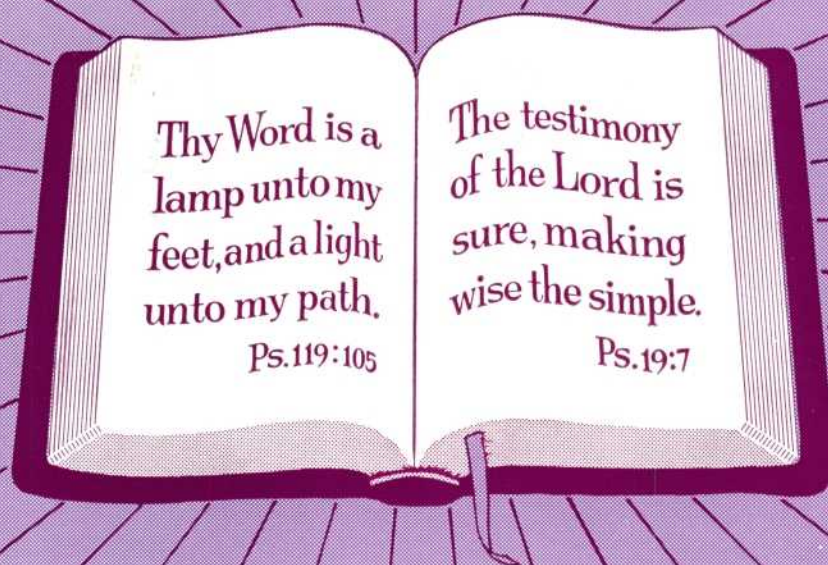


Megiddo Message

DEVOTED TO THE CAUSE OF CHRIST



With One Accord

The Epistle of First John--Prologue
Does Romans 5 Teach Original Sin?
"They Laughed Him to Scorn"

Don't Compromise Your Integrity

MMORAL VALUES are changing these days, especially in such matters as personal integrity. The change is drastic; but there is something paradoxical about it. Few people want to be thought of as knaves or scoundrels; the pull of "respectability" is mighty. But if they saw that they could gain by being slightly dishonest, would their integrity hold them true?

It is the old story that we do not possess all that we profess. We deny in practice what we uphold in principle. We don't say, "I put gain ahead of honor; who cares about honesty?" We don't say it because we know it doesn't sound good. Yet if we could be sure of "getting away with it," would we mind being just a little shady, or underhanded, or double-tongued?

Dishonesty is an ugly vice; it is ugly in anyone, but especially in those who profess to follow Christ.

Are we dishonest? Is there even a slight tint of this ungodly trait in us? Do we ever place personal gain ahead of honor? Do we do in private, or cherish in the secrecy of our minds, anything we would not wish to be known in public? If we are not guilty of open offense, have we refrained only because we lacked opportunity? Might we be a *little* dishonest *sometime* if we knew absolutely that no one would find us out?

Too easily we content ourselves with appearing good, as if to appear good is enough. But do we want sour milk, just because it appears as good as sweet? Do we want an apparently good apple, if the core is rotten? On the same basis, can we expect God to accept us because we appear outwardly good, or are apparently honest?

Personal integrity has no substitute. Without it we cannot even approach unto God. The command to "provide things honest in the sight of all men" might leave room for a little shadiness, if men were the only judge. But when we remember that "the eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good" (Prov. 15:3), is there

any place for dissembling? We know there is none; "all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (Heb. 4:13).

All of us will have our integrity tested. All of us will be tempted at some time to place respectability above principle, to do something just to appear generous, or upright, or good. Such an act may impress men, but it is worthless in the sight of God; it is worthless because it lacks inner motivation. When we settle for respectability, we are not serving God; we are playing a role, making an impression, cultivating a legend of our own goodness. And when we see an opportunity to sin in secret, when there seems to be no chance of hurting our reputation by a moment's indulgence, what will we do? Will principle hold us, or will we fall because we have been only playing a part?

