

Megiddo Message

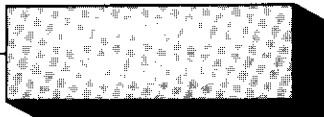
A photograph of a fern growing in a crevice of a dark, layered rock face. The fern is bright green and delicate, contrasting with the dark, textured rock. The rock has horizontal layers and some moisture or mineral deposits. The lighting is soft, highlighting the texture of both the rock and the fern.

He who dwells . . .

in the secret place
of the Most High...

will abide under the
shadow of the Almighty.

— Psalm 91:1



Internalizing Holiness

**"Be holy: for
I the Lord your
God am holy"
—Leviticus 19:2**

WHILE much of the book of Leviticus holds minimal interest for us today, chapter 19 contains what has been called "the holiness code."

Beginning with the overarching command, "Ye shall be holy for I the Lord your God am holy," it continues with a variety of specific commands, spelling out the terms of the highest law ever given for the governing of humankind. Some directives relate to personal conduct, some to social behavior. Some govern acts, some govern attitudes. Altogether it is a description of the type of law that produces a specific quality of heart: holiness.

The laws of this chapter reach beyond the civil law of Israel; from them Jesus quoted when He was asked what was the greatest commandment in the law.

But what impresses us most, perhaps, is the recurrence of the phrase, "I am the Lord." In the 37 verses into which the chapter has been divided, "I am the Lord" appears 15 times. What are we to learn from this? Here is an inescapable truth: that God is *the* authority; that holiness is submission to *His* lordship. In other words, obedience to God is the essence of holiness.

The rest of the chapter tells us that inward holiness is directly linked to outward conduct. There can be no heart holiness if there is not holiness in

conduct. A soldier can obey an order even though he despises the officer who issued it. A recalcitrant child can be sitting down and keeping quiet on the outside while he is standing up and screaming on the inside. But no such conduct is possible with holiness. The submission to God that characterizes holiness is the *heart* saying yes to God.

This is what we today would call "internalizing" holiness. It is holiness *inside*. It is a transformation of the heart, a deep cleansing of the will, a transfer of one's allegiance from self to God.

When we internalize a subject, we make it a part of our very being. It speaks to us through and through. It transforms us; it becomes part of our very being. This is what holiness must be in each of us. "I am the Lord" has for its corollary, "You are the servant." He commands; we obey. We obey, not because His will is always pleasant, or convenient, but simply because it is His will, and we are obligated to obey. Even if His will involves personal sacrifice, danger, or death, we are still to obey. We obey, not because we are comforted, but because He is our Lord, and we have accepted His authority.

This is heart holiness, internalized. This is obedience.

This is the way to life.

MM

Megiddo means . . .

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

We believe

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

We believe

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

We believe

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

We believe

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

We believe

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

We believe

—in ourselves as capable of fulfilling the precepts and principles given us in the Word 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
- Goodspeed**—The New Testament translated by Edgar J. Goodspeed
- Moffatt**—The Bible, A New Translation
- RV**—Revised Version

About Our Cover

Our cover photo was taken at Enfield Park, near Ithaca, New York.

Megiddo Message

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The MEGIDDO MESSAGE is a religious magazine devoted to the cause of Christ, and published for the dissemination of Bible truth alone. Official organ of the Megiddo Church. L. T. Nichols, Founder; Newton H. Payne, President and Editor; Ruth E. Sisson, Executive Editor.

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

AS WE stand on the threshold of another new year it becomes increasingly apparent that our generation is unnerved by the nearness of what seems to be worldwide catastrophe. People everywhere are asking "What next?"

The problem of international terrorism alone poses a threat of sufficient magnitude to paralyze the thinking person. Not only are great powers affected but all nations. Add to this the uncertainties caused by the fact that so many nations have nuclear weapons, and the possibilities become too terrible to think about.

Then add the more ordinary problems—of overpopulation, problems of pollution, of increasing lawlessness, and rampant immorality—all combined tell us that time may fast be running out for our civilization.

Can we wonder that people everywhere are asking, "What next?"

From a human standpoint, the question is unanswerable. No one knows what is next. Rather, no *man* knows. For God has decreed what will be, and no question mark is needed. God has spoken concerning the next event in His program, and it is only a matter of time until it will happen. *Christ is coming.*

A man saw the word "Maranatha" printed large on the side of the church bulletin. Unfamiliar with the word he inquired of the custodian what it meant. He was told, "The Lord is coming." The man replied sharply, "I don't believe it."

"I am sorry, sir, that you do not believe it," answered the custodian solemnly, "but He's coming anyway."

And it is so true. The Lord is not waiting for us to believe. His plans are going right ahead; everything is on schedule; the Lord *is coming.*

In the upper room, on that last night with His disciples before His crucifixion, Jesus made the simple promise: "I will come again" (John 14:3). At the time He ascended, the angels repeated the promise: "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11).

In I Thessalonians 4, the apostle Paul revealed more of the details of Christ's coming. Paul's paramount purpose in writing was to set before the Thessalonians the fact that the Christian faith gives us a great and sure hope—in contrast to the hopelessness offered by heathen religions. Those who sleep in Christ shall awake.

Within recent years an inscription was discovered in a cemetery in Thessalonica. The epitaph read, "After death

WHAT NEXT



no reviving, after the grave no meeting again." How tragic if true.

But praise God, it is *not* true! Why? "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (I Thess. 4:16-17). The coming of Christ will be a visible and audible fulfillment of these words.

In this passage Paul associates three distinct events with the coming of Christ: 1) The resurrection of the dead in Christ. Sleeping believers will not be left out. Those who have died will be raised to see the great event first-hand. 2) The meeting in the air. Living believers and resurrected believers will together be "caught up together...in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air" as He arrives. What a tremendous, thrilling experience for all! 3) Dwelling with Christ. When Christ returns, He comes to stay. Never again will He be separated from His own. From the time of His arrival, the saints shall be "with the Lord." Some people mistakenly think from this passage that they will be taken away, but Paul gives no such idea. And numerous other Biblical writers emphasize that the saints will possess the earth (Dan. 7:26-27), will take the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever (Dan. 7:18), will reign on the earth (Rev. 5:9-10), inherit the earth (Ps. 37:9, 15, 22, 29). The righteous shall never be removed (Prov. 2:21-22). The meek shall inherit the earth (Matt. 5:5).

In addition to all this, the Bible reveals that Christ will have a forerunner, a herald who will give advance announcement of the great event. We read of this in Malachi 4:5-6, "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: and he shall turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."

The coming of Christ will inaugurate a new era for the earth and its inhabitants, bringing hope and blessing to all mankind. It is the promise of Jesus Himself, given in His last message to men: "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself [Emmanuel, God with us, Matt. 1:23] shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away"

Perhaps God is serving notice on us that time is running out.

(Rev. 21:3-4). Here is real, sure hope.

How dear is this hope to our hearts? Does our whole life pattern revolve around its glorious expectation? Have we the certainty of faith that gripped the hearts of those disciples of the first century who saw Him go away and heard the reassuring words of the angels: "This same Jesus ... shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven"? Are we looking, longing, living for that Day?

Many people look ahead to His coming as if it were someone's imagination of something nebulous that might possibly take place sometime somewhere. But there is no uncertainty about it, no "might," no "maybe." All things around us are subject to the forces of change and uncertainty; but not the Word of the Lord. God's promise of the arrival of the King and the new world He will bring is one thing about which we may be absolutely sure. It is more than a promise; it is, in a limited sense, partly a reality. Christ's first coming *began* what His second coming will *complete*—the fulfilling of all that was written "in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms concerning [Him]."

What about the mighty convulsings in the world today? It seems that God is serving notice on us that time is running out. He doesn't want us to depend on anything of this present arrangement. We should be looking ahead, making our plans for the *next* world. If ever there was a generation which could momentarily expect the appearance of the King, it is our own. Events in the world today are building toward the great climax of human

history when "the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout," and the Lord's prayer will be fulfilled and God's will be done on earth as it is now done in heaven (Matt. 6:10).

These are not simply interesting speculations; they are facts which should challenge the way we think, the way we work, the way we plan, the way we live.

For all who are prepared for it, that Day will bring joy beyond description. It will be the Day of the great and glorious reunion. Loved ones long

separated will be reunited. Saints of all ages will meet and greet "on that bright celestial shore." Brethren who never met will become acquainted. In the words of the song, "What a gathering of the faithful that will be!"

This momentous truth should thrill and stir the heart of every believer in these uncertain days. What next? The imminent return of Jesus Christ, "the blessed hope" of every true, sincere believer.

