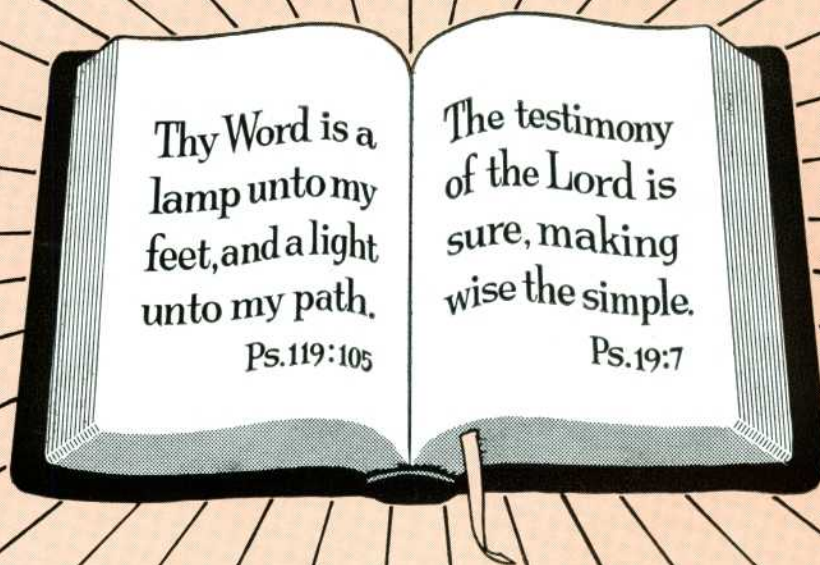


Megiddo Message

DEVOTED TO THE CAUSE OF CHRIST



Maximum Living

Eldad, Medad, Amos, Apollos

To the Seven Churches

Get Ready to Meet the King

How to Keep from Going Stale

PERIODS of staleness in life are not inevitable, but they are common. He is a rare individual who has not experienced times of spiritual dullness, when the relish seems to have gone out of his heart, and the enjoyment of living has diminished.

Since there is no single cause of this condition, there is no single remedy. Sometimes the trouble is not moral but physical. Staleness may be caused by simple fatigue. When we get tired and stay tired without relief beyond a reasonable time, we are bound to feel a deficiency. As long as we are mortal, our feelings are going to be affected to some degree by our bodies. Our Lord knew this, and occasionally took His disciples aside for a rest.

Another cause of the "stale" feeling may be monotony. To do any one thing continuously will result in boredom even if what we do is pleasant; and to think about the same things without cessation will also lead to boredom, even if we are thinking about the very best things. Of course, there is no real reason for monotony here, with all that God has caused to be written for our learning. We can dwell in thought with Moses, then Elijah, then Jesus, then John, then Abraham—can this be monotonous? Then we can peruse the promises, letting our imaginations expand them to our fullest possibility to conceive—can this be monotonous? The variety which God has supplied us in His Word is well nigh infinite, considering our limited time and capacity. But sometimes the change in our thinking must be consciously directed.

Even our spiritual exercises may need a certain amount of variety to keep them fresh and renewed. Sometimes there is nothing better than physical activity. In the wilderness, God kept Israel moving. One may wonder what would have happened if they had camped forty years in one place.

To stay fresh and renewed in our religious commitment we should be careful

not to get into a rut. Our Lord warned against vain repetition. When the lips move, the mind must move also.

There is still another cause of staleness for which we ourselves may be to blame. It is when we do wrong, and do not admit it or go about to correct it and seek forgiveness. Or it may be we permit worldly interests to grow up and choke the tender plants of the inner life.

When the cause is known, and particularly when it is as uncomplex as this, the remedy is the old-fashioned one of repentance. By recognizing our wrong and setting out with new determination, we can remove all sign of staleness.

But if after careful and candid examining of ourselves we find no evil to cause the feeling that has overcome us, we gain nothing by putting the worst construction on things and lying face down in the dust. To say that we have not sinned when we have is to be false to the facts; to insist that we have sinned when we have not is likewise to be false to ourselves.

Perhaps the greatest single cause of staleness is the loss of long-range vision. We forget the great things God has done for us. We forget the greater things He has promised us. We forget the reality of the things that are not seen, and lose ourselves in the things around us. Thus the present looms larger and larger, and God seems a long way off.

What is the corrective for this? Dig into the Word with all your mind and soul. Meditate on its precepts. Recapture its spirit. Relive the lives of those who went before, sharing their joys and sorrows. Settle it in your mind once and for all that these things are true, these things are genuine, and that God will reward every faithful servant, even you. Make the Word of God come alive in your own mind and life by grasping its promises anew. Then there will be no more staleness, dullness, or inactivity. God's law will be all in all. ●●

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 in this issue:

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*

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*

Megiddo Message

Vol. 66, No. 5

May, 1979

EDITORIAL

2 How to Keep from Going Stale

Make the Word of God come alive in your mind.

ARTICLES

4 Maximum Living

Is ours the minimum or maximum life for God?

7 Eldad, Medad, Amos and Apollos

Lessons from four men God used

BIBLE STUDY

10 Believe the Greater Witness

Tenth in a series on the Epistle of First John

SPECIAL FEATURES

17 To the Seven Churches

Repent—Or Else

Who Is Knocking?

Remember, . . . Watch

REGULAR FEATURES

13 Bible Study Hour: *Get Ready to Meet the King*

22 Scriptural Spotlight: *They Followed Wholly.*

On Joshua 14:14. Joshua and Caleb were also heroes of faith.

25 Pro & Con

Discussing the "devil" in Job 1, II Peter 2:4, Jude 6, I John 3:8, Rev. 20:1-2, I Peter 5:8-9, and James 4:7.

27 Our Readers Write

28 Cover Feature: *Come, Labor On.*

The MEGIDDO MESSAGE is a religious magazine devoted to the cause of Christ, and published for the dissemination of Bible truth alone. Official organ of the Megiddo Mission Church. L. T. Nichols, *Founder*; Kenneth E. Flowerday, *President and Editor*.

The MEGIDDO MESSAGE is published monthly by the Megiddo Mission Church, 481 Thurston Road, Rochester, New York 14619. Second Class postage for the MEGIDDO MESSAGE (USPS 338-120) paid at Rochester, New York. SUBSCRIPTION RATE: One year, \$2.00.

Maximum Living

JESUS' words in Luke 6:37-38 point up the need for maximum living if we are to be a disciple of His: "Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven: give, and it shall be given unto you: good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over shall men give into your bosom. . . ."

The words of the text express a spirit which is akin to the spirit of our Master, and a spirit which we shall need if we are to live an abundant Christian life.

In an eastern city a few years ago there was a campaign to raise money for the erection of a hospital. A high-powered financial wizard was called in to conduct it. He concluded his pep talk to the solicitors who were going out to raise the money with these words: "Never suggest to anyone a minimum contribution, for a minimum has a funny way of turning into the maximum." The person reporting this incident has this to say: "The man who came to see me about the matter had learned his lesson well. He did not suggest anything that seemed like a minimum, but mentioned gaily several sums that looked like terrifying maxima."

This, then, is our theme—minimum and maximum living. There is real truth in the saying, "A minimum has a funny way of turning into a maximum." It is not funny but subtle and tragic when applied to our service for God. God loves a cheerful giver, and we can be assured that a cheerful giver would never be satisfied with giving only the minimum. But when the question becomes not "What *can* I do?" but "What *must* I do?" we are living the minimum and not the maximum life.

There is little in the realm of life where that statement is not true. We meet it in childhood, where the question is "How little can I get by

on?" Most children are willing to wash their faces, but that means only the cheeks and not behind the ears. They are willing to shovel the snow off the front walk, but not around to the kitchen door. They are all for the minimum.

A teacher knows the reluctance on the part of many pupils to give more than the minimum. "How long must the term paper be?" "Do you mean double space or single space?" "Does the twenty pages include the bibliography?" Some students never get to the boiling point. There is no intellectual bubble of doing anything for the sake of accomplishment. Perhaps bubble is a poor word for scholarly achievement, but boiling water always seems to be water charged with animation, reminiscent of the reaction of the lame man whom Peter and John healed at the Gate Beautiful—leaping and praising God.

In the life of the mind the real delight comes after the minimum compulsion has been passed. The words spoken of Christ, quoted from the Psalmist, were: "I delight to do thy will, O my God." His was maximum living. There was no place in His life for the minimum. That should be the password for each of us.

How poorly the minimum meets life's needs! Take the matter of food, for instance. Even where people are not starving, the minimum diet can be a dreary affair. One can exist on fruitless, starchy meals, but not in optimum health. To attain the maximum in liveliness, vitality, and vigor, one must have an adequate diet.

And take the matter of marriage and the home. There is a legal minimum that the partner in a marriage has to perform or the law steps in. But what a ghastly thing life on the minimum in the home can be—with a minimum of consideration, of sacrifice, or love!

Now turn to another picture. In Jesus we have the record of a *maximum* life. It is impossible to find any unsatisfied minimum of service in the life of Jesus. It was said of Him, "Having loved his own, he loved them to the end." We never hear Him say: "Well I guess I will call it a

Major portions of this article are reprinted from PULPIT DIGEST, Box 5199, Jackson, Miss. 39216. Used by permission.

day. I have done enough for these fishermen today."

The prophet Samuel was living the maximum life when as the last of the Judges of Israel he was rejected by his countrymen by their demanding a king. He had spent the best of his life in the interest of the nation, and now they were rejecting him. But in spite of their inappreciation he still maintained a spirit of helpfulness. This was shown in his statement: "God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you."

In Apostolic times the people of the Church at Galatia showed such love and appreciation for Paul's work in their behalf that had it been possible they would have plucked out their very eyes and would have given them to him; yet he became their enemy because he told them the truth. Under these circumstances did he say, "I am all through with you, don't look to me for any more favors"? No, indeed! Like Samuel he still prayed for them and continued to teach them the good and right way.

We have the clue to Jesus' attitude toward maximum living in the story of the woman who broke the alabaster box of precious ointment. When He saw that He rejoiced, as if to say, "This is what I have been looking for, the spontaneous, unreckoning outpouring of the maximum gift." We can understand that story of the perfume better than any generation that has preceded ours, for we know more about the cost of perfume. Dr. Edgar Goodspeed has estimated that the bottle of precious ointment was worth about \$500.00. No wonder some shocked disciple said, "Go easy, sister, that stuff costs money!" But the impulsive outgoing in this woman, expressing her gratitude and devotion, was what won Jesus' commendation.

Now with us there is great danger of the minimum becoming the maximum in our spiritual lives. When that happens, we miss the deep power of joy of willinghearted service for God. There is a tremendous difference between something one *has* to carry and something that *carries* one. When we leave the minimum in our service to God, we get out of the realm of obligations into the realm of joy. That is where Jesus lived. It was His delight to do the will of His heavenly Father. Someone has said that He always had an open door to the incoming of the divine resources of God. His minimum was always His maximum. His best was the least He would permit Himself to offer.

A man came back from Nova Scotia some time ago, all enthused over the waters of the high

tide. He said: "You could hear it coming. You could see it coming. You could smell it coming. The tides swept up into the bays and lifted boats that had been careened on their sides and set them off on a new level." That is a striking picture of the powers of the Christ-filled life. His message comes into life like a tide. It lifts and sets life on a new level. If we have been living on a minimum of spiritual activity, satisfied with ourselves when doing the least that has to be done, let us try living on a maximum!

