

Megiddo Message

A photograph of a cemetery under a clear blue sky. In the foreground, a large, dark grey tombstone with a decorative border is prominent. It features a white rectangular plaque with a biblical quote. Behind it, several other tombstones are visible, including one for 'DONISH', 'RILEY', 'STRAAT', and 'SCHLOTTMAN'. A large, leafy tree with white blossoms stands in the middle ground, partially obscuring the background. The grass is green with some small white and yellow flowers.

*"He will swallow up death in
victory; and the Lord God
will wipe away tears from off
all faces" — Isaiah 25:8*



Lord, Keep Me Tuned

*O Source of all true harmony,
Keep me tuned!*

*Permeate the atmosphere of my soul with goodness.
Let not an attitude or relationship of mine
be lacking the spirit of Christ.*

*May my outward conduct always display
my unshakable dependence on You.*

*Cause my trust to grow increasingly stronger,
My grip on Your hand to be tight and firm
when heaviness of soul is my lot.*

*Give me grace to always wait Your time,
With infinite understanding and confidence
that You know best in all things.*

*Bolster me daily with an unstaggering faith
in Your eternal purposes; I must never forget
the reason I am living.*

*Stir in me a constant inward fervency
to do Your will—no matter what the cost to me.*

*The Kingdom will be cheap at any price
that I may have to pay to get there.*

*O Source of all true harmony,
Keep me tuned!*

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 life, all men, and all things.

We believe

—in the Bible as our only source of knowledge about God and His purposes and plans for the salvation of humankind.

We believe

—in Jesus 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 humankind 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 applying the precepts and principles of the Word of God in our own lives, in this way 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*

NASB—*New American Standard Bible*

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*

Megiddo Message

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Feature	
LORD, KEEP ME TUNED	2
Articles	
THERE IS A WAY OUT!	4
All hope of future life depends upon a physical, bodily resurrection	
WHAT IS YOUR LIFE?	8
On the meaning and purpose of life	
Drama	
THE RUNAWAY'S RETURN (Part Three)	10
In Paul's Hired House	
Article	
HOW TO AVOID SPIRITUAL ANEMIA	14
The most common cause of spiritual anemia is spiritual malnutrition	
Sermon	
WHEN YOU CAN'T CROSS OVER JORDAN	18
Getting the most from life's disappointments	
Editorial	
TOO LITTLE . . . TOO BIG	23
If we are not humble, God will not be able to use us	
Questions and Answers	
Concerning:	
What about Divorce?	24
Christ Our Pascal Lamb	25
Article	
THE WEDGE	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.

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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.

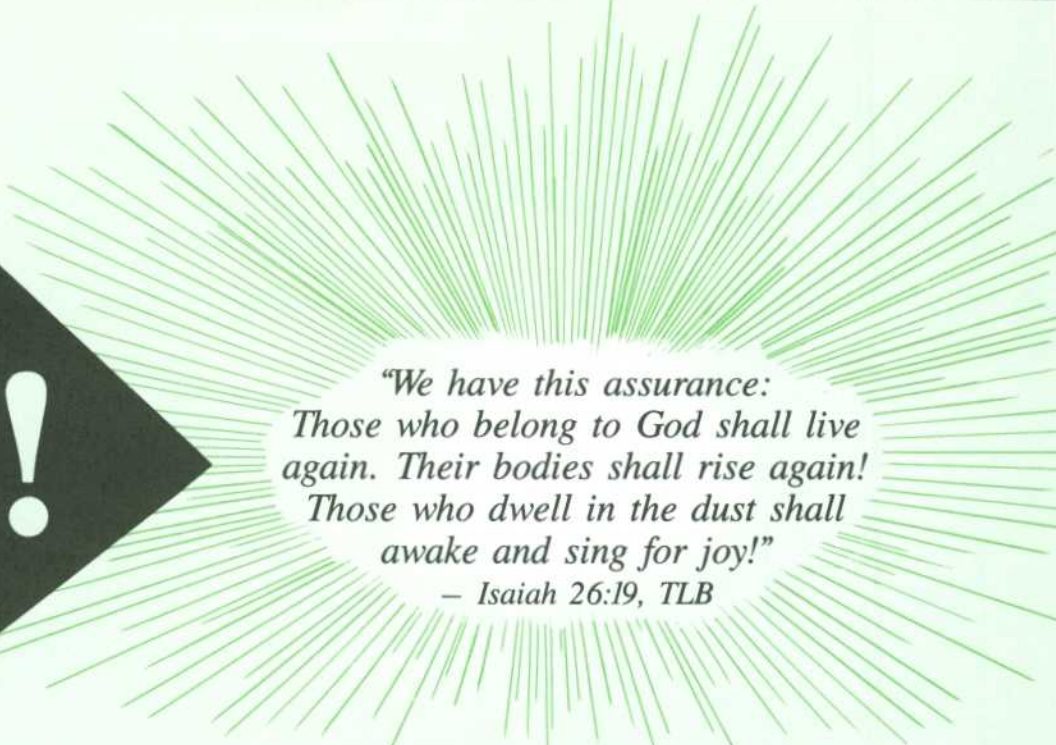


There **IS** A Way

*“He will swallow up death in victory; and
the Lord God will wipe away tears
from off all faces” — Isaiah 25:8*



OUT!



*"We have this assurance:
Those who belong to God shall live
again. Their bodies shall rise again!
Those who dwell in the dust shall
awake and sing for joy!"*

— Isaiah 26:19, TLB

"Infant Dies As Fire Rages Through Home"... "Famous Doctor Succumbs at 82"... "Four Youths Killed in Auto Collision"... "108 Die in China Jet Crash"

We have seen headlines like these so many times that we are no longer shocked. We agree that the tragedy is sad, and forget it.

Still, none of us like to think about death, our own death or the death of someone we love. Its utter finality and the sharp sorrow of separation causes us to avoid the painful subject as much as possible.

Yet death, in the present arrangement, is inevitable; and given the continuation of things as they are, all of us will come to it.

But death need not be the end. There IS a way OUT, and that way out is *the way of resurrection*. The "dead in Christ shall rise" (I Thess. 4:16). The same God who gave life in the beginning can restore it and *will*. This is the hope of resurrection, and it is vital to every sincere, truehearted believer. Christ has shown the way. Because He lives, we too may live. There IS a way out. There IS life beyond death; there IS hope, and that hope is just as real, just as certain, just as sure as that tomorrow's sun will rise.

It is sure because it is the promise of the God of heaven.

This is what our faith is all about. God has given us this life to get ready—not to DIE but to LIVE. He has provided a means whereby we can escape this vale of mortality and ultimately triumph over death so that we can say with the victors, "O death, where is thy sting! O grave, where is thy victory!" (I Cor. 15:55).

Yes, there IS a way OUT!

(Continued on next page)

*It has been said
that death has a
thousand doors of
entrance, but it has
only one exit.
We want to find
that one exit.*

*The sooner we
face the facts about
death, the sooner
we can come to
grips with the real
issues of life, and
use our present
life to prepare
for more life.*

A young bomber pilot in World War II just before taking off on a critical mission is said to have lit a match in the presence of his chaplain. After blowing it out, the young man asked the chaplain, "Now tell me, man to man, is this what happens to us when we die?"

A modern song writer a few years ago put the same question to music, in these words: "Is this all there is?"

The question was on the mind of Job centuries ago when he asked, "If a man die, shall he live again?"

It is a question that touches each of us. We breathe and eat and sleep and wake and work day after day after day, in the blind expectation that everything will always continue as it is. We know, of course, that it will not. But we think somehow that by closing our eyes to the facts we can keep them from happening—at the least, postpone them.

Ours is a death-denying culture, as though pretending it does not exist could do away with the reality. We treat death as an unmentionable catastrophe which only happens to "other" people. It is the old truism that "All men think all men mortal but themselves."

Cosmetics, face lifts, the frenzied search for the mythical "fountain of youth," the idolizing of youthfulness—all are visible evidences of our culture's inability to deal with the orderly process of decay.

What is wrong with this philosophy of denial? Precisely this, that it is dishonest. Beside that, it is bound to fail. The philosophy has nothing to offer but disappointment and frustration. And these are hardly assets in any life.

Facing the Facts

There is just no virtue in denying the facts of life and death. At the very least, truth has a persistent way of challenging those who ignore it, and the sooner we face the facts as

they are, the better for us. The sooner we face the facts about death, the sooner we can come to grips with the real issues of life, and use our *present* life to prepare for *more* life.

This is what God intends us to do.

Given the normal course of time as we know it, we shall every one die, and the world will go on without us, much as it did before we were born. To acknowledge this is not to be morbid; it is simply to see life as it is—so that we can grasp our opportunities before too late. In fact, an honest facing of our own personal mortality is the strongest single factor in bringing us to seek God and the reward He offers. We know that we shall die; we know that we shall *need* a way OUT. And if we have not taken the proper steps *in advance*, we shall find we do not have a way out when we need it most.

God knows us mortals. He knows how to get our attention. He knows how we are repelled by the idea of death. He knows how much we love life, and it is to this inborn love of life that He appeals. "He that will love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile" (I Pet. 3:10). In other words, He says, "You who love life, you who want to live many days, do this...and this...and you *will* live—forever!" Could He possibly offer more than this?

Apart from this message of hope from God, what have we? The answer is *nothing*. What do we have to look forward to apart from God? Again, the answer is *nothing*. Apart from God, about all we can look forward to is the meaning we can cull from our daily routine, the short-lived pleasures we derive from work and rest, from challenge and achievement, from winning and losing. It is all good while it lasts, but when it is over, what then? For we know where it all inevitably ends—in decline and death.

