

Megiddo Message



Not Always to Comfort

God's chief aim is not to comfort but to correct.

LIVING is problematic. There is so much that can go wrong. We carefully lay our plans, and almost immediately we must revise them. We try to get ahead, and something we never thought of interferes. Our best efforts are defeated. An accident. The weather. Sickness. The common aggravations of life. Murphy's Law.

In the midst of all this are a few men and women who have a special talent for making it all seem better. There is a tone in their voices that dispels gloom. They have a smile that is contagious. They tell us that everything is going to be all right, and somehow they are able to make us believe them.

It is no small advantage to have someone who can give us this kind of pick-up from time to time, someone who will perform this function for us—a place like the temple, a person like Pashur.

Pashur was probably the most popular preacher in Jerusalem during Jeremiah's time. He had that special capability of being able to see a positive dimension to everything. Even when times were extremely bad, he interpreted the current scene in such a way that anxieties were allayed and fears were banished. By almost anyone's standards, Pashur was a national asset. And he had a host of imitators—prophets, priests and teachers—who specialized in finding ways to massage the national conscience. Their favorite word was peace: "Everything is going to be all right; God is working out His purposes in us; we know we are God's people, so why worry? Nothing really serious can go wrong. Hasn't He promised to bless all the people of the earth through us? Can't we believe it?"

At the same time they celebrated an illustrious past—Moses the liberator, Joshua the conqueror, David the sweet psalmist of Israel, Solomon glorious in display, in wisdom and in riches. With such blood flowing in their veins the people *knew* they were secure—

were they not members of the same inviolable elect?

There were, to be sure, a few problems: an inordinate amount of crime, scandalous reports of injustice, immorality beyond description, and empty formalism at the temple. Even though public religious life was relatively "clean," it was an open secret that all the old fertility rites were being practiced regularly in out-of-the-way places in the country ("by every spreading tree, on the high hills, on the mountains, in the open countryside"—Jer. 17:2-3, JB). Actually, about all the reform movement had managed to accomplish was to drive the scandalous behaviour out to the country, and make a ritualistic temple worship popular.

But the positive-thinking Pashur refused to be bothered by any of this. And his optimism was infectious. The people responded enthusiastically. They loved him. They crowded the temple to be reassured by his sonorous baritone, to be cheered by his dazzling smile: "God loves you. . . . Peace, peace, peace. Everything is going to turn out all right."

Haven't we seen the modern counterpart of Pashur in our time?

There was one man in Jerusalem, however, who was not impressed by Pashur. This man's name was Jeremiah. In fiery indignation Jeremiah cried out against Pashur and all his blinkered company. "For every one from the least even unto the greatest is given to covetousness, from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely. For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace. Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore shall they fall among them that fall: in the time of their visitation they shall be cast down, saith the Lord" (Jer. 8:10-12).

Why such a sharp contrast? Because Jeremiah was a
(Continued on page 21).

Megiddo means

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

We believe

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

We believe

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

We believe

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

We believe

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

We believe

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

We believe

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

We believe

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

Bible quotations

Unidentified quotations are from the King James Version.

Other versions are identified as follows:

NEB—New English Bible

NIV—New International Version

NAS—New American Standard

RSV—Revised Standard Version

TLB—The Living Bible

TEV—Today's English Version

JB—The Jerusalem Bible, Reader's Edition

Phillips—The New Testament in Modern English

Berkeley—The Modern Language New Testament

Weymouth—The New Testament in Modern Speech

Moffatt—The Bible, A New Translation

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

About Our Cover. . .

Our cover photograph was taken at Highland Park, in Rochester, New York.

Megiddo Message

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

The Unbroken Seal

Scripture Reading: Eph. 1:1-6, 10-18

A SEAL suggests something that is tight or secure. Something sealed is safe against any would-be intruders or molesters. Nothing and no one can harm or disturb it, because it is sealed.

And the sealing process suggests that something out of the ordinary has been done intentionally to assure that protection. Two substances have been put together in such a way as to assure that nothing unwanted can come between.

In another sense, a seal suggests tampering has occurred if it has been broken. It is a guarantee that something is uncontaminated. Medicine products today are tightly sealed, to assure the purchaser that nothing foreign has been added. Sealing is also a guarantee that something is authentic. Railroad cars used to be sealed after being loaded. A man who grew up near the railroad recalls: "At a small siding my uncle would have an empty box car. When he had filled it with goods which the farmers wanted shipped, he would lock the car and place a metal seal over the lock so that the box car could not be opened without breaking the seal. It was not hard to break the seal, but a broken seal would announce that something had gone wrong. The train would stop at our depot to hook up the new box car, and while the train was stopped, men would walk along the track to check the seals on the box cars. Once my uncle found a broken seal. There had to be an investigation to determine whether it had been broken deliberately or by accident."

Some nineteen hundred years ago God gave a seal to authenticate His power and guarantee the great rewards He offers. It was a seal that could not be broken. It was a striking seal, unforgettable to all who experienced it.

It happened at Pentecost.

No Ordinary Days

Let us for a moment go back to the time when the arrival of that first outpouring was imminent, and relive those anxious hours.

There was nothing ordinary about those days or weeks in the city of Jerusalem. In fact, there hadn't been an ordinary day since anyone could remember. No one seemed able to escape the perplexity of that half-trembling, half-fearful, half-expectant attitude of "What next?"

For the disciples of Jesus of Nazareth, what a history-making season it had been! From that day when the Master had ridden triumphantly into Jerusalem amid shouts of Hosanna, it had been one stirring and startling event after another.

The Passover week had begun with a change from the old, established order, when Jesus had invited His apostles to celebrate the Passover with Him one day early—a change no less than shocking to any dedicated Jew. And what an experience that Last Supper had been! The week had left them exhausted from the strangest mixture of excitement, fear, despair, suspense, sorrow and joy that one could imagine. There was the arrest on that bewildering night of the Last Supper, and the more bewildering trial. Reports flew back and forth so fast, confusing and unbelievable, until that jet-black hour of the crucifixion. Then there was the shuddering darkness, the earthquake, and the shattering news that the Veil in the Temple had rent.

Who could blithely close his eyes and say all was well and normal?

The climax of the whole, however, had been the Resurrection—thrillingly breath-taking in its reality. Now they could go forth and declare with unbounded joy and positive assurance: *their Lord had risen; He was alive forevermore! He was the Son of God Almighty!*

God's Word was *true!* There was no question about it. The risen Christ had been seen by many: the two on

Note: "The Unbroken Seal" is available as a complete church service on cassette. Price: \$3.00.

the Emmaus Road, the Twelve, the five hundred brethren—who could doubt?

It had been a swiftly moving drama, shifting scenes and players, yet the whole had revolved about one central character—Jesus Christ.

The finale occurred on the day that He led them out as far as Bethany and lifted up His hands to bless them. While He was in the act of blessing them, suddenly—He was ascending! Right before their eyes He went up, and a cloud of angels received Him into heaven!

Of the opening year's events *that was finis*—or so it seemed. What more could there be! He had left them; He had ascended. It was all over.

But just prior to this, He had given them some final information: They must not depart from Jerusalem but *wait* for the promise of the Father. "You have heard me speak of it," He had said. Surely they had, but at the moment they could not recall what or when.

"John truly baptized with water: but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence."

Baptized with the Holy Spirit—what did that mean? They had seen John baptize; and they had seen some Holy Spirit power. But, "you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit. . . ."

And—"not many days hence"! How long would that be?

When the Day Came

They waited as He had told them to. They waited and prayed, and prayed and waited, while they recalled the days when their Master had been among them. When would it happen? They did not know, but their Master had said, "not many days hence."

They waited. Just what they were waiting for, or how it would come, or when, they did not know. But this was a season of great things. And Jesus' words, "not many days hence," indicated that it would not be long. Jesus had been with them forty days from that never-to-be-forgotten day of His resurrection, and now the next event, Pentecost, was not many days hence! Could *that* be the appointed day?

"Then when the actual day of Pentecost came they were all assembled together. Suddenly there was a sound from heaven like the rushing of a violent wind, and it filled the whole house where they were seated. Before their eyes appeared tongues like flames, which separated off and settled above the head of each one of them. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different languages as the Spirit gave them power to proclaim His message" (Acts 2:1-5, Phillips). Some 17 different nationalities were there that day and each heard every man in his own tongue! This

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was not *professed* "glossolalia" but was *understood* by the hearers!

The anniversary of that great event occurs this year on May 24. And the great event itself, the *renewing* of that power—when will that be . . . ?

The anxious disciples left that Pentecost meeting with power never before known or felt among men. What was it like? Can we imagine? What was it like to have actual power from God in your hands, to know that you were able to do what no other mortal has ever done! What a privilege! What a responsibility!

The Power, the "Earnest"

Several times the apostle Paul spoke of the power of the Holy Spirit as "the earnest" of their faith, the seal of His promises. It was a foretaste of future glory, a clear and visible evidence that He will do as He has promised. In II Corinthians 5:4-5, the Apostle is speaking of the reward God has promised. He writes: ". . . not that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given us the earnest of the Spirit." *Phillips' Translation in Modern English* is clearer: "We want our transitory life to be absorbed into the life that is eternal. Now the power that has planned this experience for us is God, and he has given us the Spirit as a guarantee of its truth." The Holy Spirit was a guarantee to them that God *could* fulfill His word.