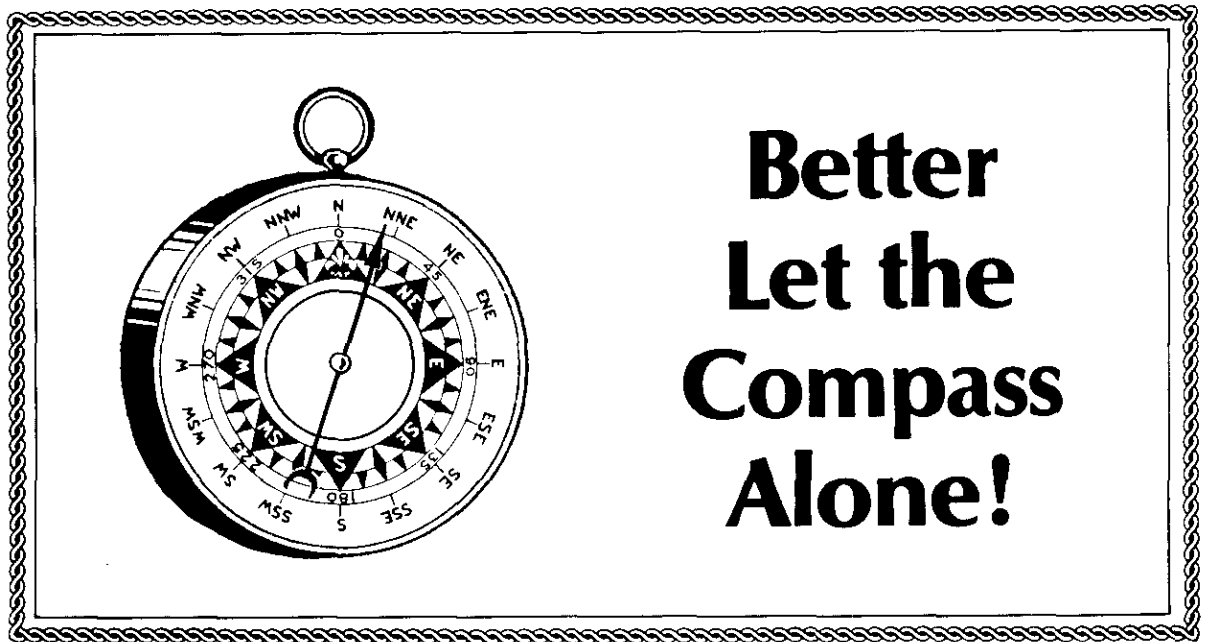
Are you ready to be part of that great Day?
MM

*There is a day of peaceful rest
To Christian pilgrims given;
There is a joy for souls distress'd,
A balm for ev'ry wounded breast;
'Twill come with Christ from heaven.*

*There is a home for weary souls
By sin and sorrow driv'n;
When tossed on life's tempestuous shoals
Where storms arise and ocean rolls,
It comes with Christ from heaven.*

*There fragrant flowers incessant bloom,
And joys supreme are given;
There rays divine disperse the gloom
And saints triumphant o'er the tomb
Bask in the smiles of heav'n.*

—Selected



Better Let the Compass Alone!

MANY years ago in the northern part of the state of New York, a man set out to cross a narrow strip of woods about three miles wide. The distance directly across this neck of the forest was three miles; however, at one end the woods led out into a vast wilderness. When the man set out through the woods, no one worried about him because he had his compass with him.

A day or so passed, and the man did not return home. His friends became alarmed as to his safety, and on learning that he had set out for home a day or so previous, instituted a search for him.

At last he was found under the snow, cold and stiff in death. On examining his person, it was found that he had not lost his compass, but close inspection revealed the fact that he had tinkered with it trying to "correct" the needle so as to make it point in what to him seemed the right direction for north. But, alas! how could the man hope to correct what seemed to him to be a wayward needle when he himself was lost!

Had he *believed* the compass, and let it alone, he could have safely made his way home.

This man was no more under a delusion than are many others who, having in their possession the unfailing compass of God, the Bible, fail to believe it, and even seek to change it to read as they think it should, and in consequence lose their lives in the great wilderness of sin and unbelief.

Let the compass alone. It points in the right direction, whether or not it seems right to us. And by carefully following its directions, we can reach home and safety.

MM

God, I need Your help today.

*Help me today to bear
The things that are hard to bear:*

*Help me to bear
Pain with cheerfulness and without complaint;
Failure with the perseverance to keep trying;
Disappointment without bitterness or resentment;
Delays with the patience which has learned to wait;
Criticism without offense or frustration;
Defeat without excuse.*

*Help me always to remember that
You hear what I say,
You see what I do,
You read what I think about;
You know how I feel.*

*Help me always to be a good follower,
Always to follow Your example;
Always to ask what You would do
Before I make a decision.*

*Keep me, O God, from any indulgence
Or pleasure
Which would injure another,
Or hurt myself,
Or which I will someday regret.
Amen.*



Was God Unfair in Judging Eli?



Are Parents Responsible for the Misconduct of Their Children?

God punished Eli for the misconduct of his wicked sons. Why? Does this mean that God holds parents responsible for the conduct of their children?

Within the Sacred Record are many things "written for our learning." These accounts are important because they show God's attitude toward problems which confront us today. At the same time we learn how God dealt with His people of other ages, and knowing this we may learn how He will deal with us when once again He begins to speak and act openly among humankind.

Just because He is silent at the moment does not mean that His attitude has changed. Just because He is not punishing evil at the moment does not mean that He has grown tolerant of evil. His demands for righteousness and His own principles of justice are changeless. Always and forever He is a God of righteousness, holiness, uprightness and truth.

The Question

In the book of Samuel is the record of Eli and his sons; later in the book is the record of Samuel's sons.

Eli was high priest at the time, and his two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were serving as priests under him. But Eli's sons were not righteous. They were disobedient and vile.

Samuel was a judge, and his sons served as judges under him; and again, Samuel's sons were not like their father. It is written that they "walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment" (1 Sam. 8:1-3).

The question has been asked: Why was

Eli condemned because he did not "restrain" his sons? Does this mean that God holds parents responsible for the disobedience of their children? Also, was it fair for God to punish Eli for the misconduct of his sons when a few years later, Samuel's sons were also wicked and Samuel was not condemned?

God Is Just

In considering this question, let us first observe what the Bible says about the justice of God.

The justice and fairness of God is one of the most firmly established topics in all Scripture. His manner of dealing with humankind has been merciful far beyond anything they could have deserved. This fact is shown throughout the Scriptures, both in His open dealings with men and in clear statements of His principles. It is the matching of God's "justice and judgment"—His justice, His fairness, is always first. We read, "Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face" (Ps. 89:14).

Justice, judgment, mercy and truth are said to form a golden chain around the throne of God. In the words of the Psalmist, He has "not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities" (Ps. 103:10).

When Abraham was pleading for any who might be worth sparing at the time God had decreed judgment upon the wicked city of Sodom, Abraham made

this memorable statement: "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Gen. 18:25). In other words, God's justice and fairness were beyond question.

The great lawgiver Moses, after a long and eventful life in the service of God, addressed God as a God of "truth and without iniquity." These are his words: "I will publish the name of the Lord: ascribe ye greatness unto our God. He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he" (Deut. 32:3-4).

However, justice does not include tolerance of evil. On the contrary, to be just God must enforce His law without partiality. He must neither condemn good nor justify wrong. Punishing and removing evil where it conflicts with His purposes is an important and significant part of His justice.

When God issues a command, He expects it to be obeyed. Those who disobey stand in danger of experiencing His judgment.

An Example

One outstanding example of God's justice is seen in His principle of judging and rewarding each according to what he has done.

To illustrate this proper matching of transgressor and deserved punishment, the prophet Ezekiel used the very example in question: that of a father and son. Apparently some of the people had been criticizing the Lord, saying that He was condemning the children for the sins of their parents, and the Lord told Ezekiel to speak out. These are his words:

"The word of the Lord came to me: 'What do you people mean by quoting this proverb about the land of Israel: "The fathers eat sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge"? As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, you will no longer quote this proverb in Israel. . . . The soul who sins is the one who will die.'"

Then follows the father-son illus-

tration. "Suppose there is a righteous man who does what is just and right. . . . Suppose he has a violent son, who sheds blood or does any of these other things (though the father has done none of them): . . . Will such a man live? He will not! Because he has done all these detestable things, he will surely be put to death and his blood will be on his own head. But suppose this son has a son who sees all the sins his father commits, and . . . does not do such things: . . . he will not die for his father's sin; he will surely live. But his father will die for his own sin" (Ezek. 18:1-3, 5, 10, 13-14, 17-18, NIV).

Then, so that there could be no question, the Prophet summarizes his point. "The soul who sins is the one who will die. The son will not share the guilt of the father, nor will the father share the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous man will be credited to him, and the wickedness of the wicked will be charged against him" (Ezek. 18:20, NIV). Never would God condemn the father for the sins of his son.

Eli and His Sons

Now how do we reconcile this with the Lord's condemning Eli for the sinful conduct of his sons?

Before we draw any conclusions, let us look at the account.

In I Sam. 2:12-25 is recorded the flagrant misconduct of Eli's sons. We read: "Now Eli's sons were scoundrels and had no regard for the Lord" (I Sam. 2:12, NEB). We are not left to wonder why. Several points of misconduct are mentioned. First, these sons, whom Eli had instated to serve as priests of the Lord, were behaving immorally with women who gathered at the door of the tabernacle. Secondly, it seems that in serving as priests they were not even offering the sacrifices properly. According to the law and custom at the time, certain portions of the sacrifice were counted as "holy,"

i. e., set aside entirely for God, and were to be consumed in the fire upon the altar and not to be eaten. However, these irreverent priests, according to the narrative, were taking of these sacred portions for their own use—even going so far as to instruct their servant to take these portions *by force* from the offerer, if the offerer should object (I Sam. 2:13-16).

What was the attitude of the Lord toward these priests? The Lord did not look upon their sin with silent tolerance. We read that "the sin of the young men was very great before the Lord" (I Sam. 2:17, KJV).

Their sin was great for two reasons: 1) because they were by their actions defying the authority of the Lord to

Can we imagine any God-fearing man allowing irreverent, immoral men—even if they were his sons—to serve as priests of the Lord, interceding for the people before the Lord?

command them what to do and how to behave while handling what was not even their own property but His; and 2) because by their abominable conduct they were causing others to sin. As a result of their disobedience, others "abhorred the offering of the Lord" (I Sam. 2:17).

We are not told how the Lord at this point communicated His displeasure to Eli, but somehow Eli was caused to recognize the sin of his sons and to speak out against it. "And he

said to them, Why do you do such things, the evil things that I hear from all these people? No, my sons; for the report is not good which I hear the Lord's people circulating. If one man sins against another, God will mediate for him; but if a man sins against the Lord, who can intercede for him?" (I Sam. 2:21-24, NEB).

