in the hope of winning endless rewards in the age to come. May we follow the example of our noble Pattern, Jesus Christ, who never sought to please Himself, but did always only those things which please Thee. Father, warn us against permitting divided loyalties, trying to serve Thee and mammon at the same time. Jesus declared with finality, Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

Warn us that a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways, he is neither wholly committed to Thee, or wholly opposed to Thee, he is half and half, and Thou hatest men who are half and half. Thou wouldst that we were either cold or hot, but if lukewarm Thou wilt spue us out of Thy mouth as unfit for Thy use.

Father, help us to sense the seriousness of our situation, and come over completely on Thy side now, that we may be on the winning side when we stand before the Judge of all the earth. May we not set our heart upon any earthly thing, but may we hold the things of this life with a loose hand, ready to drop them at a moment's notice when the great Prophet shall return to earth to herald the end of Gentile times and announce the coming of the King of kings.

Help us to take a lesson from the words spoken in our hearing this morning that we may leave this place of worship stronger to face the battles of life. Forgive us for the sins we have confessed and forsaken, and give us strength to lay aside the last weight that we may share with all the good and faithful the glories of the world to come. In Jesus' name. Amen.

is the fountain and seat of the thoughts, passions, desires, appetites, affections, purposes, endeavors; in English, the inner man" (Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon).

What does the Lord mean when He says, "Give me thy heart"? He means, Give me your love, your affection, your passions, your desires, appetites, purposes, endeavors, your whole being. This is what He asks, and how can we do less when God is our judge? Wrote the prophet Jeremiah, speaking for God, "I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings" (Jer. 17:10). What will God see when He searches *our* hearts? Better not to engage in His cause than to engage in it without heart. On God's scale of values, lip service is no service at all.

Many were the times in Biblical history when God showed his concern with the state of men's hearts. He sent the prophet Malachi with a singular warning against some who were serving Him but not wholeheartedly. The Prophet addressed himself to certain priests who were bringing evil upon themselves because they were not applying their hearts to obey the law. To be sure the message got through to them, Malachi opened it with these words: "And now, O ye priests, this commandment is for you" (Mal. 2:1). Could any priest misunderstand that?

We can almost picture the shock Malachi caused among those who were so accustomed to telling others what to do and so inexperienced at listening themselves. "This commandment is for you. If ye will not hear, and if ye will not *lay it to heart*, to give glory unto my name, saith the Lord of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings: yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart" (Mal. 2:1-2). Serious heart trouble, indeed; if not cured, it would prove fatal.

The prophet Samuel had been called by God to anoint a new king for Israel to succeed the disobedient Saul. On order from God, he went to Bethlehem, where he met Jesse and began interviewing his sons. Samuel was impressed by the eldest son, Eliab. He was tall, handsome, and strong, the ideal image of a young king. "But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart" (I Sam. 16:7).

The heart must be right. In Jesus' parable of the Sower, it was the soil of a "good and honest heart" that brought forth an abundance of fruit. The apostle Peter condemned Simon the sorcerer, who

wanted to give money in exchange for the gift of the Holy Spirit, saying, "Thy heart is not right in the sight of God" (Acts 8:21).

The heart is the control room of our being. "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed" every evil to which flesh is heir (Mark 7:21-23). "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked," hence must be cleansed, washed, purified. That is why the same Prophet pleaded, "O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved. How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?" (Jer. 17:9; 4:14). Again he pleaded, "Let us search and try our ways, and turn again unto the Lord. Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens" (Lam. 3:40-41).

### Getting the Heart Right

What causes heart trouble? It is sin. Sin separates us from God. Sin cuts us off from communicating with Him. Said the Psalmist, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Ps. 66:18). It is something for each of us to realize; *our* sins contaminate *our* hearts, so that our service is not acceptable to Him.

Whatever we are doing, let us look well to the purifying of our hearts, for only the "pure in heart" will "see God" (Matt. 5:8). Israel was condemned because "their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant" (Ps. 78:37). And so will we be condemned, if our heart is not right.

How can we get our heart right? By eliminating every lesser interest, by giving ourselves to hearing and doing wholly, wholly, wholly. It is a thought we need to have with us all the time. Admiral Perry said about his desire to reach the north pole, "For more than a score of years, that point on the earth's surface had been the object of my every effort. To attain it my whole being, physical, mental and moral, had been dedicated." Can we give less in the prospect of receiving life everlasting in God's new world?

We know we cannot. Still we face the problem that overcame the people of Ezekiel's day. It is so easy to be less than wholly committed, to reserve some part with which to serve ourselves the little extras we lust after. Yet, we know that if we would receive God's rich blessings in the age that is just ahead, we must change now. Our hearts must be cleansed, and we ourselves must do it. Our religion must touch us at the innermost depths of our being. None of the halfheartedness of Ezekiel's brethren can be ours. For each of us it must be *my* religion changing *my* ideas, giving

up *my* opinions, breaking *my* will, re-directing *my* ambitions, re-orienting *my* thinking, and finally remaking *my* body. How else can I ever receive that everlasting salvation I have been offered? How else can I ever share the physical likeness of Christ?

### **"I Mean YOU"**

It is the message of the highway sign seen occasionally near areas of road construction. First comes the yellow sign with its warning stated plainly in two words: "SLOW DOWN." Then, a few hundred yards farther down the road is another sign, even plainer. It is the outline of a patrolman, his giant fist folded and his forefinger pointing straight at the driver, and the accompanying words, "I Mean YOU." The scheme is a reflection on our human tendency not to apply a warning to ourselves. Typically, the driver seeing the first sign, "SLOW DOWN," begins to wonder what is ahead—some rough road, a detour, a long delay?—all the while he continues speeding on his way. The action demanded by the sign is thus postponed; hence the need for the second and stern directive: "I mean YOU."

We all have this built-in tendency to excuse

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ourselves. We talk easily about the sins of the world, the flagrant abuses of government, the injustices of the present system, the lawlessness and lack of integrity and morality among people in general; not realizing that when the Lord speaks, He is saying at every point, "I mean YOU."

This is what He said to Abraham in words unmistakable. "I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect" (Gen. 17:1). "Be thou perfect"—I mean YOU. It was God's law spoken through Moses: "Take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen" (Deut. 4:9). In other words, I mean YOU. YOU take heed; keep YOUR soul diligently, lest YOU forget. Again he said, "Set your heart unto all the words which I testify among you this day, . . . for it is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life" (Deut. 32:46-47). YOU set YOUR heart—it is for YOUR LIFE!

It is the command of Jesus: "Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, . . . lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping." Lest what? "Lest coming suddenly he find YOU sleeping" (Mark 13:35-37). Could words be aimed more directly to us personally, we who live in the very era of His return? Will He come and find you and me sleeping? Again and again He repeated it. "And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and the cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares" (Luke 21:34). "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man" (Luke 21:36). YOU watch, that YOU may stand.

This was Paul's attitude. Though he spent much of his time preaching to others, he never lost sight of its meaning for him personally. "I therefore so run," he wrote, "not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (I Cor. 9:26-27). Well he knew that the runner in the race most proficient in instructing others could not obtain the prize unless he himself *ran*. So Paul was running, full force, "if by any means I might attain," he wrote. In like manner he admonished his son-in-the-faith Timothy to first see to his own salvation, then that of his hearers. There is a godly selfishness here; if we spend ourselves saving others, and lose our own soul, what shall it profit us? "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou



# Hardening of the ARDOR-ies

**A**LMOST everyone has heard of the physical condition commonly known as "hardening of the arteries." This ailment is usually associated with advancing age, or is attributed to improper diet or lack of regular exercise.

There is also a mental condition known as "hardening of the categories"—a mind-set that is brought about by increasing rigidity of thought and the reinforcing of years of prejudices until one's reaction to almost any idea or proposal is negative.

What is not mentioned so often, however, is the spiritual ailment that could be called "hardening of the ardories" (and that is spelled a-r-d-o-r-i-e-s). Ardor is "extreme vigor or energy, strong or burning heat." Ardor "hardens" when it cools, weakens, and is no longer a propelling force in life.

What are the symptoms of "hardening of the ardories"? They are these: a decreased sensitivity, a reduced fervency, a dying down of one's love, a cooling of the heart's devotion, a subtle and progressive change from compassion to callousness, from tenderness of spirit and pliancy of will to hardness of heart.

And this "hardening of the ardories" is not found only among the aged. It is a possibility at any stage of life. Hardening of the ardories can

be detected when one's love for God and His Word, once warm and fervent, is cooling and waning until what was formerly a binding relationship is merely a religious routine.