We may look out almost hopelessly on a world like ours, and say, What can I do? What impression can one unit like myself make upon the mass confusion and strife about me today? The answer is that we can be different. We can begin to help other people to be different.

We can be different in our attitude toward others. We can remove the selfish spirit and do to others as we would be done by. We can be different in our attitude toward those who differ with us. We can be different in the way in which we spend our time, making the very most of it, acting like sensible men, not like thoughtless. We can do more of the right things that we have done the most of.

What can we do today? We can face and eradicate everything within us that makes the kind of world we have: fear, egotism, the will to selfish power, the inability to live in harmony and honesty with people nearest to us. We can eradicate the personal attitudes which make for war, everything that makes us willful, selfish, isolated units bent on a plan of our own, when we ought to be a united army, working to build God's Kingdom on earth.

When we begin living on a basis of exact truthfulness with other people, clearing every wrong or tense situation, even with those we do not naturally care for, sharing life with them, we shall become a channel of God's power and light, an example of a citizen of the Kingdom.

While we still have time and opportunity we should make the most of every day. As fast as the days are passing—that is how rapidly we should be shedding our besetting sins. This is easy enough to say, but too often our perverse human nature holds us in the same old rut. But this cannot go on indefinitely if we would live maximum lives. Unless we get a firm hold on ourselves we will still be talking about it, and not doing, when our day of opportunity terminates.

We must become a part of an army already on the march, doing things which, thanks to God, are being done, and things which ought to be done. Let us become God-controlled personalities,

persons who, like the boats lifted by the Nova Scotia tides, have been lifted from their precarious angle of unholy living, lifted beyond their own powers and capacities, set straight by the power of the Gospel acting and re-acting on their lives.

The Word of God provides many examples of maximum living and, sad to say, many examples of minimum living.

Speaking of maximum living the Psalmist said: "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." His plan was to do all that he could for God, and he was so earnest about it that he described it as being eaten up by His zeal. He said again: "With my whole heart have I sought thee," and again: "I hate men who are half and half."

Paul the apostle was living the maximum life. Here is how he described his intensity: "This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." And he unhesitatingly recommended that plan to every life-seeker with the words: "Copy me as I copy Christ." To the Church at Thessalonica he tendered the advice: "as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please

God, so ye would abound more and more." This leaves no place for minimum living.

Christ had already recommended this plan. When answering the scribe as to what is the greatest commandment of the law he said: ". . . thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." This pictures maximum living at its best.

The beloved John was recommending maximum living when he said: "Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward." To receive the maximum of reward we must give the maximum of ourselves. God wants us to give our best, our very best.

When in the days of Isaiah the Lord spake saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" the Prophet unhesitatingly answered, "Here am I, send me." His willingness equalled the maximum—he was not satisfied with any minimum of effort.

It is always a royal journey to go from the minimum to the maximum in the sharing of ourselves—that is, when we do it not as an obligation but of free will, as a direct way to the

(Continued on page 23)

Let Us Pray . . .

Our loving God from whom all blessings flow, both in this life and in the world to come, we draw nigh Thee again, thanking Thee for life and its many blessings. We thank Thee for divine law which can guide us in a way that we can be worth more to ourselves now, and be of such special worth to Thee that Thou wilt be pleased to bless and eternally save us.

We thank Thee for the light that shineth in a dark place, and that that light has shone unto us. We thank Thee that the eyes of our understanding have been enlightened to behold such wondrous things out of Thy law. May we ever be aware of Thy divine justice, and always live as in Thy presence. Give us clarity of vision that we may see our own shortcomings so we can correct them while there is still time for growth and correction.

Help us always to look up. Help us to pattern our lives after our Lord and Master who never sought to please Himself but did always the things that please Thee. Help us to polish up

our lives so no tarnish of sin can be seen. We know Thou art a God of too pure eyes to look upon sin with any degree of tolerance. Thou demandest perfection of character of us, and will be satisfied with nothing less. Give us the strength to meet these exacting specifications, to submit willingly to the cutting, grinding and polishing, so that in the Day to come we may be fit to shine forth as stars in the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We admit that many times we have failed to do our best. We have allowed the serpent nature to dominate, have grumbled at the wholesome life-giving food Thou hast so mercifully provided, craving flesh in place of spirit, self in place of Thee, yet Thy hand is stretched out still, and Thy mercy still waits. May we not presume upon Thy goodness, or put off until tomorrow the doing of the important things which must be done today, aware that soon night cometh when no man can work.

Guide and keep us each day in the strait and narrow way, that having walked in the way of all Thy holy commandments, we may gain a place in Thy never-ending Kingdom, for which we humbly pray. Amen.

Eldad and Medad . . .

THE CONTINUAL grumbling of the children of Israel became almost too much for their great leader Moses. Shepherding the multitude through the wilderness was a strenuous task, even without the burden of all their faultfinding.

Moses prayed to God about the matter, and God told Moses to choose seventy men of the elders of Israel and have them meet with him at the tabernacle. God said He would take of the spirit which was in Moses and bestow it upon the seventy men, and they would help carry the burden of the people so that Moses would not have to bear it alone.

Moses chose the best men that he knew and sent word for them to meet at the tabernacle. He placed them around the tabernacle. It happened that two men did not arrive. Eldad and Medad were missing. But God acted as He had said, and took of the spirit that was upon Moses and gave it to the chosen men. Immediately they began to prophesy, to praise God, declaring His will and goodness to the people.

It happened that even though Eldad and Medad had not come to the tabernacle, they were still in the camp, and the spirit had also rested upon them; they were prophesying there. A young man pressing through the crowd came running to Moses, reporting, "Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp." Joshua, Moses' servant from his youth, protested, "My master Moses, make them stop."

God had not forgotten the two men, even though they were not present. We are not told why they did not arrive at the tabernacle. Certainly it was not because they were rebellious. They must have been good men, or God would not have put His spirit upon them. Perhaps they were performing an act of mercy and were unable to leave. We do not know.

Joshua was disturbed over the matter. He was jealous for his master's prerogative and honor. He wanted these irregular doings stopped. He grudged to see the eyes of the people turned away from his master and turned toward Eldad and Medad.

To Joshua's words Moses gave this golden answer, "Enviest thou for my sake? would God

that all the Lord's people were prophets and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them!" If Moses had ever been anxious about his personal glory, his answer to Joshua showed that he had schooled his own heart and his magnificent words proved the incomparable meekness and sweetness of his subdued spirit. Moses loved and trusted Joshua, and Joshua honored Moses and was deeply loyal to him. He stood ready to run the great leader's errands and to set out with him on his hallowed expeditions. He was more than a son to Moses in the absence of his own sons. He went up with him on the mount, and "He departed not out of the tabernacle"—another remarkable testimony concerning the son of Nun. Nevertheless, this occasion brought out a defect in Joshua's finest quality. His loyalty was tainted. He envied the spiritual gifts of others.

By giving to others, God had not diminished the spirit of Moses. As a flame is not diminished by others being kindled by it, so God did not diminish the wisdom, energy and courage which distinguished Moses by endowing the seventy with His spirit. Moses shone splendidly in the warm rebuke he gave to his servant. And through the experiences of succeeding years, it is certain that Joshua profited from this noble lesson.

May we also profit by Moses' rebuke.

Would it help to ask ourselves betimes, "Enviest thou?" Though no one today possesses power from God, there are always Eldads and Medads in our midst, those who because of gifts or abilities we do not possess, stir the envious spirit, if we have not yet schooled our hearts as Moses had. The feeling of envy is deep and far-reaching. How eager human nature is to guard its own—*our* family, *our* home, *our* garden, *our* friends, *our* knowledge, *our* position. What or whom-ever we are involved with we do not like to see surpassed in any way.

However, if we would be truly loyal to God, we should eagerly, willingly defend every good cause, in whomever or wherever it may be. We should not be blinded by envy. Too often the spirit droops at the prosperity of another. Too often the friendly warmth of the eye changes to cool

resentment. Too often we harbor suspicious fears of a rival. If we cannot love Eldad and Medad, our fellow-workers in the faith, how can we love God?

We should never seek exclusively the affection or attention of one person and be displeased to see another enjoy it. Rather, we should "seek him that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning. . . . The Lord is his name" (Amos 5:8). Why are we concerned if God is our God, if He is the center of our life? What is sweeter and warmer than to be a friend of God?

All friends of God should have their hearts bound together in Christian love. Love and friendship in the house of God is a beautiful experience. May we never regard it carelessly. May it never be squelched by feelings of envy. If Eldad and Medad, our fellow-workers, should in some way excel us in the Lord and all eyes be turned on them, let us, like Moses, praise the Lord and desire a like blessing for all.

and Amos . . .

Who was Amos? We call him a minor prophet. From his own words we learn that he was not a college graduate, but a herdsman of sheep in the wilderness of Judea. In his spare time he pruned sycamore trees or gathered figs for market. This rock-strewn wilderness bordering the desert was none too fruitful. Tekoa, the little mountaintop village where Amos lived, was about two hours south of Bethlehem, by donkey. Because of its elevation, it was used for trumpet-blowing signals. From its heights Mount Nebo can be seen, east beyond the Dead Sea dunes.

Amos was plain and rugged. His comrades were herdsmen and reapers, plowmen and treaders of grapes. The daily sights he saw were wandering flocks of sheep, farmers sifting grain in sieves, yokes of oxen plowing, and carts pressed down with sheaves. Frequently he heard the roar of a lion in the forest, or saw a bear seeking its prey. He watched the mighty streams down below that rushed through the ravines. He beheld the firmament on high; and there, in the solitary wilderness, Amos often sought and worshiped Him who garnished the heavens.

One day the Lord took Amos from his sheep and said unto him, "Go, prophesy unto my people Israel." What was the matter with Israel? At the market place, the gate, or from the occasional traveler, Amos had heard all about the

wickedness of Judah and the corruption of the Northern kingdom: the luxury of the rich, the cruel injustice, the dishonesty, the immorality, and the worship of strange gods. Amos' moral energies were ready to be used for God. Like the currents of two electric poles leaping together, he met the call of Jehovah. This herdsman was one who could stand for God before people, priests, kings and nations.

What showy magnificence Israel had made of Bethel! In the very spot where their father Abraham had first pitched his simple tent, they were sacrificing to idols. King Jeroboam himself often came with his courtiers to sacrifice at the great national sanctuary of which Amaziah was the arch priest.

Here, to the splendid city of Bethel, Amos came to sound an alarm; and let us remember that he through whom the Eternal speaks speaks not only for the moment but for the ages. So Amos, while speaking to the Israelites in his day, was also speaking for us in our day. He applied the unchangeable principles of the living God to those who were persons like ourselves. Though their language and customs were different, their nature was very like human nature today. They were ruled by the same motives and feelings. They struggled with the same temptations as we. What a forceful comparison we can see as we observe the spiritual declension of our own day. Were the people, against whom Amos preached warnings and judgments, any more wicked than people are today? Was Israel less pure, or the judgments of God any more certain?

We can almost see the crowd around Amos growing huge as he first denounces before Israel and Judah the neighboring nations, Philistia, Edom, Ammon and Moab. Just like human nature today they no doubt enjoyed the powerful words of Amos as he bore heavily upon the faults of their neighbors. Directly he changed the burden of his words and cried with startling suddenness. "For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof, because they have despised the law of the Lord, and have not kept his commandments." Judah! That was different! And as he cried against Judah, so also did he denounce Israel for departing from the ways of the Lord. The people looked up astonished. But Amos went on: "Woe unto them that are at ease in Zion, . . . that lie upon beds of ivory, . . . [and feast] and drink wine in bowls. . . . Seek not the gods of Bethel! Seek him that maketh the seven stars and Orion, . . . the Lord is his name. And thus saith the Lord unto Israel, Take thou away from me the noise of

thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols! Let judgment run down as waters and righteousness as a mighty stream. Seek good and not evil, that ye may live. Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel."