Eli spoke, but apparently the sons paid no attention; and since Eli took no corrective action, the sons continued their sinful practices without interruption.

The Lord was not satisfied; mere words were not enough. The gravity of the offense required sterner measures. This time the Lord sent a direct message to Eli by one of His prophets. These were His condemning words: "Why do you look with envious eyes on the sacrifice and the offerings I have ordered, *honoring your sons more than me*, by letting them grow fat on the best part of all the offerings of my people Israel? . . . Those who honor me I honor in my turn, and those who despise me are esteemed as nothing" (I Sam. 2:29-30, JB).

Why did the Lord address Eli about the misconduct of these priests? Not because they were his sons but because Eli, as acting high priest, was responsible for those who served under him. When he did nothing to remove them from office and instate better men, the Lord interpreted Eli's inaction as "honoring your sons more than me," and gave this severe warning: that those who "honor me I honor in my

turn, and those who despise me will be esteemed as nothing."

Still Eli took no action to remove his wicked sons from office. Time went by, and the wicked sons still continued to serve as priests.

Then the Lord sent another message to Eli. This time His spokesman was the young Samuel, who was growing up in the tabernacle under Eli's fatherly care. This message from the Lord was more than a warning—it was a pronouncement of Divine judgment upon Eli: "You are to tell him," said the Lord to Samuel, "that I condemn his house for ever because he has known that his sons have been cursing God, yet he has not corrected them" (I Sam. 3:13, JB). Or as translated in the New English Bible, "Because he knew of his sons's blasphemies against God and did not rebuke (restrain) them."

Only a short time later, as a direct fulfillment of this pronouncement from the Lord, both of Eli's sons were killed in battle, and Eli, upon hearing of their death, died also (I Sam. 4:10-18).

If God does not condemn a parent for the sins of the children, why was Eli condemned for the sins of his sons?

Eli was condemned for the sins of his sons because Eli as high priest was directly responsible for the appointment and official position of his sons. It was within Eli's power to instate or remove them, as he saw fit. The inference is that if other men had been behaving in the same abominable manner, Eli would have removed them;

but because these were his sons, he was more tolerant.

By allowing such wickedness in the high office of the priesthood, Eli was degrading the worship of God and causing it to suffer shame and defilement. He was polluting the sanctity of true religion in Israel.

To serve as a priest in the Levitical order was an honor, a privilege, and an obligation. When the priests ministered, they did so in behalf of the people, as representatives of the people before God. For this reason the law provided that priests should live separate and consecrated lives. The priest's office symbolized the purity and holiness God required. They were to be visible reminders of God's high requirements.

Furthermore, the priests were appointed to maintain the covenant relationship with God, to assure the holiness of the chosen people before God.

Can we imagine any God-fearing man allowing irreverent, immoral men—even if they were his sons—to serve as priests of the Lord, interceding for the people before the Lord?

Samuel and His Sons

Now what about the sons of Samuel? We read of them in I Samuel 8: "And it came to pass, when Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel. Now the name of his firstborn was Joel; and the name of his second, Abiah: they were judges in Beersheba. And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and

**Salvation is an individual matter.
God neither condemns the children for the sins
of the parents nor justifies the children
because the parents are righteous.**

took bribes, and perverted judgment" (I Sam. 8:1-3).

What do we learn from this passage about the sons of Samuel? 1) that Samuel appointed them to act as judges over Israel; 2) that they had not their father's strong, upright character. They "walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment."

Was Samuel wrong in appointing them to be judges?

Perhaps we do not have enough information to make a fair judgment, and we are not told that the Lord condemned Samuel for this.

Still we wonder: why would Samuel appoint wayward sons to be judges over Israel?

There are three possibilities:

1) Although Samuel doubtless knew that they were not strong, God-fearing men, he may have thought that they would be able administrators.

2) They may have seemed, at the time he appointed them, to be the best men available for the job.

3) It is also possible that at the time Samuel appointed them, they were not doing anything outstandingly bad. Perhaps the appointment exposed them to temptations which they did not have the character to resist—temptations that come with public office and public responsibility. If so they were not the first to fail in this respect. They might have been good farmers, or good tradesmen, but they did not have the special qualities of character necessary to serve as good statesmen. This has happened before.

4) It is also possible that they were serving as judges only because their father told them to serve, that they were in reality unwilling to serve, and that they flagrantly abused the office as a protest against their father's appointment of them.

We should notice that the sins mentioned against them all have to do with their official functioning.

Comparing

Now let us compare the two situations. Why would God condemn Eli for allowing his sons to be priests and not condemn Samuel for appointing his sons as judges?

We should observe first that there is a wide difference between the two positions. Acting as a priest and performing sacred duties can hardly be considered on a par with a civil position, handling secular issues. Being a priest and representing God to the people and the people to God would require a much higher standard of conduct and character than merely acting as a civil judge.

We should also notice that Eli was not punished without warning. At least twice God delivered a special message to him about the wickedness of the sons, and only when Eli took no action did God act to punish.

Eli was directly responsible for the religious life of the nation, and by allowing his sons to serve as priests—an honor they did not deserve—he was honoring his sons above God. It seems altogether possible that if the offending priests had not been of his own family they would have been removed immediately. Because they were *his sons*, his fleshly sympathy came ahead of his obligation to be loyal to God.

We should also recognize the fact that Eli's sons were in a position which directly affected the religious life of the nation. As has been said, like priest, like people. Instead of protecting the sanctity of true faith and worship in Israel, these priests were debasing it—a flagrant offense against the God of heaven.

The leaders of God's people have always borne more responsibility than the people. This is why James says, "My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation" (Jas. 3:1).

We cannot really say that Samuel's sons were "just as wicked" as Eli's,

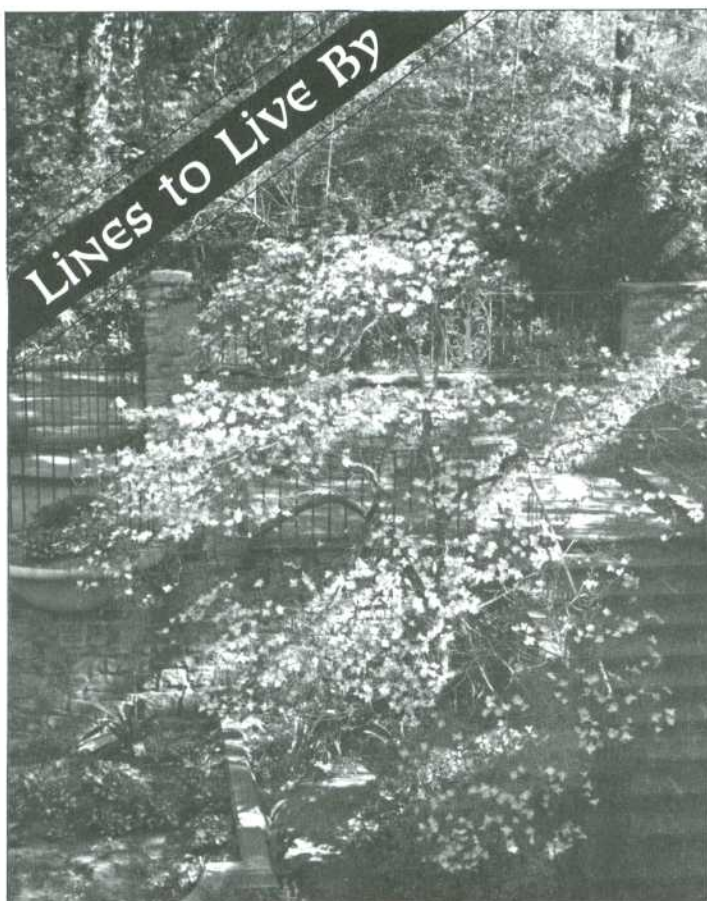
because of the difference in their obligations and the limited amount of information available. We do know, however, that the priests had far greater responsibility before God than the judges.

Whatever the sons of Samuel lacked in character, Samuel had an outstanding grandson named Heman (son of Joel). For some unrevealed reason—was it the influence of his mother, or grandfather, or an unnamed friend? We are not told, but for some reason, Heman decided not to follow in his father's footsteps and instead patterned his life after that of his God-fearing grandfather Samuel and performed honorably in the service of the Lord during the time of David. Heman was the first of three chief Levites appointed by David to conduct music in the tabernacle at the time David set up official tabernacle worship services. Heman was also the writer of some of the Psalms. In addition to all this, Heman is said to have had the singular honor of being King David's spiritual adviser in the matters of God (I Chron. 25:5). No small honor was this!

We are not told all we would like to know in the matter of Eli's sons and Samuel's sons, but all that we *are* told reinforces the fact that salvation is an individual matter, that God neither condemns the children for the sins of the parents nor justifies the children because the parents are righteous. Every individual must stand or fall for his or her own conduct in the sight of God. Samuel does not have to answer for the misconduct of his sons, and his sons were not righteous just because of their godly father. Nor was the son of the sons condemned because of a transgressing parent.

Parents are not condemned for the sins of their children, nor are parents responsible for the conduct of their children. Parents are commanded to teach their children the commands of

(Continued on page 22)



You will become as small as your controlling desire; as great as your dominant aspiration.

Humility and self-denial are often admired, but seldom practiced.

When you break your word, you break something that cannot be mended.

No farmer ever plowed a field by turning it over in his mind.

