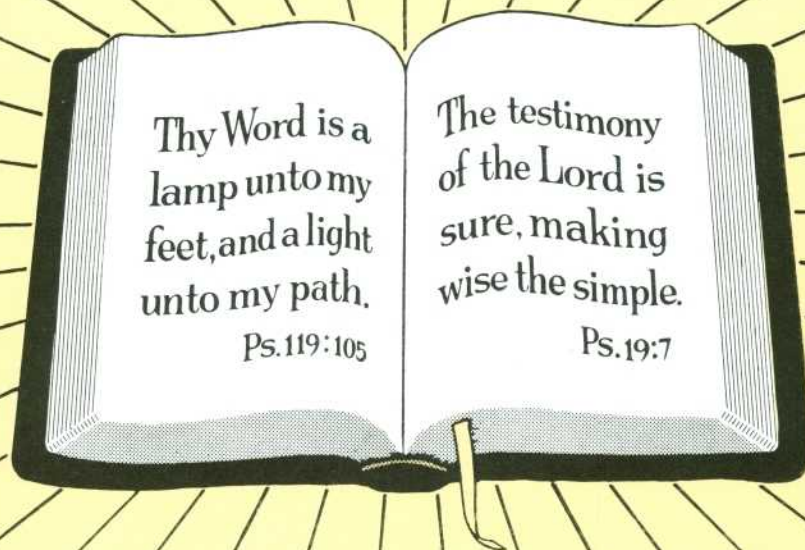


Megiddo Message

DEVOTED TO THE CAUSE OF CHRIST



Never Alone

On the Popularity Scale...

Grace and/or Obedience?

The Enthusiastic Evangelist: Philip

Building to Endure

WHEN I was a small boy, perhaps five or six years old, there was some repairing being done at our home. I had a little hammer, and I was more than anxious to use it. The work being done seemed to fascinate me, and I guess I was asking the carpenter quite a few questions. Finally he turned to me, put his hand on my head, and said, "Let me tell you something, my boy; don't ever build anything you will have to be ashamed of." This is a deep thought for each of us, not to build into our spiritual structure anything we will have to be ashamed of at Judgment Day.

We are building something every day, every moment of the day, whether we realize it or not, and someday our spiritual structure will be completed. When it is finished will we be able to step back and view it with admiration, or will we be ashamed of what we have built?

Peter the apostle said, "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house" (I Pet. 2:5). And Jesus, in His Sermon on the Mount, said: "Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them"—that shows He did not do the work for us, we have to form this character ourselves—"I will liken him unto a wise man which built his house upon a rock." Why did Jesus mention rock in making His comparison? Because He wanted to impress on the minds of His hearers the lesson of firmness and durability. Many monuments today are constructed of stone because of its quality of endurance.

If a man wishes to build a house or building, the first thing he will do is to find a suitable location on which to build. Then he will begin excavating for a foundation. He will dig deep to get below the frost and the loose top soil so that the building will not shift or sag. The same precautions must be taken in building our spiritual structure if we would have it endure. We must dig beneath the false traditions and superstitions of men and find the real solid truth of the Bible; we then can begin to lay a foundation upon which to build a holy temple in the Lord.

When we find the real truth we are taking the first step toward coming to Jesus. He said in Luke 6:47-48, "Who-soever cometh to me and heareth my sayings, and doeth

them, I will show you to whom he is like: he is like a man which built a 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." Luke's account includes a feature omitted by Matthew. The wise builder must *dig deep*. It is not enough to discard false doctrines that disagree with the Bible, it is not enough merely to remove the irresponsible attitudes and ways of our past life that are visible and apparent; our whole philosophy of life must be abandoned and a completely new concept adopted.

The term *dig deep* implies the removing not only the visible top soil of a careless and godless life but such equally unstable elements as insincerity, double-mindedness, sinister motives and hypocrisy, subtle sins that lie concealed far below the surface. In short, Jesus' parable teaches that "hearing" coupled with "doing" is what places the Christian's structure on the solid rock, so his building will endure.

In the verse following, Jesus pictures the outcome of the house whose builder did not take these necessary precautions. "But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built a house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great." If in building our character we do not take as our authority the teachings of prophets, apostles, and Jesus, we can rest assured our house will fall. And sad will be the ruin of it.

The prophet Isaiah speaks of the enduring quality of the reward for a righteous life: "Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return and come with singing unto Zion: and everlasting joy shall be upon their head; they shall obtain gladness and joy: and sorrow and mourning shall flee away" (51:11). Can we imagine *everlasting joy*? Yet it is true, for "this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life" (I John 2:25).

Is not *eternal joy* and gladness more than ample reward for building a character that will endure? MM

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

JB—The Jerusalem Bible, Reader's Edition

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

Williams—The New Testament, A Translation in the Language of the People

Rotherham—The Emphasized Old Testament

The use of selected references from various versions of the Bible does not necessarily imply publisher endorsement of the versions in their entirety.

Megiddo Message

Vol. 70, No. 3

MARCH 1983

Editorial

BUILDING TO ENDURE

The wise builder digs deep

2

Sermon

NEVER ALONE

God never forsakes His faithful servants

4

Articles

ON THE POPULARITY SCALE . . .

Popularity is not a measure of holiness

10

REPAIR THE ROOF!

Be careful of the material you use

12

GRACE AND/OR OBEDIENCE?

What is the way to salvation?

14

Sermonettes

. . . AND STILL SHE SPEAKS

19

Article

THE ENTHUSIASTIC EVANGELIST: PHILIP

20

Meditating on the Word

NOT ONLY HEAR BUT DO!

A lesson from James 1:22

22

Inquiries and Answers

Concerning:

Baptism Required?

The State of the Dead

Prayer

Healing by Divine Power Today?

24

Letters

26

The **MEGIDDO MESSAGE** is a religious magazine devoted to the cause of Christ, and published for the dissemination of Bible truth alone. Official organ of the Megiddo Church. L. T. Nichols, **Founder**; Kenneth E. Flowerday, **President and Editor**.

The **MEGIDDO MESSAGE** is available in microfilm from Xerox University Microfilms, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI, 48106.

The **MEGIDDO MESSAGE** (USPS 338-120) is published monthly (except July) by the Megiddo Church, 481 Thurston Road, Rochester, New York 14619. Second Class postage paid at Rochester, New York. **SUBSCRIPTION RATE:** One year, eleven issues, \$2.00. **POSTMASTER:** Send change of address to Megiddo Church, 481 Thurston Road, Rochester, New York 14619-1697.

Never Alone

Scripture Reading: Genesis 28:10-17

ALONE. There is something about this word that fills us with chilling apprehension. We like the confidence and comfort that comes with caring companionship. To have to face the stark realities of life alone is among the most unfortunate of human calamities.

But like it or not, people of all ages and descriptions experience loneliness. Millions of Americans today are unhappy because of aloneness. Someone has observed how popular music sounds a constant lament of the loneliness that results from broken relationships, that even the titles suggest the sentiment in songs like "All By Myself," "Lonely Street," and, "Have You Ever Been Lonely." In a survey, one quarter of the people questioned said that they had felt very lonely at some time during the preceding few weeks.

But thanks be to God! aloneness is never a problem to those who belong to Him. Even solitude is not loneliness, for they who belong to God and must dwell alone dwell "alone with God." The "angel of his presence," who "in all their affliction" was afflicted, who in "his love and in his pity . . . bare them, and . . . carried them all the days of old" (Isa. 63:9) is still present, actively present and working in behalf of those who shall be heirs of salvation. Never does our God forsake His servants or leave them to suffer alone.

The Divine Promise

Of all the divine promises to the children of men, none is more precious. Nor is any promise more sure, for the "mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, . . . to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them" (Ps. 103:17-18). It is the promise of Him who

"keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations"—even forever (Deut. 7:9). The promise has stood from the beginning and shall continue to stand: "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Just think of it: He will *never* forsake. Never!

It was the promise of the Lord to Jacob at one of the greatest moments in Jacob's life. Jacob had camped at the place which he afterward named Bethel, meaning "the house of God." He "tarried there all night, . . . and he took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep." No ordinary night's sleep did Jacob experience that night, for God gave him a dream, a dream which centuries later still fills us with awe and wonderment. Jacob saw, "and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And, behold, the Lord stood above it, and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, . . . and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

Then came that blessed promise of divine companionship: "I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land" (Gen. 28:11-15). Jacob had thought he was camping in this place alone. But he was *not* alone. Before he departed, he solemnly affirmed, "Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not." He was not alone. And God gave him the promise that he would never be left alone. Never. In response to this heavenly promise, Jacob vowed his complete commitment to God, that the Lord God would be his God. It was the beginning—or continuance—of a lifelong relationship with God.

The promise of Divine companionship was the assurance of Moses to Israel: "For the Lord thy God is a

Note: *Never Alone* is available as a complete church service on cassette. Price: \$3.00

merciful God; he will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers which he swore unto them" (Deut. 4:31).

Again the Lord renewed the promise through His servant Isaiah: "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. For I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee" (Isa. 41:10, 13).

The Psalmist felt sure of God's faithful keeping of His own. He "forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever" (Ps. 37:28). Even more than being never alone, "they are preserved for ever." What a bountiful promise to mere mortals!

Again he wrote: "As for God, his way is perfect: the word of the Lord is tried: he is a buckler to all those that trust in him" (Ps. 18:30). And again, "They that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee" (Ps. 9:10). He was absolutely confident that "The Lord will not cast off his people, neither will he forsake his inheritance" (Ps. 94:14).

The assurance of divine companionship and support was among the promises of the Lord to the incumbent Joshua, as delivered by Moses: "Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the Lord thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee" (Deut. 31:6).

Aloneness—without God

The trustworthiness of the Lord is among the richest treasures of all God's saints. When they can know of a certainty that "there hath not failed one word of all his good promise, which he promised by" the hand of any of His servants, why need they fear anything? It was true in the days of Israel; it was true in the days of Jesus. It is just as true today.

There is a type of aloneness from which the people of God are totally spared. It is a cause of intense suffering, and the consequences are tragic: separation from God. The life separated from the divine is a life without meaning, without purpose, without destination. Such a life is indescribably lonely, being stranger to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world (Eph. 2:12).

What is the Biblical prevention of this type of loneliness? Repeatedly the Scriptures exhort us to bear with one another, to put on love, to be united in spirit.