The more deeply we root ourselves in this world, the more deeply we root ourselves in the soil of despair. Our salvation lies in being able to step lightly on the soil of the present, ready to leave it at a moment's notice. At the same time we should transplant our affections from the present into eternity. We attach ourselves to despair if we attach ourselves to the things that are seen. But the more we become friends of God and righteousness, the more and more clearly we see the things we hope for, and the more strongly we are drawn to their reality. In the light of this hope, the present becomes a time and place where our salvation is to be worked out, a time to be taken with all seriousness, fear and trembling. It is our one and only opportunity to prepare for the *real* world which lies ahead, the "world to come, whereof we speak" (Heb. 2:5). The sooner we grasp the fact and go to work in earnest, the better.

To acknowledge our human condition and face the facts honestly and squarely will benefit us even now. For as we attach our lives to that which is infinite, as we give ourselves wholly to God and His cause and the development of the higher life within us, we gain immeasurably more in present happiness and genuine good than we can find in any other way, besides securing for ourselves a place in the eternal future which God has in store for all His faithful servants. For "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (I Cor. 2:9).

After Death...

The Bible positively asserts that we are mortal, that when we die we are dead—body, soul, personality and all. We read:

"For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing;

they have no further reward, and even the memory of them is forgotten. Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in the grave, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom" (Eccl. 9:5, 10, NIV).

"Do not put your trust in princes, in mortal men, who cannot save. When their spirit departs, they return to the ground; on that very day their plans come to nothing" (Ps. 146:3-4, NIV).

The patriarch Job describes man as mortal, subject to death: "Shall mortal man be more just than God?" (Job 4:17, KJV).

The dead cannot praise. "It is not the dead who praise the Lord, those who go down to silence" (Ps. 115:17, NIV). Isaiah also was specific: "For the grave cannot praise you, death cannot sing your praise; those who go down to the pit cannot hope for your faithfulness. The living, the living—they praise you, as I am doing today; fathers tell their children about your faithfulness" (Isa. 38:18-19, NIV).

The book of Ecclesiastes gives statement upon statement as to the vanity of life, comparing human life to that of the beasts. There is no enduring profit without God. "Man's fate is like that of the animals; the same fate awaits them both: As one dies, so dies the other. All have the same breath; man has no advantage over the animal. Everything is meaningless. All go to the same place; all come from dust, and to dust all return" (Eccl. 3:19-20, NIV).

The belief that we possess an immortal soul has been handed down for centuries. Long before the time of Christ, the Greeks and Romans believed it. "All men's souls are immortal," stated Socrates of Greece. He believed death to be the soul's great friend, a deliverance from bodily

(Continued on page 13)

*God knows
how to get our
attention. He
knows how we are
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idea of death. He
also knows how
much we love life.
To our inborn
love of life
He appeals.*

*All hope of
future life hinges
upon a physical
resurrection.*

*Outside the
Bible, there
is no concrete
answer to the
meaning of life.
But between
its covers there
is an answer.*

*Life, as
given by God,
has meaning,
purpose, and
destination.*

What Is Your Life?

EVERYONE at some time, soon or late, asks this question. When God's servant James asked it—nearly twenty centuries ago—he was pondering life's brevity. And we today, surrounded as we are by sickness, disease, and death, are continually impressed with the same reality. We, too, can say, "Your life, what is it? You are no more than a mist, seen for a little while and then dispersing" (Jas. 4:14, NEB).

Perhaps we are inclined to think of the next life as the great uncertainty, but in this we are mistaken. It is *this* life about which we can make no precise calculation. The life to come *is certain*, provided we comply with the conditions laid down by the Giver of life; *this* life is the *uncertainty*. No one living now has any claim upon even the next moment. No one can predict with the least certainty what will happen at six o'clock tomorrow morning, or seven o'clock tomorrow night. Our home, standing so firm and secure today, may lie in ruins tomorrow, crumbled by earthquake, explosion, fire, or any other destructive force. The good health on which we base our plans for the future may be gone in a moment and we find ourselves struck down by any one of a thousand diseases that we are subject to, with only a short while to live. Truly, what *is* our life, it is so fragile!

Do we talk about *security* in this world? It is only a dream, an illusion. Again the book of James says it well: "Now, you who say: 'We are going to such-and-such a city today or tomorrow. We shall stay there a year doing business and make a profit!' How do you know what will happen tomorrow? What, after all, is your life? It is like a puff of smoke visible for a little while and then dissolving into thin air. Your remarks should be prefaced with, 'If it is the Lord's will, we shall still be alive and shall do so-and-so.' As it is, you get a certain pride in yourself in planning your future with such confidence. That sort of pride is all wrong" (James 4:13-16, Phillips).

But to recognize the fragility of life does not answer our question. We demand to know more: What is life? Why are we here? Where are we going?

Mankind has made massive, sometimes reckless, attempts to discover the answers. But most of it has been fruitless, disappointing, and disillusioning. And the question remains: "What is life?"

Outside the Bible, there is no concrete answer to the meaning of life. But between its covers there *is* an answer. Life, as given by God, has meaning, purpose, and destination.

What is life?

FIRST of all, life is a SCHOOL, a training, a probation. God is looking for individuals who will meet His standards. God has plans for this earth. "He created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited" (Isa.

45:18). He has planned to fill the earth with His glory, with men and women worthy of the honor, and He will have the best. But that best must be developed; it is not a product occurring in nature.

That is the purpose of this life. Each person is, as it were, in training. God is disciplining him, to develop the high quality of character He is seeking. He is testing him, finding out what is in him, what he is worth, what are his weaknesses, his strengths, his desires. To do this God gives a limited measure of life, but with opportunities unlimited. If he makes the right use of his limited possibilities during a short life, God will see fit to give him *more* life, even life unlimited!

You must admit that this makes sense, that it explains life's vicissitudes, its joys, and its sorrows. Before manufacturers undertake the mass production of a device, they thoroughly test it and try it out, to see what it is worth. If it proves worthwhile, then they proceed to put more effort and money into it.

Will God be less wise? He who created us, who gave us life and all that we have, desires first to prove our worth, our value, before He invests more heavily in us. Thus, all of life becomes a *test*, a probation. Every word, every action, every attitude, every thought becomes significant. Why? because we are on trial. And what will be the result? Will we prove faithful? Will we prove worthy of God's greater blessings? Will we prove ourselves fit material for His eternity? If we fail, He will find another to take our place.

THEN there is a second answer to our question: Life is a **CONFLICT**. Conflict is vital to survival; where there is no conflict, no struggle, there is no real life.

This is true to an extent for everyone, but it is more pronounced in the

lives of those who are making a serious effort to please God and to prepare for life in His Kingdom. If there are two contrasting things in the world, they are the ways of God and our ways. And when we try to change our ways to be like His, we experience conflict. It is the battle between the earthly and the heavenly, the old and the new, the flesh and the spirit.

We are all aware of this inner struggle, often more fierce than any number of outside battles against poverty, physical distress, bad social conditions, and unhappy domestic situations. And it is continual, for "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). The apostle Paul himself experienced this conflict: "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing:...for the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do....I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me" (Rom. 7:18-19, 21).

What does the conflict do for us? It sharpens our spirit; it strengthens our mettle; it breaks our stubbornness and subdues our will to God's.

THEN there is a third meaning of life which we learn from a study of God's Word: Life is a **PREPARATION**.

Life is not one long journey with its destination the grave. This present life is but the first mile of a journey which can be eternal.

Therefore, life is a preparation. "If thou prepare thine heart, and stretch out thine hands toward him," wrote the patriarch Job (11:13-15), then someday we can be "secure because there is hope." But first, the preparation.

*No one living
now has any claim
upon even the
next moment.*

"Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel," warned the prophet Amos. And how can we make our life a preparation? Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Isa. 55:6-7).

Were we to start out traveling, would we decide to make the trip one minute and start the next? Not if we could do otherwise. If we were able, we would plan in advance. We would plan our food, clothing, lodging, routes, and time. We would prepare.

The same preparation is necessary in our spiritual lives. We must use this life to *prepare to live*. Before we can reap eternal life in the world to come, we must prepare, we must meet God's pre-ordained standard. "If ye will obey my voice and keep my covenant..." All depends on our response: "If..."—if we do well with our test, our conflict, our period of preparation.

If we do, then we shall be ready for the next step, for *real life* in the glorious, eternal Kingdom on earth, when God's will is done here as now it is done in heaven.

What is life? A school, a conflict, a preparation—it has one goal, the developing of the perfect and holy character upon which God will bestow His measureless, eternal blessings, even life forevermore.

What a life that will be!

MM

The Runaway's Return

Part III

Scene 4 In Paul's Hired House

Characters:

Paul the apostle

Onesimus young household servant of Philemon

Soldier

Setting:

Paul's hired house in Rome. Paul and Onesimus face each other across a rude table. Onesimus has writing materials before him. The soldier in the corner is bored and listless.

Paul: Onesimus, my son, I want you to know how very much I appreciate your help. With so much writing to do to the various churches, and my eyes getting worse all the time, God was very good to send me a strong, capable young helper like you. Right now you are my only support. Everyone else has been sent away on church business...Titus, Mark, Aristarchus, even Luke is away. I hope nothing will happen to take you away.

Onesimus: And I much more, my father. The debt is all on my side. You have done so much for me that I can't even express it, let alone repay it. Life wears a brighter face now that I live in a better world.

Paul: And working for a *still* better life, my son, *eternal* life.

Onesimus: True, Brother Paul, true. (pause) Someday, when I have more courage, I must tell you something of my past.