Christ in you

*Has someone seen Christ in you today?
Christian, look at your heart, I pray.
The little things you have done or said—
Did they accord with the way you prayed?*

*Have your thoughts been pure and your words been kind?
Have you sought to have the Saviour's mind?
The world with a criticizing view
Has watched—but did it see Christ in you?*

*Has someone seen Christ in you today?
Christian, look at your life, I pray;
There are aching hearts and blighted souls
Being lost in sin's destructive shoals.*

*And perhaps of Christ, their only view
May be what of Him they see in you.
Will all that they see in you bring cheer?
Friend, look at your light, does it shine out clear?*

Thine Is the Power

*Our Father in Heaven, who dwellest in light,
We lean on Thy love, and rest in Thy might
In weakness and weariness joy shall abound,
For strength everlasting in Thee shall be found:
Our Refuge, our Helper, in conflict and woe,
Our mighty Defender, how blessed to know
That Thine is the Power!*

*Our Father, Thy promise we earnestly claim,
The sanctified heart that shall hallow Thy Name,
In ourselves, in Thy children throughout the wide world,
Be Thy Name as a banner of glory unfurled;
Let it triumph o'er evil and darkness and guilt,
We know Truth can do it, we know that it will,
For Thine is the Power!*

*Our Father, we long for the glorious Day
When all shall adore Thee, and all shall obey.
O hasten Thy Kingdom, O show forth Thy might,
And wave o'er the nations Thy scepter of right.
O make up Thy jewels, the crown of Thy love,
And reign in our hearts, as Thou reignest above,
For Thine is the Power!*

*Our Father, we pray that Thy will may be done,
For full acquiescence is heaven begun—
Both in us and by us Thy purpose be wrought,
In word and in action, in spirit and thought;
For Thou canst enable us thus to fulfill,
With holy rejoicing, Thy glorious will,
For Thine is the Power!*

*Our Father, Thou carest; Thou knowest indeed
Our inmost desires, our manifold need;
The fount of Thy mercies shall never be dry,
For Thy riches in glory shall mete the supply:
Our bread shall be given, our water is sure,
And nothing shall fail, for Thy Word shall endure,
And Thine is the Power!*

*Our Father, forgive us, for we have transgressed,
Have wounded Thy love, and forsaken Thy breast;
In the peace of Thy pardon henceforth let us live,
That through Thy forgiveness we too may forgive;
The Son of Thy love, who taught us to pray
For Thy treasures of mercy, hath shown us the way,
And Thine is the Power!*

*Thou knowest our dangers, Thou knowest our frame,
But a tower of strength is Thy glorious Name;
Abandon us not to temptation, we pray,
But keep us from evil, and may we not stray;
Thy children shall under Thy shadow abide;
In Thee as our Guide and our Shield we confide,
For Thine is the Power!*

*Our Father, deliver Thy children from sin,
From perils without and from evils within,
From this world, with its manifold evil and wrong,
From the wiles of the tempter, so subtle and strong;
Till, as Christ overcame, we, too, conquer and sing,
All glory to Thee, our victorious King,
For Thine is the Power!*

*Our Father, Thy children rejoice in Thy reign,
Rejoice in Thy highness, and praise Thee again!
Yea, Thine is the Kingdom and Thine is the might,
And Thine is the glory transcendently bright;
For ever and ever that glory shall shine,
For ever and ever that Kingdom be Thine,
For Thine is the Power!*

POINTS for the MONTH

- Week 1:** Seize your opportunities today—tomorrow may be too late.
- Week 2:** Guard well thy thoughts; thy thoughts are heard in heaven.
- Week 3:** I am bound for the Kingdom, and nothing in the whole world can turn me back.
- Week 4:** Urgency generates concern, and concern leads to action.
- Week 5:** The nearer we get to the center of the circle, the nearer we get to God.

Believest Thou This?

"Yes, Lord, I believe..."

"Help me to believe **more!**"

**The living Christ
brings us a
living message
of hope!**

LISTEN! It is a question from the Master Himself: Do you believe? Do you really believe? Is your faith in God and what He has promised a constant propelling power in your life? Can it be said of you that "your faith groweth exceedingly"?

Imagine the living Christ standing before us this morning and saying to us as He did to Martha long ago at the time her brother Lazarus had died: "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." And then those three words that penetrate the deepest recesses of our conscience: "*Believest thou this?*" (John 11:25-26).

Was the Master questioning Martha's faith? What if He directed this question to us? "Believest thou this?" How would *we* answer? Our first response would probably be positive—of course we believe! No other answer would even sound reasonable. We profess the name of Christ; we have outwardly and openly committed ourselves to obey His every precept. Yet, when we think deeper into the meaning of Jesus' words, can we honestly reply with the confidence of Martha, "Yes, Lord: I believe"? Or might we need to say,

as did another believer: "Lord, I believe: help thou mine unbelief"? (Mark 9:24).

We have some degree of faith; but how abundant is it? Do we believe and know beyond any shadow of uncertainty that what God has promised *will* happen, that God *will* be true to His Word, that as surely as the earth exists, just so surely shall it someday be glorified? Do we cherish in our hearts a personal and realistic expectation of the world to come, fully confident that future life *is* a possibility for *us*? In the words of the Master, "Believest thou this?"

Most of us must acknowledge that our faith is not all that it might be. There has been too much hesitation in our commitment, too much reservation in our faith, too much skepticism in our confidence, else this late hour would find us much further along the road to holiness than we are. What is the problem? We know God has given us life and breath. We know He has created this planet for a glorious purpose. We know the Bible is His Word—its certainty has been confirmed to us a thousand times. And we know what that Word demands of us.

Yet we hesitate. Why? Why this lingering? Why this questioning of

NOTE: *Believest Thou This?* is available as a complete church service on cassette. Price: \$3.00.

things we *know* and are *convinced* of? Don't we realize that God means what He says, and that His long-suffering cannot wait forever while we vacillate and hesitate?

Knowledge Brings Responsibility

God has not entrusted us with His saving knowledge on a take-it-or-leave-it basis. With knowledge comes responsibility. This we know; yet, if we *really believed* it, would not our effort for God be wholehearted and whole-souled *all the time*? If we kept framed in our hearts a realistic picture of ourselves sharing in the glory that is so soon to be revealed, would we not be making a consistent out-and-out surrender to God, every moment being conscious of our sacred obligation?

What holds us back?—except the fact that our faith often is not all that it should be, or could be.

On the Emmaus Road

Two believers very much like us were walking along a stony road one day long ago. They were deep in conversation about everything that had been happening. Things could not have been worse, it seemed. And probably the road seemed longer and stonier than ever before, though they had traveled it many times. As they trudged along, trying to make sense out of the scuttling of their hopes, a stranger joined them and wanted to know what they were talking about.

"You must be the only stranger in Jerusalem who hasn't heard the things that have happened there recently!" said one of the two, whose name was Cleopas.

"What things?" the Stranger replied. He appeared to have no idea of the subject of their conversation, so Cleopas went on to explain that there was a man from the village of Nazareth, Jesus by name, who was clearly a prophet of God, but who had been executed by crucifixion.

"We had hoped," said Cleopas, "that he was the one who was to redeem Israel." Like other believing Israelites, these men had read the prophecies and had confused those of Christ's first advent with those of His second, and so had looked for Him to be a liberator and a savior at that time. They had listened to His preaching, and had had grand hopes, but—

They had given up; now they had to express their faith in the past tense: "We had hoped," they said, indicating that now all hope was gone. Had they fully believed and recalled the words of the prophets, they could have added, "... and we are still hoping." But at so critical a time their faith had failed.

The words of that Stranger that day—who proved to be no less than the Master Himself—were a stinging rebuke to them and all who are like them: "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken" (Luke 24:25). And then, we

read, "beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:27). How much they had failed to believe! Had they really understood what the prophets had written, they could have expected the events they had witnessed. But they did not take in the meaning; they were slow to believe.

Too often we are like those brothers of long ago; and if Jesus were to walk a while with us, might He not have to say it again: "O fools, and slow of heart to believe." We tell ourselves we know what we should believe, and what we should do. But let something happen, and how quickly our minds are distracted and our vision of faith is lost. Why? Because we are so slow of heart to believe. What fools we show ourselves to be, wasting precious hours in disbelief when time is so limited! What fools to hesitate with so much evidence before us! Why are we *so slow*?

In the physical world we depend on faith and exercise it freely. If we did not have faith that we would awake tomorrow morning, we would not willingly fall asleep tonight. If we had no faith, we would never shake hands with anyone lest we contract some disease they might be carrying. If we had no faith, we certainly would never venture down the highway, lest the first car we meet should fail to keep on his side of the road and should crash into us

**Real belief consists of mental discipline,
sincere attitude, and honest conviction.
It takes more than seeing to believe.**

If Jesus were to walk a while with us, might He have to say it again: "O fools, and slow of heart to believe"?

head-on. If we had no faith, we would not eat lest the food we consume be toxic to our system.

In the physical realm we literally *live by faith*. Why can we not extend the same confidence into the realm of the spiritual, where faith is at least a thousand times more justified? "The just shall live by faith" (Heb. 10:38). A living, active faith keeps the "just man" alive; he cannot be spiritually animate without it. Faith is a matter of life or death. Why are we so slow to believe?

More Than Sight

We may contribute a large part of our slowness in belief to our singular position in the day of salvation. We are among the few people during the entire six thousand years between the time of Adam and the arrival of Christ, who have had to live entirely by faith. We have seen nothing direct to confirm our faith. If only we could see *one* miracle, or one open demonstration of divine power, or talk with *one* angel, our problem would be solved; our faith would abound forever.

But would it? Can we be sure?

Strangely enough, seeing is *not* the full answer to the problem of faith. Although it has—understandably—been a great stimulus to many, there have been hundreds and thousands of people who have seen with their own eyes open demonstrations of the power of God yet failed to really believe.