Loneliness disappears when we become reconciled to God and accept His ways. At this point we become the adopted children of God. We belong. In the ultimate act

Never does our God forsake His servants or leave them to suffer alone.

of overcoming loneliness, God becomes our Father and we are His. We still need spiritual support and fellowship, and the experience of being understood and belonging to one another. But it is all "in Christ" and "in God." Everything we treasure on earth is seen in relation to His sovereign guidance; and if for any reason we should be deprived of our companions on earth, we are not cast into panic and despair as those who have no hope of God. We have the promise that, if faithful, we shall one day have an eternal place of belonging, even to become part of His eternal heavenly family, sharing an abundant entrance into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. No loneliness there!

An inability to find friendship or satisfaction in this world compelled the holy men and women of old more and more to God. The temptation today is real to feel too much at home in the world. It has proved the ruination of some. In their effort to "adjust" to unregenerate society they have lost their pilgrim character and become an essential part of the very moral order against which they are supposed to protest. The world recognizes them and accepts them for what they are. But not God. They are alone, and without God. The saddest thing that can be said about them is this: That they are not lonely, but neither are they saints.

Alone, but Not Lonely

Solitude does not mean aloneness; it may mean the richest relationship earth and heaven can afford to us mortals: alone with God.

In this latter category are many of God's holy men and women of old. They were alone, because of circumstances, yet they were not lonely.

Numerous were the people in Holy Writ who were alone but not lonely. They were strangers and pilgrims in the earth, with longings and loves unsatisfied and unsatisfiable in this world.

Enoch walked with God at a time when there were apparently not many others on that road. His chief companion was God, for he walked a path quite apart from his contemporaries.

Another man who found grace in the sight of God was Noah. Every shred of available evidence points to the

aloneness of his life, even while surrounded by his people. One hundred twenty years of preaching while he was building the ark did not give him a circle of even fifty faithful friends and believers; not even fifteen. He had none but his own family.

Abraham and Sarah had many servants and doubtless other acquaintances. But who can read the narrative without sensing instantly that Abraham was a man "whose soul was like a star and dwelt apart"? "By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country,... for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. 11:8-10). His land was not his own, nor were its inhabitants his friends. But his being alone was not loneliness. On several occasions God spoke to him through His angel. Abraham was not concerned by his lack of friends in this world. Why should he be, when he had God for his

friend? For Abraham was called "the Friend of God." He knew that he was a man marked for Divine favor.

Moses was another who spent much of his life in solitude. Leaving the Egyptian court at an early age, he spent most of his life until he was eighty years old in the solitude of the backside of the Midian desert. But Moses was not alone. There, while he watched his sheep alone, God watched; and suddenly, one day, one very ordinary day, as Moses was keeping the sheep, there appeared the wonder of the burning bush. Truly, Moses was not alone.

The prophets of Judah and Israel were men who knew loneliness, as far as they might have depended on human companionship and support. They loved their people and gloried in the religion of the fathers, but their loyalty to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and their zeal for the welfare of the nation of Israel drove them away

Let Us Pray...

Gracious heavenly Father, who in storm art near to us, in distress our Comfort, in temptation's lure our Stay and Guide: we come before Thee this morning to be renewed in the spirit of our minds and strengthened in our most holy faith. Thou art our God, and Thy presence doth go with us all our days.

Father, we thank Thee for providing so bountifully for our well being. We are especially grateful that Thou dost not forsake Thine own. Even in the sternest realities of life, Thou art with us, sustaining, defending, protecting, and never allowing more than we are able to bear. We know that if we stay with Thee, Thou wilt never leave or forsake us—never. Thou hast promised, and there shall not fail one word of all Thy good promises to us.

Our Father, we pray Thee to forgive the sinful pride that sours our attitude toward one another and makes us think more highly of ourselves than we ought. With rationalizations, snap judgments, and surface evaluations, we too often have shown our lack of wisdom, believing things are only as we see them. Help us to change our ways, to judge others as we would wish them to judge us, and be more concerned about our own standing before Thee than anything else. So may we be quick to consider, and slow to speak, slow to judge.

May we realize that the faults we see in others are so

often our own also, and use our speedy tongues to condemn ourselves first. And as we repent and turn, Father, forgive.

Be with us, we beseech Thee, as we come into Thy presence today. May Thy fulness fill our emptiness, Thy strength be perfect in our weakness, Thy light illuminate our darkness, Thy love fire all our indifference and fill and bless all our lives.

Lord, be Thou Master of our minds that our tongues may be used to glorify Thee. May patience and forbearance describe our attitudes toward each other, even as Thou hast dealt kindly with us.

Thou hast set us in this time and place, in the vortex of history. Go with us as we sail our small boats through great storms, and grant us the confidence that whatever is, is best for us. Thou wilt bring us safely through, if only we do on our part.

Lord, we pray for Thy true Church everywhere, that her members may be true to her high calling. Grant them courage, fortitude and faith to be constantly Thy representatives.

We pray Thee to bless us in our worship today. Thou seest how much we need these seasons of refreshing to quicken and stimulate our hearts. Be Thou our joy, our peace, our strength, our life, our light. Teach us the springs of true greatness: self-sacrifice, self-denial, self-renunciation. Help us to realize that the further we outreach ourselves, the nearer we draw to Thee. May we never thwart Thy divine purpose for us by our own willful and stubborn rebellion, but wilt Thou preserve us holy and unblameably until the day of Christ. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

from the crowd and severed them from the good favor of the people. They had to walk with God without the support and encouragement of their fellowmen. This is not easy. "I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mother's children," cried the Psalmist at such a time (Ps. 69:8). Still, he could go on to say, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." So consumed was he with his zeal for God that the loss of natural support was no cause for concern.

As we read the account of Jesus' life, we know little of its detail, but we are impressed with its solitariness. He tolerated the crowds; He loved the solitude, where He could be alone—and yet He was not alone. Did He not say of himself, "He that hath sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone"? (John 8:29). When He could escape from the crowds, He spent His hours in quiet communion with His Father. Far from loneliness, these were His mountaintop hours that drew Him close and ever closer to the companionship of the divine.

God never leaves alone the man or woman who belongs to Him. His ways and means of companionship are many. But they are real. And dependable.

Jesus Never Alone?

But let us think again about Jesus. Was He never alone? Witness His temptation in the wilderness, when He found Himself suddenly confronted with serious prospects of glory, wealth and worldly honor. This was no dream of the night. It was real. Having within Him the potential for the making of the future King of the earth, He had also what men could recognize as potential for this world's system. The temptation was real. And Jesus was alone as He faced the tempter. Or was He? for no sooner had the tempter departed than "behold, angels came and ministered unto him" (Matt. 4:11). His Father was with Him, and at the precise moment of need the angels came "and ministered unto him."

Picture Jesus that last night before His crucifixion. Supper being ended, they had gone out into the Garden where Jesus loved to pray and commune with His Father. But this night was different. This was the last night before He would suffer a cruel death. Jesus knew this. The disciples knew it also, but did not comprehend the seriousness of the hour. "And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." So intense was His struggle that He repeated the prayer not once but three times. But Jesus was not alone. Just at the precise moment of need, the

The richest relationship on earth: to be alone with God.

Father dispatched one of His glorious sons to give Him strength and "there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him" (Luke 22:41-44). What a kind, merciful, gracious heavenly Father!

Why Forsaken?

If God were so constant and His promises so near and dear to Christ, then did not Christ betray that trust utterly when in that last desperate moment He cried out, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" as the passage is rendered in our Common Version (Matt. 27:46). Or did the Father suddenly desert Him?

We cannot imagine that such an idea could be true. Were we to read these words without any other knowledge of the Bible, we would be horrified. How could a loving, gracious, protecting Father *forsake* His Son at such a time? Could He possibly forsake one whose life of consecration had been flawless, whose obedience had been perfect, whose submission had been so exemplary and complete? Could He forsake one whose character was later to be described as "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens" (Heb. 7:26)?

Theologians generally agree that God did forsake Jesus at this moment. We quote from an author in a current magazine: "There was feeling in Jesus' cry—a longing and more intense, unprecedented feeling than life could ever show us. Behind the dark feelings stood an awesome and distressing fact—Jesus *was* forsaken!... He went into His death as a God-forsaken man." Stranger still is the author's next comment. "This puzzles us, yes; but it is nevertheless a fact."

Why? Why would God forsake Jesus at so critical a moment? Again theologians have an answer. How could He do otherwise, when, and we quote again, "all the scum and filth of human life had settled upon his soul"! "He was bearing our iniquities, all of them; they burdened Him down and blocked His way to God.... The dereliction expressed in this outcry of Jesus was a real awareness on his part of the experience of lostness. As a voluntary victim, as our substitutionary sacrifice, Jesus' death consisted in suffering the penalty of our sins; He received, in our place, sin's wages. God forsook him.... His dere-

Would God forsake Jesus at so critical a moment? NO!

fiction was real—because our sins were upon him.” Other theologians go so far as to say that Jesus at that moment relinquished His “divinity” so as to be able to “identify” with our lowly “humanity,” so that the atonement could be effective. And He had to be left unsupported at such a moment, or the redeeming power of His death would have been ruined. In fact, some theologians go so far as to say that the “keen edge” of His passion was necessary to “make His sufferings meritorious to us.” In other words, the greater Jesus’ agony in suffering, the greater the merit to us. If Jesus’ agony had not been so great, and if God had not forsaken Jesus at that moment, we might be still under the condemnation of death for our sins, with no hope of release!

Could any more savage idea be imagined? Is not such teaching an outrage against reason, against righteousness, and against all the high and holy attributes we associate with our loving and holy God? How terrible the very idea of it! And how utterly foreign to the teaching of the Bible. The Bible does not even tell us that Jesus’ death was necessary to deliver us from the punishment our sins deserve, much less to say that the more He suffered, the more meritorious that death would be!

Such horrors belong to the imaginations of unfeeling heathens of pre-history days, not to the high ideals of Christianity.

God’s People Never Forsaken

Even if we discredit and remove the false ideas that theology has appended, we still have the words of Jesus as they appear in Matthew 27:46, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” What are we to believe? Did God forsake His Son at that moment?

Among the most cherished promises of Scripture, as we have seen, are those of God’s constant care and protection for His own. The promises are manifold. He is gracious, merciful, kind, a “very present help in trouble” (Ps. 46:1). “The Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him” (Nah. 1:7). Surely Jesus was as deserving of God’s “very present help” as anyone who ever lived, and He qualified fully as among those “that trust in Him,” for His confidence was complete.

