

# Megiddo Message

*Let all the trees of the forest  
rejoice before the Lord;  
For He comes to judge the earth;  
He shall judge the world with righteousness  
and the people with His truth.*

*—Psalm 96:12-13, Lamsa.*



## Lying With Our Ears

**Few of us would consider telling what we call "a lie," but do we ever lie with our ears?**

**F**EW OF US would consider openly violating the commandment of the apostle Paul, "Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old nature with its practices" (Col. 3:9, RSV). We know that lying is wrong, and so we are careful to guard our lips against the verbal lie.

Yet there is another more subtle form of lying that we may be guilty of almost without realizing it. It is the lie of the ear. If we should take care to avoid *speaking* falsely, should we not exercise the same care with regard to what we hear? What we hear with our ears (or think we hear) sooner or later becomes the source for what we say with our mouths.

If we hear falsely, we will speak falsely.

We can lie with our ears in a number of ways:

- when we do not listen carefully to what is being said;
- when we jump to conclusions;
- when we read too much between the lines;
- when we take what is being said for what is *not* being said;
- when we take a specific statement and turn it into a generality;
- when we let our preconceived ideas influence what we hear and prevent us from hearing information correctly;
- when we are so preoccupied with what we are thinking or what we are going to say next, that we fail

to register what is being said at that moment; when we hear the words, but not their meaning;

- when we assign our own meaning to the words we hear.

There are two principal areas of our lives in which we may lie with our ears: (1) in our personal relationships with one another, and (2) in the communication of our faith to others.

Consider first the role our ears play in our personal relationships—with family, or friends.

Failure to listen carefully can cause misunderstandings, and misunderstandings can lead to resentment, hatred, and feelings which are un-Christlike. When we are in doubt about the meaning of someone's words, we should not act on an assumption but ask for a clarification. We should also be careful about judging by what we hear from others, who may have misunderstood or repeated words which they heard out of context.

Next consider the consequences of faulty listening to religious truth. Multiple misunderstandings can result simply because we do not listen well. We hear falsely, then speak falsely, adding confusion to confusion.

When the truth is spoken, our dull ears miss it. We hear instead what we *want* to hear.

Listening is a delicate art. It requires clear expression on the part of the speaker and precise thought on the part of the hearer. (Continue on page 23)

## 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 precepts and principles given us in the Word 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

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

**Goodspeed**—The New Testament translated by  
Edgar J. Goodspeed

**Moffatt**—The Bible, A New Translation

**RV**—Revised Version

## About Our Cover

Our cover photo was taken from the Blue Ridge Parkway near Roanoke, Virginia, by Margaret Tremblay.

# Megiddo Message

Vol. 74, No. 3

March, 1987

## Editorially Speaking LYING WITH OUR EARS

2

### Article

## ARE YOU WELCOME IN HIS PRESENCE?

4

God selects His guests very carefully

### Drama

## THE END OF THE AGE

8

Part Three: In the Days of Jerusalem

## Questions and Answers

12

Concerning:

Should Women Teach in the Church?

Jesus' Genealogy

### Sermon

## NOT OF THIS WORLD

14

Jesus, our Example, was not in any way attached to this environment—He was not "of this world."

## Meditating on the Word

## FIRES TO FUEL, FIRES TO FIGHT

22

On Proverbs 26:20

### Article

## WALK OR WAIT

24

Watch for the signal!

## Finally, Brethren

## OBSTACLE OR PATHWAY?

27

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; Newton H. Payne, President and Editor; Ruth E. Sisson, Executive Editor.

The MEGIDDO MESSAGE is available in microfilm from University Microfilms, Inc., Serials Acquisitions, 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.

MEGIDDO is a way of believing and living, grounded solidly in the Bible as the reliable Word of our Creator. A total view of life, the world and the universe, it sees all events, men and nations moving together toward one God-ordained climax: the Kingdom of God on earth. This has been the plan of God since the beginning. Christ will return visibly, bodily, as King, and the governments of this world will be joined to form a totally new worldwide government. When the task is complete, our earth shall be numbered among the heavenly, glorified worlds and filled with immortal inhabitants. This is the purpose and goal of all creation.



# ARE YOU WELCOME IN HIS PRESENCE?

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

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

*If you despise one whom God rejects  
but honor those who fear the Lord.  
If when you promise you don't change it,  
even if it hurts you.*

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

*If you do these things,  
you will never fail.*

—Free Paraphrase of Psalm 15

**To be welcome in someone's house means to enjoy the benefits of their hospitality, their protection, their sustenance. So David is asking, "Lord, whom will You invite to be a guest at Your table?"**

**W**ELCOME!" "Come right in!" "Make yourself at home!" These are words frequently heard when friend visits friend. They let us know that even though we are on their premises, our presence is appreciated, even desired.

This is what the Psalmist was thinking about when he wrote, "Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?" (Ps. 15:1). In other words, "Lord who has the right to enter Your house?" "Who shall be a guest in Your holy mountain?" Who will You have to sit down at Your table?

This brings up a question of great concern to each of us: Are we welcome in God's presence? What is His attitude toward us?

This is the question King David was asking thousands of years ago. He was concerned with the kind of person God would welcome—*because he himself wanted to be welcome*. This is why he asked, in Psalm 15, "Who has the right to enter your tent, or to live on your holy mountain?" (Jerusalem Bible).

When David speaks of God's "tent" and His "holy mountain," he is drawing his illustrations from Israel's special place of worship in Jerusalem. From the phrases he uses, we can see that he is asking, "What kind of person, Lord, do you let into your presence?" with the further half-spoken, half-whispered query, "... would you let *me* in?"

And we, nearly three millennia later, are asking the same question: "Lord, ... would you let *me* in?"

Yes, who is welcome in the Divine presence?

Were we to reply to this question without much thought, we might say that the answer is quite simple. Of course God wants the believer, the man or woman who is of His own kind, one of His family.

But what does this mean?

We need to think further, as David did. We need an answer that is translated into everyday terms that we can understand. We need to ask, Exactly what is the person like whom You accept? How does that person live? What does that person talk about? How does that person feel and think in his or her everyday world?

Are we perhaps going too far to ask such questions, farther than God looks? Indeed not, if we may judge by David's reply—and shouldn't we be able to assume that David *knew*?

Yes, according to David, how one lives, how one speaks, and how one feels and thinks toward his God and toward his human family, are

*David is picturing the ideal man, the man he longs to be.*

## The person who is welcome in God's presence speaks the truth in his heart. He doesn't just speak it outwardly, he lives truthfully.

the very criteria by which God judges those who would approach Him.

It has been suggested that our Lord used Psalm 15 as His text for the Sermon on the Mount. The same subjects are treated, and in approximately the same order. In any case, this is David's "Sermon on the Mount." It isn't long, but oh, how much it says!

### The Question: Who Is Welcome?

The question is important for several reasons.

First, it is important because it deals with practical everyday living. Besides corresponding with the Sermon on the Mount, the qualities David discloses in this Psalm also are a close parallel to those listed as qualifications for elders and deacons in Paul's Epistles to Timothy and Titus. They speak what is the core of practical Christianity. They offer a practical description of how the believer should relate to people around him.

Who is welcome? The answer lies in *how one lives*.

Second, it is an important topic because no one can afford to miss the benefits of being welcome in God's presence. In Old Testament times, to be welcome in someone's house meant to enjoy the benefits of their hospitality, their protection, their sustenance.

So when David asks, "Lord, who is welcome in Your presence?" He is asking, "Whom will You invite to

be a guest at Your table? Whom will You protect and sustain?"

In verses 2 to 5 he gives a three-fold answer to this question.

- 2 He who walks with integrity, and works righteousness, and speaks truth in his heart.
- 3 He does not slander with his tongue, Nor does evil to his neighbor, Nor takes up a reproach against his friend;
- 4 In whose eyes a reprobate is despised, But who honors those who fear the Lord; He swears to his own hurt, and does not change.
- 5 He does not put out his money at (unlawful) interest, Nor does he take a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things will never be shaken.

—Psalm 15, *The New American Standard Bible*

We notice immediately that David is picturing the ideal man, the man *he* longs to be. For who longs more than he to be welcomed into the presence of God!

### The Answer

Notice the very interesting structure of David's answer. He begins with a broad, sweeping statement in verse 2: "He who walks with integrity, and works righteousness, and speaks truth in his heart." The one who is welcome in God's presence is one who has integrity, who does righteousness, and who speaks truth.

What could such a one lack!

Looking farther along in verses 3 to 5, these three characteristics are explained in more detail. Verse 3 corresponds to the third quality, that of speaking the truth; the first portion of verse 4 corresponds to the second quality, of working righteousness; and the last part of verse 4 goes along with verse 5 and adds emphasis to the first quality, of walking with integrity. Notice particularly how much of these qualities are revealed in how one *speaks*.

David's ideal man has three basic and closely related qualities in this chapter: 1) integrity, 2) righteousness and 3) truthfulness.

David states that the person who is welcome in God's presence is *one who speaks the truth in his heart*. He doesn't just speak it outwardly, his whole character is truthful. Proverbs 23:7 tells us that as a man speaks in his heart, so is he. What we are inwardly is what we really are. Instead of merely speaking the truth in words, David is pointing out that the righteous person *lives* truthfully.