It is a serious matter. We can pretend. We can ape our fellows, or play roles, or scurry about like bugs in the dark, hiding from the light. But God is not mocked. He knows what we are.

So long as we count on those who see us to make us do right, we will never be great in God's sight. No amount of popular opinion is adequate to make us upright before Him; nor will any amount of popular opinion change His mind toward us. "The Lord pondereth the hearts." We must do right because God requires it, because God loves it, because God honors it, and has promised to reward it. We must do right because this is the standard He has set for those who shall inherit life eternal.

And life eternal is our life-goal. ●●

Integrity is the first step to true greatness. Men love to praise, but are slow to practice it.

To maintain it in high places costs self-denial; in all places it is liable to opposition, but its end is glorious and the universe will yet do it homage.

—Selected

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Megiddo Means

"a place of troops"

—Gesenius' Hebrew Lexicon

"a place of God"

—Young's Analytical Concordance

Geographically, Megiddo was and is a town in Palestine, located at a strategic point, demanding heavy fortification; for Palestine is the age-old gateway between East and West, and the avenue connecting North and South. Supremacy there has long been the envy of aggressive nations, and the prevailing power has guarded it with jealous eye. The famous pass at Megiddo through a solid mountain range is the one means by which this avenue between continents may be traversed.

In the spiritual parallel, it is a place of troops, where soldiers are equipped for spiritual warfare against the forces of evil without and within. "The weapons we wield are not merely human but divinely potent to demolish strongholds; we demolish sophistries and all that rears its proud head against the knowledge of God; we compel every human thought to surrender in obedience to Christ" (II Cor. 10:4-5, NEB).

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Bible Quotations in this issue:

Unidentified quotations are from the King James Version.

Other versions are abbreviated as: *New International Version* (NIV); *New English Bible* (NEB); *Revised Standard Version* (RSV); *The New Testament in Modern English* (Phillips); *The Living Bible* (TLB); *New American Standard* (NAS); *The Jerusalem Bible* (JB).

*And when the day of Pentecost was
fully come, they were all . . .*

With One Accord

PENTECOST was the harvest festival in ancient Israel, and it was the day when Christ bestowed special power upon His followers. Let us think back to the time of that great Pentecost, when Christ sent special power to His people.

The Fiftieth Day drew near, and the Feast of Weeks which loyal Israelites had remembered faithfully for more than a millennium. This date marked the close of the barley harvest and the beginning of the wheat harvest. It was a time of looking back, and a time of looking ahead; a time of thanksgiving and a time of anticipation.

For the disciples of Jesus of Nazareth, what a history-making season this new year had been. So much had happened in a brief two months. From the day that the Master had ridden triumphant into Jerusalem amid shouts of Hosanna, it had been one stirring and startling event after another.

The Passover week had begun with a change—unthinkable to any strait-laced Jew. On the thirteenth of Abib, one day early (John 13:1), Jesus had instituted a new memorial which should be remembered for generations to come. Oh, that Last Supper! Such depth of new meaning He had given the time-honored feast.

That weekend had left them exhausted from the strangest mixture of excitement, fear, despair, suspense, sorrow and joy that one could imagine. Crisis upon crisis crowded into the hours until it seemed that ordinary days belonged entirely to the past. There was the arrest on that bewildering night of the Last Supper, and then the more bewildering trial. Reports flew back and forth, back and forth so fast, confusing and unbelievable, until that jet-black hour of the crucifixion. Then there was the shuddering darkness, the earthquake, and the shattering news that the Veil of the Temple had rent.

It was the end of an era.

Pentecost this year falls on June 11.

The climax of the whole, however, had been the resurrection—thrillingly breathtaking in its reality, anchoring faith and inspiring hope. Now they could go forth and declare with unbounded joy and positive assurance that their Lord had risen indeed! He was alive forevermore! He was the Son of God Almighty just as He had claimed to be! His Word was true!