One can be sure he is afflicted with "hardening of the ardories" if his heart that once flamed with devotion to Christ and the desire for His recognition is now satisfied with the friendships of this world and the perfunctory performance of religious duties. Jesus had a word for people like that when He said—about those in the church at Ephesus—"I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." Or, as Weymouth translates it, "I have this against you—that you no longer love Me as you did at first" (Rev. 2:4).

Notice He didn't say they no longer loved Him at all; but a change almost as serious had overcome them. There had been a lessening of the intensity of that love, a loss of fervency, a reduced urgency—all unmistakable signs of "hardening of the ardories."

Jesus also noted this condition in the people of the church of Laodicea. "I know thy works," He said, "that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth" (Rev. 3:15-16).

How many of us today are afflicted with this lukewarmness, this subtle condition of hardening of our spiritual ardories? We conform outwardly, but is there still in us the urgent desire, the thrill, the joy we once knew? Is our longing for the things of God waning as the days go by?

Keen, critical self-examination in the presence of God and in the light of His Word is the only sure way to avoid this serious ailment. And avoid it we must if we would have our lives preserved eternally in the Kingdom of our Lord. ••

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shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (I Tim. 4:16).

But this looking to ourselves is not natural. A minister of prominence was invited to address a group of persons who were inmates of a mental institution. Carefully the minister planned what he wanted to say to them. But just before the time arrived for him to speak, he began to wonder if maybe he should avoid saying anything too direct to these people. What if he should upset any of them? He expressed his fear to the attendant, who seemed wholly unconcerned. "Say anything you wish, Sir," the attendant replied. "These people are like the most of us humans, they'll just figure you are talking to somebody else."

This may have been the way David figured the day Nathan came to him and started telling about the rich man who took the poor man's only ewe lamb. But before Nathan left, David felt the full force of the condemnation upon himself, as Nathan put the lesson in plainest words: "Thou art the man."

So easily do we overlook what should be applied to us. Even if it applies quite obviously, we don't let ourselves get bothered too much, because it fits someone else so much better; surely it was intended for him. God forbid that this should ever be our attitude! However small the suggestion, let us seize it eagerly and search our own hearts for

*(Continued on page 20)*

From

*John the Elder*



Ninth in a series on the Epistle of First John

# The Power of the Christian

## A Study of First John 5:1-8

**J**OHN the apostle has been discussing some vital principles which mark the children of God. In the opening words of chapter five he mentions three of these together: belief, love, obedience.

*"Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him."*

*"By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments" (I John 5:1-2).*

From what John has already said regarding belief in Jesus, it is evident that he is referring to much more than a mere intellectual acknowledgement. Belief in Jesus Christ has a practical effect that cannot go unnoticed. It changes our whole being. It impresses not only the intellect but all our thoughts and actions. That is the proper scriptural meaning of the word "believe." It moves one to struggle against sin and become pure as Jesus became pure and holy (I John 3:3).

John emphasizes what he has already said about love. Those who love the Father will love the children also. Our brethren, those begotten of God, are members of one family with us. You can tell how much you love God by how much you love His children. Love to God and love to the brethren are inseparable. Each is the test of the other.

The finale of John's discussion on love is too clear to miss:

*"For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous" (I John 5:3).*

This is John's keystone of love. Love of God can be shown only in an effort to fulfill His will, a continuous and watchful endeavor to keep His commandments. Our wills are not naturally akin to the heavenly Father's. But He rewards our

efforts. He is always at our side to help and strengthen us. His duty carries with it inspiration. As in love we bring our whole being to bear to do His will, it becomes our delight.

There is an old story which illustrates how light a burden becomes if love is there. It runs something like this: Long years ago, someone met a lad going to school. The lad was carrying a smaller boy on his back. The smaller boy was lame and unable to walk, so had to be carried. The stranger said to the lad, "Do you carry him to school every day?" "Yes," said the boy. "That's a heavy burden for you to carry, isn't it?" asked the stranger. "He's no burden," said the boy to the stranger, "He's my *brother*." Love turned the burden into no burden at all.

So it will be with us. What we love to do, what is our delight to do, is not a cumbersome chore. Jesus described His service as a "yoke," but He insisted that that yoke is "easy" and the "burden light" (Matt. 11:28-30). He wore this yoke Himself, and it was nothing more or less than obeying the Father's commandments. And those commandments are not beyond our ability to keep, they are not unreasonable, they are not unjust. Every command gives us another opportunity to show our love. Obedience, we might say, is the perfume of love. Where love is it is everywhere manifest. The more we grow in love to God and the children of God, the stronger we shall be to testify with John that "his commandments are not grievous"; no, indeed; they are a delight!

Three times in three sentences, as if to rub the truth home irresistibly, John repeats the phrase "overcometh the world."

*"For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" (I John 5:4-5).*

John is speaking of those who have accepted the faith, who are living the new life, keeping the commandments. They are begotten of God. Those led by the spirit of this world, they are not begotten of God; they have not been born into the new life.

The word "overcometh" implies conflict. There is conflict; there is the struggle between the new and the old, and a ceaseless struggle it is. But the children of God are conquerors. John makes no provision for little faith, or failing faith, but only for a conquering faith. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Our faith is sufficient to overcome, if we but summon it.

There are many ways that the "world" exercises its power over men. John summed this up earlier in his letter. "All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world" (I John 2:16). The hearts of the children of God are not satiated by earth's worthless baubles. The glamour of worldly honor does not captivate the truly begotten of God. He will not be turned from his goal, though he be loaded with favor and good fortune in this world. And though he be mistreated or misjudged by friend or foe, the truly begotten of God will triumph.

Beside the manifold darts from without, the "world" may also include the untoward passions and weaknesses of our own nature within. But in whatever form the "world" rises up against the spirit of God, the children of God can be victorious. Jesus comforted His disciples with these words: "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). In other words, triumph is possible. I have done it. And it is by this same faith which made Him one with the Father that we may be one with Him and triumph as He did.

And what is the means by which we can achieve such victory? John said it: ". . . this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (I John 5:4).

Then John asks, "Who is he that overcometh the world?" and he answers: "He that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God" (I John 5:5). Who could possibly gain this victory but he who believes in Jesus Christ? All else are of the present world and are governed by worldly aims and principles. Faith means the surrender of the heart, of the whole being to Him in whom we believe. He that believes in a general follows that general unflinchingly. Faith in Jesus Christ!—this means that we believe and stand for all that He believed and stood for. It means following in His footsteps, though all men follow the spirit of the world. It means a new life altogether, though

others are opposed. This belief in Jesus the Son of God overcomes the world. What a daring claim of the first century believer! According to John, victory belongs not to Rome, which was then reigning supreme, but to Christ and His humble followers.

May our convictions be even as John's—unshakable.

A person of this world may gain a victory over some evil passion; he may break away from some form of sin, he may see the folly of profanity and intemperance, he may leave his circle of sinful companions. But that is not enough. Unless he has the true faith of Christ, the spirit of the world will still be reigning in him, and he will not be truly "of God." Some who seek for the good of this world are disappointed in their seeking, are crushed by tragedy, and they withdraw from the world; but still there is no victory over the world. Their brokenness of spirit, their dejection, and unhappiness, all show that the spirit of the world is in their hearts. Too often when the days of prosperity are restored they show as much spirit of the world as they ever did. The victory which faith wins is enduring.

Fellow Christian, let us stand shoulder to shoulder in the spirit of God, firm in the faith that overcomes the world.

## The Threefold Witness

Faith in Jesus Christ is grounded upon the validity of Jesus' own testimony. His life is that testimony.

*"Jesus Christ, he it is who came by water, blood, and Spirit—not by water alone, but by the water and the blood. The Spirit is the witness to this, for the Spirit is truth. The witnesses are three, the Spirit and the water and the blood, and the three of them are in accord" (I John 5:6-8, Moffatt Bible).*

John emphasizes that Jesus came not only by water but by water and by blood. Jesus had often used these terms in His teachings. They were part of His life. The water which He drank and gave to others was the saving gospel, the life-giving words He spoke, as to the woman at the well (John 4:14). By the term "blood" John no doubt referred to the sacrifice and suffering that is part of complete submission to the Father's will (Matt. 26:39). John was speaking in figurative terms; he was not referring to literal water or literal blood, hence could not have been referring to Christ's literal shedding of blood on Calvary. In his gospel, John quotes Jesus as saying to the Jews, "Except ye . . . drink his blood ye have no life in you" (John 6:53). No one thinks that Jesus was promoting cannibalism. He Him-



self said that there is no profit in the literal. "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life" (John 6:63).

Jesus shed the blood of His own nature; and only those who like Him surrender their lives wholly to the Father shall have eternal life. Jesus died to every sinful tendency (Rom. 6:10); He laid down His life as a perfect example for others to pattern after (I Pet. 2:21). He said, ". . . the same works that I do bear witness of me that the Father hath sent me" (John 5:36). Jesus glorified God in all that He did (John 17:4). He not only preached the gospel, He lived it. He came by "water" and by "blood."

