

Megiddo Message

Count It All Joy!



Love Is Something You DO!

LOVE is a many faceted word, much used and much abused in our modern world. But its original meaning and significance on the heavenly level is unmarred. Indeed, its challenge today is as great as ever it was. God still is a God of love. God still has love to give to those He chooses from among His human creation. God still commands us to love one another. And God still demands our love. He still commands us to love Him with “all” our heart.

What is this many-splendored thing called love?

On the human level, love is generally little more than a feeling experience, a sentimental attachment to another person that has not much foundation in thought or conscious reasoning. Or love may mean affection and commitment, often selfish, possessive, thoughtless, given in return for human gratification or self-fulfillment.

To the Christian, love is affection, devotion and commitment, and more—much more—on the highest level attainable by humankind. Love is the binding power linking human resources to the divine. And the substance of that link is the pure gold of obedience. Said Jesus, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15). The love God recognizes is a love that is felt so deeply, so compellingly, so intensely that it is expressed openly, inwardly, outwardly, wholly and constantly in loving obedience. For the Christian, obedience is the one central requirement of a living love relationship with God.

Agreeing to serve God is the beginning of this special relationship with Him. At this point we promise to obey, and God promises to recompense our obedience—a “hundredfold” now and in the world to come life everlasting.

The agreement is sealed, but it is not merely a cold, lifeless, one-sided agreement, quickly made and as quickly forgotten. In this relationship must be deep commitment, heartfelt devotion, and all the zeal and eagerness we can command. And as surely as we show our love to God, He will return the affection and will manifest His love to us. “And they shall be mine, saith

the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him” (Mal. 3:17).

Our love for God and God’s love for us is a relationship that should grow deeper, broader, and more secure as we learn to be more and more submissive, more and more obedient, more and more a part of His will. Unhindered by any external circumstances that may arise, it is a living thing, and like every living thing it must grow and expand until it reaches maturity in Christ, until we can say with Paul, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?”—implying that no power in heaven or earth can interfere.

Why? Why so secure? Why so inseparable? Why is this love so binding, so constant, so sure? Because this love is grounded in the integrity of those who love—God, on the one side, whose integrity and faithfulness toward His own can never be questioned; and the true believer, on the other side, whose integrity must be equally loyal and unchangeable.

Such integrity on the human side, however, is not a by-product of nature. Nor is it an automatic development once the process has been initiated. Love is something you DO. And doing means effort, work, concentration, discipline, along with intense prayer and constant communication with Him we love. This means disciplined thinking, disciplined speaking, disciplined acting. It means giving up what might naturally appeal most strongly and doing what God wants you to do. It means giving up your own opinion, your own plan, your own idea, and accepting His. It means obeying when virtually every nerve and sinew in your body would go another way. It means a total reorienting of your ambitions, aspirations, longings and affections.

Yes, love is something to DO! But who would want it any other way when Jesus Himself has promised: “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him” (John 14:21).

Isn’t such love *worth the effort?*

Megiddo means

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

We believe

—in God the Creator of all things, all men, and all life.

We believe

—in the Bible as containing the genuine revelation of God and His purposes for men, and as being our only source of divine knowledge today.

We believe

—in Christ the Son of God and our Perfect Example, who was born of a Virgin, ministered among men, was crucified, resurrected, and taken to heaven, and who shall shortly return to be king of the whole earth.

We believe

—in life as the gift of God, and in our sacred responsibility to use it for God and His coming Kingdom.

We believe

—in all mankind as providing the nucleus from which a superior, God-honoring people shall be chosen to receive the blessings of immortal life.

We believe

—in ourselves as capable of fulfilling the demands and disciplines given us in the law of God, thus perfecting that high quality of character which God has promised to reward with life everlasting in His heavenly Kingdom on earth.

We believe

—in the promise of God, that a new age is coming—is near—when the earth will be filled with His glory, His people, and His will be done here as it is now done in heaven.

Bible quotations

Unidentified quotations are from the King James Version.

Other versions are identified as follows:

NEB—*New English Bible*

NIV—*New International Version*

NAS—*New American Standard*

RSV—*Revised Standard Version*

TLB—*The Living Bible*

TEV—*Today's English Version*

JB—*The Jerusalem Bible, Reader's Edition*

Phillips—*The New Testament in Modern English*

Berkeley—*The Modern Language New Testament*

Weymouth—*The New Testament in Modern Speech*

Moffatt—*The Bible, A New Translation*

About Our Cover...

For our cover photograph we are indebted to the kindness of D. C. Lowe, who resides in Oregon. The photograph was taken along the shores of Oregon

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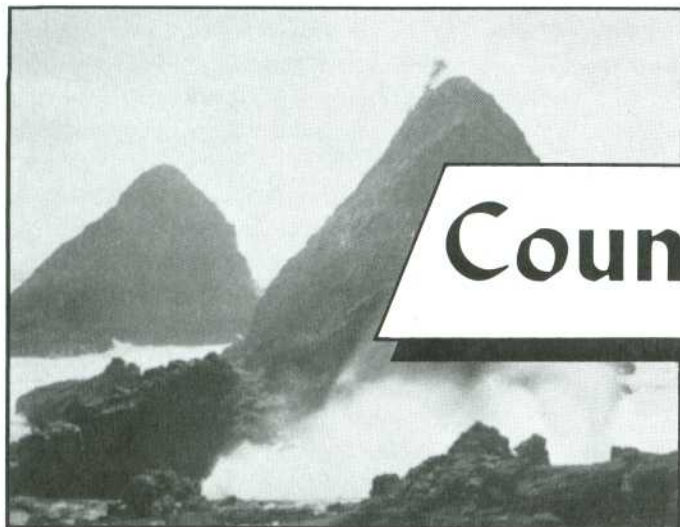
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MEGIDDO is a way of believing and living, grounded solidly in the Bible as the reliable Word of our Creator. A total view of life, the world and the universe, it sees all events, men and nations moving together toward one God-ordained climax: the Kingdom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

*As the lone tree clings to the windswept rock,
so we hold on in faith and . . .*



Count It All Joy!

WHO has not dreamed of living on an island away from all the hassles of everyday life—where the car would never run out of gas, where the telephone would never interrupt, where it would never rain on a picnic; where our best-laid plans would never go awry, where anything we tried to do would work, and the neighbors would never disturb. But these little hassles are not really trials; they are only minor inconveniences, opportunities to adorn our lives with more of those heavenly graces of patience and long-suffering.

Even at their worst, the hassles of everyday life are not the tests that try our faith. A real trial is something that cuts deep into our affections, our confidence or our emotions. It is something that touches our heart and forces us to a reality we are not fully prepared to meet. On the surface we may recognize the problem as pressure, pain, or people. Underneath is the real cause—a crippling disease, an accident, the loss of a job, a financial disaster or an unfaithful friend. Better planning and attention to detail may prevent the hassles of

daily life, but trials are inevitable.

And everyone—Christian or non-Christian—sooner or later confronts them. Trials are an inseparable part of the human experience, of life itself. But the Christian under trial has a distinct advantage over the non-Christian—to the extent that he grasps the real purpose of life.

A traveler recently reported a sign posted outside a small village in New Mexico. The sign read:

“AZTEX, NEW MEXICO.
5,667 friendly people,
and 6 old soreheads.”

A singular sign—which leaves one wondering if the six old soreheads know who they are? Or perhaps each of the 5,667 friendly people from time to time thinks he or she is one of those soreheads.

What is our view of the central purpose of our lives? What is our goal? For example, like everyone else I want to enjoy life. But if I let myself think that the purpose of life is to bring pleasure to *me*, I'm in trouble. I know that God's promises are beyond anything I can imagine, and that no good thing will He ever withhold if it is my desire to walk uprightly. I know also that I

am promised an abundance at His hand, a hundredfold of His riches, His treasures and His good things.

But if I assume that those “good things” include everything I might “want” in this world, the approval of everyone I meet, uninterrupted happiness and a life free from problems or pain, then I do not truly understand Him or His purpose.

One fact He is trying to teach me: that it is more important to learn to trust God than to enjoy life.

The apostle Paul makes this clear statement of the purpose of life in his letter to the Colossians: “For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.”

How are we to be “filled with the knowledge of his will” “through all wisdom and spiritual understanding”? “Filled” means complete, satisfied, saturated, occupied to capacity. “Knowledge” means understand-

ing, enlightenment, discernment, comprehension, acquaintance. We are to be saturated with spiritual discernment, occupied to capacity with our understanding of God.

This will make it possible for us to "walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing," to be "fruitful in every good work," ever increasing "in the knowledge of God."

HERE is the purpose for which we are living. And a trouble-free, pain-free life is not a requirement for filling this purpose. God has not given us this life for us to fill it to capacity with pleasure but He has given us this life to provide the experiences from which we can learn the lessons we need, develop the level of character He requires, and conform our lives to the image of His Son. Only when we grasp this deep, vital truth, and realize that God allows nothing that will hinder us in fulfilling this purpose, only then will we come to "welcome" our trials as "friends." Only then will we realize that He is indeed working all things together for our eternal good, and that He can use the sharp edges of pain to fashion the character He is seeking.

WHAT about all the books these days that proclaim that health, wealth and happiness are the legacy of every Christian? This philosophy is man's dream, not God's plan. Nothing in Scripture says, "Trust God, and everything will work out the way you want it to."

God knows our need. When we recognize this and are willing to accept what comes as filling this need, we have taken a long step toward meeting the trials of life triumphantly.

When we come to realize that the purpose of life is not pleasure but spiritual profit, we will have a means of coping with trials. We will

not lose faith because of trials. Rather, we will summon our faith to aid us, and in the end, the trial will strengthen us.

THE author of the book of James has the proper formula for dealing with trials. He writes: "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her

to bring impurities to the surface, so the trials of life purify us. But a trial properly used need not be a consuming fire. The refiner's fire consumes the dross, not the gold. If our metal is genuine, it will not be consumed. Only the worthless dross will be lost.

HOW does God equip us to withstand?

Heading the list of the resources

It is more important to learn to trust God than to enjoy life.

perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing" (Jas. 1:2-4).

