

Megiddo Message

May/June, 2007



*Love is PATIENT,
love is KIND.
It does NOT ENVY,
it does NOT BOAST,
it is NOT PROUD.
It is NOT RUDE,
it is NOT SELF-SEEKING,
it is NOT EASILY ANGERED,
it keeps NO RECORD OF WRONGS.*

*Love does
NOT DELIGHT IN EVIL
but REJOICES WITH
THE TRUTH. It always
PROTECTS, always TRUSTS,
always HOPES, always PERSEVERES.
LOVE NEVER FAILS. -1Cor. 13:4-8 NIV*



PURPOSE IN EVERY STEP

"Add to your faith ... perseverance" – 2 Peter 1:6 NIV

In the 1972 Olympics Lasse Virén set a new world record. World records are not uncommon in the history of the Olympics, but what was so amazing about his win was the fact that he became entangled with another runner during the 10000m run, and fell in the 12th lap. But to the amazement of everyone, he pulled his lanky frame from the ground and got back into the race! He had lost about 100 meters. It looked hopeless, but Lasse Virén decided the race was not over. Instead of panicking, he worked his way up toward the leading pack of runners. Lap after grueling lap, he gained ground and momentum. His determination was not to give up but to win. To the astonishment of all, with a lap and a half to go, he unbelievably took command of the race, shaking free of the other runners, and won the 10000m race by eight yards! Even more astounding, his time of 27:38.4 was a new world record!

Virén's excellence in racing did not begin the day of the Olympics. Performance like his comes only by persevering in grueling training and many small races. Working with his coach, Virén prepared with one focus in mind: coming to a peak for the Olympics. Through the intervening years He accumulated thousands of kilometers of running in local forests and in winter training destinations, running at gradually increasing intensities to prepare a huge foundation from which to peak. All else, even European championships, was considered only as preparation.

When a sudden crisis arose, Virén did not give up. He did not panic when it seemed all was lost. He relied on his training, kept his mind on the goal, and ran with all his might.

Comparing the Christian life to a footrace, the Apostle Paul taught the Corinthians the same strategy: run *"with your minds fixed on winning the prize"*! (1 Cor. 9:24 Phillips).

Like the young runner, our race for eternal life also has its hazards and disappointments. When we fall we have to train ourselves to get up and keep running. True perseverance is that strength of purpose that gives power to accomplish the goal, no matter what the obstacles.

Also like the young runner, we must take personal responsibility. We cannot always change circumstances, but we can change our attitude. That is something we have charge of. We're either in the race or out. There's no such thing as being in between.

In this very special race, we develop Christ-like qualities in direct proportion to our perseverance. This race is not one long run but rather the sum total of many short, daily races. In these small, daily races we are creating our destiny. If we do not develop the time-tested qualities that produce the great men and women God approves, we will—by

default—fail. The choice is ultimately ours.

Paul challenged the Corinthian Church by calling their attention to something they were familiar with: the Olympic contestant's dedication to purpose, determination to excel, and will to endure in spite of adversity. Then he made a striking contrast. The best the Olympic winner could achieve was a fading wreath. The Christian, says Paul, is running for eternal rewards. He said, *"Remember that in a race everyone runs, but only one person gets the prize. You also must run in such a way that you will win. All athletes practice strict self-control. They do it to win a prize that will fade away, but we do it for an eternal prize. So I run straight to the goal with purpose in every step. ...I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should. Otherwise, I fear that after preaching to others I myself might be disqualified"* (1 Cor. 9:24–27 NLT).

To persevere means to stay under and remain; to bear up under trials; to have fortitude, abide in, endure, take patiently. Perseverance is the critical element that gets the winner to the finish line. Faithfulness is the engine that drives one down the track of God's will, and perseverance is the fuel that keeps him going.

So what do you do, Brother Paul, when your energy is flagging and it seems like there's a setback at every turn?

1) Don't let a setback spell failure (remember the runner?). Get up and get back into the race. *"For a righteous man falls seven times, and rises again..."* (Prov. 24:16 RSV).

2) Keep your mind fixed on the goal of life eternal. Say with the Great Apostle, *"I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus"* (Phil. 3:14). Vague dreams of the goal are sure to lead to failure.

3) Be deaf to the quitter's lament: *"It can't be done."*

Paul didn't quit when the going got tough. He tells us, *"We ... rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope"* (Rom. 5:3–4 NIV). Heroes of faith persevere in the work God has called them to do.

I am reminded of the Scripture, sometimes quite often, that *"all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose"* (Rom. 8:28).

The Christian race presents daily challenges of Olympian magnitude. But *"He who overcomes shall inherit all things and I will be his God and he shall be my son"* (Rev. 21:7). The reward of the Christian race is a crown of life—eternal life! When *"the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away"* (1 Pet. 5:4). What a promise!

Won't you join me in this race for eternal life? Remember, in this race, every one who runs can win! MM

*Perseverance
gets the winner to
the finish line.*

Perfect Love

When the inspired writers talked about God's care for His human family, they called it love. "God is love" (1 John 4:7). "God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, [has] made us alive together with Christ" (Eph. 2:4-5).

When the inspired writers described Christ's relation to His followers, they called it love. Jesus said, "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you" (John 15:9, 12). Again He said, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another" (John 13:34).

When they talked about a total obedience we owe to God, they called it "love." There are, according to Jesus, two parts of this love, and both of them stand at the head of the commandments we must obey to please God. The first is a total commitment to God: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength" (Mark 12:30). The second tells how to do it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:31). What is the goal of this love? What purpose drives it? Jesus' reply to the scribe who asked the question tells us it is all for the kingdom! (vs. 34). Jesus went everywhere preaching the Kingdom of God, and this very special love, He said, is the key. It is not just to please God. It is about having a place in Christ's coming Kingdom!

How? When we look in the Bible for definitions of these two aspects of love, we find many passages that tell us how to love God by *loving our neighbor*. The apostle John says we love God by loving the children of God, by keeping the commandments of God. "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome" (1 John 5:2-3). "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God" (1 John 4:7).

If there is one word that includes all the heavenly virtues, that word is *love*. It seems that the apostle Paul may have put "love" at the head of the fruits of the spirit because it is the one virtue that encompasses all the rest (Gal. 5:22-23).

The Bible places love on the highest pinnacle. Love is the greatest commodity in the world (1 Cor. 13:13). Love defines the character of God (1 John 4:8b). Love fulfills the requirements of the law (Rom. 13:10b). Love covers a multitude of sins (1 Pet. 4:8).

What is that love?

What is this very special quality of love? If we look closely at the use of "love" in the Bible, we find something very different from the common idea of love. The love of God is not His care for helpless humanity. It is not even rescuing us from a sinful

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Four Greek words for "LOVE"

eros: love that is sexual passion. Most common Greek word for love—not used even once in the Bible.

philia: love that describes the warm affection of friendship. Used some 25 times in the New Testament as fondness toward another person.

storge: patriotic love—not used in the Bible.

agape: love above and beyond the level of human passion and feeling. Used in its various forms more than 300 times in the New Testament. Agape love is "wider, embracing especially the judgment and the deliberate assent of the will as a matter of principle, duty and propriety" (Strong's Greek & Hebrew Concordance).

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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 (2 Cor. 10:4-5).

WE BELIEVE...

- ♦ in God, the Creator and sustainer of the earth, the world, the universes, and all life, in whom we "live, and move, and have our being."
- ♦ in the Bible as our only source of true knowledge about God and His purposes and plans for His creation and for the salvation of humankind.
- ♦ in Jesus Christ, the Son of God and our Perfect Example, who was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin; who ministered among His brethren, was crucified, resurrected, and 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.

- ♦ in the Holy Spirit, the openly manifest power of God, which God bestowed at various times and in various ways to reveal His knowledge to humankind, to support His spokesmen, to confirm His utterances, and to demonstrate His supreme power and authority.
- ♦ in life as the gift of God, and in our sacred responsibility to use it for God and His coming Kingdom.
- ♦ in humankind as providing the raw material from which shall be selected and developed a superior, God-honoring people upon whom God will bestow the blessings of immortal life in His soon-coming Kingdom.
- ♦ in ourselves as capable, with the help of God, of applying to our own lives the precepts and principles taught in the Word of God, in this way perfecting that high quality of moral character which God has promised to recompense with life eternal in His heavenly Kingdom on earth.

- ♦ in the promise of God, that Jesus Christ will soon return to rid the earth of all sin and suffering and inaugurate an eternal and worldwide Kingdom of peace and righteousness, until God's will is done here as it is now done in heaven.

THE HERALD AND THE KING

OUR PLANET will soon witness the greatest events in its history. For centuries God has been silent. But that silence will soon be broken by the arrival of Elijah the prophet, who comes to herald the Second Advent of Jesus Christ. "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord...lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (Mal. 4:5-6).

Then shall follow the King of kings and Lord of lords, to begin His momentous work of transforming our world into the glorious and eternal Kingdom of God.

state that we are born into. He is looking for the same quality of character in His earthly children that Christ demonstrated to His disciples when He said, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another" (John 13:34).

Christ's love—Bible love—God's love is not love as we know it on the human level. It is not a sentimental feeling, or an abstraction, or an emotion. The Bible describes love as a behavior. It is how we relate to one another in Christ's family.

LOVE DEFINED

The Greek language, in which the New Testament was written, could be very specific. The Greeks had not one word for love but four. There was **eros**, which is the love that involves sexual passion. Then there was **philia**, describing the warm affection of friendship. The third word for love was **storge**, the word for family affection. Then there was **agape**, a love above and beyond the level of human passion and feeling.

The most common Greek word for love, **eros**, is not used even once in the Bible. The second kind of love, **philia**, describing fondness toward another person, occurs some 25 times in the New Testament. It is the word used of Jesus' love for Lazarus, who had died (John 11:36). **Agape** is used in its various forms more than 300 times in the New Testament. While **philia** "denotes personal attachment and sentiment or feeling," **agape** love is "wider, embracing especially the judgment and the deliberate assent of the will as a matter of principle, duty and propriety" (*Strong's Greek & Hebrew Concordance*).

Someone has called **agape** love unconquerable benevolence. It is a love that thinks first of another's good. Even

if the other person is insulting or ungrateful, **agape** love will never retaliate or be unkind. Is **agape** love weak and characterless? Not at all. In fact, it is the ultimate in strength! Jesus Himself personified it, and told His disciples to do as He had done. He closed His last recorded prayer before He went to Gethsemane with this petition: that "the love with which You loved Me may be in them [the disciples]" (John 17:26). In other words, they were to show one another the same perfect love that He had showed to them.