This kind of truthful living shows itself in many ways. First he is truthful in what he says. If he speaks his opinion of a person or an event, he tells the truth without adding to it. He doesn't run others down either in their presence or behind their back. He doesn't slander with his tongue. Everything he says is truthful.



In addition to this, "he does no evil" to another. This kind of truthful living shows itself in many other ways. It means that he does not take unfair advantage of another person in a business transaction. In fact, he won't take an opportunity to hurt another for any reason. He won't deliberately injure or provoke another, even if that person may have done something to provoke or injure him.

He is careful to return what he borrows. If he drives a car, he drives with the interest of the other person in mind, as well as his own. He is thoughtful and considerate with those who are slow, with those who are aged, with those who have disadvantages which are not his. Whatever he is doing, he is unselfish and keeps the interest of others in mind.

Also, speaking the truth means that he does not "take up a reproach against his friend." He "tells no tales against his neighbour" (New English Bible). He "casts no discredit on his neighbor" (Jerusalem Bible).

In other words, he doesn't keep a running log of every wrong done against him. He simply cannot afford to hold grudges. If something does not seem just right, he does what may be his Christian duty to investigate it, with an attitude of true brotherly concern; then, when he has done what he can to resolve it, he dismisses it. He will not let his own record be blotted by feeling ill toward another.

When something questionable is heard or said about another, he always puts the best light on that

person's conduct. And he doesn't keep reminding others of past wrongs and blunders. He has learned to forgive, and to forget.

David goes on to tell us that the person who is welcome in God's presence is one who "works righteousness." The word "work" indicates effort. This man realizes there is something he must do. God never invites idlers into His presence. His call is always to those who are working, doing what they can. No one can be accepted in God's presence by doing nothing.

The one God welcomes must be performing his obligations. He must be actively working, and working *righteousness*.

Righteousness includes all aspects of personal ethics. It means that he always acts in an honorable manner. He doesn't "cheat" in a situation, even if he knows that no one will find out. If a clerk in a store gives him too much money inadvertently, he does not keep the money and say nothing. His life is governed by personal honesty.

Then, in verse 4, David notes a striking contrast about this person: "In whose eyes a reprobate is despised, but who honors those who fear the Lord." This person views life and people through God's eyes. He learns to hate what God hates, and to honor what God honors. He doesn't respect the rich, the famous, the powerful. He looks for character. He places value on people according as they put God first and live for Him. He does not make his evaluations based on the world's standard. Instead, he

uses *God's* standard.

Along with being truthful, personally honest, honorable in all his dealings, and viewing life and people through God's eyes, this one who is welcome in God's presence is one who "walks with integrity." He is a man who actually keeps his word. He does his best to do what he says he will do, and *when* he says he will do it. And if he cannot, he goes to the person to whom he made the promise and tries to make it right. He pays his bills when they are due; and if for any reason he cannot, he again goes to the people to whom he is indebted and tries to make things right. He is a man who keeps his word.

This kind of person keeps his promise even if it costs him something: "He swears to his own hurt, and does not change." This does not mean that he deliberately tries to hurt himself. Rather, it means that once he makes the promise, if circumstances change so that he is at a disadvantage, he still keeps his word, unless he can be lawfully released.

This man of integrity is one who "does not put out his money at interest." He does not do anything to abuse or exploit another. David did not mean that the charging of lawful interest was wrong. The man God accepts is one who will not take advantage of another, by charging him interest that he would not be able to pay.

In the same way, this ideal man of God will not take advantage of another's misfortune. He will buy and sell with a philosophy of "live

*(Continued on page 26)*

**The person God accepts is one who is  
always honest . . . always upright . . .  
always truthful . . . always fair.**

# The End of the Age

## Part III

### In the Days of Jerusalem

*Characters:*

Baruch . . . . . *Christian believer during  
the First Century*

Nathan . . . . . *Christian believer during  
the First Century*

*Time:* During the First Century

*Narrator:*

What was it like to walk the streets of a great city like Jerusalem during the early part of the first century, and suddenly hear a new preacher—like Jesus?

Two youths, Nathan and Baruch in our story, had this experience. They chanced to hear and were drawn to this distinctive man from Nazareth. Many preachers passed through Jerusalem in those days, but Jesus was different. He had a way of doing the unorthodox—even the impossible—which attracted the boys. Something about His words and message gripped their hearts.

There was something in Baruch that loved action and adventure—even wild excitement, if it came to that. He might have been a rebel, given the right companionship. Nathan, too, saw something compelling in Jesus. Both seemed ready, even eager, to follow.

The boys followed Jesus around Galilee, and when Jesus departed for Jerusalem, the boys still followed. One day they heard Jesus speaking near the temple. His words were almost more than they could take in, but they listened intently:

(curtain opens, sound of thunder and lightning)

*Voice:*

“See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. . . .

“And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

“And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with

armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto.

“For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.

“But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land. . . .

“And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.” (Matt. 24:2, 14; Luke 21:20-24).

*Narrator:*

Baruch and Nathan heard, and in the days that followed they spoke many times of what those words should mean. But soon their boyish hopes were dashed as they saw the Master arrested—condemned—crucified. In terror they fled to their homes in Galilee.

When news arrived weeks later that Jesus was alive again, the two eagerly returned to Jerusalem—to find not a few timid, bewildered believers but men speaking boldly by the power of the Holy Spirit in the synagogues.

Wholeheartedly Nathan and Baruch joined the new—and surprisingly popular—movement. Any service, however humble, they gladly performed. The gospel, the young men soon learned, had to be preached to all the Roman world without delay; the end of the age was near.

But the movement was not to go forward without opposition. And when persecution became too much, the group had to disperse. Nathan and Baruch went different directions.

Nathan made his way to a small Christian church in Egypt, where he served as deacon for the next fourteen



years and learned many valuable lessons of the Christian life. When opportunity permitted, he visited Jerusalem, drawing strength from the sermons and example of the surviving apostles. During these years Nathan thought many times of his youthful friend Baruch, but never did he encounter him.

*Narrator:*

It was now the year 63 AD, when events were driving hard toward the fated insurrection which was to bring the Roman general Titus and his armies to the walls of Jerusalem. Nathan, single and unencumbered, strong and active in spite of a few gray hairs, had been compelled because of business to reside in Jerusalem for an indefinite period, reluctantly enough. To one who had known Jerusalem in happier days, it was a depressing place to live. Robbers terrorized the residents. Unemployment added to the general misery, and the priests kept a small army of men guarding the Temple. Prominent and wealthy citizens were daily leaving the city for other—and safer—parts of the Empire. Jerusalem had but one good to offer: association with the parent Church, where a few dedicated hearts were knit together in faithful service to God. Quickly Nathan searched them out, and became one of them.

Then one day Nathan chanced to meet his old friend Baruch. Face to face upon the street they met, after all the years of separation. Of course there were natural expressions and outpourings of joy and affection. Then they fell to discussing the real issues of life.

Baruch told his experiences in brief. He had gone to a Galilean farm when things seemed to lag in Jerusalem; and providing for his wife and five children left him little time for any outside interest—church or otherwise. No, his mate was not a believer, although at first she had seemed to go along. Now she had become embittered and the mere mention of Christianity brought a storm about his ears. That accounted, Nathan thought, for Baruch's harassed, fearful expression, so unlike his old fiery, impetuous self. He had attended the parent church on rare occasions; more frequently he had assembled with a small group in Kedesh, his nearest village. Of late he had become slack, he admitted shamefacedly, even in that; but now that he, too, had taken up residence in Jerusalem, he intended to renew his vows and his zeal in the faith.

Nathan's heart sank as he became conscious of the change in his former companion. Suddenly he felt old and weary. All these years he had hoped against hope that Baruch might outlive his youthful folly and settle down to a life of Christian usefulness in one of the

churches. Baruch had evidently settled down, but to something entirely different.

Let's listen in on a little of their conversation at this time. (curtain opens, street scene, Nathan and Baruch talking)

*Nathan:* Did you forget, Baruch, our promise to each other to remain unencumbered, ready for instant action?

*Baruch:* (slowly, reluctantly, his eyes on the ground) No, Nathan, I did not forget, but action was a long time coming. I waited for many years in Jerusalem, and at last I began to wonder what I was waiting for.

*Nathan:* What you were waiting for! Why, man, can't you see it coming?

*Baruch:* See *what* coming?

*Nathan:* The time of trouble Jesus told us about, when the city and temple shall be destroyed. It has already started, if you will only open your eyes and look around you!

*Baruch:* (shrugs shoulders) Well, I don't know. For a long time I interpreted every little riot as the beginning of the end, but things always seemed to right themselves, and time goes along as before—ups and downs, you know. So now I'm waiting to see what happens.

*Nathan:* You'll see, all right, and not long to wait. All these past troubles were preparing the way for the final crash. Everything is moving toward that end without a backward step.

*Baruch:* It's been a long delay.

*Nathan:* Not a bit of it! We had no right to expect the end till the Gospel had been preached to all the Empire, and in our younger days that work was just beginning. Things are entirely different now; you'd better get ready to escape.

*Baruch:* (smiles bitterly) I talked that way once, too, but I've seen so many seditions come and go that—well, I'm all at sea. I don't know what Jesus meant by those sayings, and probably no man living does. It may come, but what assurance have we that it will be in our lifetime?