The risen Christ had been seen by many: by the faithful women, by the two brothers on the Emmaus Road, by the Twelve—now Eleven in number—and by the five hundred brethren (I Cor. 15:5, 6).

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

The finale occurred on the day that Jesus led them out as far as Bethany and lifted up His hands to bless them. While He was in the act of blessing them, a cloud of angels lifted Him from the ground on which He stood—higher—higher. The disciples stood breathless as, their eyes fixed on His steadily rising form, they watched Him disappear into the azure blue.

He was gone, and all that remained was His promise, and the words of the angel: "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).

The drama was ended for now, or so it seemed. Of the opening year's events, this was the *finis*. What more could there be? He had left them; He would be with His Father until the appointed Day when He should return.

Waiting for the Promise

But just prior to that spectacular ascension, Jesus had given them some final instructions. They were not to depart from Jerusalem, He had said, but to wait for the "promise of the Father."

"You have heard me speak of it," He had said; but at that moment they may not have been able to recall what or when He might have spoken of it.

The narrative in Luke 24, KJV, runs as follows: "And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day. . . . And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high" (vs. 44-46, 49).

". . . John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence" (Acts 1:5).

So here they were, gathered in Jerusalem, these loyal followers of Christ, waiting as He had enjoined them. As they waited, they talked and prayed, reliving the days when their Master had been among them. So much had happened so fast. *What would be next?*

The Scriptures tell us little of what went on during those ten days of waiting; but one outstanding point is noted: When the days of waiting were accomplished and the "day of Pentecost" had fully come, they were ready. This little group of 120 believers were "all with one accord in one place." They were united in their faith and effort, and ready for whatever God might do next.

And then it happened: "Suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:1-4).

They Were Ready . . . United

This morning I want to dwell especially on the point of the preparedness of these people for the great event: "They were all with one accord in one place." Those three words, "with one accord," speak volumes. In that assembly were men and women from all walks and levels of life. Among them were some who had followed Jesus during His entire ministry. The Eleven apostles were there, whom He had chosen to be His special representatives. There were other brethren who were younger and newly converted. And doubtless,

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there were a few who had known Jesus during the days of His childhood and youth; perhaps even a few who had been believers at the time Jesus was born thirty-three years earlier. Among such a group, especially during an extended time of "waiting," there might easily have been a few heated disputes, arguments or controversies. But we hear of none of this. Luke the reporter was able to write that they were all "with one accord in one place." They had one purpose in gathering, one purpose in waiting, one purpose in living; they were the congregation of the believers. So few—only one hundred twenty—but they were the true Church of Christ, that special fellowship in which all membership is honorary. How their hearts must have been knit together in love!

The descriptive phrase "with one accord" occurs eleven times in the book of Acts. This suggests that oneness was a distinguishing quality of the early Church. It is the distinguishing quality of the people of God in all ages. It is the sublime note of unity which has joined the people of God together in every age, and the people of every age to those of every other. It is the sublime unity of the fellowship of the saints which Peter called "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people" (I Pet. 2:9-10). They are people who unite in showing forth "the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light; which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God; which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy."

In New Testament times the church of Christ was known by a Greek term, "ecclesia," meaning a congregation, a church, an assembly of the people. Paul styles it the "church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (I Tim. 3:15). Those who were assembled on the day of Pentecost were part of this "ecclesia" or "church of the living God," the living embodiment of divine truth. Theirs was no elaborate edifice, or wealthy corporation, or complex hierarchy. Theirs was more than these—much more. They were God's work and God's representatives on earth. They had joined themselves to the purpose of all creation, to the power that sustains the universes. They were part of a system of salvation which even then had millenniums of history behind it. They were part of the Church of God.

God's Great Church Universal

The Church of God on this planet forms only one small part of God's great Church Universal, a Church which fills all creation, according to the Creator's eternal purpose. Think of what it means

to join this great organization. When you are united to it, you are part of a Church which includes hosts of angels and glorified saints, even all the children of God, who are already filling the universes with the glory of God!—besides the heirs of salvation who have attained but are not yet crowned. What a Church! What a family! What a unity!

