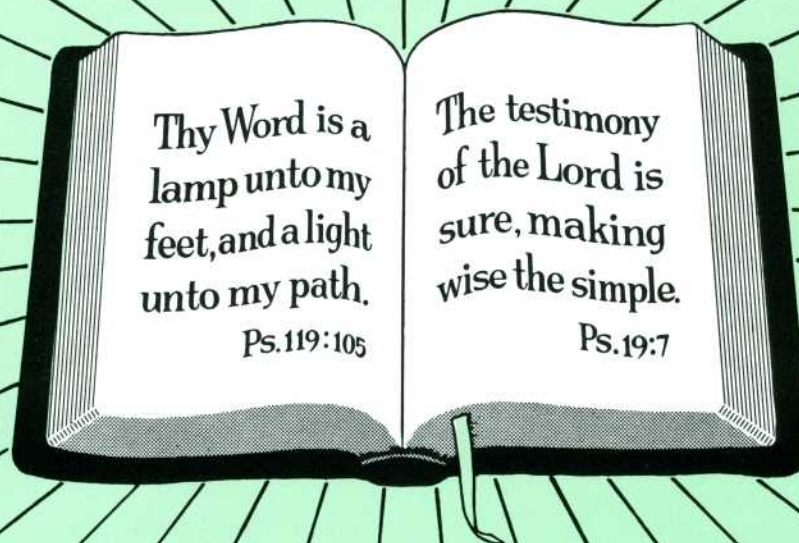


Megiddo Message

DEVOTED TO THE CAUSE OF CHRIST



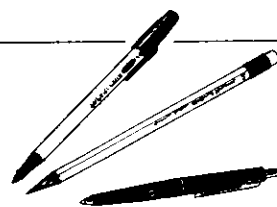
Keeping Out of Quarantine

Understanding the Bible

Life's Irritations

"A Sower Went Out to Sow"

Editorial



“Thou Shalt Not”

THE BIBLE is not a book for general interest reading. It is the Word of the Almighty Creator. Being His Word, it bears the stamp of divinity. And bearing the stamp of divinity, it speaks with authority, divine authority which is not to be taken lightly. In it, God is speaking, telling us what to do, and what not to do, if we would be part of the divine scheme for our planet. Of course the choice is ours. We do not have to pay any attention. We are free to choose our own course. But if we want what God has offered, we must exchange this freedom for obedience.

In a thousand different ways the Bible presents the plan and informs us what to do. Many statements are commands, defining closely the principles and patterns of conduct God would have us observe. Some of these serve as signposts, showing us the best road to travel. Others are danger signs, marking potential hazards. Others are plain “Thou shalt not’s” to save our lives from disaster. For we live in a universe governed by law and not by chance. If we choose to disobey, we do not break God’s laws; we break ourselves upon them by our disobedience. Someone once observed that the man who leaps from a cliff does not break the law of gravitation; he merely illustrates it. The absoluteness of God Almighty is reflected in His universe.

A passenger on a river vessel once asked the pilot if he knew where all the rocks and shoals were. The pilot grinned. “We don’t know where all the rocks are. We know where the channel is, and we stay in it.”

This is the plan by which we also may succeed. If each of us had to learn where all the hazards of life lie, if each had to

experiment to find what makes life successful and what makes it miserable, if each had to try out every possible course of action to know its worth, we would fail utterly. But thank God that we can learn from the experience of others. That is why Paul wrote to his brethren at Rome that they should be “wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil.” It just isn’t necessary to know all about everything wrong. Enough for us to occupy ourselves learning what is right, and then practicing it.

This is the purpose of the Word of God. It serves as our map, our guide by which we can avoid the hazards of life’s journey and arrive safely at our destination. If we follow its directives, we can rejoice in the possibilities it opens to us. We can travel without fear of shipwreck. Freed from the fear of reefs and rocks, we can rejoice in God’s promises of safe voyage and sure haven. Above the necessity of knowing where are the rocks is the joy and freedom of knowing where they are not—where the deep channel is—and staying within its safety. This latter course restricts our freedoms, but what can surpass the peace that comes from knowing—not guessing but knowing—that we are safe.

But this requires faith, faith that can say, “I realize it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps, that this privilege belongs only to God. He is the commander of my life. I know that He knows, and what He says I will do.”

Following His markers, we can travel safely. His markers show the safe way, and His plain “Thou shalt not’s” will warn us when we need to know where the rocks are. MM

Megiddo means

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

We believe

—in God the Creator of all 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

JB—The Jerusalem Bible, Reader's Edition

Phillips—The New Testament in Modern English

Berkeley—The Modern Language New Testament

Weymouth—The New Testament in Modern Speech

Moffatt—The Bible, A New Translation

Williams—The New Testament, A Translation in the Language of the People

Rotherham—The Emphasized Old Testament

The use of selected references from various versions of the Bible does not necessarily imply publisher endorsement of the versions in their entirety.

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

The **MEGIDDO MESSAGE** is available in microfilm from Xerox University Microfilms, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI, 48106.

The **MEGIDDO MESSAGE** (USPS 338-120) is published monthly (except July) by the Megiddo Church, 481 Thurston Road, Rochester, New York 14619. Second Class postage paid at Rochester, New York. **SUBSCRIPTION RATE:** One year, eleven issues, \$2.00. **POSTMASTER:** Send change of address to Megiddo Church, 481 Thurston Road, Rochester, New York 14619-1697.

Keeping Out of Quarantine

by Rev. L. T. Nichols

This sermon was delivered by our founder about the turn of the century, after he had traveled twice to England by passenger ship. The lesson on being "quarantined" was drawn from what he saw upon his second return.

WE HAVE BEEN permitted to congregate once more ere the King returns and calls His servants before the great tribunal, before the great white throne to give their final accounting. How near we are to that great time. How it should cause us to watch ourselves and search our hearts to see if there is anything that will cause us to lose the great prize, any sin that will cause the pearly gates to be closed to us forever, shutting us out of everlasting rest. Of all misfortunes this will be the worst. To lose a thousand such lives as this would be nothing compared to losing that life which will never, never end.

To meet Gabriel; to hear those words that were spoken to Daniel so long ago, "Thou art greatly beloved"; to stand before Jesus and receive a gracious "Well done." Christ and His saints will have power delegated to them so that they can control all nations, so they can control all nature. No longer will chilly winds blow. They will have power to still the mighty tempest and cause the balmy, ambrosial breezes to gently blow. This earth will become a garden of flowers and sweet perfume. What a wonderful time to live!

An entrance into this summerland of love can be obtained only by traveling on the right road and in the right direction. If going to Minneapolis, you would follow the road leading there. So must we follow the road which leads to the summerland of love if we would ever reach it.

The right road is so narrow that we can tell when we are in it. It is not so broad that we will get lost in it. This road is easy to follow. It is difficult only when we try to bring our own way into it.

I went into a peach orchard the other day. Such a

lovely day, and such perfume—the air was filled with fragrance. But far above that will be the summerland of love—above all we can ask or think; yes, exceedingly, abundantly above all we can ask or think. We have never seen a lovely day nor smelled a sweet perfume compared to that which we will see and smell when the gladsome kingdom of God rolls in and we have this power over all nature delegated to us. Then we can manufacture perfume instantly anywhere.

Why do you not make greater speed to reach it? The reason you do not make greater speed is your own stubbornness. If only you would submit to the yoke, and work with God, the way would be so much easier. This is what Jesus said: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt. 11:29-30).

Walking with Jesus

That sweet rest! It will lead us to rest now, and will take us into the Kingdom of God. No wonder Paul tells us, in that lovely Epistle to the Ephesian brethren, to "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness." If walking worthy with all lowliness, God will work with us. That is why Jesus said, "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart." And Paul said, "I beseech you." If only we would consider the greatness of the call—called to put on this noble yoke. We are not called to yoke with the low and groveling. But we are called to yoke with the high and noble and lofty ones.

If yoked with Jesus, we shall always be found watching at His gates, waiting at the posts of His doors. We will be walking with all lowliness, and meekness, forbearing one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, putting forth every effort to keep the unity of the spirit in the "bond of peace." Then everyone will be feeling and thinking and acting alike, all one in Christ.

"This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being

Note: *Keeping Out of Quarantine* is available as a complete church service on cassette. Price: \$3.00

alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness" (Eph. 4:17-19).

They work uncleanness with greediness—how differently we must walk. We must turn from all of this and walk circumspectly; not as fools, but as wise (Eph. 5:15). Who is a fool? The Bible tells us: "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool" (Prov. 28:26)—a Bible fool.

"Redeeming the time because the days are evil" (Eph. 5:16). If ever there was a time since Adam that this admonition should be heeded, it is now. The pearly gates are almost in sight. Only a little time and they will be closed. But they will open long enough for us to pass through—"IF" we will walk circumspectly. How we use the time we have between now and the Judgment will determine where we stand in that great Day.

This advice is for you, for me, and for all. Do not get "past feeling." Rejoice in your bright, gladsome hope, not go about with a thundercloud face. Some are so hard-hearted that they seem glad to say something detrimental about another. They are like those of whom Brother Paul wrote, "But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God" (Rom. 2:5).

No wonder the apostle Paul says, "Thou art inexcusable O man," seeing that God has placed before us such wonderful blessings; He has promised us more than we can ask or think. If we continue to harden our hearts, we deserve the doom of the unfaithful, seeing we have despised the "riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering" (Rom. 2:4).

The goodness of God leads us where? It leads us to turn, to go in another direction, leads us not to walk in the vanity of our minds but to walk circumspectly; leads us to redeem the time until our entire being, with all its energy and power, is used to the glory of God. We cannot serve two masters. If we think we can, we may as well give up. "It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" (Matt. 4:10).

It Is Written

Yes, it is written, and we should keep this in mind night and day. His mind must rule and govern us at every step. Are we serving the Lord or the flesh? should be our constant inquiry, until we know of a certainty that we are walking in all things wisely. When we humble ourselves and have God and His law of truth uppermost in us (God in us and we in Him), then we can sing for joy. What a wonderful song that will be. It does seem reason enough to cause all to drink deep at this fountain and then press

Quarantine: "a state of enforced isolation from normal relations or communication"

forward so as to obtain an entrance into that summerland of love and sing with everlasting joy.

What will be the song then? "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints" (Rev 15:3).

We have never yet realized how great His works are. "Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name?" (Rev. 15:4).

We cannot glorify His name by walking contrary to Him. Fearing and glorifying His name will cause us to walk every moment in His ways, and will prepare us to sing that grand new song, that marvelous song, and to be arrayed in that wonderful robe of righteousness, that fine linen clean and white, with pleasures forevermore. Will we not sing for joy then and say, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour, and power, for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created" (Rev. 4:11).

When we have God in us and become one with Him, it will be for our pleasure too that they have been created. Glory, and honor, and power—such precious promises should cause us to humble ourselves and walk circumspectly, walk carefully, not as fools but as wise; not trusting in our own hearts but in a mighty power that alone is able to save.

Realizing this, we will watch, be anxious, heed the warning words of our loved Master: "What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch." We will have respect unto the testimony and the law, will be watching our way carefully to see if we are actually going to reach that summerland of love.

We love to meet and greet one another now. But what is this compared to the glorious future, when it will be said to us, as it was to Daniel, "Thou art greatly beloved"? We would be willing to dress in ducking now, and be set out in the street without a dollar, if we could be sure of such honor.

Well, beloved brethren, we can all have life on much easier terms. How? Simply be lifted up out of the dust—be exalted in your thinking, in your living, in all that you do.