Paul: (gently) Have I asked? The past is something to forget, Onesimus, except for the lessons it teaches. "Forgetting the things which are behind, and reach-

ing forth unto the things which are before," we press toward the mark of perfection.

Onesimus: (total silence)

Paul: But if there is something in the past which stands in the way of our spiritual growth, some wrong which can be righted, every sin must be confessed to God; and if amends are due to our fellowman, they must be made, no matter how much it hurts. So, you see, the past is not always so easy to escape. One cannot lay it down at will, if there are things to be made right.

But now, to business. I need you to write a short note for me, acknowledging a gift.

You know, Onesimus, things are not what they used to be, and it is a good thing for me, to keep me from growing proud and independent. The time was when I earned my own living and asked nothing of any man. I preached the gospel without charge, and helped those who were in need out of my own pocket. I never thought the day would come when I would be dependent on others, but it has come, and it teaches us how uncertain are the things of this life.

Well, anyway, here's the letter (Paul stands, paces across stage and back again).

Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ,...(Onesimus begins to write as Paul dictates.) To our beloved brother Philemon (Onesimus looks up, startled) and to the church that is in your house. In all my prayers I remember you and your wife Apphia and your son Archippus, and all the brethren. The gift arrived by the hand of Demas, and was greatly appreciated. May the Lord bless you for it. The warm clothing for the coming winter will be— (Paul stops abruptly when he suddenly notices that Onesimus is not writing. Onesimus' face registers shock and distress, then despair.)

Paul: Why, my son, what is wrong? Are you ill? (Paul places his hand on Onesimus' shoulder.) Come, Onesimus, what is it?

Onesimus: (rising to his feet, unsteadily, then leaning on table) My father,...I cannot...I cannot write this letter.

Paul: Why not?

Onesimus: Please...please do not ask me to.

Paul: But why not, my son? This letter is to a good brother in Colosse who you have never seen. What is that to you?

Onesimus: I...I must tell you, Father...I must tell everything.

Paul: Go on, Son, go on.

Onesimus: It isn't pretty,...but it's true. I...I... am Philemon's...slave...born in his house.

Paul: (sitting down, in silence)

Onesimus: He was kind to me,...more like a father than a master, but I did not appreciate it...He educated me...made me his secretary...He trusted me with all that he had, and...and...and...I betrayed his trust! (breaks into sobbing).

Paul: Go on, Son, go on.

Onesimus: I became...dissatisfied,...and while he was absent on business, I ran away. And worse than that...I am a thief!...I told myself he owed me wages, and when I left I stole money from his treasury...Oh,...it was a terrible sin, and how I have suffered for it...

Paul: But not enough to make it right as yet, I take it. (pause) Go on, my son, with your story. You'll feel better when it is all out. You can trust me.

Onesimus: I went to Antioch and tried to live as a free man. The money went fast, and work was scarce. I found that freedom had its problems, too. I drifted here and there, to Ephesus, to Alexandria, to Corinth, ever sinking lower and lower...and at last to Rome, ragged and penniless, and here I fell into very bad company...the band of criminals from which you rescued me. (pause) That's my story. Surely I have been the greatest sinner in the world. Can I...can I...can I ever be forgiven? Tell me, do you think God will ever forgive me?

Paul: My son, if God should hold us to account for the sins we committed before knowing His law, who could stand before Him? I, myself, was a sinner, the very *chief* of sinners.

Onesimus: No!

Paul: Yes, far worse than you, my son. I persecuted the church of Christ, our very own brothers and sisters. I raided their meetings and broke them up. I flogged them, men and women, sent them to prison, even condemned them to death. But I did it ignorantly. I did it all believing I was doing right, just as you probably believed you were taking only what was rightfully your own when you took money from Brother Philemon. But right is right, and wrong is wrong, and we were both wrong, regardless of what we thought. How wonderful is God's mercy, that if we go and sin no more, He will completely wipe out our sins by forgiveness. He will not mention them against us—He will not even remember them!

Onesimus: Oh my father, my father!...How wonderful indeed! And how I need that mercy! But... Philemon a Christian!? It seems incredible. He was never very strong for the old gods, but I never dreamed of anything like this.

Paul: Yes, Philemon is the leader of the Christian group

in Colossee, along with his wife. There is a church who meet regularly in their house, and the little band is bearing much good fruit.

Onesimus: And Archippus?

Paul: Archippus is a zealous young preacher among them. By the way, when did you leave their household?

Onesimus: It was eight years ago last month.

Paul: Eight years... And your master was away?

Onesimus: Yes, in Ephesus.

Paul: In Ephesus... eight years ago last month. Did his wife go with him?

Onesimus: Yes.

Paul: That was it, that was the first time I met Brother Philemon and his gracious wife. It was there that they were converted and baptized... Life is very strange, my son, is it not?

Onesimus: Truly it is, my father (pause)... Somehow I feel lighter now. I have been bottled up—tense—for so long. But now what? Now that I have told you my past,... (sobbing again) what shall I do? Where shall I go? Certainly you will not trust me now as you used to.

Paul: Why not, my son? As I said, the past cannot be recalled. The present and the future are all that matter. I believe in you, and I trust you. I do not believe you will let me down. (Onesimus' face registers relief).

Paul: But, unfortunately... I will not be able to keep you with me...

Onesimus: Oh! (a soft cry of pain escapes his lips) I was afraid of this.

Paul: (placing his hand affectionately on Onesimus' shoulder) It is not that I do not wish to keep you, Onesimus. I love you as my own son, and I need you. Desperately. I will be sorry beyond words to give you up. But you have a duty that comes ahead of my need. There are things here which you have to make right with your master.

Onesimus: But I have no money to repay my debt.

Paul: No, and neither can I help you, for I am dependent on others myself. But you can and you must return to him and confess your fault and submit to his judgment. (long silence)

You are aware that the law is very strict in this matter.

Onesimus: Yes... I must go back, back to slavery.

Paul: Back to a victory over yourself. Now I do not want you to think, Onesimus, that I am condoning the institution of slavery. I detest it. I abhor it. Slavery is wrong in principle and wrong in practice. But like other features of human society, it is one of those things that are with us, and there is nothing we can do to change it. To advocate its overthrow would be to invite persecution, and there are better ways of handling it. I foresee the day when the conscience of mankind shall abolish slavery in most of the world, but not for a long, long time, and never in the Roman world. The Roman world stands on a foundation of human misery and degradation. But since we have not power to overthrow it, we must rise above it.

Onesimus: How?

Paul: There is a freedom which transcends any earthly condition.

Onesimus: You mean the freedom from ourselves...

Paul: Exactly. Freedom from sin, the freedom of the spirit. Today I lie in prison for the sake of the gospel, yet I am the freest man in Rome. No man, not even the Emperor, can enslave my soul or separate me from my true Master, who is Christ. No man can say to me, Thou shalt not, when my Lord says, Thou shalt. The things which really count are inside a man; when all is well there, external conditions don't count for very much.

Onesimus: I see... This sort of freedom has a high price, doesn't it?

Paul: It does. A very high price. It can be gained only by surrendering all other freedoms, including the freedom to think and speak and do as we please. I am free today because I am the servant, yes, the bondslave of Jesus Christ. His will is mine, and all that I have is His. But His yoke is easy and His burden is light. Sin is the *hard* master.

In our Christian society, as you have observed, there is neither rich nor poor, bond nor free, Jew nor Greek, male nor female, but all are one in Christ. The influence of the Gospel is making it increasingly difficult for Christians to hold slaves with a good conscience.

Onesimus: What do you think Master Philemon will say?

Paul: What Philemon's attitude in your case will be, I do not know, but whatever it is, you must clear your-

(Continued on page 17)

There IS a Way OUT!

(Continued from page 7)

entanglement in a world of sense. At death the immortal soul is 'freed', said Socrates, 'to roam in the eternal world of ideas to which it belongs.'"

But Socrates had no evidence beyond his own human imagination.

Plato likewise wrote, "The soul whose inseparable attribute is life will never admit to life's opposite, death. Thus the soul is shown to be immortal, indestructible." There is only one problem—it is not true.

On the contrary, the Bible consistently declares that man is mortal, that souls die (Ezek. 18:20), that the soul that sins *will* die. More than seventy years ago our Founder offered \$1000 to anyone who could find any statement in the Bible that the soul of man is immortal or undying; and the offer still stands—unclaimed.

The Way Out: Resurrection

What is the Christian's reply to death? Is there a way out? Yes, there *is*, and that way is the way of Resurrection.

All hope of future life hinges upon a physical resurrection from the sleep of death.

This was the hope of all of God's people in ages past. In the words of the patriarch Job, "I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God" (Job 19:25-26).

The prophet Isaiah looked forward to a personal resurrection: "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead" (Isa. 26:19).

When the prophet Daniel wanted to know more of future events, the

brief outline of which he had been shown, he was told, "Go thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days" (Dan. 12:13). He would rest (in death), then stand. In between would be the physical resurrection.

This same Prophet foretold more about the Resurrection: "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (Dan. 12:2).

The hope of the Resurrection was the anticipation of the apostle Paul. "If by any means," he said, "I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead" (Phil. 3:11). He said in another Epistle that the Resurrection was the believer's only escape route. "If there be no resurrection of the dead... then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain, then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished" (I Cor. 15:13, 14, 18).

The Resurrection is the true believer's way—and the *only* way—out.