The people were enraged. They hated Amos for rebuking them in the gate; they abhorred him for speaking uprightly. They could not see that their worship was amiss. Did they not have solemn assemblies and make sacrifice? They paid tithes; they sang songs to the God of their fathers and praised Him on their harps. And were their houses not their own? their gardens and their vineyards? Were they not supposed to be happy? They were satisfied with the priest in fine raiment. If only they could forget what this herdsman, Amos, had said of coming judgments!

It is interesting to note in Bible history that there lived at this time a youth in the city of Jerusalem whose name was Isaiah. It is very likely that this young boy heard Amos preach and was influenced by his words. Later this lad became a great prophet of the Lord. We hope there is some youth in our time who will be impressed to live for God by the words of Amos or some other Bible character.

We ourselves may not be resting on beds of ivory or drinking wine from bowls; still, we may be at ease in Zion. We may be finding our own pleasure, feeding on our own thoughts, and doing our own ways. How easy it is, like Israel and Judah, to set up and worship gods of our own (in our hearts) until our conscience is lulled to rest and our eyes blinded to the righteousness of God. We must get a new heart, put on the mind of Christ that we may meditate and work righteousness before the Lord our God.

In one of several visions which Amos saw concerning Israel, he beheld God standing with a plumbline in His hand measuring a wall. A plumbline measures the uprightness of a wall. It judges every wall alike by its straightness. The wall is straight, or it is not. God has only one standard, and that is righteousness. And God said, "I will set a plumbline in the midst of my people Israel." And so, as in past ages, God will judge His people in these last days—by His plumbline.

After this, God showed Amos another symbol of His judgments upon Israel. Amos saw before him "a basket of summer fruit." And the Lord said, "The end is come upon my people of Israel." In the Hebrew, the word for "summer fruit" suggests "end." The end did not come that year, nor the next, but it was pronounced. God in His mercy was longsuffering, warning and waiting

for His people to turn unto Him; it was actually years before the destruction of Israel and Judah finally came.

Even so in the these last days God has been longsuffering in waiting for His people, but the consummation will come. God said through Amos, "I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth." How we should work to be one of those precious grains worthy to be saved and planted in the paradise of God, never again to be removed.

Amos did not fail to leave before us a bright picture of all faithful Israel restored in the Kingdom of God, a picture of life and peace, blessing and comfort and joy forevermore.

As we read the words of Amos, we realize that he, as all the prophets, was one to whom God was very near. And some day we should like to meet Amos, that minor prophet, that simple herdsman and dresser of sycamore trees, called by God to denounce the social and moral degeneracy of a generation long past. We must do that same denouncing by imitating his conduct, his separateness from the surrounding evil, consecrating our lives to God.

and Apollos

As the shepherd tends and loves his flock, so Paul nurtured and loved the little churches along the route of his former journeys.

The city of Ephesus was a great center of life in Asia during the first century. The largest and most flourishing city, it was the principal port of Asia, one of the richest provinces of the empire. It had suffered from an earthquake in A. D. 21, but had been splendidly restored with the aid of the Emperor Tiberius.

In this city Paul found certain disciples who were baptized unto John's baptism. To them Paul expounded the baptism of repentance that they might believe in Christ Jesus, to which they responded. By laying his hands on them, Paul imparted to them the Holy Spirit—a power which they had not so much as heard of.

On one of his journeys, Paul had stopped briefly at Ephesus to tell of the Messiah's coming and to impart to them his faith. Aquila and Priscilla had come with Paul at that time; and when Paul had departed, they remained to keep alive the church Paul had planted.

One day a young man turned up at the Ephesus synagogue. His name was Apollos. He began to

(Continued on page 24)

From

John the Elder



Tenth in a series on the Epistle of First John

Believe the Greater Witness

A Study of I John 5:9-13

EVERYTHING in this world is not to be accepted; everything is not to be believed. John continues his admonitions, which are designed to separate the people of God from the common lot of men.

"If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son."

"He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son" (I John 5:9-10).

We are constantly believing what others say—what members of our family say, what neighbors say, what travelers report, what we read in books or the daily news. We believe what witnesses say in our courts. John says to all this: "The witness of God is greater." God is more true and wise and good than the surest testimony of men. Men may deceive; but God never does. Men may speak from partial observation or uncertain rumors; but God never does. Men may speak from partial knowledge or misjudgment; but God never does.

There are many reasons why the testimonies of men may be untrue. But the testimony borne by God is always true.

While in the days of John there were many who denied that Jesus was the Son of God, to the sincere Christian Jesus' life was the most powerful evidence of the saving gospel. The force of the evidence was irresistible. When Jesus was with them, John with the other disciples had exclaimed, "Of a truth thou art the Son of God" (Matt. 14:33). Now, many years removed from that experience, John retains his supporting

faith: Jesus *is* the Son of God.

John says further, "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself," that is, he has a deep inner conviction. His belief is an inward experience. It moves him to action. He is a witness, not merely mentally but with all his heart and soul, and mind and strength. He is ready, like Jesus, to surrender his own ways and will for that of the Father.

John continues, "He that believeth not God hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record God gave of his Son." If we doubt or disbelieve anyone, we are charging him with falsehood. Even so, John says plainly, if we disbelieve what God has said concerning His Son, we have made up our mind that He is a liar. It is a fearful thought.

John now presents the climax of the faith.

"And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (I John 5:11-12).

Eternal life is the Father's to give (Rom. 6:23). But it will be given by His Son. This is His plan; He first gave us the living Word, He provided a perfect living example for us to follow, and the Father has given to Him the power to judge and give life to all who make themselves worthy of it, according to His standards (John 5:21-22). This is how we may receive "the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life" (I John 2:25).

John speaks with an assurance that we are anxious to achieve—God has given to us eternal life. Earlier in his letter John spoke of eternal life as a promise (I John 2:25). Neither he nor the faithful believers had eternal life then, for they are not alive today but are awaiting the resurrection morning (John 5:28-29). No

doubt John the Elder had by this time lived the new life in Christ to such a far extent that he thought of eternal life as being already his. Because of Jesus' holy and righteous example Jesus was able to say, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). If we follow Him and suffer to the death every way of our old nature, we like Paul and like John and like Peter shall know that we have eternal life laid up for us. This was what Paul looked forward to, when "the Lord, the righteous judge, shall" come to give life to all who "love his appearing" (II Tim. 4:7-8). We all know that our bodily frames are not pulsing with immortal life now; but as we make ourselves ready to receive that reward, the promise becomes more and more real to us.

Continuing, John points out the consequences of unbelief. If we accept not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, we are ignoring and rejecting the testimony of God. And, he that does not believe is shut out from what the Son has power to give—eternal life. All such Paul describes as "having no hope, and without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12). What a dismal condition to be in!

John, wishing to doubly impress what he has said about belief in the Son of God and eternal life, continues:

"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God" (I John 5:13).

John is writing to believers. They believe not merely in the alphabetical letters which spell Jesus Christ, but in His person, His character, His message, His commandments. These believers already know the way of salvation, but John wants them to know over and over again that eternal life is the end result! John the Elder has a purpose behind his writing. By self-examination he wants them to determine if they have fully grasped eternal life. Have they? Do they know its full weight and meaning? Do you? Do I? Have I fully grasped the meaning of *eternal life*?

It is to be noted that John's words are not directed to certain young or wayward members who need special care and attention; He writes to the believers in general. Beginners, mid-way travelers, or finishers, all need the reminder. He is assured that they believe, but he wants them to *continue* to believe, to *persevere* in their believing. John is desirous to so set eternal life before them that they will continue to exercise their faith in Jesus the Son of God. So John sees the importance of placing before them again and

again the power of the gospel, the life and the hope which can be theirs in Christ Jesus.

In the human heart there is such proneness to unbelief; faith so easily becomes cold. The cares of life so easily distract the mind. Earthly allurements come in to draw the affections away from God.

Our minds must be continually inspired anew to follow in Jesus' footsteps. No small part of the Christian ministry therefore is to restate the things of which the mind has been fully convinced, to reinforce the evidence which has been felt and the grounds of hope and peace and joy which have been firmly established again and again. There is no danger of over-emphasis. John writing to believers knew it was as important to keep the soul as to comfort it. He knew it was as important to save it from coldness and deadness and formality as it was to impart the elements of spiritual life at the first.

It is as important to trim a vine, if one would have grapes, as it is to set it out. It is as important to keep a garden from being overrun with weeds in summer, as it is to plant it in the spring. Both are necessary.

May believers everywhere help other believers to so persevere in the faith that they may have a full assurance of—*eternal life!* ●●

Our Chance to Escape

With only a twelve-hour advance warning, some fifty thousand residents of the Mississippi Gulf Coast area fled northward before nightfall of August 17, 1969. They barely escaped the fury of hurricane Camille, one of the greatest storms ever to hit the United States. How thankful they were to be informed.

How many of us will escape the fury of the wrath of God when it strikes our world? He gives us plenty of warning. God kindly points out the way of escape; to ignore and pass off the warning would be foolish, for God does not take pleasure in the death of anyone. "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked: but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" (Ezek. 33:11).

The condition the world is in should make us buckle right down and really work that we may find the way of escape.

—From A Reader in Wisconsin

Resurrection Day

*I hear the choir singing,
Dearest Lord, of Thee.
I hear the choir sing of those
Who lived a life acceptable to Thee.
How on that Great Day called
Resurrection Day,
They shall from their sleep awakened be,
To help, and live in that great City,
Eternally, dear Lord, with Thee.*

*I hear the choir singing
Of those, dear Lord,
Who did not do their own will,
But sought Thy will to do.*

*I hear the choir singing
Of those who did agree,
To do Thy will, dear Lord,
But never did.
These shall awakened be
To shame and malcontent,
Destroyed forever, Lord,
To be no more.*

*I hear the choir singing—
And now, may we so live
So that on that great morn, called
Resurrection Day,
We shall be called, dear Lord,
To live eternally with Thee.*

—Contributed

Surrendered

*In all the little things of life, Thyself, Lord, may I see;
In little and in great alike reveal Thy love to me.*

*So shall my undivided life to Thee, my God, be given;
And all this earthly course I tread be one straight
path to Zion.*

In order to mold thee into entire conformity to His will, He must have thee pliable in His hands, and this pliability is more quickly reached by yielding in the little things than even by the greater. Thy one great desire is to follow Him fully? Then canst thou not say a continual "yes" to all His sweet commands, whether small or great, and trust Him to lead thee by the shortest road to thy fullest blessedness?

With meekness, humility, and diligence, apply thyself to the duties of thy condition. They are the seemingly little things which make no noise but that do the business.

—Selected.

One day a small boy was trying to lift a heavy stone, but he could not budge it. His father, passing by, stopped to watch his efforts. Finally he said to his son: "Are you using all your strength?"

"Yes, I am," the boy cried exasperated.

"No," the father said calmly, "you are not, you have not asked me to help you."