John mentions the "spirit" as a witness. The term "spirit" is used in two ways. Jesus declared that His words were "spirit" and "life." This was true because Jesus spoke the words which the Father gave Him (John 17:8). The "spirit" or Word of God is forever true, forever reliable.

The "Spirit" is also used of divine power. By the Spirit, God caused many miracles to be performed, to confirm the gospel of Christ. Through the centuries His Spirit moved holy men to deliver God's message to men, proclaiming His plan and making known His work among men. By the Spirit the prophets foretold the birth of Christ, His life, His second coming, His glorious Kingdom. Twice during Jesus' life, the Spirit testified from heaven, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17; 17:5).

The Spirit is of God. And John says the Spirit, the water, and the blood are in accord. They are,

because all are from God, all bear witness to the same testimony, all harmonize in their witness of Jesus Christ as the Son of God, prophet, priest and King among men. All serve together to promote all faithful believers to full salvation.

We quoted I John 5:6-8 from Moffatt's translation because this translation omits the text and the thought of verse 7, "there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit: and these three are one," as our King James Version phrases it. This verse is considered spurious by most Bible scholars. It is wanting in all the early manuscripts (written before the sixteenth century). As one writer says, it is easy to imagine how the passage found a place in the New Testament. It was at first perhaps written in the margin of a Latin Manuscript as expressing the belief of the writer. Later, some transcriber copied it into the body of the text, perhaps with a sincere belief that it was a genuine part of the text formerly omitted by accident. Then after a time it became too important a passage in the argument of the doctrine of the Trinity to be displaced.

Now there are a number of translations in addition to Moffatt's which do not quote the text of verse 7 (see Goodspeed, NEB, RSV, NASB, Weymouth, Williams, Beck, NIV, Berkeley, The Ryrie Study Bible, The New Testament from Twenty-Six Translations).

It is interesting to know that the Greek fathers in their controversies on the doctrine of the Trinity never quoted this passage—which would be so much on their point, and which could not have failed to have been used, had it been in existence and its source genuine. If the passage were genuine, if it were even known to exist at all, it is incredible that in all the controversies regarding the divine nature and the trinity it should never have been mentioned.

Besides this external evidence we note that verse 7 (which speaks of the witnesses in heaven) does not contribute to what John is saying. It breaks the thread of his argument and the sense is clearer without it.

Trinitarians may say that John is speaking of the three persons of the Godhead, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, but the evidence for the text is lacking.

Let us repeat John's thought concerning the witnesses: the water represents the living word, the blood represents the living sacrifice, and the spirit is divine power in word or act, and "these three agree in one" (KJV), they "are in accord" (Moffatt's). All come from God. ●●

NEXT: *Believe the Greater Witness*

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## ABIB Is Coming!

The steady onward march of time is bringing us once again to the beginning of the year and another sacred season. The first new moon after the vernal equinox this year occurs on March 27, therefore the evening of March 27 marks the beginning of Abib 1, which will extend through March 28, Bible time being measured from "evening to evening" (Lev. 23:32).

The arrival of Abib means special activities at the Megiddo Church in honor of our Coming King, whose birth we will commemorate at this time, as well as the beginning of the New Year. Distant members and friends, plan now to come and join us at this season! ●●

# UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God"

## The Way to Salvation

**S**ALVATION is the inspiration of the Christian life. It is the prize which will be awarded to every one of God's faithful servants, those who "endure unto the end" of their life. Nothing short of this hope of eternal life is sufficient to inspire one to "endure unto the end."

How is this great prize to be attained? Theology would have us believe that there are many ways all essentially the same and all leading to the same end. Some say, "It doesn't really matter what you believe—just so long as you are sincere. We are all going to the same place, but by different routes." Heaven is thought to be at the end of all the routes.

Substituting our own ideas for the rules doesn't work in medicine or mathematics, and it will not work in gaining salvation. It **does** matter what we believe. All ways **do not** lead to the same end. The words of Jesus attest to the truth of this statement: "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life," and "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction." And again, "If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch" (Matt. 7:14, 13; 15:14).

How can we learn the right way to salvation? First we must acquaint ourselves with the words of the One who said: "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6).

The importance of the teachings of the Word cannot be overemphasized. The writer to the Hebrews warned, "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, . . . how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard him, while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his own will" (Heb. 2:1-4, KJV; RSV).

Salvation can be lost by neglect—by neglecting the spoken Word.

Note that the "words" concerning salvation were first spoken by Jesus Himself. And what were His words?

We learn from Mark's Gospel that after John the Baptist had been put in prison, "Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel" (Mark 1:14-15).

Matthew recorded that "Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness . . . among the people" (4:23). Luke also took note of His teaching, saying, "He went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God" (Luke 8:1).

And seemingly to add emphasis to the words which He spoke, His Father spoke to Him from heaven at the transfiguration: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; **hear ye him**" (Matt. 17:5). We cannot be saved without listening to what He taught, believing it and obeying it. "Hear ye him."

## III. SALVATION—HOW DO WE GAIN IT?

The first step toward salvation is a desire; each must make his own decision. The path to life is open to one and all. "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17). God has provided the way, but no one will ever take the first step in the way without first resolving that he will. There must be a choice made to serve the Lord and Him only.

Many in our day think the way so easy that they expect to live their lives as they please, and just call on the Lord and be saved. Such thinking is only wishful thinking. No one will ever be saved without conscious effort. And as we learned in our last lesson, there is no such thing as instant, effortless salvation.

### E. Salvation—A Free Gift?

Building on two verses from the apostle Paul's writings, many proclaim that salvation is free.

"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23), and "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift" (II Cor. 9:15).

The unspeakable gift is to the masses that God in His great love for this sinful world sent Christ to die for the sins of all mankind. All you have to do is to say that you believe Christ died for your sins, accept Him as your personal Saviour, and you have eternal life.

But was this Paul's understanding of the way to salvation? We cannot believe that it was. He himself had too much to say about the necessity of virtuous living, obedience, sacrifice and service.

Salvation is indeed a gift; man could not possibly do enough in his short life to earn it. But it is a gift with strings attached. It is conditional. God says in effect, "I will do thus and so for you if you will do thus and so for Me."

**1. The wages of sin.** Sin pays wages. This we do not deny. But death that is the wages of sin is not physical death at the end of our natural life span, for that is the lot of all whether sinner or saint. Death that is the wages of sin is penal death; in the case of those resurrected and judged unfaithful, it is the second death. It is death from which there is no release (II Thess. 1:9). It is the result of knowing but not doing. Who reaps the second or penal death will be decided at Judgment.

**2. The gift of God.** To the majority, the gift of God is His Son, sent to die on the cross for the sins of mankind, but our verse says that "the gift of God is eternal life." The gift of eternal life will come to us through Jesus Christ our Lord, when He returns to bring it (I Pet. 5:4; Rev. 22:12).

At the present time we have eternal life only by promise; it is our hope, as Paul wrote Titus: "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began" (Tit. 1:2). The gift of life will be the reward given to the faithful at Judgment. It is said to be a gift because man could never earn it. We cannot receive it until Christ comes to bring it (Phil. 3:20-21).

Although salvation is a gift, every recipient must first qualify before he can receive it. He must have met the conditions laid down by the giver Himself. Not the least of these conditions is that he be an overcomer, for it is to the overcomers that Christ will "give power over the nations" (Rev. 2:26). Christ was Himself an overcomer and He promises a reward to all others who overcome: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne" (Rev. 3:21).

## F. Salvation—By Doing

Contrary to the thinking and teaching of many, salvation is for those who do. Yet there are those who state flatly that this is not so: "No man living can of himself keep the commandments any more than he can live the Christ-life. God does not say to us, Do, do, do."

We take exception to this statement. God does not ask us to do the impossible, but He demands obedience—do, do, do. It has ever been thus. God gave Abraham specific commands and Abraham obeyed. After the offering of Isaac, "the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham . . . and said, . . . because thou hast done this thing, . . . in blessing I will bless thee, . . . because thou hast obeyed my voice" (Gen. 22:15-18). **The blessing was because he had done what God commanded, because he had obeyed.**

From the time God began calling workers into His vineyard, He has said unto them, "Do, do, do!" If you doubt it, take your concordance and see how many times that little word "do" appears in the Scriptures! There are also many commands that do not include "do" but are commands nonetheless.

Jesus Himself said, "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Lk. 6:46). And again, "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" (Rev. 22:14).

To be a Christian is to live the Christ-life, as the name implies, and living the Christ-life includes keeping the commandments. God will not do for us what we can do for ourselves, but after we have done all that we can He will do for us what we cannot do—He can give us eternal life.