How is this possible? The point at first seems paradoxical, for certainly trials do not bring pleasure. But this "joy" is not joy in the sense of pleasure or enjoyment. It is an inner peace that comes from knowing that God is at the helm. It is a certain inner confidence that whatever the test, you will be able to bear it and that when it is over, you will be better for it.

This "joy" is confidence that God will never allow anything that will hinder us in our quest for future life. "God can be depended on not to let you be tried beyond your strength," said Paul, "but when temptation comes, to give you a way out of it, so that you can withstand it" (I Cor. 10:13, Goodspeed).

Joy in trial is the satisfaction that comes from holding steadily to a purpose—and winning. It is an inner joy that comes from knowing that because of your trial you are one step nearer your goal today than you were yesterday.

Just as metals are heated in order

provided is prayer. The same inspired author who told us to "count it all joy" said also, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5:16).

Even though our Father operates the universes, He lets us know that we are welcome in His presence any time. In fact, we cannot wear out our welcome with Him. The more we contact Him, and the longer we stay in His presence, the more pleased He is. He never gives us the impression that He is over-scheduled, or overbusy. If we are truly sincere He listens to us as if we were saying the most important things He had ever listened to.

Is it any wonder that the Psalmist, realizing this, exclaimed, "O how I love thy law, it is my meditation all the day"? Can we not say it, and really mean it?

Very essential to every Christian life is the power of prayer. It is the most potent power left us in these end times. How we need to use it, rely on it, practice it.

But there is no need asking God's help if we are in any degree double minded, for God knows the heart

and sees that "the double minded man is unstable in all his ways" (James 1:8). Like the man who tries to keep one foot on the shore and one foot in the boat, he is pulled in two directions. He is unwilling to cut himself free from his lower nature of the world yet still wants the things of God.

God will not hear our prayer if we are double minded; He has no use for the half-and-half.

The single-minded person has one mind, the mind of Christ. His will is God's will; his purposes are God's purposes. His aim is the good that can come from the testing of his faith. Knowing this, he prays, assured that God will hear and answer according to what He knows is best. God's answer will not necessarily agree with what we asked, but we can know that if we ask according to His will, He *will* hear our prayer.

And so we shall be able to claim the blessing of God, the blessing He has promised to all who endure patiently. "Blessed is the man who endures trial, for when he stands the test, he will be given the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him" (Jas. 1:12, Goodspeed).

How, then, can we "count it all joy"? Because the time of trial has an end; the crown of life will never end. And it will be sure to us—if we stand the test, for what God has promised He is able, abundantly able, to perform. MM

He who would offer God second place offers Him no place at all, and anything that makes our service second makes it no service at all. The Lord requires that all who profess to serve Him live up to their profession and have their words backed by deeds of righteousness.

Abib Means . . .

"month of green ears," "spring or sprouting month." God commanded Moses to observe "the month Abib" (Deut. 16:1; Ex. 12:2; 13:4).

Abib 1

begins this year on the evening of March 21 and continues through the day of March 22, Bible time being measured from evening to evening (Lev. 23:32). This is the first day of the sacred year, and the day on which we observe the anniversary of our Saviour's birth.

Abib 13

is the anniversary of the night when Jesus partook of the Last Supper with His disciples before He suffered. It falls on the evening of April 2 this year. At this time we partake of the emblems (unleavened bread and grape juice) in a consecration service, in obedience to the command, "This do in remembrance of me." We recognize the emblems as symbols, the bread representing the knowledge of the law of God which we must learn, and the juice representing the wholehearted surrender which is the heart of our covenant with God. On the anniversary of the Lord's Supper each year we renew our covenant with God to comply fully with His demands and renew our determination to suffer "with Christ" that most significant death, the death of our own natures, that we may someday share His life.

Abib 15

is the anniversary of the Resurrection of Christ when "very early in the morning" the faithful women found their way to the tomb and heard from the lips of the angel those immortal words: "He is not here; he is risen"! It occurs this year on the morning of April 5.

Pentecost fifty days after Abib 15, falls this year on May 23, 24.

Prayer-Power

*Lord, what a change within us one short hour
Spent in Thy presence will avail to make!
What heavy burdens from our bosoms take!
What parched grounds refresh as with a shower!
We kneel, and all around us seems to lower;
We rise, and all, the distant and the near,
Stands forth in sunny outline, brave and clear;
We kneel, how weak! we rise, how full of power!*

*Why, therefore, should we do ourselves this wrong,
Or others—that we are not always strong—
That we are sometimes overborne with care—
That we should ever weak or heartless be,
Anxious or troubled—when with us is prayer;
And joy and strength and courage are with Thee?*

“I KNOW”—Divine Certainties

Scripture Reading: Job 19:23-27

IN A world trembling with fear and instability, Christian confidence is like light in the dark. The writer of the book of Hebrews described it in these words: “Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast” (Heb. 6:19).

We have an instinctive attraction to that which is secure and certain, but outside the special providence of God, there is no certainty. No living being is certain of continued survival. Certainty is a missing element in the natural world.

But thanks be to God, we are not left without certainty. One very basic certainty is the Resurrection of Christ.

What brings us together in fellowship this Resurrection season? It is the power of two words spoken so long ago and reaffirmed again and again by believers through the years: “I know.” It is the confidence born of living, active, abiding faith in the workings of the Divine plan. It is confidence born of demonstrating that faith day by day in the ordinary settings of our lives, that faith which can say “I know” because its own faith and life are harmonious in God.

What brings us today to remind ourselves of this fact? It is our confident expectation that we are among the inheritors of the promises of God. We come not to say, “I wonder,” or “I would like to know” but to say with the confident assurance as men and women of God, “I know.”

Ours is no cold facing of a far-away reality. We come because we love the resurrection’s certainty, and its accent on life. We come because we love life, and we love the assurance and solid hope that is ours through the resurrection of Christ.

We come to hear again those living words that renew assurance, those words spoken by our Lord Himself: “Because I live, ye shall live also” (John 14:19). There is no wavering in this claim, no hesitation or wondering;

only positive, sublime certainty. “I know.”

We come to listen again to the startling announcement of that first resurrection morning: “He is not here: he is risen, Come, see the place where the Lord lay.” We come to hear the triumphant promise: “Death is swallowed up in victory.”

We come to strengthen our grasp on hope, a hope that in these days of hopelessness and despair is still an anchor to the soul both sure and steadfast.

We come to see through the shadows and darkness of our mortal life that light that shines from heaven; to hear beyond the sadness of mortality the strains of eternal triumph.

We come because we believe, and because we want to activate that belief yet more, to impress our minds so deeply that never will the promise slip. Yes, we know that there is hope beyond this mortal sphere, and this hope can be our hope. We come to tell ourselves in heightening strains of personal conviction, “I know that my Redeemer lives”—and who of us does not need a Redeemer? Who of us is free from the bondage of mortality? Who can say, “O death where is thy sting; O grave, where is thy victory?” Well we know that the things seen are all temporal, transitory, soon to pass away. Only the things not seen are eternal.

A Message of Triumph

This message comes to us with special force at this season of the year as we observe the anniversary of Christ’s resurrection. Of this great event the patriarch Job wrote confidently some two millenniums in advance: “I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth.”

There are two points to note especially in this text. First, Job was not expressing his belief in an event which had already happened, but only his trust in the God who had promised it would happen. Job’s was a

certainty born of an absolute faith in God. In Job's time, the Redeemer had not yet been born, much less resurrected. Yet he was able to say, "I know that my Redeemer lives." Then there is the second point of Job's personal belief in a personal resurrection. "Though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." Looking ahead nearly two millennia, Job was confident. His Redeemer would live. And looking further, he himself would see Him. It was another positive "I know."

Should not we be able to share in Job's faith, we who know as history the coming of the Redeemer and His resurrection—and with such an abundance of confirming evidence? How weak and unworthy are we if in the face of abounding evidence we still doubt!

A well-known evangelical minister, when retiring from active ministry, told of a meaningful childhood lesson he had learned. It was his first job. His task: to assist a neighbor who was a painter. One particular

task, in which he took great delight, was that of holding the ladder when his employer was working on very high buildings. One day while his painter-employer was working high on a ladder, suddenly the ladder shifted to the left. Alarmed, the boy immediately tried to right the ladder to its former position, thinking this was his duty. He recalls being relieved of his job so quickly that he hardly knew what had happened.

What is the lesson? That ladders do shift and cannot be righted. The only solution is prevention, to lean your ladder on that which is so secure that it can never shift. The lesson applies both to things natural and things spiritual. If we stretch our ladder of faith to the very highest heights and lean it on unshakable certainties of heaven, then no trembling of the earth can alarm us.

The Evidence

What makes the Resurrection of Christ so unshakable a reality? Just one word: evidence. Biblical evidence is

Let Us Pray . . .

O Thou to whom a thousand years are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night, we draw near Thee this morning in deeper humility and love. Thou hast blest us so abundantly, and again and again we have proven ourselves so unworthy of that blessing. We come this morning to plead Thy forgiveness and seek anew Thy pardon and renewed opportunity that we may do better in the days and weeks to come.

Lord, we thank Thee especially for the surety of our faith, for the blessed privilege that is ours to be able to say, "I know." I know that my Redeemer lives. I know whom I have believed, I know that the things I have affirmed are true, and I know that if I do on my part, a future life awaits me.

We pray that this service may be to us an occasion when we rethink and reaffirm Thy greatness, Thy goodness, Thy surety, Thy love; and our finiteness, our proneness to sin, and our obligation to purify the motives of our lives. Let it be a time to renew our belief that Thou art, that Thou hast given us this life and art able to give more life, even eternal life, but only to those who seek and serve Thee in sincerity and in truth.

As we follow Him whom we call "Master" from the sunny skies of Galilee to the storm of Calvary, and on to the glory of the Empty Tomb, may we not miss the meaning of all this for our lives. We know that only as we grow into Christ by a death like His shall we be able to share the triumphant joy of a resurrection like His. May each of us have the courage to crucify in our own lives the vanities, immaturities, and conceits that keep us from living on Thy high plane of holiness. Grant us such a sense of purpose in our lives that nibbling annoyances, disappointments, sorrows, crosses to bear, will not for a moment turn us from our calling. In Thee may we discover the power to be master of any and every situation in our lives. In Thee may we find the will to sacrifice our natural love for our own thoughts and ideas until our selfishness is lost in brotherly kindness, and our self-love in service to Thee and to one another.