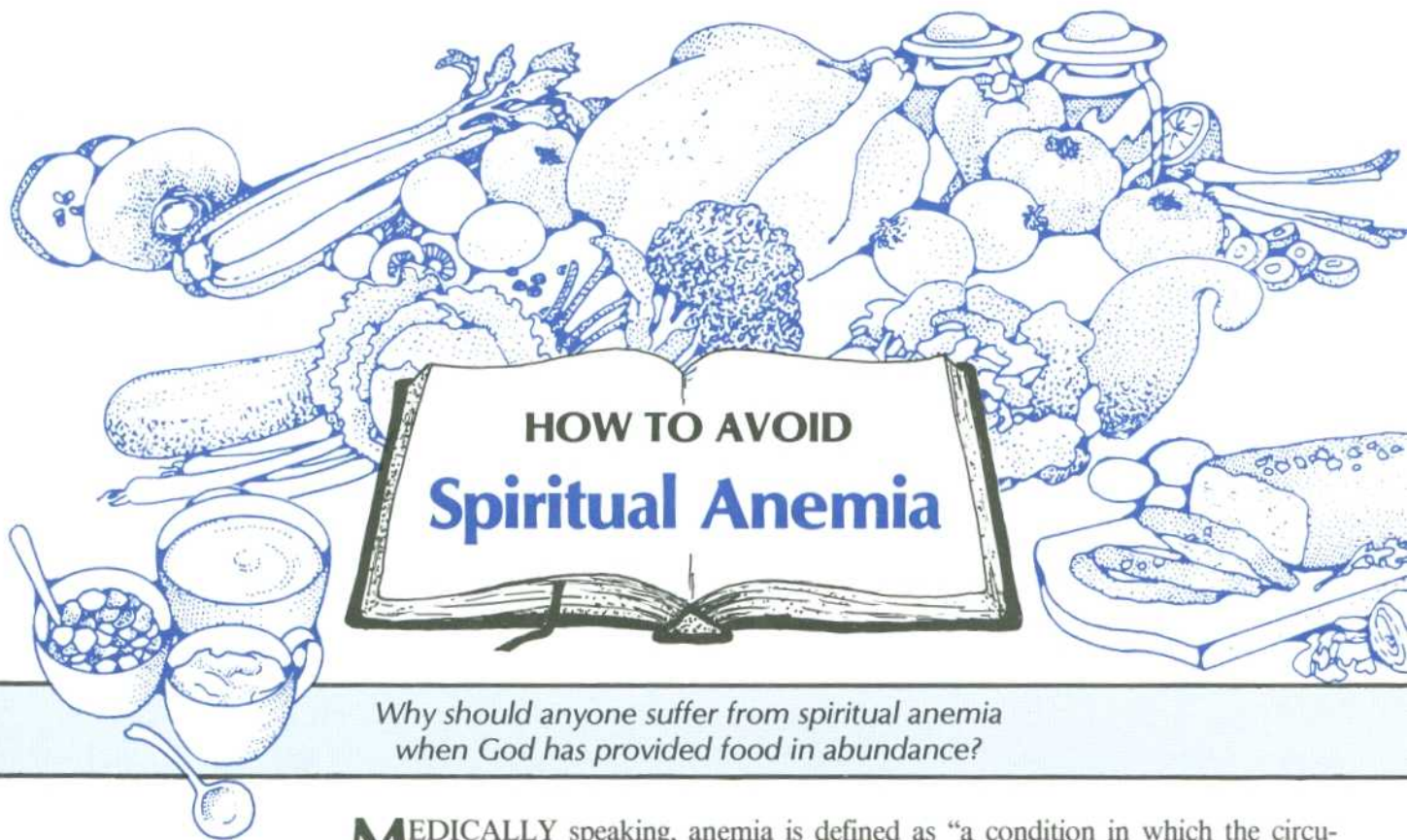
This is what faith and true Christianity is all about. It is the one and only effective way of dealing with meaninglessness and nonentity. It is the one and only true way of finding something more than what we see. For Christ tells us—rather, *shows* us—that what we see is *not* all there is, that our experience is not the whole story. And when we turn to the Bible we hear the voice of God calling us away from a life of immersion in the present, calling us to attach ourselves in faith and hope to seeking God and His eternal Kingdom. Why? Because this is the only way to obtain that which is sure, lasting, and which will never disappoint us.

Christianity offers us the one reality that does not let us down, so to speak, on our deathbed; which tells us that we do not need to deceive ourselves, we do not need to be preoccupied in pettiness to be happy.

Whatever our mortal state, we can live it triumphantly. We can think and live and plan *with God*—because we know there is an eternal life ahead for us if we have sought it with all our mind and strength. Animals may have to take life as it comes, from birth to death, but not *homosapiens*. God has given us minds which we can use to our eternal profit. We can live beyond ourselves. We can live beyond this life. We can live—in the eternal Kingdom on earth. It is a real, sure hope.

Yes, there IS a way OUT! MM

God has given
us minds which we
can use to our
eternal profit.
We can live
beyond ourselves.
And we can live
beyond this
life—in the eternal
Kingdom of Christ—if
we prepare now.



Why should anyone suffer from spiritual anemia when God has provided food in abundance?

MEDICALLY speaking, anemia is defined as “a condition in which the circulating red blood cells are deficient in number or in total hemoglobin content per unit of blood volume.” Its symptoms are weakness, vertigo, headaches, fatigue, etc. Many times the symptoms are barely noticeable, and the condition is not even detected. Other times the condition becomes acute and immediate medical help is needed. Treatment often includes a diet adequate in essential blood-building materials.

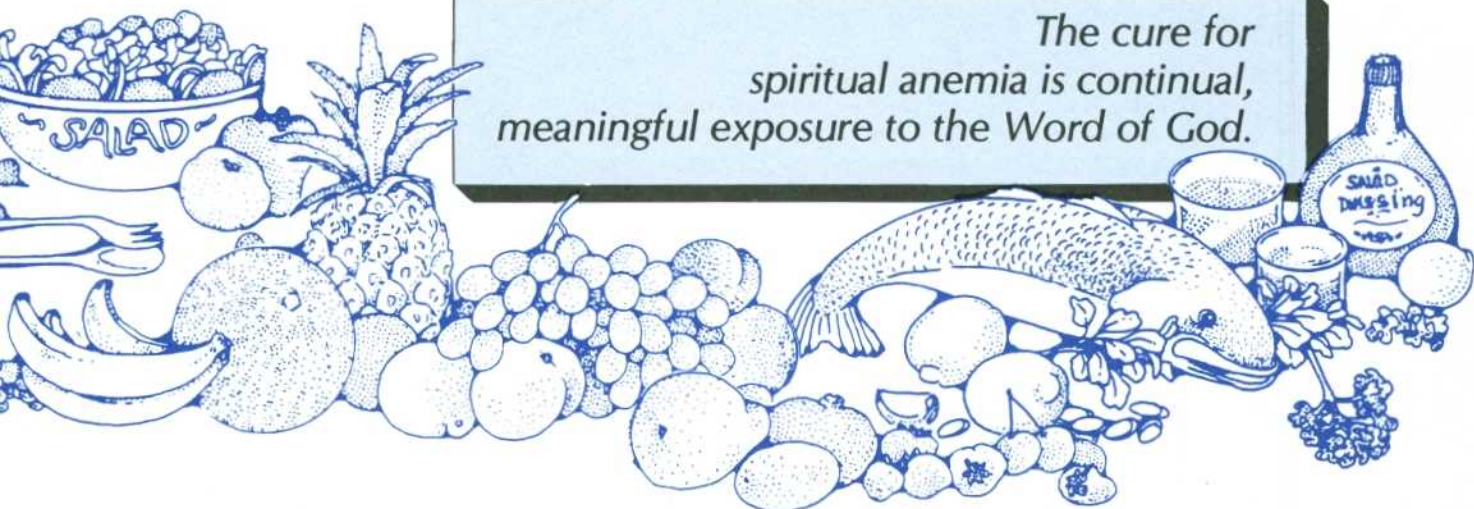
When we ponder the quantity of spiritual food which the Lord has provided for the nourishment of His children, we wonder why such a thing as spiritual anemia should exist. But then we realize that just as the mere presence of food does not avoid anemia, so the mere presence of spiritual food in itself does not prevent spiritual anemia. As in the physical, the food must be eaten before it can benefit the body; and it must be eaten in sufficient variety and in sufficient quantities to sustain life; then, too, the food that is eaten must be digested and assimilated. Only then is the spiritual body nourished.

As we look around today and observe those who profess to believe in Christ, it seems that a large number suffer from a spiritual malady closely resembling the physical condition of anemia. The symptoms indicate a serious deficiency, characterized by weakness, lethargy,

Symptoms:

- spiritual weakness
- spiritual lethargy
- lack of enthusiasm
- spiritual fatigue
- lack of power and spiritual vigor





*The cure for
spiritual anemia is continual,
meaningful exposure to the Word of God.*

lack of power and spiritual vigor, lack of enthusiasm, fatigue and many related conditions.

A further startling observation is that this condition of anemia is not limited to those who are only casual believers, it can afflict anyone. Even men and women who were thought to be spiritual giants have fallen prey to this weakening disease.

Spiritual anemia is usually brought on by an improper spiritual diet. Not that the Lord has been delinquent in providing, but His rich spiritual food, for one reason or another, is not being eaten, hence is not sustaining vigorous spiritual life. Perhaps it is not right at hand—this gives the majority an excuse for continuing to

subsist on a diet spiritually deficient in just about every element that is vital to life. Or it is not as delicious to the untrained taste. Or it is lacking in the eye appeal that foods of lesser nourishment have; or it is not recognized because of its very plain, simple packaging. Do we wonder, then, that so many are spiritually anemic?

What are the steps which we as serious believers can take to assure our safety against it?

First, we should study to learn what diet brings on this spiritually anemic condition; i.e., what diet is *insufficient*. Then we should determine what makes up a well-balanced spiritual diet that will prevent, as well as cure the problem.