*Nathan:* The assurance to me, apart from the words of Jesus and the prophets, is the condition of the whole nation, and of this city in particular.

*Baruch:* It has been bad before.

*Nathan:* Yes, and it has been destroyed before, according to the Word of God. Some—many—could not believe then, but that did not change things. Read the prophets, from Moses down, and see how they foretold the very things we see today, and the punishments which would follow. Baruch, since you are waiting now, why couldn't you wait as you were? and while you waited—*work*. Wouldn't it have been the better way?

*Baruch:* The way it has turned out so far (glances cautiously over his shoulder) you are undoubtedly right. But I couldn't foresee the future, and I was growing older all the time. I didn't want to miss everything in life, so I took the course I did. Now I have to make the best of it. You know, men have grown old and died *waiting* for something that never came.

*Nathan:* True, and men have grown old and died in their sins with no hope nor assurance of life beyond the grave; and most of them have found life without faith an empty thing. Also, as I told you years ago, men have grown impatient and died before their time. (looks searchingly at Baruch)

*Baruch:* (argumentative) But if you are so sure this is the end, why are *you* in Jerusalem?

*Nathan:* I'm here of necessity; I wish I were elsewhere. I'm leaving as soon as my business is done—maybe sooner. As for you, with your large family, I would advise you to start just as soon as you can and get as far away from here as possible.

*Baruch:* Well . . . I'll have to consult Mariamme about it first. I guess we will get out in time, anyway. I've always been lucky, and things like this don't come all at once.

*Nathan:* No, Baruch, that's what I've been telling you. It has been coming for a long time and now it is right upon us!

*Baruch:* (softening) I know I'm weak. I know I'm foolish. Oh that I could rise to my former heights of faith. Nathan, I need your help. I beg you, help me. I promise I will attend all the Christian assemblies faithfully. I will, I promise!

*Nathan:* I hope you speak the truth, Baruch, I will help you all I can. But you are aware that you are starting pretty late—?

*Narrator:*

Several months later, a small religious riot filled Jerusalem with tumult and massacre. Members of the

Church were persuaded that the end of the age was definitely at hand, and preparations for departure began. Naturally there was much unfinished business, and much delay. Then one chill autumn morning Jerusalem awoke to find the army of the Roman general Cestius encamped before the walls. Things looked black, very black; the escape had been delayed too long. Still, at the Christian's daily gatherings, preachers exhorted them to be of good courage; God would provide. "When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed about with armies, flee to the mountains." But how? and when?

The outer city was taken on the fourth day, but the populace retreated within the strong walls of the inner fortifications. For five days the assault was pressed, the residents of Jerusalem fighting bravely. But as the assault continued, the people began to run about wildly, panic-stricken. They were being defeated, and they knew it.

Then happened one of those strange tricks of fate. No, not a trick of fate but a work of Omnipotence for the salvation of His people who still remained in the doomed city. For the Jewish nation, hopelessly depraved and rebellious, God had no care; but for His own He acted.

In another hour the Romans would have been masters of the upper city. But just then the Roman general became fearful. The towers of the city were a bit too strong to take just now, he concluded from his safe observation post. Better to forfeit the whole than to risk a loss. He ordered his soldiers to *retreat*.

In silence the Roman legions marched out of the city amid the jeers of the defenders.

The result was mass disorder; Jerusalem became a vast, ungoverned madhouse.

But for the Christian congregation, this was opportunity to escape. Haste was vital. With the Romans gone, robber gangs would soon infest the whole surrounding area and render travel impossible. The Egyptian border was already reported closed and southern roads unsafe.

In the midst of it all, Nathan made his way to the home of Baruch. The latter stepped into the street and around the corner (Nathan was not welcome in the house of Mariamme), and the two men looked into each other's eyes. Baruch knew well enough the errand, but he affected ignorance. Nathan spoke first.

(curtain opens; street scene again)

*Nathan:* Well?

*Baruch:* Well, what?

*Nathan:* Come, Man, don't be stupid! You know what I mean. What are you going to *do*?



*Baruch:* I don't (hesitates) know. What do you think?

*Nathan:* I don't think; I *know*. I know it's time to get out of here. We almost got caught this time, and one such lesson is enough for me. I'm going. So are you, I hope."

*Baruch:* (weakly) Well, I . . . I suppose you're right. It isn't really safe to stay any longer. But, Nathan, this picking up and moving isn't as simple as it sounds. . . . Business . . .

*Nathan:* Business! Never mind the business. Get out with your life. You can live happily without much money, but it's frightfully uninteresting to be dead, even if you're rich. Come! When shall we start?

*Baruch:* Well—let me see—this is going to take time, of course. I can't leave on a minute's notice.

*Nathan:* Time? How much time did we lose when we ran away from Calvary? That was an unworthy thing, but in this case we have orders from Jesus Himself: 'When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies'—have you forgotten that?

*Baruch:* No; I remember, but—the armies are gone!

*Nathan:* Be thankful for that. How could we get away if they were here? This looks like an act of God for our sake, so let's take advantage of it. Your luck may fail you the next time. Shall we start tomorrow?

*Baruch:* There's no such hurry as *that*, is there? There's time enough yet. It will take the Romans months to get organized for another siege, and no telling what turn things may take in the meantime.

*Nathan:* Do you know what you remind me of? You are one of those people Ezekiel describes, who say, 'The days are prolonged and every vision faileth.'

*Baruch:* Oh, surely I'm not as bad as that, I haven't denied the faith. I still believe as firmly as ever.

*Nathan:* You *think* you do. But if you don't get moving I can't see that you believe anything. Have sense, Baruch. Get ready to leave *tomorrow*!

*Baruch:* (hangs head) Well, as I said, I'll have to see Mariamme about it. You see—you see, I'm not so free to go and come as I was when we were boys together. I can see now why Jesus said . . . But it's too late now to do anything about *that*. I'll go with you, but first I'll have to convert *her* to the idea. No telling how long that will take.

*Nathan:* Baruch, son of Jonathan, what kind of man are you? Who is the head of your house, anyway?

*Baruch:* (glances around and drops voice) That's what I'd like to know. Wait for me a day or two, will you, Nathan?

*Nathan:* I'll wait, but not too long. Beyond a certain point it's every man for himself. I'll see you tomorrow. Now get busy!

*Narrator:*

Nathan waited a week. With all his experience and Christian foresight, he was blind to the dangers involved in his affection for his boyhood friend. He might save him—or he might fail and be too late himself. Nathan debated the question, but from one side only, and he waited. But when the last party of Christians was ready to depart and still Baruch's spouse was unconverted to the idea, Nathan bade him farewell and departed for the hill country and a small village named Pella.

Pella was crowded with refugees, and the problem of subsistence was grave. The more adventurous pushed on to other havens. Nathan tarried three months, hoping against hope that Baruch would arrive. but Baruch did not come. At last Nathan set out with a score of others for the Lebanon ranges.

In the Lebanon ranges it was possible to live by the sweat of one's brow, and the refugees found the peace of the great mountains and forests very sweet. A tiny log chapel was built in a secluded glen, and the little congregation settled down for an indefinite sojourn. Worship, labor, growth were possible here; life was passing and there was no time to lose. Here was opportunity.

For two years none of them ventured to go anywhere, even into Galilee. Travel was dangerous; shadowy enemies lurked behind every bush and stone. Robbers even threatened the small, secluded community from time to time. But there was little to be had, outside a few worn garments, sandals or a bit of food. But their presence in the area kept the small congregation in a state of perpetual readiness.

Nathan was one of them, heart and soul, and he too was ready for anything—anything except what happened one day as he chanced to be on the outskirts of the settlement. It was a voice, a strange voice.

(Curtain opens. Setting: bushes and wooded area. Nathan stands erect, hears voice, reaches for dagger to defend himself)

*Baruch:* (weak, pleading, as in desperation) Nathan!  
Nathan! don't—don't you know me?

(Continued on page 20)

## Should Women Teach in the Church?

***"I see you have had women preachers. Wasn't Paul against this?"***

The passage you no doubt refer to is in I Cor. 14:34: "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak."

Surface reading of Paul's words in his letter to the Corinthian church does give the impression that the apostle Paul did not allow women to speak in the church. However, the context reveals another thought. In this passage, Paul was addressing a specific issue: not general teaching in the church but *the proper use of the gift of speaking in tongues*.

Apparently some members of the church had been using the gift for unedifying purposes, and *no unedifying speech should be allowed*. To correct the problem, the inspired Apostle saw fit to forbid all women in the church to speak in tongues (it is possible that Paul recognized certain women in the church as major offenders and saw this as the only practical solution; we are not told). At the same time he placed severe restrictions on the use of the gift among the men: 1) only one man should speak at a time, and 2) no man should speak in tongues at any public meeting except an interpreter be present.

These are Paul's words: "How is it, then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a

psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying. If any man speak an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret. But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God."

Then, addressing the women in the church on the same subject, he said, "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak [in an unknown tongue]" (I Cor. 14:26-28, 34).

The expressed purpose of both commands was that all speaking should be "edifying." Unintelligible language uninterpreted might sound impressive but could not be called "edifying."