This love is what one wills to do. It is a conscious decision, not an emotional reaction. It acts toward others with regard to one's loyalties and commitment. The one committed to Christ shows **agape** love by acting in line with his commitment to Christ.

Agape love is that quality of mind and heart that is genuine, that refuses to be bitter, or hurt or to seek revenge, no matter what (Rom. 12:9).

It is a love that puts obedience to Christ first—always.

It is what the Bible calls "perfect love," because it is the obedience to God's standard that leads to eternal life.

PERFECT (AGAPE) LOVE IN EVERYDAY TERMS

How do we learn what this love looks like? How do we apply this love in our everyday lives? How do we translate "perfect love" into everyday terms?

In First Corinthians 13, the apostle Paul lists fifteen applications of this perfect love.

LOVE IS FIRST

Paul starts by pointing out that even the best gifts, worship or sacrifices are of no value in God's view unless done with this perfect love. (see 1 Cor. 13:1-3).

What then is this perfect love?



*Love is something you do.
Love is not a quality but
an action.*

AGAPE LOVE SERVES THE CAUSE

*"There is only one way
to be an ethical individual,
and that is to choose
your cause and then to
serve it."*



Love is **PATIENT**

Longsuffering is a trait we admire a great deal more than we practice.

The rubber of Christianity meets the road at the intersections in life. As the expression goes, our faith is “fleshed out” at times like that.

The best test of my Christian growth occurs in the mainstream of life, not in the quietness of my study. Anybody can walk “in victory” when surrounded by books, silence, and the warm waves of sunshine splashing through the window. But those late takeoffs, those grocery lines, those busy restaurants, those trains! That’s where faith is usually “flushed out.”

—Charles Swindoll

Be patient in little things. Learn to bear with others in the everyday annoyances.

We have a responsibility to our brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus as if we were actual blood relations. As such, we are to love, defend, honor, stand by, prefer, encourage, edify, and uphold one another with our love....no matter what the circumstances, trials, or difficulties.

When tempted to lose patience with others, remember God’s patience with you.

The word Paul uses for patient means literally to be long-tempered. It describes patience with people, not with circumstances or things.

This type of enduring patience was something strange and new to the world of Paul’s day. To the Romans, patience was weakness. If you were wronged, you reacted with anger and showed your strength by striking back with vengeance. To retaliate was to show courage.

Paul was saying, “God’s way is different.” Love is patient.

Patience is not a mild, tranquil mannerism that can tolerate anything, good or bad. Love (patience) makes us able to “put up with” something disagreeable in a calm, controlled spirit.

Love is patient with people when the situation is frustrating. Our plans get upset, people do not respond as we think they should, or everything goes wrong. As if by instinct a feeling of frustration builds up inside us, and we are tempted to “vent” or harbor vengeful feelings.

What is the problem? Often the issue is small. Someone is slow, or petty, or irritating, or tired. We are interrupted, or delayed, or irked. Or it may be a bigger issue—sickness, an undesirable living situation, an incompatible companion, an unreasonable boss.

The solution—strangely—is not in changing the situation but in changing our attitude. Far more important than controlling the situation, or the other person, or the things that irritate us, is controlling ourselves. In God’s sight, greater is he who rules his own spirit, than he who conquers a city (Prov. 16:32).

Even at such times—all times—love is patient, because the goal of love is obeying God, not living by instinct. And God commands, “Be patient” (Jas. 1:4, 12).

We want people to be patient with us. If we would follow Jesus, we need to be patient with others.

Love is KIND

The original word means kind, gentle, courteous, compassionate, obliging. Again it is an action toward people, not circumstances or things. To be kind is to be God-like (Luke 6:35). The Scriptures command Christ's followers to be "*kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another*" (Eph. 4:32).

It is so easy to be critical, harsh and fault-finding.

Can you imagine Jesus being unkind? Can you picture how different His ministry would have been if He had been unkind—to the woman at the well, to the centurion whose servant was dying, to His own self-seeking disciples, or to the Pharisees and Sadducees who repeatedly tried to trip him?

In a world that is saturated with harshness, kindness is refreshing. Kind words and actions are the Christian's testimony to the world.

Kindness is the oil that takes the friction out of life. Let us be kind.

WORDS OF KINDNESS

Kind words bring no blisters on the tongue that speaks them, nor on the ear which hears them.

Kind words are never wasted. Like scattered seeds, they spring up in unexpected places.

Kindness is a conquering weapon.

Kindness should not be all on one side. He who expects kindness should show kindness.

—Selected



*Help me the slow of heart to move
by some clear, winning word of love;
Teach me the wayward feet to stay,
and guide them in the homeward way.*

—Washington Gladden

Love leads us to subdue our own passions and resentments, as well as to bear patiently the passions and resentments of others.

—John Watson Foster

A CHRISTIAN TONGUE

Teach me, Lord, to curb my tongue. When I am tempted to make carping criticisms and cruel judgments, keep me from speaking barbed words that hurt, and in which I find a perverted satisfaction.

Keep me from unkind words and from unkind silences.

Restrain my judgments.

I want my criticisms to be kind, generous, and constructive.

I want to remain sweet inside, that I may be gentle with other people, gentle in the things I say, kind in what I do.

Create in me that warmth of mercy that shall enable others to find Thy strength for their weakness, Thy peace for their strife, Thy joy for their sorrow, Thy love for their hatred, Thy compassion for their weakness. In Thine own strong name, I pray. Amen.

—Peter Marshall

Anyone Can Do It

Anyone can be kind, whether rich or poor, learned or illiterate. Brilliance of mind and capacity for deep thinking have rendered great service to humanity, but by themselves they are powerless to dry a tear or mend a broken heart.

—Anonymous



Love DOES NOT ENVY

*Think of ways to encourage one another
to outbursts of love and good deeds.*
—Hebrews 10:24 NLT

Find ways to sincerely compliment others on something well done and you will find yourself enjoying their joy.

William Barclay tells an incident from the life of Abraham Lincoln that shows agape love. During the early days of Lincoln's political career, Edwin Stanton was his bitter opponent and treated Lincoln with total contempt. He called the awkward-looking Lincoln "a low cunning clown"—even nicknaming him "the original gorilla." No one treated Lincoln with more contempt than did Stanton, but Lincoln said nothing. When Lincoln became president he made Stanton his war minister. And when asked why, Lincoln replied, "Because he's the best man for the job." Needless to say, Stanton continued to make trouble for Lincoln, yet the President was too big to fire him as long as Stanton was doing the job. However, the night Lincoln was murdered, it is reported, that Stanton said through his tears, "There lies the greatest ruler of men the world has ever seen."

Perfect love can be wronged again and again, without taking revenge or showing retaliation, bitterness, or animosity. The apostle Paul was an example of this agape love. "Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife,...What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice" (Phil. 1:15, 18).

The root word for envy is "to boil." It refers to an inner seething, steaming over something someone else has.

There are two kinds of envy, and both involve our relationships with others. The first kind of envy says, "I want what he has." That envy is bad enough, but the second kind is worse. It resents that another has it and will do almost anything to see it taken away from him. Do we wonder that jealousy is as "*cruel as the grave*" (Song of Solomon 8:6)? Do we wonder why Solomon wrote, "*Anger is cruel, and wrath is like a flood, but who can survive the destructiveness of jealousy?*" (Prov. 27:4 NLT).

Envy and rivalry are evidence of spiritual immaturity. Paul saw it among the Corinthians, and said, "*that surely means you are still living by your natural inclinations and by merely human principles*" (1 Cor. 3:3 NJB). They were suffering from what Solomon called "*the rottenness of the bones*" (Prov. 14:30). They were still spiritual infants, and needed to grow up.

Remember King Saul's savage jealousy? He was consumed by his jealousy of young David's success and popularity. Only David's death would satisfy Him. Yet his son Jonathan, in line for the throne, loved David with that perfect love. "*Then Jonathan, Saul's son, arose and went to David in the woods and strengthened his hand in God*" 1 Sam. 23:16). "*Jonathan loved David as he loved his own soul*" (1 Sam. 20:17). Here was agape love in action, love that had no room for jealousy.

Love does not envy. When love sees someone doing well, love shares the joy!

It is not some person or condition that makes one happy or miserable but one's attitude toward it.

Love DOES NOT BOAST

If we put Paul's words into literal, modern language, he might be saying, "Love is no windbag." Boasting is just that: so much wind.

Bragging is pride put into words. Perfect love is no braggart. Love does not have to talk up its own accomplishments because it is not about "me" but for God and His Kingdom.

Jesus saw right through the Pharisees' generous giving. He said plainly, "*They have their reward*" (Matt. 6:1-2), for they blew a trumpet to call attention to their generosity. They tithed and gave for the wrong reason.

Boasting is usually intended to make "me" stand out and "you" look inferior. That is just the opposite of "*Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself*" (Phil. 2:3). Boasting is nothing more or less than self-centeredness—self-love.

The Bible says, "*Let another man praise you, and not your own mouth*" (Prov. 27:2). Genuine love is selfless. The Christian can throw his whole heart into the cause without worrying about who gets the credit. He can encourage not only those who need uplifting but also those who are working alongside. There is no room for boasting or comparing in the family of Christ.

However, the Christian does not feel worthless and down on himself but has a healthy view. Paul advises, "*Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you*" (Rom. 12:3 NIV).

Perfect love follows the example of Jesus, who was concerned not for His own honor but for the honor of the Father who sent him (John 12:49).

"Since we are living by the Spirit, let our behaviour be guided by the Spirit and let us not be conceited or provocative and envious of one another." —Galatians 5:25-26 NJB



*Real love sets aside its own agenda
and seeks to model Christ.*

GOD'S HEROES

Love is able to go on cheerfully with the petty round of little duties and little avocations; to accept uncomplainingly a low position; to be misunderstood, misrepresented, maligned, without complaint; to smile for the joys of others when the heart is aching; to banish all ambition, all pride, and all restlessness. He who does this is a greater hero than he who for one hour storms a beach, or for one day rushes onward undaunted in the flaming front of shot and shell. He may be no hero to the world, but he is one of God's heroes.