The Psalmist spoke of God as his rock, his deliverer, his shield, his high tower, “and he in whom I trust” (Ps. 144:2). He cried unto the Lord in his troubles, and was confident that the Lord heard Him (Ps. 66:19). Surely Christ would have been as deserving as the Psalmist. The Psalmist testified further: “When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up....I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living” (Ps. 27:10, 13). Again he declared, “I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken....And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, Lord, hath not forsaken them that seek thee” (37:25; 9:10). Could this be David’s experience—and yet Jesus be forsaken?

It was God’s promise to Joshua: “I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee” (Josh. 1:5). It was Moses’ confidence for the people of Israel: “For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for?” (Deut. 4:7). It was a confidence which the prophet Samuel expressed to his people: “Turn not aside from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart;...for the Lord will not forsake his people for his great name’s sake” (I Sam. 12:20, 22). The prophet Jeremiah (51:5) uttered the same thought: “For Israel hath not been forsaken, nor Judah of his God, of the Lord of hosts.” If Israel was deserving of such care, why not Christ?

Isaiah extended the warm and all-sufficing promise in these words: “When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none,...I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them....I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not: I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them” (41:17; 42:16).

The author of Hebrews repeats the sublime promise: “Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me” (Heb. 13:5-6). Was this promise to “us” and not to Christ?

We are told still further that God forsakes only those who forsake Him. As the prophet Zechariah proclaimed to his people, “Thus saith God, Why transgress ye the commandments of the Lord, that ye cannot prosper? because ye have forsaken the Lord, he hath also forsaken you” (II Chron. 24:20).

The Psalmist cried, “In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust: let me never be put to confusion....Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth. For mine enemies speak against me; and they that lay

wait for my soul take counsel together, saying, God hath forsaken him: persecute and take him; for there is none to deliver him" (Ps. 71:1, 9-11). His enemies claimed that God had forsaken him, but David avowed that such was not the case.

Jesus' Own Confidence

Where is the consistency in God's love, that He shows greater care and concern for others of His human children than for His own beloved Son? How could God promise His people, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," and then forsake Jesus in His last moments of mortal life? Is this consistent with His promises that never fail? Is this what Jesus was to expect from His Father?

Not according to Jesus. His message to His disciples spoken the evening of the Passover Supper ring with confidence and trust. "Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you....Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also....Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice because I said, I go unto the Father; for my Father is greater than I...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....Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone." Jesus knew they, the disciples, would forsake Him. But did He expect the Father to forsake Him also? He did not. "Ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet, I am not alone, because the Father is with me. These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace" (John 16:32-33). Must we conclude that Jesus was mistaken in His confidence, and that the Father would leave Him alone? Must we think that when the crucial hour finally arrived, God disappointed Jesus and forsook Him? It is unthinkable.

This same confidence had been Jesus' all through His ministry. "The Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him" (John 8:29). And in His last prayer, recorded in John 17, Jesus lifted up His eyes to heaven and said, "Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee....I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do....O righteous Father,...thou lovedst me." How could He say it if His Father would forsake Him? And after He had prayed in the garden, and had uttered those immortal words of resignation, "Not

my will, but thine, be done," we read that "there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him" (Luke 22:42-43). His Father had not forsaken Him at that time.

If Jesus had been forsaken at the last moment, might not many a valiant sufferer who followed in His footsteps have quailed at the last? What of men like Stephen, Paul, and Peter, and many others whose names we do not know, who had to suffer—how could they have been sure God would be with them if God had forsaken Jesus in His suffering?

Jesus NOT Forsaken

The reading of Psalm 22:1 is commonly used as evidence for the doleful complaint with which Jesus is thought to have ended His time on the cross. However, a careful examination of the words used does give other possibilities of meaning.

Several Bible commentators state the difficulty in translating the words used in Psalm 22:1 and in Matthew 27:46 with any degree of accuracy; several decline to comment. Adam Clarke suggests that the words may be "referred (more) to the wicked Jews than to our Lord, and are an exclamation indicative of the obstinate wickedness of His crucifiers; who steeled their hearts against every operation of the power of God." Thus it might be translated: "My God! My God! to what sort of persons hast Thou left Me?" He then gives another possibility: "Through the whole of the Sacred Writings, God is represented as doing those things which, in the course of His providence, He only permits to be done. Therefore the words, 'To whom hast Thou left or given Me up?' are only a form of expression for 'How astonishing is the wickedness of those persons into whose hands I am fallen!'"

The Lamsa Bible translates this text giving another thought: "My God, my God, for this I was spared"—which also removes totally the thought of God forsaking Jesus. And in a footnote, it suggests the wording: "This was my destiny."

In a book by J. Ralston Skinner, in which the author seems intent only on explaining certain peculiarities of the Hebrew language, particular attention is given to what he calls "the false rendering of the words of the Saviour as given in Matthew, chap. 27, v. 46." The author first quotes the Hebrew words, and then comments: "The Scripture of these words says... 'My God, my God, how thou dost glorify me!' But even more, for while *lama* is *why*, or *how*, as a verbal it connects the idea of *to dazzle*, or... 'how dazzlingly.'" He further states that Ps. 22:1 also is falsely rendered.

(Continued on page 23)

On the Popularity Scale...

DID YOU ever stop to think what a peculiar thing the religion business is? It seems that the popularity of any religious leader is in inverse proportion to the evidence or facts which he is able to produce. In fact, if we compare the lives of the faithful servants of God as given in the Bible with the lives of their contemporaries, or even compare the lives of God's leaders of this day with the lives of certain popular religious teachers, we find the former being deserted, maligned and scoffed at, and the latter supported, worshiped and applauded.

According to the record, Noah was not a very popular preacher—not until the waters started rising. And then it was too late. He was able to save only himself and his immediate family. The crowds, no doubt, had been following a very popular priest from the temple of the Moon God. This priest was educated, personable and persuasive. Noah was not highly educated; he was a man of toil. But the flood came, and Noah and his family were saved. The priest and his followers were drowned.

The Lord sent Jeremiah to warn the Jews of the destruction which was to be meted out to them if they did not turn from their wicked ways. What was his reception? Listen: "Now it came to pass, when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking all that the

Lord had commanded him to speak unto all the people, that the priests and the prophets and all the people took him saying, Thou shalt surely die.... And all the people were gathered against Jeremiah in the house of the Lord." Here was a case where even the people in the house of the Lord were against him. Surely not a very popular preacher. Nevertheless, the destruction of Jerusalem did come as the Lord through Jeremiah had predicted.

We might mention Micaiah who was persecuted for telling king Ahab the truth, as opposed to the four hundred prophets who told the king exactly what he wanted to hear.

Elijah was certainly not the most popular man in Israel; he never received a very warm reception from the king or queen. King Ahab greeted him with the words, "Hast thou found me, O my enemy?" Elijah actually would have been his very best friend, but the king was too blind to perceive it.

John the Baptist was another hero of God who fearlessly proclaimed the truth, never becoming popular; but for this very reason his career was cut short: he was beheaded by Herod.

Jesus Christ, our perfect Example, was crucified. Paul, the apostle, was thrice beaten, confined and, according to tradition, beheaded. The

fate suffered by these noble men corresponds exactly with those in Jesus' parable of the Vineyard.

These men were not learned in the wisdom of this world; they had not studied psychoanalysis or read a book on "How to Win Friends and Influence People." They did not flatter. But they did have a respect for God and His Word. And they did proclaim it without consulting their own feelings or desires. Even in these times we have seen people who knew the way of life and had been warned of the coming destruction, but who forsook the narrow way to follow a broader, more pleasing and easier way which Jesus says leads to destruction.

Apparently to the great majority, where the road leads, or who drew the map is of little concern so long as the road is smooth and wide and the scenery is pleasant. But to the true Christian who is looking forward to endless life, the end is important; in fact, it is the most important concern in life. Do we realize what it would mean to be given life everlasting, life *forevermore*? We can have confidence in that promise, for Jesus, after passing through the death state, said, "I am he that liveth and was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore." We can obtain the same reward if we meet the conditions He proclaimed. (Continued on page 11)

With such a reward ahead we cannot afford to take a chance on being deceived. In this day we do not hear the voice of God saying, Follow this leader or that one. God is silent, but He has left us a criterion to go by in Jeremiah 15:19: "Therefore...if thou return, then will I bring thee again, and thou shalt stand before me: and if thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth." Here is identified the true guide to follow and we cannot go wrong. We know the end will be right if we follow the one separating the good from the evil.

If there is any doubt that the world is in serious trouble and the prediction for the latter days is being fulfilled, a brief reading of almost any daily newspaper should dispel that doubt. As a former President of France stated once before the Congress of the United States, "I do not believe that the human race has ever been more threatened than it is today....Finally, there is no end to the accumulation and the perfecting of the means of nuclear destruction capable of annihilating life over vast spaces and the vehicles which can carry them anywhere."

It is extremely easy to be deceived, either by ourselves or others. Therefore, "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." MM

"Why do we call some men saints? Because they were cheerful when it was difficult to be cheerful, and patient when it was difficult to be patient, and because they pressed ahead when they wanted to stand still, and kept silent when they wanted to talk, and were agreeable when they wanted to be disagreeable. That was it. It was quite simple, and always will be."

Giants, Giants

WE KNOW that it was said of Jesus as a lad that He "increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man." Apparently the Greek word which is translated "increased" means literally "cut his way forward."

If we would be worthy of God's favor, we must bravely cut our way forward against all the giants of evil that beset our pathway.

Like the little shepherd boy David who faced the giant Goliath, we too will have our giants. Perhaps it is Giant Anger, or Giant Untruthfulness, Giant Selfishness, Giant Sullenness. But whatever our giants may be we can be sure that if we are found on the Lord's side we will be armed not only with pebbles of determination and courage, but also with the sling of sublime confidence in God.

We must engage in single combat with each giant, alone, and yet we have the same Giant Helper who was with David in his fight. So let us say with the poet:

*"So let it be. In God's own might,
I gird me for the coming fight."*

—Contributed

SO WHAT DO YOU KNOW?

Detect the Errors

Abraham and Isaac

God tested Abraham by telling him to take his son Isaac, whom he loved, into the land of Nod and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the plains there. Abraham rose up late in the day and started to the place where God told him to go. He took Isaac and five young men with him. On the second day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place nearby. Abraham took the fire in a pail, and a knife and they went together.

Isaac said unto Abraham, "Behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?"

Abraham told Isaac that God would provide a ram for a burnt offering. When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built an altar there and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar upon the wood.

As Abraham took the dagger to slay his son, the angel of the Lord spoke to him and told him not to slay his son. Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw a goat caught in some shrubs by his horns, and Abraham offered up the goat for a burnt offering in the place of his son.