Had the Apostle been saying that it was wrong for women to speak in the church, he would have been contradicting his own statement made in his letter to the Galatians, in which he wrote that in Christ Jesus "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:28-29.) Paul could not have had one standard for the Galatians and another for the Corinthians; his teaching was never contradictory.

God never has discriminated

against anyone because of any physical differences, whether of race, nationality, color or sex. All are of His own design and creating. The prophet Malachi recognized this fact, when he wrote, "Have we not all one Father? hath not one God created us?" (Mal. 2:10). Whether a believer was a Greek or a Jew, a slave or a master, a woman or a man, did not matter. In the sight of God and among the true believers, all were counted alike; all shared an equal opportunity for salvation. All shared the same privileges in Christ.

The apostle Paul had women helpers in the churches he founded, and some he singled out for special commendation. To the Philippian church he wrote, "I entreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellowlabourers, whose names are in the book of life" (Phil. 4:3). We are not told of the nature of their Christian work, but these women were fellow helpers in the work, worthy of having their names written "in the book of life."

Another time Paul made special mention of Phoebe "our sister, . . . a servant of the church" at Cenchrea (Rom. 16:1) as one to be received as a saint. The Jerusalem Bible describes her as a deaconess in the church, while the New English says "she holds office in the congregation at Cenchrea."

In the same list of salutations,



Priscilla was recognized as a helper with her husband, Aquila, who taught Apollos "the way of God more perfectly" (Acts 18:26). When sending greeting to them at the close of his letter to the church in Rome, Paul even mentioned Priscilla's name ahead of Aquila's, and commended them highly for the self-sacrificing work they were doing in his behalf. "Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. Likewise greet the church that is in their house" (Rom. 16:3-5).

Paul also had honorary mention for "Tryphena and Tryphosa, those women who work hard in the Lord" (Rom. 16:12, NIV).

There is no evidence that Paul excluded women from the work. Where he found women capable of helping with the work of the Lord, he encouraged their participation, for with him all converts, whether men or women, were one in Christ.

Even in Old Testament times, women were not excluded from active roles. We find Miriam, the sister of Moses, described as "a prophetess" in Exodus 15:20. Apparently she was a leader among the women. We read also of Deborah, who judged Israel, and who went to battle with Barak to encourage him (Judges 4 & 5). Huldah was a prophetess in the time of King Josiah, a woman held in sufficient esteem that the king sought her judgment and counsel (II Kings 22:13-20).

The prophetess Hannah expressed God's supremely fair standard of judgment in these words: "For the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed" (I Sam. 2:3). And many years later Peter reinforced the same point, that God's whole interest is in character. These

are his words: "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (Acts 10:34-35). All, whether male or female, are accepted according as they "fear" God (hate what God hates, love what God loves—Prov. 8:13) and "work righteousness."

This passage is meaningfully translated in the Phillips Modern English Bible, "God does not discriminate between people, but . . . in every nation the man who reverences him and does what is right is acceptable to him!"

The Bible gives us no reason for believing that sincere, God-fearing women should be turned away from filling an active and vital role in the church just because they are women. We have no Scriptural authority for limiting the role of leadership to men.

#### • Concerning Jesus' Genealogy

***"From which one of David's sons was Jesus descended? In Matthew 1:6 Jesus' ancestry is traced through Solomon, while in Luke 3:23 it is traced through Nathan."***

Matthew 1:1-16 gives the genealogy of Joseph, whom the Jews considered to be legally the father of Jesus. As Joseph's adopted son, Jesus became his legal heir, so far as his inheritance was concerned. Note carefully the wording of verse 16: "And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ" (see also the New Catholic translation of this text: "Jacob begot Joseph, the husband of Mary, and of her was born Jesus who is called Christ").

The entire succession of ancestors mentioned in the previous verses records the line of Joseph not the

line of Mary (who was Jesus' only human parent). Joseph was "the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus"—he is not said to have begotten Jesus.

Luke 3:23-38, on the other hand, records the genealogy of Mary, all the way back beyond the time of Abraham to Adam. This is implied by the wording of verse 23: "Jesus . . . being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph." Jesus was not the biological or physical son of Joseph, even though this was commonly assumed. It further calls attention to the fact that Mary was the sole human parent through whom Jesus could have a line of ancestors. Her genealogy is thereupon listed, starting with Heli, (who was actually Joseph's father-in-law—Joseph's own father was "Jacob"—Matthew 1:16). Mary's line of descent came through Nathan, a son of David by Bathsheba (or "Bathshua," according to I Chronicles 3:5).

From which of David's sons, then, was Jesus descended? The answer is both Nathan and Solomon, because both lines of descent from David converged in Zorobabel, who was in Mary's direct line of descent. One side descended through Nathan and the other through Solomon (Matt. 1:13; Luke 3:27).

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*WORK is a trait of godliness, for it is following the example of Jesus Himself. He said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (John 5:17). We are called upon to be diligent workers, not slothful shirkers. Even the most menial task can be performed with faithfulness and industry to the glory of God.*

*Thank the Lord that you can work; do your best at your particular job. Remember, an idle mind is the devil's workshop; and idle hands are the devil's tools.*

# Not of This World

*Scripture Lesson: Hebrews 11:8-16*

**Jesus was not in any sense  
"of this world."  
Nothing on which  
He had set His heart  
belonged to  
this world.**

**W**HEN Jesus replied to the questioning Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36), He stated a fact which was true not only of His kingdom but of His whole life. Jesus was not in any sense "of this world." Nothing on which He had set His heart belonged to this world.

What "world" are we speaking of? Not the physical creation but the *cosmos*, the present arrangement, the world's system of things. In the present arrangement, Jesus had no part. He simply did not belong. He was not in any way attached to His environment. Nor did He look to the people around Him for His standards. He was God's Son, and was answerable to God. Though temporarily *in* the world, He was not *of* it. What did other people think? Did they praise, or blame? He did not even notice. It didn't matter.

We can easily imagine that the patriarchs looked like visionaries and fanatics as they left behind the comforts and favorable associations of this world in obedience to the heavenly call; but they believed God. And in so doing they were abandoning the earthly—and perishing—and laying hold of the heavenly—and permanent. That is why it is written that they sought a "better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God" (Heb. 11:16). They belonged not to the world but to God.

The prophets of God were likewise "not of this world." They were *God's* men and represented *His* cause and His domain. Their contemporaries did not like it. They did not like to hear the truth about themselves, that they were stubborn and rebellious, and that God was going to punish them for their sins; but that was the message the prophets were sent to deliver; and as a result, they did not belong.

No doubt the early Christians' bold venture seemed like stark madness to their unbelieving associates. Dared they take up a system of beliefs that the emperor would not recognize, to be part of a little sect that was everywhere spoken against? Yes! it was without question the better part. They simply could not be attracted by the lights around them that flickered briefly in the midst of worldly wealth and power, and then went out in utter darkness. They had seen a new brightness; they were electrified with new power. They were not of this world.

The apostle Paul shared the same sense of "unbelonging," as he indicated in his letter to the Philippians: "Our citizenship is in heaven" (Phil. 3:20, NEB). Peter addressed his brethren as "strangers and pilgrims" (I Pet. 2:11). All the saints had this in common: that they were strangers and pilgrims in the earth (Heb. 11:13). Everything here was incidental, passing, temporary; all that was truly meaningful and vital lay

Note: *Not of This World* is available as a complete church service on cassette. Price: \$3.00



**"They were aliens and strangers on earth . . .  
longing for a country of their own, . . . a better  
country—a heavenly one" —Heb. 11:13, 16, NIV.**

ahead. Let the present world come or go, it mattered not. It was but for a moment, anyway.

This was Jesus' attitude as He communed with His Father that last night in Gethsemane. "They are not of the world," He said, speaking of His disciples, "even as I am not of the world." Wasn't it a high compliment and a confident assurance, more generous than could possibly have been true? for Christ was not the least tempted by the world at this point. It had not the slightest appeal to Him. Its loves, its friendships, its pleasures, its goals meant *nothing* to Him. He had finished His work, and in only a matter of days He would be on the way to His Father's home. With *this* ahead of Him, what mattered the world! Small wonder He could say, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me" (John 14:30).

It was the high point of perfection that His disciples had not reached at that time, yet Jesus was confident that they were on the way. "They are thine," He said, indicating that they belonged to another type and another category of life altogether. "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."

Jesus was stating the ideal, and He was showing that He judges us by our commitment, by the direction in which we are facing, as well as by our actual position on the road. He sees beyond what we are to what we will become, if we continue. His disciples were "not of the world" because they were going a

different direction. That is why He goes on to say, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil" (John 17:15).

He said further, "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth" (John 17:18-19). Sanctified . . . in the world. It would be difficult, but it was not impossible. He had done it, and so could they if they kept themselves zealous and wholehearted. And so He says, Father, they are in the world, but they have accepted Our purposes and Our goals. Help them to devote themselves without any reservation. Let them take their inspiration from Me, so that they will be utterly unable to hold back in this bold venture, so that they will fling themselves into it with all they have and are.

This is our goal. The world can do us no harm except as we let it get *inside*. It is the lesson of the familiar verse:

All the water in the world,  
However hard it tried,  
Could never, never sink a ship  
Unless it got inside.

All the evil in the world,  
Its wickedness and sin  
Can never sink your soul's fair craft  
Unless you let it in.