God is so merciful. In His great goodness He calls upon us to do only that which will elevate and ennoble us.

He never takes away anything without giving us something better in its place.

We must consider and overcome evil, go after everything He allows and let alone all that He has forbidden. We must walk in the way of all His commandments. If He says, "Eat of this tree," then eat of it. If He says, "Leave it alone," leave it alone. He does not mean that you should fondle it. No halfway work will do. You must work with all of your heart. If you give anything less, He will not accept you. He says, "Bring no more vain oblations. . . . Away with it! it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear" (Isa. 1:13,15).

He says, I will not hear you unless you come in my way. I am the mighty Captain, the Dictator. I told you that you must not go your own way, after your darkened mind, as fools.

We must realize that God means what He says, and the sooner we do this the better for us. As He says in another wonderful testimony that we must all take heed to: "For the Lord giveth wisdom; out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding" (Prov. 2:6). God is not here personally to speak to us. He speaks to us through His Word, and in this way He is a "buckler to them that walk uprightly" (Prov. 2:7). God never promised to be a buckler to any but those who will walk circumspectly, redeeming the time.

We must walk uprightly, cleanse ourselves; that is what He wants. We must walk uprightly. "Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path" (Prov. 2:9).

You will not be walking in your own light, but watching daily at His gates, sitting at the posts of His doors, asking, inquiring. "When wisdom entereth into thine heart and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul, discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee" (Prov. 2:10-11).

When wisdom enters *into thine heart* —not simply your head but into your *heart*. This wisdom must touch your heart and cause the doing of these things to be pleasant to your soul. You must delightfully be doing them and have all your affections on things above, then they will deliver you.

"The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way: but the folly of fools is deceit" (Prov. 14:8).

To go about deceiving ourselves is the greatest folly. "The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way." Yes, understand your way, watch every step, and no longer be the fool trusting in his own heart and walking in the vanity of his own mind. We must not walk with the man spoken of in Proverbs 2:13, "who leaves the paths of uprightness to walk in the way of darkness." We must not delight in the frowardness of the wicked, but in truth. Then we shall know that we are on the way to glory; can

(Continued on page 8)

Let Us Pray...

Our loving, heavenly Father, this day brings us under renewed obligation to thank and praise Thee for Thy continued mercy and goodness to us. We thank Thee for life and health, and that we are surrounded by so many temporal blessings. Thy blessings are showered on the just and unjust alike. But grant that we may be aware that these blessings cannot always continue on this basis. The day is not far distant when Thou wilt make Thyself known to the sons of men and Thy judgments will descend upon the wicked members of society just as they came upon the wicked of Jerusalem for their disregard of the laws that came from Thee.

Help us to take warning from the people of that Day who considered Thy warnings as little worth and who went their own way until their sins became so displeasing to Thee that Thou removed them out of Thy sight. May we be aware that those same curses shall come upon us if

we take lightly Thy proffered mercy and Thy threat of eternal punishment, and that for us too the harvest will be past, the summer ended and we not saved.

Of those people who did not hearken the question was asked, "Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush." May such words never be spoken truthfully of us, but may we be so ashamed when we do wrong that we will never allow ourselves to fall into the same mire-hole again but will hasten to free ourselves from that and every other form of evil and offer ourselves a living sacrifice, free from every stain of sin.

May we never grow weary in well doing, never faint by the way, never tire of a continued effort toward holiness, being assured that our misconduct will bring Thy divine wrath upon our heads and that we will be saved only by our own effort. So help us now to make every move count toward holiness.

We pray Thee to be with us in this service. Bless and sustain each one who is striving to live the holy and exalted life. And may we continue faithful to the end that eternal salvation may be ours in the world to come. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

O Thou eternal One! whose presence bright
All space doth occupy, all motion guide,
Unchanged through Time's all-devastating flight,
Thou only God! there is no God beside!
Being above all beings! Mighty One!
Whom none can comprehend and none explore,
Who fill'st existence with THYSELF alone;
Embracing all, supporting, ruling o'er,
Being whom we call God, whom we adore!

In its sublime research, Philosophy
May measure out the ocean deep, may count
The sands or the sun's rays; but, God, for Thee
There is no weight nor measure; none can mount
Up to thy omniscience; Reason's brightest spark,
Unkindled by Thy light, in vain would try
To trace Thy counsels; their minds so dark
That thought is lost ere thought can soar so high,
Lost like past moments in eternity.

Thou in the endless ages past and gone
Didst form and shape the earth; O Lord on Thee
Eternity had its foundation; all
Sprang forth from Thee—of light, joy, harmony—
Sole origin; all life, all beauty, Thine.
Thy hand created all, and doth create;
Thy splendor fills all space with rays divine.
Thou art, and wert, and shalt be, Glorious! Great!
Life-giving, life-sustaining Potentate!

Thy chains th' unmeasured universe surround,
Upheld by Thee, by Thee inspired with breath;
Thou the beginning with the end hast bound,
And, in Thy wisdom, mingled life and death!
As sparks mount upward from the fiery blaze,
So suns are born, so worlds spring forth from Thee,
And as the spangles in the sunny rays
Shine round the silver snow, the pageantry
Of heaven's bright army glitters in Thy praise.

A million torches, lighted by Thy hand,
Wander unwearied through the blue abyss;
They own Thy power, accomplish Thy command,
All filled with life, all eloquent with bliss.
What shall we call them? Worlds of crystal light?
A glorious company of golden streams?
Lamps of celestial ether, burning bright?
Suns lighting systems with their joyous beams?—
But Thou to these art as the noon to night.

Yes! as a drop of water in the sea,
All this magnificence in Thee is lost;
What are ten thousand worlds compared to Thee?
And what am I, then?—Heaven's unnumbered host
Though multiplied by myriads, and arrayed
In all the glory of sublimest thought,
Is but an atom in the balance, weighed
Against Thy greatness—is a cipher brought
Against infinity! Oh! what am I, then?—Naught.

Naught! Yet the effulgence of Thy light divine,
Pervading worlds, hath reached my bosom too;
Yes! In my spirit doth Thy wisdom shine,
As shines the sunbeam in a drop of dew.
Naught!—but I live, and on hope's pinions fly
Eager toward thy mercy; for in Thee
I live, and breathe, and dwell; aspiring high
E'en to the throne of Thy divinity,
By cleansing now from all iniquity.

Thou art! directing, guiding all. Thou art!
Direct my understanding, then, to Thee;
Control my spirit, guide my wandering heart:
Though but an atom midst immensity,
Still I am something fashioned by Thy hand!
Pray help me serve in faith my course on earth
As near the ending of man's rule I stand,
Close to the realms where angels have their birth,
Just on the boundary of the glory-land!

The realm of being is complete in me;
In me is matter's last gradation lost;
And the next step is—immortality!
Made in Thy image, who am now but dust!
A monarch and a priest with Christ for God!
Whence came I here, and how? so marvelously
Constructed and conceived! Unknown:—this clod
Lives surely through some higher energy!
For from itself alone it could not be!

Creator, yes! Thy wisdom and Thy Word
Create anew! Thou source of life and good!
Thou comfort of my spirit, and my Lord!
Thy light, Thy truth, in their bright plenitude,
Filled me with an immortal hope to spring
O'er the abyss of death; with angels wear
The garments of eternal day, and wing
My heavenly flight beyond this little sphere,
Some day to Thee, its Source, its Author, there. —Anon.

**The mighty God
will send His Son
as inspecting officer.
He knows every disease,
even if it is only starting.**

(Continued from page 6)

tell our moorings; can tell how much further we have to go. And when we reach that blessed state, we can leap for joy, because we are ready, ready to land, ready to enter the haven of rest forever.

Beware. . .Quarantine

But oh the sorrow if not ready. If not cured of our diseases then, if not well we will have to be "quarantined."

To have it said to us, "You have such a loathesome disease you cannot land. You will have to stay on the old ship. You will never be permitted to leave quarantine. You will never reach the shore, never reach the portals of everlasting rest."

Had you been across the ocean you could understand it better. We had been gone so long, and were so anxious to see the faces of our loved ones and home again. Then the quarantine officer came around and said to one, "It is black smallpox that you have. You cannot go ashore. You must be quarantined." To think what this means—you will never see your friends again, never gaze upon your dear home again. Gone, gone forever! Lost! That would have been terrible! What anguish would have filled our hearts to hear such words.

But what is this in comparison to what will be if we are not accepted by the Great Judge? To see the bright shining gates open for the glorified ones, and we not permitted to enter; never see Abraham in his glory, never enter that summerland of love.

It is enough to stir us to the very bottom of our hearts, and cause us to let understanding lead and keep us. We are on the old ship, on the sea of nations. Our Master is the inspecting officer. Yes, the mighty God will send His Son as inspecting officer. He knows every disease, even if it is only starting. If we know we can be cured, we have hope. But when He pronounces our disease incurable, what sorrow of heart! Left to perish in corruption because we ran greedily in the way of folly; because we followed our own mind, because we were not willing to be guided and led.

The bright shining angels, dressed in white, whiter

than any fuller's soap can whiten, move majestically along, and glorified saints all join in one grand company saying: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come, . . . Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power, for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created" (Rev. 4:8-11).

No sooner does the Amen leave our lips than the voice of many waters, mighty angels from the high courts of heaven respond: "Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth" (Rev. 19:6).

The unfaithful on the ship will see the pearly gates open wide for the faithful and hear the glad acclamations of the great multitude, the mighty thunders of gladness and rejoicing "for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." Think of all the angels of God rejoicing when the Bride is proclaimed ready.

Such a grand "Alleluia." The righteous will hear this response from ten thousand worlds on high, and it will be worth more than thousands of worlds like this. How you will wish then that you had made yourself ready. Get into this work now. Do you think God will accept you if you do not walk uprightly? He will never save you if you leave the paths of uprightness to walk in the ways of darkness. As we think of the little number who will be clothed in those glistening robes of white, shining in their beauty as they move away to their summerland of love, it seems that it would cause us to begin in earnest to clothe ourselves. Put on the yoke now, and gladly, for if yoked with Him when He comes, we will never have to be unyoked.

There are two paths leading in opposite directions: one toward life, the other toward death. The longer you travel in the path that leads to death, the further you are from life. And there is no way to get back but by retracing all your steps. You lost just that much more time. A man in Buffalo wants to go to San Francisco. He goes fifty miles east toward New York. Has he redeemed the time? He has to come back and start again. There is no other way.

This is the only way to life, by traveling in the right direction. We must get in the way of life. But just to get in the way does not mean you are safe. You must follow all the way. You must walk a certain distance before you will get this life. When you get on the right road you are not yet in San Francisco. You must keep traveling.

Suppose you had been abroad, and were on your way home when you found that you had smallpox and were being put in quarantine, and would never see your home again. How your hearts would be wrung with anguish! But at the thought of losing the beautiful, eternal home, your eyes are dry; not a tear, not a feeling.

We must get our hearts softened and concerned in these things. What will it be when the City in Shining

Gold is in sight, and the wife has made herself ready and we are left out? How will you feel then to hear the inspection officer say to you, "You cannot go in; you have smallpox"? You will cry, "Let me in! Let me in!" But he will say, "No, you were warned time and again; no pity now; it is too late."

What sorrow will seize you then. Let us picture this in our minds until it becomes a reality, until we will say, "I don't want the loathsome disease. I will. I will forsake my evil ways."

These things are certainly coming, and how will you like to see your loved ones go off without you? But you need not, for He says: "Turn ye, why will ye die?" Turn now, while there is time. Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not upon your own understanding, and you will be blessed in so doing.

