

Megiddo Message



Is It Too
Late?

What Are You Becoming?

We are all in the process of becoming, as long as we are alive, but the question is, "Becoming What?"

The apostle Paul tells us that there is a definite objective toward which we should all strive within the plan of God for our lives, and that is to conform our lives to the pattern of Christ. These are Paul's words, as translated in the Jerusalem Bible: "We know that by turning everything to their good God cooperates with all those who love him, with all those that he has called according to his purpose. They are the ones he chose specially long ago and intended to become true images of his Son, so that his Son might be the eldest of many brothers" (Rom. 8:28-29, JB). God purposed that His chosen ones should conform their lives to the likeness of His Son. This is the great formative process, the process of becoming like Christ.

In a sense, that is the essence of what is often described as "becoming a whole person," a new person. The word "becoming" suggests that it is a process, a development through the course of one's life. The process includes some crises and many ordinary days, but moves inevitably to a consummation. That consummation for us earthlings will be the time when, if we have become morally like Christ our pattern, He will come to "change our mortal body and give it a form like that of his own resplendent body, by the very power which enables him to make all things subject to himself" (Phil. 3:20-21, NEB).

This transformed body, once it is complete, will continue to "grow" in His presence through all eternity.

Right now we are concerned with the first step of "becoming," as it relates to our life here and now. As a steward of my life, I must guide the direction of my life under God so that I *become* what He wants me to be. Whether Christ will transform me into His physical likeness when He returns depends on whether I bring my life to His pattern.

The implication of this is that we must be "becoming" every day what He wants us to be, that is, disciplined, directed, schooled, prepared, developed—a whole new person, wholly re-made. The change affects every facet of our lives.

Borrowing another simile from the apostle Paul, "becoming a whole new person" means a complete remaking of our life, inside out. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" (II Cor. 5:17, TLB).

Becoming like Christ is a daily process. It is not the work of a moment, a day, or a year. It is a lifetime process of creation, of putting off the old, putting on the new; of putting to death our natural inclinations and desires that conflict with the law of God, and encouraging and promoting every high and holy interest. It is a drastic, total remaking of ourselves—new thoughts, new interests, new desires, new hopes, new ambitions, new goals—"all things new!"

Whether we give serious attention to this process or not, we will become something—either "like Christ," or just "like ourselves."

What are you becoming?

MM

Megiddo means...

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

We believe

—in God, the Creator of all 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, taken to heaven, and seated at the right hand of the Father, crowned with immortal glory, and who shall shortly return to be king of the whole earth.

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

AAT—The Bible: An American Translation

Megiddo Message

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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.

THIS IS Your Life!...

This very moment. It is now. Or never.

*The human race is almost
universally afflicted with the disease of Futuritis.*

“**E**njoy thyself; it is later than you think,” runs an Oriental proverb.

At the worst, these words express a reckless hedonism; at their best and noblest, they hold the wisdom of the ages. For the human race is almost universally afflicted with the disease of Futuritis. This may be described as postponement of the enjoyment of life until certain goals and conditions shall have been attained. The child will be happy when school is out; the youth cannot wait to be living his own life; the parents will do so many things when the children are grown up; the business man hopes to find time, some day, to enjoy the fruits of his success; and as the end approaches, life becomes a desperate scramble for financial security to make the last chapter bearable, or a brief retirement which, all too often, finds us and leaves us unprepared, with empty hands, empty hearts, empty lives. And suddenly it is all over, and we have not yet found time to live.

Is this all? Is this what life adds up to? Nothing more?

Friend, this is your life. It is your only chance. The thought is sobering, but life need not be a somber experience. Life can be beautiful, life can be meaningful. It is not a burden to be endured, but a gift to be enjoyed. The

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for ever. It is more
than today that is being
squandered, it is eternity.
This is our life! We shall
not pass this way again.*

striving Christian knows this; he has experienced it to the extent of his faith. The Christian faith is a rejoicing faith; its distinguishing mark is the spiritual glow. We who have named the name of Christ have access, through our hope of an eternal future, to the cream of this present life, which we enjoy, in the highest sense of the word, in proportion to our emancipation from the bondage of earthly things.

Yet even we are in danger of the contagion of Futuritis. We are not immune, as we well know, from the stagnating, paralyzing influence of this off-balance living, this indecision, this postponement, this waiting for circumstances to change. It is true that we should not and must not strike our roots deep in the present *kosmos*, which is doomed and perishing; but neither should we despise or neglect our present opportunities for happiness—the supreme happiness which only the dedicated, the surrendered Christian knows. For this is your life, your only chance, this very moment.

If not now, when? What are we waiting for?

We face each day with our purse filled with a given number of hours and minutes. The rich have no more, the poor have no less. Ordinary hours and minutes they seem, yet they are life itself. Before us lie the day's duties; its common, routine service and its opportunities for the extra items, small and great, which make the difference—the service above and beyond the call of duty, the things done for others which take us out of ourselves and enrich us by the giving. As we hesitate, or as we are busy here and there with this and that, the minutes run into hours: the hours run by; it is

noon—it is night. Another day gone, and what have we done with its precious hours and minutes? Have we lived? If not, why not? If not now, when? What are we waiting for?

Ah, well, perhaps we *have* been negligent today, and we regret it. But the week is young. Tomorrow we will do better. But tomorrow, when it comes, is today, and very like yesterday; it will be no better than we make it. As we delay and postpone the kind deed, the encouraging word, the friendly visit, the self-discipline, the mental improvement and the spiritual polishing, until a more convenient season, suddenly the week has gone. Where? What have we done with the days?

Before the month is out, we say, we shall grapple effectively with the vital issues; we shall be overcomers; we shall make up for lost time. But the moon waxes and wanes, the weeks come and go, and the postman with his unwelcome reminders makes us aware that another month has gone—and another—and another.

It is spring—it is summer—it is autumn—it is winter; and another year passes into eternity. Have we lived it, or merely watched it go by? Are we a twelve month nearer the goal we have set for ourselves? Are we even half a year closer? It is not a trifling matter; this is your life; this year will not come again.

We are young, perhaps, and full of vigor when we set out on the road to the City of the Future Day. Middle age is a strange condition a long way off, and old age an unlikely phenomenon beyond our understanding. But time has a way of correcting these misconceptions. The demands of life grow upon us; we wake, and work, and eat, and drink and sleep, over and

Life can be beautiful, life can be meaningful. It is not a burden to be endured, but a gift to be enjoyed. The striving Christian knows this; he has experienced it to the extent of his faith.

I am only one," said a wise and sincere man, "but I am one. I cannot do everything, but I can do something. What I can do, I ought to do; and what I ought to do, by God's help I will do."

The Christian faith is a rejoicing faith; its distinguishing mark is the spiritual glow.

over and over again, hoping from year to year for something better but too busy to consider that this is it; too anxious and too driven to enjoy to the full our rich spiritual heritage, as the Eternal Giver intends us to enjoy it.

We are thirty—forty—fifty — sixty—the years are racing by with increasing speed as the strength to grasp them diminishes. Going—going—Not long, this life, as we look back over it. It was later than we thought. What have we done with the years? What has life brought to us? The answer depends upon what we have brought to it. For the harvest we reap is that which we have sown.

What are we waiting for? What reason have we to suppose that the payment of our vows to God will be easier tomorrow, or next week, or next year? What reason—except our apathy, our mental and spiritual laziness? This is not life, this is Futuritis. We expect to pass through this world but once. “Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation.” It is none too long for the work to be done. The time we lose is lost for ever. It is more than today that is being squandered, it is eternity. Let us then be up and doing. Any good thing that we may find to do, for God or for our brother—which is one and the same thing—let us hasten to do it. Let us not defer or neglect it, for we shall not pass this way again.

We may say that we have little opportunity; every day is alike—work, worry, and monotony. Yet others in less favorable surroundings have lived abundantly. The fault is not in our fate, or our environment, but in ourselves and our attitudes.

Our opportunities come to us as we seek them, find them, make them, recognize them. Nothing is more important than the ability to recognize as such the countless opportunities with which the commonplace days are crowded. For the good life is not the product of a dramatic adventure, or even of a series of them; but the sum total of our ordinary days well lived. The humblest service may be glorified if rendered in the spirit of Him who was with His brethren as one that served.

The petty trials of the day can build us up instead of wearing us down. “Sharp irritations, being overlaid with patience, will make fair pearls for our most meet adorning.” The temptation successfully resisted, the gratification denied for the sake of example—these are the golden opportunities which press in on every side. If alert, we will find in every moment of every day a challenge to the best that is in us.

Are we sitting with idle hands, perhaps, because of our limited abilities? Let us not complain of our limitations until we have lived up to our possibilities. It is important not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think, but it is equally important not to “sell ourselves short.” “I am only one,” said a wise and sincere man, “but I am one. I cannot do everything, but I can do something. What I can do, I ought to do; and what I ought to do, by God’s help I will do.”

Each of us has his place, his work, in the Almighty’s scheme of things. The foot must not say, “Because I am not the head, I am not of the body.” If all sulked in their tents because they feel inadequate or unrecognized, who would fight the battle? Our abilities are increased by exercise, not by waiting. Let us remember the legend of the cowardly soldier who, dissatisfied with the poor quality of his sword, broke it and fled the field; while the king’s son, wounded and weaponless, caught up the discarded blade and with it hewed his way to a great victory.