## G. Salvation—Then Works?

The common belief concerning salvation is that one is first saved, then good works follow. One popular viewpoint holds that "men receive eternal life in and through Jesus Christ by accepting Him as their own personal Saviour and thus being born again." Then, "having received salvation by faith, we are prepared by God's grace to show our faith by our works, for faith without works is dead. He has promised to live in us, to abide with us . . . and He will live His life of perfect obedience to the law in us if we accept Him."

This, as our founder used to say, is "putting the cart before the horse." Granted, there must be a starting point. But full salvation—eternal life—comes at the end of the race, not at the beginning. Salvation is the reward, and the reward



is salvation. The winners in the race cannot be determined until the race has been run. It is "he that endureth to the end [that] shall be saved" (Matt. 10:22). There is a certain measure of salvation at the beginning when one is delivered from the slavery of old habits and desires, and from the path that ends in hopelessness and death, but that is not the eternal salvation.

The Scriptures abound with evidence that salvation is conditioned on the believers' works, not the works of someone else.

**a. We must cleanse ourselves.** "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (II Cor. 7:1). **The cleansing is to be done by the individual; no one else can do it for him.**

**b. We must purify ourselves.** "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he [Christ] is pure" (I John 3:3). Again, it is **up to the individual himself to do the purifying. Christ will not do it for him.**

**c. We must put off the old man—put on the new.** Paul exhorted all those who had been taught the truth of God to "put off . . . the old man, which is corrupt . . . and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. 4:21-24). And again he said, "But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice," etc. (Col. 3:8-10). **Each time it was for the individual himself to get rid of the sin; there is no indication that anyone else could do it for him.**

**d. Obedience enjoined.** Obedience to the commandments is demanded throughout the Scriptures: From the beginning it was "Obey and live; disobey and die." The teaching of Jesus and the apostles did not differ.

Jesus said, "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love" (John 15:10).

John, the beloved apostle, had much to say about the necessity of keeping the commandments, but he gave no indication that someone else would keep them for us. His statements are too plain for misunderstanding: "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. . . . He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked" (I John 2:4, 6).

The message is clear throughout the Scriptures: It is works first, salvation second. "If you do, then I will do." There is no variation.

#### **H. Salvation—Through What Gospel?**

Paul was made a minister of the gospel by  
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Christ Himself. And of the gospel he said, "I am not ashamed . . . for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16).

It is the gospel that saves. But what is the gospel? A noted evangelist once said that "the only gospel this world needs is John 3:16." This would agree with the opinion of many, for to the majority the gospel concerns Christ's literal death, and they see it in John 3:16. One writer has summed up the gospel like this: "The heart of the Christian Gospel, with its incarnation and atonement, is in the cross and the resurrection. Jesus was born to die. He did for man what man cannot do for himself. Because Christ died, God can justify the sinner and still be just."

This is the gospel according to men. But what is the gospel according to Jesus Christ and the apostles? Does John 3:16 constitute the gospel?

**1. The gospel according to Jesus.** Matthew, one of the Twelve, recorded the beginning of Jesus' ministry thus: "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4:17). Mark dated the time of His ministry as following the imprisonment of John the Baptist, saying, "Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, . . . repent ye, and believe the gospel." **The gospel Jesus preached was the "gospel of the kingdom of God," and the message for them was "Repent," that is, turn from your sin and bring forth fruits worthy of salvation. He said nothing of an atonement or incarnation, nor did He tell them that He had come to die for them.**

From Luke we learn of Jesus' teaching "the people in the temple, and [preaching] the gospel" (Lk. 20:2). No mention is made of His preaching His death as a sacrifice. **If the gospel consisted of His death on the cross and the so-called incarnation, it should have been recorded in at least one of the Gospels, but we fail to find it.**

**2. Jesus and the cross.** In the course of His ministry, Jesus mentioned the cross on six different occasions. Each time it was not the cross on which He was to die, but the cross of self-denial that He asked His followers to take up. **Matthew 10:38 and Luke 14:27 point to cross-bearing as a test of discipleship. "Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple," wrote Luke.**

**Matthew 16:24, Luke 9:23 and Mark 8:34 are all very similar. Luke's words contain the essence of all three: "And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." There is no**

wooden cross here; only the cross Jesus bore from beginning to end, the same cross His followers today must bear.

Mark 10:21, the sixth of the Gospels' references to the cross, is contained in the parable of the Rich Young Man who came asking what he must do to inherit eternal life. Seeking to impress him with the necessity of giving his all, Jesus ended with the words, "and come, take up the cross, and follow me." And we read that the young man went away sad, "for he had great possessions." Realizing that it was not easy to gain the Kingdom, "the disciples were astonished at his words," says the record (Mark 10:24).

**3. The gospel according to Paul.** Paul testified that Christ sent him not to baptize, but to preach the gospel (I Cor. 1:17), and later in his letter he said, "Woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel" (I Cor. 9:16).

What was Paul's gospel? "I want you to know," said Paul, "that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ" (Gal. 1:11-12, NIV). And it was for the sake of the gospel that Paul was writing this letter to the Galatians. They were turning away from the gospel of Christ to other doctrines, and Paul warned them that there was no other gospel.

This gospel spoke of a cross, true enough. But what was the cross? "God forbid," said Paul, "that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal. 6:14). What power would the literal cross of Christ have to crucify Paul unto the world, or the world to Paul? But this genuine gospel of the cross of self-crucifixion could do both.

Paul had preached the same gospel to the Corinthians and he reminded them in his letter, "I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you" (I Cor. 15:1-2). He preached the gospel as he had received it from Christ; but if they were to be saved, they had to remember the things he had preached. In the words of James, they were to be "doers of the word, and not hearers only" (Jas. 1:22).

**4. The gospel according to Peter and the other apostles.** Peter received his commission to preach the gospel from Christ after His resurrection. He met with the Eleven on several occasions, each time giving them instructions concerning their mission. He did not tell them to go out preaching His cross, His blood or a vicarious

atonement. Rather, He commanded them to preach "repentance and remission of sins" (Lk. 24:47).

The gospel they were to preach after His ascension was the same gospel He had been preaching, only now it included the hope of the resurrection. That hope had been confirmed in the resurrection of Jesus—and Peter and the other apostles were not slack to preach it. The resurrection was the hope and power of the gospel.

Peter mentioned on more than one occasion that Jesus' death was murder, that He was put to death by wicked men. Nowhere did he say that Christ's death was a sacrifice, but he did say that "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that [we] should follow his steps," and you "do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God" (I Pet. 2:21; 1:21).

Like Brother Paul, Peter gave many commands that are as binding as the commands of Jesus Himself. They are a part of the gospel by which we live today, for they are part of the Word of God. "The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you" (I Pet. 1:24-25). The entire "word of the Lord"—not just a single misunderstood text (such as John 3:16)—is the gospel.

### In Summary

The apostles went out and fulfilled the commission Jesus had given them. Paul testified that "the hope of the gospel" had been "preached to every creature which is under heaven" (Col. 1:23). "And be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard," he said.

The gospel which they preached was recorded and preserved for us. "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" (Rom. 15:4). Like those who have gone before us, our salvation is in these words. "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand" (Rev. 1:3). Read, hearken, and do those things written therein. It is the only way to salvation. ●●

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# "Now the Spirit Speaketh Expressly"

*"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving" (I Tim. 4:14).*

This passage raises several questions:

What is the "spirit that speaketh expressly"?

When are the "latter times"?

What are the "seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils"?

Who are those who "forbid to marry" and command "to abstain from meats"?

How can Paul say "every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused"?

THE APOSTLE Peter thought "our beloved brother Paul" wrote "some things hard to be understood." We might include the above passage in this category. We cannot always be sure exactly what Paul meant. Some of his statements may have more than one possible meaning—one more literal, one more symbolic in nature. But we can benefit by comparing his more difficult statements with the rest of Scriptural teaching.

*What is the "Spirit" that "speaketh expressly"?*

The apostle Paul was privileged to enjoy a portion of a special divine power known as the Holy Spirit, which Jesus sent upon certain of His disciples and the apostles after He had ascended to heaven. Paul did not receive this power at the same time as the others—he was not present on the day of Pentecost when it descended upon the assembled group. But after Paul's experience on the Damascus Road when he was struck to the ground by the blinding light and heard the voice of Jesus, the Lord empowered Ananias to bestow that same power upon the converted Paul.

The power included various gifts as it was possessed by various people. Not all received the same benefits. Paul discussed this in his letter to the Corinthians (I Cor. 12:6-11, 30). Some could heal, some could understand languages they had

never learned, some could teach and foretell the future.

Among the gifts which Paul enjoyed was the ability to prophesy future events, and when he did prophesy, he often credited the knowledge directly to God or to His Spirit which was revealing the knowledge to him; for example, in I Timothy 4:1, "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly. . . ."