God Is Merciful

We are right down here at the end of time. The first, second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, tenth hours have passed. We are now in the eleventh hour, in the cool of the day. Can we not work for Him in the little time that is left? Wonderful goodness of God, that even down here He will give us time to get ready; and yet we lean upon our own understanding and say that we will walk in our own ways. We must cease doing this, and in all our ways acknowledge Him.

How He has in mercy warned you, telling you of your disease, how you contracted it, and how to cure it; and if you do not take heed now, it will be your own destruction. You cannot expect any help then.

We had better begin now; there is no time to lose. We look into your hearts and see the sympathetic cord. It begins to pull. If not careful, we will be like Lot's wife. We must practice now. I am practicing every day.

Oh, when the Master comes, will we be ready, or will we be found among the proud? The question is important. "Who hath stood in the counsel of the Lord and hath perceived and heard his word? Who hath marked his word, and heard it?" (Jer. 23:18). How many are doing this? What is the counsel of the Lord? It is to walk circumspectly; to walk uprightly.

"Behold a whirlwind of the Lord is gone forth in fury, even a grievous whirlwind; it shall fall grievously upon the head of the wicked" (Jer. 23:19). Think of it. The whirlwind of the Lord. Don't think you can get out of it then, unless you prepare now. If you should see a cyclone coming, things flying in the air, houses and wagons whirling and twisting, you would not stop then for money or anything else; you would flee to a place of safety. The whirlwind of the Lord is coming. When? "In the latter days ye shall consider it perfectly" (Jer. 23:20).

As certain as this chapter in Jeremiah was written, so

The longer you travel in the path that leads to death, the further you are from life.

certain will this grievous whirlwind overtake the wicked in the latter days. All these things will happen to those who refuse to hearken to the word of the Lord. Whose words? "My words," saith the Lord.

What must we do to escape this fearful doom? "And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart" (Jer. 29:13).

O the wonderful things God has promised if we call upon Him in the right way, if we seek Him with our whole heart. Great and mighty things that we know not of. "Behold, I will bring it health and cure, and I will cure them, and will reveal unto them the abundance of peace and truth" (Jer. 33:6). Now is the time to be cured of our dreadful disease, before the time for quarantine comes.

When we are cured and clean, what will He do for us? "And it shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and an honour before all the nations of the earth which shall hear all the good that I do unto them: and they shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and for all the prosperity that I procure unto it" (Jer. 33:9).

What pleasure! What joy! What honor! What power! A joy, and a praise, and an honor before all nations of the earth. Such a city of light we can be. How He is warning and encouraging us to get rid of our diseases, so that the Quarantine Officer will see no sign of ill in us when He looks us over.

Such wonderful promises before us—how they should stir our hearts to work as never before. Amen and amen!

Let all the congregation respond, Amen and Amen!


Build a little fence of trust
Around today;
Fill the space with loving work,
And therein stay.


Look not between the sheltering bars
Upon tomorrow,
But take whatever comes to thee
Of joy or sorrow.

—*And Still She Speaks*—

Part Five


The following lines are extracts from sermons, discussions, talks, comments by Rev. Maud Hembree (1853-1935).

 We must be careful or we will be like Esau, sell our birthright for a mess of pottage. Esau found no place for repentance, though afterward he sought it carefully with tears. He went too long. He let the evil thought linger too long. He even planned murder. He said, "When my father is dead then will I take my brother's life." It was a terrible evil. We do not have to commit such a terrible evil as that to be wrong in God's sight. Any little evil is wrong. So we must watch and be careful.


 If you want to be saved, do not be proud and haughty but listen to what the Lord says. "Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness." Don't you wait.

Once years ago when on our Mission Steamer, we were holding meetings in Nashville, Tennessee. We were using a great tabernacle there. Just before we left they called General Booth in; and the old man, how he did expatiate! He said a man was thrown from a horse and just while falling from the stirrup to the ground, he was pardoned; and if you wait until the last moment of your life and say, Lord have mercy, the pearly gates will open wide. That sounded so good to them. But we told them to give glory to God while they are living and while they have the strength and time.


Suppose you are accustomed to getting angry and impatient today and tomorrow and next week, and you see a cyclone coming; you become frightened and you say, Lord have mercy. Suppose you see death coming at your door and you know you have been angry and dishonest and you say, Lord have mercy. I wonder, do you overcome that anger and dishonesty while you are saying it? Why, no. You can no more do it than the Ethiopian can change his skin or the leopard his spots. Don't you wait, says the God of heaven. Give glory to God now, before the shadow of death overtakes you.


 Paul could rejoice, and he did rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory; still I am glad I did not live then. I am glad to be living down in this age—a wonderful age, the most wonderful age that ever dawned on humanity, right at the close of the six thousand years.


We know from the Divine Record that if we will lay aside every weight, overcome every sin and run with patience the race set before us, the wonderful crown of eternal life will be ours.

 When we are found mistaken—even if we are in our homes—we must be willing to acknowledge we were in the wrong. We must practice doing that whenever we are mistaken. Naturally, we like to cover up and say somebody else did it. I have heard men and women say they will never acknowledge when they are wrong. That is terrible. What a different feeling it brings when one acknowledges he is in the wrong. It encourages others to acknowledge when they are wrong and promotes meekness and humbleness of mind. "For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life" (Prov. 6:23). We must learn that to be told of our faults and mistakes means to grow stronger, and we want to get stronger and stronger. Naturally, we think and say a thing and we want to keep up that way; we don't want to come down and admit we are mistaken. But it is more honor to admit we are wrong.

The more you acknowledge your faults and sins, the easier it is. We want to get that impressed upon our minds because it is something human nature does not like to do. We don't like to believe that reproofs of instruction are the way of life, and to be meek and lowly. But this is what God says, and we should believe it.

 We know from the Divine Record that if we will lay aside every weight, overcome every sin and run with patience the race set before us, the wonderful crown of eternal life will be ours.

 How often we have prayed to the Lord that if He would deliver us from some temptation or trial we would serve Him better than ever before! But after we were delivered, how well did we remember our vows? Many we have known who, after they were delivered, went back and did not serve the Lord; they forgot their prayer. Let us see that we remember to keep our vows.

 It is a work of time, a persevering work, little by little, to get rid of the old nature, the stubbornness and the perverseness. But it can be done.

Risk in Overreaching?

ALL OF US know what it is to come short of the expectations we set for our own spiritual growth. We look back and say we should have done better—much better—than we did. We were too hasty in our judgment; we were blue and dispirited when we should have been radiant with hope. Instead of encouraging a brother or sister, our remarks were disparaging until our comrade, too, lost heart. And all because of our poor example. Or we were light and foolish when we should have been meditating. Or we answered a matter before we thought it through. We are, to say the least, disappointed at ourselves and wonder what is the reason for our failure.

Perhaps we tell ourselves that we were just expecting too much of ourselves, that we had aimed too high. A whole day without tripping is just too much to ask of ourselves at this point. Or the test was more difficult than we were prepared to handle. Or we were not feeling well; or things were simply against us—no one could have held together under such a test.

Oh, the excuses we make for our failures.

Excuses are abundant; real reasons are harder to come by. Much harder. The real reasons are the less flattering facts we prefer to overlook—that we just didn't try hard enough; that we didn't utilize all the possibilities within us; that we—God forbid!—forgot our high calling; or—we are just plain lazy.

Nothing is more deadly to spiritual initiative than to make excuses for our shortcomings. It kills the "bounce" that we might otherwise get from a hard fall. It stifles the incentive to improve, because we do not feel condemned for what we allowed ourselves to do; we had such a good "reason"! Our failure, we tell ourselves, was the natural result of forces beyond our control. We weren't really to blame; it was our lack of ability. Or talent. Or potential. Or circumstances. Or—

Which is only another way of saying that God was to blame, that He allowed something we couldn't handle, that He went back on His promise not to test us beyond our strength, that it was just more than we were able to take, and so we failed.

In our more candid moments we know that nothing could be further from the truth. There are reasons aplenty for our failure, but not one of them is any failure on God's part. Nor are we lacking in capability. The real reasons are our own deficiencies—what we failed to put

forth in effort, will-power, and spiritual exertion.

There is no substitute for genuine effort. There is no simple, automatic way to subdue the natural laziness within us. There is no way but to talk up plainly to ourselves and say, "I am going to do it, and nothing and no one on earth is going to keep me from it."

Is there not, however, some danger in overreaching? Is it not possible that we may expect more of ourselves than we may be able to achieve? There is no question but that this is possible, but it is not probable, our human nature being what it is and human inclinations being what they are. By far the greater danger lies in not requiring enough of ourselves, in being so easily self-satisfied and content with ourselves and the too-low goals we set that we fall short of our possibilities. While it may be possible to become discouraged by expecting more of ourselves than we can humanly achieve, far greater is the danger of being too easily satisfied—when we did not require enough. For if we do fail to meet expectations that we have set too high, what have we lost? We can always try again, and perhaps with greater determination—and greater success!

It is an ancient truism that we never strike higher than we aim. What, then, can be the possible advantage of aiming too low? There is none.

In view of the shortness of time in this present age, and the urgent need to accomplish as much as possible in the time remaining, should we not set our aim high, very high? And if we fail to meet it, let us not be discouraged but simply try again. The extra measure of effort may well make the difference, and we may find ourselves achieving far more than we thought possible.

Can we imagine Paul saying to himself, "This is just too hard for me, Lord. I set my goal too high, I can't do it"?

Someone has said that we should not complain about our limitations until we have exhausted our possibilities. Let's try it. On such a formula, we cannot lose.

If we do chance to set our goals too high for our possibilities, what have we lost? Whereas, if we underset our goals and underestimate our possibilities how seriously we may lose!

When we stand before the Judge of all the earth, who will worry then that they did too much, that they strove too hard, that they fought the evils of their nature too intensely, that they gave up too much, that they aimed—and struck—too high?

MM

IF...IF...IF

WHAT A privilege to become acquainted with those whom I shall associate with and love throughout eternity in a glorious Kingdom headed by our Lord and King Jesus Christ.

But such a statement as "I shall" is always accompanied with that big "IF"... "IF we continue steadfast to the end." This big "IF" must be fought with all-out determination. When we stand before the righteous Judge, we want no "IF" to come between us.

It seems that the more we strive toward perfecting our character, the more the big "IF's" we must confront. "IF ye will obey my voice indeed and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me. . . ." And, "IF we faint not," we shall reap. And, "IF we be willing and obedient we shall eat the good of the land." And, "IF ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed." These are all positive IF's by which we may profit, IF's that can be used as steppingstones to holier living. IF we come out from the world, we shall be God's own sons and daughters (II Cor. 6:17-18). IF we cleanse our heart, then we can face Him unashamed (Job 11:13-15). IF we seek and search diligently, then we shall understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God (Prov. 2:4-5). Each time we put an IF behind us, we are one step closer to those heavenly portals.

But there are always the negative IF's. At first, they are bold cautions; trumpeting alarms that will mean our failure if not heeded right away. We hear these every day: "IF I had more time to study; IF I just had more patience; IF I just wasn't so tired," and from all these IF's proceed a great many "might-have-been's." But they are stumbling stones that will bring much sorrow and pain if we don't get back on the race track.

If we continue in this condition, with all these negative IF's cumbering our way, before we know it we will be looking back with dismay as we realize that IF we had overcome; IF we had taken time; IF we had been more patient, our road would not have been nearly so hard. These are IF's of defeat. At this point, the cautions are no longer to be seen or heard. We are now approaching the point of "no return." The red light is on, God's trumpet blast is blaring "STOP! Turn around."