Are we common, uneducated men, more acquainted with lowly toil than with the finer things of life? So were the most successful group of men the world has ever known—the twelve apostles. It was not one from school or temple or palace, but One who was born in a stable and died on a cross, who is called Savior and King.

We cannot change our natural heritage by wishing, but we can improve it by working. With the help of God, by wise investment and management, our meager endowments of mind and soul can be pyramided into riches and honor beyond the power of the mortal mind to imagine, with endless life in which to enjoy them.

Purposive activity, the ability to dream, to picture an ideal self toward which the real self may strive, is man’s glory. It is this aspiration which gives him the power to turn a minus into a plus, to take his handicaps and build around them a character for the ages.

To dare to think beyond this life, to escape in flights of lofty aspiration the limitations of mortality, to visualize oneself as a coworker with Omnipotence, a

living, essential factor in an eternal, expanding Future, this is man's crowning glory. This is not Futuritis—this is *living*!

To dedicate oneself wholeheartedly to this audacious proposition, to let it dominate our ordinary days and fill them with hope and light and song, this is the highest, purest pleasure life can give. Against such pleasures, there is no law. Why, then, do we hesitate to avail ourselves of this happiness? Why do we choose the worst, when the best is ours for the taking? While we hesitate, life is going by.

Enjoy thyself—it is later than you think. MM



A Genuine Christian?

When God measures a Christian, He puts the tape around the heart. What makes a real Christian? Not just an outward form but one who has changed inwardly. A real Christian is not just the old man patched up and painted over but a whole new life within, a completely changed heart and attitude and mind. "If a man is in Christ, he becomes a new person altogether—the past is finished and gone, everything has become fresh and new" (II Cor. 5:17, Phillips).

The Lord looks on the heart, not the surface. We can usually judge by what we see. But we may be wrong. One may talk like a Christian and, judging from all external appearances, *seem* to be a Christian—and not be a Christian at all, but only a church member from Laodicea.

This is why, when God measures a Christian, He puts the tape around the heart.

—Contributed

Being Or Doing?

There is a perennial debate that centers around "*being*" and "*doing*." The "be-gooder" condemns the "do-gooder" for his failure to understand the meaning of character and integrity. Likewise the "do-gooder" scorns the "be-gooder" for refusing to be active where activity is required.

Actually, God wants both *being* and *doing*. Giving Him *all* our heart, *all* our soul, *all* our mind, and *all* our strength (Mark 12:30-31) omits neither. It is impossible to *be* good without *doing* good; it is likewise impossible to *do* good without *being* good. Neither can be given priority to the neglect of the other, for it is impossible to be good for nothing and do good; likewise it is impossible to do nothing and be good for anything.

Jesus' whole gospel was a gospel of doing. He condemned those who say and do not: "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say?" Again He said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21).

Jesus' condemnation of the Pharisees showed that He wanted people to both be good and do good. "These ought ye to have done and not to leave the other undone" (Matt. 23:23).

We are commanded both to "be holy" (I Pet. 1:15-16) and to do His commandments (Rev. 22:14). Nothing short of both can assure us a right to the "tree of life" and an entrance "through the gates into the city." MM



Is It Too Late?

If the lessons of history teach anything, they tell us that the point of "too late" does arrive. God's mercy is long, but it has its limit.

Summer is a season we all look forward to. Summer is a time of life, of renewal, of growth. It is the time to plant, cultivate and harvest.

But we must act quickly, for summer does not come to stay. Soon the chilling winds of autumn begin to blow, and before we know it winter has arrived and the time for growth is gone.

Such was the case in the nation of Judah in the seventh century B. C.

For Judah, 609 B. C. was a year of disaster. The much-loved King Josiah, the king who began so well and did so much to revive the faith and worship of the true God in Judah, was killed in battle with the Egyptians. By strenuous religious and political reforms Josiah had managed to stem the tide of moral decay and rekindle the light of faith in Jerusalem. People began to have hope—hope for the future of the nation, hope for its political independence, even hope in God.

But with Josiah gone, the hopes and

dreams which had been nourished under him died also. In addition to losing Josiah, Judah lost also her political independence. To make matters still worse, Josiah's sons did not share their father's faith, or character, or enthusiasm for a religious reformation. They marched, as we would say, to a different drumbeat, one of godlessness, idolatry, and lust.

No one even half perceptive could fail to see that for Judah it was the beginning of the end; certainly not the thoughtful prophet named Jeremiah. Pre-informed of the approaching doom, he took his pen in hand and added to his prophecies this sad lament: "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved."

It was a sad note; but what made the situation hopeless for these people was not their circumstances but their attitude; not God's action toward them but their *inaction* toward God and their adamant refusal to listen.

Even then, the Lord in His mercy did not cut them off in one grand sweep. Even then, if they had reformed their ways He would have changed His plans.

But there comes a point where the die is cast; where sin, so long established, cannot be corrected; where warnings, so long disregarded, fall on deaf ears.

Do we wonder, then, that with all that Jeremiah had seen, he should ask, "Is it too late?"

Almost four years passed, four years of grace. It was now the year 605 B.C., and another year of national calamity for Judah. Nebuchadnezzar's army marched on Judah, plundered Jerusalem, and carried away the best and brightest of Judah's young men, including her crown prince—and including a young lad named

Daniel. It was indeed the beginning of the end.

The people of Judah could not say they had not been warned. For twenty years Jeremiah had been telling them that it was coming; they *could* have repented; they *could* have reformed and turned to God—and saved their nation.

But they would not. This time, as Jeremiah pondered the sad and desperate situation, the question stuck in his throat as he asked: "Is it...is it too late?"

Still, to the majority of the people, things didn't seem that bad. The first captives and Nebuchadnezzar's army gone, life in the nation returned to something like normal. Was it possible that the worst was over? Many thought so. Another year went by, and another, and another.

Must we not agree—that God's mercy is great—beyond our fathoming?

Some sixteen years passed, until the fateful year of 588 arrived. Ironically, that very summer the streets and alleys of Jerusalem were buzzing with hope and rumor. The word was that Egypt's army was coming to free Judah from the domination of Babylon. Jeremiah, still speaking the clear, unpopular word of the Lord, was hated, maligned, persecuted.

Unrest mounted; riots and revolutions broke loose all over Judah. Quickly Nebuchadnezzar's army rose to the challenge, put down the revolts, then surrounded the city of Jerusalem and sat back to wait while he starved out the rebels. Then, just as Jerusalem's food supply was about to give out, his troops stormed the walls and captured the city. By nightfall it was all over; the nation of Judah was no more. The land was in shambles.

The message was clear: the end had come. The words of

What is my relation to God and the great things I know are coming? Can I expect to receive Christ's favor when He comes? Am I doing all He expects me to do? or am I going to be too late?

Holiness is not something apart from life but something that transforms life in the everyday world—at home, on the job, or in the street.

To be 100% fair and square and honest in judging ourselves is no simple matter. It is so easy to be self-deceived and think ourselves better than we are.

Jeremiah sounded taps: "The harvest is past; the summer is ended; and we are not saved." This time no one needed to ask, "Is it too late?" The answer was everywhere. Judah was reaping the harvest of her deeds. Too late. Why? It was a calamity that need not have been; the fruit of years of apostasy, rebellion, and disobedience. If only the people had listened, if only they had believed God's prophets and changed their ways! But they would not. And so the faithful God had no choice but to do as He had promised.

Too late. There is something immensely sad about those words. They spell the end of opportunity. They tell us that something important has been lost, set aside, wasted. Now it is gone, and gone forever. It is too late.

A Lesson for Us

The things written aforetime were written for us, and what is their message? Where do we stand in relation to divine justice? Is there any danger that "too late" may someday describe us?

If the lessons of history teach anything, they tell us the answer is Yes, human nature being what it is. The point of "too late" does arrive. God's mercy is long, but it has its limit. This is why the prophet Isaiah spoke these

stern, rousing words: "Seek ye the Lord *while he may be found*, call ye upon him *while he is near*." Yes, seek Him *now*, while He is near—because the time is coming when He will *not* be near (Isa. 55:6-7).

We stand today at a point in time never before experienced by people of God. The most significant, most climactic, most dramatic event in 6000 years is right upon us. We are at a point where every one of us ought to be pondering, anxiously inquiring, What is my relation to God and the great things I know are coming? Can I expect to receive Christ's favor when He comes? Am I doing all He expects me to do? or am I going to be too late?

God's favor, we know, is conditional. He does not love all humankind. Nor can we assume that He will automatically protect and preserve us. We must do on our part, and when we do, His mercy will be abundant, more than we can imagine!

The prophet Malachi says He will "spare" some "as a man spareth his own son that serveth him," but they are clearly said to be those who fear him (Mal. 3:16-17). Isaiah says that God will take notice of the humble and contrite, who "tremble" at His word (Isa. 66:2; 57:15). He requires that we prove the sincerity of our love; that we place nothing upon earth ahead of Him; that we put Him first in our lives, first in our thoughts, and first in our heart's affections (Matt. 6:33; Mark 12:30-31; Col. 3:1-2); that we make His aims ours, His purposes ours, and His thoughts ours.

If we hope to be recognized and spared when Christ returns, is there not a definite obligation upon us? God knows that we need time to bring ourselves to His standard, and sufficient time is part of His promise (I Tim.

4:8). Never will He allow a single sincere, earnest servant to be lost because of factors beyond his or her control.

But can we think that He will spare us if we have not been doing all we could?