We pray for the faith that conquers; for the love that reconciles; for the peace that soothes; and ultimately for the victory that triumphs over death. And may we find our highest pleasure in giving up the things that appeal to us most, when it is revealed to us that they are abhorrent to Thee.

Lord, we pray for Thy people everywhere, who are seeking Thee with all their heart. And we beseech Thee, grant each of us such a serious commitment to Thee that not for a single moment will we permit ourselves to live by the life of our lower nature, but be totally transformed, becoming the new creatures Thou canst use both in this world and in the world to come. For Thine is the Kingdom and glory forever. Amen.

abundant. And what of historical evidence? What say historians of the great event?

Historians offer a strange treatment of the resurrection. Most history books use one of two devices. The first is silence. After mentioning the death of Jesus, they immediately shift to the growth of the early Church in Jerusalem, leaving the reader to wonder what the church had to "grow on." Their second method is to qualify the report of the resurrection. For example: "Jesus rose from the dead on Easter morning, so his followers confidently believed." Or, "according to the claims made in the Gospels . . .", etc. But what a weak treatment of an event which carries so weighty a line of evidence!

Much Christian literature refers to Jesus' resurrection and the empty tomb as phenomena that can be approached only by faith, not through history. This, however, is not true, especially in the case of the empty tomb. Nor is all evidence for the resurrection phenomena confined to the New Testament, as so many assume.

Any ancient historian would have to admit that a profound religious explosion occurred in Jerusalem shortly after Christ's crucifixion, with repercussions that shook even distant Rome. A pagan Roman author who detested Christianity had to admit that only thirty-one years after the death of Jesus, "a great number" of His followers in the distant imperial capital believed so strongly in His resurrection that they gave up their lives in Nero's great persecution (Tacitus, *Annals*, xv:44).

As the historian moves closer to Judea to examine the evidence, he is impressed with the variety of what, in our atomic age, might be called the "fallout" from the resurrection explosion. The psychological change in the disciples is striking. What transformed Peter, the man who could be unhinged by questions from a servant girl, into so bold a spokesman for the faith that the whole Sanhedrin could not silence him? If the disciples had deceitfully tried to string a new faith in the world—motivated by some hazy wish-fulfillment—would they have gone on to give their very lives for this fraud? Clearly, they deemed themselves eyewitnesses of the risen Christ, for myths do not make martyrs.

What about the transformation of Jesus' doubting brother James, and the great persecutor Saul?

The birth and growth of the Church itself, its survival and rapid expansion, offer telling evidence for a mighty launching. Could it all have been rooted in a fraud, or did something happen that resurrection morning that changed the whole picture?

Actually, in point of fact, the resurrection has much more evidence for it than does, for instance, the assas-

**"I KNOW that my Redeemer
lives."**

—Job

ination of Julius Caesar on the Ides of March in 44 B.C. Why will historians not give to the resurrection of Christ the same status of historical fact—especially with so many eyewitness reports—in the four Gospels, the Acts, and the letters of Peter and Paul? Yet most historians today still quietly refuse to accept these.

There is another aspect of the evidence for the resurrection of Christ often overlooked. It is the phenomenon of the empty tomb. Both the Gospels and the early Church affirmed, "He is not here" and then immediately added, "He is risen," with this additional thrust: "Come, see the place where the Lord lay."

There is extremely important historical evidence for the empty tomb. It deals with the question: Where did the Christian Church come from? To this the answer must be: Jerusalem. But this is the very last place it could have started if Jesus' tomb had remained occupied, since anyone producing a dead Jesus would have driven a wooden stake through the heart of any such Christianity based on a supposed resurrection.

What happened in Jerusalem seven weeks after the first Resurrection could have taken place only if Jesus' body were somehow missing from Joseph's tomb, for otherwise the Temple establishment, in its imbroglio with the Apostles, would simply have aborted the movement by making a brief trip over to the sepulcher of Joseph of Arimathea and unveiling the contents. They did not do this, however, because they knew the tomb was empty. Their official explanation for it—that the disciples had stolen the body—was an open admission that the sepulcher was indeed vacant.

Positive Evidence—Hostile Source

The objection will arise: But the supposed failure of the authorities to produce Jesus' body rests only on New Testament sources. True, it rests on them, but not on them only. There is also a wealth of evidence from purely Jewish and Roman sources and traditions, ranging from Josephus to the fifth-century compilation. What is important about these references, which also admit an empty tomb, is their standing as what historians term "positive evidence from a hostile source," which is the strongest kind of historical evidence.

Well into the second century A.D., and long after

***“We KNOW that we are of God,
and the whole world lieth in
wickedness”*** —John

Matthew recorded its first instance, the Jerusalem authorities continued to admit an empty tomb by ascribing it to the disciples' stealing the body. Justin Martyr, who came from neighboring Samaria, reported about 150 A.D. that Judean authorities even sent specially commissioned men across the Mediterranean to counter Christian claims with this explanation of the resurrection. And Justin Martyr lived close to New Testament Judea in both space and time. He was intimately enough acquainted with other details of the life of Christ that he could report that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, and that he personally had seen some plows and yokes made by Joseph and Jesus in their carpenter shop up in Nazareth, which he thought of excellent, durable quality.

Does any early source, friendly or hostile, claim that Jesus' tomb was occupied after the time of the resurrection, that the sepulcher was not empty? Such a claim would have been an obvious slash through the Resurrection proclamations of the early Church. Yet no authority in any way close to the event in space or time makes this claim. And no shred of evidence has yet been discovered in literary sources or archeology that would disprove this statement. Is not all this tremendous evidence for the certainty of the Resurrection of Christ?

Does this, then, prove the Resurrection? An empty tomb may not prove a resurrection, but a resurrection would require an empty tomb. Its occupancy, indeed, would have effectively disproved it.

What a contrast between the certainty of the Word of God and the uncertainty of the plans of men. At the time of Jesus' crucifixion, when the body of Jesus was being laid in the tomb, Pilate told the soldiers, "Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can" (Matt. 27:65). "Make it as sure as ye can"—but how pitifully weak and feeble is such surety! How sure can anything be which has naught but the power of men behind it—and the God of heaven against it? What strength had Pilate's soldiers against the angels of God who came to resurrect Jesus? The record tells us they were "as dead men."

And what audacity for us ever to think that we have

any power against God. If we are not willing to give up our ways for His and our thoughts for His, we shall find ourselves fighting against God—and just as effectively as did Pilate. Any power against God is no power at all.

Christian Confidence

One very basic reason for the Christian's confidence is the Resurrection of Christ. And once each year its anniversary comes to remind us of that solid, unshakable confidence that is ours. "Now is Christ risen from the dead," wrote the apostle Paul. Nothing uncertain or indefinite about it. "Now is Christ risen."

A gentleman stood looking one day into a store window. Standing next to him and also looking in was a little boy. It was near Easter, and in keeping with the season the shopkeeper had arranged a setting of the crucifixion. After a while, the boy turned to the man. "Them's Roman soldiers," he explained. The man said nothing, but kept studying the window. "And there's Jesus," the boy continued. Still no response. "They killed him." By this time the man, having satisfied his curiosity, started to walk away. Then he heard a patter of young feet behind him and felt a tug on his sleeve. It was the boy. "Mister," he said, "I forgot to tell you the most important part. He's alive again!"

This most important part, so often overlooked by the religious world as they concentrate on His death, is indeed the focus of the whole event—even more, of the whole life of Christ. Had it not been for that Resurrection, death would have ended all and Jesus would have been as other men. But for Jesus, death was not the end. The road that led Jesus to the cross did not dead-end there. It kept right on to a triumphant reversal, to risen life, power, victory and immortality. Jesus is alive, and alive forevermore!

Other Certainties

There are other strong certainties for the Christian believer. Let us look at a few expressed by the apostle John in his First Epistle.

Nothing in the whole world is so outspoken as the word of God. Philosophers have always taught men to think for themselves and to reason, to theorize, and draw logical conclusions. But how far beyond this is the certainty that declares in no uncertain terms, "We know." This positive assertiveness occurs and recurs numerous times in Scripture.

What is so unfailingly certain?

The apostle John adds three important points of certainty. The first is in the opening words of the Epistle:

"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we

have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life." Here is John's subject. Could any more positive assertion be possible? His words accent the vivid reality of his own experience. To this aged apostle, his days with Jesus were as real as if they were but yesterday. Time and maturity have only enriched the memory and added understanding to the experience. Now he realizes that when they heard, saw, looked upon and touched the living Christ, they were in reality touching the living Word of God, so completely did He exemplify that Word in His daily life.

"For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us" (v. 2).

We know, John was saying. What do we know about? It is one electrifying word: "life." The "Word of life," "the life," and "eternal life." All were meaningful terms to John. In Christ the "word of life," the wisdom of God, became alive and visible as it had never been before. He showed men what the Father had given Him, and He spent His entire earthly life obtaining that life and demonstrating to others the way to obtain it—what better assurance could we ask? This is the same Jesus who was shortly to say, "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore" (Rev. 1:18).

John felt the richness of his experience in having known Christ, the perfect manifestation of the life God desires. So devoted was Jesus to the Father, so absorbed in doing His Father's will, that He could say, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). Here is further connection between "life" and "eternal life." Jesus preached the good news of eternal life; at the same time He showed men that eternal life could be a reality for us—as we learn to love and live that same holy life.

John's strong personal testimony probably had two purposes as he penned it: to express the deeper insights into the meaning of Christ's life and example which time had impressed upon His own mind; and at the same time to let all men know that Jesus was an actual human being. Contrary to the heresies of the time, Jesus was real. John knew. He had been both an eyewitness and an ear-witness. He and others had enjoyed intimate friendship with the Master. Jesus was no incarnation of a deity; He was no phantom walking around in a human shell. He was real.