Let us not stumble on these stones as did King

Solomon. He did not heed the caution light when his eyes lusted after Pharaoh's daughter. Nor, again when he took her in marriage. Nor again and again as he took more and more of the daughters of heathen nations for wives, finally becoming completely separated from the living God and turning to the heathen gods of stone and wood; every imaginable god of the ungodly nations around him. Before his death he admitted to being an "old and foolish king." How pathetic, when we think of the opportunity that was his.

Nor should we be like Balaam, who entertained thoughts and dreams of worldly riches and high honor which cut off his hope. Nor would we imitate Ananias and Sapphira, who thought they could lie to God and hold back part of the money they had received for their land.

On the contrary, let us be like Paul and run our race with zeal, patience and a single eye fixed steadfastly on the greatest of all riches: eternal life and joy with our Lord and King, Jesus Christ. We can conquer those big IF's and stand assured that we shall reap the greater blessing at Christ's return.

Oh, the big IF's. Woe to us if they have not been overcome at the end of our journey! Will this not be the saddest of all sad laments of the unfaithful? "IF only I had listened." Or, "IF only I had been more patient." Or, "IF only I had put away those hurt feelings." Or, like Solomon, "IF only I had looked the other way and learned to say 'No' to myself."

Let us, like Jesus, go forward whatever the cost. Better that we enter the Kingdom blind or lame, than not to enter at all.

—Contributed.

There is a kind of hypocrisy
That I like to exalt.

It is pretending not to see
Another person's fault—

Until I've first looked straight at **me**
And checked my own heart's vault;
For then, and only then 'tis time
To see my neighbor's fault.

UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God."

APOSTASY: Departing from the Faith

IN THIS lesson we will look still deeper into the dogmas of the dark centuries of the Middle Ages, when "darkness covered the earth and gross darkness the people."

A. Fathers of Darkness

3. Popes and more popes. History shows that between the seventh and fourteenth centuries the Catholic Church degenerated to its lowest level, assisted by a succession of irreverent popes. During one of these centuries, there were no less than 28 successive popes. "For several years the papal chair was filled by bribery, murder, or the favor of women of high rank and low morality," writes Durant. "For half a century the family of the official of the papal palace made and unmade popes at will"—(all successors of Peter, they would have us assume).

At the same time, the sale of church offices was common. One German baron controlled and sold eleven bishoprics. "Such appointees were men of the world," writes the historian. "Many lived in luxury, engaged in war, allowed bribery in episcopal courts, named their relatives to high positions, and worshiped mammon with undivided loyalty." Corruption flourished, both in the church and state. "Popes were seized, jailed, starved and strangled in order to influence them. . . . The aristocracy of Rome divided into factions, and whichever faction prevailed in the city intrigued to choose and sway the pope" and "between them they dragged the papacy to the lowest level in its history."

The words of the Prophet had been fulfilled; truth had fallen in the street, equity could not enter. They had cast the truth to the ground and trampled upon it, and they practiced and prospered.

One of the better known popes of this era was Gregory, who reigned in the seventh century. According to the historian, Gregory "deeply influenced and expressed the medieval mind." Gregory was a prolific writer. Of his works Durant says, "He left behind him books of popular theology so rich in nonsense that one

wonders whether he believed what he wrote, or merely wrote what he thought it well for simple and sinful souls to believe." Gregory made no attempt to separate legend from fact. His books were devoured by the common people "Because they offered as history the most amazing tales of the visions, prophecies, and miracles of Italy's holy men." In them "the reader learned of massive boulders moved by prayer, of a saint who could make himself invisible, of poisons rendered harmless by the sign of the cross, . . . of the power of relics" in performing miracles, "of the sick made whole and the dead restored to life."

Gregory also had a definition for the human soul: "The living force and guide of the body," and, he asserted, "Many of our time have often seen souls departing from the body." He also gave a frightening definition of hell, which led to the development of the doctrine of purgatory, a place in which the dead could complete their atonement for sins committed but not atoned for during their lifetime.

Gregory's writings show the depth of the darkness that had enveloped the church. There is not a glimmer of light to be found in the church of his time; the faithful remnant had disappeared, replaced by a people superstitious beyond belief, accepting for religion the mass of error being handed out by the church hierarchy. The common people had no access to the Scriptures, Pope Gregory having decreed that the Bible "needs careful interpretation by trained minds, and the church, as custodian of sacred tradition, is the only proper interpreter." Jesus' words, "Blessed is he that readeth" were not to be heard in the church. The darkness was dense.

B. Pernicious Practices

The darkness of the "Dark Ages" was not confined to the church. The powers that governed were little better. The historian writes that these centuries witnessed not only "the utmost moral degradation of the papacy, but the almost universal spread of anarchy and barbarism, while intellectually it was, par excellence, the dark age."

1. Punishment of heretics. During this era the so-

called heretics (anyone who dared to question the authority of the state church or believe any doctrine other than those taught by that church) were condemned to death at the stake often on the testimony of unreliable witnesses—or no witnesses at all. When no witnesses could be found, an authority of either church or state could condemn a person to death if they thought him a threat to the established religion. “If every man may interpret the Bible according to his own light, and make his own individual brand of Christianity,” said the theologians, “the religion of Europe would soon be shattered into a hundred creeds.”

The condemnation of heretics was known as the Inquisition, and of it the historian Durant writes, “Compared with the persecution of heresy in Europe from 1227 to 1492, the persecution of Christians by Romans in the first three centuries after Christ was a mild and humane procedure....revealing a ferocity unknown in any beast...and ranks among the darkest blots on the record of mankind.”

2. Indulgences. These formed another blot on this same period of history. The practice grew out of one of the sacraments of the Catholic Church, a means of allowing a penitent sinner to atone for his confessed sin through fasts, prayers, almsgiving or other works of charity.

An indulgence was an exemption granted by the church for some or all of the punishment due in purgatory for earthly sin. The church claimed the right to remit such punishments by transmitting to the penitent some of “the rich treasury of grace earned by Christ’s sufferings and death, and by saints whose merits outweighed their sins.”

The practice of granting indulgences was soon abused and became mixed with politics when priests refused indulgence to those who sided with the emperors against the popes. Some carried it to the extreme, using it as a license to sin again.

Indulgences were not limited to parish priests. They were offered by popes for participation in the Crusades—so-called “holy wars” launched to drive non-Christians from Palestine, and from Jerusalem in particular. In the year 1299 Pope Boniface VIII offered a “plenary [blanket] indulgence” for those who should come and worship at St. Peter’s tomb during that year. It was a rich idea. No less than two million, it is estimated, made the pilgrimage to Rome, each depositing their modest offering before St. Peter’s tomb. The historian writes: “It is said that two priests with rakes in their hands were kept busy day and night collecting the coins.”

Great wealth poured into the church coffers in these years, much of it from outside Italy. It has been calculated that the total income of the papacy about the year

1250 was greater than the combined revenues of all the secular sovereigns of Europe. From England in the year 1252, the papacy received a sum three times the revenue of the ruling crown, much of it payment for papal indulgences granted.

The practice of granting indulgences began in the 9th century; and although it was denounced by several church councils, it continued until well into the 15th century. Against such practices Luther rebelled and started the reformation of the 16th century.

No longer were there any true Christians in the church. No true disciple of Christ would have either part or lot with such works, but would cry out with the words of Peter: “Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money” (Acts 8:20-22).

C. Dark Dogmas

During these same dark years, the church issued new doctrines as spiritually dark as the age in which they appeared, doctrines which served only to deepen the darkness that hung over the church. It was an era when superstition was of almost everything amiss, and says the historian, “A hundred objects were worn for their magic power to ward off devils and bring good luck”—a practice that had been adopted from the pagans. Such beliefs were not actually sanctioned by the church, but the apostate hierarchy lacked the authority to control the people, and parish priests were often not above their flock.

1. Mariolatry. This tolerant spirit of the leaders led to the worship of Mary. She had gained some honor in the eastern branch of the church in the sixth century. It was then that the “Feast of Assumption of the Virgin” was established, asserting that Mary had been received bodily up into heaven. The feast was assigned the date of an ancient pagan festival, and Mary became the patron saint of Constantinople.

Not until some six centuries later did “Mariolatry” flower in the church. Prayers were addressed to her specifically, as well as petitions for aid, and she was credited with answering prayer. Many legends concerning Mary were created which the church did not officially accept, yet several church festivals were established marking the events of her life. As late as the year 1854 the doctrine of the “Immaculate Conception” was issued by the pope, declaring Mary to have been born sinless.

2. Transubstantiation. This word, coined by the apostate church, describes the process by which the bread and wine of the mass is supposedly transformed into the “literal blood and body of Christ by the miraculous power of the priest.” It was proclaimed an “essen-

tial dogma of the church" by the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215. The doctrine has been often contested, but stands to this day, having been affirmed by other church councils in the intervening years. One of these councils strengthened the doctrine by adding that "every particle of the consecrated wafer, no matter how broken, contains the whole body, blood, and soul of Jesus Christ."

3. Purgatory. Like transubstantiation, the belief in purgatory is a product of men's minds, not of the Scripture. Augustine touched briefly on the idea in his writings, suggesting the possibility of the existence of such a place for the "purging of sins not fully atoned for before death." Earlier church "fathers" such as Clement and Origen had also suggested such a cleansing place for all, saying that "even Paul and Peter must pass through it in order to be purified from all sin." It was not established as a doctrine of the church until the seventh century under pope Gregory. The doctrine was controversial and became one of the irreconcilable differences between the Greek and Latin churches.

According to the **New Schaff-Herzog Religious Encyclopedia**, the doctrine "as now taught in the Roman Catholic Church is that souls which depart this life in a state of grace but guilty of venial sins or liable to some punishment after the guilt of sins is forgiven, are subject to a process of cleansing before entering heaven. The souls destined there [in purgatory] are helped by the prayers of the faithful.... But what the location of the place is, ... or the duration of the purifying process, ... are questions to which the church affords no answers."

The worship of Mary, transubstantiation, purgatory and other such doctrines are only further evidence of the total darkness of the era. The words of the Prophet were fulfilled: "A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so" (Jer. 5:30-31).

IV. THE FIRST RAY OF LIGHT

"It is always darkest just before the dawn." This truism applies in the secular world; and it was also true in the religious world. The entire religious world was wrapped in darkness for many centuries before there was even a flicker of light. The Catholic Church dominated the religious life of the then known world and sought to control the civil governments as well. The Roman Curia laid a heavy hand on the pocket-books of all who came under its influence, extracting a giant share of the world's wealth.

In the secular world, conditions were no better. Class hatred prevailed. The lower class were servants,

even slaves, to the wealthy landowners. Freedom was something reserved for only a privileged few; the masses had nothing which they could rightfully call their own. Neither human life nor property was secure.

Like the dawn after the darkness of night came a first ray of light. It happened in England in the thirteenth century—ironically in the same year (1215) the Catholic Church handed down one of its darkest dogmas—transubstantiation—the dogma which affirmed that the blessing of the priest changed the bread and wine of the sacrament into the literal blood and body of Christ.

A. The Magna Carta

England has had its share of tyrannical rulers, both kings and queens; but unlike Israel of old, the good have outnumbered the violent. But no name in the ranks of English monarchs is more synonymous with tyranny than that of King John, described by the historian Durant as "the most despicable of English kings." Generations had lived under monarchs, but none before nor since ruled with such a heavy hand as King John. His rule was so harsh that his people rebelled against him. While the king was away waging war, the leading barons (the upperclass landowners) and the leading churchmen met together and drew up an agreement called "The Great Charter," or the "Magna Carta." The document spelled out the rights of the people and demanded that the king honor these rights as provided by law and custom.