These things are especially important to us, because never have any people lived so near the climax as we. Never before have any people of God faced the prospect of an interruption in their careers by the ending of the age and the change from walking by faith to walking by sight.

Thrilling...and Awesome

Yet while we do not know God's time table, that interruption is imminently before us. The prospect is thrilling; at the same time it is awesome and shocking.

What does it mean to us? Our hearts thrill at the possibility of being among those to escape death altogether, to have the privilege of seeing the end of this age and the beginning of the next;...of living through the period of transition, through the Millennium and on into eternity. It is a privilege beyond the power of words to describe. And—best of all—it is not a dream. It is a privilege which will be granted some; for, said Jesus, "whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die" (John 11:26).

But privilege always brings its compensating responsibility, and this is no exception. Those who belong to this age who would have the privilege of never experiencing death cannot anticipate a full, normal life span in which to complete their work. At some point their working time will be interrupted by the coming of Christ. This means that they must give superdiligence to their work—in Jesus' own words, "lest coming suddenly, I find you sleeping." For, like the servants in

His parable who were welcoming their returning lord, whenever He chooses to come *they must be ready*.

Is it possible? We do not fear, because we know that God would not ask the impossible; yet, we look at ourselves and see so much to be done. Then we look at the signs in the sun, moon, and stars of the political heavens. Can we help asking, With all this prophecy fulfilled, where do I stand? Is it too late? Do I still have time to change, to remake my life, to exchange my ungodly ways and thoughts for God's?... or is it too late?

Our problem, however, is not the supply of time—which is unknowable—but our failure to properly *use* the time we are given. *Never has anyone been caught by "too late" because of a failure on God's part. If God says we are "too late," we have only ourselves to blame.*

Too Late—How?

We make ourselves too late in several significant—and very human—ways: by our lack of concern, our lack of self-honesty, our stubborn rebellion, or our hardened insensitivity to sin.

Perhaps the most common is a natural lack of concern. We don't fully believe God, and so we don't see the need for any drastic action; we simply aren't that worried. This was the attitude of the people of Sodom, and surely that of the antediluvians in the time of Noah. Can we blame God if our time is suddenly cut short when this has been our attitude?

Then, too, we are all naturally lazy. Unless we have a vivid and compelling picture of the reward God offers, the work requires more effort and demanding concentration than we feel like putting into it. Lacking this, we go comfortably along the line of least resistance, somewhat

Let Us Pray

Lord God of yesterday, today and tomorrow, our strength and our stay, and on whom we depend for every breath of life: we pause in Thy presence this hour with fresh thoughts of our humility, our inadequacy, and the weakness that attends our mortal state. We need Thee every hour, Most Gracious One. Our heart and our flesh cry out for Thee, Thou Rock of our salvation.

Through Thy goodness our lot has been cast in goodly places; our lives are rich with blessings beyond our ability to measure. Thou hast surrounded us with the bounties of nature, the beauties of truth, the inspirations of friendship, and the delights of love.

What shall we render to Thee for all Thy benefits to us? How shall we bring to Thee the gratitude of our hearts for the continued gift of life and the opportunities that attend it? how—but to grasp the life Thou hast given us and shape it into the character Thou dost desire.

Grant, Father, that we may each one renew our determination to live henceforth always, only, *all* for Thee, not squandering a single moment in pride, self-will, or any unholy pursuit or pas-

sion. May we realize that we are not our own; our *time* is not our own; our *life* is not our own; our *mind* is not our own; our *tongue* is not our own; all belongs to Thee, and we shall one day be called to account for the use we have made of these gifts of Thine.

Remind us anew, our Father, of the limited nature of our days and the work that yet remains for us to accomplish; that if we squander the time Thou dost so graciously allot us, it will eventually be too late; that a moment will arrive for each of us when the last opportunity will have passed, the last battle will have been fought, the last victory won; either to our eternal, indescribable delight, or our unutterable sorrow.

Be with Thy people everywhere, who are one with us in heart and spirit. Encourage and strengthen them as Thou hast promised. And may we rededicate ourselves to live each hour victoriously, that the arrival of Thy Son may be to us a day of ecstatic joy, the beginning of delights that shall continue and increase through all the ages of eternity. In His Name we pray. Amen.

careless, somewhat indifferent, and priceless opportunities slip by unused.

How can we do it when our own eternal welfare is at stake?

Or we feel that there is plenty of time, so why worry? Besides, we have many other interests and obligations at the moment. And so we put off the real work of changing ourselves. It is a sure formula for arriving "too late."

Or we lose time because we lack self-honesty. To be 100% fair and square and honest in judging ourselves is no simple matter. It is so easy to be self-deceived and think ourselves better than we are. It is so easy, when a point is brought up, to say to ourselves, "I know my faults; I'm glad that's not one of them." It is so easy—and so dangerous—to be self-righteous

Are we really looking for Christ? Are we living as if we longed to see Him again? Do we say by our lives that we love His appearing?

and self-confident, content within ourselves that we are pleasing God when in reality we are not.

It is so easy to pride ourselves in the good we have done; to focus on our good points, instead of our weaknesses.

If such is our temptation, let us remind ourselves that good qualities are remarkably capable of caring for themselves; it is the bad ones that need attention. God cannot be mocked; or deceived; or fooled. Whatever label *we* give a sin, however mild and harmless *we* make it seem, it is still sin and still deadly in the sight of God. He never calls good evil, or evil good; never.

Oh, let us be careful not to overlook anything that might stand against us at Judgment or lessen our chances of receiving a favorable verdict on our lives.

Then, too, we make ourselves "too late" and lose valuable time by holding stubbornly to our own opinion and our own way. This

is one of the greatest time wasters possible, for it freezes us in our tracks; we go nowhere. God wants us to be pliable, to listen and obey. In the words so often repeated to the Israelites of old, "obey and live."

Then let us not overlook the danger of disregarding God's law, of telling ourselves "it doesn't matter" so long that it no longer penetrates our consciousness. Let us beware of becoming insensitive to sin so that its presence no longer pricks our conscience. At such a point we lose both the will, the desire, and the inclination to change. Brethren, let us guard warily against this. Nothing is so surely fatal, or so sure of placing us among those who are "too late." Not without cause did the Prophet warn: "Give glory to the Lord your God before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble on the dark mountain."

What can be more hopeless than to neglect the loving entreaties of God so long that they lose their appeal; to become so hardened in our sins that we see no need to change, hence fail to exert the effort. At such a point, can we expect God to extend our time—when we are making no use of it? Can we expect His mercy when, through our own neglect, our moral work has become as impossible as the Ethiopian changing his skin or the leopard his spots?

Oh, let us take warning now, before it's too late!

God Has Promised...

God has promised to provide sufficient for our need—all the time, the strength, the energy, the life that we need. Yet, how easily we misuse these resources—because they look so ordinary, because they seem so much like our own. We forget that we have not a single thing that is wholly ours, or that we can use wholly as *we* wish.

To avoid the "too late" possibility, there are certain steps we need to take right now. As a matter of sound spiritual caution, we ought to give serious and careful attention to our own position in the light of divine judgment, and see where we stand.

Let us in all earnestness search our hearts and find out how matters stand between ourselves and God. What does God think of us? What are our thoughts of God?

We live in an age of spiritual privileges. We suffer no outward persecution; we have everything we need for comfort and ease. Are we taking advantage of the privileges we enjoy? Are we any better for them—spiritually?

We live in a time of peculiar *spiritual danger*. Never before have men been so indifferent, so tolerant, so disregarding of the divine will. Times like these call

Do not pray for easier lives—pray to be made stronger.

Do not pray for tasks equal to your strength.

Pray for strength equal to your tasks.

for careful self-examination. For when we look around, we may well ask, Is it too late?

So let us ask ourselves, How concerned am I about my spiritual condition before God? How high is His opinion on my list of concerns?

Thousands of people never give the subject a serious thought. From the beginning of the year to the end they are absorbed in their business, their pleasure, politics, money, or some other type of self-indulgence. Topics like death, judgment, eternity, and a world to come are seldom thought of. They live as if they were never going to die. They do not even pretend to reason about it—until they encounter sickness, or a death in the family, or an accident. Barring such interruptions, they seem quite able to ignore God altogether, to go their way, as though there were nothing worth thinking of except the cares of this world.

It is hard to imagine a life more unworthy of God than this. Like the Jews of old they do not “consider their ways,” they do not “consider their latter end” (Isa. 1:3; Hag. 1:7; Deut. 32:29). If they prosper in the world and succeed in their line, they are lauded and admired by their peers. Nothing succeeds like success. But for all this they cannot live for ever. One day they, like all others before them, will die, and it will be too late.

When so large a class of this kind exists, no one need wonder whether he belongs to it. In the simple words of the apostle John, “Look to yourselves.”

How Are We Progressing?

Then let us ask how we are progressing in the developing of heart holiness. It is as certain as anything in Scripture that without holiness no man shall see the Lord (Heb. 12:14). Holiness

is the goal of absolute perfection and freedom from all faults. And it is equally certain that real Christian holiness can never be attained, or maintained, without a constant fight and struggle. The great Apostle said, “I fight, —I labor,—I keep under my body and bring it into subjection” (I Cor. 9:27).

The holiness of the saints is a real, true, genuine thing, as unmistakable in its character as light or salt. It is a condition of heart, and attitude, and will. It is not something apart from life but something that transforms life in the everyday world, that makes one do his duty more fully at home, on the job, or in the street.