Errors Corrected: "land of Nod" should be "Mount Moriah"; "plain" should be "mountain"; "late in the day" should be "early in the morning"; "five young men" should be "two young men"; "second" should be "third"; "nearby" should be "afar off"; "in a pail" should be "in his hand"; "ram" should be "lamb"; "dagger" should be "knife"; "goat" should be "ram"; "shrubs" should be "thicket" (see Gen. 22:1-14).



Everyone can remember waking up some dreary gray morning, when the weather outside matched the weather inside, all rain and fog. I recall a friend telling of a particular tenant house in which the family lived for a time, where they had no running water—except when it rained. And then they had running water in abundance. How they would hunt to find containers to catch all the drips from the leaky roof!

Yes, leaks in the roof turn a home into a dismal place.

From time to time, each of us experiences an inner leak—which is far more serious than mere leaks in the roof, and far more difficult to repair. When such inner leaks appear, the condition of our inner house is threatened. Quickly we try to find containers to catch the dirt-stained drips. But what we *should* do is *repair the roof!*

The Bible tells us about some of these leaks, and where we can find the material to repair them. We let ourselves feel the cold drip of fear, the streams of dismay, or the ebbing of courage. We huddle in our wet, leaky houses and forget that God has told us something we *should* do. Yes, we are to *do* something. Repair the roof!

In the beginning of Deuteronomy, Moses was reminding the people that the Lord God had told them to possess the land because He had given it to them. "Fear not," He said, "neither be discouraged." Yet the people listened to men. Their actions showed that they were believing men, not God: "Whither

shall we go up? our brethren have discouraged our heart, saying, The people is greater and taller than we; the cities are great and walled up to heaven..." (Deut. 1:28). But Moses tells the people, "Dread not, neither be afraid of them. The Lord your God which goeth before you, he shall fight for you, according to all that he did for you in Egypt before your eyes; yet in this thing ye did not believe the Lord your God" (1:29-30, 32).

Discouragement and fear had leaked through. The holes in the roof were made by their friends, "our brethren." The Israelites listened to one another and doubted the Lord's promises. A crack in the roof always comes when we listen to people who insidiously hint—or openly say—that God cannot be trusted. Fear is far more contagious than faith. God's strong admonitions to "fear not, neither be afraid" are always accompanied by a command to action, something we are to go ahead and do to show that we trust His word.

At the end of Deuteronomy 31:7-8, Moses says to Joshua, "Be strong and of a good courage: for thou must go with this people unto the land which the Lord hath sworn unto their fathers to give them; and thou shalt cause them to inherit it. And the Lord, he it is that doth go before thee; he will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed." Repeatedly God directed this advice to Joshua (1:8-9): "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein

day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success. Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest."

God called upon Joshua to begin a project beyond the power of men to perform; but He did not leave him to attempt it alone. Over and over again God made it clear that He would help them if they did on their part. Fear, dismay, even cowardice would be natural emotions, but God pointed Joshua to the law, to the word of God, and told him to read it, think about it, and fill his mind and emotions with what it said. Then he would not fear.

Joshua could be courageous because God would never fail him. It was not that circumstances would be always easy and smooth. Joshua had to act on his faith in what God had promised. As leaks came in the roof of his inner self, and fear or dismay dripped in, the tar paper and tile to mend the leaks would be found in rereading and meditating on God's promises. And then—act. Do the next thing that God revealed. Joshua was to cross Jordan. Our next task is different. But there is always a next step to take, and there is always someone around who will try to discourage us.

In I Chron. 28:9-11, David says to Solomon, "And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever. Take heed now; for the Lord hath chosen thee to build an house for the sanctuary: be strong, and do it. Then David gave to Solomon his son the pattern...." David forcefully tells his son to seek the Lord, and then

to do what God wants him to do. Each generation must seek God on its own. We cannot go in the faith of our fathers unless that faith is ours also.

According to the word of God, courage is not meant to belong only to certain individuals. There is meant to be a special continuity of courage that follows through the lives of God's men and women like a gleaming silver thread. Courage belongs to *all* the people of God. Courage is our heritage also. "And David said to Solomon his son, Be strong and of good courage, and do it: fear not, nor be dismayed: for the Lord God, even my God, will be with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work for the service of the house of the Lord. And, behold, the courses of the priests and the Levites, even they shall be with thee for all the service of the house of God: and there shall be with thee for all manner of workmanship every willing skilful man, for any manner of service: also the princes and all the people will be wholly at thy commandment" (I Chron. 28:20-21).

What fantastic mending material is ours for the taking! Are you—am I—exhausted? Is there a leak letting in drips of discouragement? We are meant to be strong, fear not, but do what God has told us to do, take what He has provided and put it together to make for ourselves a secure, leak-proof protection against any assailing storm. In other words, keep the roof in good repair. Never shall we need it so much as when the great time of trouble strikes this earth. We shall want a sure protection then, and if we have had opportunity to provide for it now and have procrastinated, it will be too late.

Nothing will mean more to us then than a leak-proof protection against that storm of divine judgment. And if such protection be ours, then the heritage of God's people in all ages will be ours also—a priceless heritage that will assure us that God is with us as we are with Him, now and to all eternity.

MM

When God Heareth

O GOD, who didst Thy will unfold
In wondrous modes to saints of old,
By dream, by oracle, or seer,
Wilt Thou not still Thy people hear?

What though no answering voice is heard
Thine oracles, the written Word.
Counsel and guidance still impart,
And draw response from each true heart.

What though no more by dreams is shown
That future things to God are known;
Enough the promises reveal:
Wisdom and love the rest conceal.

Faith asks no signal from the skies,
To show that prayers accepted rise:
Our Priest is in the holy place,
And answers from the throne of grace.

No need of prophets to inquire:
The sun is risen; the stars retire;
The Word of God is ours, and sheds
Its holy grace upon our heads.

Lord, with this grace our hearts inspire:
Answer our sacrifice by fire:
And by Thy mighty acts declare
Thou art the God who heareth prayer.
—Selected

Grace and/or Obedience?

MANY PEOPLE write us who are concerned about our teaching regarding "grace" and "works." Their concept of "grace" as the "unmerited favor of God" is the almost universal idea among both Protestant and Catholic church people today. Along with the concept is the idea that the literal death of Christ on Calvary atones in some mysterious way for our sins and thus relieves us of any responsibility for our sins or their consequences; in fact, they say, there is virtually nothing one can do toward his own salvation.

This doctrine has much to recommend it. First of all, it is pleasing, comforting, reassuring. Anything which relieves man of responsibility for his conduct is bound to be popular. Second, this doctrine has the tradition of centuries behind it. Third, by taking isolated passages from the Bible and applying them out of their context (mainly passages from the writings of the apostle Paul) and disregarding the general teaching of the Bible, it is possible to present some impressive-sounding "proof" for this position. Fourth, this doctrine allows us to

completely disregard the Old Testament as fulfilled in the New and thus superfluous to teach us anything about salvation or the type of works that please God. The New Testament is thought to have introduced a new—and superior—way to salvation no longer requiring the "works" of the Old Testament.

We do not believe any of the above reasons are sufficiently valid when applied to a matter as important as our eternal salvation. The fact that a doctrine is pleasing is no proof of its accuracy. The fact that a doctrine is accepted and believed by the majority of people does not do anything to make that doctrine true. The fact that accepting a certain doctrine forces us to create contradictions between different authors of the Bible or even between the writings of the same author is entirely unacceptable. If the Bible is God's instruction Book to mankind (and we know it is) and we have no other, then it must contain only *one* plan of salvation, not two or more. It is our responsibility to find that *one* plan

regardless of our feelings or desires in the matter.

To establish what that plan is, let us list one verse from each book of the Bible which is typical of the theme that runs through the whole book.

Genesis: "Walk before me, and be thou perfect" (17:1).

Exodus: "Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book" (32:33).

Leviticus: "Ye shall therefore keep all my statutes, and all my judgments, and do them" (20:22).

Numbers: "That ye may remember, and do all my commandments" (15:40).

Deuteronomy: "And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the Lord our God, as he hath commanded us" (6:25).

Joshua: "That thou mayest observe to do according to all the law" (1:7).

I Samuel: "The Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed" (2:3).

II Samuel: "The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness: according to the cleanness of my

hands hath he recompensed me (22:21).

I Kings: "And if thou wilt walk in my ways, to keep my statutes and my commandments" (3:14).

II Kings: "The statutes, and the ordinances, and the law, and the commandment, ... ye shall observe to do for evermore" (17:37).

I Chronicles: "So Saul died for his transgression which he committed... against the word of the Lord, which he kept not" (10:13).

II Chronicles: "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land" (7:14).

Ezra: "Should we again break thy commandments... so that there should be no remnant" (9:14).

Nehemiah: "But if ye turn unto me, and keep my commandments, and do them" (1:9).

Job: "If iniquity be in thine hand, put it far away, and let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacles" (11:14).

Psalms: "I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments" (119:60).

Proverbs: "The upright shall dwell in the land, and the perfect shall remain in it. But the wicked shall be cut off from the earth, and the transgressors shall be rooted out of it" (2:21-22).

Ecclesiastes: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man" (12:13).

Isaiah: "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land" (1:19).

Jeremiah: "O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved" (4:14).

Lamentations: "Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord" (3:40).

Ezekiel: "Cast away from you all your transgressions, ... and make you a new heart and a new spirit" (18:31).

Daniel: "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (12:2).

Hosea: "Seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children" (4:6).

Joel: "Render your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God" (2:13).

Amos: "All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword" (9:10).

Obadiah: "Thy reward shall return upon thine own head" (v. 15).

Jonah: "And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way" (3:10).

Micah: "What doth the Lord require of thee; but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God" (6:8).

Nahum: "The Lord... will not at all acquit the wicked" (1:3).

Habakkuk: "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity" (1:13).

Zephaniah: "I will bring distress upon men... because they have sinned against the Lord" (1:17).

Haggai: "Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways" (1:7).

Zechariah: "Turn ye now from your evil ways, and from your evil doings" (1:4).

Malachi: "From the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them" (3:7).

Matthew: "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance" (3:8).

Matthew (Jesus): "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (5:48).

Mark: "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: this is the first commandment" (12:30).

Luke: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (9:23).

John: "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love" (15:10).

Acts: "He that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (10:35).

Romans: "Who will render to every man according to his deeds" (2:6).

I Corinthians: "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?" (6:9).

II Corinthians: "Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (7:1).

Galatians: "Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (6:9).

Ephesians: "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise" (5:15).