When the king returned from the war, he was met by a delegation of barons and bishops who demanded that he sign the document. The king vainly tried to gather support against the document. In the end he was forced by a large delegation of the people to sign it and affix his seal. Copies were distributed throughout the country. The document insisted upon the right of justice and property for all—rights which we take for granted—and established the principle that the king must govern according to law.

The Magna Carta is regarded as one of the most notable documents in history. It became the basis of English law and was brought to America by the early settlers, who used its principles in the government of the colonies. Though it was a step toward reform, many centuries were yet to pass before the light of divine knowledge could again shine in the darkness. The apostasy still held sway.

B. The Bible Into English

At the word of God, the light of divine knowledge was made known to men. But as we have seen, the time came when men no longer desired the light of God's

Word, and the light of true religion went out. Divine foreknowledge had revealed that this would happen, that darkness would envelop the earth. And it did.

But just as surely had Divine foreknowledge decreed that the light would again shine out. However, before the light of knowledge could shine, the source of that light had to be exhumed. Men had to be free to read the Word of God for themselves, in their own common language, without having to depend on the erroneous interpretations offered by a limited clergy.

It was now the 14th century, and light was slowly coming. But very slowly. As yet there were no newspapers, no magazines; the only reading material available were books, and these were few and precious. The printing press had not yet arrived, and the only known means of duplicating the printed word was by hand. The Bible still remained in the hands of a very few. Only small portions had been translated into English, and these were not publicly circulated. As for the rest of the Bible, it was still "sealed," as it were, in the obscurity of the Latin language.

But this was the fourteenth century, and change was imminent, thanks to a few exceedingly brave souls.

1. Wycliffe. To John Wycliffe we are indebted for a stupendous effort in delivering the initial blow that broke the yoke of Rome and led to the establishment of the Protestant churches in Europe. He believed that the "Bible should be the sole and unerring guide to true religion." His emphasis was that of "an infallible Bible as against the fallible traditions and dogmas of the Roman church," and "on the sermon in the common vernacular as against a mystic ritual in a foreign tongue"—Latin.

Wycliffe vowed that the Bible should be available to all who could read. Laboriously he copied his Bible by hand, translating the Latin Vulgate—England's only Bible up to that time—into English. Without the aid of a printing press, many copies of his translation were made, some of which survive to this day. Opposition was fierce, but the Bible survived—because God willed that it should survive.

To such men as Wycliffe, who had the courage to go against the decree of the church and place the Bible in the hands of the common people, we are deeply indebted. God was working through them toward the time when the light of His Word might again shine on earth. But many centuries lay between those first attempts at translating and circulating the Bible and the time when whosoever desired might pick up a Bible and read.

2. Tyndale. An edict of 1408 forbidding "unauthorized translation" and publication in English or other languages effectively discouraged duplicating of the Bible for a few years. But in the middle of the century,

the printing press was invented (c. 1456), and both the Hebrew and Greek Bibles were printed in their original languages. The first printed English Bible became inevitable.

In the time of William Tyndale it was still heresy to oppose the edicts of the Catholic Church, and heretics were treated mercilessly. Many were tortured, even burned at the stake. But Tyndale was undaunted. As a youth in school, he expressed his hope to translate the Bible into English. An ardent Catholic reproved him, saying, "It would be better to be without God's law than without the pope's." But Tyndale answered, "If God spare my life, ere many years I will cause the boy that driveth the plow to know more of the Scriptures than you do."

He started his translation task in England, but was forced to remove his work to Germany to escape persecution. In Germany he continued, moving from place to place to escape his pursuers. Tyndale's translation differed from Wycliffe's in that he used the original Hebrew and Greek texts as his source. His excellent knowledge of both languages and his ability to write English in a clear, understandable form resulted in a Bible that became the basis for numerous later translations.

Six thousand copies of his first printed edition of the New Testament were smuggled into England. The church bishops tried to suppress the edition by buying them and publicly burning them. But Tyndale quickly used the money for larger printings and more editions. And so more copies kept coming from Germany. Even the king tried to assist in suppressing the new translation. Declaring himself the legal head of the church as well of the country, the king forbade the reading or circulation of the Bible in English.

The king's words had little effect, but Tyndale could not escape. In Belgium he fell into the hands of cruel officials, was imprisoned, tried for heresy, convicted and put to death. But even as he died, the whole Bible, based largely on Tyndale's work but without his name, was being circulated and read in England, openly and with the permission of the king—a change that Tyndale could hardly have believed, had he known of it. Already the plowboy could read the Bible in English.

Tyndale lived and died in the darkness of the apostasy. Even so, he was an instrument in the hand of God, doing his part in preparing the way for the rebirth of true religion. When the King James Authorized Version appeared only a century later, ninety percent of it was unchanged from the Tyndale translation.

We can rightly say that Tyndale's work lives on in the Bibles we use today. It was a direct link in the Divine plan to prepare for the end of the apostasy.

Tall Thinking

A DOCTOR, lecturing on attaining and maintaining health, stressed the advice: "For better health, sit tall, stand tall, and *think tall*." The listening audience had no trouble in understanding what he meant by sitting tall or standing tall, but erect thinking, for many was a new term; it required definition. It is a recognized fact that the mind masters the body to a great extent. So thinking above our problems is not only essential to our happiness, but also to our health. Of far greater value are its benefits to the soul. There can be no spiritual health without high and noble tall thinking.

Law governs the production of much of the food for our bodies. It recommends stringent inspection of processing and packing plants to eliminate injurious products. If there were official inspection of thought factories to eliminate the production of inferior products of and for the modern minds, how much safer and cleaner would be the moral health of our nation.

But such inspection must be done by the individual for the individual. It will be done by each one who desires quality thinking, quality conversation, and quality living.

"Guard above all things, guard your inner self" is the Wise Man's advice to Christians (Prov. 4:23, Moff.). If the thought, which always precedes action, is right, we shall never have to worry or be concerned about our outer life; what shows on the surface will be merely reflected from inside. Never doubt it: our "tall thinking" will be obvious.

Too many times our thinking has been dwarfed. We have been concerned with petty interests, with insignificant happenings, with the

opinions of people more than God's standard of holiness. We have yet to reach the heights to produce a superior product. But there is not one thing in the world to prevent our thinking being elevated from this day on. Growth to the full stature in Christ will spring from lofty thoughts. It was by tall thinking that the Tallest of Good Men reached the lofty stature of perfection. He left us a sample of His thinking when He answered the tempter, "It is written." God's law was engraved in His mind, and sustained Him in times of trial so that He did not yield, not even to inferior thoughts.

Much thinking of the average citizen is not tall, nor even dwarf, but is low, "sensual and devilish." We must not nurture such thoughts in our minds even for an instant.

In physical life every one is not tall: there are also medium and short individuals, and there are dwarfs. When a person is below average height the medical world consider this to be the result of some deficiency. In the realm of spiritual stature it is much the same, smallness of stature, results from spiritual deficiencies, making the tall individual extremely rare. As our Lord made plain, no man can change his physical height; but we can always increase our spiritual stature.

If impatience rules our minds, there is no tall thinking going on there. It manifests, rather confused thinking. A modern translation of Prov. 14:7 advises, "Withdraw from an impatient man; you will not find a word of sense in him." Our thinking is spiritually subnormal if we allow pride to control us. It puffs us up to an artificial height which is doomed to catastrophe, as the Wise Man comments

(Prov. 16:18). Jealousy, sensitiveness and selfishness stem from low-rate thinking. Stubbornness meters our thoughts so that they cannot expand to higher levels. A root of bitterness in our hearts blights every thought and does untold harm.

The function of tall thinking does away with useless regrets over past failures; all the present strength is utilized for greater heights. We can encourage ourselves on toward holiness by the very thoughts we entertain.

The thoughts will grow tall in a mind that is motivated by God's promises. Given sufficient thought, their grandeur will overshadow all earthly trials and perplexities and stimulate our minds to outgrow them.

Let us nourish and train our thoughts to grow tall.

Paul was a tall thinker; his mind was occupied with the hope of becoming a part of God's new creation; and he urged us to do likewise, so we would be rooted and grounded in the faith, and know the fulness of God.

It is said that the taller a tree grows the deeper it sends its roots to stay it in the time of storm. The person of lofty thoughts has a depth of character. He is not unduly concerned about the trivial circumstances of life. His conversation edifies, his presence inspires and blesses.

Often growing children will stand on their tiptoes in an effort to make themselves appear taller, and are thrilled, at each new inch gained. Let us copy this enthusiasm to continually measure ourselves by those spiritually advanced, and the Pattern God gave us, our Lord Jesus Christ, and see how tall we can grow.

All depends on how tall our thinking becomes. MM

Life's Irritations

Everybody has some annoyances in life. No one is completely free from the irritations which are the result of our contacts with each other. People do things which get on our nerves. They have ways of stirring us up on the inside and of riling our dispositions. Since this is a common experience and is not likely to be removed from human relations in the foreseeable future, we ought to give some attention to the successful ways of handling it in our lives.

What we do with life's irritations and what we let them do to us have telling effects on where we go in life and what we get out of the journey. If mishandled, they can make us extremely miserable and even destroy us. However, this need not be the outcome. These annoyances, properly managed, can be rendered as harmless as last summer's heat wave.

When we deal with these unpleasanties objectively and with our reason rather than our emotions, they cease to be the major problems which we so often let them become. If you group together the irritating factors in life so that you can see them as they actually are, you will discover that they fall into a pattern which is universal.

Everybody has practically the same experience with irritations. And they are composed of the little and not the big things in life. Often the one who is the source of the irritation is not conscious that he is causing it. But

whatever the irritation, its control is always a matter of *personal* mastery first.

To deal with such annoyances successfully we must see them at work in the lives of others. The most complete example for this purpose is described in the Book of Esther.

Haman, the King's right hand man, had about everything that a person could wish for. Artaxerxes had given him the highest position in the kingdom. Everybody recognized his importance and all that happened in the King's palace channeled through him. He had vast wealth. He had a fine family. He had the best job. He had achieved social distinction.

What we do with life's irritations and what we let them do to us have telling effects on where we go in life.

All of this notwithstanding, Haman was not happy. He had noticed one man in the kingdom who was not cordial toward him. Mordecai neither bowed nor trembled before him at the King's gate. All the rest did, but Mordecai did not.

This made Haman furious. It spoiled his day. Thinking about it made him

dissatisfied. "All I have accomplished is no good to me," he said to his friends and family, "so long as I see Mordecai, the Jew, sitting at the King's gate."

The only thing missing in Haman's life was one bow. He was just one little bow short, but he let that missing bow rob him of his reason. It distorted his judgment. It embittered his life and it stole away his joy. In the end, it made him the victim of the method by which he sought vengeance on his irritator. He actually destroyed himself because one man ignored him.

Haman may have mastered some of the big things in life, but he could not handle the little irritations.

Haman has a lot to teach us in handling the things in life that annoy us. His story is a common experience and a horrible example. By analyzing what he did we learn what not to do.

First, Haman never realized that these minor irritations can serve a useful purpose. Just as the dust in the air enables us to see, and the bacteria in the water makes it palatable to drink, so the irritations of life help us maintain a healthy point of view about ourselves; so life's annoyances can be effectively used in disciplining character, and enlarging personality. Accepted as a part of life, they develop patience. Looked on as messengers rather than intruders, they serve as reminders of our limitations and encourage that healthy humility which saves us from thinking of ourselves more highly than we ought to think.