Where do we stand? How far have we progressed in the development of this quality?...How far can we advance—before it's too late?

Then let us look at our daily disciplines of faith: our Bible study, private prayer, and worship. It is possible to perform these regularly and formally, yet have them unknown to God and the angels. It is possible to go through the motions, yet know nothing of enjoying them; to attend to them as a matter of duty, but without any feeling, interest, or affection. Yet even common sense tells us that this formal, mechanical use of holy things, is utterly worthless and unprofitable.

Can we change our concern; can we put our heart into our devotions to God; can we develop that intense love of God and future life, in light of the reward He has offered us—before it's too late?

How needful that we do, for how can we please God if we read about Him and His Christ as a mere matter of duty? How can we be acceptable to Him by repeating morning and evening

How concerned
am I about my
spiritual
condition before God?
How high is His opinion
on my list of concerns?

a string of words under the name of “prayer,” which we do not feel nor scarcely think about?

If such is the state of our heart, if our heart never truly “burns within us” upon hearing of heavenly truth, how could we ever live among those intense souls who stormed their way into the Kingdom; whose devotion amounted to enthusiasm; whose whole heart and soul were bound up in pleasing God?

Then, let us ask how we feel about Christ's coming. The hour is late; His coming draws near and ever nearer. Again the words echo back to us: “Is it too late?” In other words, Am I doing everything in my power to be ready?

The promise is as certain as anything in the Bible. As surely as He went up visibly, on the Mount of Olives, before the eyes
(Continued on page 17)

Let us in all
earnestness
search our hearts
and find out how matters
stand between us and
God. What does God think
of us?

MENE, MENE, TEKEL,

(Numbered)

(Numbered)

(Weighed)

*Living in the final days of Modern Babylon,
we too may be caught*

Feasting to

It is night. Nature has bowed to the inevitable, and save the low moaning of the far-off sea, the lispings leaves awakened by the restless night breezes, and perhaps an occasional gurgle of the gliding Euphrates, all is hushed and still.

All, but not all. From the towering domes of the city of Babylon a myriad of lights gleam and flash defiance to the darkness and to the watchful stars. Every dwelling is aquiver with excitement. But in the royal palace are gathered the proudest of the land. All the pomp and splendor, all the wealth and the luxury that lands ever produced are lavished there.

Can words paint the grandeur of that scene? High on the throne in jeweled robes, sits the proud King Belshazzar, while brawny slaves bow in his presence in trembling adoration. Gorgeously appareled lords are grouped around him, while before him are spread all the bounties of earth. The rich perfume of costly spice mingles with the scent of rare flowers. Wave upon wave of thrilling music echoes and re-echoes through that massive hall and swells into the night.

It is King Belshazzar's midnight feast. His last feast.



UPHARSIN

(Divided)

Louder grows the revelry of laughter and song. Recklessly they quaff the rare wine, yet pride is not satisfied. Let music swell. Let flowers fade and die. All hearts beat with happiness. "No power in earth or sky can stay our mirth. Bring forth the cups of gold and silver from the temple. Drink from their sacred depths the foaming beverage. Fill these consecrated censers with sacrifices to Babylon's gods, *I am King Belshazzar! I fear not Israel's God!*"

Forward are brought the sacred vessels taken years earlier from the temple so sacred to the fallen Israelites, the temple wherein God Himself had reigned. Now they are dese-

crated by honoring the gods of the heathens.

But their desecration is not hidden. The Omniscient Eye sees the mocking festivities, and hears the derisive shouts of victory as those hallowed vessels, so sanctified to His divine use, are polluted by unholy sacrifices.

But—ah! what is this? O'er the glittering and defiant scene a shadow, slight yet chilling, seems to fall. The lights, but a moment ago so brilliant, now flicker and dart like greedy tongues toward the far corner where, on the wall, appears a dark, rapidly moving object—a human hand. Swiftly and silently it traces word after word

of a language all unknown.

Spellbound, with bloodless lips and bated breath, the revelers watch, transfixed, with sickening terror. Silence has fallen, a silence so dread, so full of horror, that the very foaming of the wine is audible. The rich perfume of the flowers makes the stillness more oppressive, yet they dare not move. As if carved from marble, they watch the awful vision until, as silently, as swiftly as it came, the mysterious hand vanishes.

The hand is gone; but the writing remains in bold, distinct, glowing characters, with meaning as fathomless as the hand that wrote it. (Continued)

Death

Do we by any manner pay honor to the gods of the flesh? Shall WE be weighed and found wanting? Soon the kingdoms of this world shall fall, and with the dawn of the great new Day of the Lord, Babylon shall be no more. Shall we be found feasting, even to death?

(Continued from page 15)

Every throat is parched; every limb is quaking in that splendid hall. The mirth and song, so thrillingly sweet, is hushed, and only hoarse whispers break the chilly stillness. The throngs, but one short hour ago so merry, so fearless, now start at their shadows. What of King Belshazzar who fears not God or man? The wild, horror-stricken faces, turned to him for help, meet the same fixed marble stare in his own. His trembling hand refuses to hold the golden vessel half raised to his lips, and it falls, its ring reverberating in hollow tones: "The time is come, the time is come."

Listen! The king is speaking: "Summon immediately the wise men of Babylon; let them unravel the mystery. Their gifted minds can pierce the thickest veil."

They come. They start and shake as did their fellows at sight of those strange words of fire. They try to speak, but are as powerless as infants in a lion's paw.

They have failed. What now will the king do? The talent of

the land has failed him. Oh! if those flaming letters would but vanish!...But there they stay, gleaming with renewed force, burning like firebrands into the king's soul.

What will he do? What *can* he do? Is there no one? no one in all the realm?

The Queen prostrating herself in the King's presence offers her suggestion. She pleads with him to send for the pale-faced dreamer, the captive Israelite, whose soul speaks with the God of the skies: Daniel.

They bring Daniel in. His appearance is simple, in contrast with the gorgeous attire of the revelers, his heavy locks falling over a long black robe and around a shining face. Long ago his earthly hopes and joys were borne, along with the moans and cries of fellow captives, away on the bosom of the Euphrates. But can captivity crush the soul? Not such a soul as his. Not a soul whose freedom lies in the hands of the Eternal God.

Breathlessly they watch as he scans the mystic inscription, fearful lest they miss one tone or gesture. Will he know, will he tell? Will he be above all the favored of the King? Does he shrink or start? No. His stately form rises like a pillar from among that cowering host, and with confidence in his God he turns to King Belshazzar and begins to speak.

"Oh, King! before whom nations bow in reverence, whom men delight to honor, thou in whose hands lies the fate of millions, thou hast forgotten the Almighty Ruler of earth and sky; thou hast defied the God of Heaven, at whose hand thou shalt suffer. Thou canst not repent. Thou hast set at utter defiance Him before whom every knee shall bow and whom every tongue shall reverence.

Listen!

'Thou art weighed in the balance and found wanting.' This night the kingdom shall be taken from thee and the conqueror's hand lay thee low."

For one moment the heart stops, only to burst forth with terrific energy as if to free itself from prison walls and fly to the bosom of the deep. The breeze which so lately had wafted the sweetness of music and of flowers, now moans, "Oh, Babylon! Babylon!"

And does it not bear another sound, a distant rumbling, a hollow chatter? It is but a fleeting fancy. On with the wild, weird music! On with the joyous dance! Let not mere fancy bring a barrier to our sport.

But hark! that far sounding cry draws nearer and yet nearer. A surging, seething sound, the clanging and clashing of steel, the heavy tramp of marching feet.

O King Belshazzar, where now is thy power, thy boasted might?

.....

The conqueror with his victorious army encompassed that magnificent palace and Belshazzar the Great, the one above all others, mingled his blood with that of his fellow victims. He was weighed in God's balances and found wanting. The proud city which so lately had rejoiced in its glory, which had vaunted its greatness, was laid low, never again to raise its head in haughty sovereignty.

.....

Many centuries later, right here in our own world today, we see not a reproduction of that night so long ago in the doomed city, but a much amplified and intensified Babylon, a universal city of confusion, of wanton pleasure, of mocking festivity, of luxurious reveling and feasting.

Above the din we hear that mighty voice from Patmos cry as the Prophet peers into the future, not far distant now: "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great. Come out of her, O my people, that you share not her sins, that you partake not of her plagues. ...God calls her misdeeds to the reckoning....In her heart she vaunts, 'A queen I sit,...tears I shall never know,' so shall her plagues fall in a single day. The kings of the earth...shall wail ...as they watch the smoke of her burning,...crying, 'Woe and alas, thou great...strong city of Babylon! In one brief hour thy doom has come.'" The Prophet visions a strong angel who lifted a "boulder like a huge millstone and flung it into the sea, crying, 'So shall the great city, Babylon, be hurled down...and never be seen any more.'" Perished forever her luxury and splendor, who destroyed the earth with her vice.

Behold now, the handwriting on the wall, in clear, emblazoned letters! Are we taking heed? Or are we careless, defying the Almighty Ruler of earth and sky, doubting that the condemnation of a Babylonish world shall come to pass even as He has decreed? This empire of evil, the world-wide Babylon, revels on, heedless of naught but the present.

Do we delight in her luxuries, do we desire to touch, taste, or handle her dainty meats? Do we by any manner pay honor to the gods of the flesh, or to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience? Shall we thus be weighed and found wanting?