Philippians: "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (3:14).

Colossians: "That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God" (1:10).

I Thessalonians: "For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus" (4:2).

II Thessalonians: "Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work" (2:17).

I Timothy: "That they do good, that they be rich in good works" (6:18).

II Timothy: "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity" (2:19).

Titus: "They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him" (1:16).

Hebrews: "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us" (12:1).

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

I Peter: "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the

truth through the Spirit..." (1:22).

II Peter: "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity" (1:5-7).

I John: "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as he [Christ] is pure" (3:3).

II John: "And this is love, that we walk after his commandments" (v.6).

III John: "He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen [known] God" (v.11).

Jude: "These are spots in your feasts,...trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit" (v. 12).

Revelation: "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein:...As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent....He that overcometh shall inherit all things. ...Behold I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book....Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be....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. 1:3; 3:19; 21:7; 22:7, 12, 14).

This list of texts is far from complete; it could be multiplied at least four or five times. But it should be sufficient to establish the fact that God requires *effort* on our part. If He compares His people to trees, He wants them to bear fruit. If He compares them to runners in a race, He wants them to fling aside every weight and *run*. If He requires cleanliness, they must *cleanse themselves*. And always they must "walk worthy," "work righteousness," "be doers," and "keep all my commandments always." There is no way to avoid or sidestep the fact: The Bible teaches that there is something for

every believer to do.

Theologians will say immediately that this is not the whole picture. Surely, the Old Testament contains many commandments, but this was all changed with Jesus' death on the cross. He died for our sins, making us righteous and opening the way for us. Paul, they say, developed an entirely new plan of salvation which he received direct from Jesus Himself. Furthermore, it is not possible for mankind to keep all of these commandments without failing. God's grace (His unmerited favor) is an absolute necessity if we would ever be presented pure and holy to God. And this grace, operative in our lives, does everything that is necessary for us.

Before we pass judgment on this view, let us consider these arguments carefully and see how they stand critical analysis. First, consider the argument that the Old Testament stressed keeping God's law and that Paul formulated an easier way. That argument might be valid if the Bible were only of human origin. Each author would be stating his own opinion and opinions would vary with different writers at different periods of history. But with the writers of the Bible all working under divine guidance and all penning the plan He wanted written, how could such be possible? Would the same God tell one man to write one thing, and another man to write something contradictory to that?

We read that "God commanded Moses," also "the word of the Lord came to Ezekiel," or "Moreover the Lord said unto me [Isaiah]," or "The Lord showed me [Jeremiah]." Paul called himself "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ," and James was "James a servant of God." These men were all writing under the guidance of the power of the Holy Spirit, the divine power of God. And would that power have been guiding them differently? Would God have communicated one message to one man and another to another man?

The Lord's will was made known sometimes by an angel, sometimes by a voice, or a dream, or a vision. In the case of Paul it was direct from Jesus Himself.

Since God has arranged that our only contact with the Divine Mind should be through the medium of His written Word, the message which God caused His holy men of old to write, is it reasonable that that Word should contain several plans of salvation? Was God formulating the plan for the earth as He went along, on some kind of trial-and-error basis? No, we know He was not. His design was complete from the beginning. He was not experimenting. His original plan was perfect, and it was a plan of "Obey and live, disobey and die." Even Christ had to obey: "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Heb. 5:8-9). Here is the plan of salvation—and its fundamental principle is that of *obedience*. Christ learned to obey His Father's will, and if we want eternal salvation, we must obey Christ.

Believers in the doctrine of the atonement hold that it is not possible for a human being to keep all of God's law. But are we in a position to say that a just and righteous God is asking of man something that is impossible for him to perform? Do we not read that Zacharias and Elisabeth did exactly this (Luke 1:6)? "God knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust"? (Ps. 103:14). He of whom the Psalmist wrote, "Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassed my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether" (Ps. 139:2-4)—is it possible that such a God does not know our limitations and also our possibilities? And would He be just and fair

to ask what we *cannot* do?

Have most people who say it is impossible to keep all of God's commandments made a real bonafide attempt to do just that? If not, how do they know it cannot be done? The Bible tells us of others who *did* make the effort—and succeeded. The apostle Paul was one. He could say, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (II Tim. 4:7). Jesus could say, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (John 17:4). And His many promises are "to him that overcometh." Were those promises to no one? They would be, if overcoming were an impossibility.

The problem is that people have accepted the pronouncements of church councils and so-called church fathers, who were not divinely inspired, instead of honestly investigating the matter for themselves. But all the varying opinions of all the men in the world will not alter one word of the Lord. It is *His* opinion that matters, and it is His Word that we can rely upon.

Our survey of the Bible (one text from each book) gave us a general overview of God's opinion in the matter. And that opinion is that there is something we must perform to merit God's favor and salvation.

There is another argument advanced by the opponents of "good works." They reason that a person is rewarded for the good works which he does, but that this has nothing to do with his salvation. In other words, the more one does for the Lord, the greater his reward will be. But whether he does the good works or not, he will be "saved" if he accepts Christ's atoning sacrifice and puts his faith in Him. Ideas vary on this point also. Some say "once saved, always saved." Others say, "Not so, you can become 'unsaved,' if you commit a serious offense."

It would seem that one statement by Jesus after He had been to heaven and was glorified would settle this argument. In His message He said, "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). If it is they who do His commandments who will have right to the tree of life, how will those who do not do His commandments procure the right to life?

No, we cannot conceive of a just and righteous God instructing some of His prophets to require His followers to obey God's law perfectly, and then to instruct Paul to proclaim salvation by grace (unmerited favor) alone.

There is still another angle to this question of "faith versus works." Many Bible scholars admit that good works are required for salvation, but that when you accept Christ as your Saviour, either He or God or the Holy Spirit comes into you and does the good works for you. You find yourself *automatically* keeping the law. You can't help yourself; God does it *in* you. Now there is no denying that there is provision whereby God *helps* us when we sincerely try to live the Christian life. But there is nothing that says He does everything for us. There is no passage in the Bible that tells us God will do for us what we are commanded to do, or what we can do for ourselves.

The doctrine of substitution has a great many adherents. But if it were true, why would God have caused the Bible to be written? The Bible is a book of instructions telling mortal man how to live in this present life so as to be worthy of having his life perpetuated beyond this short span. If God had planned that Christ would take care of all the details of salvation for us and that all we need do is accept what He has done for us, why the Guidebook? Why bother our head about the future? All the necessary instructions could have been given in one short chapter—even in one verse.

John 3:16 has been claimed to be just such a text! It has been called "the gospel in a nutshell." And what does it say? "For God so loved the world, that

he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." There is no other verse in the Bible that even comes near to being quoted so frequently as this one, or that has been so grossly distorted. Does God love this present evil world—the world for which Jesus would not even pray (John 17:9)? the world which John commanded us to "love not" (I John 2:15), which Paul bade us "come out from" (II Cor. 6:17)? No, it is the world of *believers* ("whosoever believeth in him"), and real belief is no idle thought but a belief to the point of acting on that belief.

There is no such thing as a passive, inert belief in Jesus. Jesus was a man of action, and He demanded the same of His followers. "If any man will come after me"—again, something to *do*—"let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke 9:23). No suggestion of simple verbal acknowledgment. "Come,...deny,...take up,...follow." With these thoughts in mind, John 3:16 must be more understandingly phrased, "For God so loved [the world of believers], that he gave his only begotten Son [as a pattern and perfect example], that whosoever believeth in him [to the point of acting on that belief, and fully committing himself to follow Christ] should not perish, but have everlasting life [in the world to come]." (For a further explanation of this text, see "What World Did God So Love?" in the *Megiddo Message* for September, 1965, p. 14.)

Even the most confirmed believer in salvation by "faith alone" will acknowledge that Jesus gave as the first commandment, "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). But they almost never explain how this can be done with the minimum of effort they say is necessary, the simple "confess with thy mouth," or mental assent. Nor do they quote Jesus' definition of love revealed in His statement, "If ye love

me, keep my commandments," or "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 14:15; 15:10). If Jesus had to keep the commandments of His Father, shall we be exempt? And how in the name of reason could a person love God with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength and *not* keep His commandments? What disobedient child truly loves his parents?

Organized religion has over the years made a determined effort to ridicule the idea that we can by our own conduct do anything toward our salvation. One of the requirements of a Christian church is that they believe in the atonement, they say. Any church group teaching salvation by "works" is a "cult." Thus the word "cult" is given a stigma which is foreign to its true definition. The definition of a "cult" is "devotion to a person, thing, idea, theory or the like." We are most thankful that we can be devoted to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and that we can believe all the Bible says about salvation. If this classifies us as a "cult" we are thankful to qualify.

No one who believes the Bible will deny that Jesus should know more about this subject of salvation than anyone else. If Christ made an agreement with His Father to come down to earth and die for the sins of mankind so that they need only accept Him as their Saviour to be saved, why did He make the following statement: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21). If the atonement doctrine is true, then Jesus was talking two ways and contradicting Himself. If "Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord," shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, how could anyone be sure of getting into the number who *would* enter the kingdom of heaven? If Jesus says "Not everyone who says Lord, Lord," will enter, this

makes it a high risk proposition and one which would indeed be foolhardy to trust.

The Bible nowhere says that not everyone who keeps the commandments of God will be saved. Jesus says, on the contrary, "Every one that heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them," and goes on to compare such a one to the man who builds his house upon a rock. The house stands. So will the man or woman who keeps the commandments of God. We have our choice. We can follow tradition and the popular doctrines of the day and say "Lord, Lord," or we can follow Jesus and be a wise man.

The necessity of obedience is a

fundamental teaching of Scripture. It is a truth of the Bible so basic that we can ignore it only to our own peril. Yet it is exactly opposite to what nearly all organized religionists today are proclaiming. Which shall we follow? There is a verse in Proverbs that should influence our decision: "There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand" (Prov. 19:21).

(For further discussion of the doctrine of the atonement, see our booklet *The Atonement*; also chapter eight in our publication, *What Must We Do To Be Saved?* on the subject of grace.) MM



Contentment

Perhaps because it is one of the sweetest things in life, contentment seems to be amazingly scarce. We seldom find a truly contented person; yet contentment can be cultivated, as it comes not entirely from material things, nor from circumstances.

Someone said, "The contented man is never poor, the discontented man is never rich."

The rolling stone is merely restless, not ambitious.

Contentment does not mean lack of thrift; it pays in dollars and cents just as surely as does ambition.