Consider the children of Israel and all they saw of the power of God. Surely if any people should have had faith, it was they. Scarcely had they begun

their journey when the Red Sea parted and they all passed over on dry ground. And then, just as miraculously, the waters closed in upon their pursuers, and the hosts of Pharaoh perished. For forty years they followed the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night, both divinely provided, the angels of God; for forty years they harvested manna daily, which they had neither to plant nor cultivate. Before their eyes, water gushed out of the rock; they saw the mountain smoke, and quake, and burn with fire; they saw the earth open and swallow the offenders, Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and all that pertained to them. But how many believed? How many used what they saw as the foundation upon which to build a strong, abiding, working faith in God? We are not told, but we know the number was very, very small. And that was an age of *sight*!

Or think of Elijah on Mount Carmel, and the thousands of Israelites who witnessed the dramatic display of divine power that day. Fire came down from the azure blue and consumed the altar, sacrifice, stones, water and all. But how many believed? Their immediate response was positive: "The Lord, he is God! The Lord, he is God!" but how soon they forgot. Even Ahab saw it, but the event apparently made no lasting impression of faith.

For three years Jesus was among the people of Judah and Israel, preaching and performing mighty miracles which proved the authority of God behind Him. Any one of His miracles should have brought lasting conviction to

any honest heart. But how many believed? How many demonstrated their belief in a life of faithful following? Again we are not told; but the number was very small.

We think, if only I could see someone raised from the dead; *then* I would believe. But how many saw Lazarus come forth? The Bible tells us that "many of the Jews which . . . had seen the things which Jesus did, believed" (John 11:45)—but not all, as the very next verse tells: "For some of them went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done," to stir up trouble against Jesus (v. 46).

Those Jews who crucified Jesus did not willingly acknowledge His resurrection, we can be sure; but neither did they succeed in refuting it. The empty tomb was evidence indisputable. Clearly, something had happened; Jesus was alive!—yet no multitude joined the ranks of the believers.

In the years immediately following Jesus' ministry, His apostles went everywhere preaching the gospel of the risen Lord—and how could they have done this so soon after the Resurrection if there had not been ample evidence to prove their claim? Time and again they demonstrated the authority behind their message by the signs and wonders they performed. There was no question; it was all true. The result was the greatest conversion in the history of God's people, yet it was only a handful. The majority gave no heed.

What about the people who knew the apostles personally and saw their

manner of life, men like John or Peter or Paul? What was the problem? Wouldn't we have been convinced if we had seen what those people saw?

Is it possible the human eyes can see so much and yet not believe? It is a serious warning to us. And it is evidence that real belief is a matter of mental discipline, sincere attitude, and honest conviction. It takes more than seeing to believe. When Christ returns and evidences of His judgments are everywhere, even then two out of three will not have the faith, foresight and willingness to submit to the new Ruler, so unbelieving are humankind by nature.

An Age of Skepticism

Besides the absence of visible divine power, we today have another problem: we live in an age of skepticism. Much as we try to resist its influence, the atmosphere is filled with it; there is no escape. What can we do? The first thing is to recognize it; then we can fortify ourselves to deal with it effectively.

Our world today, particularly its secular art and literature, is saturated with what might be called the "naturalist" point of view. The "naturalist" preaches, often subtly, that you can *know* only what you experience. All truth is relative; there are no absolutes, no predetermined standards of right or wrong moral behavior. Each person must determine his own values and standards through "creative self-assertion." Behind this philosophy is the belief that life is a cosmic fatalism; man is doomed to rolling a stone up a hill, only to have it roll down upon him finally and crush him to death. In such thinking there is no God, no faith, no truth.

To accept such a view of life is to say that nothing lies beyond the realm of our experience, that we are here without design or designer; that all life is a chance proposition and that we know all there is to know. We might

Let Us Pray . . .

Heavenly Father, God of heaven and earth, on this the anniversary of the day when Thy beloved Son rose triumphant over death, we come to this place of worship, conscious of Thy presence, in prayer, in song, in praise, and in quiet meditation. We feel that we need these moments spent in the atmosphere of holy worship. Here we are still, and we know that Thou art God. The mad pace of life is slackened and we grow quiet, folded in Thy peace. Here we sense a power to sustain us and a wisdom to guide us. From the world of hostilities we come to seek peace with Thee and with each other.

Father, we thank Thee for Thy Word, and the great and precious promises which it contains. Help us to believe with all our hearts, and demonstrate that belief by living a fully consecrated life.

It was foretold that Jesus our Lord would suffer, that He should be taken by wicked hands and crucified, He would die, be placed in the tomb, and all these forecasts were literally fulfilled.

It was foretold that He should rise again the third day, and this forecast was fulfilled to the very letter. Death could not hold Him; His life of holy obedience warranted that Thou, His heavenly Father, should break for Him the bands of death, and He now lives in the power of an endless life.

It was foretold that He should be taken to heaven and seated at Thy right hand, and this forecast was fulfilled in every detail.

At the time of His ascension the holy angels assured the watching disciples that He would return, and we have the best of reasons to believe that this part of the forecast will also be fulfilled—and soon.

We rejoice in the promise that there will be some living at the time of Christ's re-appearance that will escape death altogether, and that our place in history makes this promise pertinent to us: "He that liveth and believeth in me shall never die." Some who are living at the apocalypse of the Son of man will never experience physical death, but can be transported right into that better age and be made equal to the angels without having to die. What a glorious prospect!

Help us to believe this with an intensity that will set our heartstrings vibrating with a determination that neither life, nor death; temporal interests, or the brightest of worldly prospects can cause us to forget the glory that can be ours in the world to come.

Guide us now in our worship, in our study, in our daily lives, so we may become perfect even as Thou, Father, art perfect. In the name of Thy dear Son we ask it. Amen.

compare such a view of existence to a man sitting in a closed room, who concludes that there is nothing to the universe except the four walls that enclose him. He does not think to ask who put him there, or to reason that he sees only *one* side of the wall, that there must be somewhere a second side. He simply absorbs himself in the

study of his four walls of existence, until he dies.

Thank God! such a restricted view of life need not be ours. God Himself has invited us to observe the visible evidences of His creative power: "Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth

them all by names by the greatness of his might" (Isa. 40:26). The stars, the planets, the sun and moon and the million evidences of creative genius in nature all around us, plus the overwhelming confirmations of His written Word, convince us that we do *not* know all there is to know, that present life is *not* the limit of existence. We *know*; there is no reason for our being so slow to believe.

The Problem of Shortsightedness

Another problem in our slow faith is an inherent lack of vision. So many "things" lie so near at hand that the future is hard to think about. Immediate concerns of what we shall eat, or wear, or live in, or enjoy, absorb so large a part of our interest that, if not exceedingly careful, we shall have little left for the world to come. In the words of the poet:

*"The world is too much with us,
Early and late, getting and spending,
We lay waste our powers."*

There is also the problem of complacency. It is born in us. As long as we are flesh and blood, we shall be subject to the patterns of human inertia. The law of inertia says briefly that a body at rest tends to remain at rest; and a body in motion tends to remain in motion. What is true in the physical realm is true also in the spiritual. But how much more inclined we are to remain at rest when resting than to remain in motion when moving! To remain at rest, we need do nothing; we can think as we please, pursue life in any manner we wish, but we get nowhere. A powerful force must be exerted to move us and keep us moving.

What need for *willpower* and *won't* power, when dealing with the problem of inertia. We must be able to tell ourselves what we *will* do—and think and say—and what we *will not*. To not *feel like* doing what we know we should, is no excuse for not doing it.

This inertia is not a problem new in our age; God's people in all ages have had to exercise self-discipline. God's people in all ages have had to exercise willpower and won't-power. They are vital to faith. Without them there can be no true faith, and no action.

Danger . . . !

Oh, the dangers of a slow, stalling faith!

One of the greatest is that of procrastination, and its inevitable results. If the day of the Lord arrives and

finds us still hesitating, still waiting, still vacillating, still struggling with our convictions, our work not nearly so advanced as it might have been—and all because we did not have enough faith to put *all* our effort into it—what then?

This is no time to drift along with a weak, half-believing faith. Weak faith makes procrastinators, and procrastination is sure to prove fatal.



How To **GROW** Your Faith

Why not plant more seeds of faith this spring—feed them, cultivate them—and watch them grow! You'll be amazed at how much fruit they will be bearing in a short time!

Maintaining an ample supply of faith through all the varied situations of life is a concern to every serious believer.

What is the answer? How shall we overpower that halfhearted, half-interested, lethargic spirit that results from incomplete faith?

How shall we get ourselves spiritually energized to full faith and full action?

How shall we bring ourselves to that supreme sensitivity that is continually conscious of a sacred obligation and is alert to every opportunity to fulfill it?

A Few Preliminaries

Before we can grow and mature a one-hundred-percent productive faith, we need to check on a few preliminaries.

First, what are we building upon?

Faith in God is founded on evidence. But evidence to be impressive, meaningful and useful in building faith must be properly received and understood. We might compare the evidence God provides us to the seed in Jesus' parable of the Sower. The seed is given of God, and its quality does not vary, whatever the type of soil into which it falls. It is the Word of the Lord, pure and eternal, wherever it is planted. But the seed, perfect though it be, does not grow equally well in all types of soil. Only that which falls into the soil of a good and honest heart produces fruit unto holiness. Likewise, if the seed of evidence is to grow in us and produce sturdy plants of faith, our hearts must provide the right kind of soil.

The type of soil we provide is *our* responsibility.

What kind of soil will grow faith?

First of all we need an *unflinching mental honesty*. Most of us have a stronger instinct to save face and justify ourselves than to acknowledge the truth. Being strictly honest, even with ourselves in our own minds,

According to our faith we work. If we knew absolutely that Jesus would be here in thirty days, if we really believed it, what superhuman progress those thirty days could show! That is the way we need to be living every day, proving to ourselves what we *can* do. We will never regret the extra effort we invest; to give too little may prove an eternal disappointment. There is no time for putting off; we are too near the end!