Are we really taking full advantage of all our strength? We cannot do this thing alone, we need God's help and we need each other's help. Help is not only in pointing out to a brother a weakness he may have, which he does not see as clearly as we do looking from outside in; help is also trying to help him overcome this fault in any way we can help.

How to Triumph

The most satisfactory way to overcome these evil deeds is to attack them at the first appearance. The first desire, or the sudden feeling to stray from the path of right, is much easier to restrain and correct before the thought has taken lodgment in our minds and is well established. We cannot agree for our enemy to enter our house and believe there will be room for him and us too.

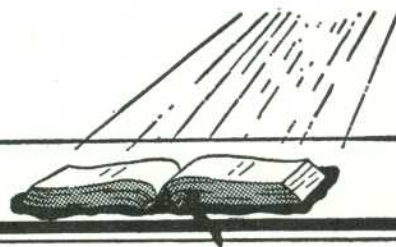
Jesus' manner of triumph over His hardship is not a secret. It has been clearly written as an example for us. We know it was by His frequent petitions to the Father that He developed the strength and learned to do His Father's will. And, of course, His life corresponded to His prayers. When His popularity was high, He departed into a solitary place and there prayed (Mark 1:35). He did those things pleasing to the Father. We can do the same, if we keep ourselves near to the Lord our God. We cannot do this if we are not willing to work for Him with all our heart; and if we have not worked, if our work is only half-way done and not properly done, the Master will not be able to pay us.

Prayer is needful in resisting temptation. Persistent temptation can be attributed directly to a lack of faith. There are some temptations easy to resist, but, unfortunately, there are others which, because of our inexperience or carelessness we have allowed to cast us down. Prayer is needful and beneficial, and we should realize that it will profit nothing if we pray contrary to the will of our Father.

Once we have chosen ourselves to work for the Lord our God, the evil desires should be removed or rooted out from our hearts entirely, so that we may be safe from them.

—From a Friend in Liberia

BIBLE STUDY HOUR



Get Ready to Meet the King

OUR Bible study today is based on some words of Jesus in the book of Luke. The lessons to be gained from Luke 12 are many and varied. There is the parable of the Rich Fool, the value of watching, the futility of worry, the vanity of earthly possessions and the inestimable value of treasure in heaven.

Jesus' lessons have long since ceased to impress the masses of so-called Christians, but not so the true Christian. Every real believer watches and works as he waits for the return of his Lord from heaven; meanwhile the masses occupy themselves with the things of here and now, the very things Jesus cautioned against in this chapter.

Q. We profess to be true Christians, following the road that will lead us to the Kingdom. The road to destruction is said to be paved with good intentions—but what might we say the road to the Kingdom is paved with?

A. Faith and works of righteousness.

Q. Yes. If we are living as though we expected our Lord, we must have both. Could we have a few texts from Scripture showing that works are as vital as faith?

A. "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (1 John 2:4).

Q. That is very good. Can we have some others?

A. "If ye love me, keep my commandments," said Jesus (John 14:15). That would infer that if we don't keep His commandments, we don't love Him.

Q. That certainly shows we have something to do.

A. "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may

enter in through the gates into the city" (Rev. 22:14). Those who don't do His commandments will not meet Him, for they will be outside the city.

Q. Yes, that is right. There are some good verses in James that we have not yet had.

A. "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed" (Jas. 1:22-25).

Q. That is excellent proof that we must be doers and not hearers only. Belief must be coupled with obedience. William Barclay has some very good thoughts on those verses.

A. Mr. Barclay says in his commentary that James is here speaking about the man who goes to church on Sunday and listens to the sermon—and thinks that makes him a good Christian. He deceives himself by thinking that public worship is enough. Such a man closes his eyes to the fact that what is heard in church must be lived in life or it is of no avail. James says he is like the man who looks into a mirror and sees that his face is dirty and that his hair needs combing—but turns away and does nothing about it. The point is that "what is heard in the holy place must be lived in the market place—or there is no point in hearing at all."

Q. That is a good point for us to remember: That which is heard in the holy place must be lived in the

market place. Belief must be coupled with obedience. It is not enough to say, "I believe," and then do nothing to show that belief. Faith is necessary, and it has been said that it is quite an accomplishment to have faith in something that cannot be seen. Why is this such a major accomplishment?

A. Ordinarily seeing is believing. We are naturally prone to be skeptical, doubting—like Thomas.

Q. What does the Bible say faith is?

A. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). Faith is belief, and belief must precede obedience. We cannot do unless we first know what to do.

Q. We must have faith in God's Word. What else can we safely have faith in? We cannot have faith in man. Man cannot fulfill what he predicts, nor can men agree in their predictions. The only One to trust in is God. And there is one we should never trust in. Who is that?

A. Self. Paul said to have no confidence in the flesh (Phil. 3:3).

Q. Not only can we have no confidence in the flesh, but we must fight against it. This is sometimes described as warfare—a warfare between what and what?

A. Would it be between the old man and the new?

Q. Yes—but is that in the Bible?

A. It is in Ephesians 4:22-24. "That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

Q. What did Paul mean by the "old man"?

A. The natural man, the lower nature.

Q. Can we have some proof that the "old man" is the natural man, our old nature?

A. Colossians 3:8-10 describes the deeds of the old man that have to be put off. "But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him."

"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (II Cor. 5:17). The old things would include all the ways of the old man, all the ways of the flesh. All things must become new.

Q. There is another good verse on the two natures in Galatians 5:16-17. Could someone please read it to the class?

A. "This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would."

Q. One of the newer translations phrases it this way: "Live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature" (NIV). This is what makes the conflict.

Now let us study Luke 12, beginning at verse 22. Would someone please read verse 22?

A. "Therefore, I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on.

Q. When Christ said, "Take no thought" for these things, what did He mean? Are we just to forget such things and trust that we will be fed and clothed?

A. No, He meant to take no anxious thought. Don't worry about it, or be overly concerned about temporal things. Give more thought to the Kingdom.

Q. Yes. We know that we must give

some thought to providing for our bodies, but the idea is not to let it take up too much of our concern. Newer translations carry the idea of not worrying about such things as food and clothing. According to our Scripture lesson, who makes seeking food and drink their aim in life?

A. The pagans. Verses 29 and 30 in the Jerusalem Bible reads: "But you, you must not set your hearts on things to eat and things to drink; nor must you worry. It is the pagans of this world who set their hearts on all these things." Verse 31 says, "No; set your hearts on his kingdom, and these other things will be given you as well."

Q. That is very good. But what is the definition of "pagans"?

A. Pagans are worshipers of false gods. According to the dictionary, a pagan is one who is unenlightened. He has never known the true God.

Q. Yes. Pagans are not necessarily those who lived many years ago. There are many pagans living today. We can be pagans ourselves if we are living as though we were unenlightened, doing things just to satisfy our "old man," our old nature, and not keeping the commandments. But if we are living the life Christ wants us to live, we do not have to worry about the future—our future will be taken care of by God. God wants to give the Kingdom to His own. Will someone quote Luke 12:32?

A. "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

Q. Why do you think Jesus used the term "little flock"?

A. God's people have always been in the minority; they have never been many in number.

Q. What do we have in Scripture to indicate that the number was small in the past and that it continued small in number?

A. Moses described them as the fewest of all people in Deuteronomy 7:7.

Q. How could we say that the Israelites were "the fewest of all people?" I think I recall that when they were numbered after reaching the Promised Land that there were 600,000 able-bodied men, able to go to war. That would mean that there were perhaps three million or more in all.

A. They were all part of the nation of Israel, but he must have referred to a group within the nation. They would be those that were Jews indeed.

Q. What is a Jew indeed?

A. Paul described the Jew indeed or the true Jew in Romans 2:28-29: "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God." A Jew indeed is anyone, Jew or Gentile, who fears God and works righteousness (Acts 10:34-35).

Q. Yes, we must also become Jews indeed. But can we have some more proof of the little flock, the fact that God's people are few?

A. Isaiah spoke of them as a "very small remnant" in the 9th verse of the first chapter, and in the 17th chapter he says they shall be as "gleaning grapes" and as "two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough" of an olive tree. That wouldn't indicate many.

Q. No, it wouldn't. But how about New Testament times? Were there many following Jesus?

A. No. After all His miracles there were only 120 gathered in Jerusalem to wait for the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:15). Five thousand had been fed at one time and four thousand at another!

Q. Did Jesus say anything about what we could expect in our day?

A. He indicated there would not be many. In Luke 17 He said that at His second coming it would be as it was in the days of Noah and also as it was in the days of Lot. Even fewer were saved then—only Lot and his two daughters escaped the wicked cities. And only Noah and his family were saved in the ark.

Q. That would be few. Jesus said something else about "few" in another place.

A. When He contrasted the two gates He said many would enter the wide gate and the broad way, but "strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matt. 7:13-14).

Q. Yes. There will be many in the broad way, but only a few will be ready to meet Christ when He returns. Would someone read verse 33 of our lesson?

A. "Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth."

Q. Could we have some thoughts on this verse? Are we supposed to sell all our property and give away the proceeds?

A. No, if we did, we would be poor and have to beg. We have to give up our thoughts and ways for God's thoughts and ways. We have to sell out to the Lord.

Q. What is meant by having "treasure in heaven?" And how can we get it?

A. Our reward is in heaven—that is our treasure, and it will be brought to us by Jesus when He returns (1 Pet. 5:4). Unless we have a good record in God's book we have no treasure in heaven, hence will receive no reward.

Q. Yes. We must lay up good, pure thoughts and righteous deeds—our thoughts, words and actions must be those that are recognized and recorded in heaven. Who does the recording?

A. God's angels. Malachi 3:16-17 tells about God's book of remembrance. Those that are written in it will be rewarded when Christ comes.

Q. Can we have some Bible proof that our reward comes with Jesus from heaven?

A. "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be" (Rev. 22:12).

There is another good text in Philippians: "For our [citizenship] is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our [lowly] body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body" (3:20-21, Scofield Reference Bible).

Q. Why did Jesus use the illustration of treasure that could be moth-eaten?

A. Back in Bible times a man's wealth was often in the form of costly garments which could be easily ruined by moths. His hearers

would understand such an illustration because they knew moths could destroy a garment. They would know that He meant for them to gain treasure that could not be destroyed.

Q. Yes. If a man has treasure in heaven, it will be good for all time; but if his treasures are of earth, someday he must say good-bye to them. When death comes, a man's earthly treasure belongs to somebody else; but his treasure in heaven is his for all time.

Matthew told about a treasure that was hidden somewhere. Could someone tell us about it?

A. It is in Matthew 13:44. "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field."

Q. What is the lesson here?

A. We have to sell out all in order to obtain the treasure of eternal life. It will require our all to obtain that treasure.

Q. Yes. That does not mean that we have to sell all our personal belongings and our houses, but that we have to be willing to do whatever God asks. This treasure will be worth more to us than anything else in the world. Why?

A. Because it means eternal life.

Q. Yes. Unless we are ready to meet the King, unless we make the Kingdom first in our lives, nothing in this life has any lasting worth. We need to think about where we are going, what we are doing. Whether we eat, drink or whatever we do, what must we do?

A. Do all to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31).

Q. That enters into every aspect of life. What did Paul say along this line in Romans 8:13?

A. "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."

Q. We cannot have everything in this world and expect anything in the future. Could we have a few texts on the thought that we cannot have both worlds?

A. Joshua called on the children of Israel to choose whether they

would serve the gods of their ancestors or the true God (Josh. 24:15).