In the same way, the twelve apostles whom Jesus sent out during His ministry were divinely empowered. Jesus told them, "When they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you" (Matt. 10:19-20). So it was with Paul's prophecies—they were not the words of Paul but of the Divine Mind, the Spirit of God behind Paul and speaking through Paul.

*When are the "latter times"?*

Paul used his ability to foretell future events to discuss one period of time in particular, which he called "the latter times." What time was this?

We know from other passages of Scripture that the apostles spoke of more than one period of time as the "latter times" or the "last days." Several times they spoke of their own apostolic age as the "last time." The author of Hebrews thought of the age then present as the "last days," the time of Christ's first advent. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son" (Heb. 1:1-2). The apostle Peter made a similar statement in I Peter 1:20, that Jesus was "manifest in these last times for you." Note also the statement of the apostle



John in I John 2:18, "Little children, it is the last time."

In another application of the term, the apostle Paul spoke of the time just preceding the second advent of Christ as the "last days." "This know also," he wrote, "that in the last days perilous times shall come" (II Tim. 3:1), and we today see the detailed fulfillment of this remarkable prophecy in this period of time just before the end of our age.

Still another "last" period which the apostles spoke of was the closing days of their own age, a period of time which was to terminate in total apostasy from true religion. This seems to be the period the apostle Paul is speaking about in the text in question. "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils." Paul said elsewhere that he could already see the beginnings of the apostasy in his day.

Paul wrote of this same event in his Second Epistle to Timothy: "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (II Tim. 4:3-4). He spoke of it also in his address to the Ephesian brethren: "also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:29-30).

*What are the "seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils"?*

These evil-minded people who would arise within the churches and "speak perverse things" and seek to "draw away disciples after them" could surely be termed "devils." In the Bible, any one who opposes can be termed a devil; Jesus called Peter a devil when he opposed the will of God with regard to Christ (Matt. 16:23). Jesus called Judas a "devil" because of his evil heart and evil intents: "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" (John 6:70).

Those who would teach false doctrines within the church and seek to lead others in their error would surely classify as "seducing spirits," and their teachings as "doctrines of devils." This is what "seduce" means: "to persuade to disobedience or disloyalty; to lead astray." And this was the direct cause of the apostasy.

The fact that Paul called them "spirits" does not mean he was thinking of phantoms or ghosts. In another letter he called it the "mystery of

iniquity" which he could see already working (II Thess. 2:7). It was a false spirit, a spirit of evil insidiously attacking from within his congregations.

The term "spirit" has many possible applications. In First John 4:1 the term is used in much the same way that Paul used it: "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world." This text shows that "spirit" is the equivalent of "prophet," one speaking in the name of the Lord, in this case speaking falsely, just as Paul observed among his people. John continues the thought, using "spirit" in the same sense: "Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world." John could see the apostasy coming, the rise of "seducing spirits" just as Paul saw it. And John says: "We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error" (I John 4:3, 6). "Seducing spirits" were teaching "doctrines of devils," doctrines of their own evil imagining, contrary to the teaching of Christ and His apostles.

*Who are those "forbidding to marry" and commanding "to abstain from meats"?*

This prophecy follows his prediction of the apostasy in this passage and also describes a condition which was shortly to exist among apostate Christian peoples. History tells us there were such groups, who became absorbed in their own ideas of righteousness and their self-imposed laws and abstinences, and forgot what God requires: "to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God" (Mic. 6:8).

The particular points Paul mentions have to do with human relationships and food: "Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth" (v. 3). Paul's overall point is that every aspect of life must be controlled and used to the glory of God. He is warning against the extremists who have always thrived under the guise of religion. On the one hand are the naturalists, who say that all natural appetites and inclinations are good and should be indulged; and on the other side are the extreme ascetics, who say that all natural appetites and inclinations are bad and should be repressed. Of course, says Paul, both are wrong.

History confirms that the ascetic attitude became dominant in the apostate church during the centuries following Paul's time; so it does not seem strange that Paul, seeing its beginnings in his own day, should warn his brethren. He did not want them substituting mere outward abstinences for true service and obedience to God. In his Epistle to the Colossians he mentions it again, for these brethren were likewise being tempted to "follow merely human injunctions and teaching. True," he said, this self-imposed rigor "has an air of wisdom, with its forced piety, its self-mortification, and its severity to the body; but it is of no use at all in combating sensuality" (Col. 2:22-23, NEB).

Right conduct is never self-centered. The ascetic denies himself for his own sake in a sort of self-worshiping self-denial. God has nothing to do with this. God must be glorified by all the Christian does, and all things from Him must be received with humble thanksgiving.

This passage on the forbidding of marriage and commanding to abstain from meats may also be applied consistently in a spiritual sense. Paul is talking about the approaching apostasy, and this is just what the false teachers would (and did) promote. They would, as Paul wrote in II Timothy 4, turn away their ears from the truth and be turned to fables. And this is what happened. They turned away from the truth that Christ would return to be married to the true Church, His faithful Bride (Rev. 19:7-8) to the fable that Christ was very God and that the saints would go to heaven to dwell with Him. They totally forbade the marriage Paul taught when he wrote, "I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (II Cor. 11:2).

Paul warns also against those who would command to "abstain from meats," and in a spiritual sense they may apply to the wholesome, edifying "meat" such as Jesus presented in John 6:27, that "meat which endureth unto everlasting life," that meat which Jesus ate saying, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work" (John 4:34). The command to abstain from this "meat" was literally proclaimed during the dark centuries of the apostasy, as men wandered further and further from the teachings of Christ and His apostles, until finally all *did* abstain from eating it, until all were turned from the truth and the last living faithful witness for God perished. This was the fulfillment of what Jesus foretold, that "all" would "slumber and sleep" (Matt. 25:1-5).

*How can Paul say "every creature of God is*  
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*good, and nothing to be refused"? (I Tim. 4:4)*

Obviously Paul could not have intended for us to take this statement literally, or we would find ourselves contradicting many plain statements of Scripture. For example, how could we say "every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused" and obey the command: "Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men" (Prov. 4:14). Or, "Go from the presence of a foolish man, when thou perceivest not in him the lips of knowledge" (Prov. 14:7). Or, "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house [brotherhood, or fellowship]" (II John 10).

First Timothy 4:4, "Every creature of God is good," is usually understood as saying that everything God has created for man's use should be received with thanksgiving and used with self-control, consideration for others, and intelligent recognition of the personal and social consequences of what we do.

But while this thought may have points to recommend it, this is not the only possibility for understanding this verse. The word translated "creature" in I Timothy 4:4 is defined in Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon as "thing founded; created thing." And following the definition is this comment on the word when used in the phrase, "creature of God," as in I Tim. 4:4. It reads: "contextually and metaphorically, transformed by divine power to a moral newness of soul, spoken of true Christians as created anew by regeneration."

If we apply this thought to the text, we have no difficulty understanding how "every creature of God is good." That is, every person made new by His divine power, His gospel, who is transformed in nature, is "good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving." And the thought of the next verse fits this application appropriately: for such a one is "sanctified by the word of God and prayer." The verse reads "*it* is sanctified," etc., but the original word may as correctly be rendered "he" as "*it*." How could inanimate objects or abstract ideas have "intercourse" or "prayer" or "communion" with God, as the last word of verse 5 indicates? But "every creature of God," every one made new by His power, is good, and is "consecrated by the word of God and prayer" (v. 5, RSV).

Paul's next words follow in logical conclusion to the thought: "If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained." ●●

## Wholly, Wholly, Wholly

(Continued from page 9)

anything that is keeping us from being wholly committed. And when the lesson comes to us, let us tell ourselves in plainest words, "Thou art the man."

David's prayer of penitence, recorded in Psalm 51, shows how deeply his tender heart was impressed. Notice his forthright personal confession and his all-out plea for forgiveness and extended opportunity from his long-suffering God. "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. . . . Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. . . . Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. . . . Thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Ps. 51:1-3, 7, 9-10, 16-17).

### Results of Half-Commitment

What is the end of the half-committed? Let us return to the word of the Lord spoken to those halfhearted people of Ezekiel's day. What did the Lord say to Ezekiel about them, those who heard but did not do? "When what you say comes, as come it will, they will know that there has been a prophet in their midst" (Ezek. 33:33, NAS).

There is a note of sadness in these words, a note of hopelessness, of trouble for which there will be no remedy. When that time arrives, and lo! it will arrive, they shall know. But then it will be everlastingly too late.