In his letter to the Romans, Paul includes himself among those privileged ones who had received the "firstfruits of the Spirit"; or, as worded in the *New English Bible*, "we, to whom the Spirit is given as firstfruits of the harvest to come" (Rom. 8:23, NEB). The Holy Spirit given on the day of Pentecost was the firstfruits of the harvest to come—it was the "former rain" prophesied centuries before by the prophet Joel, which was to yield firstfruits for the coming harvest.

In his Second Epistle to the Corinthians, Paul again mentions the Holy Spirit as the "earnest" or guarantee of their hope, the "seal" upon the loyal believer. This,

and similar passages, are often used to assure the nominal believer of what religious teachers sometimes call "eternal security"—his assurance that whatever happens, he cannot be eternally lost because he has "accepted Christ." But this was not Paul's point. On the contrary, Paul says this seal is not a guarantee of the believer's eternal security but of the surety of the promise of God.

The passage in II Corinthians 1:20-22 reads, "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us. Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts."

What was the "earnest of the Spirit" in their hearts? It was the power of the Holy Spirit, that delightful foretaste of coming glory. What a privilege was theirs!—and what a responsibility. Some of the newer translations again are slightly clearer: "Both you and we owe our position in Christ to this God of positive promise: it is he who has consecrated us to this special work, he who has given us the living guarantee of the Spirit in our hearts" (Phillips Translation). Or as worded in the *New English Bible*, "He is the 'Yes' pronounced upon God's promises, every one of them. That is why, when we give glory to God, it is through Christ Jesus that we

say 'Amen'. And if you and we belong to Christ, guaranteed as his and anointed, it is all God's doing; it is God also who has set his seal upon us, and as a pledge of what is to come has given the Spirit to dwell in our hearts."

What is sure? It is "this God of positive promise." And what was the "living guarantee" of that promise, the "pledge of what is to come"? It was the power of the Holy Spirit, which they were then experiencing in their own hearts and lives. The living power of God in them was God's seal and surety that He *could* and *would* do as He had promised. Whatever men might do to them, however rife the persecution and however long the strife, they were not traveling up a blind alley. God had promised them a glorious future, and they had right within themselves a pre-sampling of that promise. If only they proved faithful, they could know the *fulness* of God's power and blessing. What a promise!

The "Earnest of the Spirit"

In a few breathtaking sentences in the opening chapter of his Epistle to the Ephesians, the apostle Paul studies the "earnest of the Spirit," the temporary power of the Holy Spirit that was theirs, in the total perspective of the universal and eternal plan of God. Musing on the

Let Us Pray . . .

Dear Lord and Father of mankind, who hast invited us into the closest relationship with Thy self, who hast called us to be part of Thine eternal family, we come before Thee this morning with hearts eager for Thy love and minds open for renewed impressions from Thy Word.

Lord, Thou dost know our frame; Thou rememberest that we are dust. But Thou knowest also what we can become, weak mortals that we are, by the power of Thy law and in cooperation with the plan which Thou hast designed. Thou hast called us to become Thine eternal associates, co-workers with omnipotence, living and essential beings in an eternally expanding future, if we will now fashion our lives by Thy standard.

Father, with glowing hearts and expectant faces we look forward to the glorious Day, now very nigh, when

Thy power shall once again be seen openly on earth. May we believe with all our hearts that it is coming and now apply every power of our being to transforming ourselves to Thy character image, eradicating every impulse to sin and every taint of our lower nature, that we may be presented faultless before the presence of Thy glory with exceeding joy.

Lord, make us ever more ashamed of our pettiness, our small aims, our mean ambitions, our tendency to pride, to self-will, to jealousy, to anger and self-esteem, realizing that every time we allow these to dominate us we remove ourselves farther from Thine acceptance.

We pray Thy blessing upon Thy people wherever they may be, and upon the work which they are doing. May our hearts sing for joy at the remembrance of Thy goodness. Keep us in strength that we may serve Thee, in faith that we may trust Thee, and in hope that we may never waver but remain steadfast in the way until faith is changed to sight and all sin, sorrow, and suffering are relegated to the forgotten past and only peace and happiness abide.

In the name of Christ our hope and coming King we pray. Amen.

fathomless far-reaching plan of God, he rises above the "smoke and stir of this dim spot which men call earth" to the mountain crests of the Most High, that sublime region where the horizons of time touch the orbit of eternity.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," he begins, "who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. 1:3). It is a sublime vantage point. What earthly strife or pettiness or passion could ever interfere in the life of one whose possessing thought was of "all spiritual blessings," and whose dwelling place was "in heavenly places in Christ"!

Why was this indescribable privilege *his*? Only because of the overabounding goodness of God—"according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." From his exalted vantage point the Apostle casts a rapid glance over the chief landmarks in the majestic panorama of the divine scheme. Yes, he—and they—and we also—share these privileges because "God hath chosen us." The great God has most surely some great purpose enshrouded in His creative workmanship, a purpose that reaches back even to the time of earth's creation, to the "foundation of the world." And what is the focus of His choice? What is His unalterable decree? "That we should be holy and without blame [blemish] before him in love." We are called—not to a guaranteed and effortless attainment but to a challenge that demands our best. Our own character is the qualifying factor.

Predestinated?

"Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved."

These words, "Having predestinated us," have led many to a wrong conclusion about the plan of God. Does God act indeterminately, without cause or design? Does He who beholds the end from the beginning in one simultaneous view "will what He wills once for all," as Augustine phrased it? Are we destined to be human nothings in the slave-camp of God's caprice? Does He decree arbitrarily that one of us shall be saved, and another lost, and that nothing we can do can alter this divine decree over us?

The answer is No, a thousand times NO! Never does the divine wisdom that oversees the events of earth violate His justice by overruling the individual lives and histories of His children. The scales of His justice are never sliding scales. No such unfairness ever blotted

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the transcendent plan of Omnipotence. Nor will the outcome of that plan ever depend on caprice. His justice has always decreed "to every man according as his works shall be."

And to the earnest believer who is seriously striving to be "holy and without blame before him in love," the benefits are indescribable. Such a one can, in proportion to his faith, enjoy the highest, rarest privileges of heavenly places even now. And then—how can we even faintly perceive the glory and happiness of the New World, when, "in the dispensation of the fulness of time," God discloses the *fulness* of His blessings!

It is all part of the promised "inheritance." "... In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ" (vs. 11-12).

Here again is divine predestination, but again we must see it from the Apostle's vantage-point—from "heavenly places," from the divine point of view. "Being predestinated according to (His) purpose" and being "predestinated unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ" does not tell us that God predetermined, even before we were born and totally apart from anything we could do, that we would or would not be saved.

In reality, our success or our failure, our being inside or outside God's eternal purposes is determined entirely by our individual response to God's call and has nothing whatever to do with any predetermining by God. If all depended upon God's pre-formed decision, why any need for us to be diligent, watchful, alert, or enthusiastic? And why any need for a judgment, where each must "give account of himself to God" and "receive for the things done in his body, . . . whether good or bad"? (Rom. 14:12; II Cor. 5:10). What need for faith, or courage, or fortitude, if all is assured automatically and we have no power to alter it?

No, predestination, as it is commonly understood, forms no part of the plan of God. Why, then, did the great Apostle even mention the word predestination?

Our being inside or outside God's eternal purposes is determined entirely by our response to God's call and has nothing to do with any predetermining by God.

Why did he even say that "God hath predestinated us"?

"God Hath Predestinated Us"

When we read the passage carefully we see that what is predetermined is God's overall plan for the redemption of worthy mortals, as phrased in the Moffatt Bible: "... it was the purpose of his design so to order it in the fulness of the ages that all things in heaven and earth alike should be gathered up in Christ—in the Christ in whom we have had our heritage allotted us (as was decreed in the design of him who carries out everything according to the counsel of his will)" (Eph. 1:10-11, Moffatt).

The Guarantee

Let us read verses 13 and 14 from our Common Version:

"In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory. . . ."

Here again is the "seal" of the Holy Spirit, God's open verification of His promises to us. God has openly demonstrated the surety of His promise through the "seal" of the Holy Spirit, "which," says Paul, "is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory." It is only a foretaste, only a preliminary confirmation—it is only "until the redemption of the purchased possession," until they actually receive the full salvation promised by God.

Can we appreciate what all this means, we who live almost two millenniums later? Can we wonder that God allowed no repentance to those who would turn away from Him after enjoying such rich privilege?

The Apostle says further: "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is

the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places" (vs. 18-20).

The giving of the Holy Spirit in fulfillment of Jesus' promise was a solid guarantee that God was with them, and that He would do as He had promised. What did that guarantee do for the confidence and hope of those early saints? It shone on their faces, it thundered in their preaching, it burned in their hearts, and brought them together in a common bond determined to be true to their high and holy calling.

Even though we today do not have the power of the Holy Spirit in us, it is fitting that we stop to realize what it meant in experience and in significance to them. For the promise still stands—as sure as ever it was given. For there is today the not-so-subtle danger that we in these cool, quiet, late evening hours will grow complacent, satisfied, unmindful of the great things that have been done before us, that we will keep alive the form and lose the force. More than ever we need to imitate the apostles' faith. More than ever we need to echo their convictions. Every day we need to testify anew with fervor and devotion in our lives. Even though we have not the "earnest" or power of the spirit as they had it, we have the same promise, the same conviction—and the same responsibility to live acceptably before God.

We, too, can say "I know." We know they did receive power from on high. And we know that the same God who gave that power can—and *will*—dispense power again. We, too, have the promise. It is all part of the seal, and it is still unbroken.

The Seal: Two Sides

Let us now consider the seal as a two-sided arrangement. There are two parts to the seal binding us to God: God's side and our own side. Both are essential if we would receive the eternal benefits that God has to offer us. Let us first consider God's side of the seal.