Second, Haman's fate reminds us of what happens when we see only the things in life that we cannot help. His vision was always toward the unpleasant side of life. He was always looking for the blighting things and putting the worst interpretation on what he saw. How miserable that can make our best days. Everybody cannot be expected to run their lives to our pattern. Difference is a mark of personality.

Third, Haman failed to keep his eye on the main events. He majored in the minors. The big things were forgotten

or neglected by too much attention to the inconsequential irritations of his life. He made mountains of discontent out of mole hills of irritation. What did it matter about Mordecai's decorum so long as Haman had the King's ear? But when he lost sight of that fact, the days of his progress and usefulness became numbered. Equanimity of life can be maintained only so long as we see things in their proper perspective, so long as we are conscious of the really big projects of our lives and maintain a constant devotion to them. When the dogs begin to bark around your heels, you only delay yourself if you stop to bark back.

Fourth, Haman's life is a reminder of what happens when we use the best energies of our lives on the smallest concerns: *Nothing is left for our main objective!* In one of the colonial wars between England and France, an English admiral by the name of Fitz was sent to Quebec with the fleet and was commanded to await the arrival of the British army for a simultaneous

Haman has a lot to teach us in handling the things in life that annoy us.

attack on the city. But Fitz, being an ardent Protestant, was annoyed by the images which the Roman Catholic city of Quebec had attached to their church steeples. While waiting for the army, he took daily shots at these images with his ship's cannon, only to discover when the soldiers arrived that he could not support their attack on the city because he had used up his ammunition on these images.

It is easy to slip into the habit of a fusser with small things, to waste our energies on removing the thorns on the rose bush stems when we ought to be cultivating the rose.

A wise man once said that a man is
(Cont. page 20)

Haman Plots to Destroy the Jews*

... King Xerxes promoted a man named Haman to the position of prime minister. Haman was the son of Hammedatha, a descendant of Agag. The king ordered all the officials in his service to show their respect for Haman by kneeling and bowing to him. They all did so, except for Mordecai, who refused to do it. The other officials in the royal service asked him why he was disobeying the king's command; day after day they urged him to give in, but he would not listen to them. "I am a Jew," he explained, "and I cannot bow to Haman." So they told Haman about this, wondering if he would tolerate Mordecai's conduct. Haman was furious when he realized that Mordecai was not going to kneel and bow to him, and when he learned that Mordecai was a Jew, he decided to do more than punish Mordecai alone. He made plans to kill every Jew in the whole Persian Empire. . .

So Haman told the king, "There is a certain race of people scattered all over your empire and found in every province. . . . They do not obey the laws of the empire, so it is not in your best interests to tolerate them. If it please Your Majesty, issue a decree that they are to be put to death. If you do, I guarantee that I will be able to put 375 tons of silver (about \$12,000,000 value in our currency) into the royal treasury for the administration of the empire."

The king took off his ring, which was used to stamp proclamations and make them official, and gave it to the enemy of the Jewish people, Haman son of Hammedatha, the descendant of Agag. The king told him, "The people and their money are yours; do as you like with them."

So . . . Haman called the king's secretaries and dictated a proclamation. . . . It was issued in the name of King Xerxes and stamped with his ring. . . .

Runners took this proclamation to every province of the empire.

It contained the instructions that on a single day, the thirteenth day of Adar, all Jews—young and old, women and children—were to be killed. They were to be slaughtered without mercy and their belongings were to be taken. . . .

Mordecai Asks for Esther's Help

When Mordecai learned of all that had been done, he tore his clothes in anguish. . . . Throughout all the provinces, wherever the king's proclamation was made known, there was loud mourning among the Jews. They fasted, wept, waited. . . .

When Esther's servant girls and eunuchs told her what Mordecai was doing, she was deeply disturbed. . . . Then she called Hatach, one of the palace eunuchs. . . and told him to go to Mordecai and find out what was happening and why. . . . Mordecai told him everything that had happened to him and just how much money Haman had promised to put into the royal treasury if all the Jews were killed. He gave Hatach a copy of the proclamation that had been issued in Susa, ordering the destruction of the Jews. Mordecai asked him to take it to Esther, explain the situation to her, and have her go and plead with the king and beg him to have mercy on her people. Hatach did this, and Esther gave him this message to take back to Mordecai: "If anyone, man or woman, goes to the inner courtyard and sees the king without being summoned, that person must die. That is the law. . . ."

*From the book of Esther, chapters 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7, as translated in the *Good News Bible*, the Bible in Today's English Version. Copyright American Bible Society 1976.

When Mordecai received Esther's message, he sent her this warning: "Don't imagine that you are safer than any other Jew just because you are in the royal palace. If you keep quiet at a time like this, help will come from another source to the Jews, and they will be saved, but you will die and your father's family will come to an end. Yet who knows—maybe it was for a time like this that you were made queen!"

Esther sent Mordecai this reply: "Go and get all the Jews in Susa together; hold a fast and pray for me. Don't eat or drink anything for three days and nights. My servant girls and I will be doing the same. After that, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. If I must die for doing it, I will die."

Mordecai then left and did everything that Esther had told him to do. . . .

Esther's Requests

On the third day of her fast Esther put on her royal robes and went and stood in the inner courtyard of the palace. . . . When the king saw Queen Esther standing outside, she won his favor, and he held out to her the gold scepter. She then came up and touched the tip of it. "What is it, Queen Esther?" the king asked. "Tell me what you want, and you shall have it—even if it is half my empire."

Esther replied, "If it please Your Majesty, I would like you and Haman to be my guests tonight at a banquet I am preparing for you."

The king then ordered Haman to come quickly. . . . So the king and Haman went to Esther's banquet. . . . "Tell me what you want, and you shall have it. I will grant your request, even if you ask for half my empire."

Esther replied, "If Your Majesty is kind enough to grant my request, I would like you and Haman to be my guests tomorrow at another banquet. . . ."

When Haman left the banquet he was happy and in a good mood. But then he saw Mordecai at the entrance of the palace, and when Mordecai did not rise or show any sign of respect as he passed, Haman was furious with him. But he controlled himself and went on home. Then he invited his friends to his house and asked his wife Zeresh to join them. He boasted to them about how rich he was, how many sons he had, how the king had promoted him to high office, and how much more important he was than any of the king's other officials. "What is more," Haman went on, "Queen Esther gave a banquet for no one but the king and me, and we are invited back tomorrow. But none of this means a thing to me as long as I see that Jew Mordecai sitting at the entrance of the palace."

So his wife and all his friends suggested, "Why don't you have a gallows built, seventy-five feet tall? Tomorrow morning you can ask the king to have Mordecai hanged on it, and then you can go to the banquet happy."

Haman thought this was a good idea, so he had the gallows built. . . .

That Night. . .

That same night the king could not get to sleep, so he had the official records of the empire brought and read to him. The part they read included the account of how Mordecai had uncovered a plot to assassinate the king. . . . The king asked, "How have we honored and rewarded Mordecai for this?"

His servants answered, "Nothing has been done for him."

"Are any of my officials in the palace?" the king asked.

Now Haman had just entered the courtyard; he had come to ask the king to have Mordecai hanged on the gallows that was now ready. So the servants answered, "Haman is here waiting to see you."

"Show him in," said the king.

(cont. from page 19)

as big as the things that annoy him. When we apply that measure to our lives, we see what opportunities there are for all of us to grow.

Fifth, Haman was a big and important man, but he took himself too seriously. If he ever had it somewhere on the way up, he lost his *sense of humor*. He had let it atrophy. Even if he had retained the smallest vestige of it, he would have seen the humor of letting an exiled and displaced person so completely upset him by an irritating habit. He not only let it *upset* him but he let it *unseat* him. This is an old trick in life. We see it at work in so many phases of human relations. Things provoke us when they ought to amuse us. We let them get out of hand when, with so little effort, we could take them in hand. Frightened with the sense of our own importance, heckling experiences sink us, when, if touched by a sense of humor, we could rise above them.

Think of Lincoln who, in the face of McClellan's adolescent insults, could say that he would hold the general's

It is easy to slip into the habit of a fussier with small things, to waste our energies on removing the thorns on the rose bush stems when we ought to be cultivating the rose.

horses if only the general would begin to win battles for the cause. *There* was a demonstration of greatness saved by a sense of humor. Or remember John Wesley's retort to the stranger on one of London's narrow sidewalks who refused to step aside for Mr. Wesley to pass, with the remark that he would not get out of the way of a fool, whereupon Mr. Wesley replied simply, "I will," and stepped around him. There humor and piety united with good advantage. When we learn to keep

life's littleness *little*, we open the way to bigness.

Sixth, Haman did not know how to read correctly life's balance sheet. He got the meaning of the black ink and

When we learn to keep life's littleness *little*, we open the way to bigness.

the red ink mixed up. On the black-ink side of his life was wealth, position, power, influence, health, family. On the red-ink side was one little man who refused to bow, but he got the notion that all the black-ink items counted for nothing and that the one little red-ink item was the biggest concern in his life.

It is one thing to count your blessings and another to weigh them properly against your liabilities. Unless you can evaluate one against the other, emphasis upon every small liability can submerge the benefits of your great personal assets.

Seventh, Haman made the greatest mistake of all in the matter of dealing with his irritations by thinking that he had to handle it all by himself. He left nothing either in the hands of his friends or of God. Had he made use of the available advice, he would have known that in such times he must trust in the Lord and do good. A little yielding on his part, rising above the petty irritation and subduing the piqued vanity would have saved him his neck. He would have known better than to fret because of other's gains, or be irritated by another's attitude. He would have realized that the judgment of Mordecai belonged to God, and that his own judgment in the matter, to be of any real significance, would have to be validated by the verdict of the higher court.

Emerson concluded the matter when he said, "Life is too short to waste in critic peep and cynic bark, quarrel and reprimand. 'Twill soon be dark. Up! Mind thine own aim and God speed the mark!"

MM

"HAVE ROYAL ROBES
BROUGHT FOR THIS MAN—
ROBES THAT YOU YOURSELF
WEAR. HAVE ... ONE OF YOUR
HIGHEST NOBLEMEN DRESS
THE MAN IN THESE ROBES...
LEAD HIM, MOUNTED
ON YOUR OWN HORSE,
THROUGH THE CITY...."



Haman thinks: "Whom would the King delight to honor more than myself?"

So Haman came in, and the king said to him, "There is someone I wish very much to honor. What should I do for this man?"

Haman thought to himself, "Now who could the king want to honor so much? Me of course."

So he answered the king, "Have royal robes brought for this man—robes that you yourself wear. Have a royal ornament put on your own horse. Then have one of your highest noblemen dress the man in these robes and lead him, mounted on the horse, through the city square. Have the nobleman announce as they go: 'See how the king rewards a man he wishes to honor!'"

Then the king said to Haman, "Hurry and get the robes and the horse, and provide these honors for Mordecai the Jew. Do everything for him that you have suggested...."

So Haman got the robes and the horse, and he put the robes on Mordecai. Mordecai got on the horse, and Haman led him through the city square, announcing to the people as they went: "See how the king rewards a man he wishes to honor!..."

Then... Haman hurried home, covering his face in embarrassment. He told his wife and all his friends everything that had happened to him....

While they were still talking, the palace eunuchs arrived in a hurry to take Haman to Esther's banquet.

And so the king and Haman went to eat with Esther for a second time.... "Now, Queen Esther, what do you want? Tell me, and you shall have it. I'll even give you half the empire."

Queen Esther answered, "If it please Your Majesty to grant my humble request, my wish is that I may live and that my people may live. My people and I have been sold for slaughter. If it were nothing more serious than being sold into slavery, I would have kept quiet and not bothered you about it; but we are about to be destroyed—exterminated!"