So John for the third time in his introduction repeats the certainty beneath his conviction: "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our

**"We KNOW that the Son of God
is come . . ."** —John

fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ" (v. 3).

But this is not all John says about the certainty of his hope. Three other vigorous certainties form the climax of his letter.

The First Certainty:

"We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not" (I John 5:18).

John is not saying that it is impossible for the child of God to stumble or fall in his struggle to achieve this end; if this had been true he would not have needed to give frequent warnings all through his Epistle as he did. John is describing the ultimate quality of the child of God: a state of sinlessness.

This affirmation comes directly after his exhortation to pray for brothers who sin. Eternal life is the Christian goal, promised by God to overcomers. In his gospel, John indicates that this is an achievement, not a natural endowment. Speaking of Christ he says, "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God" (John 1:12). Eternal life is not promised to all indiscriminately.

God calls us His sons and daughters even now while we are in the process of achieving this status. When we start in the way to life, we are said to be "begotten" or "born" into His family—not that we are saved or already immortal or perfected, but we are what Peter called "newborn babes," ready to learn and grow (I Pet. 2:1-2). Such an earnest babe "keepeth himself" so that the evil cannot overpower him. He utilizes all his mental and moral powers to keep himself free from sin. This does not mean that he never falls, but when he falls he gets up and goes on every time.

John's thought is the same as that of I John 3:9, which the New International Version translates: Anyone born of God "does not continue to sin." It is a process of learning and growing.

The Second Certainty:

"We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness" (I John 5:19).

Do we realize what this is saying? that we, a mere

***"I KNOW whom I have believed,
and am persuaded that he is able
to keep that which I have
committed unto him against that
day"*** —Paul

handful among earth's millions, can qualify as being "of God," belonging to the omnipotent Being who inhabits Eternity. We, the smallest among the puny inhabitants of one of the lesser planets in a far off corner of creation among billions upon billions of stars and galaxies—we can indeed be recognized by our mighty Creator! How tremendous the privilege! How overwhelming the reality!

This is the Christian's assurance. The Elder does not say "we think" or "we hope we are of God" but "we know that we are of God."

But let us think carefully about who the "we" may be. We do not automatically belong. This "we" is no self-appointed class who make the law they keep. It includes only those who truly belong to God, those who live daily in close relationship with God. Only the serious, committed, wholehearted, believing Christian can qualify, he who is continually renewing his sincere faith. His endeavors to follow Christ are real, serious, genuine. What assures him that he is of God? It is nothing less than the genuineness of his character in the sight of God.

In dreadful contrast John says that "the whole world lieth in wickedness." It is in the grip and under the dominion of that wicked one, the evil heart of man. Moreover, the world lieth there; it is not represented as struggling actively to be free, but quietly lying. The "world" includes all who walk in darkness, all who are strangers to the living way.

If our own life is inspired by the world and its goals and ambitions and lusts, we are part of that realm.

John wastes no words, neither does he blur the issue. Everyone belongs either to God or to the world. He makes no distinction between the civilized and uncivilized, between the educated and the uneducated. Whether they be the refined Ephesians or the wild Parthians, his judgment is the same; if they have no interest in the plan of God, they are the world; there is no intermediate class.

Today we live in a world possessed by evil in high

and low places, evil so widespread and so powerful that only God shall be able to deal with it. Were John among us today, would he not pronounce the same judgment in this time as he did long ago, "The whole world lieth in wickedness"? Would he not urge us to realize the tremendous contrast, and the great need to make certain that we are of God?

The Third Certainty:

Then comes another blessed certainty which the Christian holds—it is the certainty of believing faith, knowing of a certainty that Christ is, and that God is true. John writes, "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life" (I John 5:20).

For centuries men have sought to discover the Supreme Being and the destiny of life. Because they are easily satisfied with inferior substitutes, the majority are still in darkness.

Not so the Christians. They know God. Christ has given them understanding whereby they can know God. He came teaching them the way of salvation. In His own life He manifested the holy principles of God. As Jesus said to one, "If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father" (John 14:7). Christ showed the way to God, who is the source of life and the Giver of eternal life through Jesus Christ (John 5:26, 21; I John 2:25). That is the glorious destiny that Christians are certain of if they abide with the Father and the Son. Or as John phrases it, "this is the true God, and eternal life."

Some religious people like to believe that John is here giving unequivocal evidence of the deity of Christ. By the words "This is the true God, and eternal life," they say John is referring to Christ, thus stating that Christ is the "true God." While "Christ" is mentioned immediately before, it seems the most natural reference is to the subject not locally nearest but dominant in the mind of His apostle. John has been saying much about the true God in contrast to the many false gods.

Paul's Confidence

The confident tone of "I know" is sounded again by the apostle Paul in his letter to his son-in-the-faith Timothy. He writes: "For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (II Tim. 1:12). Never was affirmation more positive or absolute. There was no chance for error. He had placed himself on

deposit as security, persuaded that God was able to keep that which he had "committed unto him against that day." There was no question in Paul's mind. It was certain.

What was Paul certain about? That he was not traveling down a dead-end street. The cause to which he was giving his life was not going to fail. He knew whom he had believed, he knew whom he served, and he knew he would be rewarded for all that he was doing.

Is it not our sacred privilege today to share this same confidence? Yes, we know whom we serve. We know whereof we speak. We know whom we have believed, and that if we do on our part, that same future is secure for us! Is it not a glorious confidence?

But there is a question, a question inescapable, on our part: Can we, you and I, truly share in this "I know"? The answer lies with us. Are we living each day

so that we can claim this same positive assurance? Are we living so that we know our daily life is building for us a record for eternity? Can we say "I know" and mean it? Can we say with Paul, "I know whom I have believed," and with Job, "I know that my Redeemer liveth"?

Oh, our great God, who orders the universe and has given life to billions and quadrillions of shining angels, is able—abundantly able. He can do "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us"—He will, if we do our part. The only uncertainty lies with us.

Let us add to our confident hope our own positive determination and say, "I know, God helping me, that I shall overcome," and then work to make that determination a reality.

We can, if we will.

MM

Homey Reflections—

Grateful

AS I sit here by the warm fire and look out the window at a beautiful sunrise how could I not help but exclaim, "He had made everything beautiful in his time. O Lord, how manifold are thy works!" The goodness and majesty of God is so great, we must just simply sit back in wonderment. To think this all-wise, all-mighty God looks down on us weak, frail human beings. Copious blessings flow daily . . . food on the table in abundance, a warm home to shelter us from winter's blast, health and strength to do our daily tasks, and a reasoning mind to know and learn of this wonderful God and His Truth . . . this being the greatest blessing of all.

Oh, so much more hath He given us!

The tendency to become satisfied with the way our spirituality is progressing, makes it a necessity to have those reminders from time to time. The reflection we get of ourselves is not always accurate, thus we must rely on the word of God to direct us.

You know, if we refuse instruction, says the Wise Man, we despise our own soul! This instruction is our very life. Why is it so hard to take? Because pride is lurking at the door. Only those who are sincerely desiring to become righteous are glad to receive this "excellent oil of reproof" so that they may grow thereby. When humility fills our heart then and only then, can we rejoice to know we are being directed in the right

paths, paths of peace.

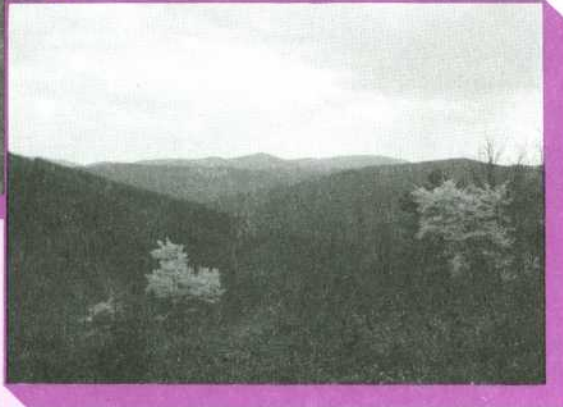
Time is running out. These words have been spoken many, many times. Nevertheless, they are true and must be heeded. Today is the day of salvation. We know at best our time is short. These days must be used wisely. In fact, we're not even promised another day, unless we are applying our hearts unto wisdom.

It is so easy to be lulled into complacency. There is much to distract us from our course and this is exactly why we must heed every warning.

World conditions have never before been in such a state. Yet, we can have peace and happiness if we only keep in mind those wonderful promises of God. One day righteousness will fill the land. All evil will be put down. "For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Hab. 2:14).

God is being so merciful to us. Every opportunity has been afforded us to work out our salvation. Let us be up and doing so that shame and remorse will not be our lot.

—Contributed



Lines to Live By

In Touch with God

*If we will keep in touch with God,
And daily bow beneath His Rod;
And lend Him our attentive ear,
Be slow to speak, and swift to hear
The words of wisdom that He speaks;
Yes, be as one who daily seeks
To do His will, then He will give
The right to with His chosen live.*

*How glorious to be in touch
With One who offers us so much,
Exceeding more than we can ask
For such a simple little task—
Yet not so simple as it seems
To one who only sits and dreams.
Yet labor with a song begun
So frequently is quickly done.*

*To keep in touch with God we must
Believe His mandates true and just,
When He forbids us to partake
Of worldly pleasures for His sake.
We must, with willing heart and mind,
Leave all the former lusts behind,
The anger, pride and jealousy,
All envy and hypocrisy.*

*He asks but one step at a time,
All through the rugged, upward climb;
But we must press, in sun, or rain,
Until at last the heights are gained.
The lowlands are for those alone
Who by their daily deeds disclose
The fact that they're content to lie
And let the workers pass them by.*

*To keep in touch with God is to
Rejoice in what He bids us do;
And, going at it with a smile,
Let nothing sensual beguile.
To banish our ungodly ways
Is more to God than hymns of praise;
And our almsgiving He will see,
When mingled with humility.*

*To keep in touch with God is more
Than passing through a chapel door,
To worship once a week, or twice;
It is a living sacrifice.
It is in giving God our all
That He delights to hear our call;
Yes, hopes of glory never dim,
If we will keep in touch with Him.*

—L. L. S.