All of us are careful of the foods we give our physical body, but how about our *spiritual* diet? What are we trying to exist on spiritually? Do we choose the very best, those foods that are loaded with all the good nutrients God has provided? or do we settle for whatever is cheap and convenient?

Who Are Spiritually Anemic?

Possibly the best way to understand spiritual anemia is to look closely at the diet of those who suffer.

Knowing that the Bible is the main source of spiritual food for the active believer, let us see what types of readers are deficient:

1. The "Listen-Only" readers. They

My first great and primary business everyday is to attend to the nourishing of my inner man. I begin by meditating upon the Word of God, searching into each verse I read to get a blessing from it; not for the sake of what it may say to others, but for the sake of what it says to me, for the sake of obtaining food for my own soul.



Read, Read, Read...

The Bible very clearly teaches the need for personal, consistent exposure to the Scriptures. For example:

"Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful" (Josh. 1:8, NIV).

"When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, O Lord God Almighty" (Jer. 15:16, NIV).

"Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night" (Ps. 1:1-2, NIV).

"The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of the Lord are sure and altogether righteous. They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb. By them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward" (Ps. 19:9-11, NIV).

The apostle Peter exhorted believers to develop a hunger for the Scriptures just as babies crave milk, in order that they might grow. "Like newborn babes, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up to salvation" (1 Pet. 2:1-2, RSV).

do nothing to feed themselves; they take only what is handed to them, and usually only on Sunday. That is, in their judgment, enough.

The book of James is very specific about these persons: the word of God is not meant only to be listened to but acted upon. "Don't, I beg you, only hear the message, but put it into practice; otherwise you are merely deluding yourselves. The man who simply hears and does nothing about it is like a man catching the reflection of his own face in a mirror" (James 1:22-23, Phillips).

Truth heard and not applied, i.e., not digested and assimilated, cannot be used to build strong spiritual muscles.

2. *The "Spare-Time" readers.* They believe in reading the Bible in their "spare" time, casually, when relaxing. They read, but only when they have nothing more pressing to do. And it is usually at the tired end of the day, a time which allows little keen focus or attention.

3. *The "Chapter-A-Day" readers.*

These are very diligent in their effort to read a measured amount of the Bible regularly, "so much" today, so much tomorrow, so much the next day. But their reading is formal and without much thought, often hurried. They read to fulfill a self-assigned duty, to pacify a conscience trained in religious respectabilities, not to satisfy a spiritual hunger.

4. *The "Find-Out" readers.* These read the Bible when and if they have a specific purpose for reading—a question to answer, a subject to explore, an assignment to complete, a point of curiosity to satisfy. And when the purpose is over, they turn to other, "easier" reading. There is little love in their reading, or relish, or yearning, or desire.

5. *The "Defensive" readers.* They read the Bible for the sole purpose of defending it, or to prove a point to an opponent who might challenge them. They pride themselves in their great "Bible knowledge" and want to be just a little more informed than their opponents.

The Cure for Spiritual Anemia

Just as carefully as we feed our bodies, we must feed our inner life if we expect it to be healthy and strong.

If there is to be spiritual growth, there must be strong desire for spiritual food.

What, then, is the cure for spiritual anemia? The formula is simple: Read, meditate, pray.

READ

There is no substitute for frequent, meaningful, personal exposure to the Word of God. And the more we read, the more we will want to read.

We should read:

- out of love and yearning, to satisfy a deep, inner craving for spiritual nourishment
- to learn more and more of God's law and of His will for our lives
- to fill our minds with God's thoughts and meditate on heavenly realities
- to search our own hearts for any feeling or attitude displeasing to God

This type of reading may have many forms:

• *Careful reading for content and application*—not a hurried reading to "cover the ground," but serious interacting with what is read. Then, for added insight, read the passage from another translation. Often another translation may emphasize a point previously overlooked.

• *In-depth study of a passage*, with a workbook or a notebook, to impress vital points on our minds. We might also write questions and answers to ourselves, or outline the passage read. Still another method is to rephrase the passage, saying it in our own words.

• *Subject study of the Bible.* For example, find texts pertaining to the second advent of Christ, and see how

they interrelate to tell us about His coming.

● *Memorize Scripture.* Select one testimony each week and commit it to memory. Review memorized passages frequently, to keep the impression fresh.

MEDITATE

We should set aside time for concentrated study and meditating on the Scriptures. Psalm 1 pronounces a blessing upon the man who meditates day and night in the law of the Lord, to whom it is a joy and a delight. He lives in it, he revels in it. He allows the truth of a Scripture to speak to him and monopolize his thoughts, to pervade his mind until its meaning becomes a part of his very being.

The Scriptures are not really feeding us, not really sustaining us until we cultivate the habit and art of concentrating on them, of meditating on them, of depending on them for our very life and well-being.

PRAY

When we read, or when we meditate, we are using God's resources. Any using of God's resources should be accompanied by prayer—personal, heartfelt, sincere prayer.

Someone has said that prayer acts as a catalyst in which the Scriptures can work in our lives. Time spent in prayer is time given exclusively to God and the influence of His Word. By praying we commune with God, we allow His Word to speak to us, and to discern the thoughts and intents of our heart. Bible study and prayer are inseparable. Either one is ineffective without the other.

The Cure

What, then, is the cure for spiritual anemia? Its remedy is right within the reach of everyone of us. We have no reason to be spiritually anemic, with the abundance of food provided us. If we are spiritually anemic, it is because we have closed our mouths and are not partaking of the rich spiritual food the Lord has provided.

Our food supply is the Word of God. To neglect it is to starve our soul. We cannot grow strong without feeding regularly on the Word of God.

The cure for spiritual anemia is a daily diet rich with all the nutrients provided by the Scriptures. The more we eat, the stronger we will grow.

And this is true for every one of us.

MM

ANNOUNCEMENT

THE NEW YEAR is coming—this year with the evening of Saturday, April 16, and continue through Sunday, April 17, Bible time being counted from evening to evening (Lev. 23:32).

Members and friends of the Megiddo Church will set aside this time to honor 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 Thursday evening, April 28) we will commemorate the anniversary of our Lord's Supper, and the morning of May 1 (Abib 15) will be observed as the anniversary of Christ's triumph over death and the grave.

The Runaway's Return

(Continued from page 12)

self. We cannot get right with God until we have done all we can to make ourselves right with man.

Onesimus: (raises his head and speaks with determination.) Yes...I can do it. I *will* do it. I am afraid, but I will overcome my fear. I have sinned, and I will take my medicine. When do you wish me to go?

Paul: Not until Luke and some of the other brethren return, which will be in the early Spring. And it may be that my case will come before the Emperor before that time. If I am set free, we can go together. As for the ship fare, we'll arrange it somehow. I have a few friends here in Rome who can be depended on to help out. But if I can't go I will write a suitable letter to Brother Philemon to send with you. It may help you.

Onesimus: Father, I thank you with all my heart. But I cannot rest until this thing is settled, now that my mind is made up. It will be a long winter.

Paul: In the meantime, let us finish this letter. What was I saying ...let's see...

(Continued Next Issue)

When you give in to God, God will give out to you.

When You Can't Cross Over Jordan

Scripture: Deuteronomy 32:1-5, 28-47.

When you cannot have what you want, when you do not get what you hope for, when what you stake your life on does not come true—what have you for that?

**Life is a struggle.
Try living it
and see!**

LIFE is a struggle. It is true for all of us. If there is no struggle we can be certain there is no life, in the fuller meaning of the word.

*"To breathe, and wake, and sleep,
To smile, to sigh, to grieve,
To move in idleness through earth,
This, this is not to live."*

When it comes to our hopes and aspirations, it seems that life is constructed in reference to trouble.

But when you cannot have what you want, when you do not get what you hope for, when what you stake your life on does not come true—what have you for that?

Moses was not permitted to pass over Jordan because he disregarded the Lord's command to speak to the rock that water might flow for the congregation to drink, and struck it with his rod as at other times. He had failed to honor God at the waters of Meribah. A small thing, you might say, but remember Moses enjoyed the rare privilege of receiving information first hand from the mouth of the angel. And his censure was a lesson for all time of God's exactness when He commands.

So that was the situation! After forty years of struggle and the exhausting ordeal of leading an untutored, unthank-

ful and rebellious people through the wilderness, the crossing of the Jordan to the promised land was not to be for him.

In a little while the banners of Israel would be seen floating down through the valley. The trumpets would be sounding and all the joyous shouting of the people would echo from the hillsides. This would be the high moment of achievement and possession, but Moses would not be there. And as if to add salt to the wound of unfulfillment, another was chosen to lead the hosts of his people in his place. The Lord had chosen Joshua to be the new commander.

A man of smaller stature might have found this accumulation of circumstances a pill too bitter to take with good grace, but not so with Moses. Practically the entire book of Deuteronomy was spoken after the final ultimatum had been given him, and it shows no sign of bitterness or despair. Moses had pleaded with the Lord to change the verdict of a year or so before, and let him cross over Jordan and see the land before he died, but it did not seem to suit God's purpose to alter it.

In Deuteronomy 3 Moses was relating their recent conquests of the land east of Jordan where a part of the Tribes were

Note: *When You Can't Cross Over Jordan* is available as a complete church service on cassette. Price: \$3.00

**Take the denials that life hands you,
the thwarted hopes, the disappointments, and weave
from them a garment of beauty.**

to be settled. And beginning at verse 23 we read: "And I besought the Lord at that time, saying, O Lord God, thou hast begun to show thy servant thy greatness, and thy mighty hand: for what God is there in heaven or in earth, that can do according to thy works and according to thy might? I pray thee, let me go over, and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon. But the Lord was wroth [displeased] with me for your sakes, and would not hear me: and the Lord said unto me, Let it suffice thee; speak no more unto me of this matter. Get thee up into the top of Pisgah, and lift up thine eyes westward, ... and behold it with thine eyes: for thou shalt not go over this Jordan" (Deut. 3:23-27).