—F. W. Faber

**Conceit may puff one up, but
it can never prop him up.**

If you don't brag about the good you do, then you will be truly wise! But if you are bitterly jealous and there is selfish ambition in your hearts, don't brag about being wise. That is the worst kind of lie. For jealousy and selfishness are not God's kind of wisdom. Such things are earthly, unspiritual..." —James 3:13-15 NLT

*I deepen my faith by being near people
of faith, for faith is beautifully contagious.*



Love is NOT PROUD

The major obstacle to humility is pride and self-will. We think we can look out for ourselves.

GOD'S OPINION

One day everything will get its own price tag and real worth will come into its own. Then the righteous shall shine forth in the Kingdom of their Father. The meek person is willing to wait for that day....

Like a multi-faceted stone, the humble person's colors shine forth. By their nature, they are able to bear an injustice without retaliating, do one's duty even when one is not watched, keep at the job until it is finished, and make use of criticism without being defeated by it. —E. Colvin

The man who sings his own praises is bound to be off pitch, and he certainly won't harmonize with his neighbor.

The meek person is delivered from the burden of pretense. I'm not speaking about hypocrisy, but the common human desire to put the best foot forward and hide our failings. There is hardly a man or woman who dares to be just what he or she is without doctoring up the impression. The fear of being found out gnaws like rodents within the heart.

Lord, make me childlike. Deliver me from the urge to compete with another for place or prestige or position. I would be simple and artless as your child. Deliver me from pose and pretense. Forgive me for thinking too highly of myself.

—A. W. Tozer

Pride is self-esteem that puts itself first without regard for others. It is a feeling of deep pleasure or satisfaction for one's own achievements, qualities, or possessions.

To be proud is to be self-assured, conceited, smug, egotistical, puffed up with arrogance. Love, on the other hand, is modest, thoughtful and considerate. Pride says by actions, "Of course I know what I'm talking about!" while humility says, "I might be mistaken." The truly loving person does not think first of defending his or her rights.

The arrogant person shows disdain and lack of respect for another. It thinks first of its own reputation and second of the other person's welfare. The Bible says:

"Everyone proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord" (Prov. 16:5).

"The fear of the Lord is to hate evil; pride and arrogance" (Prov. 8:13).

Pride ends in destruction (Prov. 16:18). What greater reason do we need to let go of the old ego! Perfect love finds true greatness in being able to say, "I am sorry," when it takes a wrong course.

Perfect love is humble and considerate, not arrogant.

Lording it over others is a sure sign we haven't submitted to the lordship of Christ.

"What makes you better than anyone else? What do you have that God hasn't given you? And if all you have is from God, why boast as though you have accomplished something on your own?" (1Cor. 4:7 NLT).

Love is NOT RUDE

If our aim is to take care of No. 1, it follows naturally that we will be rude to others. The King James Version of this phrase is: *"does not behave itself unseemly."* The literal meaning of the Greek here suggests the idea of being "without form" or "shapeless," as it describes bad manners and rude behavior toward others. The rude person says by his rudeness, "This is the way I am, I could care less how it affects you." There is no perfect love in such an attitude.

The Christian's vocabulary will be punctuated with such expressions as, "No, you first," "please," "thank you," and "may I help you?" Love operates with pre-determined politeness and consideration. *"And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works"* (Heb. 10:24).

Being rude also includes the thought of being undisciplined. It describes actions that are out of character with those who belong to Christ. To be abrupt, loud, forward, overbearing, "rough around the edges," is not Christ-like.

The person who emulates Christ's love will not throw slurs and innuendoes at another. He will not endorse the modern vernacular, which is often vulgar and unbecoming to Christians. He will show by his disciplined conduct that he endorses the higher values of Christ and lives by higher laws than the law of the jungle.

"So don't get tired of doing what is good. Don't get discouraged and give up, for we will reap a harvest of blessing at the appropriate time."

"Whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone, especially to our Christian brothers and sisters" (Gal. 6:9-10 NLT).



**Don't forget to say "Thank you,"
even to those closest to you.**

*Nothing is won by force. I choose to be gentle.
If I raise my voice may it be only in praise. If I
clench my fist, may it be only in prayer. If I make a
demand, may it be only of me.*

—Max Lucado

NO ROOM FOR RUDENESS

On one occasion a nurse in one of the London hospitals complained to the Chaplain-General that she had been rudely treated by some patients. "Thank God for that," was the reply. "What do you mean?" asked the astonished nurse.

The Chaplain explained, "If you are carrying a pitcher and somebody knocks up against you, you can only spill out what is inside the pitcher. And when people misjudge and persecute us, we can only spill what is inside. In the case of a godless man, he will probably swear. But if you are filled with the love of Christ, only love will come spilling out, which will astonish them."

***Little kindnesses done over and over
are what win the heart and strengthen
friendships.***



Love is NOT SELF-SEEKING

As a man goes up in God's
view he goes down in self-love.

**I am more and more convinced that my
happiness or unhappiness depends far more
on the way I meet the events of life than on
the nature of the events themselves.**

*How the hand of love can lighten, All our woe, all our woe,
How the gleam of hope can brighten All below, all below,
Let us do the kindly deed, Let us speak the loving word;
They will spring like precious seed In the garden of the Lord.*

**The best way to gain happiness is
to think about the happiness of others.**

A NEW KIND OF LOVE

I can remember what Jesus said in John 13:34-35, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, That ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

There are two major forces in the world: selfishness and love.

Selfishness has given birth to all our sorrows, heartaches and tears. It has caused all the wars and other atrocities that bring grief.

The world is not yet acquainted with the new kind of love—*agape* love. Few have seen it in practice, and still fewer enjoy its fullness. It absolutely eliminates selfishness.

—E. W. Kenyon

Few people need voice lessons to sing their own praise.

Selfishness is an octopus with many arms, all of them attached to "me." And if "me" is on top, then everyone else is below! If we prefer ourselves we will put others down. The Bible tells us to think of *others* first, and *self* second. "Never act from motives of rivalry or personal vanity, but in humility think more of each other than you do of yourselves" (Phil. 2:3 Phillips Bible). If everyone practiced this love, wouldn't we have a much happier world?

Selfishness is stubborn, intractable, inflexible, expecting everybody else to adjust. Perfect love looks out for the interests of others.

Selfishness insists on its rights. It has been said that there are two kinds of people—those who insist on their rights and those who remember their responsibilities; those who say, What can they do for me? and those who say, What can I do for others? Are you thinking, who then will take care of "me"? Christ has the answer: "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matt. 6:33).

Whenever I start talking about my rights, what "I" am due, what "I" deserve rather than what is my responsibility, I am not practicing Christian love. Can we picture Jesus saying, "I think I deserve better than this!" when the disciples offered Him food, or when He was looking for a place to sleep? Can we imagine Jesus saying to the Pharisees who were questioning Him, "I am a king. I have my rights!"? Instead He said, "I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me" (John 5:30).

The best way to help ourselves is to help others. Isn't unselfishness the key to the whole concept of the perfect love Paul describes? When we are patient with people, kind to them, not jealous of others, not boastful, or proud and arrogant with people, etc., we can truly say "not I, but Christ." "For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake" (2 Cor. 4:5 NIV).

We always weaken whatever we exaggerate.

Love is NEVER IRRITATED

If you have a problem being irritated and angry, do you realize the solution is within yourself? It is not an instant solution, but as you grow in perfect love the feelings of anger and irritation will grow less.

For example, what happens when you are driving down the road and someone quickly squeezes into the little space between you and the car in front of you? What is your reaction? Do you feel a flash of anger inside, as if to say, "That's my space!"—as though you are the only one who matters? Or is your first thought, "Maybe I saved an accident by letting him in. Maybe cutting me off was the only option he had"?

Watch what different drivers do when two lanes of traffic merge into one. You see those who hold back to let another car in, and you see those who stay one inch off the bumper of the car in front of them as if to say, "This is my space, you can wait." Which one is selfless? Which is selfish?

"Love is not easily angered." If we are easily irritated, angry, or upset, and blame it on our circumstances, we are deceiving ourselves. The problem is not the circumstances, it is the preoccupation of your mind that *you* are important, and *your* rights matter.

Anger is our response to any violation of our space, and it may range from a slight irritation to all-out rage. The root cause is usually other people, not circumstances. And the cure is love. Christian love never becomes exasperated with people. Exasperation is always a sign of defeat. When we lose our tempers, we lose everything. Kipling said that it was the test of a man if he could keep his head when all around were losing theirs and blaming it on him.

The man who is master of his temper can be master of anything.

Temper destroys. How many outbursts of temper have resulted in harm that could not be undone. People have even killed those they love in a fit of rage. Paul says simply that perfect love never gets upset, irritated, or angry. Love is never ready to pick a fight.

Does this mean Christians are spineless and weak-willed? Is the spirit to "fight" always wrong? No, but we must watch what we fight. We fight the clock, we fight our own ignorance, laziness and tendencies to sin. We fight to keep our priorities right. We do not fight to defend our opinion. We do not fight to be first. We do not fight to hurt others.

Love is the cure for irritability because irritability is, in the last analysis, mainly self-centeredness.



PRAYER FOR GENTLENESS

O Almighty God, give to Thy servant a meek and gentle spirit, that I may be slow to anger, and easy to mercy and forgiveness... Give me a wise and constant heart, that I may never be moved to an intemperate anger for any injury that is done or offered. Lord, let me ever be courteous and easy to be entreated; let me never fall into a peevish or contentious spirit, but follow peace with all men; offering forgiveness, inviting them by courtesies, ready to confess my own errors, apt to make amends, and desirous to be reconciled. Let no sickness or cross or accident, no employment or weariness make me angry or ungentle and discontented, or unthankful and uneasy to them that minister to me; but in all things make me like unto the holy Jesus. Amen.

—Bishop Jeremy Taylor (1613-1667)

Anger is selfish. It is an emotion that is opposite to perfect love. If you tell your children you love them, then yell at them, get irritated and upset at them, it will be hard to convince them of your love.

What is irritability but too much focus on "me"? I don't feel well, things aren't going well for me, "my" rights are violated, "my" time is infringed upon, "my" wants are not met.

This perfect love is so important that the New Testament keeps hammering away at it. Christians are exhorted to...