Q. Yes. What were Adam and Eve told way back in the beginning?

A. They had to choose whether to obey God or not. God told them they could eat of every tree in the garden except the tree of good and evil. God is still warning mankind that they cannot partake of the tree of good and evil if they would have eternal life. He demands that we be all good, with no evil mixed in.

Q. That is good. The man who attempts to have both worlds at the same time misses out on both, for God has no use for fence-sitters. Could we have further proof for this statement?

A. The apostle James said that the double-minded man is unstable in all his ways (1:6-8).

Paul said we cannot eat of the Lord's table and of the table of devils.

Q. Yes. If we want that treasure in heaven, we must invest all we have and are. If we are satisfied with this life only, we can have our own way now, but that will be all we will have. That would be like the pagans. This life is all they will get. If we hope to see the dawn of that day of prosperity and happiness, we must give up our ways and get treasure in heaven.

To get back to our lesson, would someone read Luke 12:35-36 please?

A. "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately."

Q. What are the loins that must be girded? Peter had something to say about it.

A. The loins are the loins of our mind. Peter said, "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1:13).

Q. What did it mean at that time to "gird up the loins"?

A. William Barclay sheds some light on the meaning of girding up the loins. In the east men wore long flowing robes girded at the

waist by a broad belt known as a girdle. When running, or strenuous exercise was called for, they pulled the robe up and tightened the girdle to hold it up. So for the Christian to "gird up the loins" would be to prepare for running, for strenuous exercise. To "gird up the loins of the mind" would be to be prepared for strenuous mental endeavor, to increase faith, to think things out.

Q. If we are getting ready to meet the King, we will have the loins of our mind girt with truth. Our hope will be set on His coming and in that hope we can endure the trials of the present. But before Christ comes, who will come—and why?

A. Elijah must first come to bring in a great moral reformation. The prophet Malachi finished his prophecy with the promise of the coming of Elijah the prophet.

Q. Where does the idea of a restoration or reformation come from?

A. Jesus said in answer to the disciples' question, "Elias [Greek for Elijah] truly shall first come, and restore all things (Matt. 17:11). The original Greek for "restore all things" carries the meaning of a great moral reformation.

Q. Surely one is needed today! Why?

A. People seem to have lost their sense of values. They spend billions each year for cigarettes and intoxicating beverages—and billions more trying to solve the health problems they create.

Q. Could we mention some other things that need changing?

A. Drug abuse—especially among youths—has become a major problem in our land. Pornography is further deadening the moral sense of our nation.

Q. Yes, there will be none of it after Elijah comes. Our world would not have it today except for the money involved. Some people will do almost anything to increase their treasure in this world. They give no thought to treasure in heaven. But while "evil men and seducers wax worse and worse," what must we be doing?

A. We must be doing good and getting better as fast or faster than the world is getting worse.

Q. Could we have a few texts to show what we should be doing to get ready to meet the King?

A. Paul said, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (I Cor. 9:27). Paul was making sure that he saved himself, not just others.

Jesus said, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation" (Matt. 26:41). To be tempted is not sin, but to yield to temptation is sin.

Q. We use the word "watch" a great deal. But does it mean that we are to sit looking out the window, watching for Christ to return, or to get a telescope and peer into the heavens to see if He is on His way? Just what do we mean when we say we should be watching?

A. If we are watching we will not be looking out the window or through a telescope for His arrival, but we will be getting ourselves ready, making sure that we are worthy of meeting Him. We must be alert for His coming, holding the things of this world with a loose hand so that we can drop them at a moment's notice.

Q. That is a good point. We must not become too attached to the things of this life. What are some of the things we must watch?

A. We have to watch our words, for Jesus said, "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Matt. 12:37). Every idle word will have to be accounted for in the day of Judgment.

Q. That is a serious thought. What about our light?

A. We have to let it shine so that others will know that we are getting ready to meet the King. We cannot put it under a bushel. Jesus said, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works" (Matt. 5:16).

Q. Yes, we will not let our lamps go out like the foolish virgins in Jesus' parable; but as the song says, we will keep them trimmed and burning. What is the lesson for us in this parable?

A. To be ready to meet the King and waiting for His return. The foolish virgins went to replenish their supply of oil when it was too late to buy. The time will come when it will be too late to prepare to meet Him. "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh" (Matt. 25:13). Jesus Himself made this application of the parable.

Q. That is a good lesson for us. We do not know just when our Lord will come, but if we have had time to get ready before He comes there will be no time to get ready after. Those watching and working will never be taken by surprise. How are we to wait?

A. We must wait patiently. "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him" (Ps. 37:7).

Q. Does that mean that we just sit down and wait for Him?

A. No, Jesus said, "Occupy till I come" (Luke 19:13). We have to make use of the things He has entrusted to us in His absence. We must provide for ourselves, and at the same time be laying up "in store for [ourselves] a good foundation against the time to come, that [we] may lay hold on eternal life" (I Tim. 6:19).

Q. There is one more "watching" verse that we would like to close with. Shall we repeat in unison Mark 13:35-37?

A. "Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch."

When Jesus comes to reward His servants,
Will He find us doing right?
Faithful to Him will He find us watching,
With our lamps all trimmed and bright?
Oh, can we say we are ready, brother?
Ready for the great white throne?
Say, will He find you and me still watching,
Waiting, waiting when the Lord shall come?

TO THE 7 CHURCHES

Repent--Or Else

REPENT! . . . or else . . ." This stinging rebuke was first addressed to the church at Ephesus. Ephesus was the center of the Roman government in Asia, also an important business center, being situated on the highway which connected that area with the Euphrates. It became also the center of the Christian Church in Asia. Paul visited this church on his second missionary journey, and on his third journey he spent two years there teaching the gospel.

But Ephesus was also a center of pagan worship and the influence of paganism was felt in the church. The city was celebrated as the place of the image of Diana, and her worship rivaled that of the true God. But apparently at this time, without the apostle Paul to exhort and direct, the church had lost its fervor. They had labored and borne fruit in the past, but now they were resting on their laurels, hence the need for this stern warning from Jesus: "Repent and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, . . . except thou repent" (Rev. 2:4-5).

Repent! Do it now, before it is too late! When enthusiasm departs, loyalty soon follows. Rekindle those fires of holy faith! Stir yourselves to labor for the Lord. The choice is yours: "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life," or "I will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."

In Pergamos there was sharp conflict between emperor worship and the worship of God. Rome demanded the worship of the emperor above all else; Christianity demanded the worship of God only. The result: conflict and much suffering at the hands of the cruel Romans. To be a Christian in Pergamos was to live in the shadow of death. Some remained faithful and for them there were words of commendation. But some relented and joined the "mystery cults," one of which was the "Nicolaitanes." These cults were idolatrous and immoral. Christians could have no part with such. Separate yourselves from among them, was the message from Christ. "Repent!"

"Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."

—Revelation 2:5

Turn from these idols and worship God only. "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, . . . and a new name"—or else "I will come unto thee quickly" (Rev. 2:16-17).

The church in Thyatira was another small Christian oasis surrounded by the world. Thyatira was noted for its purple dyes. It was the hometown of Lydia, the first Gentile convert of Paul on his second missionary journey. Here idol worship prevailed and immorality was rife. A few staunch Christians held their ground in this city, but for many the temptation had already proved too great and they had yielded.

The chief troublemaker—bad enough to be identified as "Jezebel"—had been given an opportunity to repent but had refused. Now she and her consorts are warned that they face "great tribulation, except they repent."

The church had once flourished; they had even shown improvement. They were praised for their good qualities—charity, service, faith, patience. But they were not all clean. "Repent!" Cast out the Jezebel and remove the idols. Wash and become clean, for "I will give unto every one of you according to your works." Repent—or else!

Sardis also needed the stirring message. Sardis had a name that they had earned in times past, but now they were living on their reputation. They had more reputation than character. But past works can never cover present sins. In reality, they were spiritually dead. They tried to appear alive, to maintain their good name; but Jesus knew the difference. They were dead.

In this center of paganism there were a few, however, who were still alive. To those living on their reputation the message was clear: Repent—or else. Wake up! Bring forth fruits to show that you live. Make your garments clean like those who are alive among you, then you too "shall walk with me in white." "He that overcometh, . . . I will not blot out his name out of the book of life," but if you will not repent, "I will come on thee as a thief."

Laodicea may have had faithful workers in the church at an earlier date. Paul made note in his letter to the Colossians that the Epistle be read to the church at Laodicea, so they received sound Christian doctrine and exhortation. But to us who live 1900 years later, Laodicea is synonymous with lukewarmness. The church was neither cold nor hot, neither good nor bad—and this was a serious state to be in.

They thought they were all right. Their works looked good enough to them, for they had everything they wanted. They had just enough religion to be satisfied with themselves.

But in reality they had need of all things. They had become complacent and failed to realize their need. They had a form of godliness, for they were still called a church. But pretense is not practice. A form of godliness is no substitute for spirituality.

Let us hear, let us receive instruction, while there is still time to change ourselves. For “whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth”; “be zealous therefore, and repent.”

Repent, Repent

Just what does it mean?

The message of repentance was not new with the Letters to the Seven Churches. We read that when Jesus began His ministry, He “came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, . . . Repent ye, and believe the gospel” (Mark 1:14-15). John the Baptist had preached a similar message before Him: “Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. . . . Bear fruit that befits repentance” (Matt. 3:2,8, KJV and RSV). Peter began preaching repentance immediately after Pentecost. And it is not strange, for among Jesus’ last recorded words to His disciples before His ascension was the command to preach “repentance and remission of sins . . . among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (Luke 24:47).

Jesus and the apostles never minimized sin or the need for repentance. They proclaimed the coming of a new order; their message: Get ready for it; acknowledge the authority of Christ; *repent*.

Repentance is moral honesty. There can be no forgiveness except on the basis of an honest facing of the facts, a turning from sin. It is always possible to turn over a new leaf, to make a new start no matter how serious the sin. It is always possible, so long as opportunity is extended; but the time will come when it will be too late. “He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger forever” (Ps. 103:9).

True repentance is the key to salvation. It is turning from the way of death, darkness, error and ignorance to the way of life, light, knowledge, and salvation.

The Bible does not teach unconditional forgiveness. The assurance of mercy must always be preceded by repentance. There has to be a movement Godward on man’s part, before God will respond. It is only if we confess and forsake that He will forgive (Prov. 28:13).

Eternal justice and righteousness demands repentance first, followed by fruits—deeds befitting the Christlike life. Our sin—small or great—will not be automatically washed “white as snow” until we turn from it and show our repentance by obedience to God’s will.

God has honored us by giving us a part to play in our own salvation. How we play that part determines our eternal destiny. The choice is up to each of us. It is “Repent—or else.”

Who Is Knocking?

“Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.”
—Revelation 3:20

YOU HEARD that knock. You did not recognize it? You do not know who knocked?

Your ignorance betrays you. Do you not claim to belong to His family? Do you not say that you long for His presence? And when He comes knocking at your door, you do not make any response? How can you do it! How can you leave someone whom you profess to love standing out in the cold?

However, at the church of Laodicea, this was apparently the case. It was as if Jesus had come to their door and knocked, and they had ignored Him. By their actions they were saying that Jesus was not welcome in their midst.

This was a change. What had happened? Perhaps it was because their flaming zeal had cooled; now they were neither cold nor hot. Now they had at the most only half a heart for Him.