God knows our need of evidence and surety, and never does He leave us in the slightest doubt of the verity of His words, His promises or His work. Again and again in different ways He has given us His guarantee, His seal.

God's seal is upon His promises. In the words of the apostle Paul, "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his.

And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity" (II Tim. 2:19). Do we appreciate the certainty in those words: "The Lord knoweth . . . "?

Every aspect of God's word and work in behalf of men is sealed with surety. Such expressions as: "As truly as I live," and "As I live, saith the Lord God," attest that His promises are as sure and as unchangeable as the Creator Himself. Here is a comparison recorded by His inspired prophet Isaiah: "As the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it" (Isa. 55:10-11).

Again and again we are reminded of the certainty of His mandates. In the words of the erstwhile prophet Balaam, "God is no man to break his word, no mortal to change his mind; he promises, and does he not perform? Does he not carry out his word?" (Num. 23:19, Moffatt).

King Solomon, at the height of his kingly splendor, at the dedication of the temple, voiced the surety of God's promises in these words: "Blessed be the Lord, . . . there hath not failed one word of all his good promise, which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant" (I Kings 8:56). The same surety stands among his recorded proverbs: "Have not I written to thee excellent things in counsels and knowledge, that I might make thee know the certainty of the words of truth; that thou mightest answer the words of truth to them that send unto thee?" (Prov. 22:20-21).

The message of the Lord spoken through His prophet Ezekiel is equally confident. "For I am the Lord: I will speak, and the word that I shall speak shall come to pass; it shall be no more prolonged: for in your days, O rebellious house, will I say the word, and will perform it, saith the Lord God" (Ezek. 12:25).

To God, promise and fulfillment are all the same—one is as sure as the other. The prophets believed this to such an extent that they often used the past tense when foretelling future events, so clear in their minds was the reality of what they were saying—as clear as though already a reality. The Word of the Lord was sure, there was just no question about it.

Our Side . . .

But what about the *other* side of the seal—*our* side? What or where is the surety that this side will hold true, that it will abide by its covenant and fulfill its part of the contract? For, remember, a seal has two sides,

and one is useless without the other.

The simple fact is this: that the seal will never be broken on God's side. If the seal is broken, we ourselves broke it.

This places the entire responsibility squarely upon us, to keep the seal unbroken. So let us refresh ourselves on the possibilities: what *might* break the seal?

The first and most obvious cause of a break would be our own flagrant transgression against God's law. "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (Jas. 4:17). Every time we know the right and choose the wrong, we break the seal.

It might be a worldly ambition, an angry outburst, an ungoverned lust for that which God forbids. Or, going deeper, it might be a feeling of impatience, a touch of jealousy, a jab of bitterness, or a tendency to exaggerate the facts we relate. It might be an ungoverned love of our heart which we know we should give up but which we still cherish—secretly. It might be an unsatisfied longing of our heart that has not been replaced with the longings for Christ's approval and Kingdom. Any or all, large or small, will adequately break the seal that binds us to God.

Looking still closer, there are other things that threaten our bond with God. It might not always be an outright wrong but something less than the best of which we are capable. What about our choice of what we read, and what we refrain from reading? What about the ways we spend our time, our energy, ourselves? What about the forgetfulness we allow, the cold, unfeelingness we sometimes have toward God and things divine? Is not this a clear break in the seal? And should we not go about immediately to mend it?

It might be only careless neglect—but how can we afford this, when our relationship with God and our whole future life is at stake!

But thank God! once broken, not always broken. Forgiveness, repair and full restoration are possible—if we do on our part.

The nearer we live to God, the less the things outside the seal will affect us and the tighter will grow the bond that draws us to Him, until at last the seal shall become permanent—we shall know the life that is "hid with Christ in God." And can we picture the bliss, the joy, to know of a certainty that never, never, never shall we be separated from Him and the abundant life we love? When the Great Judge comes to inspect, He will approve only those with seals unbroken, whose future is sealed with God. All these shall be among those truly "sealed" with the "seal of the living God" (Rev. 7:2). All these shall have God's eternal stamp of

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Glorious Things Are Spoken

Glorious things of thee are spoken,
Zion, city of our God;
He whose word cannot be broken
Formed thee for His own abode.
On the Rock of Ages founded,
What can shake thy sure repose?
With salvation's walls surrounded,
Thou mayst smile at all thy foes.

See! the streams of living waters,
Springing from eternal love,
Will supply thy sons and daughters,
And all fear of want remove.
Who can faint when such a river
Flows to e'er their thirst assuage,
Grace which, like the Lord the Giver,
Never fails from age to age?

Blest inhabitants of Zion,
Walking where their Master trod,
Jesus, crowned thy King forever
Makes them kings and priests to God.
'Tis the truth His people raises
While they bless the King of kings;
And as priests, His solemn praises
Each for a thank offering brings.

Saviour, if of Zion's city
I someday a member am,
Let the world deride or pity,
I will glory in Thy Name.
Fading is the worldling's pleasure,
All his boasted pomp and show;
Solid joys and lasting treasure
None but Zion's children know.

—Selected

OFF with the Old— ON with the New

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" (II Cor. 5:17, NIV).

MANY who identify themselves as Christians would explain that becoming a new creature in Christ is a very simple process, that there is little you must do except to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, confess the fact that you are a sinner, accept Him as your Savior, and He will come into your heart and in some mysterious way make you a new creature. And from that point on, you are "saved," rescued from sin's power and ready to meet the Lord.

Other individuals, even though they claim to be saved, would say that it is indeed impossible for them to change their old habits. They insist that they cannot change, and anyone who thinks they can just doesn't understand their past life. They excuse their shortcomings because of something they inherited from their parents, or something that happened to them in childhood. Or there was something about their environment that affected them, something about the neighborhood in which they lived that made such an indelible impression that it can never be erased. In other words, they excuse their failure to overcome certain characteristics by using some aspect of their

previous life as a scapegoat.

We need to recognize first that a person—any person—can become a new creature even though he starts late in life. A respected educator once said, "It is no disgrace to be born in a hovel, but it is a disgrace to stay there." In childhood, he may have had much against him. He may not have been taught the habits of cleanliness and neatness. But after reaching the age of understanding, change is possible. Even though he may have lived under such conditions long enough to have a wrong pattern of living firmly ingrained, it is still possible to replace it with good habits of cleanliness and proper living.

WHATEVER bad impressions were made in our youth as a result of a bad environment, those impressions are not set forever and can, with proper motivation, be removed or replaced. Evil thoughts can be removed by filling the mind with good thoughts, just as a life once lived in a hovel can be changed. Life patterns can be changed by replacing the old habits with new and better habits. Change may be more difficult for one brought up under unfavorable circumstances, but it is not impossible. Whether nine or ninety-nine, one can learn new habits of living.

Unsettling experiences can influence a person for the rest of his

life—but only if one wishes it that way. It need not be that way, for through association with the people of God and right living in general, bad experiences can be routed out of the mind and replaced with new and godly experiences. Old experiences need not remain vividly etched in the mind's eye. They need only be replaced by better. No matter how vivid, they can be left behind.

It is the same with sin. Paul's writings make it abundantly clear that no matter how serious the offense or how deeply involved one has been in sin, it can be overcome, even though that sin may have been indulged from the early days of youth. Whatever the sin, it can be replaced with goodness. God's Word holds out the promise that "if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die" (Ezek. 18:21). And more than that, "all his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him" (v. 22).

TO SAY that change is impossible is negative thinking. The Scriptures tell us that we can and must become wholly new persons in Christ. This means changing our old nature to the "new man," which is "created after righteousness and

true holiness," but this is not impossible.

Writing to the Corinthians, Paul enumerated many terrible sins, warning that those who do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God. And then he indicated that at least some of his hearers had previously indulged in such sins but had forsaken their sins and were on the way to becoming new creatures in Christ. He writes, "Such were some of you." Notice that it is past tense—"such *were* some of you." They had done such things in the past, but they had made a change so noticeable that Paul spoke of them as already being new creatures. It was possible to change—they had accomplished it.

Paul's teaching was forthright: sin excludes from the Kingdom of God. The tree has many branches, but one root: the heart of man. To be worthy of the kingdom, they must now work to cleanse their hearts, to rid themselves of their sin. Sin is pollution, and only by "the washing of water by the word" is the heart cleansed.

Having learned of Christ they had changed, they had gone to work to put off the old ways and put on the new. The degree of sin did not matter; they may have been thieves, drunkards, extortioners, or adulterers. But they had confessed their sin and had turned from it. Now they could walk "in newness of life." "You were washed, you were sanctified," said Paul. Not that they had completed the process all at once, but they had broken with the old life; they had made such a clean break that Paul could mention their sin in the past tense. That did not mean, however, that they were clean through and through, for Paul gave them many admonitions in his letter after making this comment, showing that they had much more work to do

before they were perfect.

Their acceptance of the faith of Christ had not changed them automatically, but *believing* in Him they had accepted what He taught and *following* it they had changed their ways.

WRITING to the Galatians, Paul repeats a list of sins similar to those he wrote to the Corinthians, and even adds a few more, "of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal. 5:19-21). God will not tolerate the least degree of sin in the kingdom.

And then immediately following this list of the most heinous sins, Paul lists qualities which he identifies as the fruit of the spirit, good fruit which those who inherit the kingdom must bear: "Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" (Gal. 5:22-23, NIV). Paul is showing that regardless of what sins we have committed before knowing the law of God, it is possible, perhaps not all at once but progressively, to put off the deeds of the flesh and in their place to put on the fruits of the Spirit. But there must be effort on our part. These good fruits are not going to just automatically come into our heart and take possession. Nor is the old going to depart of its own will. There is some effort required on the part of the believer. No amount of profession can guarantee possession.