- a. **Put on love** (Col. 3:14)
- b. **Follow after love** (1 Cor. 14:1 ASV)
- c. **Abound in love** (Phil. 1:9)
- d. **Continue in love** (Heb. 13:1)
- e. **Increase in love** (1 Thess. 3:12)
- f. **Be fervent in love** (1 Pet. 4:8)
- g. **Be consistent in love** (Phil. 2:2)
- h. **Provoke each other to love** (Heb. 10:24)
- i. **Be sincere in love** (2 Cor. 8:8)



Love keeps **NO RECORD OF WRONGS**

One of the great arts in life is to learn what to forget.

TO FOLLOW CHRIST, LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR

Perhaps you say, "I cannot love my neighbors, because for all I do they return ingratitude and contempt." So much the more room for the heroism of love. Would you be a feather-bed warrior, instead of bearing the rough fight of love?

He who dares most wins most. If your path of love be rough, tread it boldly. Love your neighbors by heaping coals of fire on their heads, and if they be hard to please, seek not to please them but to please your Master. Remember, if they spurn your love, your Master has not spurned it. Your deed is as acceptable to Him as if it had been acceptable to them.

In loving your neighbor you follow Christ.

Selfishness is that detestable vice which is hard to forgive in others and very few are without it themselves.

HOW TO GROW IN GOOD TEMPER

◆ Breathe a prayer for yourself when you are about to lose your good temper. For you are the center of the problem at that moment. Jesus said: *"Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee...forgive him"* (Luke 17:3).

◆ Thicken your skin deliberately so you will no longer be a touchy individual.

◆ Have a convenient memory—a memory that easily forgets hurts and slights.

Some people have long memories for slights and hurts, and short ones for the blessings and good. A college turned down a youth named George Washington Carver when it found he was a Negro. Years later when Dr. Carver became famous, I asked him what college it was, for he had never mentioned the name. He brushed it aside and said, "Oh, that doesn't matter." And he would not tell me!

—E. Stanley Jones

Does this description mean that perfect love ignores or overlooks evil or wrong? No, that view would contradict numerous other passages of Scripture (see 2 Tim. 4:2; 2 Tim. 3:16–17; Ps. 141:5; Prov. 6:23).

The Greek word Paul used is an accountant's word. It was used of entering a transaction in the record so as not to forget it. Love does not keep records such as, "Three times this month he has neglected to speak to me." The one who says, "I forgive you," then later brings up the same offense, has failed the test of love.

Christian love has learned to "Forgive," and let it go.

By instinct we want to make the other **PAY** for the wrong—real or perceived. Perfect love makes the decision not to get even or keep score. It is far more profitable to look to our own sins instead of counting our brother's.

Bible love does not stack up a record of wrongs; Bible love forgives.

FORGIVE OUR SINS AS WE FORGIVE

"Forgive our sins as we forgive,"

You taught us, Lord, to pray;

but You alone can grant us strength
to live the words we say.

How can Your pardon reach and bless
the unforgiving heart
that broods on wrongs and will not let
old bitterness depart?

In blazing light Your Word reveals
The Truth that sets us free!
What trivial debts are owed to us,
how great our debt to Thee!

Lord, cleanse the depths within our souls,
And bid resentment cease;
Then, bound to You in bonds of love,
Our lives will spread Your peace.

—Carol Owens

Love does NOT DELIGHT IN EVIL



What makes you sad? What makes you glad? Here is another test of perfect love.

What is there in the human spirit that delights when another stumbles and falls? Whatever the quality, it is the opposite of love. There is some malicious pleasure in hearing that another fell. The fact that somebody did something worse than we would have done makes us feel good. But such comparing is wrong; it is rejoicing in iniquity.

Newspapers sell by recounting evil. If it isn't an account of a crime, or an injustice, or something emotionally salable, it isn't worth publishing.

Love finds no pleasure in anything wrong. If love chose the content of the news, it would think of the good of the people who read the newspaper and would want to present the best, not the worst. Love would give headlines to the teen who rescued a child at the community swimming pool; or the family who successfully turned their son or daughter away from drugs and alcohol. Prominent space would be given to the report of the school class that won the integrity competition. Along with the obituaries would be a tribute to the family patriarch who died, and a full testimony to his upright character, with an appeal to others to follow.

But such news would not sell. People rejoice more over iniquity, not truth. It does something to their conscience if someone else is sinning—especially if the other person's sin is more obvious.

You can delight in evil by wishing ill on someone, or by being glad when someone sins so that you look better. Or you can delight in evil simply by enjoying a sense of invincibility in sin, a feeling of "I would never do a thing like that." All such delight is evil.

It is much easier to weep with them that weep than to rejoice with those who rejoice.

Love is never glad "when others go wrong; love is gladdened by goodness" (Moffatt Bible). Love rejoices when others are true.

FOR CONSISTENCY IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Lord, what is the matter with us that we are so fitful and moody, so changeable—one moment professing our love for You, and the next moment yielding to temptations that lure us away from you? One moment cheerful, smiling, and kind, and the next, glum and surly. Lord, what strange creatures we are!

Teach us how to maintain life on an even keel, that with a balanced life of faith and trust in You, and kindness and love toward each other, we shall not be at one moment up in the sky and at the next at the bottom of a well.

Help us to walk with our hand in Your hand, that we may show Your perfect love in every trying situation. —Peter Marshall

DO YOU WANT LOVE?

Perfect love is not a product you can buy.

Don't pray for love and expect it to come into your life like a miracle.

Perfect love is the result of applying Scripture principles to everyday circumstances. Perfect love is the product of right decisions and godly reactions.

Perfect love comes ... not from trying to do the great or spectacular but from being faithful in the little things of daily relationships that few people ever see or know.

This central loyalty to a cause puts other loyalties and loves in their places as subordinate. To the Christian the "cause" is Christ and His Kingdom. We seek these first, and then all other things will be added.

FAITHFUL IN LITTLE THINGS

Christ's question on the day of account will not be, "How much were you noticed?" Rather, His question will be, "Were you faithful where I placed you?"

It is not how obscure or prominent a place we occupied, but only how faithfully did we fill it. How did I treat my "neighbor"? Was I always loving—patient, kind, and forgiving? Did I serve out of love for Christ and others or for the praise of men?

Let us strive to be more faithful one day at a time in performing the small, everyday tasks of life faithfully. Such is our primary responsibility. By the faithfulness with which we fulfill the common daily duties, we develop the character that will determine our destiny for eternity.



Learning To Fly



"I do not know what is the matter with Baldy," said Mrs. Eagle to Mr. Eagle. "He's four weeks old tomorrow and he won't even try to fly."

"What does he say when you ask him to try?" asked Papa Eagle.

"He says he's afraid he will fall. Says it makes him dizzy to look down. He screams, he cries, he does everything but flap his wings. My patience is completely exhausted."

Later that evening, Mr. Eagle said to Baldy, "Son, what do you want for your birthday tomorrow? How about an airplane?"

"No, I don't like airplanes."

"Why, son?"

"Because they scare me."

"Don't you want to learn to fly?"

"No, I'm afraid I might fall."

"But mother and I both fly and we don't fall."

"Yes, but I'm sure I would. I don't want to fly."

Mr. Eagle sat thinking for a moment. He couldn't understand why a son of his should be afraid to fly. He felt Baldy must have some reason for his fear. "Son," he said, "have you ever seen anyone get hurt by trying to fly?"

Baldy hesitated, then said, "That's the way Bushy Squirrel sprained his ankle."

"What do you mean?" asked Mr. Eagle.

Then Baldy told him the whole story, as now I tell it to you.

Bushy Squirrel had come over one afternoon to Baldy's nest when both Mr. and Mrs. Eagle were away. After a while Bushy said, "My daddy is the best climber in all the world. He can climb the highest tree in the forest."

"But my daddy can fly over the tops of all the trees," said Baldy. "He can fly away up almost to the sun."

"That's nothing," said Bushy, "flying is easy but climbing is hard."

"If you think flying is easy, why don't you try it," said Baldy. "I dare you!"

Of course Bushy had never seen his father or mother fly but he had heard them talking one night about flying squirrels, and he didn't like to pass up a dare, so he said, "All right, here I go. Watch me!"

And with that he jumped off the limb, spread out his feet, swished his tail and headed straight for the ground! Probably he would have been killed but for the fact that he landed on a big limb about twenty feet below. He grabbed it with his claws and held on for dear life.

He was so frightened that he lay quite still for several min-

utes before he dared to move, and Baldy Eagle was almost as scared as he was. Both of them decided then and there that they would never, never try to fly again.

That is the story Baldy told his daddy. When he had finished, Mr. Eagle said, "Baldy, why didn't you tell us before?"

"Because," said Baldy, "Bushy didn't want anyone to know. He was afraid that his mother might shut him up in a hole in a tree for being a naughty boy. Am I going to be punished for daring him to fly?"

"No, son," said Mr. Eagle, "because I am going to show you how to fly. You see, Squirrels were not made to fly but Eagles were. Bushy does not have wings but you do. If you spread them out and flap them, they will hold you up. Come on now, try it!"

"I can't Daddy, I'm afraid I might fall," and Baldy was about ready to cry.

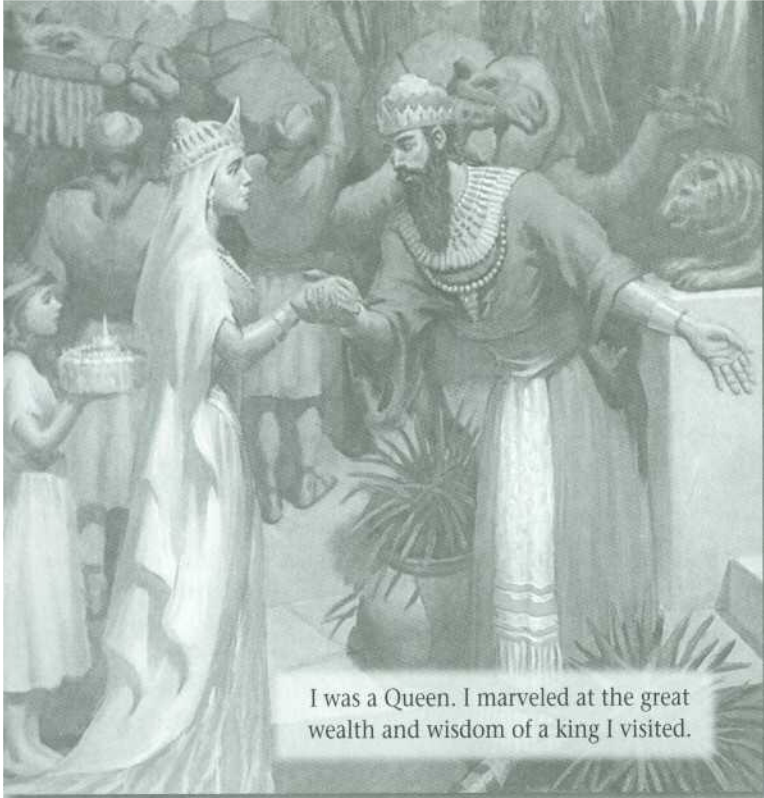
Then Mr. Eagle did a very strange thing, a thing that looked quite heartless. He pushed Baldy out of the nest and right off the edge. Down, down he started to fall, and then for some reason he hardly knew, he began flapping his wings and what do you think? He stopped falling and started to rise instead.