The lesson is for us: When we have an opportunity and do not apply our hearts to it, we may be sure that our decision will end in regret. The people of Ezekiel's time knew Ezekiel was a just and faithful man of God, and they listened with interest and pleasure. They knew the message was true; but they did not take it to heart, and by not taking it to heart they forfeited the blessings that had been placed within their reach and wronged their own souls. Oh, let us take heed! Privileges neglected and abused can never be recalled, and their memory will be bitter when we

shall see Abraham, and Isaac and Jacob and all the faithful in the Kingdom of God, and we ourselves thrust out (Luke 13:28).

The apostle Peter gave a similar warning. "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?" Where will Judgment begin when Christ arrives to cleanse the earth? It will begin "at the house of God," at those who are professing to be part of His building. "And if it first begin at us"—at *us*; oh, let us take this to ourselves; it affects us more closely than it did any of Peter's brethren, for is it not written that the last shall be first? And are we not nearer to the last, far nearer, than was Peter? "If it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?" If we have been taking our religion generally, applying it where convenient, and not committing ourselves wholly to the gospel of God in full obedience, what shall we do when Judgment begins at *us*?

"And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" (I Pet. 4:18). No place here for worrying about others; the obligation is ours to do what is right **OURSELVES**. We shall each be called to account. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ: that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (II Cor. 5:10). No fear of having to answer for someone else's wrongs; each of us shall receive "according to that *he* hath done, whether it be good or bad." And how shall we stand if we have not taken these things to heart, if we are still coddling little sins we should long ago have left behind?

### Personal Religion—Personal Benefits

These are not warnings to be heard as a pleasant melody, to be allowed to run like water off a duck's back. They are ours to hear and heed. Think of the price we shall have to pay if we are not wholly committed to God. Contrast this with what we shall gain by wholehearted service. Think of the endless benefits God will shower upon His faithful children, and the joy unspeakable and full of glory that shall go with us through all eternity. To know that henceforth our lives will be free from disappointment, sorrow, pain and trial, and that pleasures and joys beyond our fondest imagination shall increase forever!—do we not want the fulness of these experiences *ourselves*?

But there is only one way to secure these incomparable joys, and that is by the way of full

MEGIDDO MESSAGE

surrender, full commitment to God without the slightest provision for the satisfying of our own old nature.

But in surrender there is joy even now. Picture the man who has acquired a thorough knowledge of his own heart and character, who is able to restrain his irregular inclinations, subdue every rebellious passion, and to act always from the purest motives; who has formed himself to that temperance which no pleasure can seduce, to that meekness which no provocation can ruffle, to that patience which no affliction can overwhelm, and to that integrity which no self-interest can bribe. When we have attained this wholeness of consecration, we can be sure we shall be wholly blessed, world without end.

May these words stir us as never before. They are not just a pleasant melody; the Lord is speaking and He means for us to hearken; and that means YOU and that means ME. There is no other way to secure His eternal favor and blessing. ●●

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## Get Out of the Ditch

**M**OST of us have felt pity for the hapless driver who suddenly finds he is sitting in a stationary vehicle that has one wheel—or two or three—in the ditch. The snow-covered pavement was more treacherous than it had seemed; hence, this unplanned delay. No one *plans* to slide into the ditch, but so easily, so unexpectedly, it can happen.

It seems that life has those critical, slippery moments when it is so easy to slide off the path. Many times we are ditched by our own failures; sometimes, it is by the failures of others. But what do we do when we find ourselves in the ditch? Do we stay there? We go immediately to seek a friend to help us out.

The young apostle Peter suddenly found himself in such a ditch. It was the night before the crucifixion. Jesus had warned him of the slippery path that lay ahead, but Peter had taken no heed. Not until he heard the crowing of the cock did Peter realize what had happened. He had denied His Lord, just as Jesus had said he would. He was in the ditch. But Peter didn't stay there. He was soon out and traveling the more surely—and wisely—for the experience. In fact, Peter did his best traveling after that experience.

The paths of Judas and Peter were parallel for a time, but in the end they are literally worlds

apart. Both were men of great potential, with high calling and beginnings full of hope. Both came to an hour of tragic failure. Judas betrayed his Master, and Peter denied Him.

But in the end, Judas is despised with the lowest, while Peter is esteemed with the highest. What is the difference? The big difference is in what they did with their failures.

When Judas tried to undo his betrayal and could not (Matt. 27:3-4), he went out and ended his life, thus severing every opportunity he might have had. But Peter, though he cried bitterly (Matt. 26:75), went out to repent and returned a stronger, better, humbler, and more determined man. He didn't stay ditched.

Judas let his ditch become the end of the road; there he stopped, and there he stayed, like an abandoned vehicle. When Peter found himself in the ditch, he promptly set to work to get out, and once out, he proceeded the more carefully. He used his failure in a life-changing way.

Failure is part of every life. Time and again we fall short of what we know we could be. We find ourselves in the ditch when we least expect it. We look back and see how easily the mishap could have been avoided. But it is too late to avoid it. All we can do now is to get out of it.

What we do with our failures determines to a great extent the success we attain. What we do with them reveals our strength of character. If we have not the humility to ask for help, we may have to stay in the ditch and we shall never go any further. Or if we have not the determination to force ourselves against our will, we shall stay in the ditch and all hope of progress will be cut off. It is only as we make the extra effort to get out that we can resume our journey.

At the end of what seemed a hopeless night of failure when the disciples had been fishing all night and had caught nothing, they heard a voice that seemed to say, "You have been fishing on your side of the boat, now fish on Mine." This is the call that comes to each of us. We have failed too often because we were following our own course, going our own way, thinking our own thoughts, fishing on our own side of the boat. Jesus calls us to obey Him, do it His way, and find success.

How can we get out of the ditch of our former sins and failures? By building up strong fortifications where we are weak and facing the future in the strength of the Lord. And how can we prevent ourselves from sliding into the ditch again? Only by following carefully in Jesus' footsteps. This is the only sure way to keep out of the ditch. ●●





# SCRIPTURAL SPOTLIGHT

*"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world"*  
—Titus 2:11-12

IN HIS pastoral letter to Titus, Paul makes clear the practical aspect of our Lord's returning. In fact, wherever the second advent is mentioned it generally is related to the life the Christian should be living in preparation. Although he is to believe in the blessed hope with all his being and project himself into that blessed time, there is no automatic transport into that realm. There is practical work to be done here and now. He is not to be so heavenly-minded that he is of no earthly use. Hence, Paul says this gospel or "grace of God" has "appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world" (Tit. 2:11-12). Here is a triad that compasses the believer's whole responsibility to himself, to those around him and to the Lord above: "Live soberly, . . . righteously, and godly." Here is life inward, outward and upward.

Let us look closely at each of these aspects of Paul's command.

**SOBERLY.** The word used here implies self-control, discipline and determination to master all the passions and desires of one's nature. Our personal life must know the exercise of a holy restraint. All forces that war against the inner life must be brought into subjection, so that the higher impulses may control. Every thought must be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. The majority of us are apt to shun a rigid discipline of all our natural desires and appetites, but Paul says it is necessary. It is part of living "soberly"—not for the purpose of satisfying the cravings of the flesh but as impelled by a higher power and nobler instinct.

Christ's return places upon us a strong imperative to practice sobriety. Worldly ambitions and aims, the desire to please those around us, living for their praise rather than the praise of God—these snares are ever tempting the child of

God. Again, there may be things which of themselves are right, but which if allowed a place of ascendancy will impede spiritual progress. Seeing that the glorious appearing of our Saviour is not far distant, can we risk the danger? Are we not better off if sitting loose to things of earth?

**RIGHTEOUSLY.** We have in our possession the grace or knowledge of God. Should not this fact alone move us to a practical righteousness? Since we are accountable before God for the treasure placed in our hands, should we not act righteously in all our ways? Should we not live so that all who contact us may see in us a transparent honesty, a wholly upright life that is bent upon pleasing God? All dishonest transactions, all callous negligence of responsibility, all words or phrases that in any manner dishonor His holiness must not so much as be named among those who claim the blessed hope. All frivolity, all pettiness, all tendencies to treat one another on a purely human level must be gone, if we would live "righteously" in this present world.

Some people think that believing in the second advent is not practical, that we should live *now* rather than speculate about the future. But the blessed hope is not speculation; it is the sure promise of God Almighty. And Paul's approach in this text is practical. What could be more practical than to exhort men to fulfill every obligation in this world honestly and squarely, to shun all that is crooked, never tip the scales, give sixteen ounces to every pound and act honestly in all things because Christ is coming? What is more practical than admonishing men to live soberly, having thoughts and emotions and passions under absolute control? The advent message is one of the most practical in all the Bible. No one can truly believe Christ is coming again without feeling the urgency to get ready, realizing that Christ could be here at any moment.