#### **The "World" Inside**

When we think of the "world," we think immediately of its pleasures

and entertainments, its goals, its pride, the love of money and the things money can buy; "what shall we eat," "what shall we drink," "wherewith shall we be clothed."

But "the world" that concerns us is more than these. It is the lower nature in each of us. It is all our natural likes and desires—which God forbids. It is the life that centers around self—loving ourselves, gratifying ourselves, pleasing ourselves, justifying ourselves, satisfying ourselves, congratulating ourselves.

Here is the world that poses the real problem to us; and we shall not be totally free from its "pull" and its contaminations until we can say "None of self, and all of Thee," until we have exchanged our ways for God's, our thoughts for God's, and our tastes for God's; until we have learned to abhor everything He calls evil and love only what He calls good. Until then, we are, to a greater or lesser extent, part "of the world."

We think of the world in terms of fashion and show, rough speech, and all kinds of un-Christlike behavior. But it is a startling fact that we may not be tempted by any of these and yet be very much a part of the world, as God sees us. The "world" that threatens us is much closer to us than any of these; and we shall find that we must exert a mighty force to overpower it. Very, very easily we may find ourselves playing with the toys of worldliness—and right in the sanctuary of our own minds.

One of the greatest threats of the



**It is not what we have  
but what we love and admire  
that makes us what we are.**

world in us is our strong desire to hold to our own way and our own opinion. We know God wants our *all*, and we have agreed to give it. But it is one thing to *say* and another to *do*; and we give ourselves one flimsy excuse after another for our failures—as though postponing the task would make it easier. We offer God our heart—except for a few forbidden loves we are not quite ready to let go. And we give Him our minds—until we get tired of the constant vigil and relax, and let our thoughts drift here and there, to this or that pettiness, and forget our high calling in Christ. We bridle our words—until something comes up where we feel we just *have* to speak our mind. Oh, the world within us is *strong*.

**Misplaced Love**

And the one underlying problem is this: that we think more of *our* way than of God's. We love ourselves more than we love God.

This is why the command is written in words unmistakable, "Love not the world" (I John 2:15). God wants our heart, our affections, our love. Worldliness, fully diagnosed, is a heart problem.

Even so drastic a step as taking us out of the world would not remove us from the temptation to worldliness because, as we said earlier, worldliness comes not from *without* but from *within*. We have all seen people who claim to be not of the world, and they point out how "separate" they are. They tell you how they don't go there; they

don't do this, and they don't do that—but they sure would love to! This is not godliness. This is worldliness. It is loving the world.

It is not what we *have* but what we love and admire. The poorest person can make an idol of money—simply by admiring those who have it. The simplest, least gifted man can seek the world's praise and honor—all he need do is wish he had it.

This is not saying that everything we naturally desire is wrong. Things can be *rightly*, as well as wrongly used. Food, drink and clothing are necessities of life, and lawful in proper measure; and money, possessions, and ability need not be snares. But all must be used as from God and given to God, for His glory.

The problem of worldliness for us is the problem of desire, of appeal, of "what do I really like?" As Christians we must ask ourselves, What am I living for? Is pleasing myself and getting what I want my highest goal in life, or am I truly living for God? Is my heart set on something here; am I wrapped up in myself, or is my sincere desire to have God approve my life and grant me a place in His kingdom?

Worldliness, in simplest terms, is the desire to satisfy ourselves, to think as we please, say what we please, and do as we please. It is demonstrating that things here mean more to us than the things God has offered. It is saying that we think more of ourselves and our own ideas than of God. James calls it

adultery, because it is disloyalty to God; we are violating our sacred covenant with Him. He writes, "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship (love) of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4).

Here is seen the contrariness of our human nature: that in one sense we despise the world and all that belongs to it, because we know it is headed for destruction; still it appeals to something in our nature to "love" it!

**Choose, Choose**

Life is a series of choices. Each hour of every day we are choosing what we shall do, what we shall say, what we shall read, what we shall think about. We make these choices according to what we like, what we value, what we respect. As our love for God and the life He has offered us increases, we will find that the world within us and around us will have less and less pull upon us.

Let us look again at John's command to "love not the world." John does not leave us to wonder why. The reason for this command lies in the very nature of "the world": it is so fleeting, so transitory. "For the world passeth away, and the lust thereof." Only he who does the will of God "abideth forever" (I John 2:15-17).

What is "the world" as John thinks of it? He says it is known to us in this familiar triad: "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." And John says we cannot love any one of these *and* the Father, for "if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." And if we do not love the Father, the Father will not love us. In the words of the Lord spoken long ago through the ancient prophet of Israel, "Them that honour me I



will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed" (I Sam. 2:30).

Lest we find ourselves outside the Father's love, let us look closely at each part of John's warning.

### **"The Lust of the Flesh"**

John's first two terms include the word "lust." That word bothers us. We would so much prefer that John had used another word, like "desire" or "longing." Aren't we above the level of "lust"?

But "lust" it is, and that is just how God looks at us in our natural, unregenerate state; that is how He thinks of our rebellion against Him, our spirit of self-sufficiency, our pride, our ungoverned desires. Anything we crave that the law of God forbids is a "lust." The Greek Lexicon defines "lust" as intense desire, especially desire for what is forbidden.

There is nothing good about lust. We read that the Israelites in the wilderness lusted "after evil things" (I Cor. 10:6), and the Psalmist says of these same people that God "gave them up unto their own hearts' lust" (Ps. 81:12). Peter wrote that the world is corrupt "through lust" (II Pet. 1:4); and Jude speaks of those who walk "after their own ungodly lusts" (Jude 18). In each case they insisted on their own way, and their own desire, and refused God's.

John speaks of two types of lust that tempt us. The first is what he calls "lust of the flesh."

In a broad sense, we might define a "lust of the flesh" as a desire for anything God forbids. And notice that the lust is the *desire*, the *longing*, not only its gratification. If we would put to death the "lusts of the flesh," we must actually change our desires; besides keeping ourselves from *doing* the wrong, we must not *want* to. We must not have the

Almighty God, Source of all mercies and God of our life, we thank Thee for all Thou hast given, and all that Thou hast promised to give. We thank Thee for the marvels of beauty which surrounds us, and for the providence that goes with us.

Father, we are especially grateful for Thy long-suffering and mercy which is new every morning, giving us yet another opportunity to fulfill our sacred covenant with Thee and do the things we have promised to do. We thank Thee for those who have helped us with our problems, when we needed encouragement and love. We thank Thee for those to whom we may go at any time, with whom we can talk and keep nothing back, knowing they will understand, and help us. We thank Thee for the desire to help others, and to be helped ourselves.

We thank Thee for calling us out of this world, which is doomed and perishing, for revealing to us Thy magnificent plan, giving us new interests, new goals, and new horizons. Help us now to take the next step and remove every vestige of the world from our own hearts—the pride, the selfishness, the jealousy, the strong-headedness to

slightest longing for that which God forbids.

We are all human, and our natural instincts and appetites are not good. In God's sight they are "lusts of the flesh," the things that appeal to our lower nature. Against these every man must battle. It has

which we are prone; and may we grow ever more eager to see ourselves as Thou seest us, so that we may make the drastic change from the old creature to the new. Help us to not spare, but to sever anything which separates us from Thee, however near or dear it may be, that we may belong entirely to Thee and someday be accepted into Thy eternal, heavenly family.

Help us to exchange our ways for Thine, our thoughts for Thine, and our tastes for Thine, until we abhor everything Thou dost call evil and love only what Thou dost call good; until we are in deed and in truth, not of this world. And may the change be so complete that what formerly appealed to us will not get even the smallest part of our consideration, but Thou wilt be all in all.

Give us within our own hearts the peace that passes understanding. Take from us the anxieties which perplex us and the doubts which distract us; and may we know the supreme joy of accomplishment in the divine life, of visible growth into holiness. And may Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth as it is done in heaven. All this we ask through obedience to Thy Word. Amen.

been well said that "Wherever he stands, a man has either to sacrifice his gods to his passions or his passions to his gods." We cannot be subject to both; one must give way to the other. In the words of Jesus, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Either the love of the

## *Let Us Pray*

Father, or the lusts of the flesh, will triumph.

How powerful and persistent are these "lusts of the flesh" is evident from the methods that must be used to overcome them. Paul calls them "earthward inclinations" that must be "mortified" or "put to death" (Col. 3:4-5, Moffatt). Again he says that nothing less than crucifixion will succeed, and crucifixion is always a painful ordeal. They who belong to Christ have "crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts" (Gal. 5:24). We must become "dead to the world," "dead indeed unto sin," until not a breath of the old nature survives; until we "make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof" (Rom. 13:14). So complete will be the change that what formerly appealed to us, what we might like if not restrained by the law of God, will not get even the *smallest* part of our consideration. We will "make *not* provision for the flesh."

The author of the book of James says that everything that tempts us is one or another of our "lusts," i.e., our desire for something God forbids, be it prestige, or honor, or self-pity, or selfishness, or any fleshly gratification. "Every man"—no exceptions—"every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (Jas. 1:14-15).

As long as we are in this mortal state we shall never be entirely free from the temptations of the flesh; but as we progress in the divine life we will find that their intensity lessens, and we will be drawn more and more to the things of God.