"That's the way, son," called Mr. Eagle. "Keep on flapping your wings. Let's see you make it back to the nest."

Up, up, a foot at a time came Baldy, until he was almost to the edge of the nest. But he couldn't make it. His strength was gone and he was out of breath, and now again he was falling, falling, just as fast as Bushy Squirrel fell when he tried to fly. Baldy thought it was all over for him, when all of a sudden he felt something soft under his feet and realized he was sailing out into the air.

"Here I am, son," said Mr. Eagle, who had swooped down under him and caught him on his wide back. "Now I'll show you how much fun it is to fly. Hang on!" and they sailed out into the open and across a river and over the top of a mountain and up toward the blue of the sky. When they were almost back home again Mr. Eagle said, "Son, I think you have learned a very important lesson. Our fears are our worst enemies. They frighten us and make us unhappy. And the only way to get rid of them is to face them and to do the

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I was a Queen. I marveled at the great wealth and wisdom of a king I visited.

I WAS A LEADER

1. I was a conqueror spoken of prophetically in the book of Isaiah. I was said to be God's anointed, to subdue nations before me.
2. My mother was a concubine and my father was a man known as the father of the faithful.
3. I was a conqueror who employed the services of a Hebrew to interpret my dreams.
4. I was the ruler of the Roman Empire during the time of Jesus' ministry.
5. I was a Persian king. I issued a decree permitting my cup-bearer, Nehemiah, to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the city walls.
6. I was chosen by Jesus to be the apostle to the Gentiles.
7. I was a mighty warrior who led King David's army.
8. I was appointed by God to lead the Children of Israel out of Egyptian bondage.
9. I led the first group of captives back to Jerusalem after the exile.

FIRST CORINTHIANS

1. The writer of 1 Corinthians is _____.
2. There was a problem in the Corinthian Church. Paul appealed to the members of the church to _____.
3. God's wisdom is spoken of as a _____ because it is not known to "the princes of this world."
4. The people of Corinth were called _____ in their faith because they were still immature in their behavior toward one another.
5. Paul sent _____, his "beloved son and faithful in the Lord," to help the people at Corinth.
6. Paul reproved the Corinthians for behaving worse than the _____ because they were allowing fornication in the church.
7. The Corinthians were sinning against their _____ when they committed fornication.
8. Paul advised the single women and the widows to _____.
9. When you sin by hurting a follower with a weak conscience you sin against _____.
10. We run the Christian race to win a crown that will last _____.
11. Everyone is tried, but God promises _____ so that we will be able to bear up under the trial.
12. We are commanded to celebrate the Lord's Supper to demonstrate Christ's death until _____.
13. The gifts the early Church had by the Holy Spirit came from _____.
14. Paul said it was better to prophesy than to _____.
15. If Christ was not raised from the dead, then Paul's preaching and message are _____.
16. The sting of death is _____.
17. When the gifts of the Spirit are gone, three things would remain: _____, _____, and _____.

ANSWERS

I WAS A LEADER

1. Cyrus the Great (Isa. 44:28; 45:1)
2. Ishmael (Gen. 16:1-15; Rom. 4:9-12)
3. Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 1:1-6; 2)
4. Tiberius Caesar (Luke 3:1)
5. Artaxerxes (Neh. 2:1-8)
6. Paul of Tarsus (Rom. 1:1; 11:13)
7. Joab (2 Sam. 10; 24:1-2)
8. Moses (Ex. 3:1-10)
9. Zerubbabel (Ezra 2:2)

PICTURE: Queen of Sheba (1 Kings 10:1-9)

FIRST CORINTHIANS

1. Paul (1:1-3)
2. Be united (1:10)
3. Mystery (2:7-8)
4. Babies (3:1-2)
5. Timothy (4:17)
6. Gentiles (5:1)
7. Own bodies (6:18)
8. Remain single (7:7-8)
9. Christ (8:8-12)
10. Forever (9:24-25)
11. A way to escape (10:13)
12. Until He comes again (11:23-26)
13. God (12:1-6)
14. Speak in an unknown tongue (14:5)
15. Vain (15:14)
16. Sin (15:56)
17. Faith, hope and charity (or love) (13:13)

THE LOWLY MOLE WITH THE SUPER NOSE



Photo courtesy of Kenneth C. Catania

When we saw ridges appearing on our front lawn and discovered that moles were responsible for the damage, we didn't call them "wonders." Apparently attracted by some delicious insect that had attacked the lawn, they had kindly cleaned out the invaders by tunneling close to the surface—and departed, leaving a maze of collapsing chambers.

How did they do it? They used the tools provided by our marvelous Creator. With a long pointed snout out front for burrowing, short sturdy support legs, broad hind feet for bracing, and powerful forefeet and claws for digging—who could design a better miniature earth-mover? We can only stand back and marvel. The lowly mole didn't design itself!

One of the twelve known genera of moles has, in addition to all of the above, a half-inch fleshy star appendage surrounding its snout. Almost scary in appearance, this remarkable creature is the star-nosed mole. The size of a hamster and weighing between 1.5 and 3 ounces, it lives in the marshes and wetlands of Southeastern Canada and the Eastern United States.

The nearly black fur of the star-nosed mole is short, dense, and coarser than that of other moles. Water repellent, it protects the mole from the cool, wet environment. Its broad front feet also make super paddles for swimming as it hunts down small invertebrates, insect larvae, worms and even small fish in its wet environment. It is also one of two creatures known to be able to "smell" in the water.

Moles are nearly blind, but in their underground world there is little light, so moles have little use for eyes such as ours. That leaves the senses of touch and smell pre-eminent. How does the star-nosed mole hunt and catch prey?

Here the Creator has designed something truly unique. The mole looks very much like other moles except that its snout is ringed with 11 pairs of pink appendages that form a fleshy star. These appendages are covered with more than 25,000 microscopic sensory receptors. Viewed under a microscope these receptors are a honey-combed pattern of tiny domes, each sensitive to the slightest touch. More than 100,000 nerve fibers carry messages from these domes to the mole's brain.

How much can the mole sense through its nose? "Given this structure, the mole can feel distinctive differences in the textures of materials at the microscopic



Photo courtesy of Kenneth C. Catania

The Star-nose Mole is truly a lightning-fast eater. It can locate and eat up to 8 separate food items every 2 seconds.

level," says one researcher. Just compare its sensitivity to that of the human hand, which has about 17,000 nerve fibers. Think what it would be like to have six times the sensitivity of your whole hand concentrated into an area the size of your fingertip! Accidental? By chance? Absolutely not! God

designed this unique creature for its environment.

Speed-eaters!

Does our modern world know the meaning of "fast food"? Not according to the star-nosed mole, which is constantly waving his nose appendages in search of food. A researcher timed this unique creature's eating habits. How much time to discover, grab and gulp? About 230 milliseconds—or less than a millionth of a second! Are we to think for a moment that this mole evolved or designed its own, awesome abilities? It is said that this mole can actually touch 13 separate areas of ground every second and can locate and consume 8 separate prey items every 2 seconds. The incredible rate at which this "fast-food" creature can locate food items allows it to thrive on a diet of much smaller creatures than another animal its same size. What an awesome appendage is this star-nose to the lowly mole!

Growing A Star-Nose

When the baby mole is born there is no star on its nose—because it doesn't need it! (all mammals begin by living on their mother's milk). At birth the baby mole has only a small ring of cylindrical shapes around its nose that are held to the sides of its face by a layer of skin. But very soon, as the young mole develops, the ends of the cylinders lift away from the nose, a little like peeling a banana. By the end of three weeks the young moles have their own fully functional star-nose and are ready to hunt for food on their own.

The female star-nosed moles usually have one litter of 4 or 5 young each spring. During the winter they actively forage for food. They have been found tunneling under the snow

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THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD, THEN AND NOW

When the Spirit Came...

Everything during the last few months had been so sudden, so unexpected. Now it was all over, and Jesus had gone to heaven. What was there to do now but wait, yes, wait in Jerusalem, just as Jesus had told them to do. Just before He ascended, Jesus had told them to *"stay in the city [Jerusalem] until you have been clothed with power from on high."* So they were there. Waiting.

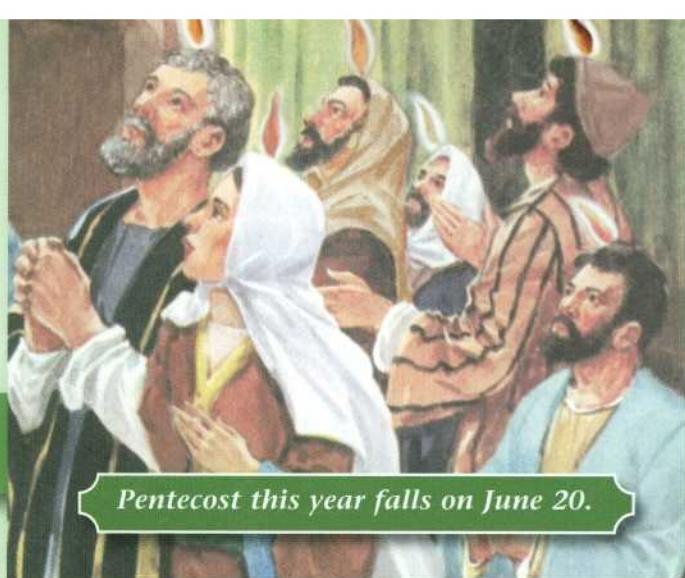
They were waiting in expectancy for—what? Yes, they were expecting *"power from on high"* (Luke 24:49), but what would that be like? Their imaginations ran dry.

Ten uneventful days passed, and nothing significant had happened. Now Pentecost relieved the monotony. People were arriving from every part of the empire. Pentecost was an ancient Jewish festival still observed religiously by loyal Jews. Early in the morning the streets were already buzzing with the general commotion of gathering crowds.