It would be time well spent if each of us would read through the wonderful book of Deuteronomy. It contains exhortations to obedience, a condensed account of Israel's fortunes during nearly forty years in the wilderness. It foretells the birth of the Messiah. Included, are warnings against apostasy, the blessings for obedience and the curses for disobedience. A compendium of laws and ordinances is given, the treatment of idolaters, the year of release, the stated feasts, the cities of refuge; plus a long-range prophecy of the curses that should accompany rebellion.

Chapter 32 records the beautiful song of Moses which ended with these practical words: "Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day, which ye shall

command your children, ... all the words of this law. For it is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life" (vs. 46-47). The New Catholic version makes the point in vs. 46-47 even stronger: "Take to heart all the warning which I have now given you and which you must impress on your children, that you may carry out carefully every word of this law. For this is no trivial matter for you; rather it means your very life." And these words apply to us as truly as they applied to ancient Israel. Our very life in the world to come depends upon our taking to heart all the warnings which God has given, and impressing them upon the hearts of our children and others.

Moses' days now were numbered; he was living out the last few hours of his mortal life, and he knew it. Let us observe his attitude. "And the Lord spake unto Moses that selfsame day, saying, Get thee up into this mountain Abarim, unto mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab, that is over against Jericho; and behold the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel for a possession: and die in the mount whither thou goest up, and be gathered unto thy people: ... because ye trespassed against me among the children of Israel at the waters of Meribah-Kadesh, in the wilderness of Zin; because ye sanctified me not in the midst of the children of Israel. Yet thou shalt see the land before thee, but thou shalt not go thither unto the land which I give the children of Israel" (vs. 48-52).

This was now the third time Moses' inattention to the Lord's command in striking the rock in place of speaking to it had been mentioned to him. And what was his reaction? Did the prospect of a forced demise while still robust and in excellent health make him downcast and sullen? No, indeed! He was still buoyant, and his desire was to spend his few remaining hours encouraging men and women to live closer to God.

Singling out the tribes of Israel one by one he blessed them. His last recorded utterance registered joy in the God of his salvation, and confidence in the final triumph of right: "There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky. The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy them. Israel then shall dwell in safety alone: the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine; also his heavens shall drop down dew. Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of

**If all we got out
of our defeat was
defeat, we didn't
get enough.**

thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places" (Deut. 33:26-29).

Our Jordans

For the man who lives only for the present, life can be a competitive struggle. He is ever fighting to get over some sort of Jordan. He may fight for a seat on a crowded bus, for a scholarship abroad, for a wage increase, for social recognition. He crams his life so full of what he can wear, use, drive, build, eat and drink, that there is no tiny corner of mood or mind left for holy thoughts or desire. He is afraid of being left on the wrong side of Jordan.

But how about us who should have learned the lesson to "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness"? (Matt. 6:33). Are we as concerned lest we be found on the wrong side of Jordan when we stand before the Great Tribunal, as ambitious men of the world are of failing to reach their goal? Too often we have made the mistake of Naaman the leper in feeling that to do anything worth while it must be some great thing. An old schoolbook rhyme comes to mind which emphasizes this point:

*"If always the statesman attained to
his hopes
And grasped the great helm, who'd
stand by the ropes?
If all dainty fingers their duties
might choose
Who would wash up the dishes and
polish the shoes?"*

We may have set higher stakes for ourselves in the service of God than time, abilities, finances, physical health, or other factors will permit us to go through with, but that is no reason for discouragement. If we cannot cross over Jordan and accomplish services for others that once may have appealed to us as the

Let Us Pray

OUR loving Father, Thou just and righteous God, Ruler of the mighty universe; Thou Being so full of compassion and justice and long-suffering. Thou God who so patiently endures the misbehavior and wickedness of mankind—along with the apostasy of the unfaithful covenant-makers—for the sake of the few who will profit by Thy mercy.

Our Father, we thank Thee that a door of hope is still open to us, that the Day of Salvation has been lengthened out to take in a few after the long night of darkness, and that we are among that privileged few.

Grant, Father, that as Thy good doctrine drops as the rain we may open our mouths to take in its life-giving qualities that we may be refreshed, and as Thy speech distills as the dew, may we bare our heads, that we may receive this moisture so vital to well-being in the spiritual life.

Father, Thou art our Rock. Even our enemies reluctantly agree that their rock is not such as Thou art to us, a Defender, a Guide, a Sustainer. Father, help us to be very careful of the life that we lead that we may be worthy of this favorable position with Thee. But forbid it that we should presume upon Thy goodness, or expect Thee to continue to be our Rock unless we show the proper appreciation and surrender wholly to Thy leading.

Help us, Father, to take to heart all the words that Thou hast caused to be written for our instruction; help us to do Thy will, to command our children, and influence each other to do Thy will, to observe and do all the things which Thou hast commanded us.

Be with us in this service, and may we go away from this place of worship stronger to face the battles of life. Be with those absent from us today, who would desire to be with us. Bless all everywhere who are striving to learn and live Thy holy way. Be with the sick and afflicted, and with every one who is in trouble or distress, strengthen and sustain them as Thou hast promised. And when we have worked out our salvation with fear and trembling, and made ourselves worthy of perpetuation, grant us the full reward, for Thine is the Kingdom, and the glory, and the power for ever. Amen.

worthiest of ideals, let us be satisfied to do something less spectacular. We can do a kindly deed, speak a word of encouragement, a word of warning, a word in season to our brother who has grown weary of sin.

And then there are ordinary mundane duties always at hand that need doing. In Jesus' Parable of the Judgment in Matthew 25, the righteous were amazed when told they had seen Jesus hungry and given Him meat; thirsty, and given Him drink; naked, and they had clothed Him; sick, and they visited Him; in prison, and they came to Him. Then in v. 40 Jesus gave the explanation: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of

the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

It may not be possible for us to go on numerous missionary trips, we may not be qualified to effectively present our faith by word of mouth, but there are things we can do. There are letters to be written, questions that come through the mail to be answered, work in connection with getting the Message ready for mailing, and mailed. Someone has to help keep the church clean and in repair and in suitable shape for the service of the Lord. And as Brother Thatcher once said, no one need be at a loss for some way to assist, for that can be done by such menial

tasks as helping someone shell beans.

If all we got out of our defeat was defeat, we didn't get enough. Let us take the denials that life offers us, the thwarted hopes that life casts back at us, and make out of them a garment of beauty.

And even if we cannot get over Jordan let us deepen our life within the will of God. Here is an achievement nothing can prevent. If life will not let us strike out ahead, then let us reach down inside. Let us greaten our life within, deepen it in God's will.

It was said of the man Moses that he was "very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth" (Num. 12:3).

It was on the occasion of the disgraceful attack of Miriam and Aaron on Moses at Hazeroth that this testimony was borne to him. It was when Miriam and Aaron determined to pull down Moses from the supreme place that God had gifted him for and put him into,—it was then God set on Moses His open and lasting seal to the greatness of Moses' office as a prophet, and the greatness of Moses' meekness as a man. "That incident," says Ewald, the philosophical historian of Israel, "furnishes a grand exemplification of the universal truth, that the best and most capable man in a community is often the most misunderstood and...persecuted." And it was just this persecution that drew out the divine vindica-

tion and valuation that is here put of God upon Moses.

Luther's translation of the Hebrew text is that Moses was "very much plagued." He was plagued, indeed, "above all the men which were upon the face of the earth." Yes, "plagued" exactly describes the life that Moses had led ever since he was called of God to take Israel in hand: and all of Moses' plagues may have come to a head in the matter of Miriam and Aaron, and their envy and their evil speaking. It is similar to the situation which King David describes in Ps. 55:12-14: "For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him: but it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company."

In this experience of Moses God is fast putting the last touch on his servant's meekness and humility of heart when He shows him what a terrible temptation his great gifts and his great services are to his brother and sister. For a man like Moses to see how his high place as God's prophet to Israel, and, especially, his sovereign superiority to all other prophets, was a constant temptation to Miriam and Aaron, plunging them into such envy and ill-will—what a last blow to all Moses' remaining pride and

ambition and self-exalting was that! And when we have eyes to see, and a heart to take it to ourselves, how our very best things can become a continual occasion to our brother of his worst things—his jealousy, envy, and malice—when we lay that to heart as we should, and act upon it, then there will be more men than Moses who will be meek above all the men that are on the face of the earth.

"The perseverance of the saints," says an excellent old adage, "is made up of ever new beginnings." So it is. And Moses' perseverance in meekness was exactly of that ever new beginning kind. And he never lost sight of the time when he failed to honor God by striking the rock in place of speaking to it. All the rest of his days upon earth, all the way from Meribah to Pisgah, Moses remembered, and went praying, and importuning for his sin against meekness.

The perseverance of saints is indeed made up of ever new beginnings. As said Paul the apostle: "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye" (Col. 3:12-13). Here is a whole array of new beginnings the active Christian must concern himself about each day. And again a still

**As we measure the good words, good wishes,
good purposes, good preparations, and good performances
in our heart, and find them genuine, so will they be measured
back to us by Him who sees and measures the heart.**

**If life will not let you strike out ahead,
then reach down inside and deepen it in the will of God.**

meeker Man than Moses says to us every day, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Matt. 11:29).