The problem is that too often we lack the force of wholehearted conviction. It is the lesson of Jesus' parable of the Ten Virgins. All ten took their lamps, trimmed them, filled them with oil, lighted them, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. At the time they set out, no one would have thought but that ten virgins would welcome the bridegroom when he should come. And had the bridegroom arrived when

they expected him, all would have been well. But there was an unanticipated delay; longer and longer they waited, and still the bridegroom did not come. At length, some of the lamps started to flicker and go out—they had run short of oil. When the bridegroom finally arrived, only five lamps were still burning. Five had prepared for the unforeseen by taking an extra supply of oil.

And how abundantly their foresight was rewarded! But oh, the sad plight of those whose lamps went out.

The lesson is for us, we who live in the time when the Bridegroom is expected. We have looked for His coming for many years, and still He is not here. Are we prepared for this? Do we have enough oil of faith to see us through, however long the seeming delay? Are we continually renewing *our* supply, lest our plight be that of

the five foolish virgins?

Another danger before us is that of being so slow to believe that we do not sense our sluggishness or lack of faith. It is possible to think our faith stronger than it is. "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (I Cor. 10:12). Here is a warning to each of us. Faith to be strong and vital must be continually renewed, or it will never be able to stand against all the foes which threaten it today. Overconfidence is deadly to faith. If we feel so secure, so satisfied, so well established that we exert little or no effort to build ourselves up, we are in great danger. Overconfidence will get us nowhere.

There is a nineteenth century story of a man who sent his young son to Sunday School each week, but who seldom attended himself. One Sunday, (Continued on page 23)

How To Grow

(continued from page 18)

can be difficult. We tend to cling to our doubts and objections even after they are proven groundless. Or we accept the evidence, but in our minds we "slant" it, so to speak, so that it does the least possible damage to *our* ideas. Such mis-handling of evidence is deadly to tender faith.

To grow faith, we need also a *desperate concentration*. Naturally our minds flit here and there with every passing interest and distraction, but we cannot let them do this and expect to develop strong faith. Faith does not just happen to come upon us; we must discipline our minds to support it. We must think about where our thoughts are, and this requires a desperate concentration. We must be conscious all the time of what our minds are dwelling on, to be sure that it is conducive to the development of faith and virtue. A wandering mind is the enemy of all true faith.

Then, if we would sharpen our faith, we need a *keen sense of the issues at stake*: eternal life and eternal death. Doubt is nothing to be fondled or played with. When we play with doubt, we are playing with death. Doubt may be counted among the most deadly of sins in that it can forestall all other efforts toward holiness.

Perhaps we do not take the matter seriously enough. By nature we are numb, spiritually speaking; we lack a feeling for the vital issues before us. Let us shake our

selves awake before doom overtakes us. Let us prepare to attack our doubts head-on, before they ruin us. Death and life hang in the balance; we will be either unconscious and asleep through all eternity, or we will be alive and active and enjoying the bliss of immortality. The more we think about this, the keener will be our sensitivity to that which can build faith.

Before we can go far toward developing true faith, we need to feel within us *an overpowering love of life*. We must have a deep, moving love of life, and desire so much of it that we will gladly sacrifice anything of the fleeting present to obtain it. Nothing less than this overpowering desire for life will stimulate a faith strong enough to carry us into the world to come.

With an ever-growing mental honesty, a willingness to give desperate concentration to the thoughts that will produce faith, a moving sense of the issues before us and an overpowering love of life, how shall we build faith?

Faith Comes By . . .

The apostle Paul gave the one unequalled answer for all time on how to grow faith. These are his words: "So then faith cometh by hearing . . . the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). Faith is a direct result of exposing ourselves to that which is divine.

The more effort we spend on reading, understanding and applying what we read in the word of God, the stronger our faith will grow and the deeper will be our roots in God.

The result? Our faith will grow...and grow.

The First Resurrection

Who Are the "Blessed and Holy"?

"And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished.) This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years"

—Rev. 20:4-6

THE PLAN of God for His human family is one of the most capturing themes of Scripture. It includes many topics, i.e., the second coming of Christ, the Resurrection, the Judgment and the setting up of a worldwide kingdom of peace.

Many passages that speak of these events are clear and without question. One passage, in Revelation 20, has caused considerable confusion. Let us look closely at what it says about the first resurrection and see if we can understand the thoughts of the Divine mind which it reveals.

The passage reads: "But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years" (Rev. 20:5-6).

From this text many people have deduced what seem to be two obvious points: 1) that only the good and holy are raised in the "first" resurrection; 2) that all others, i.e., the unfaithful, "the rest of the dead," are restored to life a thousand years later. Thus we have the common belief in two resurrections separated by one thousand years, the faithful being the sole participants in the first and the unfaithful in the second.

This position must be questioned for several reasons. First, the resurrecting of only the "blessed and holy," the faithful, presupposes that some procedure of separating, some type of judgment, must have taken place so that the "blessed and

holy" could be identified. The clearly stated purpose of the Judgment is to separate "good and bad," righteous and wicked, faithful and unfaithful (II Cor. 5:10; Eccl. 12:13-14).

Several texts which speak of the resurrection of the dead mention specifically that both faithful and unfaithful will be resurrected. The prophet Daniel foretold that at the time of the end, "Michael" shall "stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time." Speaking of that same time he says: "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (Daniel 12:1-2). This text says nothing to indicate that the raising of the two classes of individuals would not occur at the same time. "Many" come forth from the dead, then follows the Judgment which separates them, and some go "to everlasting life" and "some to shame and everlasting contempt."

Jesus made a similar statement in John 5. Speaking of the time of His second advent and the resurrection He said, "The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves ("the" graves—certain specially designated graves) shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (vs. 28-29). Both classes are resurrected together, then at the Judgment, those who "have done evil" are separated from those who "have done good."

Second, the Bible clearly states that a judgment is part of the divine plan, and that the purpose of the judgment is to separate faithful from unfaithful servants. Said the apostle Paul, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (II Cor. 5:10). At the Judgment, each is evaluated and rewarded according to what "he hath done."

Again, Paul wrote, "so then every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Rom. 14:12). In his Epistle to the Corinthians he again indicated that the judgment will be the time of revealing, both good and bad. "Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts" (I Cor. 4:5). This statement would have little meaning if only the faithful, or unfaithful, were present.

Third, the Bible, using various similes, pictures the two distinct groups, *both* faithful and unfaithful, as alive and present at "the judgment." Jesus illustrated this fact in His parable of the wheat and the tares. "Let both grow together until the harvest," He said. "And in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn" (Matt. 13:30)—both wheat and tares are harvested at the same time. (It is interesting to notice that if we are considering *the order* of judgment and reward, the unfaithful, "the tares," are the *first*, not the *last* to be judged.) The use of wheat and tares as an illustration of the Judgment would be unrealistic if each were to appear separately, because everyone knows that wheat and tares grow together, and one could hardly be harvested apart from the other.

Jesus makes a further illustration of the Judgment by comparing it to the separating of sheep and goats, i.e., faithful and unfaithful; and again, both are present at the same time. We read: "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations [all belonging to His nation; His servants] and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left" (Matt. 25:31-33).

Sheep and goats, representing faithful and unfaithful, stand side by side at the Judgment until separated.

What, then, can we conclude about the passage in Revelation 20?

Let us look again at verse 6. What does it tell us about "the first resurrection"? We read, "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such, the second death hath no power." Here is a clear statement that those having a part in the "first resurrection" are "blessed and holy." But as already pointed out, an arrangement whereby only the righteous would be brought to life would cancel the need for a judgment. Hence, the resurrection at the time of Christ's coming must include both faithful and unfaithful servants, if both are to be judged and rewarded together.

What, then, can we conclude?

When we look at the definitions of the word translated "first," we find an enlightening thought. The word translated "first" is *protos* and means "foremost in time, place, order." It also means "foremost in . . . importance: best, chiefest." The word from which it is derived means, in a figurative sense, "superior, . . . above."

This suggests a resurrection that is first in importance, the "best" or "chiefest" resurrection, rather than simply first in sequence.

Let us also look at the original word translated resurrection, *anastasis*. Is there any possibility of a meaning other than the restoring of physical life? The root word from which it is derived is *anistemi* and means to "arise, lift up, raise up, stand upright . . . in either a literal or a figurative sense."

We are accustomed to the literal sense, the physical resurrection, the restoring of physical life and breath. If we take the word in a figurative sense, we have a raising or lifting up from a lower to a higher plane; a lifting up to a higher level of life. Combining this with the thought of "first" being "chief," "best," "first in importance," we have a "first resurrection" which is a "chiefest" or "primary" or "best" exaltation or lifting up to a higher plane of life, i.e., immortality.

This concept fits perfectly with the thought in Revelation 20:6: "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first [or most important] resurrection; on such the second death hath no power."

**All who have
part in the
"first" or "chief"
exaltation
will be indeed
"blessed and
holy"**

All who have part in this chief or primary exaltation are indeed "blessed and holy." They are the saints, "called, and chosen, and faithful." They are the faithful of the six thousand years, who have attained to the character likeness of Christ and thus are worthy of the physical change to immortality promised to the faithful (Phil. 3:20-21). Hence the statement: "on such the second death hath no power"—and never will it have power over them, because they are free from mortality. For them, death has been swallowed up in victory; they are the victors who can say, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (I Cor. 15:55).

Many of the translators recognize that the statement, "The rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished" is parenthetical and out of context at this point. If we remove this parenthetical statement, we have Christ's statement about the "first resurrection" following immediately after verse 4. This makes those whom John saw under the altar, the beheaded ones, *the subjects of the "first resurrection"*—which they are! All of these are indeed "blessed and holy." They are the saints, said to be "beheaded" because they have relinquished every right to their own ways and thoughts. These live and reign with Christ a thousand years." If we define the "first resurrection" as the "primary exaltation," the lifting up to immortality, this statement is absolutely true. That exaltation entitles them to "live and reign with Christ."