But the followers of Jesus were not among them. They, about one hundred and twenty all together, were gathered in a large upper room, waiting. And as they waited, they wondered: just how and when would that power come? No one doubted that Jesus would keep His promise, but how? And *when*? They couldn't help but wonder, too, what was Jesus doing? What was happening even now around the Father's throne in heaven? How long would the journey take?

They did not have answers to their questions. There wasn't much to do but wait. And pray. And they *did* pray. The Bible says they *"all joined together constantly in prayer"* (Acts 1:14 NIV). Can't we imagine that they also talked? Can't we almost hear them talking about their Lord and what He had taught them? How they missed His company, He whom they had come to know and appreciate; He who had been their close connection with the Father. We can imagine, too, that they talked about others in former days who had received power from God, men like Elijah, and Elisha, and the prophets. These men also had power from God. How did it come to *them*? On and on they talked, and then they prayed again.

And then ... in the midst of it all ... *"when the Day of Pentecost was fully come,"* when *"they were all with one accord in one place ..."* suddenly coming, its arrival was still startling, shocking. *"Suddenly there came ..."* but not like anything they had imagined. There was something to see, something to



Pentecost this year falls on June 20.

feel, and something to hear! It sounded like *"a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind"* that *"filled all the house where they were sitting."* It looked like *"cloven tongues like as of fire,"* and—most mysterious of all—somehow it physically *"sat upon each of them."* No one present missed the effect: *"Everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages, as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability"* (Acts 2:1–4 NLT & NKJV).

Excited, they rushed into the street. The onlookers were astounded. *"Utterly amazed, they asked: 'Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language?'"* (vs. 7–8 NIV). The Holy Spirit broke language barriers as had never been done in the history of the world. Imagine people from seventeen or more different language backgrounds all understanding the apostles, *without an interpreter!*

What Did It Mean?

What was this descending power all about? What did it mean? The apostle Peter, divinely inspired, took the floor and began to speak.

Imagine people from 17 language backgrounds all understanding one speaker—without an interpreter!

"Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say." In a calm, straightforward manner he explained what it was all about. This was something that had been foretold. It was in the prophecies, but even the apostles didn't expect it! *"What you see this morning,"* says Peter, *"was predicted centuries ago by the prophet Joel"* (Acts 2:16 NLT).

Then Peter explained even more. Here is a fulfillment, he says, right in front of your eyes. And if you think this is spec-

tacular, just realize what is still ahead. Amazing as all this is, it is only a few sprinkles of rain compared with the heavy, worldwide downpour of power that is scheduled for the last days! When that downpour comes, said Peter quoting Joel who spoke for God, *"In the last days ... I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord"* (Acts 2:17–20 NIV).

We can scarcely begin to imagine what that first Pentecost following Jesus' ministry was like—much less what that

*"You will receive power," Jesus had promised, and He sent it—
at Pentecost (Acts 1:8).*

Greater Pentecost will be, when God pours His power on *all who live!*

Power Prophesied

In addition to the outpouring of power, Pentecost brought a gigantic confirmation to the disciples themselves. If there was any faltering, any hesitating, any skepticism among them, Pentecost dispelled it.

The event was sudden, but not because Jesus had withheld information about it. Actually, He had spoken on several occasions of the power He would be sending. *"Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him."* By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified" (John 7:38–39 NIV). It would be a much greater measure of what Jesus had already given for special purposes, as when He sent out the seventy (Luke 10).

Just before His ascension Jesus told them explicitly to wait in Jerusalem, because, He said, *"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you"* (Acts 1:8 NIV).

The night before His crucifixion, in His last discourse with

His disciples, Jesus spoke of the power He would be sending. He called it a *"Comforter,"* or *"Helper."* He would be going away, He explained, but He would not leave them alone. This *"Comforter"* would come, *"which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I have said to you"* (John 14:26).^{*} The apostles heard, but little did they realize what the fulfillment of that prophecy would be like—and right within themselves.

The Purpose of the Power

What was the purpose of this Comforter, this power that Jesus was sending?

First of all, in the words of Jesus to His apostles, He was sending it to *"teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance that I have said to you"* (John 14:26). Jesus gave His apostles this power so that they could write an accurate documentary of His life, ministry and teaching for generations to come. We have this documentary in the form of the New Testament of our Bible, and we can know that it was accurate in its original form because the writers were guided by God's spirit or power (2 Pet. 1:21; 2 Tim. 3:16–17).

Second, the power of the Holy Spirit was sent to confirm that the Apostles were sent by God. Having superhuman power from God added authority to their message (Mark 16:20). It told everyone that their message had Divine authority behind it. Paul said the Holy Spirit was given *"to confirm the promises made unto the fathers"* (Rom. 15:8). Again Paul says, speaking of his Gentile converts, *"I have won them over by the miracles done through me as signs from God—all by the power of God's Spirit"* (Rom. 15:19 NLT).

Limited Power Given for a Limited Time

The power sent by Jesus on that day of Pentecost was a fulfillment of the prophecy made by Joel many hundreds of years earlier. Joel foretold two "rains," or two outpourings of power. The first was to be a "sprinkling" or "early rain" (Joel 2:23). Like any period of "rain," it would come and it would go; when its purpose was accomplished, it would cease.

The apostle Paul discussed this aspect of the power in His letter to the Corinthians. In I Corinthians 12 he tells how different persons had received different gifts. One had power to heal, another to teach; another could speak in tongues; another could interpret, and so on.

Then in the next chapter he explained that these gifts were limited. When their purpose was done, they would cease. *"For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away"* (1 Cor. 13:9–10). What is the "perfect"? The Psalmist says, *"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul"* (Ps. 19:7).

When the Bible, or written Word of God, would be complete, knowledge and power by the Holy Spirit would no longer be needed. The written Word would supply everything needed by the man or woman who chose to serve God. As Paul also explained, *"All Scripture... given by inspiration of God...is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work"* (2 Tim. 3:16–17).

^{*}The Holy Spirit was not a person, as the use of the pronoun "He" referring to "Comforter" might suggest. Because the original text was written in Greek and all Greek words have gender (masculine, feminine, or neuter), the pronoun used in Greek had to match the gender of the word to which it referred. For example, the word for "day" (hemera) is feminine; the word for "age" (aion) is masculine; "fruit" (karpos) is masculine; "city" (polos) is feminine. Thus, the pronoun for "fruit" would be "he," and the pronoun for city would be "she," and the pronoun for "comforter" is "he." A few of the newer translations have observed this fact, and have used the pronoun "it" in place of "he" in John 14:16 (see the Concordant Version, Goodspeed, Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott). Others solve the problem by avoiding the use of the personal pronoun form.

Since one of the primary purposes for which Jesus sent the Holy Spirit or Comforter was to enable the apostles to recall what they had been taught (John 14:26; 2 Pet. 1:21), it seems reasonable that the power ceased when that mission had been accomplished. Several of the newer translations of *“that which is perfect”* in 1 Cor. 13:10 suggest this meaning: *“when the time of fulfillment comes”* (Knox Bible); *“when the complete comes”* (Phillips), *“when perfection comes”* (Williams). The same word is used to describe the *“good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God”* in Romans 12:2. Paul even combines his statement about the *“perfect”* with a discussion of complete and partial knowledge (1 Cor. 13:9–13).

When the writing of the Bible was completed (the Old Testament had been compiled before Jesus was born), about the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, open vision and revelation ceased (as prophesied, see Daniel 9:26); and the *“early rain”* Joel prophesied, the power of the Holy Spirit that Jesus had sent at Pentecost, was no longer needed—it was *“done away”* (1 Cor. 13:10); it disappeared (NIV).

The Second Comforter

The Holy Spirit benefited us by making possible the arrival of a second *“Comforter.”*

When Jesus, on the night before His crucifixion, spoke of the first *“Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit,”* He spoke also of *“another Comforter”* which is *“the Spirit of truth.”* We read of it in John 14:16–17 (NIV), *“And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counselor [Comforter] to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth.”* This *“Spirit of truth,”* the written Word of God (Jesus’ *“words ... are spirit”*—John 6:63) would give support, guidance, and strength, and *this Comforter was promised to “abide forever”*—nothing was said about the first Comforter being *“forever.”* But as said above, the first Comforter, the power of the Holy Spirit, was necessary to make possible the second Comforter, so that the New Testament writers could accurately recall what they had seen and heard, and accurately write the knowledge God wanted preserved for future believers. What they wrote is part of the second Comforter, which we today have as the Bible.

God’s Work in Our Behalf

Over and over throughout the Scriptures, God gave special, temporary power for a limited purpose to select individuals, and when the purpose was accomplished it was withdrawn. The Holy Spirit power given at Pentecost was also temporary; and when its purpose was accomplished, it was withdrawn. Does that mean that we are left today without help or hope? Because we today do not see angels, because we do not have the ability to perform miracles or receive revelations from God, does that mean we are beyond the reach of God’s help? Absolutely not!! Actually, the Holy Spirit was only one part—one *small* part—of God’s work in behalf of His human children.

All through the ages God has worked on behalf of His chil-

*Those who were trusted with the power of the Holy Spirit had a singular responsibility. If they apostatized, if they forsook the faith, there was no way back; there was no forgiveness available to them (Heb. 6:4–6). They had committed the unpardonable sin.

dren, sometimes openly and sometimes through human instruments or the arranging of circumstances. Often His word is referred to as the activities of God’s *“Spirit.”* Literally God’s *“breath,”* the term is used in a figurative sense to refer to His influence, His power, His knowledge, which is literally *“God-breathed.”* The greatest resource is His written Word, from which we may draw strength, knowledge, and insight any day, anytime, anywhere. Then we can communicate with our heavenly Father through prayer. Through prayer we can find courage to tackle any stronghold of sin, strength for any test, and the assurance that every trial that comes to us has been pre-measured to our ability to endure (1 Cor. 10:13).

Then, too, how much help do we receive from God through His ministering angels as they direct and oversee the lives of those who will be *“heirs of salvation”* (Heb. 1:14)? The promise of Psalm 34:7 is without time limit. The only limitation is that the one receiving the benefit must be a God-fearer. *“The angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them.”*

The entire plan is designed to assure the success of those who are committed to Him and are living by His laws. The whole focus of His plan—past, present and future—is on the participants, His potential sons and daughters (2 Cor. 6:17–18).