Then King Xerxes asked Queen Esther, "Who dares to do such a thing? Where is this man?"

Esther answered, "Our enemy, our persecutor, is this evil man Haman!"

Haman faced the king and queen with terror....

Then one of the eunuchs, who was named Harbonah, said "Haman even went so far as to build a gallows at his house so that he could hang Mordecai, who saved your Majesty's life. And it's seventy-five feet tall!"

"Hang Haman on it!" the king commanded.

So Haman was hanged on the gallows that he had built for Mordecai.

MM



A Sower Went Out to Sow...

A Lesson from Our Master

During His earthly ministry Jesus' mission was to proclaim the gospel of peace and to show forth the glad tidings of the Kingdom of God.

There came a day when much people came out of the city to hear Him. Looking into the vast multitude before Him, He commenced His saying with a parable. A parable is defined as an earthly story spoken to convey a heavenly meaning. Using earthly things, Jesus tried to direct men's minds to heavenly realms.

With all the energy and holy consecration of His young dedicated life, He endeavored to plant the life-promoting Word of the Lord in the hearts of men, with the hope of gainful returns in the future Kingdom of God on earth.

But being a practical and a far-sighted individual, He did not envision nor hope for a full return. Some would listen, some would be partly impressed, some not at all. Only time would tell the whole story.

"A sower went out to sow his seed. He that has an ear let him hear."

His disciples being also with Him inquired concerning the meaning of the parable. Answering He said, "To you it is given to know the secrets of the Kingdom of God, to others it is presented in parables that they may see and yet not see, that they may hear and yet not understand."

The meaning of the parable, He said, is this: The seed is the Word of God broadcast into different heart soils of men with the hope of bringing forth fruit unto eternal life.

The first of these is comparable to the wayside soil, the land along the highway, beaten hard as pavement by the passing to and fro of many feet. Often Jesus Himself had seen these stray seeds lying on the ground after the farmer's sowing. He knew how hardly possible it was for

the seed to take root here, exposed as it was on the hard bare ground.

He likened some people to such pathway soils, their minds shut solidly against the truths of God. In such there is no response of obedience, despite God's most diligent endeavors at piercing their understanding; there is no growth and no production. Noble convictions and lofty restraints cannot make their way through the implacable ground of their solidly set soils that refuse to yield to any entreaties that they change the inner attitudes of their minds, emotions and wills. Should Jesus or anyone commissioned by him try to tell them anything contrary to their pet beliefs of right or wrong, they already know all there is to know. "What is the Almighty that we should serve him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto him? Depart from us: for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways" (Job 21:15, 14). Superficial thinkers are they, quite sufficient in themselves to be good and to do good, according to their own set way of doing. Such are totally unlike the man of sensitive conscience who has discovered that when he would do good evil is present, who realizes that in himself naturally dwells no good thing, whose mind is wide open to receive and to hold any and every impression that might usher him into the Kingdom.

Likewise the stony ground is a pitifully hard soil to cultivate, yielding scant returns, if any. After clearing away the stubble, the ground remains stony. The seed that falls between the rocks comes up quickly, temporarily moistened and heated by the rocks; but just as quickly it dies. The rocky soil hinders growth.

There is no depth, no deep rooting, hence no nour-

ishment, for there is no root system and no place to spread or flourish. Weak, undernourished. The tender plant is weak, undernourished; unable to take the sun's scorching heat, it soon succumbs.

Those in the sudden flush of spiritual enthusiasm are like that. They answer the call with a positive response. But as has been said, it is easy to *start* as a Christian but it is not easy to *continue* as one. Feelings can be affected and deeply moved by the swaying power of eloquent speech. Fresh encounter with the holy and the Divine, like the seedling between the rocky crevices, produces a temporary warmth and challenge. But what appeared as an enormous potential for fruitbearing is not there. Only a brief moment does the Word take hold, and flourish. The whole new adventure being only a surface experience, it soon withers and comes to naught.

Trust in God is the true foundation of our faith. Though winds and scorching adversities may beat, it is God handling our lives and arranging our circumstances through it all into the channel of spiritual productiveness. His standard for our growth is higher than we can conceive or appreciate and holier than we would naturally believe or accept.

Would we be trees of His own planting? We must be pruned and cultivated at great expense, every stone of disobedient action dug out and removed, every unpromising resistance to His Holy Word made to acquiesce and bow in a lowliness that says, Thou Lord knowest best, Thou art the ruler of my soul.

The wastelands of our lives must be transformed. If we truly want a change of character, there is no better stimulus than the effectual working of the Word within us.

The thorny ground is said to be infested with weeds, thistles, briars and thorns. Any plot riddled and choked thus with fibrous roots and wild grass is incapable of fruit production. Good seed sown in with wild seed will have a bitter struggle for existence. The fibrous roots, being stronger, will choke out the good plants and cause the crop to fail.

Some of our lives are like that, weed infested with noxious cares, anxieties, worries and interests of this present world. It is altogether possible to be so absorbed with living that we forget how we are living or what we are living for. In His majestic Sermon on the Mount we hear the Master Teacher saying, "But seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." To crowd out the best at the expense of the second best, which could prove to be the worst in the end, is to defeat our chances for a permanent place in the Kingdom of God.

Whatever our lot may be, we are instructed to work at it diligently and heartily. There is no excuse for neglecting to make a living, to meet our bills and pay our

taxes. The crux of the whole issue is an overall preoccupation with the cares pressing upon us. If God is the center of our gardens, Him we will give our first and best consideration, Him we will serve and Him obey and reverence.

Let our resolve be that of the diligent gardener who works hard to keep his plot clear of weed growth. Let us say, I want my garden clean, and I'll do my best to keep it that way. I can't make it grow, but I can trust Him who can.

Can we really be fruitful and productive in His service and live above the clutter and complications of our modern complex society? Yes, scratch out all other time-consuming and life-robbing involvements and cleave to the main interest at hand and you will discover the true secret of a well-ordered life free from noxious weeds and cares.

At last we come to the piece of good-listening ground, with an impressible and understanding heart, who holds fast the Word. These hear and obey under all circumstances. And there is response: there is genuine productivity. The returns are thirty fold, sixty fold and even one hundred fold.

What makes the difference? First of all they are open-minded, receptive and amenable to God and to His Word. What they hear they believe to be in fact and truth the Word from God above. Not content to remain wild or fruitless wasteland, they want their minds, emotions and dispositions to change. Their genuine hunger and thirst for righteousness moves them to action. The seed of truth is germinating, it is growing in the good rich soil of their warm, productive hearts. Eagerly they assimilate every word and incorporate it into their daily experiences. Their good piece of ground produces the fruits of the Spirit in abundance unto eternal life. So productive is their soil that the Master sower will be pleased to reward them at His coming with "Well done, thou good and faithful gardener."

MM

READ for Your LIFE!

THE COMING OF JESUS AND ELIJAH
WHAT MUST WE DO TO BE SAVED?
HISTORY OF THE MEGIDDO MISSION
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
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Inquiries and Answers

• Original Sin and Psalm 51:5?

"I had the great pleasure of reading your booklet on the Atonement and your articles on the doctrine of Original Sin. As far as refuting the doctrine of original sin is concerned, how do you explain Psalm 51: 'I was born in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me'? I do not believe the doctrine of original sin, but I find difficulty with this verse."

If you or I or anyone else had never heard of original sin, we would probably not see it in Psalm 51:5. But those who believe the concept see it vividly here. They see David guilty of sin even before he was born; and this, of course, was not his own sin—it had to be Adam's!

It is hard to comprehend how so many people can believe that an all-wise God would condemn all His earthly children and their unborn posterity for the sins of one man, then to resolve the dilemma would arrange to send His Son to earth to die as the perfect atonement for sin. The idea is so unreasonable, so unjust, so unworthy of an all-wise God that one wonders how it could ever have become so widespread. There is a saying in this country (called one of Murphy's "laws") that the more ridiculous an idea, the better chance it has of catching on. How pathetic when topics of life and death are concerned. It is also possible that the doctrine of Original Sin/Justifying Atonement is popular because it is so effortless. Men naturally seek an easy way. To make God responsible for sin and righteousness is so much more comfortable than to accept one's own individual responsibility.

To know of someone who does not believe in the widely accepted doctrine of original sin is a pleasure. But still the question remains: What did David mean when he said, "I was born in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me"? Was he thinking that his mother was the source of his sin, or that the guilt of sin was upon him through her because of Adam's sin?

There are several factors against this understanding of the text. First, we know from other writings of David's that he did not believe this. He wrote in Psalm 94:23, "And he [the Lord] shall bring upon them their own iniquity, and shall cut them off in their own wickedness:

yea, the Lord our God shall cut them off." The wickedness was "their own." His son Solomon understood this also. He wrote, "His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sin" (Prov. 5:22).

Second, Psalm 51 is a chapter of deepest heart-searching and heartfelt repentance. In its place there is no suggestion that any but David himself is responsible for the wrong he committed. Note such phrases as "My sin is ever before me...my sin...I have sinned and done this evil in thy sight...mine iniquity...my transgressions," etc. David had no idea of blaming any of his progenitors; he felt the pain of guilt because he knew he himself was responsible for the wrong. He *could* have done right; henceforward he *would* do right. There is not even the slightest indication that he was in the grip of a sinful propensity beyond his power to control.

In Psalm 51:5 David is expressing the deep, almost overwhelming, sense of his own sinfulness. In this moment of penitence he feels so sinful that he can see nothing else in his nature but the grievousness of sin. (Have we not all felt this way at some time or other?) He is looking at the fruit of the tree and saying that the tree is evil, thoroughly corrupt, right down to the very first root. He feels that his natural tendency to evil—which we call human nature—has not been sufficiently restrained; the consequence: sin, which in a sense reaches clear back to the very beginning of his life. "I was shapen in iniquity" was David's way of saying what Paul said in these words. "I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing" (Rom. 7:18).

A Hebrew scholar has commented on the absence of any allusion to original sin or Adam's sin in this passage. He says: "There is not in the Hebrew word any idea corresponding to the word 'shapen' as if he had been *formed or moulded* in that manner by Divine power; but the entire meaning of the word is exhausted by saying that his sin could be traced back to his *very birth*; that it was so deep and aggravated that it could be accounted for—or that he could express his sense of it—in no other way than by saying that he was *born a sinner*. How that occurred, or how it was connected with the first apostasy in Adam, or how the fact that he was thus born could be vindicated, it is not intimated, nor is it alluded to. There is

no statement that the sin of another was *imputed* to him; or that he was *responsible* for the sin of Adam; or that he was guilty *on account of* Adam's sin; for on these points the Psalmist makes no assertion. It is worthy of remark, further, that the Psalmist did not endeavour to excuse his guilt on the ground that he was 'born' in iniquity. The fact that he was 'born in iniquity' only deepened his sense of his own guilt or showed the enormity of the offence."

As created living beings, part of the animal creation, we possess certain instincts and capabilities to enable us to survive. As such, we have the potential to do either good or evil. Because we more easily incline to evil—because the evil requires less effort, less application, less concentration—and because so often evil leads to the satisfying of our natural cravings, we might say that all of us are, in this sense, born into sin. In the same sense we would speak of one who was a "born musician," or a "born artist"—not that that person was able to perform any work of art at birth but that he was born with extraordinary potential, and, very likely, had worked during successive years to develop that potential. In the same way sinfulness develops. The more we allow our natural instincts, undirected, to govern us, the stronger becomes our tendency to sin. The basic instincts which God gave us for survival thus become the agents of all kinds of vice, pride, selfishness, jealousy, hate, greed, etc.