Among the fruits of the spirit, self-control is perhaps the one most needed in replacing those deeds of impurity that Paul listed as of "the sinful nature" (Gal. 5:19, NIV), or the works of the flesh. Without self-control, there could be no progress toward character growth. Nor would we who live today do any

better without it.

The great Apostle did more than preach about the change from old to new. He *showed* how the change could be accomplished. He also recognized the power of example in becoming "new." More than once in his letters he counseled the brethren to follow his example. Writing to the Corinthians, he said, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (I Cor. 11:1). Also to the Philippians he spoke of example, and included a warning: "Brethren, be followers of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ" (Phil. 3:17-18). And again to the Philippians he said, "Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you" (Phil. 4:9).

Well this great teacher knew the importance of his own example. He was personally known among the brethren, and they knew Jesus only by his words. Paul could set the example, a true example of Christ, an example worthy of being followed, and then bid his brethren follow Christ by copying him. A noble challenge.

BECAUSE his brethren were looking to him for an example, Paul wrote of his own personal struggle between the old nature and the new. Goodness was not automatic—far from it! His life was a constant battle between flesh and spirit. These are his words: "I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me," he wrote. "For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to

the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom. 7:21-23). But Paul fought valiantly and won.

"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me," was his battle cry.

We today look not only to Paul but to others in the Bible for our example; and in our everyday life we observe and follow the pattern of life of those whom we respect.

The new character image God requires not only can be acquired, it must be.

Anyone who has attempted to live the Christian life can testify that right living is not automatic, but it is rewarding. The Christian has the best of both worlds; the hundred-fold in this life, and in the world to come, life everlasting. MM

Happiness through Friendship with God

We have been given a great opportunity of winning eternal life, if we follow in our Saviour's footsteps and copy the life of the One who said, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." As Jesus once said, "I do always those things that please the Father."

Can we think of anything which could give us more happiness than to become a friend of God? It will enable us to live each and every day with gratitude.

We cannot afford to miss out on the happiness our friendship with God will bring to us.

—Contributed.

The Unbroken Seal

(Continued from page 9)

approval. All these shall become part of the permanent, part of the eternal creation of God, eternally bound in the bundle of life with God.

Shall we be there? Shall our seal be unbroken? The answer lies with us.

Benediction

O Lord, we pray Thee to dismiss us with Thy blessing. We thank Thee for the assurance we have of the reality of the things which Thou hast promised. The first Pentecost actually came as promised, and so will the greater Pentecost actually come.

Grant that the glory of that coming Day may stimulate us to serve Thee wholeheartedly now, that we may participate in that better soon-coming Pentecost. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Keep Everlastingly At It

*"Steadfast, serene, immovable, the same
Year after year, through all the silent night
Burns on forevermore that quenchless flame,
Shines on that inextinguishable light!"*

WHAT gives the light its value? Nothing more or less than the fact that it is inextinguishable. It is always there. Day in, day out, it burns.

It is not what we do once, or occasionally, that counts most in the mastery of life, but what we do every day which builds, like compound interest, on the investment of our time.

The seemingly spontaneous mastery of the violin by a great violinist, or the superbly controlled voice of a great singer appears to be effortless. "How easily he does it!" we exclaim. What we forget are the countless hours of exhausting practice that have been invested in that near-perfect performance.

The marvel of the human race is the wonder that can be accomplished by diligent application. Take a youth of twenty and give him eight or ten more years of everyday study and practice in any field within his ability, and see him become a master in his field. His peers may marvel at his skill. They may attribute his accomplishment to genius. And genius it is—the genius of painstaking, everyday disciplined dedication.

For better or for worse, destiny is the stored-up power of what we have been doing—or not doing—every day, every day.

Let us keep watch and see how much time we waste each day in precious "nothings," fiddling about, in day dreaming, in starting what we never finish. How much time might we be able to redeem from our lives if we employed every moment in the pursuit of our one unwavering aim?

This was the secret of the great Apostle's success. "This one thing I do," he said in Phil. 3:13-14. May we, too, keep everlastingly employed in the attainment of "this one thing," with an unwavering aim. MM



Lines to Live By

The Fall of Sodom

*There was a wicked city,
Upon a wicked plain.
Where men thought only wicked thoughts
Of cheating, lust and gain.*

*But in this wicked city
There lived one holy man,
Who built his life according
To the Almighty plan.*

*His name was Lot . . . God loved him,
And sent two angels down
To warn him that destruction
Would come upon the town!*

*The angels came at even. . . .
They bade Lot go away
From wicked, brutal Sodom,
Before the break of day.*

*So Lot took both his daughters,
Together with his wife,
And all of them left Sodom.
His plan could save each life!*

*But as they fled, God told them
They must not look behind—
Be careful! God's least wishes
Are things that we should mind !*

*They crossed the plain, they entered
Another city's gate,
Just as the sun was rising,
And Sodom met its fate—*

*For God, with mighty power,
Let fire fall down upon
The wicked, blasted Sodom,
Until all life was gone.*

*And Lot looked ever forward.
His wife was not so wise—
She disobeyed God's wishes,
And backward turned her eyes.*

*She saw a smoking ruin
Upon a blazing plain.
She dared to look on Sodom—
And never looked again !*

*And Lot and his two daughters
Went on, as God had said.
Lot never looked behind him—
He never turned his head!*

*He journeyed to the mountains,
And raised his glance above,
And thanked God for His mercy,
And praised Him for His love!*

Whatever You Do

Wherever the battle may take you,
Wherever the field may be,
Your thoughts are the things that will make you
Or break you—just take it from me.
Your thoughts are the things to preserve you
You'll ride on the crest or you'll fall;
It takes your own mind to unnerve you;
While calm, it can rule over all.

Tho' perilous the way, take it striding!
How towering the barriers or grim,
You can't make them topple by hiding—
Strike into the current and swim!
You'll never ward off a disaster
By waiting with fear in your breast.
Whatever the task, be its master!
Whatever you do, do your best!

Philosophy

—teaches us to endure afflictions.

Christianity

—teaches us to turn afflictions into blessings.

*"Were half the breath now vainly spent,
To heaven in supplication sent,
Our cheerful song would oftener be,
'Hear what the Lord has done for me.'"*

True worth is in being, not seeming,
In doing, each day that goes by,
Some little good—not in dreaming
Of great things to do by and by.
For whatever men say in their blindness,
And spite of the fancies of youth,
There's nothing so kingly as kindness,
And nothing so royal as truth.

We get back our mete as we measure—
We cannot do wrong and feel right,
Nor can we give pain and gain pleasure,
For justice avenges each slight.
The air for the wing of the sparrow,
The bush for the robin and wren,
But always the path that is narrow
And straight, for the children of men.

We cannot make bargains for blisses,
Nor catch them like fishes in nets;
And sometimes the thing our life misses
Helps more than the thing which it gets.
For good lieth not in pursuing,
Nor gaining of great nor of small,
But just in the doing and doing
As we would be done by, that's all.

Through envy, through malice, through hating
Against the world, early and late,
No jot of our courage abating—
Our part is to work and to wait.
And slight is the sting of his trouble
Whose winnings are less than his worth;
For he who is honest is noble,
Whatever his fortunes or birth.

*Look around in your mind just the way you
might walk through your house, analyzing
what should be changed and what should be
thrown out.*

Points for the Month:

Week 1: Too many of us speak twice before we think.

Week 2: It makes a difference to all eternity whether we do right or wrong today.

Week 3: You cannot WISH yourself good; you must MAKE yourself good.

Week 4: Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success.

Known for Their Faith

NATIONS around the globe honor their heroes of war or peace. Institutions honor their leaders and founders, men who displayed outstanding courage, valor, fortitude, or philanthropy. Occasionally even the living are honored for their heroism. Each year *Who's Who* records the names and accomplishments of the high achievers in the arts, sciences, and medicine.

Centuries ago the apostle Paul pointed out certain of his children in Christ as worthy of special recognition. They, too, he said, were known—known for their faith. These are his commending words: "I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world" (Romans 1:8).

All of God's people through the ages have been select individuals singled out for special recognition on account of their faith. The 11th chapter of the Book of Hebrews provides a gallery of men and women who were distinguished by this singularly identifying quality. Among them are such shining names as Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David—all known for their faith.

In his letter to the church at Rome, the apostle Paul pointed out another distinguished group of believers. Here in the City of the Caesars, in Rome itself, were those

whose faith was so exemplary, so outstanding, so mighty through God that it was told abroad and became an example to believers near and far. Paul says it was spoken of "throughout the world." What a rare thing! The New Testament records but one other instance where the faith of a group was so widely recognized. Paul wrote to the church at Thessalonica: "... ye were ensamples to all that believe... not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing" (I Thess. 1:7-8).

What is the nature of this faith that the Apostle commended so highly, that was known throughout the whole Christian world at that time? Faith is so often an intangible term that easily loses its meaning in vague or false definitions. But there is no need for this. Very simply, the Bible itself defines faith as "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). Paul adds that "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). Is our faith in need of strengthening? Here is the divinely inspired formula: "Faith cometh by hearing... the word of God."

Faith is not apathy. It is not the attitude that "God is going to take care of the situation, so I'll just sit back and let Him." *Faith is believing in God's Word and acting upon*

it. Faith is committing our best efforts to God, however meager they seem, knowing that He can take those efforts and multiply them as Christ did the loaves and the fishes, and give us eternal benefits in the future.