God does not hear the call of those who are seeking Him, and arrange for their enlightenment, then leave them to the blind forces of chance. Those who are seeking Him with all

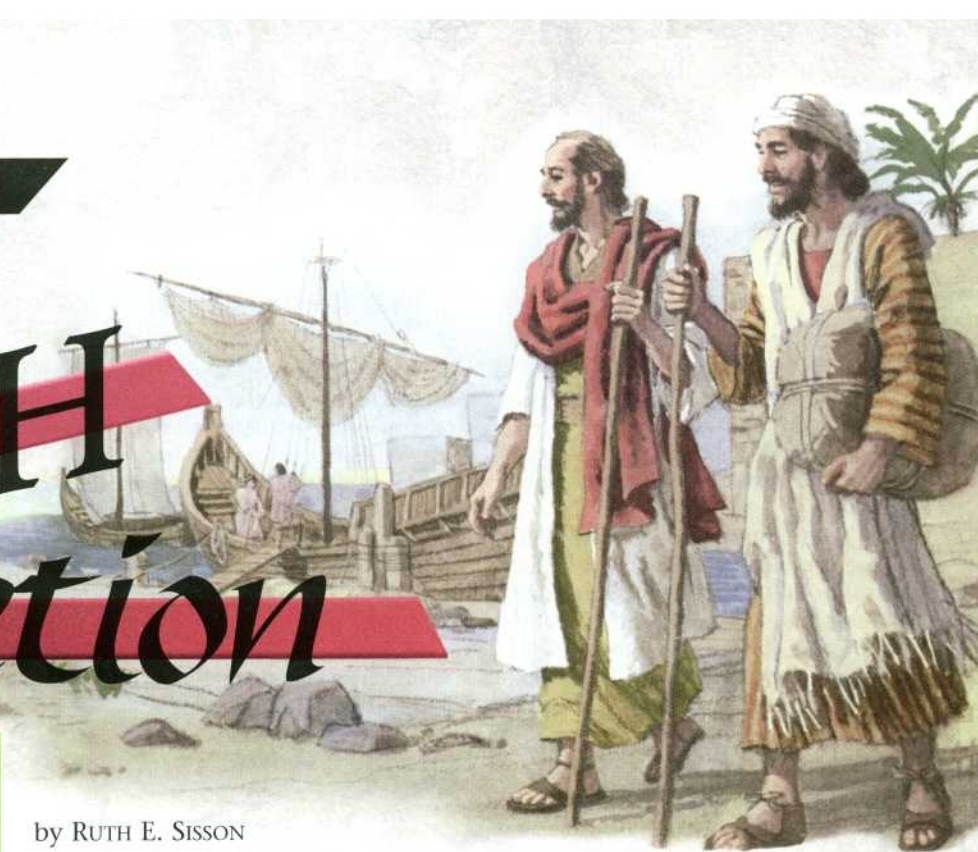
*Angels direct and oversee
the lives of those who will be “heirs
of salvation” (Heb. 1:14).*

their heart and soul and mind and strength (Jer. 29:13), who desire the future life He is holding out to His faithful, obedient children (Ps. 34:12–16; Prov. 3:13–18; Heb. 12:1–2), have His promise: *“I will never leave you nor forsake you”* (Heb. 13:5). There is also this promise: *“My God shall supply all your need”* (Phil. 4:19). And didn’t the great apostle Paul say also, *“I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me”* (Phil. 4:13). There is nothing haphazard about the plan of God. Even though *“time and chance happen to them all”* (Eccl. 9:11), above all is the Divine hand guarding, guiding, working all things together for the eternal good of those who are seeking Him.

The second downpour of the Holy Spirit is coming, as *“rain”* prophesied by Joel (2:23–25). This promise will be fulfilled when the prophet Elijah comes to announce the approach of the Great King Jesus (Mal. 4:5–6; Matt. 17:11).

Who does not want to be part of that great outpouring of power, when God’s Spirit is poured out abundantly, never to be removed! MM

FAITH in Action



Acts 22:30

30 The next day, because he wanted to know for certain why he was accused by the Jews, he released him from his bonds, and commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear, and brought Paul down and set him before them.

Acts 23:1-11

1. Then Paul, looking earnestly at the council, said, "Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day."

2. And the high priest Ananias commanded those who stood by him to strike him on the mouth.

3. Then Paul said to him, "God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! For you sit to judge me according to the law, and do you command me to be struck contrary to the law?"

4. And those who stood by said, "Do you revile God's high priest?"

5. Then Paul said, "I did not know, brethren, that he was the high priest; for it is written, 'You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people.'"

6. But when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, "Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged!"

7. And when he had said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees; and the assembly was divided.

8. For Sadducees say that there is no resurrection—and no angel or spirit; but the Pharisees confess both.

9. Then there arose a loud outcry. And the scribes of the Pharisees' party arose and protested, saying, "We find no evil in this man; but if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him, let us not fight against God."

10. Now when there arose a great dissension, the commander, fearing lest Paul might be pulled to pieces by them, commanded the soldiers to go down and take him by force from among them, and bring him into the barracks.

11. But the following night the Lord stood by him and said, "Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome."

by RUTH E. SISSON

THE MAN UNDER CONTROL —GOD'S CONTROL



Read Acts 22:30-23:11

At this point in the story, the Roman commander has brought Paul before the Sanhedrin to learn more about his "crime."

Have you noticed that all through the ordeal in Jerusalem—from the time Paul told his experiences to the Jerusalem Church, through his time in the temple, from the time of his arrest, and all through the unfair treatment, beatings and false accusations that followed, Paul kept his spirit superbly under control? Picture Mr. Average Citizen in Paul's situation: insulted, abused, falsely accused, unjustly beaten, to say nothing of the slander, the libel, and the gross injustice he had suffered. Still, the more furious the mob became, the more composed he seemed to be. Even to ask permission to address a mob that had angrily shouted, "*Away with him*", was not the norm. Far from being inflamed, Paul was dignified and composed. Even when he used his Roman citizenship to save his life, he spoke with quiet courtesy. How could he do it? He was under total control—God-control. He was not there in his own name. He was the servant of Jesus Christ.

1. How does Luke describe Paul's appearance before the Sanhedrin?

(23:1) _____

2. What was his opening salutation? (23:1) _____

3. What was his first statement about himself? (23:1) _____

"*Looking earnestly*" is Luke's description of Paul. Perhaps he had a serious longing in his heart that showed even in his face. When Paul addressed the Sanhedrin, he began with the same earnest, composed tone of voice that had

been his custom. "Men and brethren," he said, "I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day" (23:1).

4. Who reacted to Paul's opening statement? (23:2) _____
5. What did the high priest do? (23:2) _____

At this moment the high priest Ananias showed his utter lack of character. Wealthy and influential, Ananias had a record of greed and graft in office. For him, money talked, and might was right. Infuriated by Paul's claim to a "good conscience," he gave orders for someone to smack Paul across the mouth. Ananias was a man without a conscience.

6. What was Paul's response? (23:3) _____
7. Why did Paul refer to Ananias as "whitewashed"? (23:3) _____
8. On what did Paul base his response to being smitten? (23:3) _____

When Paul responded to his smiter with, "God will strike you, you whitewashed wall!" (23:3), he was speaking up in defense of Jewish law, which protected the right of the one accused. After all, Paul was in the presence of the Sanhedrin, the highest Jewish court in the land—where should he be safer from attack? An official had no right to abuse a prisoner in court.

Why did Paul call him "whitewashed"? This was the same word Jesus had used in Matthew 23, when he denounced the Pharisees as "whited sepulchers." Looking beyond the fine exterior, Paul could see a character rotten to the core.

9. When someone reproved Paul for reviling the high priest with, "God will strike you," what was Paul's response? (23:5) _____
10. What reason did Paul give for his seemingly disrespectful reply? (23:5) _____

What was Paul saying by his reply? He was likely stunned by being smitten—not only was it contrary to the law but totally beneath the dignity of the court. Paul cited the law instantly: "it is written, 'You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people'" (Acts 23:5; see Ex. 22:28). Of all people those officiating in Jewish court should hold Jewish law in high esteem.

When Paul apologized, was he silently questioning how one so despicable as to violate the prisoner's dignity could deserve the office of high priest? We cannot say. But Paul by citing the law showed his own

respect for the law, and respect due to the position, if not to the person.

Pharisees Versus Sadducees

11. What did Paul observe immediately as he stood in the presence of the Sanhedrin? (23:6) _____
12. How did he introduce himself to them? (23:6) _____



From the Word

Living in Good Conscience

"I have lived in good conscience before God" (Acts 23:1).

Did Paul live by something God had put deep in his psyche, some reliable guide that always told him what is right or wrong? If so, that "something" changed drastically after he met Jesus on the Damascus Road. Before that, he had been persecuting the very cause he now joined! As an overzealous young Jew, he had—in good conscience—held the garments of Steven's torturers. He had—in good conscience—captured Christians and compelled them to blasphemy, even committing them to prison and death. After being struck down by the light from heaven, he was ready to suffer for the very cause he had been fighting.

Conscience depends on what one is taught, or the law one accepts. Paul lived "in good conscience" because at all times he was living by his convictions. When those convictions changed, his conduct and manner of life changed also. What changed Paul's conscience? After his conversion, he changed his heart allegiance 180 degrees, from the laws and principles of the Jewish religion to the laws and principles of Christ. Before and after the change he lived in "good conscience" because he was living by the law to which he had pledged obedience.

What is the role of conscience? The authority of law creates a moral "must" or "ought." When the law of God says, "Do not lie," I know that I must not color, or stretch, or shrink the truth. If I say I don't know what happened when I really do, there is an emotional distress. Something in me feels uncomfortable. That something is conscience, because I know better than I said. My conscience tells me I am liable.

"Let your conscience be your guide" was not Paul's wisdom. He trained his conscience by his convictions, then lived by it. Let us do likewise.



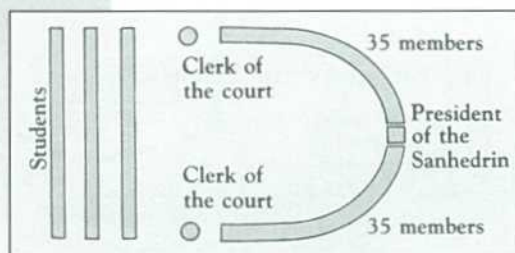


Did you know...