The history of God's true Church on this planet goes back thousands of years. Among its earlier members was a noble man named Enoch. This man walked in such close accord with God so many years that God transported him to another field of service in His great Church Universal. The record reads, "And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him" (Gen. 5:24).

Then there was Noah, who labored in accord with God's purpose, constructing an ark for the saving of all who would heed God's warning. Hear

Noah preaching to a doomed world for 120 long and patient years, but to unresponsive hearts and ears. Then there was Abraham, a mighty pillar in the true Church because of His outstanding record of faith and obedience. Years later Moses joined this Church. See him in the halls of Pharaoh, crying out for God, "Let my people go"; (Exodus, chapters 7-12); and then see him laboring with those people and their descendants through forty years of wilderness wandering.

Years later a man named David was part of this Church. See him at what was perhaps the best moment of his life, sparing the life of Saul, his mortal enemy. Then there were the prophets. Hear the lone voice of Elijah ringing from the top of Mount Carmel, challenging official heathendom at the risk of his life, working with all his might to keep alive God's true Church. Hear the prophet Amos, delivering God's message to an apostate

Let Us Pray . . .

Most blessed Lord, Thou in whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning; deepen and quicken in us the sense of Thy presence. Still our irritation, soothe our restlessness, and grant us Thy peace. Humble us by laying bare before our eyes our littleness and our mortal limitations. Let us in quietness and cleansing fulfill the calling to which we have been called.

On this the anniversary of that first Christian Pentecost when Thy power was shown so vividly in the outpouring of Thy Holy Spirit, we meet to perpetuate the memory of that day, and to speak forth our brilliant hope of the arrival of that still greater Pentecost that is now just ahead.

Dear Father, we rejoice that we have been informed of the great impetus given to the Christian movement by the outpouring of Holy Spirit power during the Apostolic Age. With great power and authority were these teachings broadcast by the apostles, with great signs and wonders was their genuineness vouchsafed to the people living at that time. Fulfilling the Apostolic commission, the gospel was preached to the then-known world.

Help us, Father, to have faith to know that as truly as that first Pentecost arrived with all its exciting experiences and outstanding accomplishments, so surely its greater counterpart will come. The return to earth of the noble prophet Elijah will mark the beginning of those greater events,

the outpouring of Thy Spirit upon all flesh. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped; then the lame man shall leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing. Then greater works will be done than were accomplished by Jesus at His first advent.

We praise Thee for making so certain to us the promise that as the former rain of Thy power fell, so surely there will be a renewing of the Holy Spirit in much greater power and volume. A day is not far distant when greater works will be done than were accomplished during those outstanding years, and we ourselves can have a part in that work if we now qualify by living a life above reproach, crucifying every fleshly lust and affection.

And as that first Pentecost found all loyal believers assembled together in one place and with one accord, may we as aspiring members of Thy true Church of these last days be found all of one mind, perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

Grant us the daring to take Thee at Thy word, and to look forward with glad hearts and shining faces to the arrival of that better, grander Day. But, Father, grant us the practicality to know that our sharing in the bliss of that better Day is dependent upon our conduct right here and now. Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation. Right now is our working time. Our acceptance or rejection then will depend upon the intensity of our effort now. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

nation. See Jeremiah and Baruch standing rock-like for right and truth in the ruins of a crumbling civilization. They too were part of the Church.

Then there was Daniel, praying three times a day before his open window in open defiance of the King's decree. On the sacred roles of this Church are also names like Zerubbabel and Ezra and Nehemiah, men who labored faithfully to rebuild a shattered nation and a shattered hope. All were laboring with one accord for one purpose.

At last came the Child of Promise, after a time of long despair, in fulfillment of the words of the prophets. Angels from heaven at the time of His birth proclaimed the deathless hope of the Church: "Peace on earth, good will to men" in the face of an immemorial system of violence.