Whatever the reason, it is apparent that the loving devotedness was gone. He whom they had loved had become a stranger; or if not a com-

plete stranger, at most a little-known acquaintance. They seemed quite content to ignore His knocking.

Shall we not consider these words as written for us? "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." He stands and knocks at *our* door also—not literally but in a figurative sense. He wants admission to our hearts, our minds, our lives; He wants us to accept His authority, His thoughts, His ways, and His promises—all of which are available to us through the words He spoke, and which have been written for our learning.

And so He knocks. He does not grow impatient right away and leave; but neither will He knock forever. He may not even knock a second time. Life is short, opportunity is passing. There may be but a short time for us to get acquainted with Him; too soon will have passed our opportunity to sup with Him and He with us if we do not heed His knocking now.

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock." We as individuals who have vowed our desire for the greater life are responsible for the answer we give Him. The latch is on the inside, and it is up to each of us to lift it, open the door and invite Him in. He will not force His way in; he is no Gustapo police; He must be invited.

Christ's life was a teaching life. His life was an exemplary life. It was His divine mission for more than three years to manifest the mind of God in the various experiences that make up human life, to show others the way to a better life. Security in this world was not His first concern; neither were political problems His care. His philosophy was simple: "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's" And having given Caesar what Caesar was due, He could concentrate the far greater portion of His mind and life on what He could give to God.

Should we not long to open the door to this Master of men, so that we may listen to His kind voice, that voice that speaks of the glories that can be ours in the world to come, that life free from care, from sorrow, sickness and pain, that life that will be beyond our comprehension for greatness? Should we not long to listen to that voice that speaks of the love God holds in store for all who truly love Him, that love so far surpassing any love known on earth that it is truly "love divine all loves excelling"? Should we not long to listen to that voice that speaks of the glory and grace of sacrifice and submission, those rich qualities that can adorn every earthly life with the beauty of holiness?

But so long as He stands outside, knocking,

all that could be ours is not yet claimed. Only as we invite Him in and sup with Him can we enjoy what He has to offer us.

He would teach us to forsake the follies of this world going to destruction and come, take up our cross and follow Him. He would have us count the things of this world as nothing compared with the magnificent future He has planned.

Think what it means to open the door to Christ even now. It means opening our minds to the noblest aspirations available to men. It means dwelling in the presence of the best, sharing the thoughts of the greatest person ever to live on earth, the Son of God Himself! What honor and glory in this! Should we not be willing, even anxious, to hear His knock and open the door?

And should we not thank Him that even in this day, so far removed from His earthly career, we can still hear His knock, His voice sounding to us through those words written of old? They are living words, still ringing their clear message of entreaty: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Rev. 3: 20). Only as we listen, only as we pay attention to His words and accept His teaching as the ruling authority in our lives can Christ, this spiritual Christ, "dwell in our hearts by faith" and we be "rooted and grounded in" Him (Eph. 3:17).

When He knocks, it is our duty to open the door. He does His part; we must do ours. And what are the doors we may open to Him?

First there is the door of the intellect, that door by which we can learn His law and His plan for this earth and the high qualities of life demanded by His holy will.

Again, we may learn of the evidence He has provided to complete our faith, fulfilled prophecy that testifies to the certainty of His words.

Again, He knocks at the door of love. He wants our affections, our interests, our fondest dreams and aspirations in this world. He would also teach us the love that we should show to one another in His name, that same quality of love that He has shown to us. For indeed, is it not "of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness" (Lam. 3:22-23). His kindness shows us what ours needs to be toward our fellowmen and toward God. And see His forgiving spirit as He teaches us to pray, "Forgive us our debts,

as we forgive our debtors." It is as much as to say, "Take my life, Father, and use me as it pleaseth Thee."

There is also the door of promise, and here too we should be anxious to open and let Him enter. What other ground have we for hope? We may be young and full of vitality, but one day we will begin to falter, our strength will weaken, and what lies ahead will seem dismaying. If Christ is not dwelling with us, we know that soon death will be knocking at our door and will not hesitate to enter, and that will be final. But if we have opened the door to Christ, hope will be all aflame and before us will be the picture of the empty tomb and the risen Lord who conquered death and is now alive forevermore. We hear His precious words of comfort, "Because I live, ye shall live also."

Are we listening for His knock that we may open this door to Him?

And if we let Him in now, think of the doors that He will open to us in the future! Then

there will be the door of freedom, freedom to expand the mind in high desires and goals soaring into the ultimate world that shall be! And think of the desires that may be fulfilled when we are able to ask what we will and have it done unto us! Think what it will be when He opens to us the door of immortality and invites us into that higher life where we may partake of the divine nature. Think of what it will be like to live forever in a timeless world!

But now He stands at our door, knocking, knocking. What a blessing awaits us when we open the door of our heart to such a visitor, one we can trust assuredly in everything, one we can listen to with rapt attention and know He speaks the truth. When we do let Him in, we surely want to let Him search with His piercing eyes, looking into the deep recesses of our hearts that He may reveal to us any sin lurking there.

Did I hear it again? Someone is knocking. Do you hear it? Do you still wonder who it is? ●●

Remember ... Watch

"Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee."

—Revelation 3:3

IT IS part of the message of the risen Lord; it is a message of urgent entreaty. His people must be roused out of their spiritual lethargy to face their moral obligations before it is too late. Remember every day, every hour, He says; don't waver. This is not the time for reserved obedience, for hesitation in the cause we have vowed to uphold and support with unshakable steadfastness. Be rooted and grounded. No matter if the present-day tests sorely press and vex, hold fast. Be strong to resist the temptation to conform your ideals to current patterns of thought and conduct. Do not let what you were given and what you were taught slip from your grasp.

Jesus would remind us that the prospect of life hereafter is a very thrilling one when truth

is fresh and enthusiasm runs high. It is easy to remember then. But if you want the full reward, look well to yourselves; hold your ground and stand fast. When all sorts of trials and temptations come upon the scenes of life, restlessness and impatience may come also. At such a time it is possible for the spiritual glow to dim and enthusiasm to wane. At such times, remember.

A life of dedicated service can, if one is not exceedingly careful, slip back unconsciously into a sleepy, "has-been" service. It doesn't take much to settle down into a comfortable, relaxed condition. A simple, deliberate indulgence in sin or a little neglect will do it. This not only affects us personally, but a bad example can and usually does produce a like influence on others.

One moment of self-gratification and then another and yet one more leads us to trade the eternal values for a mess of worldly pottage, and soon the promise of the world to come is lost. What is the corrective? Leave the fleeting things of this fast dying world strictly alone. Rise to life's challenge and become a hero of faith.

The Lord's deep concern for our spiritual success is manifested here. In the days of His flesh, when He was tempted in all points like as we are, He was all too familiar with our weaknesses. He knew firsthand that man's ingrained tendency is to be lax; He knew the

MEGIDDO MESSAGE

many guises of evil which would seduce and lead astray. Thus He can say, As it was in My day, so it is in yours. In your modern age of synthetic values and a host of worldly attractions, there will be all the more menaces to your spiritual wholeness. Not only is it a battle, a campaign, and a contest; it is also an endurance test. A harsh life some may call it, for everything we have wished for in this life, every ambition and desire that is contrary to the law of God must be sacrificed on the altar of rigid self-denial. There must be submission, surrender and discipline. But at the end of it all there is life, a crown, and a royal throne. So, says Jesus, be faithful to My cause from the beginning to the end, whether you are stationed in the kitchen, in the office, on the farm, or in the factory. What you have begun, complete; never stop. Be faithful, and I will not blot your name out of the book of life, but I will confess it before my Father, and before His angels (Rev. 3:5).

There is no real believing without hearing and doing. The Word of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom sent down from heaven to teach and prepare for salvation. Unlike the teachings of men which require only a nominal belief, the message of salvation must be heard on every point and acted out daily. The Word gives us the opportunity to believe; and having heard the Word, to keep and obey it. It is not only knowledge to think about and revel in; it is the way of life to be lived. "Remember, . . . hold fast, and repent." "Take fast hold of instruction, let her not go: keep her; for she is thy life" (Prov. 4:13).

So Jesus tells us, Watch and pray. I, your Lord and Judge am coming soon, suddenly like a thief in the night. A thief, as you know, does not announce the hour of his coming. I may do the same and give you a surprise. While you are working, keep on the alert and be watchful, lest evil come upon you unawares. Despite the modern-day permissiveness and easy-going tolerance, keep a firm grip on this truth. Do not sway from it to something else. Don't drift into procrastination. Bring forth fruit answerable to amendment of life. Change your ways wherever change is necessary; change them drastically, and you will receive My honor now and forevermore. ●●

All other knowledge is hurtful to him who has not honesty and good nature.

May, 1979

We Need Repentance

We Americans have in the last several years seen the scandal of Watergate, which involved high officials, including the President of the United States. Many of those involved have since paid for their misconduct with prison terms and with shame.

It seems that in today's society, the greatest crime is getting caught. Those who get away and are not found out—well, to them belong the gains. But the Bible cries out, "Evil will be found out." Divine justice cries out, "Sin will be recompensed."

If men fear the condemnation of fellow humans, how much more should they fear that One who "knoweth the secrets of the heart"? (Ps. 44:21).

These things should be a lesson to us. Are we also adopting the standards of the world? Do we think, "It's all right, nobody knows"? Our wrongdoings may not be as hateful as those of the world around us, but they are no less sinful. Ours may be a personal ambition disguised as zeal for the Lord.

We need repentance. We need to be truly sorry for our sins. We need to turn to God in utter humility and sincerity and say, "I have sinned," and then do what is right. We will, if we remember that "all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (Heb. 4:13).

From a Friend in Wisconsin

True Love

Abide in me; o'ershadow by Thy love.

Each half-formed purpose and dark thought of sin;

Quench, ere it rise, each selfish, low desire.

And keep my soul as Thine, calm and divine.

The spirit of love must work the works, and speak the tones of love. It cannot exist and give no sign, or a false sign.

It cannot be a spirit of love, and degenerate into irritable and selfish impatience.

It cannot be a spirit of love, and at the same time make self the prominent object.

It cannot rejoice to lend itself to the happiness of others, and at the same time be seeking its own.

It cannot be generous, and envious.

It cannot be sympathizing, and unseemly; self-forgetful, and vainglorious.

It cannot delight in the rectitude and purity of other hearts, and yet unnecessarily suspect them.

—Selected

Laodicea may have had faithful workers in the church at an earlier date. Paul made note in his letter to the Colossians that the Epistle be read to the church at Laodicea, so they received sound Christian doctrine and exhortation. But to us who live 1900 years later, Laodicea is synonymous with lukewarmness. The church was neither cold nor hot, neither good nor bad—and this was a serious state to be in.

They thought they were all right. Their works looked good enough to them, for they had everything they wanted. They had just enough religion to be satisfied with themselves.

But in reality they had need of all things. They had become complacent and failed to realize their need. They had a form of godliness, for they were still called a church. But pretense is not practice. A form of godliness is no substitute for spirituality.

Let us hear, let us receive instruction, while there is still time to change ourselves. For “whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth”; “be zealous therefore, and repent.”

Repent, Repent

Just what does it mean?

The message of repentance was not new with the Letters to the Seven Churches. We read that when Jesus began His ministry, He “came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, . . . Repent ye, and believe the gospel” (Mark 1:14-15). John the Baptist had preached a similar message before Him: “Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. . . . Bear fruit that befits repentance” (Matt. 3:2,8, KJV and RSV). Peter began preaching repentance immediately after Pentecost. And it is not strange, for among Jesus’ last recorded words to His disciples before His ascension was the command to preach “repentance and remission of sins . . . among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (Luke 24:47).