This night the kingdoms of men shall be taken from them; in the Morning, the dawn of the great new Day of the Lord, Babylon shall be no more. Shall we fall with the doomed city? Are we working mightily to escape her destruction; or are we eating

and drinking with the drunken and rising up to play?

Let us not answer until we have scrutinized every act, word, thought and motive—lest we delude ourselves and continue feasting—even to death. MM

Is It Too Late?

(Continued from page 13)

of His disciples, so surely will He come again in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory (Acts 1:11).

Are we really looking for Christ? and what do we think of Him? Are we living as if we longed to see Him again? Do we say by our lives that we *love* His appearing?

Readiness for that appearing means directed, dedicated, consistent living. It does not require that we cease from our daily occupations and business. But each can do his duty better when he does it as a Christian, as has been said, "with a heart packed up and ready to move."

Yes, Jesus is coming. But where do we stand? How much of the summer of opportunity remains? Is it too late?

It is not too late so long as we are using to the maximum each new day that is given us. Each new day is a new opportunity which, rightly used, can build the credits we need to secure His approval.

But the longer we allow ourselves to squander time, the more time we let go by thoughtlessly, unredeemed, the harder it will be to make the really serious effort we must make to succeed.

Old patterns are hard to break; a life spent doing the wrong things cannot be changed in a moment.

But every new day is new evidence to us that it is *not* too

late—not yet. The time may be short, but as long as it is time, it is ours to *use*. Each day is a fresh opportunity with potential beyond anything we can imagine—if we apply ourselves to it. Who can say how much growth a single day can produce?

The most important concern is that we give every day our *best*.

We need to think often of the day "when the trumpet of the Lord shall sound and *time* shall be no more." For as surely as we are living, that trumpet will sound, our day of probation will end, and all the wonderful events we have anticipated will come to pass.

And since we do not know when that will be, how carefully we should walk. We have no time for any missteps, no time for any dallying or indecision. Never has the urgency of the hour been so great upon us. Every moment is priceless. *Now* is the time to give ourselves heart and soul to completing the work we have begun; now, before too late.

The Day is coming when we shall have to stand before the Judge of all the earth. And when that Day arrives, we shall find it much easier to explain why we achieved than why we failed; with such a magnificent future before us.

The story is told of a certain stern and commanding Admiral Rickover who was head of the US Nuclear Navy. For many years every officer aboard a nuclear submarine was personally interviewed and approved by Rickover. According to those who went through those interviews, they were unforgettable experiences. Among those interviewed was ex-President Jimmy Carter who, years ago, applied for service under Rickover. This is his account of the interview:

"I had applied for the nuclear

submarine program, and Admiral Rickover was interviewing me for the job. It was the first time I met Admiral Rickover, and we sat in a large room by ourselves. For more than two hours he let me choose any subjects I wished to discuss. Very carefully, I chose those about which I knew most at the time—current events, seamanship, music, literature, naval tactics, electronics—and he began to ask me a series of questions of increasing difficulty. In each instance, he soon proved that I knew relatively little about the subject I had chosen.

“He always looked right into my eyes, and he never smiled. I was saturated with cold sweat.

“Finally, he asked a question and I thought I could redeem myself. He said, ‘How did you stand in your class at the Naval Academy?’ Since I had done very well, I swelled my chest with pride and answered, ‘Sir, I stood fifty-ninth in a class of 820!’ I sat back to wait for the congratulations—which never came. Instead, the question: ‘Did you do your best?’ I started to say ‘Yes, sir,’ but then I remembered who this was that was interviewing me, and I recalled several of the many times at the Academy when I could have learned more, ...and so forth. I was just human. I finally gulped and said, ‘No, sir, I didn’t always do my best.’

“He looked at me for a long time, then turning his chair around to end the interview He asked one final question: ‘Why not?’ I sat there for a while, shaken, and then slowly left the room.”

If such can be the experience of man facing man, what will it be to face one who is our King, one to whom the thoughts of our hearts are as evident as the lines on our faces? What will we say

when he puts the question squarely to us: “Did you do your best?” Shall we have to stutter and stammer and reply, “No, sir, I didn’t always do my best”? And when he asks us why, ... what shall we say?

Oh, how lame and weak will be all our excuses in that moment of truth!

How we should apply ourselves every day to doing our best, our very best. How can we do less, with such a magnificent future before us? How can we hesitate? What propensity of the flesh can

have too strong a hold on us to break? What way of our own can be too dear to give up? What trial can be too painful or too severe to endure—for a moment—for rewards that will go on and on with the ages of eternity!

When we look back upon it all, how small will seem the sacrifice; how short the time we had to endure; and what delight, what honor, and what happiness beyond description if we can say, “Yes, Sir, I did my best,” and He can say to us, “Well done, thou Good and Faithful Servant.” MM

If...

*If you can keep your head when all around you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you;
If you can trust when every one about you
Is doubting Him, proclaiming Him untrue;
If you can hope in Christ, though all forsake you
And say 'tis not the thing for you to do;
If you can wait on God, nor wish to hurry,
Or, being greatly used, keep humble still,
Or if you're tested, cater not to worry,
And yet remain within His sovereign will;
If you can say 'tis well, when sorrow greets you,
And death has taken those you hold most dear;
If you can smile when adverse trials meet you,
And be content, although your lot be drear;
If you can be reviled, and never murmur,
Or, being tempted, not give way to sin;
If you can fight for right, and stand the firmer,
Nor lose a battle that you ought to win;
If you can really long for His appearing,
And steadfast set your heart on things above;
If you can speak for Christ in spite of sneering,
Or, to the most unlovely one, show love;
If you can hear the call of God to labor,
And answer "Yes," in yieldedness and trust,
And go and tell the story of the Saviour
To souls in darkness, o'er the desert's dust;
If you can pray when Satan's darts are strongest,
And take the road of faith, instead of sight,
Or walk with God, although the way be longest,
And swerve not to the left hand or the right;
If you desire Himself alone to lead you,
For Him alone you will to live and be;—
Then 'tis not you, but Christ that dwelleth in you,
And that, O Child of God, is victory!*



ELIJAH:

One Man With God

I have been thinking about Elijah and wondering what his personal life was like at the time we are introduced to him in I Kings 17. Suddenly he appears to King Ahab with the unwelcome and terrible message of a three and a half years' drought. There we are told all we know about his personality: that he was a Tishbite, that he lived in Gilead, and that he had a nature and feelings very similar to our own.

Someone writing about him said that he was the "grandest and most romantic character that Israel ever produced." Just one man, but he could do great things because he stood in the presence of God; because he was devoted to God and trusted Him with all his heart. He could know that whatever God had for him to do, God would be with him and go before him. Truly God needed such a man with strong faith.

We feel acquainted with Elijah because of what we learn of him in the Scriptures. How I would have loved to see and hear him as he prayed to God before the altar he had built and the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice. How I would have loved to hear him saying, "Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel and that I am thy servant, and that

this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again."

May we pray for that same faith and put our trust in God that we may know His will for us and do it. We must not hesitate between two opinions, but serve the Lord our God and Him *only*. Nobody can be against us then, if God is for us. Devotion to God will make us like Elijah, zealous and fearless to do what He wants us to do.

We know that Elijah had the power of God's Spirit to run so far ahead of Ahab's chariot. He was very brave, too, to go to idolatrous Israel and confront the king with what was about to transpire because of their wickedness. Truly, Elijah's secret was in knowing God's will and being delighted to do it.

Like Elijah by the lonely brook Cherith, we too, need our Cheriths, where we may pray to God for a stronger faith and to patiently wait for the realizing of our hope.

I want to remember, too, when I feel alone, the words of God to Elijah when he was in the cave, hiding from the wicked Jezebel, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" God also told him to "Go forth and stand." That meant action. So must we never let our faith grow weary, for there is much