Oh, how we should appreciate the new beginnings our heavenly Father provides us with! Each new day of our lives provides a new beginning, a new opportunity to make good. It provides a new beginning to perfect that which is lacking in our faith. A new beginning to a day when we fully control each emotion of our mind and body, our tempers, our tongues. It provides a new beginning to fulfill our sacred covenant to serve the Lord with all our mind, might and strength, to do to others as we would have them do to us.

And how fitting is the use of the word "perseverance" in this connection. The Christian's life is a growth, it is a time-consuming process. It is not an accomplishment that we can effortlessly drift into, perseverance is needed. It demands serious concern, definite determination, and all-out effort. And there must be a joyful performance of duty, even when we can't cross over Jordan.

Pliancy A Christian Virtue

To maintain the right spirit when we cannot cross over Jordan and when every power of our body and mind is all set to make the crossing, requires pliancy. And pliancy is a characteristic which the Christian must possess. He must be able to have his plans changed or delayed without losing his composure or becoming fretful. It is not just spasmodic obedience or obedience when things look plain ahead that

this word suggests, but a suppleness of mind that takes care of any of the sharp turns and bends in the divine will. Pliancy in the spiritual life is best expressed in Revelation by the word "whithersoever." Of the faithful we read, "these are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth," and it seems from observation and experience that sometimes the road to the Kingdom twists strangely.

For examples, take the case of Abraham when he was asked to offer up his son Isaac, when he had been promised to be the father of a great nation through him; or Joseph, beloved son of his father when he was sold into slavery by jealous brethren. David, when a youth, was anointed king of Israel by Samuel, but was obliged to spend the following years as an unknown shepherd boy.

Paul gives us a picture of his own life in his letter to the Philippians "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which

strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:12-13). A fine definition of pliancy in the Christian life. Paul was ready for anything. If he could cross Jordan or couldn't cross Jordan, he was ready to serve wholeheartedly in any capacity.

If our hope of eternal life is a real thing to us, if to obtain it is the most burning quest of our lives, an interest for which we would gladly exchange everything of this fleeting present; then whatever surrender God's plan for us demands we will gladly make it. We will serve as wholeheartedly in second place as in first position.

When we cannot have what we want, when we do not get what we hope for, when what we have staked our life on does not materialize, we *will* have something for that. And that something is the promise in Rom. 8:28, "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."

We will keep pressing right on, submissive to the will of Him who is leading, and say with emphasis: "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (II Tim. 1:12).

All who consistently follow this life pattern to the end shall accomplish immeasurably more than crossing some self-imposed Jordan in life, for at Judgment Day they shall receive the "well done" of the Judge, and with Moses and all the faithful, triumphantly cross the swelling of Jordan into the Promised Land of hope and glory, and share with the good of all ages the felicities of eternal bliss.

MM

**Knowledge
without
practice
is like flower
without fruit.**

Too Little . . . Too Big

If you are too big for a little place," says an ancient proverb, "you are too little for a big place."

It is a definite pattern among the children of the Kingdom that if we want to get big we must first get smaller. God is a jealous God; we are only the products of His creative genius—who are we to think ourselves big? All we have and are we owe to Him who made us what we are. Any striving to appear great will bring the displeasure of God upon us and prevent our achieving the real greatness which we desire—the greatness which is eternal.

It is very easy for us to hinder our Christian effort by our attitude toward ourselves. A young man may set out in the Christian life with the notion that he is at least a bit above the average in intelligence and ability, and consequently he may hesitate to take a humble place. He wants to begin at the top and work upward—naturally! What happens is that he usually fails to reach the high place where his "great" talent could be used until he has changed his whole attitude and has added to his character the godly grace of humility. A proud young man was Moses; he knew just how to handle those who mistreated his brethren—at least he asked no one's advice; but forty years later when the Lord called him to deliver the oppressed Israelites, his first response was, "Who am I, that I should go...?" (Ex. 3:11).

The danger of seeing an enlarged image of ourselves and our own usefulness is a serious potential hazard for all of us. The apostle Paul issued stern warning to "every man that is among [us]"—each of us must learn not to "be conceited or think too highly of [ourselves]; but think [our] way to a sober estimate based on the measure of faith that God has dealt to each of [us]" (Rom. 12:3, NEB). This may have been a rock of offense to Paul, but that truly great man learned to cut himself down to size to fill the great place God had for him.

When we feel tempted to imagined bigness, we might do well to imitate the naturalist who, after an evening's

talk with his friend, would go outside and look up at the sky. When he could detect a certain faint spot of light-mist in the heavens, he would recite: "That is the Spiral Galaxy in Andromeda. It is as large as our Milky Way. It is one of a hundred million galaxies. It is 750,000 light-years away. It consists of one hundred billion suns, each larger than our sun." Whereupon his friend would respond, "Now I think we are small enough. Let's go to bed." This is a good exercise for any of us when we are feeling rather important in our sphere.

The humble man is truly great—because God chooses him: "The Lord taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify the meek with salvation." "The meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way" (Ps. 149:4; 25:9).

If we feel too big for a little place now, we can be sure that we will be too little for the big place God has prepared in His eternal Kingdom. MM

Discipleship

*Matthew left his place of toil
And Christ as Lord confessed,
Zaccheus left his wayside tree
And entertained his guest;
And Mary left her household tasks
To hear her Master's voice,
While fishers left their boats and nets,
And followed Christ from choice;
A woman left her water-pots
To spread good news abroad;
Then gladly shall I leave my all
To follow Christ my Lord.*

What About Divorce?

"What is your attitude toward divorce? It seems inconsistent to me that the book of Deuteronomy allows it and Jesus said, 'Whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery' (Matt. 5:32)."

You are correct in observing this difference between Moses' law and that of Jesus. Deuteronomy 24:1 reads, "If a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him because he finds something indecent about her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house" (NIV). The only restriction was that the former husband could not take her again to be his wife.

We learn, however, that this law was given to control an existing situation, not to allow permissiveness. When the Pharisees asked Jesus, "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? tempting him," Jesus answered, "'What did Moses command you?'...They said, 'Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away.' 'It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law,' Jesus replied" (Mark 10:2-5, NIV). Moses' law allowed divorce only because the people were hard-hearted and would not obey a higher mandate.

In answer to your question, we forbid divorce because Jesus forbade it.

"Why did Jesus say that the one exception to His law was in the case of fornication? I always supposed fornication to be between persons not bound by marriage."

The Bible seems to use the words "adultery" and "fornication" interchangeably. Other translations of Matthew 5:32 use the words "unfaithfulness," "unchastity," "loss of virtue," and "adultery" in place of fornication. In defining the original word translated "fornication" in Matthew 5:32, Thayer's Greek Lexicon says, "Of illicit sexual intercourse in general,...used of adultery in Matt. 5:32."

However, the question might be asked as to how unchastity on the part of either spouse could annul a

marriage contract which is God decreed and broken only by the death of one of the partners. Obviously it could not.

Bible scholars point out that the wording of this passage in the gospel of Mark, from which Matthew's account is believed to have been derived, differs from that in Matthew (Mark 10:11-12; also Luke 16:18). These passages do not list any exception to the rule: "He answered, 'Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery'" (Mark 10:11-12, NIV). Thus it appears that the words in Matthew, "saving for the cause of fornication," were no part of Jesus' original statement.

It could also be pointed out that these exceptions do not even agree with Jesus' own teaching in Matthew 5 (see verses 17-48). It seems from history that the Christian teaching of the first three centuries recognized no exception to the strictness of the law of Christ. The view that adultery dissolves the marriage bond not only degrades the concept of marriage by making its physical side dominant but also involves two absurdities; first, that a man may cease to be married and yet be unaware of the fact; and second, that it makes adultery or the pretense of having committed it the one way to get rid of a marriage which has become distasteful, and so puts a premium on adultery.

Throughout Matthew 5, Christ is substituting the perfect standard of God for the faulty standard of the Jews. He lays upon His people the duty of rising to the Divine standard of moral perfection (Matt. 5:48). The only real difficulty is not in ascertaining the meaning of Jesus' words but in applying them. His standard is high, and is in many cases impractical because of the world's "hardness of heart." Therefore the world, whether outside the church or nominally within it, has never taken the Christian law of marriage seriously.

Yet it stands. Christ, for His community, totally disallows divorce. And it is precisely this indissolubility of Christian marriage which strengthens the Christian family

bond by motivating both husband and wife to do their utmost to make their marriage a success.

However, our Lord does not forbid separation, any more than does the apostle Paul in I Cor. 7:11. It may sometimes be a duty. Though a man may and should forgive an adulterous wife when she repents, he must not live with her if he cannot trust her. That would mean confusion and the bringing into the world of children whose fatherhood would be uncertain.

But in the eyes of God an original marriage must stand until the death of one of the partners. And because of this fact, no other can be lawfully contracted while one's partner—whatever his or her character—is living.

The loss of the churches' firm discipline in this matter has brought about conditions not contemplated in our Lord's words. Multitudes of marriages now are lightly formed and lightly discarded, the Christian view of marriage never having been accepted. Then new marriages are formed, perhaps more satisfactory than the previous one, perhaps less, and more problems result. The subject becomes complex.

But Jesus' standard is inflexible, positively forbidding divorce: "But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, ... causes her to commit adultery, and anyone who marries a woman so divorced commits adultery" (Matt. 5:32, NIV).

The law of God allows only one living companion. Only the death of one of the marriage partners can release the other from obligation. Only then is he or she free to enter into another marriage contract.

The apostle Paul summarizes the Christian position in Rom. 7:1-3, "Do you not know, brothers—for I am speaking to men who know the law—that the law has authority over a man only as long as he lives? For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law of marriage. So then, if she marries another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress, even though she marries another man" (NIV).