The message of the true Church became even more vital as it was exemplified in the life and ministry of this Son of God. Jesus was the Church personified. So completely and so perfectly did He live its message that He became the pattern of the perfect member, the standard to which every aspiring member must ultimately attain. All the way from Nazareth, through the towns and cities of Galilee and Judea, from the seashore to Gethsemane, and all the way to Golgotha—even to the empty tomb—He was the perfect example of God's Church.

The one hundred twenty who gathered in His name "with one accord" on the day of Pentecost were part of this great tradition, part of the Church of God which lives through all ages strong and triumphant, prospering as God wills it to prosper. It is the Church of those who are of one accord with God, who are determined to make their thoughts and ways subject to those of their Master, that they might be joined to God's infinite, eternal purpose.

The Bond of Christian Fellowship

What is it that binds the members of this Church together in every age? What makes them one in God? It is the binding power of a common heritage and a common goal. It is the bond that is formed as they together strive to purify themselves even as Christ is pure (I John 3:3).

Being of one accord with Christ's true Church means being like Christ. And as we become like Christ we enjoy a new fellowship with Him, and with one another; the two cannot be separated in our mortal life—they can hardly even be distin-

guished. Christ is not among us so that we can have fellowship in person; we must express our devotion to God in our relationship with one another. Jesus encompassed the whole in one term: love, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:34-35). When we know the meaning of true love for one another, when we share a common interest in the work which the Lord wants us to do—even the total remaking of ourselves into the divine moral image—we are bonded together with a bond which is itself divine. There is nothing like it in the whole world. And slowly, step by step as we grow in every Christian grace, we shall become increasingly like those with whom we fellowship—like God, like Christ, like His saints—until someday we are permitted to know the highest heights of true love and to share the fellowship that will be eternal.

The Basis of Unity—Love

But we must constantly remember now the very practical basis of our fellowship in Christ; Christian unity must be developed in our everyday relationship with one another. "For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen?" (I John 4:20). Such divine love is expressed in totally selfless service to others; selfish interests will be lost in consideration for others. We will be continually aware of what God wants us to do and to be. Only in this way can we grow into the family of God; only in this way can we become of one accord with Him and those who are His.

This divine love was the basis of the friendship between Ruth and Naomi; it is something that spiritual life demands. Ruth needed Naomi. Naomi tested Ruth, suggesting that she might go back to her own country and her own people. If Ruth had any desire to go back, now was the time. But Ruth had tasted the greater fellowship and would not forsake it. "Entreat me not to leave thee," she replied, "or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God" (Ruth 1:16). Ruth's bond of fellowship with Naomi was strong because Naomi's God was *her* God, and Naomi's people *her* people. Ruth was part of Naomi's family, and Naomi was part of God's family, "the pillar and ground of the truth" (I Tim. 3:15). The two were of one accord in God.

David and Jonathan are another example of
(Continued on page 21)

NOTE: "With One Accord" is available as a church-service recording on cassette. Price: \$3.00

From
John the Elder



Second in a Series on the Epistle of First John

The Prologue - A Personal Testimony

A Study of First John 1

"That which was from the beginning."

This is not how we would expect any letter ancient or modern to begin; but this is how John begins his letter. There is no salutation or greeting to any church or individual. The Apostle plunges straight into his subject. It is as if he suddenly invited us to listen in on a conversation that has already been going on for some time.

Yet it is apparent before too long whom he is addressing. Only a few verses further on he speaks to "My little children" (2-1). The term "little children" does not imply immaturity, but is an expression of endearment. His letter is filled with intense personal feeling. He is bound to these brethren in the faith, and they are bound to him. He is acquainted with their achievements, their dangers, and their needs. Love makes the task of writing them both a necessity and a delight.

It is likely that these believers were the people of the churches addressed as the seven churches of Asia in Revelation, possibly including several other churches such as Miletus, Hierapolis, and Colosse. John was very possibly a highly esteemed traveling overseer of these churches, and being an apostle he would have been lovingly received in any of them.