Some people confuse faith and trust. Faith is more than simple trust—it is trust rightly placed. You may drive your car 50 mph down a familiar road and cross a bridge that is well-built and strong. It was not your faith that carried you over the stream, it was the bridge. On a stormy night when a flood had taken away the foundations of the bridge, you might come down the road in your accustomed manner, with the same faith, and the bridge would collapse beneath you, and you would find yourself in the raging flood.

Faith, to be noteworthy, to be recognized by God, must be rightly placed on a solid foundation of reason and evidence. God does not ask of us a blind and unreasoning faith. He gives us reason—every reason—to believe.

How many of us have been lost, or confused, or turned around in a strange city, and have stopped and asked a stranger to help us. Then what did we do? We proceeded to do our best to follow those directions, sure that if we followed them correctly we would find our way out. What would have happened, though, if we had asked for direc-

tions, agreed that we were sure those directions were right, then had done nothing to carry out those directions? Wouldn't we be still lost in the strange city?

Now faith in God is very similar to that. By nature we're lost, without hope and without God in the world. We have nothing that can sustain us or promise us life. But we learn that God *has* what we need. And we have faith that He can perform what He has promised. So, on the basis of this faith, we *act*.

Faith is an individual matter. It is not something that can be purchased, shared or borrowed. If I would be strong in faith, I must build that faith, daily, hourly, thought by thought. I must think about faith, talk about faith, and read the evidence that will build up my faith. And when we as a group of people are like-minded in building our faith and acting upon it, then what will we be? Will we not be another community like the one Paul commended, a people known for their faith. Haven't we every reason to be *such a people*?

Unfortunately, this is not the goal of most churches today. We see

churches who are known for their architecture, for how many people their sanctuary will hold, or for their ornamental stained-glass windows. Some churches are known for who attends there: "That's so and so's church."

There are churches that are known for the eloquence of their pastor. His diction, his art of persuasion, his singular personality all tend to make him—not God—the center of attention.

Other churches are known for their fanaticism or their gimmicks. One church hung bananas around the Sunday school rooms and advertised for people to come and be part of the bunch. Churches give away cars, sponsor social and community affairs; conduct shows, games and so on. They are known for things other than their faith.

God has not blessed us with great buildings, great programs, or a great congregation. But we can still be people of faith, strong, living, abiding, moving faith, faith that will keep us all steadfast until the day of Christ. We *can* be and we *must* be men and women of faith, both individually and as a church. Ours must be the one, uniting, dynamic

faith that was once delivered to the saints, the same faith that propelled the apostle Paul to press for the prize. And as we continue to build this faith, as we walk with Christ, our faith will grow. God will multiply our efforts, and He who has begun a good work in us will keep on perfecting it until the day of Christ.

All the rewards of the heavenly Kingdom are promised on the basis of faith—is not the final "Well done" addressed to the "good and faithful servant"?

We cannot be known for our size, or our spectacular achievements in this world, but we *can* be a people known for our faith—faith in God, that He will fulfill all that He has promised; faith in the future, that it shall be even as He has said; and faith in ourselves that we are capable of living the life God requires.

If we meet this standard, we shall someday belong to the fellowship of the saints, those who have abandoned the uncertainties of the present and are indeed and in truth "known for their faith" and ready to enjoy all the glorious joys and grand experiences that God has prepared for us, world without end. MM

Whose Favor?

LIKE Daniel of Bible fame, we should strive always to let the Lord's work be our greatest pleasure.

*Take the task He gives you gladly,
Let His work your pleasure be;
Answer quickly, when He calleth,
"Here am I, send me, send me."*

We as life-seekers must learn to choose our words carefully, at all times. This is something I want to strive harder to do, "for to change a bayonet into a poker is within the capacity of the least mechanical; however, to transform a sword into a pruning hook is a matter for a skilled smith," said S. M. Corothers.

As well as learning to choose the proper words, we also must learn to choose the right actions. The actions of a well thought of brother may have great effect on another brother. We can say with Carlyle, "He who shows me the achievements of a brother touches my lips with a live coal from off the altar."

Yes, it is later indeed than we think. We have long enough sought what this world has to offer and, as the Rev. Maud Hembree has said, the great of the world are in reality working for nothing. So often it is written of them, "He was a great scholar"; or "He made a huge fortune"; or "He rose to be a peer"; or "She was noted for her beauty"; or "She was a leader of fashion, a queen of society"—but what are such epitaphs worth if below them God's finger silently carves, "He did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord"? —Contributed

The Rose

THE DYING day lay beautiful in the tender glow of the evening. Gleaming white walls of Jerusalem and the purple hills silhouetted against the crimson sky lent an almost ineffable splendor to the closing of another spring day.

On the slopes ascending eastward from the Kidron Valley and south of the Mount called Olivet was the abode of Ithamar and his household. Surrounded by gardens and trees, the villa spoke to all of its owner's appreciation of beauty. In the garden outside the high stone walls a great variety of bushes, vines and flowers bloomed profusely, interrupted by white gravel walks which wended their way through the gardens like a white ribbon. Tall date palms lifted their swaying arms to the deepening sky, while spreading tamarisks rustled and whispered among themselves.

Inside the walls was a large open area, the courtyard, the center of the family's activity. On one wall long boxes of anemones opened their delicate blossoms. On the opposite side of the yard was the brick oven, used for baking bread; nearby was a small stone grinding mill. Presiding over all the court rose a massive ancient olive tree.

The large house extended perhaps two-thirds of the way across the rear of the yard. The remaining section was a covered patio, in the far end of which was the flight of stairs which lead to the roof top.

Such was the home of the highly respected olive grower Ithamar. Everything about the estate pointed to the refined tastes and ample wealth of the owner. Yes, Providence had dealt kindly with Ithamar. His generosity and goodness had been well repaid, and all he put his hand to seemed to prosper.

All was not peace, however, on the grand estate. Toward the back of the house was a tiny cubicle, very simply but neatly furnished. On a low bed lay a young maiden, her face buried in her arms. The fading sun's long slanted rays reaching through a small high window tinted the wall a rosy shade of gold. The little room was

silent, except for now and again a heartbreaking sob, "Oh! God, how long? how long?"

Sorrow. Heartache. Frustration. When would she cease to be thwarted by these demons of misery? Why should Mara be so utterly mean to her, when she tried so hard to be kind and obedient? She heaved another desperate sob as she recalled the violent and threatening vocal combat she had had with Mara the cook earlier in the afternoon.

The combat might have been avoided—but how? Naamah felt an irresistible inner compulsion to stand behind the King. David was a man of God, the Lord's own anointed, whatever Mara's feelings to the contrary. True, he was not the strong, valiant David she had heard about, when all the people rallied around him and praised him for his might. Indeed, the spring of his life was gone, and he was retiring more and more from his active duties. But the Lord would supply their need in due time; of this Naamah was confident. And King David's brilliant past left a warm afterglow that was illuminating his declining years with a holy light.

However, Mara was not alone in her discontent. Court servants whispered loudly of disturbances in the royal family. Wise men nodded among themselves. Women gossiped. The opinion of many was well-circulated: King David's spoiled son had his eye on the throne.

It was Absalom, yes, Absalom. An ambitious young man, tall, unusually handsome and well favored, with such a winsome personality—no wonder he was a favorite son of his father. But alas! how sadly depraved he was. Naamah had often heard her master and mistress tell of his ungodly ways.

On this particular afternoon, while Naamah and Mara were preparing the evening meal, Mara, being in a more or less agreeable mood, was prattling on to a great extent about Absalom.

"Absalom is very charming, isn't he? It's about time we got a new king."

Naamah's only reply, however, was, "King David is the Lord's anointed."

Mara turned a cold stare upon Naamah as she sneered, "King David? The great and glorious warrior and champion? Ridiculous! He's nothing but a withered up pomegranate. A king? We may as well have no king at all!"

Naamah's face colored involuntarily, and a protest wavered on her lips. But she restrained herself.

"Lord's anointed!" mocked Mara, sniffing loudly. "Indeed, he spends most of his time in the temple or reading the musty books of Moses, and praying to Jehovah, the great God of Israel, whose Almighty hand has helped him into so many messes."

"That is not true," cried Naamah, indignantly. "Our king has sinned only when he has turned away from God. But he always repented and God has forgiven him."

"He needs it," the cook barked. Then she lowered her voice. "Oh! But Absalom is indeed handsome, and so clever, too. He would make a marvelous king! Don't you think so?"

"The son of David is both depraved and disloyal," remarked Naamah without raising her eyes from her work.

"Don't contradict me," snapped Mara.

"But you asked what I thought"—the words were out, and Naamah could not retract them.

"All right! Don't get smart, you—you—" Mara was furious now. The wooden spoon in her hand waved wildly and her bloated face was changing from red to purple to white and back to red again. "I'll teach you that it isn't proper to—"

At that moment a lad of about seven came in bearing an armload of wood. He ducked as an elbow shot up in front of him, and depositing his wood, he drew back quickly, open-mouthed at the scene.

"I shall tell our mistress about this," rasped the angry cook, bringing her fist down with a bang, knocking a big jar of vinegar to the floor where it shattered into a hundred pieces.

Mara pointed a trembling finger at Naamah, who was already picking up the fragments, and yelled hysterically. "Naamah! You stupid, careless child! Now look what you have done!"