The contented person makes the most of what he owns, conserves, cares for. He multiplies its value and uses possessions as stepping-stones to greater opportunities. The restless do not even get the most out of what they have. Two men in succession owned the same poor farm; the first man capitalized on every good feature; the second was discontented, and the farm, during his ownership, continually depreciated.

Contentment comes from confidence, and justified confidence is from a mind and heart that recognizes the greater Power which shapes our lives. It gives a calmness that creates poise in personality and energizes power to succeed. The frustrated person gets nowhere.

Contentment makes the best of bad conditions until one can do something constructive about them.

Discontent and ambition are not a matched team. Discontent is a bucking broncho. Ambition is a thoroughbred which teams up perfectly with contentment to plow a neat furrow.

And Still She Speaks

Extracts from sermons, discussions, talks, comments
by Rev. Maud Hembree (1853-1935).



I am reminded of a little note I read about Napoleon and Wellington. Napoleon was a great general, and so was Wellington; but they made use of different tactics. Napoleon would rush his troops into the battle at all odds, but Wellington was more calm; he kept looking out for defense against the enemy. So when they came to Waterloo, Napoleon was rushing against the British troops. Wellington's men were following this same policy; but Wellington sensing the situation, rushed into the midst of his troops—generals in that day went right into the battle front many times—and cried out, "My men, hold on! the victory will come to the one who endures to the end!" And that is what Jesus said, "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Matt. 24:13).

Let us take this lesson home to our individual selves, that all the things this world can offer are not to be compared to wisdom. Why? because they cannot give life. They may afford a few comforts, but cannot give life beyond the fleeting days of this earthly career. But what will this wisdom of God give to us? "Length of days" in one hand, and "riches and honor" in the other; length of days when all the ills and aches of this present existence are in the past. What a promise!

Go after the wisdom of God. Love to ponder over something good and elevating, not low and degrading. Fill your mind with good thoughts, lofty thoughts, thoughts that will elevate you, lift you up. Stop reading fiction and foolishness if you want to keep your mind clean. Read what will cultivate the memory with the good and elevating. Keep your mind active on something worth remembering, something that will make an impression upon your mind, and you will keep your memory to old age.

We read how that early generation wandered away from God and rebelled, how the Almighty in His goodness brought them out of Egyptian bondage, how He led them through the wilderness: Yet they murmured and complained at Moses all the way through. We follow them down the time of the judges, and on through the days of the kings, and how they murmured; and on to Jesus' day, how patient, how kind He was! what wonders He wrought before them! Yet the mob crucified Him. Does it not show the longsuffering of God?

We want to be ashamed when we commit wrong. We will never cease committing wrong unless we are ashamed of it.

Were you ever happy when impatient? Were you ever happy with envy in your heart or with bitter feelings? No, this Word of God teaches us how to be happy by putting the evil away.

The God of the Bible is working. He has a plan for this earth just as He has a plan for other worlds on high that He has been making. He has not just been working on this little earth of ours but He has been working through eternity in the past taking out people on other worlds who will serve Him. He has billions of worlds revolving in the immensity of space. To Paul He outlined His plan, of taking out a people worthy of His mercy, worthy of enduring. Paul said, "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named."

We have to have faith to work for the Lord. In this life, if you did not have faith that you would get your pay, you would not work. So with eternal life. Before we will work, we must have faith that we will be rewarded.

How good God is to tell us what we must do, what the evil works are that must be put away! It is much more necessary to know this than to understand all the parables and allegories.



The Enthusiastic Evangelist: Philip

IF WE WOULD get as enthused with the message of the Gospel as was Philip, the deacon and evangelist, how much we could do!

Philip was only a deacon in the church of Jerusalem, but being a deacon was a responsible position. We can imagine that he filled it well.

Deacons were chosen to help the apostles with the practical work of the rapidly growing church. Among other things, they were responsible for the fair distribution of alms. This was a trustworthy position and one that required the best in principle and honesty from the holders.

The Christian church was engaged in a magnificent adventure and required the utmost of its leaders. Leaders in the enterprise had to be men whose heroic spirit was founded on character, character in which the basic virtues of honesty and sobriety were unquestionable. Deacons were to be serious. This does not mean that they were gloomy men or men who had lost all "zest of life," for Christians are commanded to "rejoice in the Lord always." But they were to be soberminded, earnest, thoughtful.

Deacons were not to be "tale-bearers." As leaders of the church, they were entrusted with knowledge of the personal concerns of many of the members. Such knowledge was to be kept in strictest confidence.

Then too, deacons were not to be "drunkards" or "greedy for money." However, church leaders are not likely to become drunkards or thieves. But many a Christian faces the temptation to be something less than strictly honest in matters of money and property, to be careless of truth in buying and selling, to practice legal but morally questionable methods of getting something for nothing, to expect special privileges not accorded to others, to pay less for services received than they are worth, or to demand more for services given than they deserve.

Church officers and members should be above question in such basic matters.

The deacons of the first church were to be men filled with the Holy Spirit. This was important in the task to which they were assigned, because human nature is very deceitful and perverse. How they needed its guidance in dealing fairly with all who depended on the church for aid and support.

As the news of the Gospel spread throughout the city, persecution mounted. Nevertheless, the church stood firm, taking blows which would have quenched any movement less powerful than the Gospel working in the lives of the believers.

After the death of Stephen, internal problems in the church came to a head in Jerusalem. It became clear that Christianity could not bloom as a branch of Judaism. They were plants of the same stock, but they were *different* plants. The Christians were driven out of Jerusalem and scattered abroad. This was something that the people would not have chosen, for no one likes to be uprooted and evicted. At the time it must have appeared disastrous, and yet, that very disaster was the scattering of the seed of the Christian church.

As the Christians fled, they spread the Gospel. This threshing was like the bursting of a seed pod. They used this extremity as an opportunity. If they could not preach Christ in Jerusalem, they would preach Him elsewhere. How could they hold their peace when they had in their possession such priceless knowledge!

Philip was one of these who could not keep still. When we read of him, he is at work spreading the Good News.

Now, suppose for a moment, that you had been Philip. Suppose you had escaped with the Gospel in your hands and were chased into some half-heathen land that had only been touched on the surface with the knowledge of Christ. You would probably seek out those who had thus been touched, and would throw yourself on their hospitality and protection.

And so we can imagine Philip in Sychar, seeking out a woman that all the world knows about now, in whose heart there was a well of water springing up into ever-

lasting life. "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord," she would say to him. "Come to my house," she would say also to her neighbors; "and see and hear a man who has come to us from the risen Christ Himself."

So Philip preached in the city of Sychar. His words met with a ready response. Large crowds listened to him and saw the miracles he performed. As a result of Philip's work, there was much rejoicing in that Samaritan city.

Then something else happened. "There was a man...in the city who had been practicing magic for some time and mystifying the people of Samaria. He pretended that he was somebody great and everyone from the lowest to the highest was fascinated by him. Indeed, they used to say, 'This man must be that Great Power of God.' He had influenced them for a long time, astounding them by his magical practices. But when they had come to believe Philip as he proclaimed to them the Good News of the Kingdom of God and of the name Jesus Christ, men and women alike were baptized. Even Simon himself became a believer and after his baptism attached himself closely to Philip. As he saw the signs and remarkable demonstrations of power which took place, he lived in a state of constant wonder" (Acts 8:9-13, Phillips).

When the mission in Samaria was complete, the angel of the Lord said to His missionary, "Get up and go south down the road which leads from Jerusalem to Gaza, out in the desert." Philip obeyed and on the way met the Ethiopian eunuch riding along in his chariot, reading the Scriptures as he went. In this eunuch Philip found a receptive mind, one who wanted to be instructed in the right way. Philip climbed into the chariot and beginning from Isaiah 53, where the eunuch had been reading, and told him the good news of Jesus Christ.

When the eunuch was baptized, Philip departed and the Ethiopian eunuch went on his way rejoicing. Could it be that this eunuch went home and to teach in Ethiopia? We can be sure that he who went on his way rejoicing would not be able to keep his newfound joy to himself.

After Philip left the Ethiopian eunuch, he went to Azotus, which is the Old Testament town of Ashdod, one of the five Philistine Plain cities. Passing on, he preached the Gospel to all of the towns until he reached Caesarea. Among the towns he visited may have been Lydda and Joppa, towns where Peter may have followed up and confirmed Philip's work just as Philip had previously done in Samaria.

It is believed that Philip made his home in Caesarea, for he was still there when Paul visited many years later. Philip the evangelist, we are told, lived at Caesarea with his wife and their four extraordinarily gifted daughters. We are not told exactly what these virgin sisters did, but we can be sure that they were a blessing to their devoted

parents and that they used their gifts to promote the Gospel of Christ.

We know little more of the life of Philip. Nonetheless his example lives on as one who was on fire with the hope of eternal life and who did all in his power to fit himself and others for the supreme reward.

Let us catch the zeal of Philip in our hearts and show by our lives that we are intensely interested in the glorious future God has promised. Let us show by our lives that we are willing to support His cause wholeheartedly at home and abroad, by precept and—most importantly—by example. This is the greatest evangelizing we can do.

MM

R_x For a Full and Happy Life

YOUTH...is not a time of life—it is a state of mind. It is not a matter of bright cheeks, red lips and supple knees; it is a temper of the will, a quality of the imagination, a vigor of the emotions; it is a freshness of the deep springs of life.

Youth means a temperamental predominance of courage over timidity, of the appetite for adventure over love of ease. This often exists in a man of 50 more than in a boy of 20.

Nobody grows old by merely living a number of years; people grow old only by deserting their ideals. Years wrinkle the skin, but giving up enthusiasm wrinkles the soul. Worry, doubt, self-distrust, fear and despair—these are long, long years that bow the head and turn the growing spirit back to dust.

Whether 70 or 16, there is in every being's heart the love of wonder, the sweeter amazement at the stars and the starlike things and thoughts, the undaunted challenge of events, the unfailing childlike appetite for what next, and the joy and the pursuit of life.

You are as young as your faith, as old as your doubt; as young as your self-confidence, as old as your fear; as young as your hope, as old as your despair.

In the central place of your heart there is a wireless station; so long as it receives messages of beauty, hope, cheer, courage, grandeur and power from environmental sources and God's Word, so long are you young.

When the wires are all down and all the central place of your heart is covered with the snows of pessimism and the ice of cynicism, then are you grown old indeed. —Sel.

Not Only Hear but Do!

"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves."

—James 1:22

THIS IS a familiar phrase. Estimating roughly, we hear this sentiment voiced in sermons, in verse and song, at least one hundred times each week. This adds up to quite a total at the end of a year, perhaps 5000 times. It could become common to our ears, or we may forget to put it into practice.