Jesus and the apostles never minimized sin or the need for repentance. They proclaimed the coming of a new order; their message: Get ready for it; acknowledge the authority of Christ; *repent*.

Repentance is moral honesty. There can be no forgiveness except on the basis of an honest facing of the facts, a turning from sin. It is always possible to turn over a new leaf, to make a new start no matter how serious the sin. It is always possible, so long as opportunity is extended; but the time will come when it will be too late. “He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger forever” (Ps. 103:9).

True repentance is the key to salvation. It is turning from the way of death, darkness, error and ignorance to the way of life, light, knowledge, and salvation.

The Bible does not teach unconditional forgiveness. The assurance of mercy must always be preceded by repentance. There has to be a movement Godward on man’s part, before God will respond. It is only if we confess and forsake that He will forgive (Prov. 28:13).

Eternal justice and righteousness demands repentance first, followed by fruits—deeds befitting the Christlike life. Our sin—small or great—will not be automatically washed “white as snow” until we turn from it and show our repentance by obedience to God’s will.

God has honored us by giving us a part to play in our own salvation. How we play that part determines our eternal destiny. The choice is up to each of us. It is “Repent—or else.”

Who Is Knocking?

“Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.”

—Revelation 3:20

YOU HEARD that knock. You did not recognize it? You do not know who knocked?

Your ignorance betrays you. Do you not claim to belong to His family? Do you not say that you long for His presence? And when He comes knocking at your door, you do not make any response? How can you do it! How can you leave someone whom you profess to love standing out in the cold?

However, at the church of Laodicea, this was apparently the case. It was as if Jesus had come to their door and knocked, and they had ignored Him. By their actions they were saying that Jesus was not welcome in their midst.

This was a change. What had happened? Perhaps it was because their flaming zeal had cooled; now they were neither cold nor hot. Now they had at the most only half a heart for Him.

Whatever the reason, it is apparent that the loving devotedness was gone. He whom they had loved had become a stranger; or if not a com-



SCRIPTURAL SPOTLIGHT

"Hebron therefore became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite unto this day, because that he wholly followed the Lord his God" (Joshua 14:14).

IN THE GREAT roll of the heroes of faith, in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, are many of the outstanding men of God. But some are left out. Two of those omitted are the names of Caleb and Joshua.

Caleb's shining record, that he had "wholly followed the Lord," was equally true of Joshua, and these two splendid characters have a large place in the story of the conquest of Canaan. But, though their names do not appear in Hebrews, their acts are recorded, for both were present on that memorable day when "by faith the walls of Jericho fell down," and a manifestation of divine power sealed the faith which had borne the scoffs of the defenders as the men of Israel quietly compassed the city.

True obedience, wholly following the Lord, is what makes life victorious. And this victory in life never precedes the surrender of our whole being to God. Only as our will is handed over and the keys of our life placed in the hand of the Lord will there be in us that full measure of obedience that was found in the life of Caleb. It is the lesson the apostle Paul learned, that "in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing" (Rom. 7:18). It is a hard lesson to learn, but a necessary one; for only after this can one reckon himself as "dead indeed unto sin" and "alive unto God."

How much the saints of old understood of the whole plan of salvation we do not know. But one fact is clear as we read the record. We are impressed with their deeply spiritual relationship to God. We can see that their experience with God was genuine and mighty. They walked with Him, and talked with Him; He guided them and strengthened them for service; they shared His hatred of idolatry and His abhorrence of sin. Nor was positive love and devotion lacking; at

the root of their service was genuine desire for fuller, richer life in God. The Psalms have many an outpouring of intense yearning, and those inspired poems express as truly the inner longings of Joshua and Caleb and other godly Israelites as they do our own heart-aspirations today. "From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I. For thou hast been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy. I will abide in thy tabernacle for ever: I will trust in the covert of thy wings. . . . So will I sing praise unto thy name for ever, that I may daily perform my vows" (Ps. 61:2-4, 8). "Truly my soul waiteth upon God: from him cometh my salvation. He only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defence; I shall not be greatly moved" (Ps. 62:1-2). "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is. . . . Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee" (Ps. 63:1-3).

From such seeking after God alone can come the power for obedience. There is a time in the experience of every aspiring child of God when sin becomes the most terrible of all things, something that must be overcome before God can truly be found and His favor assured. Only at this point can "perfect love"—loving the Lord with all the heart, and with all the soul, and with all the mind, and with all the strength—become an actuality in the inner life.

Was not this the aspiration of Joshua and Caleb as they walked before God in lives that were wholly committed? Was not this the source from which flowed the ardent zeal that spurred them on to "wholly follow the Lord" their God?

Is there, then, so much difference between the

saints of the Old Testament and the saints of the New? There are differences in the conditions in which they lived, in the testings they had to withstand, in the trials that were allowed to purify their lives and hearts; but the obedience and faith required of all was the same. And it is the same that is asked of us today. We, too, may wholly follow the Lord, just as Caleb and Joshua did, just as Abraham before them had done, just as Nehemiah and Ezra after them did. There seems to have been little lacking in Simeon, "just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel," or in Anna, who served God day and night in the temple. We know Zacharias and Elisabeth were "both righteous before God" (Luke 1:6), walking in "all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless." Paul the apostle had brethren whose "names are in the book of life"; and he himself is along with the Eleven who are named as foundation stones of the eternal temple. So Caleb and Joshua will have many to join them, many besides those mentioned in Hebrews 11. Some day we shall meet these old worthies and compare experiences, if we, like them, "wholly follow the Lord." ●●

The Neglected Book

I have heard of people hiding their extra money in the Bible, because no one ever looks there for anything.

A man was once asked if he had a Bible in the home. "Somewhere," was the reply. And after searching a few minutes, he found it being used as a doorstop.

Year after year the Bible is still the best seller. There are more Bibles printed and distributed in our world today than any other single book. But the ignorance of the Bible of otherwise intelligent people is astounding.

A Chicago newspaper reported that if the churches in that city would forget the bazaars and other nonessentials and open the Bible and reveal its truths, the result would be a revival. That statement came from the press, not from a preacher.

The Bible says "Pray," and pray we must. The Bible says "Work," and work we must. We are to love God with all our soul, strength, and mind. Unless we do, we do not love Him at all.

—From a Friend in Georgia

Maximum Living

(Continued from page 6)

more abundant life. "For none of us liveth unto himself," is a true maxim. Paul defines this journey in his Epistle to the Church at Ephesus with the words: "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice. And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

And not only is it a *royal* journey to go from the minimum to the maximum of living for God and each other; it is also a most *rewarding* journey. Jesus said: "There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, . . . and in the world to come eternal life."

Give up all, and gain the hundredfold; sell out all your former hopes, ambitions, and ideals, that you may secure the pearl of great price; lose your life in the service of the Lord that you may find it in the Kingdom of God—so taught the Master. And as we offer in living sacrifice ourselves at our best, as we sacrifice the sunny, favorable, working days of our life; when we give the maximum of effort for God, when we give the best of our talents, all of our mind, might and strength, we shall receive an hundredfold in present remuneration and enlarge the capital for eternal dividends which they shall never know who give the minimum to God—only the tired, little end of life.

Let our resolution for this coming year be that we will live to the maximum! ●●

Four Kind of "Bones"

Someone has said that there are four kinds of "bones" in every organization.

There are the wishbones, who spend their time wishing someone else would do the work.

There are the jawbones, who do all the talking, but very little else.

There are the knucklebones, who knock everything anyone ever tries to do.

And finally, there are the backbones, who get under the load and do the work.

Which kind are we?

Eldad, Medad, Amos, Apollos

(Continued from page 9)

speak eloquently and fervently about Jesus. Trained in the excellent schools of rhetoric in his home town of Alexandria, in Egypt, Apollos was a forceful orator and skilled debater who made a powerful impression.

Aquila and Priscilla listened. But they were disquieted—in Apollos' talk about Jesus there were glaring gaps in his understanding of the gospel.

Luke the historian describes Apollos as "fervent in spirit" in teaching the things of God. He was "boiling hot" in earnest spirituality. But his knowledge of the Christian gospel was incomplete.

Luke tells us that Apollos "had been instructed in the way of the Lord . . . though he knew only the baptism of John" (Acts 18:25). "Instructed" can mean "catechised" in the Greek language. This suggests that Apollos had had a formal course on the life of Jesus in his studies in Alexandria, possibly having heard about Jesus from one of the catechists or traveling teachers sent from Jerusalem to Egypt. He may even have had a brief piece of some Christian writing, since the earliest written materials were beginning to circulate about this time.

All this was fine, but it was not enough. Apollos had a few facts, and he took them seriously and argued for them persuasively.

Aquila and Priscilla were grateful for such a promising young leader. But at the same time, they were disturbed. What should they say or do? What was the right thing to do? Was there danger of offending the young enthusiast and having no preacher at all for the cause?

We read that Aquila and Priscilla "took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly" (Acts 18:26). Imagine those modest, quiet tentmakers giving instruction to a learned Jew from Alexandria. We admire them for their wisdom, tact, courage, and love in this matter. And Apollos was not offended. He listened eagerly to his friends, counting them his superiors in the gospel. We admire far more the humble mind and quiet heart that Apollos had at this moment than all the first-class certificates or gold medals which he may have had. A noble young Christian gentleman he proved himself to be.

What would the church be without godly laymen such as this pair of quiet cloth weavers! Though no speakers themselves, Aquila and Pris-

cilla knew when and how to speak to a would-be spokesman.

Shortly afterwards, Apollos sailed from Ephesus to Corinth, carrying with him letters of introduction to the young congregation in Greece, that he might be favorably received. And indeed he was—his talent for preaching, his quick answers to critics, and his artful manner of discourse soon bound to him a strong following in the Corinthian congregation.

As far as we can learn from the record, Paul at this time had not yet met Apollos—Apollos had already left Ephesus when Paul arrived there. But in due time they met—perhaps Apollos returned to Ephesus during Paul's extended stay in that city. We are not told.

Apollos became one of Paul's trusted friends and companions. The hearts of these two workers were knit together in a bond nothing could break. And their friendship withstood one of the oldest and greatest temptations among preachers—*envy*. There was strife among the Corinthians, whether they were followers of Paul or Apollos; but never do we hear a word about such a strife between the two brothers themselves. Paul heard of the crowds in Corinth flocking to hear the eloquent Bible lectures delivered by Apollos, and Paul rejoiced.

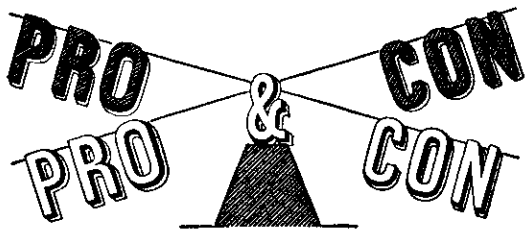
There must have been something refreshing about the youthful ministry and fervent spirit of Apollos. Paul, the great missionary-statesman, spoke of Apollos' words as cool streams upon a burnt-up garden: "Apollos watered." The drooping converts of Corinth, so spiritually parched, revived under the courageous and positive preaching of Apollos, and Paul rejoiced to have so capable a partner.

Can we in our day match the character of these noble men—Eldad, Medad, Amos, and Apollos? ●●

What Is Our Labor Worth?