This divorce law of God is the highest and noblest by which men and women can live. It keeps families intact, and makes for clean, Christian living and an environment that promotes the highest morality. God always demands the highest and the best from His people.

• Christ Our "Pascal Lamb"?

"One text in particular I would like you to explain is in I Corinthians 5:7. Most people take the passover sacrifice as the killing of the Lamb. The phrase in question reads, 'For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.' Many people believe that Christ was crucified on the Jewish passover and that this was significant, He being, as they believe, the one appointed to die for us,' as our sacrifice, literally our 'pascal lamb.' Please comment."

This theory has several problems, the first being that Christ was not crucified on the Jewish passover but on the "preparation" day (John 19:42); hence Christ's crucifixion does not form a perfect parallel of the "pascal lamb" sacrificed.

The second problem is that Christ's physical death was not a "sacrifice"—He did not voluntarily offer Himself; He was forcefully taken and crucified. Hence Paul cannot be speaking of Christ's death on Calvary.

A third problem arises from the fact that the words "for us" ("Christ our passover is sacrificed *for us*") are not in the best Greek manuscripts, and many of the new translations omit them (the NIV, NEB, RSV, JB, and TEV, among others.) A footnote in *Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott* reads, "Omitted in Vatican MMS."

A fourth point might be observed in this passage: that Paul does not say that Christ's sacrifice removed any sin or made anyone righteous or pure. He says only this: that "even Christ our passover has been sacrificed." And if he is not saying that it has been done "for us," what does he mean?

In First Corinthians 5, Paul is sharply reproofing his Corinthian brethren for their sin in being too tolerant of an evildoer in their midst. Instead of taking solid action against the offender and removing him from their congregation, they were apparently doing nothing about it—and even glorying in it. "Your glorying is not good," he says plainly (v.6).

Sin is a serious issue, and appropriate action had to be taken so that it could be removed.

The sin among the Corinthians was abominable in the sight of God, and was placing a stain upon the whole congregation. Paul illustrates the contaminating effects of sin by drawing an analogy with the unleavened bread eaten at Passover: "Know ye not that a little leaven

*A grudging, reluctant,
backward-looking service is worse than useless.*

leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed...therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (I Cor. 5:6-8).

There may be a second reason for Paul's reference to the Passover or Feast of Unleavened Bread in this connection. Originally, the Passover rite was an act of obedience which the Israelite performed in order to secure the mercy of God and escape the plague of death. The destroying angel had been directed to destroy all the firstborn—unless he saw blood sprinkled upon the doorpost of the house, in which case he would "pass over" that house.

The observance of the Passover was directly binding upon all Israelites as a remembrance of their miraculous deliverance from Egypt. But the observance had meaning far beyond that. It was also associated with the establishing of a covenant relationship with God or renewing a relationship that had been broken by sin. In the time of king Hezekiah, after a time of apostasy, the king ordered and directed a major temple clean-up operation. When the renovations were complete, the first action taken in returning to regular worship was the observance of the Passover, to restore the people to a right relationship with God (II Chron. 30 and 31). In the time of Josiah, after another period of apostasy, the Passover was again kept—"with great joy." The people heard the law and agreed to keep it.

The Corinthian situation would seem to be parallel. Sin had been committed, and a renewal was needed, a spiritual passover, a serious act of seeking God's forgiveness and entreating His favor, to restore a relationship that had been broken by sin.

Hence Paul's appeal, "Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (I Cor. 5:8).

His words in verse 7, however, seem to indicate still another aspect of Passover—a spiritual passover which must be kept continually. He addresses the brethren as being, in a spiritual sense, the passover bread, which must be free from any leavening of evil. "Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough? Clean out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump" (NAS).

Then follows the comment in question, "For Christ our Passover has also been sacrificed" (NAS). Now let us ask: Can Christ be any more literally the "pascal lamb" sacrificed than the believers are literally the passover bread? Are not both symbols and in the same sense part of the pure pass-

over that must be kept?

The centrality of Christ in this figure is not strange. Christ instituted the New Passover, He set the pattern of the Passover they were to observe, He was in a sense their "passover," being at the heart and center of their faith. Just as He was their light, their joy, their hope, and their salvation, so He was their passover. In Paul's mind, it was a reality inexpressible. But there is no suggestion of any blood sacrifice for their sins. The believers must purge out the old leaven to restore themselves to a right relationship with God—the pascal lamb could not do that for them. The obligation was entirely upon the individuals.

"Therefore," he says, or "in the same manner," "let us keep the feast," even as Christ did, "not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (I Cor. 5:8). MM

OUR READERS WRITE

Weeds, Weeds

Some of the weeds we've had to deal with in our garden are deadly. One of the worst here is convolvulus or bind weed, which comes up and almost strangles the plants. This plant reminds me of people who strangle the truth, turning the words of our Lord into fables. Another thing which we have a lot of are wireworms. These are very small and thin, yellow in color. These eat right through the plant roots. Here again these remind us of the sins that keep worming their way into our lives then let us down.

At the back of our house is a little hill, the same kind of hill from which we can imagine Jesus giving His Sermon on the Mount. To the west are three other hills covered with sheep. So many Bible pictures come to mind, it's good to be alive!

England

J. T.

"Making the Grade"

Our time is valuable. Each day shortens what remains of our day of opportunity. So often we find ourselves taken up with the things of this life. Just to think of the promises of God helps me to be determined to stay awake, praying for strength to survive to the end.

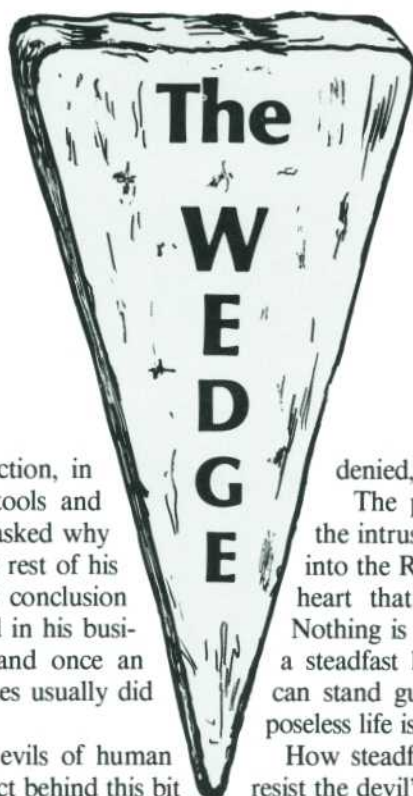
God sees to it that we have many examples to follow. Jesus is our great example: "If any man shall come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."

We have what it takes or we would not be here. God wants us to succeed. His whole plan is built around the winners. We can reach God's standard. In Romans 8, Paul said that we "are called according to His purpose," therefore we are capable of "making the grade."

Colorado

W. P.

Allow even a hairline of an entrance of sin in your life, and the damage is begun.



YOU have heard the fable of the devil's auction, in which he purposed to dispose of all his tools and adgets. All, that is, except the wedge. When asked why he wanted to keep the wedge and sell all the rest of his devices, he replied that he had come to the conclusion that the wedge was the only tool he needed in his business. No other tool proved so effective, and once an intrusion was made, time and circumstances usually did the rest.

Any who have struggled against the evils of human nature are keenly aware of the painful fact behind this bit of fiction. Allow even a hairline of an entrance of sin in your life, and the damage is begun—the wedge is driven. If no action is taken to remove the wedge, the sin will widen, with blow upon blow, until your allegiance to God is severed, your loyalty divided.

The moral, then: resist the first, tiniest impulse to sin. Every evil, however small, begins with that smallest of all offenses, the evil thought. Once the thought is granted lodgment, its demands become more and more insistent until finally it is expressed outwardly as a deed.

But the evil thought endangers only as it finds welcome (lodgment) in the mind. If it is immediately refused, or denied, it can do no harm. Sin consists in *yielding* to the evil thought. So long as the thought finds no sympathy within, the wedge is useless, unable to make a dent. And so the mind remains unharmed.

The wedge's sharp edge is always sure to find the weakest spot in our character.

Each time we resist the entering wedge of unbelief, we are strengthening our resistance and becoming more firmly established in the cause of right.

Each time we resist an unthankful spirit, our peace and contentment increase. With each evil desire crushed, each wicked thought repelled, each impure motive

denied, we grow stronger in the Divine life.

The prophet Daniel showed his strength in resisting the intrusion of sin's wedge, and his success has been put into the Record for us. We read: "Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself" (Dan. 1:8). Nothing is so effective against "the wiles of the devil" as a steadfast heart-purpose. It is the mightiest sentry that can stand guard over our Christlike conduct. The purposeless life is the defenseless life.

How steadfast must our heart-purpose be in order to resist the devil's wedge? The prophet Isaiah described his own in these meaningful words: "I have set my face [heart] like a flint." Against such a fixed purpose, such flintlike determination, the devil's wedge is powerless as a straw.

The apostle Paul also had a mighty safeguard of purpose and, like Daniel, every time a hostile circumstance confronted him he held firmly to it. This is his testimony, left on record for us: "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:38-39, NIV).

If we cultivate a close companionship with God and cooperate with His glorious purpose, we shall find that we, too, are able to resist the insidious wedge of evil, whatever the temptation may be. Our mind will cherish no suggestion which will make it a less holy dwelling place for the Word of Christ. Nor will we be found entertaining any desire which would be an affront to God and righteousness. We will allow ourselves to do nothing that would impair our fitness as a true servant of the living God. Our heart will be safe against any wedge of evil that threatens to intrude.

MM

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