The Lord could have made man otherwise. He could have made us as robots, to think, speak and act exactly as He would have us; but that is not the way He in His wisdom chose to do it. He has made us creatures with intellects capable of choosing. We can take the easy way, do whatever seems right in our own eyes, and follow a life of sin; or we can follow God's plan of training and discipline and become His eternal sons and daughters.

If we choose the latter, it may someday be said of us that we were born unto righteousness and life.

Life's Journey

There's a perfect guide on the darkest road
Of the toilsome journey of life;
The Lord led the way, and He'll lighten the load,
And strengthen our hearts for the strife.

Life is much what we make it; then let us keep
To the chart that will lead us aright;
Watch well every guide-post, and prayerfully seek
With Jesus, to step in the light.

If we patiently keep in the narrow road
'Twill lead to a home of sweet rest,
Where we'll drop every sorrow and burdensome load,
And dwell with the faithful and blest.

So What Do You Know?

Matching Bible Names

Many well-known people in the Bible had two names. Can you think of the common name of each person in the column below? If you need help, refer to list below, or use the reference by each to check yourself.

1. Jerubbaal (Judges 8:35)
2. Saul (Acts 9)
3. Belteshazzar (Daniel 1:7)
4. Hadassah (Esther 2:7)
5. Hananiah (Daniel 1:7)
6. Tabitha (Acts 9:36)
7. Israel (Gen. 32:28)
8. Sarai (Gen. 17:15)
9. Abram (Gen. 17:5)
10. Emmanuel (Matt. 1:21-23)
11. Sheshbazzar (Ezra 1:11; 2:2)
12. Joses (from Cyprus) (Acts 4:36)
13. Abednego (Daniel 1:7)
14. Zaphnath-paaneah (Gen. 41:45)
15. Bartholomew (John 1:45; Matt. 10:3)
16. Thaddeus (Matt. 10:3)
17. Mishael (Daniel 1:7)
18. Mark (Acts 12:25)
19. Barsabas (Acts 1:23; 15:22)
20. Eshbaal (I Sam. 31:2; II Sam. 2:8)
21. Cephas (John 1:40, 42)
22. Niger (Acts 13:1)

Abraham
Azariah
Barnabas
Daniel
Dorcas
Esther
Gideon
Ishbosheth
Jacob
Jesus
John

Joseph
Judas
Lebbeus
Meshach
Nathaniel
Paul
Peter
Sarah
Shadrach
Simeon
Zerubbabel

There is nothing that brings on premature age like secret sin. It keeps the mind in perpetual unrest and a troubled mind soon makes the body old. The real nourisher of the body is a quiet and radiant mind. But let the mind be in chaos and the body will soon be in ruin.



Letters

Impressed

I feel happy today in thinking we are "free," free to choose our way of living, to do God's commandments and live, or choose this life of sorrow and pain and worldly pleasures and then die to be no more.

I have been impressed as never before of how dependent we are on God. To think we are standing on holy ground and everything we have and are belongs to God. He is depending on us to take care of what we have—our jobs, our money and our talents. He knows if we are doing our best with what we have. It all belongs to God. "I delight to do thy will, O my God: Yea thy law is within my heart" (Ps. 40:8). It is so important to redeem the time for the days are evil.

Paul recommended Phil. 4:4 and 4:8 for disciplined thinking. The results:

- Our fears will decrease.
- Our faith will mount.
- Our attachments to unworthy goals will grow less.
- Our devotion to what is worthy will grow.
- Our discouragement will diminish.

Our courage will mount until our whole mind and heart will be filled with God's great and precious promises.

How do we know we will succeed? Because we have what it takes through the grace and goodness of God. And it will take enthusiasm to get the work done.

Soon Elijah will be here and bring angels to help him. What a gathering that will be!

Davenport, Iowa

W.P.

Stand—Ready

This is a trying and perilous time, and it takes faith and courage to stand in such a time as this. He only who has clean hands and a heart unstained, who never sets his mind on what is false, who never breaks his word, gains a blessing from the Eternal. Only these will stand ready at such a time as this. May we work to be among them.

Rome, Georgia

S.J.

Happy Day

We should carry kind thoughts with us always and show others the happy way.

Crawford, Nebraska

R.M. (9 years old)

No "Tag End" for the Lord!

I enjoy the cassettes. They build up my faith and do help me daily. They stimulate and strengthen my faith in God's purposes towards us, erring though we be. They are as an oasis in the desert, so alive, true, knowledgeable. I deem them the greatest invention of our time.

The time was when housework took first place in my life. Now it is secondary. I think the warning of giving God the tag end and expecting a full day's pay alerted me. That was what I was doing. It is essential to read and study before night time.

**Fill Thou my life, O Lord my God,
In every part with praise:
That my whole being may proclaim,
Thy Being and Thy Ways.**

**Fill every part of me with praise,
Let my whole being speak:
Of Thee, and of Thy love, O Lord;
Poor though I be and weak.**

The time is short; it flies so quickly. The speed with which it gets away is almost frightening. Time is given us to spend, but let us spend it wisely, laying up a goodly account to have something worthwhile to show for our allotment of it. To be living in these last momentous days is thrilling; the forward look is real. So we should be willing to spend and be spent in the Lord's service.

Crewe, England

N.T.

Striving

If we are not very careful to keep God's Word uppermost in all we do, we can slip down the old way of our own evil imagination.

Too many times in my daily affairs I have failed to realize the great importance of esteeming the law of our Lord more than my necessary food. It is my weakness. Our very kind Heavenly Father has been very merciful and longsuffering towards us in every way. I am trying to impress upon myself more deeply the great importance of redeeming this precious time because the days are evil; We can plainly see how the words of our Master are being fulfilled. As it was in the days of Noah and Lot, so shall it be in these very last days. It is a very high time to wake up and keep fully awake; to strive with all our mind, might and strength to please our merciful Heavenly Father; and to be very thankful for all the kind help, warnings and reproofs which we all need so very much.

Vernon, British Columbia

Z.S.

Follow

Brother Flowerday is a wonderful, sincere leader. May we also be sincere with ourselves and listen to our leaders in righteousness and accept their warnings and admonitions.

Crawford, Nebraska

M.M.

No Time to Linger

We truly are "living in the shadow of eternity." So, what manner of persons ought we to be, seeing that at any moment we could hear the cry go forth throughout the land: "Behold, the bridegroom cometh."

Now is the day of salvation. Preparation day is still extended. How thankful we should be that we have this day to grow in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. He who is wise will not put off until tomorrow what he can do today. "Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away" (James 4:14).

The evils of our nature will not vanish at the snap of a finger. We must steadfastly strive to get rid of them. Our work is laid out for us. Therefore, procrastination is very dangerous. No time to linger by the wayside, not a moment to spare! No time to lie back and take our ease, eat, drink and be merry.

The moments of each day are precious and they are fleeting. Let us heed the warnings of the signs of the times and make haste to meet our King!

***"Say not, 'Someday I'll break that habit's fetter,
When this old year is dead and passes away';
If you have need of living wiser, better,
Then say, instead, 'Dear Lord, I'll start today!'"***

Conyers, Georgia

B.P.

Read and Re-read

I have read the *Millennium Superworld* twice and I am reading it again. I always feel that I might have missed a vital point so I read it again in case I have.

We are receiving the *Message* each month and it is a great help to us to read the wonderful inspiring writings.

Please be informed that although we are here in England our thoughts are of you all in Rochester.

Leicester, England

C.D.

Obituary

Andrew I. G. Stewart

On Saturday, April 10, funeral services were conducted in St. Catherine's, Ontario, Canada, for Brother Andrew I. G. Stewart. Brother Stewart had been acquainted with the Megiddo Church for more than fifty years, and had corresponded actively as long as he was able, and made many visits to the Church.

Brother Stewart was a veteran of the First World War, having fought in the Imperial Army. He was an avid Bible student, and thoroughly convinced of what he believed.

Brother Stewart is survived by two sons, David of Hamilton, Ontario, and Andrew who is an active member of our Rochester Congregation.

Finally, Brethren

Can I Like Me?

THE PRINCIPLES of Christ involve our every relationship with one another. Relationships are either right, or they are not right.

Why is it that some people are easy to live and work with, others cause you to feel passive about them, and yet others cause you to say, "Lord, help me not to be like this one"?

Let me describe for you the kind of person I like.

I like the person who is unaffected and unpretentious, the kind who is consistently and sincerely true to his convictions.

I like the kind of person who can be understanding with a brother, who isn't so totally absorbed in himself that he can't share another's sorrows and joys.

I like the person who has deep, moving convictions and the highest of high aspirations. It thrills me to hear him say, "I can't do that—I'm living for eternity."

I like the person who is never satisfied with what he is, but is grateful for all he has, and gives God the credit for all.

I like the kind of person who finds pleasure in serving, giving, loving, helping; the person whose self-respect is largely based on the fact that he is striving to be good for something—and Someone.

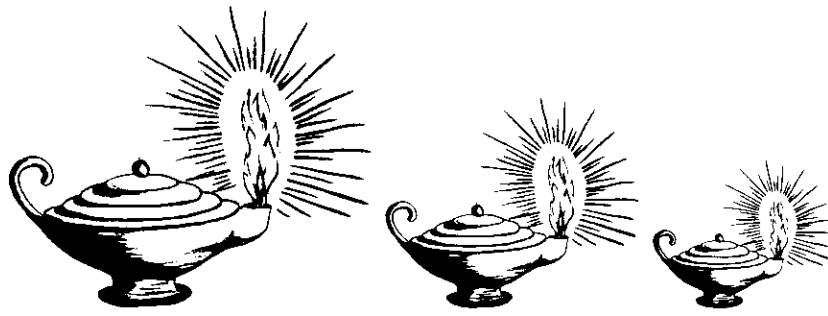
I like the kind of person who will go the second mile to do a good job; who gives his very best to every task, and who doesn't draw rigid boundaries around the extent of his obligations. God never intended His people to be mediocre.

I like guileless people—people whose word is absolutely as good as their note, and who don't paint false pictures with deceptive words. You know they mean exactly what their words say.

I like the kind of person whose ideals shine like stars, and who is a light for God to all around him.

I like the kind of person who can frankly admit it when he makes a mistake, who doesn't have to beat around the bush, so to speak, or rationalize his mistakes, or retreat from point to point, but who can honestly say, "I'm sorry, I was wrong," and try again.

The greatest problem I face is in being the type of person I like. Isn't that your problem, too? MM



He Comes

*Behold, the Bridegroom cometh
In the middle of the night,
And blest is he whose loins are girt,
Whose lamp is burning bright.
But woe to that dull servant whom
His Master shall surprise,
With lamp untrimmed, unburning,
With slumber in his eyes.*

*Do thou, my soul, beware, beware
Lest thou in sleep sink down,
Lest thou be given o'er to death
And lose the golden crown;
But see that thou be sober, with
A watchful eye, lest thou
Cry "Holy, holy, holy God,
Have mercy upon us."*

*That day, the day of fear, shall come.
My soul, slack not thy toil,
But light thy lamp, and feed it well,
And make it bright with oil.
Thou knowest not how soon may sound
The cry at eventide,
"Behold the Bridegroom comes! Arise!
Go forth to meet the Bride."*

*Beware, my soul; take thou good heed,
Lest thou in slumber lie,
And, like the foolish, stand without,
And knock and vainly cry;
But watch, and bear thy lamp undimmed,
And Christ shall gird thee on
His own bright wedding robe of light,
The glory of the Son.*