The boy stepped from the corner and said respectfully, "I will—I think that—um—the jar rolled off the table when—um—Mara brought her hand down on it." He gulped, turned, and headed for the door, but a guttural "Come back here" arrested his escape. Having recovered her senses, Mara slapped him across the

face and growled threateningly, "That will teach you to mind your own business, I hope."

The affair ended with Mara having the last word. "I shall wait on table tonight." She had no desire to have the family of Ithamar see Naamah's pale face and red eyes. Naamah, only too glad for the favor, stumbled from the room, sick, dizzy, and exhausted.

She shuddered at the horrible remembrance. Why, she asked herself, did this have to be? Would her happiness always be marred? Was this the portion that God had meant to be hers forever? She strangled a fierce tide of bitterness that welled up within her. No! She could not hate. She could not hold resentment and bitter thoughts about Mara. But Mara sorely tried her.

Her master and mistress—Ithamar, warm, kind and altogether noble; Adah, understanding, gentle and sincere—could they ever guess what went on behind the kitchen door? A river of shame rushed over her at the thought of them. "Heavenly Father, please forgive me for being ungrateful"—a prayer escaped her lips—"I want to see your hand in the trials that I have to face."

At that moment she heard a gentle knocking at the door. Naamah sat up quickly, wiped her eyes, and pushed her black hair away from her face. "Come in," she called softly. The door opened and the young servant boy, who earlier had come to her rescue, stepped into the room.

"Oh! It's you."

The boy nodded solemnly. "I stuck 'em inside my shirt when nobody was looking. It isn't very much."

Naamah watched in silence, laughing inwardly a little in spite of herself as he produced a squashed barley cake, a piece of cheese, and a few dates.

"Oh! Thank you," she said, but not feeling very hungry at all. "But are you sure you had enough to eat?"

"I wasn't very hungry because I was thinking about you without any supper at all."

She looked at the begrimed, handled food and thought of the generous heart of the little one who had saved it. "You are very kind, little Benjamin," she said gently as she smiled down at him in the dim light.

He seemed not to hear, but said hesitantly, his eyes big and serious, "She—she's—awful mean, isn't she, Naamah?"

"Truly, little one, Mara isn't as kind as she could be, but then, she doesn't serve and love the true God. That is what makes her unhappy and mean, because no one can be truly happy without Him."

She paused and bit her lip thoughtfully. "Did my mistress inquire about my absence?" she asked.

"Indeed, Naamah, and Mara told her that you were

ill tonight. Adah looked at me and I kind of shook my head, so she asked Mara if that was all."

"What did Mara say?"

"She said, 'I don't know what all her ills are,' and she—um—said. 'By the way, Naamah needs a few lessons in obedience, too.' You know, after she was so mean to you, she was in a bad temper an—an she scolded me for leaving the goat's milk out when she did it herself. She shook me by the ears till I thought something would have to break. Then I remembered that you never complain or talk back to her and she's ever so much meaner to you than she is to me and I am bad sometimes. So I went like this"—he pressed his lips firmly together—"even though I felt like shouting at her that she was the one who did it."

"You were very brave, Benjamin. It's hard to live with a person like her, but we should never, never complain because we have so many good things—a kind master and mistress, good food, and clothing and this beautiful home to live in. Mara has all of these, but she lacks one thing—the most important—and that is Jehovah."

"Oh! Naamah," the little boy cried, impulsively flinging his arms around her. "You are so good. Everyone loves you, but not nearly so much as I do."

"Please don't talk that way," laughed Naamah, and then added more seriously, "But, my little man, you had better run along before she comes after you. Thank you for your kindness to me." And so saying, she tenderly kissed his hot forehead.

"Goodnight," he whispered, and stepping into the hall, he disappeared into the shadows.

Benjamin had expressed the attitude of nearly everyone who knew Naamah—the cook, of course, excepted. Up to the time that she was eleven years old, her life had been one bitter experience after another. Very, very dimly she remembered the time when her family had been together and happy. Then, alas, her sweet, gentle mother had died. For several years the family struggled on, her father trying to provide for his motherless family, and Naamah, being the oldest girl, caring for the younger children. Then, like a blood-thirsty monster, disease had swept through the village leaving her alone with a little sister whom she dearly loved.

It was then that Ithamar and his gracious wife Adah kindly offered to take them as servants. But the younger child, although tenderly cared for, being fragile and weak, died within a few months. And Naamah, age 11, was given work as a maid in the kitchen and elsewhere as she proved her worth. A servant, yes; but her charm, her delicate manners, sweet disposition, and

unselfishness soon found their way into the hearts of the members of the new family. After a few short, shy conversations, the daughter, Miriam, and Naamah became fast friends. Together they went on walks through the flower and shrub gardens or, when they had more time, in the olive groves and beyond. Miriam often accompanied her to the spring En-rogel for water. Together they learned the things every Palestinian girl should learn to be proficient mistresses of their own homes. And Naamah was very fortunate to have training in the finer arts, which very few girls ever received.

Miriam's sad death three years after she came to live with them was another crushing blow to Naamah, for she had loved her as a sister. Had she not seen enough death and sorrow? Nevertheless, as one very wise man observed, the canary sings sweeter the longer it has been in a darkened cage. Her darkness, the sickness and death, sorrow and grief, loneliness and care had created in this young girl love, tenderness and compassion, and she could forget herself in her deep feelings for those whom she loved. She had an understanding far beyond her years.

Naamah was changing rapidly from a sweet girl into a young woman, strong and lithe of body. Her clear skin was tanned to a deep golden brown and her features were marked with strength and beauty of character.

Now, since their only daughter, whom they adored, was taken from them, Ithamar and Adah grew continually more fond of Naamah. Her presence seemed to fill an aching void in their hearts. She comforted them, not so much by words as by her faithful devotion to them and to her duty. Naamah, in turn, loved them as she would her own parents. A stranger, seeing her among the family of Ithamar, would have thought her a daughter—except, perhaps, that Naamah served and waited on them and generally did so in a very reserved and unobtrusive manner.

Life had been a struggle since Naamah could remember. She had found joy in Miriam, and now that too was gone. But Ithamar and Adah were still her friends. And they were good, kind, and God-fearing, and never considered her below their warm love and keen interest. Despite her unpleasant memories, Naamah might now be enjoying a serene and happy life, if it were not for one other person also very much a part of her life: Mara.

Mara was the possessor of a violent, vindictive tongue; and because of her unpleasant habit of finding fault and expecting everyone to conform to her, people in general found it rather trying to get along with her. It

may be said, however, that Mara had been satisfied, to her limited capacity, with life as it had been before the coming of Naamah, back in the days when she was absolute, sole and supreme ruler of household affairs. Life for Mara at that time had been all anyone could ask. But with the coming of that intolerably meek little miss Naamah, her peace had come to an abrupt end and hatred and jealousy rankled in her heart.

(Continued Next Issue)

Not Always to Comfort

(Continued from page 2)

true prophet of the Lord, and the task of a prophet is not to smooth things over but to make things right; not to comfort but to correct; not to make people *feel* good but to shock them into actually *being* good.

What about love? Yes, there had been love upon those people who had sought the Lord (Jer. 2:2-3). And God still has love to give, an abundance of love. But His love is conditional. It is not free for all. God's love is for those who love Him. He wants something in return. His love is for the faithful, the committed, the passionately devoted. It is for those who are willing to give to the last ounce of what they have been given, and without reserve.

God does not want tame pets to fondle and feed; He wants mature, responsible men and women who will respond to Him in genuine obedience. For that to happen there must be honesty and truth. There must be submission and humility. Self must be toppled from its pedestal. There must be pure hearts, clear thoughts, and an open inner-heart evaluation along with a ready confessing and forsaking of sin.

And what about peace? Yes, God also gives peace. But it is not a peace at any price. It is not a peace that gets along with everyone by avoiding any hint of disagreement. It is not a peace achieved by refusing to talk about painful subjects or to touch sore spots. It is a peace that comes from knowing who and what we have believed. It is a peace that comes by learning to trust God for what we cannot do for ourselves and know that all will be well in the end. It is a peace that is the result of hard won victories in self-control. It is a peace that comes from confronting ourselves honestly in the fear of God. There is evil to combat, ambition to confront, apathy to defeat, dullness to challenge. Peace comes only after the battle has been successfully fought and won. Peace comes only by obedience and

faith, by correcting wrong and vindicating right. Any preaching of peace that turns its back on these is not of God.

And what about popularity? Should the preacher of God's message think about how he rates among his listeners and how many are listening?

Every preacher wants an audience—else why preach? But it is fairly safe to say that the greater the popularity of the preacher, the more likely that his message is his own and not of God. True and faithful men of God have always been an uncomfortable sort. And they have always preached—not foremostly to be *heard* but to be *obedient*; not to make themselves popular with men but to perform their duty to God. And the message they bring is not usually a message that multitudes are clamoring to hear; it is a message that God *wants* to have heard.

Truth has never been popular. There were times when the multitudes followed Jesus, but when His days of preaching were over and His disciples assembled to wait for His promise, the number of them was just 120. Where were the multitudes? Safely returned to their comfortable quarters and their accustomed manner of life, not wanting to be disturbed.

Why is truth unpopular? Because it is not designed to make men comfortable; it is designed to make them *right*. And this means pain. Sacrifice. Suffering. Death. Not a "Don't worry—everything's-going-to-turn-out-all-right" philosophy, but a severe "Do what is right and leave the consequences with God," because right is right and wrong is never right.

This was and is the mission of all true men and women of God: not to fondle but to fortify; not to pet but to purify; not to comfort but to correct. Not to sing, "There's nothing to worry about" but "Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Until this is accomplished, there is no place or time for comfort.