Now what about "the rest of the dead" who "lived not again until the thousand years were finished? Who are they?"

The Bible defines two classes of individuals who will compose the number ultimately to fill the earth with the glory of God: rulers and teachers (called "kings and priests"), and populace (those ruled over). During six thousand-year days, God has been

developing those who are to be the rulers of His Kingdom upon earth. At Christ's return, these will be resurrected, judged, and rewarded. Then during the seventh thousand-year day, or Millennial reign of Christ and the saints, God will develop a great number to compose the populace of the Kingdom. Under the ideal conditions of a righteous government, this second group, as mortal men and women, will prepare themselves for eternal salvation.

At the end of the thousand years, all of these who have died will be resurrected and together with the living will be judged and rewarded. This is the "great multitude, which no man could number" which the Revelator saw standing before the throne, "clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands" (Rev. 7:9, 15).

The Revelator also saw in vision the judging and rewarding of this second group, at the end of the Millennium, which he described in these words:

"And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, . . . and I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (Rev. 20:11-12, 15). The result of this judgment will determine who will live as the immortal populace of the Kingdom.

To summarize: the first resurrection is "first" in the sense of being primary, chief, best; and it is not a resurrection from the state of death but an exaltation to a higher form of life. The "rest of the dead" are those who compose the populace of the Kingdom, who live and die during the Millennium, who will be judged and rewarded according to their works at the end of the thousand years. MM

Was God Unfair in Judging Eli?

(Continued from page 11)

the Lord, to bring up their children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Deut. 6:4-10; Eph. 6:4). They are also responsible to show their children a worthy example of everyday Christian life and conduct; and with that their responsibility ends. The children are free to make their own decisions and choose their own goals in life.

Eli's responsibility for the sin of his sons lay in the fact that he as high priest was responsible for the appointment and the continuing service of his wicked sons in a capacity where the highest character was demanded. MM

Better than Good

The mechanic had fixed the sprocket on the old bicycle for the third time. With a note of uncertainty, the boy asked, "Is it a good job?" With a look of wounded pride the mechanic answered, "It's better than good."

Are we doing "better than good" in our service for the Lord? We sing, "Give of your best to the Master," but do we do it? The ancient Hebrews were warned to bring only the best for sacrifices to Jehovah. No maimed or blemished animal, no cast-off would be acceptable as an offering to the Lord. Merchants are required to label goods having any flaw or imperfection as "seconds" and sell them at lower prices. Foods are carefully inspected, so that only that which is pure and fresh is offered for sale.

What are we offering to God? Is it *better than good*?

Believest Thou This?

(Continued from page 19)

the son questioned his father. "Dad," he queried, "why don't you go too?" "I don't need to, Son," the father replied; "my faith is established."

Later the same day the father decided to take the family to visit the grandmother, who lived a few miles up the road. He harnessed the horses to the buggy, and everyone climbed in. But before they were out of the yard, the horses became hopelessly mired in mud. The more the father tried to maneuver the horses, the more hopeless the situation became. When all the father's efforts were unavailing, the young son, who had been watching thoughtfully, called out to his father, "Dad, they aren't going anywhere. I think they're *established*."

Let us check closely our attitude toward our faith—to be sure that we are not so "established" that *we* are getting nowhere!

Think of the power to work for God that would be ours if our faith was all it could be! What great things we could accomplish! If we really believed that one of these days we could stand approved with Christ and the saints of all the ages, we would not be able to forget it for a moment. That indescribable joy would begin to fill us even now as we thought about it, and we would be so intent on meriting it that nothing in this wide world could divert our thinking. There would be no interest in life strong enough to distract our vision, if—if!

As We Think, We Are

What we allow ourselves to think about has a tremendous effect upon us—our attitude, our interests, our personality, our whole manner of life.

We become what we think about.

If we allow ourselves to spend ten hours a day thinking about the things of the present and one hour a day thinking about the future, we should not be surprised if the present seems ten times

more real to us than the future.

Our minds have unmeasurable potential to help us. That is why God places us under obligation to use every ounce of our thinking power in the right direction. That is why Jesus said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Mark 12:30-31). Anything less than *all our mind* is too little to be effective in securing eternal life.

To develop faith we need to exercise our minds daily in certain areas. We need to review God's plan of salvation for mankind, His purpose in creating this planet and placing mankind upon it. Then we need to think about the time that has already passed, to realize the urgency of the hour in which we live.

Then we need to review the history of God's dealings with other people in other ages, and think about the many evidences of His faithfulness to them, His mercy, and His justice. Thinking on what God has revealed and done in the past will help us to build faith in what He is doing now and will yet do.

What we read is closely tied to what we think about. It is part of our duty to God to restrict our reading to that which is spiritually upbuilding, edifying and instructive, and to scrupulously avoid anything that would prove detrimental to our faith. Light, humorous reading can do little to feed a mind that is bent on serving God; and even instructive secular reading should be so governed that it does not displace the vital, faith-building thought so necessary to spiritual life. We want to evaluate everything in terms of spiritual benefit: What is *best*? God has given us minds to fill with the constructive and helpful; why clutter them with useless trifles?

One area in which we may profitably spend our mental power is in reviewing fulfilled prophecies. Time and again the words of men of God have met their exact fulfillment, while the

words of men without God have been forgotten. God's promises, whether of blessings or of doom, have come to pass in His time. Sometimes the fulfillment was swift. When Peter prophesied the death of the wicked Sapphira, it followed within a matter of seconds (Acts 5:9-10). Elisha, in a time of hopeless famine, issued a prophecy of sudden plenty, which met a dramatic fulfillment within 24 hours, exactly as he had foretold (II Kings 7).

Again, the interval was longer. The antediluvian world had 120 years' warning of the Flood. They rejected the warning; and when the years had expired, the Deluge came and took them all away.

Enough has been spoken and fulfilled to convince us of the reliability of the whole. God never guesses; when He makes a prediction, there is in it no element of chance or uncertainty. He speaks with absolute knowledge and absolute authority. To Him the

THINK faith.

READ faith.

TALK faith.

future is as clear as the past. Realizing this fact should help us to build faith.

Think faith. Read faith. Talk faith. There is no surer way to a strong, living, working faith in God.

The Test of Faith

God's people in all ages have had to be heroes of faith. They have had to have confidence in what they could not see, even when they had visible evidence. And if they who could see

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Father, in the Morning

**"Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness in the morning; for in thee do I trust:
cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto
thee"**
(Ps. 143:8).

CHRISTIAN living is never old, never stale, never monotonous. It begins new with each new day. Each new morning there is something new to hear: "Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness in the morning."

At the beginning of each passing day of life our frame of mind should be to implore God to cause us to hear His lovingkindness. We should thank Him that though we are such frail worms of the dust He has condescended to recognize us. We are so small in the scale of the universe, yet He has made a way for our existence; He has planned for our temporal needs, has given us richly all things to enjoy, and designed an eternal existence for us if we care to make the necessary changes in our moral life that will fit us for perpetuation.

As children of God, we have an obligation that begins new every morning. It is important that we start each day right. Nothing worth while can be accomplished in any avenue of life by a careless, haphazard approach, and this is doubly true in character building. No work is so exacting or requires such complete concentration as right living. The flesh is weak, the tendency to deviate from God's law is strong.

What makes a "right" beginning? The day started right begins with a prayer, with thankfulness for continued life and opportunity. It begins with a fervent plea for help that every moment of that day may be lived right.

But these few moments of silent prayer must not end our devotional attitude for the day. Rather, they should set the pattern for the day, so that every minute and hour we may continue in that frame of mind, in that consciousness that we are not our own but that every breath, every move, every thought, every activity of body or mind is made possible by a higher Power—to which we are responsible.

We should set a definite goal for ourselves, and as we go about our ordinary duties keep our plan for right liv-

ing as a background for every activity. We should remind ourselves often that we are writing a record today, and this may be the last day we will have to alter that record. This day may be our last day of opportunity. Our life could suddenly end, or the day of the Lord might burst in upon us and we find ourselves face to face with immortal beings from heavenly regions. Soon or late, that day *is* coming.

Then let us consider "the morning" from another vantage point, that of the morning of our day of life. The human life has fittingly been compared to a "day," with its morning, noon, and evening. Those whose good fortune it is to hear the story of God's lovingkindness in the "morning," in youth, find they have a decided advantage. While the decision to live for God is entirely a matter of individual choice, those who "hear" in childhood or youth and who make that choice to live for God find that the training and instruction they received early in life are an immense and priceless blessing. Early impressions are deep, and knowledge acquired early, if adhered to and reinforced through advancing years, forms a solid bulwark against the shocks and jolts of life.

The apostle Paul, writing to the brethren at Rome, spoke of the advantage of the Jew in this respect: "What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there in circumcision? Much every way" (Rom. 3:1-2). One of those advantages was a godly instruction and training from youth. The Mosaic Law enjoined the parent: "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children" (Deut. 6:6-7). It is not difficult to bend the newly sprouted twig, but to straighten the fully grown tree trunk is impossible. It is a great advantage to hear and submit to God's loving call in the morning of life.

Then in still another sense every individual must be ready to hear God's lovingkindness in "the morning" of

his or her particular day of salvation. Whether the sound of the gospel reaches our ears in youth, in middle life, or in advanced years, that very time is the morning of our individual day of opportunity and we must immediately take action. The Eternal wants in His service men and women who really love life, who value it above every earthly consideration, so that when the way is opened up to them they will act at once. "I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments" (Ps. 119:60).