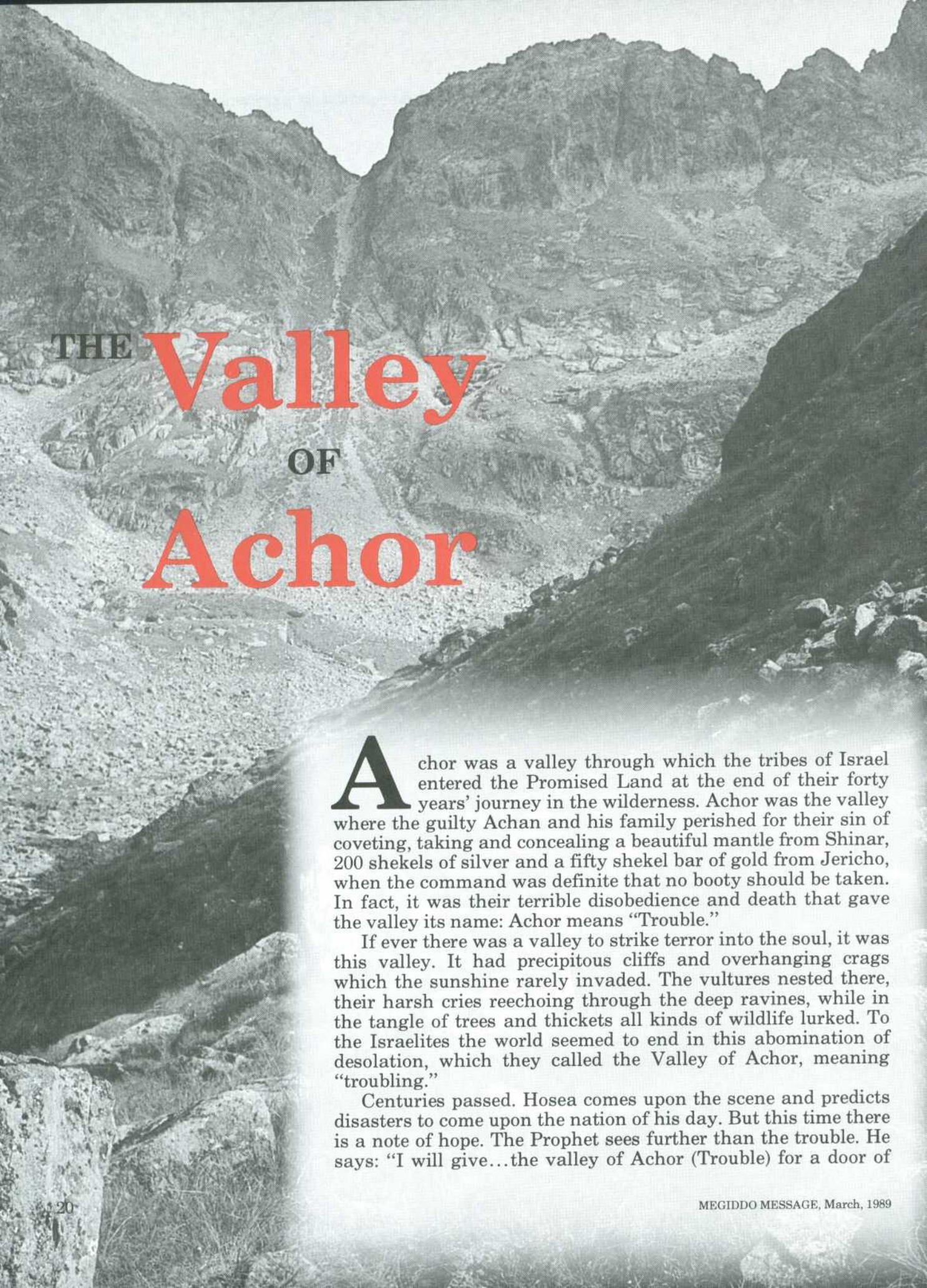
to do to become a new creature.

What a wonderful experience for Elijah when he was parted from his successor, Elisha, his career for that time coming so suddenly to an end—to be walking and talking together when suddenly they were separated as a chariot of fire—angels from heaven!—drove between them and took Elijah up as by a whirlwind into heaven.

It may not be very long now before this same grand prophet of old will appear, perhaps just as suddenly, to turn people's hearts to God and to prepare the way for the great and dreadful day of the Lord. While we have never seen a miracle nor heard a "still small voice," we do have hope—if we had seen, it would not be hope; but like Paul says, "We hope for that we see not" and "with patience wait for it" (Rom. 8:24-25).

How wonderful if it can be for us a "great" day and not a "dreadful" one, if we are ready to greet him with joy and not with fear; if we can be worthy to share with him in the mission God has planned for him, a mission far greater than the first, as he prepares the way for the coming of the great Judge and King of all the earth!

One would think that after hearing about God's righteous rule, all would accept and willingly submit and, like the people after the dramatic trial on Mt. Carmel, fall on their faces and say: "The Lord He is God!" But we know they will not. —Contributed



THE Valley OF Achor

Achor was a valley through which the tribes of Israel entered the Promised Land at the end of their forty years' journey in the wilderness. Achor was the valley where the guilty Achan and his family perished for their sin of coveting, taking and concealing a beautiful mantle from Shinar, 200 shekels of silver and a fifty shekel bar of gold from Jericho, when the command was definite that no booty should be taken. In fact, it was their terrible disobedience and death that gave the valley its name: Achor means "Trouble."

If ever there was a valley to strike terror into the soul, it was this valley. It had precipitous cliffs and overhanging crags which the sunshine rarely invaded. The vultures nested there, their harsh cries reechoing through the deep ravines, while in the tangle of trees and thickets all kinds of wildlife lurked. To the Israelites the world seemed to end in this abomination of desolation, which they called the Valley of Achor, meaning "troubling."

Centuries passed. Hosea comes upon the scene and predicts disasters to come upon the nation of his day. But this time there is a note of hope. The Prophet sees further than the trouble. He says: "I will give...the valley of Achor (Trouble) for a door of

hope" (Hos. 2:15). Just as their forefathers found on their journey to the Promised Land, so they, at this later time, would find their experience of sorrow leading to something bigger and better than they had ever known before. The Valley of Trouble would prove to be a place of new beginnings, a veritable door of hope.

Now as then, as then so now, our valleys of trouble often become doorways opening to new and better things.

The Valley of Trouble may be a door of hope because it brings us to ask searching questions about ourselves, questions such as: What kind of persons we are, and what we are making of our lives?

The Valley of Trouble may be a door of hope because it gives us an opportunity for reflection, to put to ourselves the questions which count, and creates a certain tenderness in our hearts so that we are more ready to face ourselves, to examine ourselves in earnest, then make the necessary changes. If in the valley we learn anew what are life's true values, its noblest ends, its abiding joys, then for us in our day the Valley of Trouble will truly become a door of hope.

The Valley of Trouble may be a door of hope if it awakens in us a sense of our dependence upon God. So easily we go from day to day feeling self-sufficient. We imagine that we are able for almost anything, that we need no strength beyond our own. Then comes the Valley of Trouble, and we find that we are not so competent or almighty as we had imagined. Eventually death knocks at our door, and we learn that all we possess is nothing and nothing we can do can prevent death from taking our loved ones from us. Sickness comes, and our proud bodies are drained

of their vitality and vigor. We realize, perhaps for the first time, how totally dependent we are. In one form or another, the Valley of Trouble appears, and all our wisdom and power seem to be of no avail. But if this Valley of Trouble is making a breach in the walls of our pride, if it is breaking down our illusions of self-sufficiency, if it is compelling us to depend upon God and to trust His promises and to work for His eternal rewards, then it will become for us a door of hope.

The Valley of Trouble becomes a door of hope if it makes God real and enriches our experience of Him, and gives us true hope of sharing eternal life in His Kingdom. To many this is a dream, not ever to be a reality. The new world in all its glory seems to have so little connection with the here and now, that it is scarcely believable. God, silent at the moment, seems to have nothing to say to our peculiar problems and pressing needs, and therefore we forget Him. Then comes the Valley of Trouble, awakening within us a sense of need—keenest need—for God and all that He and only He can do for us. We need a new body, a new world, a new life—immortality!

That sense of need draws us to God as nothing else can. Our Valley of Achor becomes for us a door of hope, real hope. It shows us in real, living terms what God can and *will* do for us, if only we will do on our part. We are ready and eager to taste and see that the "Lord is good," and that "his mercy endureth forever."

When we have achieved the full stature of which we are capable, when we have learned the lessons of life and graduated from its schools, then we shall look back on our Valley of Trouble and see it was indeed for us the door of hope.

MM

Lord of the Valley

*Lord God Almighty,
I pray Thee to bring me
into the valley of vision,
where from the depths
I can see Thee in the heights;
where, though surrounded
by sin,
I may behold Thy glory.*

*Help me to learn by paradox—
that the way up
is down;
that to be made low
is to be high;
that the whole heart
is the broken heart;
that the contrite spirit
is the rejoicing spirit;
that the penitent soul
is the victorious soul;
that to have nothing of
my own
is to possess all;
that the way to wear the crown
is to bear the cross;
that the way to receive
is to give;
that to walk in the valley
is to see the place of vision.*

*Lord, show me that the brightest
stars
can be seen from
the deepest wells;
that the deeper the valley
the higher appears Thy
mountain.*

*Teach me to find
Thy light in my darkness,
Thy life in my death,
Thy joy in my sorrow,
Thy riches in my surrender,
Thy glory in my valley.*

Why Did God Let It Happen?

"This past month (December) a plane came down in Scotland causing the death of many innocent persons. Just before that a terrible earthquake occurred in Armenia causing the death of thousands. How can God let it happen? The plane was carrying many students who hadn't had a chance at life. What is the answer to this?"

"We know that God is love, then why does He allow such terrible things to happen? I have heard many people ask this."

Your question is one which has been asked countless times. In short, why do innocent persons die? Why do the young die prematurely?

God is the Supreme Creator. "In him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28). The entire earth and everything in it and upon it exist by His design and creative power. In the words of the ancient Prophet, "Thou, even thou, art Lord alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee" (Neh. 9:6).

God has designed the laws by which the human race is perpetuated, and by which each of us came into existence. But God has not guaranteed any certain duration of life to anyone. Nor has He guaranteed any fixed conditions for one's existence. In the words of Ecclesiastes, "Time and chance happeneth to them all" (Eccl. 9:11). He has provided resources which the human race can use to survive (food, shelter, clothing, fuel, etc.), and minds and bodies capable of using these resources. But responsibility for their use or misuse lies with man, not God.