If we wish to retain "the word of the Lord," everything depends upon where we keep it. We may hear a sermon but keep the thoughts only in our notebooks. If we keep it in our mind, a leaky memory may waste the treasure, or any vagrant care may snatch it away. The business of the day may wipe it out as a sponge erases a record from a slate. A thought is never secure until it has become a desire, an aspiration, a driving force, a deed! Yes, we find that the best way to remember the Word of God is to do it!

Where are we keeping the Word? What are we doing about it? Is the engraved word becoming character in us? Is it impressed indelibly upon the fleshly tables of our hearts? If we ever expect to obtain the benefits of our faith, it must become a principal part of our personality; we must live it, and it must live in us. This is the only vital way of remembrance, to convert the Word into moral fiber. "Be ye doers of the word, not hearers only."

This is no attempt to belittle the value of "hearing." He was only warning those who might fall for the deceptive philosophy that hearing of the Word was the fulfillment of all that was required. Not so, says James. You must not only hear; you must do.

It is no gentle appeal; it is a command, an imperative. Even more, it is a call to continuing duty. James does not mean to imply that we have never done so, but that we must never stop doing so. As rendered by other translators, his words are, "Become ye doers"; "show yourselves more and more to be doers"; "continue to be doers of the Word"; "keep on obeying this message." It is

a call to keep on demonstrating the reality of our profession.

"Doing" is a favorite word with James. Five times in his small Epistle he underlines this singular requirement. He wants us to be persons who habitually submit to and comply with the requirements of the Word of God. No occasional obedience must be ours; whenever we hear—which is often—we must do.

When we hear the Word but do not do it, our hearing is defective. And so our obedience is not a straight line: it is crooked and circuitous; it takes the way of By-path Meadow instead of the Highway of the Lord. We do not wait upon the Lord's pleasure; we make Him wait upon ours.

No listening is healthy which is not mentally translated into obedience. We are to listen with a view to obedience, with our eyes upon the very road where the obedient feet will travel. That is to say, we must listen with purpose, as though we were ambassadors receiving instructions from the King concerning some momentous mission. Yes, we must *listen with our eye on the road*.

So often when we listen, obedience is not primary. We take in information much as a paper receives ink. The ink dries, and there it remains. Nothing else happens.

"Doing" makes a new thing of "hearing." The statute obeyed becomes a song. The commandment is found to be a beatitude. Obedience changes the stubborn heart to one of pliable willingness; and as we tread the path of obedience we shall find rest after restlessness, and peace for our troubled hearts.

"Hearing" brings a limited amount of satisfaction, but in the way of obedience we continually discover springs of delight as well as stores of provision. Fountains of delicious satisfaction rise in the realm of duty: the satisfaction of being right with God and in union with His will.

Haven't we every reason to be "doers of the word, and not hearers only?"

MM

Never Alone

(Continued from page 9)

From the Hebrew Lexicon (Gesenius') we find the word translated "forsaken" in Psalm 22:1 has for its first definition: "To loosen bands and to let a beast go free from its bonds.... Thus in the difficult passage, Ex. 23:5, 'if thou see the ass of thy enemy lying down under its burden, beware that thou leave him not, but that thou loose his bonds.'" The lexicographer further explains: "There is a play on the words in the double use of the verb which stands first in common signification of forsaking, then in the primary one of loosing. It is applied to a servant set free." This being true, why could we not replace the word "forsaken" in Psalm 22:1, and in Jesus' quotation of that passage, with the words "set free"?

If we select the meaning that harmonizes the words of Jesus with the thoughts of God expressed elsewhere in the Word, are we not being fair to the Scriptures? We know that the Word of God teaches that He never forsakes the righteous; hence do we not do injustice to the Word when we choose a meaning that suggests that God forsook Jesus? How much better the thought that He was "set free." Historians inform us that it was customary for men who were crucified to linger several days before death ended their sufferings. Pilate, we are told, marveled when informers told him that Jesus was so soon dead. He could not believe it and so sent a trusty centurion to confirm the report. But it was true; the mercy of God had delivered Jesus from the extreme and prolonged suffering. And was it not fitting that Jesus should, as He felt the end approaching, utter an exclamation of praise for relief?

Thus we might phrase Jesus' last words, "My God! my God! how greatly thou hast helped me! how wonderful has been my release!" Instead of thinking God had forsaken Him, Jesus breathes His last with words of thankfulness to His Father who had relieved Him of suffering and would so soon raise Him from death's slumber to the glory of an endless life.

Gesenius' Hebrew Lexicon gives another definition of the original word translated "Forsake" in our Common Version: "to commit to anyone, to leave in one's care, as in Psalm 10:14, 'the poor committeth himself unto thee.'" Isn't this exactly what Jesus was doing at this time, committing Himself to the care of His heavenly Father? Far from being forsaken, He was in this helpless moment trusting Himself to the care and keeping of His faithful, loving Father.

Did God forsake Jesus, then? Never! Does God

forsake any of His own? Never! They are His priceless jewels, and He will remember them through all the ages of eternity. His promise is sure.

What is the lesson in all of this for us? To be sure, absolutely sure that we are doing everything in our power to identify ourselves as belonging to God. He will do on His part, if only we do on ours. The loving relationship, the sure protection, the divine promise is sure—we are—and always will be *never alone*, never never through all the cycles of eternity—if—.

If we just fulfill our part of the contract. God is faithful. MM

Ruth To Naomi

A Poetic Paraphrase of Ruth 1:15-17.

*Farewell? Oh, no! It may not be;
My firm resolve is heard on high!
I will not breathe farewell to thee,
Save only in my dying sigh.
I know not that I now could bear
Forever from thy side to part,
And live without a friend to share
The treasured sadness of my heart.*

*For rays of heaven serenely bright
Have gilt the caverns of the tomb;
And I can ponder with delight
On all the gathering thoughts of gloom.
Then, Mother, let us haste away
To that blest land to Israel given,
Where faith, unsaddened by decay,
Dwells nearest to its native heaven.*

*For where thou goest, I will go;
With thine my earthly lot is cast;
In pain and pleasure, joy and woe,
Will I attend thee to the last.
That hour shall find me by thy side,
And where thy grave is, mine shall be:
Death can but for a time divide
My firm and faithful heart from thee.*

• Baptism Required?

"There is one thing I would like you to clear up for me. It seems that you don't believe it matters whether you are baptized or not. Would you mind explaining why you believe this to be true, even when Christ said to fulfill all righteousness, you must be baptized. Please, I need to know."

The text to which you allude was spoken by Jesus at the time of His baptism in the River Jordan by John. The text is found in Matthew 3:15. It reads: "Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbade him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness" (vs. 13-15).

The passage, as translated in one of the newer versions (Jerusalem Bible), is perhaps more understandable: "Then Jesus...came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. John tried to dissuade him. 'It is I who need baptism from you,' he said, 'and yet you come to me!' But Jesus replied, 'Leave it like this for the time being; it is fitting that we should, in this way, do all that righteousness demands.' At this, John gave in to him."

This passage points up several facts:

- First, Jesus' knowledge that He was to be baptized, and His personal obedience to that law.
- Second, John's humility. John felt himself the lesser, and unworthy to do so honorary a service as to his superior.
- Third, Jesus' desire to obey the stipulations of the law binding upon them—"it is fitting that we should...do all that righteousness demands."
- Fourth, John's obedience—"John gave in to him (Jesus)."
- Fifth, Jesus' recognition of the fact that the law was only a temporary stipulation—"leave it like this for the time being." Baptism was a part of that particular age; it was not a command binding upon all people for all time.
- Sixth, the association of the baptism ceremony with the bestowing of Holy Spirit power. Immediately as John baptized Jesus, "the heavens

were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: and lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (vs. 16-17).

Jesus' baptism was a fulfilling of the law of righteousness, the law of faith and obedience by which Jesus lived. It was part of the divine arrangement at that time. To not have complied with the rite of baptism would have been to disobey the command of God. But this is not to say that baptism is binding upon all of God's people in all ages. It is not even mentioned in the Old Testament, where many persons found favor in God's sight by their lives of obedience. It was only for a special purpose, "for the time being," as Jesus Himself said.

The connection between baptism and the receiving of the Holy Spirit is further strengthened by this incident. Not having the Holy Spirit to give or receive at this time, we are under no necessity to baptize or be baptized.

John, when questioned by the Pharisees as to the purpose of his baptisms, made clear that literal water baptism was not the whole law nor the most important point in the law. He said, "I baptize with water; but there stands among you—unknown to you—the one who is coming after me; and I am not fit to undo his sandal strap. ...I am the witness that he is the Chosen One of God" (John 1:26-27, 34, Jerusalem Bible). The one who "cometh after me" is greater. The message of Christ was what they should be concerned about, not literal rites of baptism.

• The State of the Dead

"My father recently died. He was the kindest, most wonderful man I've known, but not religious. What is his state?"

I can sympathize with you in your concern for your father. One consolation you have is that there is no literal hell, as so many churches teach. On the other hand, there is not the slightest evidence that any part of the body, life or personality survives natural death. The dead are totally unconscious, asleep, and can be awakened only by the power of God resurrecting and restoring them. The Bible does not teach the concept

of a soul separate from the body. The phrase "immortal soul" cannot be found in the Bible. "The living know that they shall die; but the dead know not anything" (Eccl. 9:5).

The only escape from the tomb is by means of a bodily resurrection. Christ experienced this physical resurrection. And the promise is: "afterward they that are Christ's at His coming" (I Cor. 15:23). It may be comforting to think that our loved ones are in heaven enjoying the felicities of bliss; but deception, however comforting, is no substitute for truth.

There is no doubt that the religious world today has been deceived into believing many doctrines not found in the Bible. The Bible is a deep book. Its truths are not on the surface, they must be searched for as for hid treasures (Prov. 2:4-5).

For further information on the subject of Life after Death, send for our booklet, *After Death, What?*

• Pray to Jesus or the Father?

"My wife and I have been fellowshiping with a group, but we don't feel that they see eye to eye with the Scriptures. One point we question is: They pray to Jesus, not the Father, as the Bible teaches we should. How do you feel about this?"

We are not told in Scripture that we should address all our prayers to Jesus, nor do we support or condone the "Jesus, precious Jesus" sentimentalism that disgraces some religions today. As a church we address our prayers to God in Jesus' name. This is according to the directives Jesus gave His disciples in His last recorded sermon before He was crucified: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full....the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in parables [parables], but I shall show you plainly of the Father. At that day ye shall ask in my name. And...whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you" (John 16:23-26; 15:16).