GODLY. The fear of the Lord will be ever with us if we believe that the coming of the Lord draws nigh. Here is the secret of walking "humbly with" our God (Mic. 6:8), walking before the Lord "in the land of the living." To be godly is to be like God; and such godlikeness is not mere imitation but the willingness to allow God to possess every part of our being and direct every aspect of our lives, producing His own moral likeness in us.

If one is godly, there will never be any question about whether to obey God or to go our own way. If one is godly, godliness will be the basis of our devotion, and we will never wonder whether we should be living soberly and righteously. Godliness is the root, and righteous living and sober conduct are the fruit of our lives in Christ.

But perhaps the most striking point in Paul's exhortation to Titus is the last phrase, where Paul says this is the life which must be lived "in this present world." The world Paul lived in was characterized by carnality, sordidness and apostasy, and was full of the sensual and godless, just as is our world today. Yet Paul kept himself unspotted from it, and he urged young Titus to do the same, to live a life that would be a constant rebuke to the world around.

Does anyone feel that such a life is impossible today, when multitudes are driven by lust and the atmosphere is putrid and defiled, and graft, bribery and deceit are condoned and godliness is completely out of style?

Yet the command comes to us; it has been written for a day and generation such as ours, that we may live as becometh "saints." Living soberly, righteously and godly in our present world is possible because we are possessors of the "grace of God," His saving knowledge, that same knowledge which worked mightily in the apostle Paul. Only by so doing can we welcome the appearing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and be part of that "peculiar people, zealous of good works." ●●

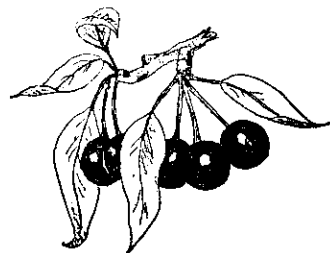
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Today is all sufficient for  
The burdens we must bear;  
Today is ours to live, to love,  
Our brothers' burdens share.

Tomorrow never comes to us,  
And yesterday is gone;  
Therefore, today is all of time  
We have to build upon.

March, 1979

## Fruitful Fragments



*The countenance is the portrait of the soul.*

*It isn't what happens but the way you take it that brings out your true character.*

*We would live in a world of peace if everyone waited for the other fellow to start trouble.*

*If you happen to be blessed with a sympathetic disposition, don't waste it on yourself.*

*To spend time on naughty narratives when we can learn of Christ, the apostles and the prophets, is like being given our choice of all the diamonds in Tiffany's mine, and then walking out with a bit of broken glass.*

*The truest characters of ignorance are vanity, pride, and arrogance.*

*Character is the result of obstacles surmounted.*

*It is well to act well; it is divine to think well.*

*Character is the perfectly educated will.*

*When the fight begins within him, then a man is worth something.*

*If you have the will to do it, it can be done.*

*Do not attempt to do a thing unless you think you can do it, but do not relinquish it simply because someone else thinks you cannot.*

*Be not afraid of enthusiasm; you need it; you can do nothing effectually without it.*

*Men who have the most to say usually use the fewest words.*

*Manners carry the world for a moment, character for all time.*

*Persistent people begin their success where others end in failure.*

# Our Readers Write...

## Doors Do Close

**M**ORE than one tale has been told of those who waited until it was too late. It is in the parable of the Ten Virgins. Five were wise, and five were foolish. But remember, those five foolish virgins were not anti-Christ nor were they totally unprepared for the event. Their fault was lack of foresight. They were not prepared for the long delay. "And while they went to buy [oil], the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage; and the door was shut." Opportunities are not forever.

The same eventuality overtook the people of Noah's time. After all those years of preaching and building, the day arrived when the ark was finished, and Noah and his family went in. "And the Lord shut him in" (Gen. 7:16). The open door closed.

Luke 19:20 tells of the man who hid his talent in a napkin. He committed no heinous crime. He was not openly defiant or rebellious or dishonest. His sin was that he did nothing with his opportunity. When the lord of that servant returned, all that the servant could show was his one unused talent. And the door of opportunity was closed. Said his master, "Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds" (Luke 19:24).

Neglect is serious. "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation. . . ?" (Heb. 2:3). Doors do close.

God calls us to act with decision while it is day. "Now is the accepted time: now is the day of salvation" (II Cor. 6:2). It is now or never. In fact, God does not even give us the promise of tomorrow; only now. Now is the only sure moment. "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Rev. 3:20).

Unused opportunities, like unused muscles, atrophy. The unwound clock stops. Unentered doors close.

Opportunity is not forever. Neglect has the power to destroy us.

## Breaking All Records

Each year since racing began, records have been broken. Man has been able to run faster, jump higher, throw farther, etc. There seems to be no limit to the achievements of man, if he will set his course and try.

But it seems that although the athlete gets better and better, man's spiritual life gets worse and worse. If Paul could live a life well pleasing to God in those hard days under Roman rule and Jewish rulers, when men could be stoned for even saying the name of Christ, surely in these days those who put on the name of Christ should be breaking all records in living perfect lives.

But it seems quite the reverse. So many who call themselves Christians are like the potential athlete who through neglect, smoking, drinking, and other health-ruining habits, fails to build his body up in order to finish the course.

It behooves us in this day of easy living to discipline ourselves for the task that lies ahead. Each day is a hurdle which we must clear cleanly; and the space between the hurdles must find us in the right step, so that we will be on our best leg to make the next jump. And we must strain every effort to match, if not better, those who have gone before us. Then, when the last hurdle has been cleared and our race is over, we shall be given the prize.

## Trust and Walk

Life, we find soon enough in our Christian walk, is a fierce battle even for those who have a strong faith.

Great are the problems that beset us in our homes, at our business, and even in our relationship with other believers.

We often tend to let the grasp on our faith slip a bit, as if it were a hindrance to our everyday walk. But it need not be so; indeed it is not so. Our faith is our lifeline! If we keep our faith, our heavenly Father has promised to give us the needed strength to meet each need of the day.

To those who have learned to trust Him, the Eternal is a never-failing source of strength in every time of need, whether it be sickness, bereavement, poverty, or loneliness.

Let us be determined to trust Him and walk the ways of His appointment.

—E. S., Wisconsin

MEGIDDO MESSAGE

## Awed . . .

I AM filled with great joy and awe as I become aware of the magnitude of the promises of the Father to us if we are willing to undertake the work of overcoming and perfecting our character to match that of His Son, Jesus. We are not asked to do it all in one day, or one week, or one month; but we are required to make daily progress. If we stumble and fall, then we are to get up and move onward. Even to the untrained eye, there is no mistake that the end of the age is upon us and rushing forward at a terrifying speed. I sense the urgency to do away with all filthiness and uncleanness, and to become that kind of person that Christ would welcome as a brother and exalt before the great and powerful and mighty angels. The trivia, the senselessness and worthlessness of this present age will vanish in the twinkling of an eye and be forgotten; but those with the character acceptable to Christ, that character that has been brought about by patient work every day, will truly shine forth and be admired by all.

The Father has promised to do for us exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think, and that's a lot. When I start to really examine all of the promises of the Father, this world dwindles and the world to come becomes more real and I look forward to it with anticipation. To think that we can become a part of God's Kingdom here on Earth and be co-rulers with Christ and share all eternity just staggers the mind. Truly Christ was absolutely correct when He said that to lose your right to life in the Kingdom and to have everything in this world is to lose everything.

There seems to come a time in your life when you have to decide which direction you will go. It is about the easiest thing to put your trust in your own right arm, since that is nearer and you have a rough idea of the extent of your own abilities. This is the direction the world takes, and it is the wide gate and broad path that leads to everlasting destruction. On the other hand, there are a very few souls who are willing to put their faith and total trust in the Father for all aspects of their lives. They demonstrate this confidence by being faithful when things are lean, and when they are nice. Regardless of the circumstances, they are confident in the power and wisdom of the Father to guide and direct their lives and to provide those things necessary for their existence and well being.

We have such good examples of such men in the Bible, the chiefest being Christ. Trying to be

your own guide is identical to a blind man leading another blind man. Both will fall.

I am confident that to place all of my trust and faith in the Father is the wisest and most profitable thing I have done to date. If He can order this universe and sustain this earth, in spite of mankind, then taking care of my needs is well within His abilities. There is a peace within that is beyond description, and I can certainly live up to my end of the bargain by overcoming and reaching that moral perfection that will yield me eternal life in the Kingdom—a great and noble calling, and one that is worthy of my total dedication with my remaining life.

—D. K., Louisiana

## Stop the Leaks

Something smelled strange. Then we smelled it again. We stopped at a service station, and the attendant checked the engine and decided there must be a small leak in one of the water hoses. He applied pressure to the hose, and there it was—a pin-like leak, so small that nothing showed when there was no pressure.

A hole the size of a pin seems like a very small thing, but if that pinhole had not been plugged that day, soon the radiator would have been drained of its water and the cooling system of the car could no longer function. As a result, the motor would have stopped running.