While John wrote for the benefit of these early Christians, God preserved his letters for the benefit of believers in every age, even ours; his words have great import for believers in these last days, for our problems and needs are much the same.

There is something wonderful about the Word which John is thinking about as he opens his letter:

"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life" (v. 1).

John has stated his subject. And his words accentuate the vivid reality of his past experience. To this aged apostle sitting in his dimly-lighted parlor, pen in hand and parchment rolled out, the days with Jesus were as real as if they were but yesterday. But time and maturity have added a new dimension of understanding to the experience: Now he realizes that when they heard, saw, looked upon and touched the living Christ, they were having physical contact with the living Word of God, so completely did Christ exemplify that Word in His daily life.

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

"Life" was the great word for John. The "word of life," "the life," and "eternal life" were meaningful terms to him, especially having known Christ. In Christ the "word of life," the wisdom of God, became alive and visible as it had never been before. As John wrote in the Fourth Gospel, "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us" (John 1:14).

But John has no idea that Christ existed in heaven before He was born. He says that "eternal life" comes from the Father, and that it has been "manifested unto us" by Christ. Christ showed men what the Father had given Him. And He spent His entire earthly life demonstrating the way to obtain that life and obtaining it Himself—what better manifestation could we ask! In His post-ascension message, the book of Revelation (not yet given when John was writing these letters) Christ could say, "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore" (Rev. 1:18).

John felt the richness of his experience in hav-

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

John's strong personal testimony probably had two purposes as he penned it: In it he expressed the deeper insights into the meaning of Christ's life and example which time had impressed upon his mind; at the same time John wanted his brethren to know that Jesus was an actual human being. Contrary to the heresy of the Gnostics, Jesus had a human body and a human nature the same as each of them had (and we also have). John knew; he had been an eyewitness and an ear-witness. He and others had enjoyed intimate friendship with the Master. Jesus was no incarnation of a deity; He was no phantom walking around in a human shell.

So John repeats for a third time the certainty beneath his convictions:

"That which we have seen, and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ" (v. 3).

Earthly fellowship exists only in being in fellowship with the source of all fellowship—God. And one can have fellowship with God and His Son Christ only as he becomes morally *like* God. The character of God must set the standard for all fellowship among believers.

This wonderful fellowship John writes of is not that on the level of this world—its amusements, its hobbies, its sports or politics, or even its religion. It is a high and holy fellowship that has its center and source in God. It is a fellowship that is manifested in self-sacrificing love, in mutual service, in prayer and labor and helpfulness. It is fellowship "with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." Only in unity with them can there be unbroken fellowship among men. And only as one becomes like them can he experience this high and holy fellowship.

"And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full" (v. 4).

Joy, the very joy of God, filled the heart of the noble John as he penned these words to his brothers in the faith. His had been the rare privilege of knowing Christ and the hope of eternal life He had set before men. His had been the price-

less opportunity of enjoying fellowship with Christ, and of sharing in the prospect of full and eternal fellowship with Him in the future. The prospect of such holy fellowship brought joy even now, joy that was real and abiding.

We today can enjoy the same fellowship with the Father and with one another if we live up to our profession of faith and put on the character of the Lord Jesus. God will fellowship with none but those who are like Himself, pure and holy.

When we have attained to that high standard, we—like John—will be able to know the fullness of overflowing joy.

God Is Light

Then John becomes intensely practical as he shows the lines along which one may test himself, to learn from his own behavior whether or not he belongs to God.

Because all children of God will be continually working to develop in their own lives the characteristics of the Father, John first describes the Father. He uses two symbols which are used frequently through the Scriptures to represent the contrast between good and evil: light and darkness. John writes:

"This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (v. 5).