If I have taught one soul to look aloft;
If I have helped one soul to live for God,
Or eased one throbbing pain,
Then I can be happy in the thought,
And I can thankful be, because I know
I have not lived in vain.

If I have fed one hungry soul in life,
Or spoken words of comfort or of cheer
To some sore heart,
Then I will thankful be, and smiling go
Along life's way—thankful for each hour that I
Can do my part.

If I have brought a smile to some sad face,
Or helped a weary one his burden bear,
Then I can say
That I have lived to do some good,
Or taught a weary one that there will come
A brighter day.

—Selected

“We live in our minds, and it is in our minds
that the problem is, and it is in our minds that
we must handle the problem.”

*He will guide you safely homeward,
If you trust Him every day.
Let His blessed Word e'er lead you,
Strengthen, help you watch and pray.*

*Strength of character and power of will
come only as a result of struggle, deep medi-
tation, prayer and sacrifice.*

Points for the Month:

Week 1: Enthusiasm makes a difference.

Week 2: Great thoughts applied become great acts.

Week 3: If you put away all selfishness, envy and strife, you will be happy.

Week 4: We must be more anxious to improve our performance than to defend it.

How Much More?

Man spends his strength on granite and on steel
He builds his structures reaching for the sky.
Above their puny pretense, quite alone
The timeless mountains stand aloof and high.

Man writes his name in symphony and song,
Along the path where weary mortals plod.
He seeks articulation. There remains
More music in the silences of God.

Man flings his feeble flutters into space
And prides himself on progress and on change.
And silent stars, eternities away,
Maintain their secret orbs remote and strange.
—Selected.

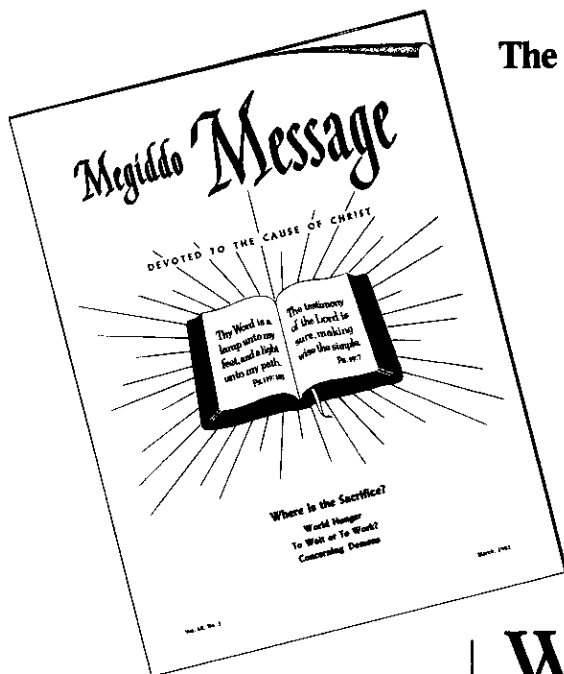
To do everything as unto Christ transforms
the menial into the meaningful, the lowly into
the lofty, the simple into the sacred.

God's Word

I paused last eve beside the blacksmith's door,
And heard the anvil ring, the vesper's chime,
And looking in I saw upon the floor
Old hammers, worn with beating years of time.

“How many anvils have you had?” said I,
“To wear and batter all these hammers so?”
“Just one,” he answered. Then with twinkling eye:
“The anvil wears the hammers out, you know.”

And so, I thought, the anvil of God's Word
For ages skeptics' blows have beat upon;
But though the noise of falling blows was heard,
The anvil is unchanged; the hammers gone.
—Selected



The *Message*—

WHY?

WHY publish the *Message*? Monetarily, there is no gain, only loss year after year. And in the matter of presentation and appearance, we make no impression. So why keep going? Why publish?

Our reasons for publishing today are the same as those of our spiritual fathers and mothers of a former generation. We publish out of an overarching love of God, an impelling devotion to truth, and a sincere desire to help our fellowmen.

We publish because, like the apostles of old, we have a message to proclaim and we cannot keep silent.

We publish because we believe:

- 1) in God, the Creator of the universes, our Sustainer, and in whom is all our hope of future life;
- 2) in Christ, the Son of God, who is destined soon to return to be king of the whole earth, one world government from sea to sea;
- 3) in ourselves, as material which may be molded as we yield to the shaping of the Masterworkman upon us, into vessels for His eternal use.

Our *Message* is "devoted to the cause of Christ." This means that it is *His* work, not our own, and all our efforts are directed to the promoting of His interests, His Kingdom, His truth as revealed in the written Word of God. In this age we have no divine revelations, no visions, no ecstatic experiences, no angelic visits; these are not part of the plan of God for us. But we do have a sincere conviction of the things which we believe, and using the resources available to us we proclaim them.

The *Message* is a religious publication. By this we mean that we

**Lest our faith fail in times like these,
we must do all we can to build faith in ourselves
and others. This is a primary purpose of the *Message*.**

are concerned about our relationship with God, and the vital issues of life and death—eternal life and eternal death. In view of our limited mortal allotment of days and all the limitations of mortality, this subject becomes supremely important.

Because of our commitment to the Word of God, the *Message*, above all else, strives to be accurate, truthful, Scriptural. How can we afford to be any less when we realize that we are under the scrutiny of One who is Omnipotent?

THE main objectives of the *Message* may be summarized in a few basic statements:

● **The *Message* strengthens faith in the Bible and its Author.**

Faith is in short supply in our world today where gods of humanism, secularism, materialism too often displace confidence in the Supreme and Almighty Creator. But all this fulfills the words of Jesus: "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?"

Lest our faith fail in times like these, we must do all we can to build faith in ourselves and others, and this is a primary purpose of the *Message*. Never was the need greater for faith in the God who is even today overruling all and will in due time bring all of His good promises to fruition. This is why we emphasize every evidence that the Bible is indeed the Word of God, every indication that His plan is steadily being carried to one grand completion. Such facts help to maintain faith.

● **The *Message* answers perplexing religious questions.**

Nothing is more disheartening than religious confusion. So many religious groups teach so many different—and

conflicting—ideas. Who is right? What does the God of heaven want us to believe? Small wonder that modern man turns away from religion in despair.

But the Bible *has* the answers. It is a book with a message, a message that can sustain us even in times like these. And it is a message solidly grounded in evidence. God does not ask of us a cowardly defense or a blind belief.

The Bible presents sound doctrine, and the teaching of that doctrine is one of the primary objectives of the *Message*—not for the sake of knowledge alone but as an aid to a better life and a stronger faith. The Bible is a book designed for studying, and studying it builds faith in its author. "So then faith cometh by hearing . . . the word of God" (Rom. 10:17)—because it is reasonable, consistent, and harmonious. An understanding of the Bible and God's plan for this earth gives breadth and depth and purpose to life. It adds a vital third dimension, without which life is flat and meaningless.

In answering questions on various Bible subjects, the *Message* follows one basic plan: to look first at the overall teaching of the Bible; then to see how the particular question can relate to the whole. In this way it seeks for unity rather than conflict—and unity there will be, for the God of the Bible is *one*, and His Word proclaims *one* plan and one gospel throughout.

● **The *Message* upholds a standard above the world's moral corruption.**

As our world sinks lower and lower into immorality, vice, and permissiveness, it is every Christian's continual desire and prayer to maintain a standard of conduct acceptable to God. The *Message* aims to present material in line with such a standard, for God's

standard cannot and does not change. Temporary laws, such as those given to Noah, or Abraham, or Moses, may be withdrawn; but God's principles are eternal and unchanging. The Bible admonishes that we "be not conformed to this world," and what God called "wrong" a thousand years ago, or a hundred years ago, or yesterday, is still wrong today.

● **The *Message* reveals how to develop a character acceptable to God.**

The Bible is not simply a book to be read, or a doctrine to be believed; it is a *life to be lived*, a thorough furnisher unto all good works (II Tim. 3:17).

God is holy, and He requires that His children be holy also. "Don't let your character be molded by the desires of your ignorant days, but be holy in every department of your lives, for the one who has called you is himself holy. The Scripture says: Ye shall be holy; for I am holy" (I Pet. 1:14-16, Phillips). A high level of achievement for mortals to reach! But it is our conviction that such an achievement is not only possible but mandatory for all who would be saved.

The *Message* emphasizes this vital truth, and shows its practical application to everyday life in the twentieth century. True religion is above all else practical, and if it is to benefit us as individuals it must be vital and living *in us*. What we think, what we feel, what we say, what we do—our whole life must be *recast* by it. Only such a life will be acceptable to God.

● **The *Message* gives peace, harmony and meaning to life.**

The *Message* points to the changed life which will result from the application of Bible principles to daily life. For

Applying Bible principles to daily life is a *primary*, not a *secondary* consideration.

example, consider the words of the apostle Paul: "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another" (Eph. 4:31-32). What would family life be across our nation if every member of every household lived by this one command?

Applying Bible principles to our lives creates peace and harmony by removing the situations which would mar peace. Even the most provoking situation becomes nothing to disturb the perfect poise of the true Christian.

- **The *Message* gives stability and hope in an uncertain world.**

Never has the world situation been more complex and more uncertain than at present. With the constant threat of nuclear armaments and the delicate balancings of world power, the words of Jesus are graphically fulfilled; men's hearts are indeed "failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth." The powers in the political heavens are shaken.

In times like these the *Message* gives a solid Scriptural perspective which sees all events—personal, social, national, political—building toward the great Day when our world will become the "kingdom of our Lord," with new administrators and re-made inhabitants.

With unwavering confidence in the plan of God we can have steady courage and faith through the most trying hour. Whatever the atmosphere of the age, we need not be affected by it because we know that God is true and that all things are working together according to His master plan.

WHAT about the *Message* is different from the thousand other religious publications circulated today?

Our answer might be clearer if stated in the negative. It is not what the *Message* says so much as what it does *not* say. The *Message* is different in what it does *not* have, as well as in what it has. Because we are "devoted to the cause of Christ," we must be highly selective of the material we publish. In the *Message* you will NOT find:

- *Material which does not stand squarely upon true Bible teaching to the best of our understanding.* Because of the Bible admonition to "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good," we publish only that which is in harmony with general Bible teaching.