MM

Thought for the Day

Write it on your heart that every day is the best day of the year. He is rich who owns the day, but no one owns the day who allows it to be invaded with evil and anxiety. Finish every day with your very best and be done with it. Begin each new day well, and let the good in it spill over into tomorrow, but do not waste a precious moment on your yesterday.

—Selected

Better to Trust

"It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes" —Psalms 118:8-9.

THE former of these two verses is said to be the center verse of the Bible, the pivot on which all else hangs, and if we may judge, it well deserves its central position. What advice more timely than that which is couched in the words, "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man"? It lifts us above ourselves. It lifts us above other men in our same rank or sphere of life. It lifts us above "princes," the mighty, the cultured, the possessors of great wealth or influence, and directs our attention to the "Rock" that is "higher" than we are.

Even a casual comparison between the qualities of God and man should serve to convince us that it is better to trust in the Lord.

Man is finite, God is infinite. God has lived from all eternity past and will continue to live through all time yet to come. Man is mortal, here today, gone tomorrow, his days on earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding.

God is omnipresent, "the . . . heaven of heavens cannot contain" Him; man is puny, his sphere of action is circumscribed by the physical laws that bind him to the earth.

Man can make promises but can give no assurance of the ability or the continued life to fulfill them; while the Almighty cannot fail. His great and precious promise that every worthy child of His shall partake of the divine nature is as immutable and unbreakable as the laws that control the universe.

God never changes. He is the same "yesterday, today, and forever"; while the mind of man is fickle and unstable, as an open torch "blown and flared by every wind of passion's sway."

God never forgets. When once we have made Him our Friend through virtue of a righteous and sinless life,

His interest in us never wanes. Even death itself cannot blot our name from His "book of remembrance"; while human interest is ephemeral, and one whom we have especially favored may hold us in highest esteem today, yet forget us completely with the passage of years, and be totally indifferent to our welfare in time of need or distress.

Truly, "it is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man."

But the Almighty does not ask us to accept one general statement of a fact, such as that in our memory verse, as complete proof. His Word abounds with declarations, forceful and direct, telling specifically what He can and will do for us if we trust Him. The following are examples:

"Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength . . . They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint" (Isa. 40:28-29, 31); "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us" (Eph. 3:20; see also II Cor. 6:17-18; Rev. 21:3-4; Isa. 58:13-14).

Now that we have a clear mental picture of what God will do for those who trust in Him, let us check up on ourselves to see what changes are necessary in our lives before we can qualify as one who trusts in Him. In Proverbs 3:5 we are commanded, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding." The inclination to lean upon our own under-

standing and think ourselves capable of directing our own destinies is very common to human nature, and let us not delude ourselves into believing we are an exception to the rule. By nature our thoughts are vain and need directing. The Word of God can do this. "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (II Cor. 10:5).

If trusting in God we will never take the attitude of the haughty ones who say, "With our tongue will we prevail; our lips are our own: who is lord over us?" (Ps. 12:4) but instead our prayer will be, "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips" (Ps. 141:3).

Freedom of action is a right which democratic people feel should never be denied them, yet to enjoy the benefits of living in a well-regulated society we willingly submit to a certain amount of restriction. Likewise, if we wish to share the abundant blessings the Lord can give, we must be prepared to submit to the commands given in His Word. Proverbs 3:6 is forceful and direct,

"In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." It is one thing to acknowledge Him in some of our ways, quite another to acknowledge Him in all our ways!

To illustrate: we easily agree that a Christian should not murder nor steal nor swear, but are we as ready to agree with the divine command not to let "filthiness, . . . foolish talking" and "jesting" be once named among us (Eph. 5:3-4)? And how about our tempers? Do we agree that wrath is a fruit of the flesh and must be dispensed with (Gal. 5:20); that it rests in the bosom of fools (Eccl. 7:9) and has no place in the life of a Christian? Are we willing to comply with the demand to come out from the world and be a separate and peculiar people "zealous of good works" (II Cor. 6:17; Titus 2:14), to redeem the time (Eph. 5:16) and not waste it in time-killing activities? Before we can truthfully say we agree with the Psalmist's conclusion that "it is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man," we must be fully in accord with every divine precept given for us to obey, or our mere citing of the words will avail nothing.

MM

Shining?

IT IS no wonder the face of the early church shone. Filled with faith in God and faith in His promises, they rested in hope. Keeping the commandments made them happy. There was no cause for glum countenances. Were they not on the way to glory, to everlasting fields of bliss and perfect happiness? Trials seemed but light afflictions. Hope was the stimulus behind the show of their glowing faces.

If we would reflect the image of Christ, our life pattern must reflect His. Completely under Divine control, His will was brought into harmony and submission to the Father's. Even in the hour of His final and severest testing, His face was radiant with the inner glow of complete self-command. At peace with the world, He spoke reassuringly to His disciples, "Be of good

cheer. I have overcome the world. Let not your heart be troubled. You go and do the same."

It is human nature to want to go the opposite way. We prefer our own ways and thoughts to God's. Thus being self-determined we err in our own self-directed way. Yet the Word of the Lord is clear; our thoughts like our actions and all imaginations should and must be all transformed and renewed by the refining power of the Word working within.

God is no respecter of persons. He commended Abraham for his obedience and he was called "the friend of God." Moses, approved of God as the meekest man, nonetheless without thinking smote the rock when he should have spoken to it. A small misdemeanor, we would say, on the part of an otherwise

great man. Yet it was not overlooked; it barred the entrance into the promised land of Canaan and terminated his earthly career. What a lesson for us!

"For the ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord and he pondereth all his goings" (Prov. 5:21). There is no escaping God's all-seeing eye. His care is over all who will obey. Day by day He arranges circumstances. Some things will vex and try us. Someone will give the reproving look or remark for our benefit. We can take it or leave it, as the saying goes. But we are much wiser when we take it, examining ourselves to see if it be so.

If we would shine in the ages to come, we must shine now. As the words of one of our hymns expresses it: "Help us, O Lord, Thy light-bearers to be, Living and shining that others may see we are reflecting the image of Thee."

—Contributed

• The Efficacy of Christ's Death

"Do you think that Christ had a choice between dying on the cross for us or requesting eternal life for Himself alone?"

A restatement of your question in other words, if I understand you correctly, might be this: Did Christ, by dying on the cross, perform a work He had been commanded by His Father to perform in behalf of us, or could He have refused to die on the cross and still have merited eternal life for Himself?

We do not believe that God had any part in planning or executing the death of Christ on the cross. He did foreknow that it would happen, but His foreknowledge in no way made God responsible for engineering the despicable act. Christ was slain by wicked hands. Peter, in his message to the assembled multitude on the day of Pentecost showed that he understood the matter: "whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go. But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and . . . killed the Prince of life" (Acts 3:13-15). He understood also that God had foreknown and foretold the event years earlier—a fact which made strong argument for the mighty power of God which they were even then witnessing. He said, "But those things, which God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled" (Acts 3:18). But God's divine foreknowledge in no way makes Him responsible for the act.

On another occasion, also recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, Peter laid the blame for Christ's crucifixion not upon God but squarely upon his hearers. We read: "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour" (Acts 5:30-31). Stephen in his defense again underscored the fact, as he spoke of "the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers" (Acts 7:52).

Might Christ still have been obedient to God and merited salvation for Himself had He refused to die?

If Christ had refused to die, He would not have

been fully obedient to God. His submitting to death rather than deny His calling was His last act of obedience. For Christ, as with many other who lived during the early centuries when persecution was rife, it was a matter of suffering for His loyalty to God rather than deny the purpose of His life. Had Christ denied that He was born to be a King, had He when questioned, promised to say no more about His life work or destiny, had He promised to live henceforth in obscurity as other men of His time, He surely would not have been crucified. It was His unwavering steadfastness that enraged both the officials and the people. But we should observe that all through His ministry the issue was not His death for the salvation of anyone but rather the acceptable type of life that would please God and receive God's approval.

As far as Christ's own personal qualifications for eternal life were concerned, it would seem that He had completed these before the crucifixion, as His words to His Father in John 17 reflect: "I have glorified thee on the earth," He said, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (John 17:4). If the principal work of His life was to die on the cross, He could hardly have said His lifework was "finished" before He was crucified.

The efficacy of Christ's death lay not in what it did for others as an atoning sacrifice—Jesus said nothing of this. For Christ it was His last act of obedience; and for us it was an example of perfect submission, of a life fully consecrated to God, obedient "unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:8-10).

Though God was not responsible for Christ's death, it was within God's "will," or the circumstances which He allowed—and which He turned to good by raising Him from the dead. In submitting to death Christ was submitting to the "will" of His Father, as He said, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt." God used Christ to demonstrate the complete course of a Christian's development—from birth through life, death, resurrection and finally exaltation to immortality. Had Christ not experienced physical death He would not be the perfect Example to us. And if Christ had not died, we would not have

the powerful and convincing evidence of God's power as manifest in Christ's resurrection. Nor would we have the assurance that death can be overcome.

There is yet another facet of Christ's physical death we should not overlook. It was doubtless a source of strength for Christ's followers who would also have to face persecution and death for what they professed. Knowing that Christ suffered and died, they were strengthened to stand firm and not deny their faith, even unto death.

Christ's literal death did not atone for our sins, as practically the whole religious world believe. The only aspect of Christ's death that affects our sins is His example in completely crucifying His own evil ways, dying to sin, as He has commanded us to do, that we may with Him gain the victory over death and the grave. In the words of the apostle Paul: "But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming" (I Cor. 15:23).