Every desire or craving of our nature must be controlled, disciplined, restrained. We are not free to do as we please, we are only free to do *as we ought*; we are only free

*under law*. In the words of the noble Apostle, "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (Gal. 5:17). *Ye cannot do the things that ye would.*

This type of thinking is not popular in this age when the philosophy is "whatever feels good *is* good," but the popular way is never God's. If we would love "the Father" and be part of what shall abide forever, the lusts of the flesh must go.

#### **"The Lust of the Eyes"**

Then John mentions another lust: "the lust of the eyes." Our eyes are

**We are not  
free to do as we  
please  
but only  
free to do as we  
ought.**

marvelous instruments for good, but they can also be instruments to sin. The eye is a gate of the mind; and if not extremely careful, we may, almost without realizing it, open our minds to contamination—through the gate of the eye. What we see becomes, in a small way, a part of us; and that which does not build up tears down.

While we cannot be responsible for everything our eyes see, we are responsible for the thoughts of our mind; and if we would be spiritually-minded, if we would keep our minds pure, we will want, as far as possible, to avoid looking at that which is evil—whether on the printed page, on the billboard, or in real life. We cannot look at things that are unclean,

sordid, immoral, degrading, or impure, and be thinking on what is true, honest, just, pure, and lovely.

To us who are living in the midst of modern-day Babylon, this is a problem of no small dimension. There is no escaping it. However, we can avoid going out into the world as much as possible; and when we must go, we can help ourselves by not "seeing" all there is to see on the street or in the store. Remember, it is the "fool's eyes" that are "in the ends of the earth." What we do not see we do not have to erase from our minds.

Then, too, we can help ourselves by filling our minds so completely with pure, wholesome, and upbuilding thoughts that what our eyes see will hardly register on our minds at all. This was the method used by our founder. He said that when he went out into the world, it was like being in dreamland. He was in another world. He kept his mind so filled with thoughts of the future, things holy, things sublime, that he was lost to the sights and scenes around him.

Even when we are doing our best, our eyes will pick up things we wish they would not, but if our mind is elsewhere, if we are "otherworldly-minded", if we are in the fullest sense "*not of this world*," the scenes of this world will make little or no impression on our minds except to remind us that we are in the last hours of this age, and that soon Babylon and all that pertains to it will fall.

The "lust of the eyes" may also include things that are considered wholesome in this world but which have small or questionable value to us as Christians. In this category may be looking at art for art's sake, beauty for beauty's sake, novelty for novelty's sake. God has given us our eyes to use in filling our minds with His Word and the sights that will



impress us with the glory of His power, the beauty of His handiwork, the wonders of His creation, and the perfection of His plan. We misuse them when we use them for anything less.

### **The Pride of Life"**

Then comes John's third definition of worldliness: "the pride of life." Here is another area of universal danger. It is the desire to be well thought of, or well spoken of, to be consciously seeking the approval of those around us. It reminds us of the apostle Paul's warning "to every man" that is among us not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought, or to value reputation above character (Rom. 12:3).

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But wanting to maintain a favorable image in the eyes of others is as natural as to breathe, though sometimes circumstances show us for what we are. The story is told of a man who bought a new yacht and persuaded his nervous wife to join him for a day of sailing. After the first hour he grew weary of her constant questions and decided to set her at ease. "Look," he said, "I've practiced enough in this harbor to know where every rock and sandbar is." At that moment the boat struck a submerged rock, producing a crunch from stem to stern. "There," he said with a sheepish grin, "that's one of them now."

Very early in life we learn to make the most of ourselves. We see it in the young child who says to his oldsters, "Watch me! Watch what I can do!"

Oh, this "pride of life," of name and face and grace; so offensive in others, so "tolerable," even pleasing, in ourselves. If we could only see it as God sees it; if we would only despise it as God despises it; if we could only realize that by this sinful "pleasure" we are cutting ourselves

off from things eternal!

The pride of life is nothing new; it has been part of the human race in every age and at every level of society. One glories in his assumed importance, another in his skill, another in his wealth. Another harbors a desire for praise, a secret delight at being thought well of. It is, as someone has aptly said, "all the empty vanities of fashion and custom and title and office and uniform and status, the little snobbish impostures into which men tumble. . . . It matters not that before God it will avail us nothing. The mean little ego will still have us out on our stage, prancing and strutting and posturing."

Our founder put it in these straightforward terms: "We parade ourselves before ourselves, and always to our own advantage." It is subtle, it is serious—it is deadly. In reality it is a form of idolatry: self-worship—which God abominates. As a serious thinker has commented, "If my reputation, my 'image,' matters more to me than the glory of God or the well-being of others, the pride of life has

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become the object of my idol-worship. And if in defining my identity I misrepresent the truth, I show myself to be only a pompous fool who has deceived no one."

Only a fool, for life is so soon over and gone. And then what have we? Nothing. It is the penetrating message of history. In the words of the hymn, "Change and decay in all around I see; O Thou, who changest not, abide with me."

Only "He that doeth the will of God abideth forever." Should not our deepest longing, then, be to *do the will of God?*

### **What Does It Mean to "Do the Will of God"?**

It means giving up our identity, our natural self-image, and *God's*. It means asking God to be the authority in our lives; His will to control us, dominate us, rule us. It is asking Him for any circumstance, any test, any sacrifice that will crucify us to the world and the world to us.

Yes, He who is so merciful, so kind, so just, must be given total sovereignty over our lives. And He will require absolute obedience to His Word, absolute submission, absolute love. He will not tolerate any of the self-sins so common to us, self-love, self-indulgence, or self-conceit; nor will He permit us to find any selfish satisfaction in the things we do. Yes, He will take the directing of our life away from us and will reserve the sovereign right to test and discipline us as He chooses. He will even go so far as to strip away from us many of the things we naturally like—which are really harming us. Will we give Him this right?

Unless we can answer an eager "Yes," we are saying that we prefer the world to the Father—and that we do not really want to abide forever.

But who can settle for this? Who

can be satisfied with anything that is temporary?

No, if we truly love life, we will love the Father who is offering us life, and will be ready and eager to give up our will for His.

Someday soon our King will arrive, and what shall we want more when He appears than to be like Him! Can we project ourselves into that auspicious moment in His

presence and see the "lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" as they will look to us then, when we stand before the Judgment seat of Christ?

Oh, let us show that we truly love the Father by putting to death every fleshly feeling and desire. Then when the world passes away "and the lusts thereof," we may be among those who will abide forever. MM

## **The End of the Age**

*(Continued from page 11)*

*Nathan:* (stands silent a moment, gazing straightly at him)  
*Baruch!*

*Baruch:* Oh, Nathan, I—I am weak. (coughs hard) I am sick. Will you—will you take me in?

*Nathan:* Where are your family?

*Baruch:* Dead.

*Nathan:* All dead?

*Baruch:* Every one. They starved to death before my eyes. My children— (silence)

*Nathan:* What do you expect to do now?

*Baruch:* I want to go with you, Nathan. Take me with you!

*Nathan:* (almost in tears) Life is hard here, Baruch. I doubt if—if you could take it, in your condition.

*Baruch:* I've—I've wasted my life. I've made every mistake a man could make. I've been blind and weak and rebellious. Now I want to change my life. I want to be a Christian again. I want to forget all about this terrible thing I have been through and to serve my God the rest of my days, if . . . if . . . He lets . . . me live.

*Nathan:* I'm afraid—(silence)

*Baruch:* (halting speech) A month ago I escaped from the city by night. I hid by day, and crawled by night. When I slept, I dreamed of you and our boyhood days in Galilee. (coughs) When you came to me I was wondering if I should ever see you again. Don't leave me, Nathan! Take me . . . take me . . . take me with you! (whimpering, weak) Take me!

*Narrator:*

Tenderly, Nathan bent over his boyhood friend to give what comfort and assurance he could. By spells Baruch babbled, sometimes incoherently, about the new life which lay ahead of him. He had had his lesson—a terrible lesson. Now he was looking forward to something better. Now he was free, free to live wholly for God. Henceforth nothing should come between him and a life of faithful service.

Suddenly a fit of coughing seized Baruch, and he sank lifeless to the ground.

Nathan stood by, but he could see there was no more he could do for his old friend. A wave of helplessness swept over him, and a pleading cry escaped his lips: "O God, help!"

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# This Ordinary Day

## *Well It May Be . . .*

*If at the closing of such an ordinary day as this I can look back without regret and see that my conduct has been worthy of the Lord's "Well done."*

*If at the end of this day I can see some fruit of the Spirit growing where before had been only a blossom.*

*If I may look back and see that kindness and patience have reigned supreme.*

*If there have been no evil thoughts, no angry words, no jealous feelings.*

*If I have not sat down to the heavenly feast to eat and drink and then rose up to play.*

*If through the varied duties of the day the bright picture of the future never faded from my mind.*

*If at this day's close I can look back on hours whose every moment was redeemed to His glory.*

*If my last waking thoughts this day are of the coming Kingdom and of God.*

*. . . for all unknown to me, this day may be my life's last ordinary day.*

Then kneeling in prayer, he poured out his soul to God. With a heart full of gratitude to God for sparing his life through perilous times and with a deep longing for the Kingdom of Christ, he pleaded for the strength and courage to attain. He wanted above all else to work while he still had time, to remove the last blemish of sin before too late. He wanted above all else to stand someday among the vic-

torious saints and to live with the King he had known as Master so many years ago in Galilee. Nothing of the present could attract him; all his heart and hope were fixed on God. Nothing—absolutely nothing—would he allow to stand between him and securing the everlasting joy that God had promised for a life of faithful service.