The Old Testament is rich in illustrations of light and darkness. Light was often the symbol of God's presence, as in the pillar of fire that led the Israelites by night; or the blazing glory of the Shekinah that filled the temple. The prophets saw God manifesting Himself in light: "the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light"; or, "Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise" (Isa. 60:19; Mal. 4:2).

How fitting, then, that John should write: "God is light." The Word or knowledge of God is called the "light" (Ps. 119:105).

Light represents truth, not error. It is the purity and holiness of God. This holy light which comes from God is not only self-contained; it diffuses. It shines "brighter and brighter unto the perfect day" (Prov. 4:18). It offers guidance for the footsteps of men (Ps. 43:3). It reveals the imperfections of men; there are no imperfections in God, no sin; God is all-righteous.

On the other hand, darkness stands for the life without God, or the life that has strayed from God. Evil loves darkness, and the deeds of darkness are evil—anger, hate, prejudice, covetousness, jealousy, and every lust of the flesh.

John distinguishes between light and darkness. They are ever set one against the other. The judgment of God consists in "bringing to light the secret things of darkness" (I Cor. 4:5). God Himself is sometimes symbolized as light that is "devouring fire," as that which will ultimately consume all the sinful deeds of darkness. The dividing of light and darkness is the task assigned to every child of God, lest we find ourselves consumed with the evil that still remains in us. This should be a warning to us. As a thoughtful Bible scholar once commented, "It is possible to sing, 'Jesus the very thought of Thee. . . .' without having once asked ourselves if there are not things in our life and character that that holy Presence, if it once came anywhere near us, would burn to shreds."

God is all "light"; in Him "is no darkness at all."

The difference between light and darkness is also the difference between what men say and what men do.

Here John is answering the challenge of the Gnostics. The Gnostics believed that knowledge was all important; if they advanced intellectually, sin ceased to matter. John forcefully refutes this theory and his message is timely for us. Gnosticism has its counterpart in every age. The masses today believe in a carefree, easy-going conscience. Knowledge, yes; but sin may be overlooked. So darkness prevails.

The Three Lies

John makes three assertions, each of which is a lie. *First,*

"If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth" (v. 6).

This statement is a plain accusation against anyone who might think that religious knowledge can be had without moral reform. If our actual conduct is such that out of shame and fear we conceal our deeds, and we "walk in darkness," we both speak and act out falsehood. "Our words and our lives are a lie" (NEB). Our actions refute what we say; the truth is not in us.

The light of God must permeate our lives; it must be displayed in action, not only in words. One cannot walk in the light merely by intending to do right; he must *do* it.

John then mentions two ways by which the children of light are recognized.

"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (v. 7).

If men are walking in light, they have fellowship with God and with one another. Indeed,

true religion is that by which every day a man comes closer to his brother and closer to God. True religion produces the richest fellowship; we cannot have the one without the other.

Another test which will prove that we are walking in the light is that "the blood of Christ," that is, the living essence of His life, is daily cleansing us from sin. John is not suggesting that the physical blood of Christ could do anything about our sins. He uses the term "blood" to represent the vital circulating life which he said earlier was manifested in Christ, the living Word (1:1-3). Jesus Himself said, "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you" (John 15:3). He did not say that we are clean through the blood He shed; neither did John say this.

Those who walk in the light will be constantly carrying on the cleansing process, just as Christ did, daily becoming more pure and holy, day by day their fellowship growing richer, day by day their joy fuller.

Then comes the *second* lie:

"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (v. 8).

It is easy enough to find defences to hide behind. We may blame our sins on our physical health, or our environment, or we may try to shuffle them onto someone else. By closing our eyes to our own shortcomings, we deceive ourselves. But by doing this we reject our obligation and our own need for cleansing and choose to walk in darkness. In this way we bar the door to forgiveness because we have not a penitent heart; and God forgives only him who confesses and forsakes his sin (Prov. 28:13).

It is so easy to be self-deceived, to think we were all right when we were all wrong. But we should remember that God can see all our deceit and our sin. His eyes are in "every place, beholding the evil and the good" (Prov. 15:3).