God's thoughts are not the same as those of human beings. God has not said that every human being that comes into His existence is His special concern. Contrary to popular belief, God does not place a high premium on every life irrespective of

its character. All are not His children. We read: "They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God" (Rom. 9:8). In His almighty perspective, whole nations are as "less than nothing, and vanity" and are "counted as the small dust of the balance" (Isa. 40:17, 15). "It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers" (Isa. 40:22). On the opposite side of the scale is the intrinsic value He places upon those who know and faithfully serve Him. They are His prized possession (Ex. 19:5-6). They are loved and protected as the apple of His eye (Deut. 32:10). He is said to draw near to them (Ps. 145:18), to preserve them (Ps. 145:20), to watch that no evil befalls them or any plague (Ps. 91:10). He sends His angels to protect and keep them (Ps. 91:11), even to deliver them out of danger (II Pet. 2:9). He even promises them riches, and honor, and endless life (Prov. 3:15-18, Ps. 91:15-16). He promises them prosperity and pleasure (Job 36:10-11), "fulness of joy" and "pleasures for evermore" (Ps. 16:11).

What makes the difference? The difference lies in the attitude which His human creatures take toward God. We become valuable in the sight of our Creator only when we show a serious interest in His interests and an eagerness to comply with His requirements.

How does all this answer our question?

God created the world and the laws that govern it (laws of growth and reproduction, laws of heat, motion, gravitation, etc.). In accordance with these laws He provides all that is necessary for the sustenance of the race. How His human creatures use or abuse those provisions is wholly their responsibility. As long as they were content to use the means He provided to travel (by foot, by animal), there was a very limited danger to life. When they use their intellect and resources to design and build complex equipment by which they navigate through the sky, they multiply the risk to life in the event of a malfunction or some other interfer-

ence, and indirectly cause much destruction of life. But God is not to blame, even though He has decreed that bodies heavier than air fall. Man is simply suffering the consequences of his own design, and the laws God has set in motion are continuing to operate.

When an earthquake strikes, or a tornado, or a typhoon, or any natural disaster which claims many lives, again God is not to blame. Though no human devises or designs are at fault, still the laws God set in motion are operating, and God does not see fit to interfere with those laws. His only concern is with those who are serving Him, and those who will serve Him in the future. To these He promises protection and deliverance so that no harm befalls them until they have completed their work for Him (Ps. 34:7; I Tim. 4:8).

Life is a gift, which we have done nothing to earn, which God has simply given, free and clear. But this life, rightly invested, can become the means by which we can merit a better, even eternal life.

God has not promised that the present world would be perfect, or that all in it will live in happiness and prosperity. He has only promised that the *next* world will be different, and that this world can be used as the preparation for the next. When God's will is done on earth as it is now done in heaven, everything will be different. Everyone who lives then will be upright, glorified, and beyond the reach of any calamity or suffering. The present is our opportunity to prepare to live in that better world. For it we work, and watch, and wait. It shall be, in God's appointed time, just as He has promised: "But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord" (Num. 14:21).

• The Unclean Spirit that Returned with Seven Worse Spirits

"What is the meaning of Jesus' saying about the unclean spirit that was cast out and returned with seven worse spirits?"

Jesus' illustration (Matt. 12:43-45) seems to be a vivid portrayal of the terrible persistence of wickedness. Cast out, it inevitably returns, multiplied, unless the space it formerly occupied has become the dwellingplace of better company. The one not inhabited by the rightful tenant is always beleaguered. Reformation alone is never enough; however thorough the cleansing, it must always be the prelude to a new loyalty. Nature and human nature both abhor a vacuum: no faith is almost worse than a bad faith, for no faith invites a

swarm of bad habits. No life remains empty. It does not greatly help one to know what he does *not* believe unless he knows also what he *does* believe.

Our own observation confirms Jesus' conclusion. It does not greatly help one to know what he should *not* do, unless he knows also what he *must* do.

In the context of Jesus' time, He may have been speaking to the Pharisees, whose strict outward practices cleansed life from obvious sins. But at the same time this outward cleansing left life empty and open to a multitude of grosser sins. In contrast, Jesus offered His followers a new and higher loyalty to all that is true and wholesome and upright and good. For every evil expelled, there was a multitude of good to take its place—good behavior, good conduct, good works, good loyalties. In His own words, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength" (Mark 12:30).

Jesus' parable may have been suggested by the case history of an insane man who seems to have been healed. It may frequently have happened that one seemingly cured by whatever means suffered a relapse, and that his state became worse than before.

The demon, expelled from a man's house or life, is said to wander in a wilderness. Homeless, it returns to look at *my house*. Finding it swept and set in order—but empty—he summons seven other devils each worse than himself, and they, in alliance too strong for the man, come to repossess him. Thus this man's last state is worse than the first.

It is the solemn truth: empty houses do not remain empty. Dust gathers in the corners; rats gnaw at the floor boards.

The Pharisees had cast out gross sins, but they left life empty of any loyalty beyond themselves. So seven other devils arrived, such as money, greed, self-righteousness, contempt for those outside the Law. But Christ offered something to replace what had been evicted. No house need remain swept and garnished, for He was the bread of life. No house need fear darkness, for He was the light. Even death held no terror, for He was the resurrection and the life.

When shall we learn that our hearts are made for this same divine possession? When shall we learn to say, "I believe with all my heart"?

This is the passionate and positive commitment God is seeking. Without it our emptiness invites a worse fate.

The last phrase of verse 45 shows Jesus' mean-

ing: "Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation." Using this parable our Lord foretells the degeneration of the people who imagine that they have nothing to learn from Him, although He has more wisdom to impart than Solomon gave to the Queen of Sheba (v. 42). Yet by rejecting it, they were in danger of a relapse into even greater evil.

There is yet a spiritual lesson we can draw from this parable. In our unregenerated state, our house of life was the abode of many "unclean spirits," in the form of fleshly ways, unchristian interests and unholy attitudes. Once the way to life is presented to us and we accept its challenge, we attempt to reform our lives, with the result that our house becomes swept and garnished. The old evil propensities are forced out. But this is not enough. Flesh is weak and evil is strong, and the process of keeping our house clean and free from evil soon proves more drastic than we had suspected. The result, if our effort is less than 100 per cent, may be that our evil nature, given a chance, will return with full force and worse.

Let each serious believer guard warily against this possibility.

• **Whoever Is Born of God Does Not Commit Sin?**

"Please explain I John 3:9, 'Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.' How can this be?"

Taken at its face value this verse might be taken to mean that the person who has become part of God's family is wholly incapable of sinning, i.e., he is beyond the reach of sin. We know that this is not John's meaning, however, for earlier in this Epistle he said, "If we say that we have no sin"—notice that he says "we," including him-

self—"we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.... If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us" (I John 1:8, 10). Being "born of God" as used by the apostle John means being born into the family of believers, and this is not a guarantee against future sin. We become free from sin only as we make the supreme effort to purify ourselves even as Christ is pure (I John 3:3), and this is a lifelong process possible only as we cherish the same hope that was Christ's, the hope of being made in His image, immortal (I John 3:2).

What is sin? John gives his own concise definition: "Sin is the transgression of the law" (I John 3:4). Only when we cease to transgress the law do we cease to sin. But it cannot be truly said even of the most sincere believer that he "cannot sin," that he is utterly incapable of sin. Not until we are made in the image of God, made like the angels of heaven, will we be totally beyond the possibility of sin (Luke 20:35-36).

What then is the meaning of the text in question?

There are two possibilities. First, John may have been picturing the ideal. Full grown men and women in Christ Jesus, fully matured in the divine life, must eventually reach the point where they do not sin. But it still seems unlikely that he would say, even in this context, that they "cannot sin."

There is a second thought: that those born of God cannot sin and also remain truly sons of God, in the strictest sense of the word. When they are truly and fully "born of God" they are without sin. Because God is holy, those born or begotten of God must also be holy. And if the "seed" John mentions is the word of God abiding in the true believer, that word *can* effectively keep us from sin. This was the Psalmist's formula: "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee" (Ps. 119:11).

Here is a truth we need to record
at the very depth of our being:
that all our efforts for God count.

Third, John may be saying that sin cannot rightly dominate the life of one born of God. Such a one must be continually fighting against sin until the victory is complete. John is not saying that this is accomplished all at once, but that it is the goal toward which he works with all his might.

Another thought has been suggested about the "seed." We know how natural seed produces life. In like manner, the "seed" of God, the word of God, produces new life in the believer. Peter expressed this idea when he spoke of the Christian as one "being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever" (I Pet. 1:23). Here the word of God is definitely identified as the incorruptible seed of God. If this was John's thought, he could have been saying that the man who is born of God "cannot sin" because he is guided wholly by the word of God within him. The word acts as his defense and his constant weapon against sin.

The word or "seed" of God dwelling constantly in our hearts can have another effect upon us: it can keep us constantly aware of God's presence, God's power, and God's authority over our lives, and in this way keep us from sin. Such a one will truly belong to God's family, and be one who abides with God, one who never forgets God, one who draws so near to God that sin becomes increasingly repulsive. Such a one will reach the state where he "cannot sin" and will surely receive God's forgiveness and eternal blessings. MM

Your real character is what you would do if you knew you never would be found out.

"By his faith he is speaking to us still"—Heb. 11 : 4, Moffatt.

Words for the Living

Excerpts from the sermons, talks and writings
of Rev. L. T. Nichols (1844-1912).

You say you are trying to overcome your natural disposition? Try harder. Just quit the evil. Grit your teeth and say, "I won't do it. I will keep my patience."



If we look on our little trials as grievous, we are living on "Grumble Street." It is an old, dirty street, not a fit place for a decent person to live. Look at the children of Israel. Most of them lived on Grumble Street, or Blue Avenue.

We should live on Love Walk, Hallelujah Street, and Praise Avenue. Get on Hallelujah Street. Be rejoicing all the time in these wonderful things of God.