When Jesus appeared to that fiery young Pharisee, Saul of Tarsus, bent on persecuting the Christians, and he was struck down by the light brighter than the noonday sun, Saul conferred not with flesh and blood but obeyed immediately the heavenly vision (Gal. 1:16). And from this extraordinary conversion developed the staunchest defender of the Christian faith, Paul the Apostle to us Gentiles. In this, too, he left a pattern for believers of all time to follow.

"Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk." Salvation is not ours just for the asking. There is something to be learned, something to be done, a "way" in which to "walk." Such an inestimable boon as eternal salvation does not come to us without effort. It cannot be truly earned, in the sense of an amount of work equal to the amount of pay. "The gift of God is eternal life," but that gift is conditional. All who are saved will be saved for eternity, and the Almighty does not intend to perpetuate any unholy or unworthy thing. His demand is the highest, even moral perfection; heart holiness; purity of heart. For "the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart" (I Sam. 16:7)—hence our need for Him to cause us to know "the way" wherein we should walk.

The command to Abraham was: "I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect" (Gen. 17:1). That over-all demand is spelled out even more precisely for us in Micah 6:8, "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God."

The Apostle states it again with clarity in Ephesians 4:29, 31-32, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers . . . Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another." These commands are far-reaching, covering every activity and aspect of life.

We should be prepared to say with the Psalmist: "O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill" (43:3). Nothing in life

can be so important as to know how to walk. Life eternal comes to us as a result of walking right. A casual survey of the numerous divine statements on walking right is impressive: "Walk as children of light," "walk in love," "walk not as other Gentiles walk in the vanity of their minds," "walk in newness of life," "walk honestly as in the day," "walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing."

Jesus was our great Example, and He did always those things that pleased His heavenly Father, and, contrary to popular opinion, Peter tells us that we too must do the same: "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps" (I Pet. 2:21).

If two people walk across a stretch of newly fallen snow, the one following the other and stepping in the footsteps of the first, the two will step exactly alike. So to walk in the Master's footsteps—figuratively speaking, of course—we will walk as He walked, step where He stepped; we will think as He thought, act as He would act. If we apply this guiding principle to our everyday living, we will realize a great transformation in our lives. We will stop doing many of the things we formerly did, and learn to do many things completely foreign to our natures.

Once our eyes are opened to see the great advantage of walking in God's way, once we put our trust fully in Him, once we know the way wherein to walk, then the natural result will be the conclusion of our text: "for I lift up my soul unto thee." And that lifting up will not be an empty gesture, but we will lift our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens.

Forbearance

*Instead of being sad and hurt
By those who are unkind,
How better far it is to choose
The opposite, and find
The way to peace and happiness
Is graciously to do
To others as the Master taught
You'd have them do to you.*

*True courtesy and gentleness
Reveal an inward grace
That gives a glowing radiance,
Transforms the plainest face.
Be calm, dear heart, and when oppressed
Bless those who do you wrong,
And in forbearance love will prove
There is no force so strong.*

Believest Thou This?

(Continued from page 23)

divine power had to consciously build faith, how diligently we must apply ourselves, we who must walk *entirely by faith!* How constant should be our effort in building a stronger and ever stronger faith!

In this age when faith is so critical, when maintaining faith is a matter of spiritual life or death, we need to remember the resurrection of Christ. This one event sets Christ apart from all other men. And the evidence that he rose is abundant. The empty tomb was a sign incontrovertible that it *did* happen; even those who crucified Him had no other answer.

The Resurrection stands today as a citadel of faith. No other religion proclaims its hero physically dead and resurrected—no one attempts such a claim, for it could be too easily disproven. Power to restore life belongs only to the God of heaven.

One supreme test in this closing hour of the day of salvation may well be the test of faith, for "when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8). Jesus compared the condition of the world and of His people just prior to His second advent to the days of Noah and Lot. The comparison may be more realistic than we are accustomed to thinking; only eight were saved in Noah's day, only three in Lot's. Both calamities were made known in advance so that people might escape. But men and women were too complacent to respond, too unbelieving, too absorbed in their own small circles of existence to listen to a message from heaven. If so few believed when they saw and heard the Lord's messengers directly, what of us today? Our faith should be growing by leaps and bounds as we see the word of the Lord fulfilled.

What a superabundant reward will be ours if we hold on to the end. Perhaps the words of Peter were recorded especially for us; to no other

people could he have spoken so forcefully than to us who may live to see the great day of the appearing of Jesus Christ. Wrote Peter: "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1:7).

No other people have lived so near to His appearing. No other people have so realistically hoped to live to see that appearing. What praise and honor and glory will be ours if we stand this final test of faith! It is the blessing which Jesus mentioned that day He spoke to Martha so long ago: "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." His question: "Believest thou this?" should bring from us an answer so affirmative that it will set our hearts pounding with expectancy and send our feet flying toward the Kingdom. Our actions will confirm our living, abounding faith as we reply: "Yes, Lord, I believe."
MM

Obedience Is Better

*If I would for Jesus live,
And my service freely give,
First of all I hear Him say
All His servants must obey.*

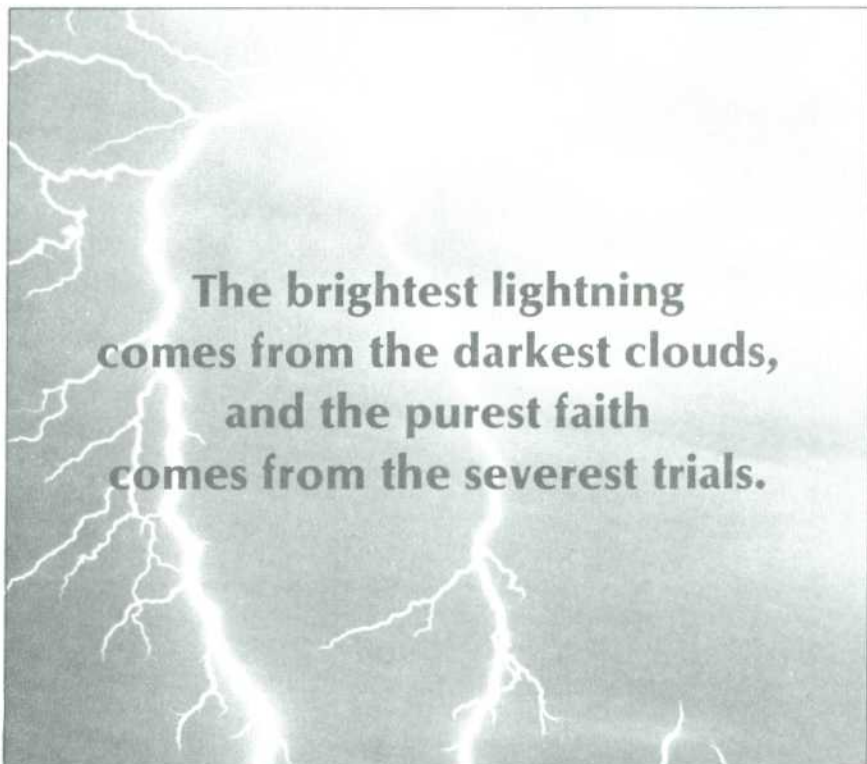
*Or, if bravely I would fight,
Striving hard to do the right,
And to follow day by day,
Still I must His word obey.*

*Could I bring to Jesus gold,
Just as much as I could hold,
Still for all He would not care
If obedience was not there.*

*Could I fill my hands with gems
Fit for monarch's diadems,
Jesus still would turn away
If my heart did not obey.*

*Not like prophets need we preach,
Need not learn an angel's speech,
Nor, like martyrs, face the fires—
'Tis obedience Christ desires.*

*Let me serve with loving heart,
Let me act a valiant part;
But before I praise and pray,
May I first my Lord obey.*



**The brightest lightning
comes from the darkest clouds,
and the purest faith
comes from the severest trials.**

Keep It Clean!

THERE is a story of a man who visited a school. As he was leaving, he promised the children he would come back sometime and when he did he would give a prize to the student who had the cleanest desk.

After he had gone, a little girl who was noted for her cluttered desk announced that she was going to win that prize. Her classmates laughed at her and said, "Your desk is always a mess."

"I know it," she said, "but from now on I'm going to clean it every Monday."

One of her classmates spoke up. "But suppose the man comes on Friday."

"That's no problem," she replied. "I'll clean it every morning."

Then another spoke. "But what if he comes at the *end* of the day?"

The girl was silent for a while. Then her face lit up and she said, "I know what I'll do! I'll just keep it clean all the time. Then he can come *anytime*!"

That's the kind of attitude we should have about our preparation for Jesus' coming. Jesus said He would return. He gave His word, but didn't tell us when. So if we believe what He has told us, we must be ready for His return whenever that might be. Like the child, we must keep our lives clean at all times.

Keep moving, but not for the sake of movement alone. Just random activity, to give the appearance that you are going somewhere, is useless. Running in place is self-defeating and self-deceiving.

Promise Yourself . . .

To be so strong that nothing can disturb your peace of mind.

To look for the good in everything, then work to make your optimism come true.

To think only the best, plan only the best, believe only the best, and *be* only the best.

To be just as enthusiastic about the success of others as you are about your own.

To forget past mistakes and press on to the greater achievements of the future.

To wear a cheerful countenance at all times and give every living creature you meet a smile.

To give so much time to the improvement of yourself that you have no time to criticize others.

To be too trusting for fear, too noble for anger, too strong for hate, and too filled with faith in God to worry about tomorrow's trouble.

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GOD'S SPIRITUAL CREATION

The GREAT APOSTASY

HELL and the DEVIL

The HOLY SPIRIT

The SABBATH

WHAT MUST WE DO TO BE SAVED?

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