MM

*(Continued Next Issue)*

*It is so easy to have our thoughts on things that God would not approve of.*

*I want to remember that whatever I think, say or do, the angels are monitoring my actions. I want to stop and think: Is this to the glory of God?*



## Fires to Fuel, Fires to Fight

"Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth" (Proverbs 26:20).

**T**HESE words were written many centuries ago by a very wise man named Solomon. His subject is simple and still very familiar to us today: fire.

Many of us have had good or bad experiences with fire. At times after building what we thought was a good fire, and leaving it for a short time, we have returned to find the fire out, due to lack of fuel. At other times we have added too much fuel to a fire, making ourselves uncomfortably warm; we should have let it die out. In actual life these are only minor inconveniences and as a rule can be easily rectified. But in our daily Christian living, the task of being a discriminate fireman is not so simple.

In the situation described in King Solomon's proverb it is very important that no fuel be added to the fire. If what we might say would prolong the strife, or make a bad matter worse, it would be wrong to say it. If, however, we could speak a gentle word which would turn away wrath, we would be equally guilty if we refrained from speaking.

The point is this: an experienced fireman knows when to add fuel to the fire, and when to let the fire die.

When should we *not* add fuel to the fire? We have just mentioned one such time, in the case of strife.

It is so natural, if we see someone stirred up, to add ever so little to the fire. But we would refrain, if we remembered the words of another proverb of King Solomon, "A soft answer turneth away wrath" (Prov. 15:1).

An all too familiar instance where we are likely almost unknowingly to add fuel to the fire is in gossiping or talebearing. Who can say he is entirely innocent? Gossip has been well defined as putting two and two together and making it five. Over the ages many innocent men have lost their lives because of a false tale told about them. We are all familiar with the story of Naboth, whose vineyard King Ahab wanted to add to his estate (I Kings 21), and who was stoned to death because of false witnesses hired by Jezebel. While no one professing to keep God's law would ever go that far, it behooves us to be extremely careful that we add not the slightest fuel to the fire of gossip. George Eliot once said, "A cruel story runs on wheels and every hand oils the wheels as they run." We all know from our own experience how true that saying is. A story may be almost unrecognizable after being repeated a few times.

Another form of evil related to gossip much more subtle yet equally

dangerous before God is flattery. Someone once said: "Of all wild beasts, preserve me from a tyrant; and of all tame, from a flatterer." We cannot always prevent someone flattering us, yet we need not feel flattered. But there is a form of flattery still worse and which we can and must prevent: flattering ourselves. The Psalmist said of the wicked man: "He flattereth himself in his own eyes, until his iniquity be found to be hateful" (36:2). May we never be guilty of adding fuel to this fire.

There is another fire which must constantly have fuel added to it, one which must *not* be allowed to go out. That is the fire of zeal in the cause of the Eternal. The five foolish virgins in Jesus' parable found themselves short of fuel at a critical time—and when they were unable to replenish it—a fatal mistake. But the five wise virgins had a plentiful supply of fuel and they kept the fire burning brightly.

Sometimes our fire of enthusiasm burns low, the wood just about gone. At such times let us be quick to add fuel to the fire. Remember, *there is no shortage of fuel at the Supply House!* Emerson said: "Nothing great was ever accomplished without enthusiasm."

We need enthusiasm for every

aspect of our Christian work. Especially do we need enthusiasm to build up our faith, and to fling aside the clinging weights of our besetting sins. Here is a fire which will take all the fuel we can obtain. We should follow the example of a famous fireman of the past, the apostle Paul. He never allowed his fuel to become depleted but always had it ready for instant use. "I press toward the mark," he said; "so fight I"; "stand fast therefore"; "quench not the spirit"; "thou therefore, my son, be strong." These phrases show Paul's unwavering enthusiasm for the work of the Lord; and in the end he could say, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (II Tim. 4:7-8).

One important time we must add fuel to the fire is when we are individually reprov'd. It may seem at such a time that the fire is hot enough—too hot; still more fuel may be needed. The extra heat is necessary if we would burn away the dross, leaving the pure gold for the Master's use. Says the wise author of the book of Proverbs again, "Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee: rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee" (Prov. 9:8).

Another fire to which we frequently neglect to add the necessary fuel is the fire of joy. Did you ever stop to think how many times the words "joy" or "joyful" are used in the Bible? "Great joy," "exceeding joy," "joy unspeakable and full of glory"; "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall be joyful in my God"; "The sons of God shouted for joy." "Joyful" is defined as "full of joy, showing joy, causing joy." In order to impart joy to someone else

we must be full of joy ourselves.

How much we could help and encourage others in the way to salvation if we added more fuel to our fire of joy. Let us not neglect this fire, for it will not only increase our

happiness now and our usefulness in the Christian way of life, but will materially increase our chances of obtaining joy and gladness in the age to come, when sorrow and sighing shall be gone forever. MM

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## Announcement

THE New Year is coming—this year with the evening of Sunday, March 29, Bible time being counted from evening to evening (Lev. 23:32).

At this time, members and friends of the Megiddo Church will set aside a special day in honor of Christ, our coming King and Ruler, to give recognition to His past, present, and future work in our behalf. The heavenly Father chose to honor Christ at the time of His birth by sending angels to the shepherds—shouldn't we do our part?

Abib First is also another landmark in our journey: the beginning of the Sacred New Year and an appropriate time to reconsecrate ourselves to God.

Thirteen days later (Abib 13, this year on Friday evening, April 10) we will commemorate the anniversary of our Lord's Supper, and the morning of April 13 (Abib 15) will be observed as the anniversary of Christ's triumph over death and the grave.

Pentecost this year is June 1.

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## Lying With Our Ears

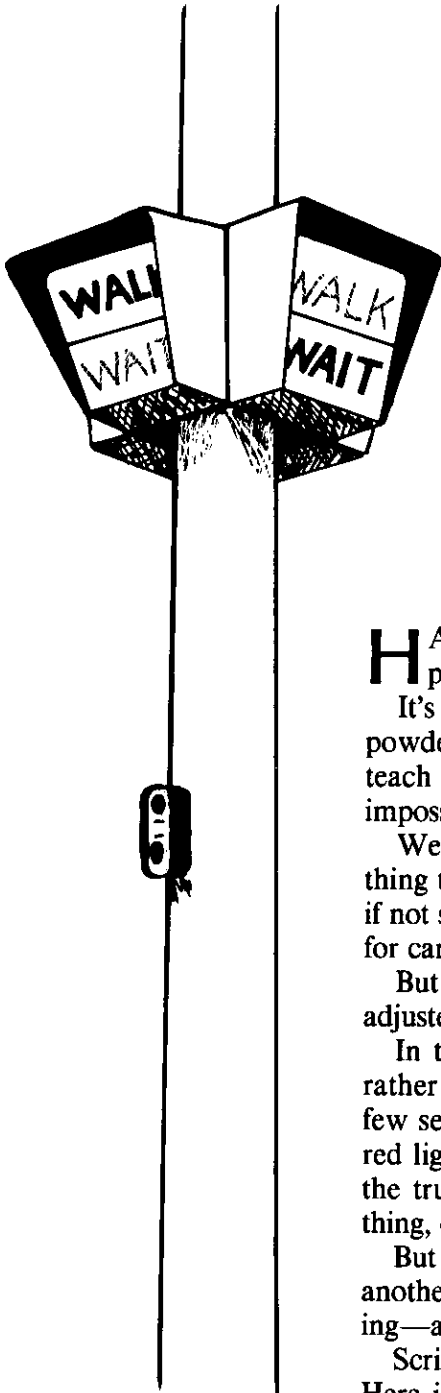
(Continued from page 2)

How well are we listening? What steps are we taking to improve our listening?

The book of James offers this sound advice to each one of us: "Knowing this, then, dear brothers, let every man be quick to listen but slow to use his tongue, and slow to lose his temper. For man's temper is never the means of achieving God's true goodness" (Jas. 1:19-20, Phillips). And Jesus said, "If any man have ears to hear, let him hear. And he said unto them, Take heed what ye hear" (Mark 4:23-24). MM

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*Give me wide walls to build my house of life—  
The North to be of love against the winds of fate;  
The South of tolerance, that I may outreach hate;  
The East of faith that rises new each day;  
The West of hope that shines with glorious ray.  
The threshold 'neath my feet shall be humility,  
The roof—the very sky itself—infinity;  
Give me wide walls to build my house of life.*



# WALK or WAIT

**H**AVE you heard the so-called American Prayer? "Lord, give me patience . . . and I want it right now!"

It's hard for people accustomed to frozen dinners, instant soups, powdered orange juice, pre-fab houses and freeway express lanes to teach themselves or anyone else how to wait. In fact, it's next to impossible.

We think such and such ought to happen right away. We see something that needs to be done and think it should be done immediately, if not sooner. We want what we want *now*. We even object to waiting for cars when we must cross the street.

But have you ever noticed that God's heavenly timetable cannot be adjusted by anyone on earth? He wants us to learn to wait.