• Hate Your Enemies?

"I can't find in the Old Testament where anyone was told, 'Love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.' What was Jesus quoting in the Sermon on the Mount?"

The text to which you refer is found in Matthew 5:43, where Jesus says: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy."

We should notice that Jesus did not say that He was citing either the law or any of God's spokesmen. He said simply, "Ye have heard that it hath been said. . ."—it seems entirely possible that He was quoting a saying familiar among the Jews.

The most nearly related passage in the Old Testament is found in Leviticus 19, but it does not command any form of hatred to anyone. It reads: "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him. Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the Lord" (vs. 17-18).

God never sanctioned hatred, much less commanded it, though jealous Jews found it possible to interpret the law in this way to justify their feeling against Gentiles.

Another possibility is suggested by a footnote in the Jerusalem Bible which tells us that the "second

part of this commandment (i.e., "love thy enemies") is an Aramaic way of saying 'You do not have to love your enemy.'" In other words, the opposite of "you must love" is "you do not have to love." We get an entirely different thought from the passage if we read it, "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and not love thine enemy." There are verses in the Old Testament which indicate a larger or lesser measure of compassion to various peoples. Israel was definitely commanded not to go in with their wicked and pagan neighbor-nations that so often caused Israel to sin. Certainly they were justified in loving them less.

The quotation is apparently a paraphrase of the text, and the translation overlooks one essential point: that the original word translated "hate" is simply the opposite of love, which is literally "not love," rather than "hate."

The word "hate" as used in Scripture need not always convey the thought of violent behavior, as it conveys in our language today. Jesus used the original word translated "hate" in this sense, as the opposite of love, which is literally "not love," or "love less," rather than "hate." This use of the negative of love is found in several New Testament passages, one being Jesus' words in Luke 14:26: "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also. . . ." The thought is not that they should be hated but *loved less, not loved* in the same way as brothers and sisters in the family of God. In other words, the follower of Christ must be willing to exchange loyalties, but there is no thought of developing a hatred for anyone. Any and all forms of hatred are strictly forbidden. MM

PATIENCE

1. Patience—Its Meaning: Endurance (see II Cor. 1:6).
2. Patience—Its Need (see Heb. 10:36).
3. Patience—Its Accompaniment (see Luke 8:15).
4. Patience—Its Power (see Col. 1:11).
5. Patience—Its Attitude (see Heb. 12:1).
6. Patience—Its School (see Rom. 5:3).
7. Patience—Its Bestowment (see Rom. 5:4).

All That You Have

We might say that our time spent before we covenanted to serve God, was wasted, for what do the fleeting, worldly pleasures of this short life or even the gaining of the whole world, profit a man if he lose his own soul? Now, however, we have something of real value to work for, something so wonderful and lasting—a future in God's Kingdom which will never pass away. May we give glory to God while we have the time and opportunity and set our affections on the things above.

We need to hasten also, for time passes so rapidly and to get right with God and to keep His works to the end, to overcome our lower nature with all its vain and wicked ways, will take every minute of the time we have left us. It is so easy to get all absorbed with things of this life and its many attractions, which can steal away so much precious time, or to think like the "rich young man" that you may enjoy great possessions now and still have eternal life in the future.

But what did Jesus say? "Go and sell all you have; give the money to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven; then come take up your cross and follow me." It is not the 10 percent, 40 percent, or even the 99 percent Christians which will be accepted by God. He has waited nearly 6,000 years to get the very best, the "all that you have" ones, the ones that take up their cross and follow the Master.

How could anyone observe the command to "love the Lord with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength" unless they devote much time to the study of God's Word to get to know Him, to know of His

greatness, long-suffering, mercy and kindness, also His severity to those who fall away—together with all the wondrous things He has done, is now doing and has promised to do in the future, for the faithful ones who have kept His commandments, the wonderful promise of a crown of glory that will never fade away.

It is beyond our capability to get more than just a faint glimpse of the wonderful future prepared for those who love God, so I am resolved to keep in mind God's precious promises and make my religion and love for God, come first in my life.

South Wales

R. B.

Grateful

Thank you for the tapes and the *Megiddo Message*. I enjoy them very much. If we will do our part, God will help.

New Brunswick

M. L.

Closer to God

Even though we do have our trials, it is grand to be able to go to the Word of God and renew our strength in time of need. The trials are made so much lighter, and the joy of having to endure trials for Christ's sake surely causes rejoicing, and the bringing of us closer to God.

God is over all and knows what is best for us to develop the Christlike character He so earnestly desires to see in us.

It certainly is our brightest ray in our glorious hope to look to the return of Christ. No wonder John exhorts and reminds us that all who have this hope purify themselves "even as he is pure."

Australia

A. B.

In Debt

We are going to receive in the future as we sow (II Cor. 9:7). We should remember this and be liberal with our time in His cause. Whatever we do, we must do willingly.

We are preaching a sermon constantly by our actions, and our attitude. To whom are we most indebted to give willingly? To God, who has given us so richly of life, and wisdom, and knowledge.

First, we should give Him willingly of our obedience. If we get rid of our own ways, our natural dispositions, that is a big part of giving cheerfully.

With self-surrender cometh rest,
The consecrated life is best:

Giving our all to God.

Our time and talents, strength, and skill,

We owe to Him who leadeth still:

Giving our all to God.

Our utmost will so little be,
Compared with truth so pure, so free:

Giving our all to God.

Constrained by His all-conquering grace,

We'll fight the foe, we'll run the race:

Giving our all to God.

Nebraska

M. M.

Only By Doing

"You cannot wish yourself good, you must make yourself good." It's too easy to be wishy-washy. You can build yourself up in your mind until you think you are much better than you actually are. But just wishing something doesn't make it so. It all boils down to the *doing*—steady, moment-by-moment doing.

Michigan

D. J.

First Things First

Working for the Lord is the most important work we will ever have to do. It is the job that must come first in our daily life. Nothing can ever come ahead of it. If we should place earthly things ahead of our work for Christ, we hurt no one but ourselves. This is something we ourselves have to do. No one can earn our salvation for us nor lose it for us. We alone are responsible for it.

New York

L. S.

Light, Hope

The *Megiddo Message* is indeed "a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path," and for many years I have read the inspiring messages therein. Sometimes in dark valleys of a wilderness experience the words of your magazine have brought light and hope.

I am still having to face tremendous challenges and trials of my faith in Jesus Christ, but am doing so in the knowledge that "All things work together for good to them that love God" and am determined to press on.

Your latest magazine to reach me has in it a most challenging and enlightening article on Baptism.

There are churches in this country which virtually enslave people to their doctrines (doctrines of men) and among them is one church (with branches throughout New Zealand) which says that unless people are baptised in water 'for the remission of sins' there is no way they can be forgiven and that they are destined to burn in the fires of hell.

I well remember having sleepless nights for many years wrestling with the unreasonableness of that doctrine.

Your article clarifies all this and exposes to the Light of day the darkness and evil of such error. I just felt I had to write to let you know there are people who need your message in this beautiful land of New Zealand.

New Zealand

W. D.

Appreciating Spiritual Food

Thank you for the last *Megiddo Message* and two beautiful children's booklets. The boys wanted them read at once. They contain very good religious material for bringing up children.

The articles in the *Message* were very interesting and upbuilding. With much interest we have read the biography of "An Honest Man," The Life Work of Rev. L. T. Nichols. Truly he

was a man of God. "Why Do We Need Thanksgiving" is another deep article. Everything we receive comes from our Heavenly Father and truly there isn't enough gratitude in our hearts for all His goodness. Such articles are necessary to bring it to our consciousness.

We thank you for this spiritual food and beg you please to send more.

Poland

E. K.

A Seaman's Meditation

WHEN I set out on a voyage, I think of the voyage the Lord sends me on, a voyage through life. When I look up at my ship, my home for the next few weeks of the sea voyage, I look at myself, for I am in my very being a vessel on such a voyage.

From the bridge as I watch the bows part the calm sea as we move slowly out of harbor, I remember how gently I am guided out into the streams of life to face all that might come across my course. When I see a fog bank, I think of the unknown, the hidden rocks, the hazards of life that I must be able to deal with. But when I turn to the Radar, my ever-seeing eye in times such as these, so then do I see Christ, my guide, my friend, my aid in steering my vessel clear of such hazards.

I look at the helmsman, and I think of Him ever true to the course of my voyage, keeping my vessel from straying off the shipping lanes. When I visit the engine-room and see those massive engines driving this ship through these waters, so do I remember the power of faith and prayer, giving me the will to plough on through the seas which separate me from my destination.

Looking at the anchor chain, those great heavy steel links all combining to make one strong cord of steel, then do I remember all the links in my chain, faith, prayer, obedience, trust, and at the end of my chain, Christ, my anchor, my tether to keep me from straying into troubled waters and help me weather any storm.

When I reach my destination, once the vessel is alongside the berth and the gangways put in place, I glance around the bridge. No more the mellow green glow from the navigating-instruments, no more the movement of the compass or the clicking of the Gyro repeater. I glance into the engine-room and see the pointers at "finished with engines," so then do I think of my human vessel, and realize that my voyage is over. It is time to rest.

Then I know that if I have been faithful in all my voyaging, I shall someday set foot on the eternal shore. Then may I hear Him call "Welcome, my son," and may I answer gladly, "Father, I'm home."

—Author Unknown

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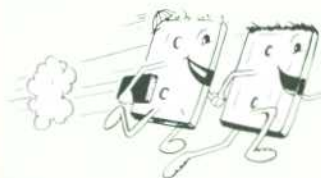
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