There is a popular song called the "Dollar Song." It tells about people putting in a nickel for a song, but they want a dollar song.

That has a message for us. Are we putting in a "nickel's worth" of labor for the Lord and expecting a "dollar reward"? Such great blessings as Christians hope for require also a great amount of work. If we want eternal life, we must expect to work for it. ●●



A Column for Open Discussion

All our readers do not agree with us. If you are among those who differ on some point, write us your views and we will consider them in the light of Scripture teaching. Our policy is the Apostle's injunction: "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."

• About the Devil.

"There are many Scriptures I would like to quote, but I will give you some that you can read and prayerfully study with an honest, heart and mind. What will you do with the following texts?"

"Job, chapters 1 and 2."

—E. A. P., Armstrong, B. C., Canada

To the believer in a personal devil, Job's experience is the ultimate proof. But before we jump to conclusions, let us consider the facts.

At least twice in the book of Job it is stated that Job "continued his parable." The account in the first of Job has been variously described as a drama, a parable, a poem. The sixth verse of chapter 1 reads, "Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them." If this was an actual occurrence, do we imagine that the personal devil of theology ventured into the very presence of God? And who are the "sons of God" who might present themselves? Are we to think of them as literally His children?

No, the book of Job is part of the "wisdom" literature of the Bible, which includes Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and a part of the Psalms. If we approach the book from this angle, the incongruities disappear. The "sons of God" who present themselves before the Lord are men and women seeking to be adopted into God's family, who gather to strengthen themselves in the Lord; and does not "Satan," the insincere worker of evil, come among them? Job's boils and the potsherd with which he scraped himself may be taken as symbols of the evils of the flesh that defile us, and we may gain the vital lesson of our own need for cleansing.

May, 1979

Satan, likewise, is representative. Our evil natures are always ready to discredit our brother on the grounds that his service for God is a shrewd bargain; that he serves for the temporal advantages he gains for so doing. And God, in His unimpeachable justice and fair dealing with His earthly children, is the Hero of the story.

There is no evidence in Job of the existence of a literal devil.

"What about II Peter 2:4 and Jude 6?"

II Peter 2:4 reads: "For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment." Jude 6 reads, "And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day."

Both the apostle Peter and Jude are reminding their readers of what befell evildoers in olden times. In the fifth verse of Jude we read, "I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not." The sixth verse continues: "And the angels which kept not their first estate," etc. This is a definite reference to the messengers which were sent to spy out the land and who brought back an evil report in the days of Moses. One definition of "angels" is "messengers," and these specially chosen messengers were "high ones" among the Israelites; each was a "ruler" among the people (Num. 13:2). These "angels," by rebelling against the Lord and bringing back an evil report, fell from their high estate; they all died in the plague that followed.

Notice that Jude says these angels are reserved in "everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day." If these passages referred to the devil of theology, this text would have the devil in "everlasting chains under darkness" at the **present time**, where he could do no harm. Why, then, should we see so much evil in the world today?

No, these passages do not describe angels falling out of heaven, but mortal men falling from their positions of honor.

"What about I John 3:8?"

I John 3:8 reads: "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil."

The New English Bible reads: "The man who sins is a child of the devil." If this were taken literally, then everyone on earth is descended from the devil, for we have all sinned.

No, let us return to the plain statement in Scripture: When we sin we are devils, just as Jesus said to Peter, "Get thee behind me, Satan."

"What about Revelation 20:1-2?"

Revelation 20:1-2 reads: "And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years."

The book of Revelation contains some highly symbolic language. The fact that the angel comes down from heaven would indicate that the bottomless pit is on the earth. If the angel would try to confine the devil in a bottomless pit, he would have a hard time, for the devil could fall right out the bottom. No one, so far as we know, ever found a bottomless pit on this earth. The pit, the key, the chain—and the devil—are all symbolic. The passage gives a fitting illustration of a condition that will exist during the Millennial reign of Christ, which the chapter is describing (see verse 4). During that time all evil will be bound, confined. Evil men and women will not be allowed to manifest their desires. The evil will be in their hearts—fittingly termed "bottomless" (Jer. 17:9)—but they will not be allowed to practice wickedness openly and deceive others, as they have been doing for the past 6000 years. In other words, the devil will be bound.

"What about I Peter 5:8-9?"

These verses read: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world."

The same symbolic use of the term appears here. The devil of theology is very sly, and subtle. He gets inside you and tempts you in the most crafty ways; he is unseen and unheard. The apostle Peter's devil is like a roaring lion—which should be easily seen and heard! There is no question when *this* devil is around!—doubtless Peter had encountered these two-legged devils many times.

In the Bible, evil men are often compared to animals—serpents, foxes, dogs, lions, etc. Paul

informs us that evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, and they certainly are comparable to roaring lions today. Evil roars through the movies and television, on the streets, and, sad to say, even in some churches. Roaring lions also include gangsters, hi-jackers, rapists, murderers, muggers, thieves, etc. Everyone openly opposing God and His laws is aptly described as a "roaring lion," against which the alert Christian must be vigilant.

"What about James 4:7?"

The text reads, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." If the writer here is referring to a real personal devil, then he flatly contradicts himself, for he has just said in chapter 1: "Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed."

Now it can't be both ways; it is either one way or the other that we are tempted. If we allow that when the Scriptural writers used the term "devil" or "Satan" they used it in a figurative sense as the evil man himself, then we have harmony. But if we insist on attaching a mythological label to the word, we create confusion and contradiction; and worse still, we discourage persons who otherwise might be converted to the religion of the Bible.

And now, in the words of our correspondent, we ask you to prayerfully study and consider these things with an honest, open heart and mind. Above all, be guided entirely by what the Bible says and not by tradition, or theology, or your former teaching, or the beliefs of your friends, or by what we or any others may say. Follow the Bible injunction: "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (I Thess. 5:21).

Gardentime Again

A garden is a lovely place
Where seeds burst through the sod.
A garden is a partnership
Between two hands and God.

A garden is a restful place
Where gentle breezes blow,
A family of growing things
Where souls can also grow.

A garden is a peaceful place
Where I can go apart
To think, to meditate, to pray
And listen with my heart.

—Selected.

MEGIDDO MESSAGE

Our Readers Write...

Time to Thank God

It is time to thank the Lord that He is able to help us out of any situation, no matter how hopeless it may look to us. Perhaps we have brought the trouble upon ourselves. Does the Lord turn His back and tell us to suffer the consequences alone? Not if we repent and turn to Him. If we are separated from Him it is only because we choose to be separated. Sometimes we may be so enshrouded in our problems that we're not sure we even have the will to do what is right. Even so, we can pray that we will have the will, knowing that every sincere prayer will be answered.

It may take a cup of bitter medicine to cure the diseases that come under the heading of selfishness and pride. As long as it is God's hand that holds the cup to our lips, we can be sure that He is right by our side and only holds it for our benefit, not through some spirit of vengeance but because He loves us and wants to see us have characters that will last for eternity.

"For whom the Lord loveth he correcteth."

Covington, Georgia

L. G.

Hundredfold Plus

The Psalmist says "unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness." We have far too much to lose to ignore this shining light, the knowledge of God. This knowledge not only can give us future life, but we can enjoy a hundredfold of hope, joy and comfort in this life. The deplorable condition of the world cannot affect us, as Psalm 112:7 tells us, "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings, his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." Those who are desirous of obtaining this fantastic reward at any cost will be willing to suffer anything, even to the loss of all things.

The thought of that future life in glory, a life that will never end, should cause us to all lay aside the weights, even at this eleventh hour. Nothing is too hard or difficult for us to deny ourselves, for such a reward.

Swansea, South Wales

G. S.

Pleasing God

Whom do we seek to please, "self" or Christ? I wish I didn't have to say this, but I know I try to please "self" much more than I should. As you say, when we think of God's limitless bounty and His goodness, how foolish to desire anything other than what comes from His hand.

I feel like the cartoon in the *Message* sometimes (February issue). So much to do, and I'm thinking "I can't." No talent, no ambition. No one will ever win a race with these thoughts in mind. So if we're running for the Kingdom, it is high time that we put to use what talents we have. We know we are in the last days and perilous times are upon us. Christ will soon be here and I have all this work to do to conquer self before He gets here.

Let us keep in this bond of Christian fellowship and faithfully follow our Guide to the very end, never forgetting our main object in life is the Kingdom of God.

Davenport, Iowa

W. P.

Honor Supreme

What an honour it will be if we are found ready, every spot and wrinkle gone from our garments of character and we arrayed before Him in the bridal dress of pure linen "clean and white, for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints"! And to know we shall ever be with Him, and to work and rejoice with the faithful of all ages!

God has shown us the way to the high pinnacle of perfect character in the life example of His dear Son, and shall we be so shallow as to let the opportunities of eternal glory pass from us unwanted? Of course we do not wish for this to happen to us, so how we should seek out our weaknesses and get rid of them by applying the wisdom of the Word of God in humble obedience.

What a glorious Day it will be for us if we can be brought into the King's presence, adorned with beautiful garments of needlework. Each and every garment will have taken the allotted time to make, some longer than others, maybe; but the determination to create the specified beauty of the garment has won through to God's honour and glory. Every stitch has slowly combined to bring to perfection the garment of "wrought gold," as the Psalmist tells us.

May we truly look forward to the glad rejoicing that shall be in that glad Day when God's everlasting Kingdom will be ushered in, to ultimately fill the whole earth. When the new order is fully established, what a wonderful world it will be, the righteous law of God going forth from Zion to the ends of the earth, bringing justice and peace to all people, the King and His co-workers enforcing the law to the good and benefit of all! What a busy time it will be, in that every year, people from the ends of the earth will journey to Jerusalem to worship the King.

What glories await us if faithful. We do want to be sure we are ready. So let us be humble and make sure we are. Surely we have felt as the apostle Paul felt when he wrote to those in Rome, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18). And all because we gave heed to the Word of God and walked in the way of His commands, in loving obedience.

Warwick, Queensland, Australia

A. B.

Deceased

We have just received word of the death of Fanny Hutchins of Columbus, Ohio. Sister Hutchins had been a subscriber to the *Megiddo Message* for fifty-two years.

Twelve Booklets

HISTORY OF THE MEGIDDO MISSION
THE COMING OF JESUS AND ELIJAH
WHAT MUST WE DO TO BE SAVED?
GOD'S SPIRITUAL CREATION
THE KINGDOM OF GOD
THE GREAT APOSTASY
HELL AND THE DEVIL
AFTER DEATH, WHAT?
TRINITY OR UNITY?
THE HOLY SPIRIT
THE ATONEMENT
THE SABBATH

ALL for \$3.00, Postpaid.

Come, labor on.

*Who dares stand idle on the harvest plain,
While all around him waves the golden grain?
And to each servant does the Master say,
"Go work today."*

Come, labor on.

*The enemy is watching night and day,
To sow the tares, to snatch the seed away;
While we in sleep our duty have forgot,
He slumbers not.*

Come, labor on.

*Away with gloomy doubts and faithless fear!
Thine arm is strong to do His service here:
We are the agents who may yet fulfill
His righteous will.*

Come, labor on.

*Claim the high calling that the angels share;
In youth or age thy holy burden bear:
Redeem the time; its hours too swiftly fly.
The night draws nigh.*

Come, labor on.

*No time for rest, till glows the western sky,
Till the long shadows o'er our pathway lie,
And a glad sound comes with the setting sun,
"Servants, well done."*