- *Paid advertisements.* These, we feel, would be a distraction to our readers, who want articles and departments from which they can gain spiritual benefit. Consequently, the *Message* is not a moneymaking proposition; it never has paid its own way, and it never will.

- *Appeals or requests for contributions or financial support.* The *Message* has a minimal subscription fee—\$2.00 per year—which covers only a small fraction of the cost involved in its publication and mailing. And it is mailed free of charge to thousands of libraries for the benefit of the reading public. Yet the *Message* has never lacked for the support needed to carry on.

- *Anything that tends to demoralize or discourage Christian effort.* Our aim is to encourage and build up, never to tear down.

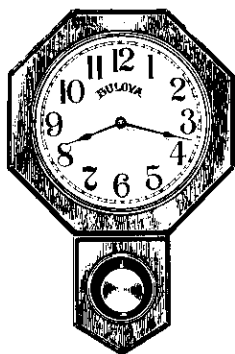
- *Anything that is sensational or which would tend to depreciate the value of the priceless treasure which is ours in the Word of God.* An occasional sensational article might tend to build up

readership; a touch of emotionalism and a little stretching of the truth might have its appeal; but such would be a sacrifice far too costly to sustain. Our work is God's and our constant question should be, What is true? What is right? What is Biblical? What is inspiring to the spiritual life?

The most distinguishing characteristic of the *Message* is without question its emphasis upon Bible support for everything that is printed. One point is always uppermost in the editor's mind as he reviews the copy for publication: What says the Lord?

Another significant distinction of the *Message* is our method of relating the Bible to our lives today. Applying Bible principles to daily life is a *primary*, not a *secondary* consideration, because our quality of life is not a *result* of salvation but the *prerequisite* to salvation. The God-directed life is not the result of some mystic force at work in our lives or the Holy Spirit in our hearts; it is the result of our own diligent attention to what we learn from the Word of God. Thus obedience to Biblical commands is always central, personal and imperative. Rather than discuss personal experience and relate it to the Word of God, the *Message* discusses the Word of God and how human experience must relate to it. First, last and always it projects the Word of God.

Wherever the *Message* travels, to Orient or Occident, to metropolis or backwoods hamlet, it is our prayer and desire that it be God's messenger, bearing tidings of hope, comfort and courage—hope of a brighter, clearer, better age. Upon us is laid the task of warning the world of the coming judgments of God and preparing some to receive Christ when He comes, and "woe unto us if we preach not this gospel!!" MM



It's TIME to Review

EVEN though some 200 years have passed since Benjamin Franklin wrote the following words in "Poor Richard's Almanac," they still seem most appropriate as we come to the close of an old year and enter a new.

Said this great philosopher, back in 1756: "If thou art a Man of Business, and of prudent care, thou wilt now examine thy accounts, to satisfy thyself whether thou has gained or lost in the Year past, and how much of either, the better to regulate thy future Industry or thy common Expenses.

"This is commendable—but it is not all. Wilt thou not examine also thy moral Accounts, and see what improvements thou hast made in the Conduct of Life, what vice subdued, what virtue acquired, how much better and how much wiser, as well as how much richer thou art grown?

"What shall it profit a Man, if he gain the whole World, but lose his own Soul? Without some Care in this Matter, tho' thou may'st come to count thy thousands, thou wilt possibly still appear poor in the Eyes of the Discerning, even here, and be really so for ever hereafter."

GRANT me the self-awareness to know honestly what I am, what I can do, and what I cannot;

GRANT me the judgment to channel my energies into those avenues which best utilize my abilities and do not require talents which I do not possess;

GRANT me the wisdom to admit error cheerfully and learn from my experiences, that I may grow and develop and avoid repetition of mistakes;

GRANT me the humility to learn from others, even though they be younger, less experienced, or of humbler station than I;

GRANT me the courage to make decisions whenever they are necessary and to avoid rashness when they are not;

GRANT me the consideration to recognize the worth of each individual, and to respect all those with whom I have contact, neither stifling them nor exalting myself at their expense;

GRANT me the perception to acknowledge that I can be no more effective than my subordinates enable me to be, and to deal with them so that they can help me by helping themselves;

GRANT me the tolerance to recognize mistakes as a cost of true learning and to stand behind my subordinates, accepting my responsibility for their actions;

GRANT me the insight to develop a personal philosophy, that my life may have more meaning and satisfaction and that I may avoid capricious action under the pressures of expediency;

GRANT me patience to live realistically with my circumstances, striving always for the better but recognizing the perils of too rapid or too drastic change;

GRANT me all these things, dear Lord, that I may live a more useful life, through serving my fellowmen and Thee.

Faithful in Little Things

“YOU’RE cheating!” shouted Roy as his lightning-quick pass just missed contact with Alan’s stealthy fingers and crashed onto the table. This wasn’t the first time they had bought candy together and divided it, and Roy was wide awake.

Alan’s round dark eyes blazed with fury. “You’re sure touchy,” he retorted; and snapping his finger at the piece of candy he had filched from Roy’s pile, he sent it whirling across the table and off onto the floor.

“I shall never, never, never buy another bag of candy with you.” Roy herded his small pile of candies into a bag, shoved back his chair, and bounded for the door. “Every time we buy something together you have to cheat.” Roy opened the door and slammed it behind him, then opened it again to give Alan one last word. “Just remember, Alan, never ask me again! Never! You’re too big a cheat.” The door closed firmly and Roy was gone.

Mrs. Brown, hearing the commotion from the kitchen, hurried into the room, wiping her hands on her terry cloth apron. There sat Alan, resting his elbows on the table and staring blankly at the small pile of candies.

“Alan”—

He turned slowly around in his chair to face his mother.

“Alan,” she said in a kind voice as she looked squarely into the eyes of her nine-year-old son. “Alan, are you—are you cheating again?”

Alan did not answer.

Mrs. Brown placed a firm hand on her son’s shoulder. “Are you cheating again, Son?”

Still he did not answer.

“Never forget the importance of being faithful in little things.”

“Aw, Mom,” he muttered as he slumped down in his chair. “All I did was take one l-i-t-t-l-e candy and Roy made all this big fuss.”

“Yes, but—”

“Just—” interrupted Alan, “just one small candy! Nobody but Roy would ever miss one *tiny* piece of candy.”

“It doesn’t matter how small it is,” returned his mother. “*Anything* you take which is not rightfully yours is stealing.”

Alan sat up straight in his chair and opened his mouth to continue his defense, but his mother’s stern look checked the words which rushed to his lips.

“Alan, what was that Bible verse we studied yesterday?”

Alan knit his brow and tried to put on an air of concentration. That verse did come close home, and he squirmed a little. “It was, ah, ah—”

“From a parable of Jesus,” hinted Mrs. Brown, trying to be helpful. “He that is faith . . .”

“He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much; and, and . . . and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.”

“Now tell me in your own words just what that means.”

Alan scowled, blinked his eyes and wiggled his nose. But seeing no way out, he stammered, “If you are not er—uh—honest in little things, you—you will not be in—in bigger things.”

“That’s right. Now Alan, do you think you were obeying that verse just now?”

Alan hung his head but made no reply.

Mrs. Brown repeated the question, this time more emphatic. “What do you think, Alan?”

“No, I guess not.”

“Criminals do not start out stealing diamonds or big amounts of money,” explained his mother. “They begin with *little* acts of dishonesty. One boy may steal an apple when no one is looking. Or, just as you did, he may try to cheat his friend out of a tiny piece of candy. Little things, almost too small to notice. But these little sins of dishonesty do not stay little. They grow and grow

and grow until *no one* can really trust us.

"Now I want you to apologize to Roy, Alan. Start right now to break that habit of cheating so we can always trust you."

Alan looked up from a spot on the floor which he had been studying and smiled a crooked little smile. "All right, I'm sorry," he mumbled.

Later—

"Albert, wait up—" Alan hurried to catch up with his friend.

"I've got bad news—we're in trouble."

"Trouble? about what?" Albert rolled his eyes curiously in Alan's direction.

"Miss Fraser says you and I will have to make an 'A' in the final exam Friday or lose our credit for history."

Albert stopped dead still in his tracks. "That means—" he ran his fingers nervously through his hair.

"You're right. No graduating unless we can pass it."

The two boys gazed at each other a moment, then walked on slowly. "Is it really *that* bad, Alan?" he queried as he moistened his lips with the tip of his tongue.

Alan nodded glumly. "I don't see any way out," and the two walked on, shoulders hunched and hands driven deep in their pockets.

"Well well, captains!" a voice from the rear startled them. Melvin wedged his way in between Albert and Alan, grinning broadly. "Why so glum today?"

Albert explained their predicament, and Melvin listened, still grinning.

Alan couldn't stand it any longer. "But Melv," he interrupted, "tell me—what's up *your* sleeve?"

"Nothing to worry about at all, boys. Just let me tell you." The three boys huddled together as Melvin put an arm around Albert's and Alan's necks.

Melvin lowered his voice to a whisper. "Miss Fraser made the mistake of leaving a copy of the test in a book on her desk. When she was out of the room, I managed to copy the questions, word for word.

"Really!"

"You did—how'd you get away with that?"

"Just stop over to my house tonight and we'll look up all the answers."

"Good!"

"Best news I've had today!"

And Melvin went whistling down the street.

"Are we in luck!" chuckled Alan. "If all our problems could be solved as easy as that!"

Years later—

"An unexpected pleasure!" exclaimed Alan Brown as he thrust his hand forward to grasp the hand of Mr. Smith, a highly respected citizen and adviser in the community. Having just recently graduated from law school, Alan was grateful for the recognition of a long-established man of distinction. Mr. Smith's friendship would be a valuable asset.

"I was about to stop for lunch," said Alan, nodding toward the restaurant.

Mr. Smith smiled pleasantly. "I was about to do the same."

The two men chatted steadily until the waitress placed their orders on the table, along with their checks.