The Sanhedrin...

The Sanhedrin, the highest tribunal of the Jews, met in Jerusalem and acted as the supreme Jewish court. In New Testament times it was largely responsible for the internal government of Judea.

At one time Paul himself may have been a member of the Sanhedrin. If not, at least that was his aspiration. Now he stood before them as an accused prisoner. But Paul did not stand alone. He stood there as the representative of Jesus Christ, for whom he was willing to suffer any loss, any hardship, any accusation, if only Christ would approve his actions (Phil. 3:8-9).



The Sanhedrin, a body of 71 leading priests, scribes, and prominent laymen, which wielded final authority on religious matters, sat in a semicircle. Only the death penalty probably fell outside its scope, requiring a ruling by the Roman administrator.

Paul was a keen strategist, always looking out for the good of his cause. When he realized that his audience was made up of both Pharisees and Sadducees and knowing the tensions and political rivalry between them, he saw his opportunity to "divide and conquer." Being a follower of Christ, he belonged to neither party, although he had begun his career as a Pharisee.

If he had said to them, "Men and brethren, I'm a Christian, a follower of the resurrected Christ," he would likely have not had opportunity to say anything more. By beginning with, "Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee," they were immediately attentive. This was politics.

Then Paul dropped his word-bomb: "Concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged!" (23:6). Why did he say it? Because everything relating to his captivity was a result of his loyalty to Christ, and his loyalty to Christ centered around his belief in future life and the resurrection. This was his one aim, "If, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead" (Phil. 3:11). The Sadducees denied the whole idea of resurrection. The

Pharisees believed that the hope of Israel lay in the resurrection. But, of course, they did not recognize the resurrection of Jesus.

13. What was likely Paul's purpose in raising the issue of the resurrection? (23:7-8) _____

14. What was the outcry of some of the teachers of the law who were Pharisees? (23:8) _____

Paul's one statement about the resurrection set the two parties against each other, instead of against Paul. The result: some were ready to release Paul! Said the Pharisees, "We find no evil in this man; but if a spirit or an angel had spoken to him, let us not fight against God" (23:9). As corrupt as they were, they now argued for the authority of God.

15. What move did the Roman authorities take because of the dissension in the Sanhedrin? (23:10) _____

By introducing their primary point of difference—his own belief in the resurrection—Paul had moved the debate away from himself and toward their internal differences. It caused such immediate discord that Roman soldiers had to rescue Paul from the confusion and take him back into the barracks (23:10).

The commander's plan for the Sanhedrin to discover the nature of Paul's crime had failed. However, one fact was evident: he had a "hot" prisoner! What would happen next?

Reaction

It would have been natural for Paul at this point to have felt totally discouraged, depressed, fearful. Was he blaming himself for going along with the Jewish Christian elders' request to assist in the purification rites in the temple? Was he feeling that perhaps his career for Christ was at an end, because of all the negative events of the past few days? Was he thinking that perhaps he



A closer look

A Divided Camp

The Sanhedrin was at best a divided camp, and Paul knew it was divided. The influential Sadducees, who represented the wealthier elements of the population, considered visions unbelievable. Their main interest was to keep the temple going and to maintain their political authority. The temple business was extremely profitable, and so long as Rome tolerated what they wanted, it was the most important issue. They wanted no trouble with Rome. The Pharisees, on the other hand, had more interest in the religious life of the people, even though at many points it was superficial.

Paul's statement drove a division between the two groups. By it he aligned himself more with the Pharisees, but only because of this one belief. His bond with them at this point was nonexistent. Converted by Christ, he had left Pharisaism far behind.

What Paul did not likely expect was the violence that followed, the two opposing parties becoming so antagonistic that his own life was endangered.

It is the old story of the house divided against itself. That is why Paul emphasized unity in his letters to his Churches. There must be one foundation, and that foundation must be the Word of God, or the superstructure is useless.

should not have spoken up when an official of the Sanhedrin ordered that he be struck on the mouth? Was he feeling all around that his effort for Christ had failed because of all the negative events since he had reached Jerusalem? What good had come from his visit to Jerusalem? What thanks had he received for the generous gift he had worked so hard to bring?

16. How did God strengthen Paul at this difficult junction in his career? (23:11) _____

17. What did the Lord say to Paul? (23:11) _____

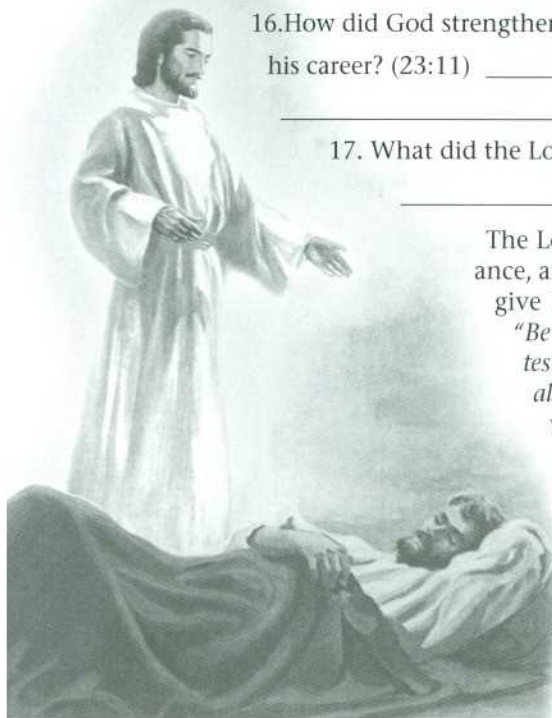
The Lord knew that Paul needed reassurance, and that night He stood by Paul, and give him this tremendous reassurance:

"Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome" (23:11). Can

we imagine the new heart this put into the great Apostle? Suddenly his suffering seemed like nothing at all. He took new courage, new strength, and new hope. All things were indeed working together for good, and God had work for him yet to do.

So now it was on to Rome! MM

to be continued



Insight

Under Control?

Did Paul lose control of his emotions when he was smitten, and act irresponsibly? We have no reason to believe he was irresponsible.

Why did Paul say he did not know the one ordering the smiting was high priest? There are two possible points here.

1) Since this meeting of the Sanhedrin was convened suddenly, the high priest was not likely dressed in his official robes, so Paul may not have suspected that he was the high priest.

2) One who would order a prisoner smitten in court was not acting like a high priest, and Paul may have been making this point: how could anyone be God's high priest and treat a prisoner contrary to the law?

When Paul apologized, he cited the law as his reason for his statement. The man was despicable, even though his office was worthy of dignity. Paul showed his regard for the law, and paid respect to the position, if not to the person.

THE LOWLY MOLE WITH THE SUPER NOSE (continued from page 18)

and swimming under the ice of frozen streams and ponds as they hunt. During this time they store up energy for the spring mating season as their tails become 3 to 4 times fatter than normal. The stored energy is used to reproduce and suckle the young.

In Perspective...

How amazingly our Great Creator has fitted each creature in His vast creation to survive and thrive in its particular environment! Even more important, He has given us what we need to survive and thrive—not only on an earthly level but also on a higher, spiritual level. He challenges us to keep looking to His awesome creation for reminders of His purpose, His design and His plan for this earth. For the God that can make the star-nosed mole, what can He do for His own sons and daughters? No wonder the Prophet has written, *"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him"* (1 Cor. 2:9). MM

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LEARNING TO FLY

(continued from page 16)

very thing they tell us not to do. That is why I pushed you out of the nest. You would always have been a coward and unhappy inside unless you had tried to fly."

"I am not afraid now," said Baldy, "and I am rested too, see?" and with that he spread his little wings and sailed off his father's back and they flew on home together side by side. As they landed on the edge of the nest, Baldy said, "I have changed my mind. I do want an airplane for my birthday tomorrow."

"You shall have it," said Mr. Eagle, "your mother and I are so very proud of our brave little son." MM

LET'S TALK ABOUT IT:

Our fears are our worst enemies.

What are you most afraid of? How can you learn to face it and do the thing you are most afraid of?

We feel cowardly and unhappy until we learn to overcome our fears.

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Disappointing facts do not warrant discouraging conclusions. It is not likely that Caleb and Joshua were delighted at the sight of the giants and the *walled cities, any more than the ten other spies were. What they faced was the same, but Caleb and Joshua concluded differently. Why? The ten faced the situation by themselves, the two faced it with God. The ten looked at the difficulties, and said, "It cannot be done." The Caleb and Joshua judged the difficulties in the sight of God and said, "We are well able."

**The point has been made that walled cities were new to the newly freed Hebrews as Egypt's cities typically did not have walls. The desert on either side and the Mediterranean Sea to their north were natural barriers against invaders. Therefore, to the Hebrews the walled cities of the Canaanites looked formidable to them.*

Conscience is a safe guide only when God is the guide of the conscience.

Before you speak, listen.
Before you write, think.
Before you spend, earn.
Before you invest, investigate.
Before you criticize, weigh the evidence.
Before you pray, forgive.
Before you quit, try harder.

Holiness is not the inability to sin, but the ability not to sin.

Contentment is a matter of hoping for the best and making the best of what we get.

If some Christians knew as little about their jobs as they do the Bible, they would have to be guided to their work benches every morning.

Good habits are formed; bad habits we fall into.

Contentment has been praised more and practiced less than any other condition of life.

Boasting of one's strong point is a weakness.

You cannot pour deep spirituality into a shallow life.



A person's character is like a fence: all the whitewash in the world won't strengthen it or straighten it.





What Will It Take?

*What will it take to break my heart?
I live so close to myself,
What will it take to bend my will—
The loss of a friend, or my health?
What will it take to walk straight on?
I wander so often from Him;
What will it take to give up my way
And win in the fight against wrong?*

*What will it take to lift me up
When I am stuck in a rut?
What will it take to feel again
And soften a hardened heart?
What will it take to spark a flame
In a life that has lost it's first love?
What will it take to fear His name
And glorify God above?*

*This you must do, God's Prophet says:
You must walk in His righteous way;
Give justice to all, and mercy love,
And humbly Him obey;
You must give to the Lord the best you have,
And love Him with all your heart,
And when you've committed your strength and mind,
Repent and make a new start!*

*And now, Israel,
what does the Lord your God
require of you? He requires you to
fear him, to live according to his will,
to love and worship him with all your
heart and soul, and to obey the Lord's
commands and laws that I am giving
you today for your own good.*

— Deut. 10:12–13 NLT