You think it would be a great thing to meet the President of the United States, or the Queen of England. But how would you like to meet the angel who did the handwriting on the wall in ancient Babylon, twenty-five hundred years ago? How would you like to see such a personage as that? Think of the knowledge we could gain from a being like that!



Think of living all those years—and all that is only a tick of the clock of the grand eternity, so full of joy and happiness.

To become a shining immortal is no small pay for the little God calls upon us to do. Indeed, it is wonderful pay, so great that the human mind cannot realize its greatness, no, not even a beginning of its greatness. It is too wonderful, too extensive, too eternal, too magnificent for the human mind to grasp! I do not wonder that Paul exclaimed, "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out."



Unless you realize the great love of God, and realize the things He has promised are near at hand, you will not work.



Do we realize what we are working for? One literal day of this day of salvation will work out for us billions of years of love, joy and happiness in eternity, if we will keep ourselves firm and straight and true.



I am determined that I will live in that summerland of love, and I am trying to get others to go with me. Will you go? Will you? I am bound for it, I'm on the way.

The Bible

*There is a treasure,
Rich beyond measure,
Offered to mortals today;
Some folks despise it;
Some criticize it,
Some would explain it away.*

*Some never read it,
Some never heed it,
Some say "It's long had its day";
Some people prize it,
And he who tries it
Finds it his comfort and stay.*

*God gave this treasure,
Rich beyond measure,
His Word, we call it today.
Let us believe it,
Gladly receive it,
Read, mark, and then it obey.*

Announcement

The New Year is coming, this year on Thursday evening, April 6, 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 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 Tuesday evening, April 18) we will commemorate the anniversary of our Lord's Supper, and the morning of April 21 (Abib 15) will be observed as the anniversary of Christ's triumph over death and the grave.

Pentecost falls on June 9.

Pressing On

With determination I am resolved to press on, to increase the growth of character, for only perfection of character will fit us for perpetuation. How wonderful it would be. And nothing should be too hard for us to do to make ourselves worthy, to enjoy for eternity all of God's most precious promises.

There is much need of moral reformation today. It seems incredible that only one third will submit and take heed to the warning, but man loves to follow the way that is right in his own eyes and is satisfied with things as they are, loving darkness rather than light. They do not want to come to the light so have no desire for a "new heavens" or "new earth" filled with God's glory. However, no evil will be tolerated in that wonderful new age.

What a blissful, supremely happy and blessed time in which to live! God gives us so many wonderful things to increase our faith, so may we "observe his statutes all divine" and keep His precepts, that we may be worthy of His great and precious promises.

South Wales

R. B.

Using Our Opportunities

Opportunities do not last forever. Today is ours, tomorrow may not be.

The Word of the Lord is definitely against the misuse of time. "So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." We must grasp the swiftly passing minutes without delay, lest our good impulses and intentions die before the day is over because we were dilatory in acting upon them.

The man who will not execute his resolutions when they are fresh with opportunities can have no hope for them afterwards; they will be wasted, lost and perish in the hurryscurry of life's activities. But oh, what a life, what a future can be ours if we will only take the time to see our sinful failures as God sees

them before all hope is gone. The accepted time is upon us now and rapidly passing by to be no more.

Though our days are few and numbered they need not be empty or void of useful service for God and others. It is an interesting fact that work well done and at the opportune time gives the most satisfaction and delight even in this life. How much more joy and real satisfaction can be ours if our whole heart is wrapped up in every solemn warning from the Lord.

It doesn't take much to stray in by and forbidden paths. All we have to do is to forget our high calling by giving ourselves to lesser values at hand.

We can die to sin or we can die in sin. It is all a matter of choice which we will do.

New Jersey

L. K.

A Helping Hand

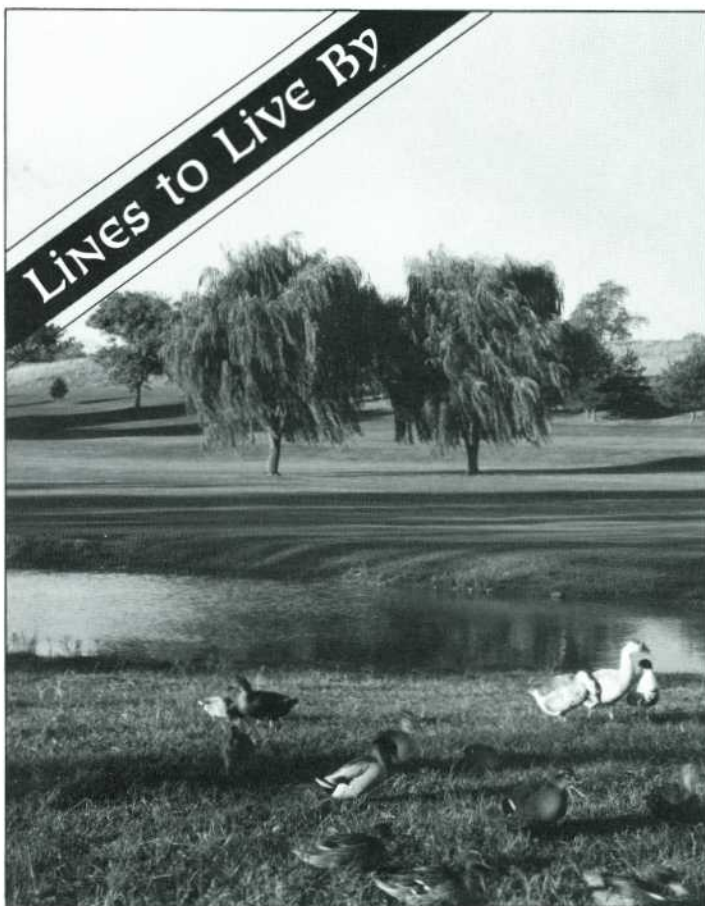
We appreciate your helping hand to give us strength to continue steadfast in the narrow way. God provides it by means of those who are able to give us the lift we so often need. Without doubt we have all been thankful for someone who has helped us along in some way. Their encouragement is a stimulus to us, to help us grow stronger in the good works which are well pleasing to Him.

Life is not one straight, smooth road, as each one of us has experienced. But as we overcome each trial, each problem, we are made stronger to press on. We read in Prov. 24:16, "A just man falleth seven times and riseth up again." He is not defeated or discouraged.

We will never reach the end of our tunnel if we have a defeatist attitude, or try an easy way out—our own way. God has designed the rules, together with the reward to be given; it is for us to obey. God forbid that we should murmur, as did so many of the children of Israel.

Australia

J. B.



See the Rainbow!

*Be strong and of good courage,
Fear not nor be dismayed,
For if the Lord is with you,
You need not be afraid.
Just learn to live like Jesus
Ne'er murmur nor complain—
For if we'd see the rainbow,
We first must have the rain.*

*It is the Lord's own promise,
He'll give us length of years,
And with His glorious comfort
He'll wipe away all tears.
So follow ever closely
Ne'er murmur nor complain—
We're sure to see that rainbow
Because we've had the rain.*

*Just work and keep on working,
Let not your faith grow dim,
Each day can bring you nearer
Until you are like Him.
Then, in His image fashioned,
You never will complain,
And there you'll see that rainbow
Right close behind the rain!*

—Contributed

Prayer is as vital to the soul as breathing is to the body. We should therefore be keenly aware of its importance, and be faithful in its practice.

Use prayer to help drive sin out of your life lest sin drive prayer out of your life.

Better Than Money

*The Word of God gives what no money can ever buy:
Peace in the midst of trial,
Strength in weakness,
Joy in the midst of sorrow,
Courage in the face of danger,
Victory over one's self,
Hope in the midst of hopelessness,
And the promise of eternal life in the glorious
Kingdom of Christ.*

“He’s Coming!”

*He’s coming!” said the Prophets, “and the glory of the Lord
Shall be revealed and all shall see the Christ, the living Lord.”
Yes, He will come, Earth’s sovereign, our Redeemer, Savior, King,
To fill the world with truth and make eternal praises ring.*

*“He’s coming!” said two angels as He disappeared from sight,
Borne up by holy ministers sent forth from heaven’s height;
Yes, two stood by to strengthen those who watched Him go away,
To give the sweet assurance that He would return one day.*

*Meanwhile their comrades flashed through space, to bear Him to the throne,
The Highest Throne, where in the Father’s presence Christ was crowned!
O joy Supreme! But what of those who stayed behind that day—
Whence came they? Did they just “drop in,” their word from heav’n to say?*

*Or had they camping been close by through all the days of stress,
Unseen, yet lending help and aid in loving tenderness?...
We only know that they were there when greatest was the need.
How God provides! He ne’er forsakes those who are His indeed.*

*“He’s coming!” taught the faithful ones, apostles of our Lord,
As they proclaimed His kingdom and His vital, living Word;
All pressing, fighting, struggling as they lived from day to day
Reflecting Christ their Lord and King in each and ev’ry way.*

*“He’s coming!” rings the message still from loyal heart to heart,
As we prepare, our spirits tense, to see our living Lord.
Though nineteen centuries have passed, His word stands firm and true:
“I’m coming!” echoes back His voice. He comes to make all new.*

*“He’s coming!” Yes! Lord Jesus, come! with longing hearts we pray,
Bring in the Age of Peace and Truth, and glad eternal Day!
Your chariots gather, Lord, and come! Come quickly to Your home!
Bring in the grand millennium, and make our world Your own!*

—Contributed.