In things temporal and things spiritual, waiting is the rule of life, rather than the exception. The green lights in life are only for just a few seconds. The rest of the time, it seems, is filled with yellow and red lights flashing WAIT! WAIT! WAIT! Waiting is difficult and if the truth were known, some of us would rather do just about anything, even the wrong thing, than wait.

But if you have felt this way, perhaps you've also discovered another very important lesson: there is only one thing worse than waiting—and that's wishing you had.

Scripture gives us a very important lesson in the example of Saul. Here is a man who learned the high cost of *not waiting*. If he were able to be resurrected and appear before us today, Saul would probably tell us, "It is better to wait than to wish you had."

Saul was chosen by God to be the king of Israel. He started his reign by defeating the Ammonites, but after that victory it was all downhill. In chapter 13 of First Samuel, a Philistine invasion threat-



ened Israel. In desperation, Saul assumed the role of the priest and offered sacrifices himself. He did this in defiance of God's clear command to wait for Samuel (I Sam. 10:8).

After Saul made this move, we see three results of not waiting on the Lord:

- 1) He disregarded God's authority
- 2) He justified his disobedience
- 3) He lost God's blessing and favor.

Even today these are still the disastrous results of not waiting upon God, even as they were for Saul.

### **Saul Disregarded God's Authority**

The first result is found in I Samuel 13:8-12. In not waiting for the Lord, Saul went directly away from the Word of God. He clearly paid no attention to what he knew was God's command.

Now before we get too harsh on Saul, let's look at why he did this. First of all, we see that when God didn't move according to Saul's expectations, Saul panicked. Saul was in a hurry. Samuel didn't arrive, and Saul took matters into his own hands by offering the sacrifices. Second, Saul looked at the scene in which he had been chosen to act (which indeed looked bleak) instead of looking to the God who was directing the drama.

What we focus our eye upon determines our course of action. An experienced carpenter tells one of the greatest lessons he learned: that when you are going to hammer a nail, you always watch the nail, never your thumb holding the nail. That's because you always hit what you watch. In the same way, we should focus on God and His Word; then we won't miss the mark or move ahead of it.

This is where Saul failed. He looked at the situation and judged that it was time for action, instead

of waiting for God to act. On the surface his reasons are very understandable.

But regardless of why Saul moved ahead of God, no matter how understandable his "reasons" in human terms, the results were that he blatantly chose his own way instead of the path that God commanded. Today, it is often "understandable" to us why we don't "wait on the Lord," but it's no less wrong for us than it was for Saul.

### **Saul Justified His Disobedience**

The second result of not waiting for the Lord is most insidious, because it leads to deception. We begin to rationalize our reasons for not waiting and try to convince ourselves, others, and even the Lord, that there was a very good reason for what we did. It was even mandatory that we not wait for the green light.

This is exactly what Saul did. He excused his behavior by pointing out that the people were scattered, Samuel didn't show on time, and the Philistines had a great number of people. Actually, these looked like pretty good reasons, and the people around him may have urged him to do exactly what he did. What was wrong was that it was a direct violation of God's command.

This is something for us to remember, that any word from the Lord always comes FIRST. Whatever men may say, one word from the Lord must always mean more—ininitely more—than all the words of all the men in the world combined.

Saul disobeyed; and then, instead of humbly admitting his error before the Lord, he rationalized his actions. He didn't claim that he had misunderstood the instructions. He *defended* what he had done.

### **Saul Lost God's Blessing and Favor**

The third result of not waiting on God is that we lose the blessing we could have had. And if we persist in our own way, we end up with nothing at all.

When we fail to wait, fail to trust, we lose what we could have had. But praise be to God, if He sees we are sincere and earnest, He gives us time to repent and turn—if we will. If you don't believe this, look at David, Jeremiah, and a host of others in the Bible. God works with us where we are and helps us get where we need to be. But we must take the first step. We must approach Him with a true spirit of repentance, demonstrating our implicit trust and obedience and showing Him our willingness to cooperate with Him.

It is important, while we learn to wait on God, to remember what He has done in our past. Too easily we lose our perspectives and get impatient. But when we take the time to see God's perfect timing in the past, we gain hope for the future while we are waiting for His green light. The Psalmist put it well when he said, "The Lord bestows favor and honor; no *good* thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless" (Ps. 84:11, NASB).

A good accompaniment for waiting is rejoicing. Paul said to "Re-

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joy in the Lord alway; and again I say, Rejoice" (Phil. 4:4). We often fail to realize that Paul was in prison at the time he wrote this epistle. How strange it would sound if he should have written, "I want you to rejoice, my brethren. I'd be rejoicing, too, if I hadn't had to sit so many days in this cold, damp, miserable prison."

No, while he was waiting he was rejoicing. Rejoicing helps us keep a positive perspective. It is very difficult to be impatient or negative when we are rejoicing. Rejoicing not only helps us maintain our perspective, it forces us to remember that we are trusting God and that He is in control.

Waiting can do one of two things. It can make us bitter or it can make us better. When we rejoice we are showing that God has allowed a delay in our lives to make us better.

With each new situation we have the opportunity to wait on the Lord. It's not easy. It means more patience, more courage, more trust. But how much better, instead of having to correct things after the fact, to learn to walk or wait with the Lord at His command.

Perhaps we should change that "American" prayer to read: "Lord, give me the patience to wait as You teach me patience." MM

## Are You Welcome?

(Continued from page 7)

and let live." He will realize that others beside himself need consideration, and will do his best to be fair in all his dealings.

This man or woman of integrity also will not be influenced by bribes. "He does not take a bribe against the innocent." It is another statement of his inner honesty. He does not do anything solely for the benefit

of himself. He thinks of the other person as well. And he is not susceptible to outside influence or corruption. He makes his decision honestly, on the basis of his own solid principles, and then stands his ground.

Now look back at this Psalm and see how much our words have to do with this ideal person David has been describing.

- His words are *truthful*, even if no one hears: he "speaks truth in his heart."

- His words are *restrained*: he will not slander or insult another.

- His words are *respectful*: he "honors those who fear the Lord."

- His words are *reliable*: he abides by his promise., even if he must suffer for it.

### In Closing . . .

What about this wonderful person David has been discussing? What is the special blessing he will enjoy?

First, he is the answer to David's opening question: He is the one who will be welcomed into the very presence of God.

Second, his honored position in the presence of God will never be challenged. In fact, his whole future will be assured: "He who does these things will never be shaken."

He who does "these things"—this refers to an entire life based upon these principles of integrity, righteousness, and truth. The one who reaches this standard will "never be shaken," "never be moved," "never fail." This does not mean that such a one will never have problems, never experience conflict, never suffer loss. But it does mean that his end will be stable. His end will be assured—even eternal life.

"He that doeth these things shall never be moved" (KJV). Such a one will never be removed from his place in the Divine presence. He will never lose his welcome.

It is said that just north of Los Angeles is a very high observation tower. Visitors can ride an elevator to the top and enjoy a magnificent view of the entire area. What many do not know is that the tower was designed to have a sway factor of seven feet in either direction at its highest point. That means that in the event of an earthquake or high winds, the tower is built to be able to sway back and forth a total of 14 feet without danger. The tower definitely will be shaken, but the foundation will remain secure; and because of that security, the tower will last.

This is what David says of the true believer who shall "never be moved." He may have to feel some sharp wind, some severe shaking, but he will be secure because of his sure foundation, because God has accepted him.

He shall never—*never* be moved—and *never* is a long time, even an eternal duration. Never through all eternity shall he be moved. Never will he suffer eternal death, but will enjoy a life and glory that will continue to expand through all eternity. MM

## You

You are your greatest investment. The more good you store in that mind of yours, the more you enrich your experience, the more people you meet, the more good books you read, and the more places you visit, the greater is that investment in all that you are. Everything that you add to your peace of mind, and to your outlook on life, is added capital that no one but yourself can dissipate. —Selected.

## Obstacle Or Pathway?

**L**IFE is not all easy. Life is not all as we would design it to be. The problems are many—a disagreeable job, an abnormal child, poor health, family problems, financial crises, or any number of other circumstances.

Our Christian faith teaches us, however, that it is not our circumstances but our *response* to those circumstances that determines our character.

How can we control our response to our circumstances? By how we look at them, accept them, and make them work for us.

This is the art that all of God's people in all ages have engaged in. What did David do when he was being pursued night and day by an enemy who had no just cause to be an enemy? How did the apostle Paul view shipwreck, beatings, imprisonment, and stoning? Were they hopeless setbacks?

How did Peter feel about imprisonment and separation from his brethren? How did Paul and Silas respond to being whipped and put into prison?

What was Jesus' attitude during that supreme trial in Gethsemane?

In all cases, they turned their obstacles into a pathway upon which to go forward. If circumstances barred one course of action, they simply pursued another course.

All of them found that by accepting the circumstances they could not change and making the best of them, recognizing that God was in control of their lives, they could make an obstacle into a pathway.

Can we not do the same? Just as God was with them, so He will be with us, giving us vision and strength for whatever we encounter. We have His perspective, His power, and His promise.

Remembering this, we should not see our reverses or problems as tragedies, but rather as the making of our triumph. The promise still stands: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28).

God can make every obstacle into a pathway to Himself. Every crisis rightly used can bring us nearer to Him.

MM



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