Mr. Smith glanced briefly at his check. Thirty-five cents for his hot drink and roll. Alan's order had been identical, but his check, Mr. Smith's sharp eyes noticed as Alan quickly turned it over and went on talking, was only twenty-five cents.

Soon they were ready to leave, and Alan stepped up to the cashier, handed over his ticket and twenty-five cents, and left. Mr. Smith paid his thirty-five cents and followed him.

Several months passed, and Mr. Smith had almost forgotten the incident with Alan Brown until a business man called at his office one day for advice.

"It's this way," explained Mr. Norton pulling thoughtfully on his ear. "My brother Jake has died, leaving a considerable amount of property and money. We'll need the services of a lawyer, and I want somebody I can *depend* on. And since a lot of property is involved, the fee for the lawyer who gets the job will amount to several thousand dollars. I've been thinking about Mr. Brown for the job. What do you know about him?"

Mr. Smith thought a moment, then said simply, "I don't believe he's just the man you want."

"You wouldn't give it to him if you were in my place?"

"No, I would not."

"Thanks very much for your advice, Mr. Smith. But would you mind telling me why?"

"A man who would be dishonest for a dime cannot be trusted with a large sum of money, I regret to say. The great Teacher knew human nature when He said, 'He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.'"

MM

Words Are Deeds

"Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit.

"O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.

"A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.

"But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.

"For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."

—Matthew 12:33-37.

LET US not miss the meaning of Jesus' words because they are familiar. Nor let us immediately put up our moral umbrella and let their message run off onto someone else. Jesus missed no one in the direction of His listeners. "I say unto you," He said—each one of you—and He meant it.

Words are such tell-tale things. And what a burden they put on the moral capacity of each of us. "By your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."

What a contradiction is Jesus' statement to our common opinion that words are "just words." If something doesn't give the right impression, we quickly explain, as if to justify ourselves, that "We didn't mean it that way." Or if a word comes to us that is piercing to the heart, we console ourselves that "sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never harm me."

But is this what Jesus is saying? What is this about being judged by our words? And didn't He say earlier in the same context that a tree is known by its fruits—and so we are known by what we say? Didn't He make a direct link between our "fruits" and our "words"? "Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: . . . how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."

Surely Jesus didn't mean just this, for in the Sermon on the Mount He had said, "By their fruits ye shall know them"—their fruits, meaning deeds, not words. Also, "Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." Surely we are to assume that the accent is on the life, the act, the deed, not the words—aren't we?

But when we look more closely, we see there is more to the picture. This is not to say that what we do and how we live is unimportant. What this is saying is that words are something for which we will be called into judgment. So they become tangible items for judgment, just as much as deeds. In fact, *words are deeds!*

Jesus says it plainly in our text. "How can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." In other words, if you are doing evil, you cannot speak right. And conversely, if you are doing right, you cannot speak evil—if you did you would at that moment cease to *do right*. The significance of the passage is quite clear. Sin here is the sin of wrong speech. We can sin just as much by wrong words as by wrong actions.

Needless to say, it is difficult for us to put this high value on our words. Part of the difficulty lies in the customs of our times. We simply do not take words that seriously. Talk is cheap. To compound the prob-

lem, we live in a land of "free speech," where anyone can say just about anything, and no one can find fault or object. There is the added opinion that words are worthless in accomplishing anything. What can mere words do? The general impression is that they can't do anything. To try to solve the world's problems today by using words would be about as effective as trying to break up a concrete floor by dropping light bulbs on it.

This may be true on the national and international scene, but when we return to Jesus' words and our own responsibility for them, we find that words are weighty things. Nor would Jesus have us set the significance of words against the significance of deeds, because, as He saw it, *words are deeds*, and just as subject to the divine judicial eye.

Talk is *not* cheap. There is cheap talk, true enough. Chatter is cheap, and that is easy. But significant speech is something very different. In fact, talking may be one of the most demanding tasks we have to do. Every one of us knows how hard it can be to say those six simple words, "I am sorry; I was wrong." Every one of us knows, too, how hard it can be to introduce a subject that really needs to be discussed for the good of all. It may take all the courage we can muster to speak to another in kindness and love about that which will affect his or her eternal welfare. Weighty words are these, words of life and death—even eternal life and eternal death! And they are not cheap words.

IT all comes down to this, that the more significant the conversation, the more difficult it is. How do we get it started? What will we say first? How will we bring it up? And so we delay—hoping that sometime, another time, it will come up easily, casually, and *then* we will be able to talk about it.

Isn't it strange that the things which lie closest to our hearts and mean the most to us, the vital issues of our lives, are sometimes the hardest to talk about?

Yes, there is easy talk; there is cheap talk. But we do not want idle chatter to define for us the significance of our duty in speaking with one another—not when Jesus said, "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."

WHAT is speaking? It is the act of breaking the silence. All words come out of silence—unless the stream of them is so steady that the opposite is true. But knowing that "in the multitude of words there wanteth not sin," let us assume that our natural situation is silence, not words.

To speak is to split the silence by hurling a sound against it. What is the sound that we hurl? What about

our words? When we use words to break the silence, Jesus wants us to be sure that they are significant words, words that others really *need* to hear.

When Jesus said to His Father, "I have given them thy word," what did He mean? He meant that He had used His own power of speech to convey to His disciples the truths that His heavenly Father had conveyed to Him.

What higher or nobler use of words can we find than this! No cheap talk here, but words that are weighty, words that come from heaven, words that we will want to have on our record to justify us in the Day to come.

May words like these be ours today—kind words, patient words, sincere words, encouraging words, words of hope, words of courage, words of faith, words which speak to us of our duty to God and to each other, words which help us up and on toward the eternal Kingdom of God.

The more we practice using words like these, the more they will mean to us. They will not always be the easiest to say, but that only reveals their value, their worth, their importance in the eternal scale.

How can we afford to let an opportunity go by for words like these?

For it is still true that "By your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."

By your words, because words are deeds. MM

Not Yet, But Surely

We see not yet the throne of Christ uplifted,
Nor yet all nations bowed to His commands;
Sorrow and sin His heritage have rifted,
He has not yet the sceptre in His hands;
But we see Jesus, clothed in power supernal,
The keys of death and hell are His alone;
And He shall come, our Saviour, King Eternal,
To reign in power and might upon His throne.

We see not yet the holy consummation
When He shall rule, commanding every eye;
But we endure, amid earth's sharp negation,
As seeing One invisible on high.
The King is coming! to His own appearing,
So let us serve, nor shall we serve in vain;
For we know surely that the hour is nearing
When He shall take His kingly throne and reign!

• Concerning Aaron's "Plate"

"What is the meaning of the plate of pure gold that Aaron wore?"

Exodus 28:36-38 tells about this distinguishing headgear which Aaron was commanded to wear, the golden mitre. "And thou shalt make a plate of pure gold, and grave upon it, like the engravings of a signet, HOLINESS TO THE LORD. And thou shalt put it on a blue lace, that it may be upon the mitre; upon the forefront of the mitre it shall be. And it shall be upon Aaron's forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things, which the children of Israel shall hallow in all their holy gifts; and it shall be always upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before the Lord."

This verse points up the high responsibility of the priests before God. They were appointed to act as intermediaries between God and the people, and in this position they had to do exactly as they were commanded, or their offerings would not be accepted. The Israelites also had to do on their part to bring offerings according to the law, or their offerings would be rejected.

One of the requirements for the high priest was the special golden mitre. Without this mitre on his head, Aaron could not officiate as high priest, hence could not "hallow" the gifts of the people of Israel or "bear the iniquity of the holy things." The "holy things" may refer especially to the sacrifices which the Israelites had to bring. It was Aaron's duty to see that the gifts the people brought to be offered on the altar met the specifications God had given to Moses. If it was an animal it had to be without blemish, a male of the first year. All sacrifices had to meet exacting standards of quality. If the priest became careless and failed to observe meticulously all the rules of the sacrifices, including the rules concerning his own apparel, he could lose his office, even his life (as in the case of Aaron's two sons, Nadab and Abihu see Lev. 10:1; Num. 3:4).

We should notice also the inscription on the mitre: "HOLINESS TO THE LORD." These words, promi-

nently displayed, kept God's requirement before the people, as the high object in all services to God. The attainment of holiness was then, even as now, the key to salvation.

• On the Sundial of Ahaz

"I have been receiving your publication the past few months and feel that it is well written. I do have a short comment, though, on your article on the Sundial of Ahaz.

"I am going to quote out of the New International Version of the Bible because that is the one handy to me on my desk at this moment. But in any version, it is hard to understand how a statement such as 'this is the Lord's sign to you that the Lord will do what he has promised: I will make this shadow cast by the sun go back the ten steps it has gone down on the stairway of Ahaz. So the sunlight went back the ten steps it had gone down.'

"Come on! When you read figurative things into literal statements such as this, you do the Word of God a disservice. If you will figuratively approach the end of the story, then you must also figuratively approach the first part of the story and deny the literal story which is being presented."

Your question raises a valid point established by the Apostle Paul long ago, that in Biblical study we must be careful to compare "spiritual things with spiritual." Combining literal and spiritual applications in the same context results in confusion.

What are the possibilities in the account of the sundial of Ahaz? We do not even consider the account to be totally "spiritual." Hezekiah was a real, physical king of Judah, and the Lord extended his physical life.

However, let us note the sequence of events in the story. Hezekiah becomes very sick, and his life is about to end. Hezekiah then prays, and the Lord promises to extend his life. To demonstrate this fact visibly to Hezekiah, the Lord gives Hezekiah a "sign." This "sign" is translated from the Hebrew word *owth*, which is defined in *Strong's Exhaustive*

Concordance as follows: "a signal (lit. or fig.), as a flag, beacon, monument, omen, prodigy, evidence, etc.:—mark, miracle, (en-)sign, token."

This definition would allow either a literal or a figurative application of the "sign" without doing injustice to the meaning of the word. If we take the "sign" as a literal event and say that the Lord literally caused the sun to backtrack that day, we certainly are not venturing beyond the power of the Lord.

But considering the fact that "sun" is used numerous times in Scripture in a figurative sense, should we totally rule out the possibility of a similar application here?