Jesus fills a singular role in the plan of God. His God-assigned name was "Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us" (Matt. 1:23). To us He is the instrument of our salvation, our Redeemer, our Savior, our King. Paul's statement to Timothy (I Tim. 2:5) shows that there is "one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." While we do not address our prayers to Jesus, we do acknowledge Jesus as our intercessor, our advocate, our point of contact with the Father and our perfect Example.

• Healing by Divine Power Today?

"I have often read and questioned the seeming prophecy by Jesus, 'Elias truly shall first come and restore all things.' I speak fluent Spanish, and the prophecy is more obvious in Spanish that Elias will come (future) and restore (future) all things. However, the group I have been fellowshiping with emphasizes speaking in tongues, healings, etc., today."

You certainly are right about Elijah coming before Christ. Elijah the prophet will surely come and will restore all things, and that includes, we believe, the power of the Holy Spirit which no one on earth possesses today. Despite all the claims, no one today can heal by Divine power. No one can do one single miracle you can see with your eyes. They claim to heal backache or headache, or cancer, but ask a so-called Divine healer to replace an ear, repair instantly a broken or mangled limb, heal a person that you know is blind, or even make an axe head float as Elisha did, and they are utterly helpless. Claims of speaking in tongues by the power of the Holy Spirit is also deception. Paul made it plain in I Cor. 13:8: "Whether there be tongues, they shall cease." MM

1983 The Abib Calendar

The Bible New Year:

Abib 1, from sundown April 13 through sundown April 14.

The New Passover:

Abib 13, the evening of April 25.
This is an observance Jesus expressly commanded us to keep: "This do, in remembrance of me."

Christ's Resurrection:

Abib 15, the morning of April 28.

The Ascension of Christ:

Forty days after the Resurrection, or June 6.

Pentecost:

Fifty days after the Resurrection, June 16.
This was the day the Church received "power from on high," according to Jesus' promise.

Reaching for the Summit

Thank you for the new book "Elijah Then Christ." It surely tells us in good plain language that Elijah truly shall first come. I don't know how anyone can believe that he already has come.

The times are drawing so close now that we all must strive that much harder. I have wasted so much time; I haven't a minute to spare now.

I am enjoying the tapes so much. The hymns and the Messages are beautiful. We really can rejoice in hope.

Yes, indeed we know the day is drawing near when God's glorious promises will be reality. And how we can rejoice to know, if we carry the banner of truth high in our forward march, we can be a part of it. It is wonderful and so grand to think upon, to become part of an everlasting reality! A hope to be fulfilled because we have striven faithfully to the end.

Striving to keep our Banner high brings its trials and afflictions. We believe, therefore we must speak and uphold our faith, and there are always the scoffers and scorners who like to tell us we don't know what we are talking about. But what does it matter?

Our Master is coming soon again, and we are determined that we shall press on to the high peak of the mountain of holiness God has set for us. God has spoken and we know that one day the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea, with a people holding high Truth's Banner. "Having reached the summit of holiness mountain, there to await the Sunrise!" How wonderful it will be to be there, all our banners flying high, awaiting the first golden sunbeam of Zion's glad new Morning. May we think upon it and imagine the wonder of it.

Australia

A. B.

Appreciating Reproof

It is good to take stock every once in awhile to see if we are growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We naturally do not like reproof, but it is good for us. So we had better make up our mind if we want to get into the Kingdom, we have to take reproof.

We will do well to take inventory to see where we stand. The time is short and what is done must be done quickly. So let us put forth every effort, for the time is short.

Newfoundland

G. W.

Tried and Tested

I am so thankful to be able to listen to the cassette tapes.

The tests of life will help us or be against us, as we allow them. We know as long as we are in this mortal frame we will suffer many adversities. We will be tried and tested but must not be cast down. They are needed to make something of us. Jesus, our great Example, was meek and lowly and left us a pattern to follow. To follow this pattern will also bring peace and happiness.

Indiana

E. M.

One Day at a Time

The time is flying fast. We can only live one day at a time now. We don't know what one day to the other will bring forth. Our main concern now is to prepare to meet the great Prophet Elijah and Jesus.

We should not be too much concerned with the fleeting things of the present, and having food and raiment, let us be therewith content (I Tim. 6:8).

Newfoundland

D. T.

Something to Think About

Please enter my subscription to the *Megiddo Message*. I have read your set of books received a while ago; they are really something to think about.

South Carolina

M. B.

The Way, the Truth, the Life

When we look around us and see what a beautiful earth we have to live in, how much more beautiful it will be when made over new and filled with a righteous people, glorifying God in all their ways! Our finite minds cannot comprehend what the future will mean to those who are worthy of it. So may we work the harder and not lose sight of the grand prize that is just ahead.

May our eyes be kept constantly on the straight gate, the only gate which leads to life, knowing that no matter how difficult our task or how hard the struggle, it can be accomplished, if we lean on the Everlasting Arm.

Realizing how swiftly time is passing and with it our opportunity of gaining eternal life, we must direct our every thought and action toward the goal we are seeking, redeeming the time for the days are evil. And let us be guided by Christ, the truth, the way and the life, for without the Way there is no going; without the Truth there is no knowing; without the Life there is no living.

Missouri

H. W.

Grateful

I have been receiving the *Megiddo Message* almost a year and it has helped me so much.

I am 73 years old and believe in God with all my heart; but there was also much that I didn't understand, and you tell it all so plain. So please keep sending the *Message*.

Arkansas

A. W.

I Am...

Can't you almost hear Jesus saying, "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst" (John 6:35).

Jesus has shown us how to live for God, told us to forsake our ways and become one with Him, doing only those things which please our Father. We need to be as a rock, with a firm foundation or we shall be eliminated, as a sand castle built by the sea. Someone else will be put in our place. Christ will not take second best. For He plainly states:

I am the *Way*,
So walk in same manner.
I am the *Light*,
And will rid you of all darkness.
I am the *Truth*,
Always believe in My words.
I am the *Rock*,
That can never be shaken.
I am a *Star*,
So follow me closely.
I am your *Master*,
Obey My every command.
I am your *Lord*,
There is none else beside Me.
I am your *Bread*,
Eat Me and hunger not.
I am your *Friend*,
If you will obey Me.
I will then give you *Eternal Life*,
If you become as one with Me.

Georgia

C. P.

No Floating

God has created so many beautiful sights for us to behold, and just think, what we can see around us here and now is nothing to compare with what is in store for the faithful ones. We can't even begin to imagine.

There's an old saying: "He couldn't see the forest for the trees." Isn't this our condition many times? The cares of day-

to-day routine seem to engulf us and we lose our vision.

But living for the future is what it is all about. Paul counted all things but refuse that he might win that prize. Moses gave up the luxuries of a palace grand that he might do God's will. Abraham looked for a city whose builder and maker was God. Christ endured the cross and suffered shame that He might sit at the Father's right hand.

Our stations in life may be quite dissimilar, but we each have a work to do, a cross to bear, in preparing for that world to come. Contrary to popular belief we can't float in on grace, we must put away all ungodliness, break away every bad habit that has us bound, conquer all—not part—but all sin in our lives, even to

bringing every thought into obedience unto Christ (II Cor. 10:5). The work is great, but the reward greater.

The promise Jesus left His disciples, "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself: that where I am, there ye may be also" is one that should give great comfort. If we are faithful to the end, then that promise can be ours also. We know the way; are we willing to walk in it? It is straight and narrow and there is no room to carry along any excess weight—those besetting sins.

If we can only work and watch, not fainting by the wayside, then what a glorious and joyful day that will be to enter into the joys of the Lord!

Georgia

B. P.

Perfection's Hill

*Above earth's hills and mountains, above the weights of sin,
The galling chain that bound us, above the doubts that pain,
Above all earthborn longings, stands one eternal hill,
All other hills o'ertopping; it is Perfection Hill.*

*The way is rough and thorny for those its heights would seek;
Many the fallen and fearful, weary and worn the feet;
But all along the pathway we see the footprints still
Of many a wayworn traveler who climbed Perfection Hill.*

*Oft doubting mists o'erhanging shut out the shining top,
It seems we are not nearing the Pisgah of our hope.
The Saviour's voice is cheering us all our journey still,
The Father's love is lighting us up Perfection Hill.*

*Fear not, nor be discouraged! above the blinding mists,
Above the thorny pathway, above the rugged cliffs,
The weary footprints marking, we see the shining crest;
And just beyond is lying the Promised Land of Rest.*

*Yes, just beyond, beholding the Promised Land in view,
All other lands outshining, our hearts with rapture glow.
Oh, fear not, but keep climbing till on the top we stand,
Then from its heights we'll enter the glorious Promised Land.*

Megiddo Church
481 Thurston Road
Rochester, N. Y. 14619-1697

Second Class Postage Pa
(USPS 338-120)
Rochester, New York

**VITAL
Information**

**READ for Your
LIFE!**

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

ALL for \$3.00, Postpaid

**Church
Services**

In Your Home

CASSETTE—LOAN PLAN

2 Cassettes each month, only \$1 per month

Here's how it works. We mail you two cassettes—two church services complete with message, prayer and music. You play them as many times as you like for one month. Then you return them to us, and we send you two other cassettes.

Write for further information.

Understand the Bible

ORDER YOUR COPIES NOW!

Complete Sets of Bible Study Lessons
BY SUBJECT

God	\$.40
The Bible .....	.50
Jesus Christ .....	.70
The Kingdom of God .....	.80
The Nature of Man .....	.40
The Hell of the Bible .....	.40
The Devil of the Bible .....	.70
The Trinity .....	.40
Baptism .....	.40
Original Sin .....	.50
The Ministration of the Spirit .....	.90
Three Classes of Humanity .....	.50
Man and the Earth .....	.40
World Religions .....	.40
The Mosaic Law .....	.70
The Three Christs .....	.10
The Second Advent of Christ .....	.70
The Resurrection and Judgment .....	.60
The Pre-Existence of Christ .....	.40
The Sabbath of the Bible .....	.40
The Way of Salvation .....	.40
Death—According to the Bible .....	.40
Apostasy: Departing from the Faith .....	.70
All of the above	\$10.00

Did You Get Your Copy ?

Millennium Superworld

It puts the reader on the pulse-point of tomorrow!



Send now.

Only \$2.00 postpaid

Megiddo Church, Dept. MS
481 Thurston Road
Rochester, New York 14619-1697