In our spiritual lives there are sometimes small, pin-like leaks, almost too small to see. We may not pay much attention to them at first. But if we are not careful, under pressure they will drain us of all our spiritual reserves. They may even bring our Christian effort to a halt.

Such little things may seem too small to even notice. But as surely as night follows day they will mushroom into larger and more serious items.

Most sins start small. Murder begins with a feeling of anger. And anger may result from a resentment or hurt feeling. Apostasy begins with a single wayward thought. Adultery starts in the lustfulness of a single glance.

Examine your life closely. Look at it under pressure, and be sure to stop the leaks!

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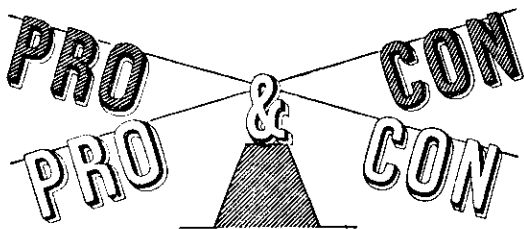
No horse gets anywhere until he is harnessed.

No steam or gas ever drives anything until it is confined.

No Niagara is ever turned into light and power until it is tunneled.

No life ever grows great until it is focused, dedicated, disciplined.





### A Column for Open Discussion

*All our readers do not agree with us. If you are among those who differ on some point, write us your views and we will consider them in the light of Scripture teaching. Our policy is the Apostle's injunction: "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."*

**"How can you possibly say that there aren't two resurrections? Chapter 20 of Revelation surely says differently."**

There will most certainly be two resurrections; our point in saying that there is only one at the close of the six thousand years (see February issue, 1977, "Understanding the Bible") is that this one resurrection will include both faithful and unfaithful; both classes will be raised at the same time, not one thousand years apart, as some people believe.

**"By the way, I might as well point out that there are some people who will experience two resurrections—Lazarus, Jairus' daughter, and others."**

This is true, we agree. They were resurrected by the power of God, as recorded in the Bible. And if they are among the covenant-makers, they will be resurrected again at the time of Christ's second coming.

**"Back to Revelation 20. This chapter speaks of a definite order of events in time. Verse 4 tells of the beginning of the one-thousand-year reign. Notice verse 5: 'But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.'"**

If we take the statements of Revelation 20 in the order in which they occur in the King James Version, through verses 4 and 5, the subject could be confusing. We all agree that the first general resurrection takes place at the second coming of Christ. This must of necessity have taken place before the events of verse 4, where the saints are described as reigning with Christ "a thousand years." Then verse 5 goes on to say, "But the

rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection." *The Emphatic Diaglott*, containing the original Greek text as translated by Benjamin Wilson, places the first part of verse 5 in parentheses (as does the New International Version, the Moffatt Bible, and the Concordant Version also). This places the sentence "this is the first resurrection" immediately following verse 4, which is understandable. The exalting of the saints to a position of rulership with Christ, the better resurrection (Heb. 11:35), is the "first resurrection." It is first in sequence, and it is also first in importance, the word "first" meaning "primary, first in importance, of rank or dignity" (Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon). The second resurrection takes place at the end of the thousand years.

**"Now read carefully verse 12 of Revelation 20. This second resurrection is for the wicked, as well as for those who never had a chance. Why would I say the latter, you may ask? In verse 12 is mentioned '... and another book was opened, which is the book of life, ...' This shows that some will be given a chance for salvation, otherwise why would they even use the book?"**

Your statement, "This second resurrection (v. 12) is for the wicked, as well as for those that never had a chance" is in error. It will be for righteous and wicked covenant-makers who have lived during that thousand-year period, and all of these will have had a chance for "they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord" (Jer. 31:34).

Revelation, chapter 20, makes the following points. Verse 7 shows the time referred to is the thousand years: "When the thousand years are expired. . . ." Verse 12 pictures the judgment at the close of this period: "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works." Then verses 13-15 continue with the end-time program, which will result in the final destruction of death itself. Chapter 21 follows with a picture of the completed work: "a new heaven and a new earth."

Both righteous and wicked will stand and be judged. The righteous whose names are written in the book of life will be placed on the winning side; the wicked, whose names are written in the book of death, will be placed on the losing side. But nothing is said of a third class which you designate as those who never had a chance.

## Quotes Worth Quoting

*A noted Harvard scholar was once asked, "Why are there no courses in conversation? How can I learn the art of conversation? Is there anything I can do to learn it?"*

*"Of course there is," answered the scholar, "and if you'll just listen, I'll tell you what it is."*

*There ensued a long and awkward silence, which the student finally interrupted with: "Well, I'm listening."*

*"You see," said the scholar triumphantly, "you are learning already."*

### Occupy Till I Come

*A sacred trust my Lord to me has given:  
The pounds are His; to use them is my task.  
Whether 'neath skies all bright or tempest-riven  
His service leads, it is not mine to ask;  
He tells me not how long the time shall be  
Till He shall say my task is fully done,  
I only hear Him saying unto me,  
"Occupy thou here until I come."*

*He does not say that I may choose my toil,  
And only do the things that please me best;  
Nor does He tell me when I've served a while  
That I may lay my armor down and rest;  
But I must keep enduring to the end,  
Alike through joy or pain, or light or gloom;  
He promises to be my Guide and Friend,  
If I but occupy until He come.*

*How dare I then enwrap the precious pounds  
In folds of uselessness, and lay aside!  
On every side rich fields of toil abound  
Where they may be increased and glorified.  
I may not understand why He to me  
Gives but perchance one talent, while to some  
He gives the five or ten, yet faithfully  
Must I still occupy until He come.*

*Why should it matter whether one or ten,  
Since all are His, and but a trust retained  
To use for Him, until He comes again  
To see how much my toil for Him has gained.  
But it does matter whether I, at last,  
Among the faithless meet a bitter doom,  
Or hear Him say to me, "Well done, thou hast  
Been faithful unto me until I came."*

Father Graham, as everybody in the village called him, was one of the old-fashioned gentlemen who was beloved by everyone. His influence in the little town was great, so good and active was he.

A young man of the village had been badly insulted and came to Father Graham full of angry indignation, declaring that he was going at once to demand an apology. "My dear boy," said Father Graham, "take a word of advice from an old man who loves peace. An insult is like mud; it will brush off much better when it is dry. Wait a little till he and you are both cool, and the thing will be easily mended."

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*So he died for his faith. That is fine—  
More than most of us do.*

*But say, can you add to that line*

*That he lived for it, too?*

*In his death he bore witness at last*

*As a martyr to truth.*

*Did his life do the same in the past*

*From the days of his youth?*

*It is easy to die. Men have died*

*For a wish or a whim—*

*From bravado or passion or pride.*

*Was it harder for him?*

*But to live—every day to live out*

*All the truth that he dreamt,*

*While his friends met his conduct with doubt*

*And the world with contempt—*

*Was it thus that he plodded ahead,*

*Never turning aside?*

*Then we'll talk of the life that he led.*

*Never mind how he died.*

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## Twelve Booklets

HISTORY OF THE MEGIDDO MISSION  
THE COMING OF JESUS AND ELIJAH  
WHAT MUST WE DO TO BE SAVED?  
GOD'S SPIRITUAL CREATION  
THE KINGDOM OF GOD  
THE GREAT APOSTASY  
HELL AND THE DEVIL  
AFTER DEATH, WHAT?  
TRINITY OR UNITY?  
THE HOLY SPIRIT  
THE ATONEMENT  
THE SABBATH  
ALL for \$3.00, Postpaid.



## *As Now We See*

*Our God, to whom we turn when weary with illusion,  
Whose stars serenely burn above this earth's confusion,  
Thine is the mighty plan, the steadfast order sure  
In which the world began, endures, and shall endure.*

*Thou art Thyself the truth; though we who fain would find Thee,  
Have tried, with thoughts uncouth, in feeble words to bind Thee;  
It is because Thou art we're driven to the quest;  
Till truth from falsehood part, our souls can find no rest.*

*All beauty speaks of Thee: the mountains, and the rivers,  
The lien of lifted sea, where spreading moonlight quivers,  
The deep-toned organ blast that rolls through arches dim  
Hints of the music vast of Thy eternal hymn.*

*Wherever goodness lurks we catch Thy tones appealing;  
Where man for justice works Thou art Thyself revealing;  
Till heart of man has bowed and at truth's altar knelt,  
He's missed the matchless plan by which Thy house is built.*

*Thou hidden fount of love, of peace and truth and beauty,  
Inspire us from above with joy and strength for duty,  
May Thy fresh light arise within each clouded heart,  
Until the Day when we shall see Thee as Thou art.*

*—Selected.*