If we take the "sign" as a literal manifestation, we have two possibilities. Either we must believe that the Lord changed the rotation pattern of the physical sun temporarily so that the shadow on the steps went backward to show Hezekiah—one lone man on earth—that his life would be extended—which seems an unlikely and purposeless phenomenon; or we may believe that the Lord used a means not understood to us to effect what appeared to be the "returning" of the sun, i.e., that the Lord worked much the same as He did when Joseph or Daniel had a prophetic dream revealing future events. Again, could not the Lord have caused an angel to make the shadow—unknown to Hezekiah—just as He caused an angel to obstruct the road of the ass in the time of Balaam? The angel at that time was clearly visible to the ass but invisible to Balaam.

Can we not as easily take the "sign" in a figurative sense, as a miracle demonstrating a literal fact?

We are not always told all we might like to know about every incident in the Bible, and if we were told, we might not understand any more than we do now. The most important point is that we know that God is working, and that He continues to work today in the affairs of men, though silently. And someday soon He will resume His open work when He arises "to shake terribly the earth." Then all men and nations shall "see the glory of our God," His power, and His judgments. If we are on His side when that Day arrives, little else will matter. MM

The best way to stop thinking about something you want to throw out of your mind is to start thinking about something else.

Obituary

Robert C. Bryant

On February 19, 1985, we met to pay our last respects to our oldest friend and brother, Robert Curtis Bryant. Brother Bryant was born February 16, 1880, and lived to within a few hours of his 105th birthday—almost 35 years beyond the Psalmist's expressed average of three score and ten.

Brother Bryant's father and mother were among the original group of members who embarked on the Mission steamer Megiddo in 1901. Their three sons chose not to join in the venture, but their early training had made a lasting impression, and in 1941 Robert Bryant relocated from Oregon to make his home with the people of the Church and assist in the work of the Lord, which he did actively as long as health permitted.

* * *

"And now dear brothers, I want you to know what happens to a Christian when he dies, so that when it happens, you will not be full of sorrow, as those who have no hope. . . . I can tell you this directly from the Lord: that we who are still living when the Lord returns will not rise to meet him ahead of those who are in their graves. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a mighty shout, and with the soul-stirring cry of the archangel, and the great trumpet-call of God. And the believers who are dead will be the first to rise to meet the Lord. . . . So comfort and encourage each other with this news."

—I Thess. 4:15-18, TLB.

Opportunity

Master of human destinies am I,
Cities and fields I walk; I penetrate
Deserts and seas remote, and passing by
Hovel, and mart, and palace soon or late
I knock unbidden once at every gate!
If sleeping, wake! If feasting, rise before
I turn away. It is the hour of fate,
And they who follow me reach every state
Mortals desire and conquer every foe
Save death. But those who doubt or hesitate,
Condemned to failure, penury and woe,
Seek me in vain and useless implore;
I answer not, and I return no more.

As We Begin Again

We face the beginning of another Sacred New Year which, we trust, is God's way of giving us yet another opportunity to start again; so may we take full advantage of every coming day. The wonderful prize for righteousness given the highest place in our minds should encourage us to be much swifter in pressing forward. For time is running out and we must be wakeful, determined to do only the things which will please our heavenly Father.

May we search our own hearts and confess and forsake our sinful ways and make an untiring effort—indeed “run to the point of exhaustion”—to win in the race for Eternal Life.

We know that we really must do much better before we can pass our field test trial and be qualified to enter the Kingdom of God. But what joy beyond description will then be ours, if we are found worthy!

It is so good to know that if we are earnestly seeking and striving to make this our aim in life, reverently fearing Him and keeping His commandments, we can be happy and safe in this increasingly evil and troubled world.

We realize what a great privilege it is to have been given the opportunity of making Jesus our friend. May we swerve not to the right or to the left, but follow the straight road, “stand firm” and “hold to the rules which we have learned and may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal encouragement and good hope, graciously encourage your hearts and strengthen them for all good in deed and word” (Moffatt).

South Wales

R. B.

Following Jesus

Jesus said, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me.” Jesus never laid down the cross to rest and partake of His fleshly desires. So must we do.

Jesus furnished mankind with a perfect example. His teaching was simple and intelligible, not one unwise sentiment, not one superfluous word. He taught to convince and save.

Can we imagine anyone sitting down with Him in His Kingdom who does not have the wedding garment on? We know there will not be one who has not done the work required.

Angels announced His birth; angels took Him from the earth, and according to the promise of God, angels will soon be bringing Him back to earth to rule and clean up a sin-sick earth.

Iowa

G. M.

Appreciative

I would like very much to receive your booklets and the *Megiddo Message*. I enjoyed reading it while waiting in the dentist's office.

California

K. F.

Delivered from Hopelessness

We should realize life without Christ is a hopeless end; life with Christ is an endless hope. With the hope that God offers us, we have a promise of more—much more than we can even begin to imagine or comprehend. Peter described our hope in I Peter 1:4 as “an inheritance, incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.”

The early Christians rejoiced be-

cause they had hope, and this same hope can bring joy into our lives today. We can be making the most of our time by “pressing on” in the strait and narrow way, never becoming discouraged but exercising unto godliness, for godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come. For someday—and maybe sooner than we think—these things that He has promised will come to pass!

Missouri

H. W.

Spiritually Dead?

We see people walking around who are spiritually dead. They know not of God, don't want to know Him, and are quite happy to stay that way. I just can't understand how anyone can live without God, but they do. Just think, they believe this is the only life that there will be, so they might as well “live and enjoy it.”

How sad it is that they choose not to know God. Some believe in determinism, that there is absolutely nothing they can do to change things.

Our Father's Love

How merciful God is to us,
We creatures of the dust!
He sends down rain and sunshine,
He always lifts us up!

How thankful, then, we all should be,
For wisdom He has shared!
And how much more there'll be to
learn,

When Jesus shall return!
To think the everlasting King of kings
Has taken note of us,
To work with us, to shape and mold
If we will do His will!

Georgia

C. P.

Enormous Compensation!

IF THERE is one thing we need to impress upon our minds daily, it is the surety that we reap what we sow.

Actually, when serving our Maker, we reap *much more* than we sow. Who of us can *earn* eternal life with its everlasting joy, glory, honor and wealth? We are not able to accomplish anything very outstanding in this life; nevertheless a multitude of small services done earnestly, joyfully, every day for our Lord, will give us *great* reward—we might say it is interest compounded! Even a “cup of cold water” given in His Name will not be forgotten!

One of the founders of the rich and famous “House of Rothchild” tells a story which illustrates this truth. In his early years he borrowed a small sum of money from a friend to help him through a difficult business situation. He had no security to offer, but his benefactor let him have it on the basis of his need and loving understanding.

Nearly half a century rolled by, and the benefactor moved to a distant part of Germany. By this time, the name of the now wealthy Rothchild family had become a household word. Then one day Mr. Rothchild’s old friend and benefactor called on him—not even realizing that he was the same youth he had once befriended. The banker, however, recognized his old acquaintance. He saw, too, that his former friend was now broken in health and in dire financial straits. Going to his desk he prepared a draft for an *enormous* amount of money, saying, “You perhaps do not recall the rather modest sum you lent me years ago, but it has been compounding interest and dividends for fifty years. Receive this check therefore not as a gift but as your due.” Overjoyed, the old man took the sum with astonishment and gratitude, the compound interest of his early, loving deed.

So, too, God promises *enormous compensation* for every deed done in His Name, and every sacrifice that consecration may demand.

Just think of it! Each moment spent in His service is earning and compounding centillions of years of joy and happiness unmixed with the sorrows, frustrations, and disappointments we experience in this life! Is it any wonder that Paul’s joy knew no bounds as he wrote, “In my opinion, whatever we may have to go through now is *less than nothing* compared with the magnificent future God has planned for us!”

Seeing that day afar off, can we not hear his voice thrill

as he continues, “The whole creation is on tiptoe to see the wonderful sight of the sons of God coming into their own!”

How can we possibly look back even for a moment, or drag our feet on the highway of Zion, with such great and precious promises before us!

But do we find this level of enthusiasm hard to maintain at times? Do we find that “when we would do good, evil is present” with us?

A wise man of the world once said, “No one ever went successfully through any great enterprise whose earnestness did not amount to enthusiasm.” If our seeking after God is to be successful, it too must be sincere, and the earnestness with which we seek God must amount to enthusiasm. To win the approval of our Father, we must seek Him *with all our heart*, with *enthusiasm*.

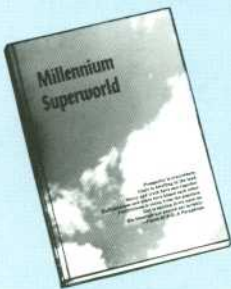
It requires steady patience on our part to be able to escape the allurements of the world, the cares of this life, and the promptings of our own selfish nature. The desire to live in God’s Kingdom must create in us a longing to do the will of God, whatever it may demand, so that to do it will be our chief concern. Our desire should be to perform *everything* the law of God demands and not only for a short season—a small part of our life—but our entire lifetime, from the day we hear His call to the very end. If Godlikeness is our aim we will show it by our conduct seven days a week. Our life will exhibit the godly virtues of honesty, truthfulness, sincerity, love, long-suffering, courage, single-mindedness, devotion.

God wants us to be able to say “NO” to ourselves. Discipline means cost. We must give up, go without, renounce, refuse. The lower must give way to the higher. If we have really caught the vision of the world to come, we will allow nothing to come in the way, no craving of the flesh, no desire for personal pleasure or selfish ease.

In every true life there is sacrifice, struggle, things to forsake in obedience to the heavenly vision. The spirit of the world is by no means a vague and meaningless term to the one who has heard the call of God. He recognizes that world within him, where flesh and spirit lock in mortal combat. The fight is hot and fierce, the tug-of-war grim and real.

But never forget that there is a reward awaiting the victors, yes, *enormous compensation!* MM

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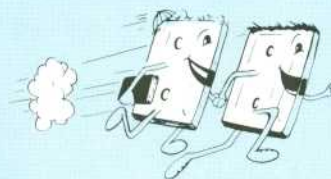
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