John continues his counsel: God is "faithful and just." He is not fickle or arbitrary.

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (v. 9).

If we confess, He will forgive. The wording "confess our sins" extends to specific, definite acts, not to sin in general terms. Many are ready to admit sin in a general way, but recoil when it comes to particular points. God wants us to deal with each sin as we commit it; He wants the truly penitent heart.

John repeats: "He is faithful and just . . . to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." How

does the Father or the Son Jesus Christ cleanse us? By forgiveness. He has given us His Word which, if we obey, will make us clean. And when we cease committing a sin, God will forgive us. Jesus left us the pattern, a living example to follow. He sanctified Himself through the truth, showing us how we too might sanctify ourselves through the truth (John 17:17). The word of life, the truth, and the light are all the same blessed Word of God, that Word which Jesus lived so perfectly that He was called the "word," the "truth," and the "light." If we would have fellowship with Him, we must walk in that same light. God does not take away our responsibility, as John says. He cannot do the walking for us; we must do it for ourselves. We ourselves must walk in the light.

There is yet a *third* lie that would tempt us away from the seriousness of obedience:

"If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us" (v. 10).

This is actually a dual lie. If we say we have not sinned, we lie ourselves, and we make God a liar. This wording seems to include the past as well as the present. We may feel that we are naturally good, at least in many ways, perhaps even altogether. But God says "all have sinned." Paul realized this natural tendency to sin in himself, even after he had spent considerable time serving Christ. He said, "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing" (Rom. 7:18). We are not naturally good. Let us not lie about it, either to God or to ourselves or to one another. According to John, this lie needs no further comment. God's Word should settle it.

So far the apostle John has given us a spiritual tonic with wholesome severity. Let us take it to heart and remove all the lies from our lives.

Let us live in the light and walk in the light until sin dies out in us and there is no more darkness at all. ●●

Next: LEST WE SIN

The Lord Searches the Heart

WE NEED a longing desire for God to search us. We want to find out if possible just what He thinks of us. Our prayer will be the cry of the Psalmist: "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me; and lead me in the way everlasting" (Ps. 139:23-24). And may He turn the searchlight of His holy Word upon us until we are able to see ourselves as He sees us.

We do not need to know what the world thinks of us. Newspapers, books, gossip and our friends may give a report of us very different from what God would give. They may praise while He condemns, or they may condemn where He praises. Even our nearest and dearest may be deceived. "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." Our only desire is to discover what *God* thinks of us.

We shall some day find ourselves face to face with the Judge of all the earth. And then in the sight of all we shall be unveiled and the innermost secrets of our hearts shall be laid bare. The cloak that hid us from man will not hide us from God. Is it not better to find out now what God thinks of us and, if as He weighs us in the balance we are found wanting, to make up at

once wherein we lack and get right with Him?

And so I ask, "What does God think of me?" God who searcheth the heart, as He looks into mine, what does He find? Am I well pleasing in His sight? What does He think of me?

First, what does God think of my work? Does He find me genuine and sincere, free from all deception and a stranger to hypocrisy? I know I make human blunders; God does not hold against me my mistakes in judgment. The question is, Am I earnest? Am I sincere? Are my motives right? Am I always loyal? Do I work from my heart, or are my labors merely professional, a service done purely for recompense? Is there any thought of personal gain or prestige in my work? Am I selfish? Do I serve to present a good appearance before others, or to merit a place in His eternal Kingdom? What can I realistically expect to get out of my lifework—just the bread and butter I need from day to day, or something of eternal value?

Is all my work counting for God? What about my influence. Is it constantly for good? Are others, seeing me, more convinced than ever that the Christian life is the only life worth living? Is my persuasion deep enough to be meaningful to others?

(Continued next page)

Second, what does God think of my relationship to others? Have I obeyed His summons, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate"? "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers"? Are the things I am doing pleasing to Him, and does He smile upon me? Is there any pleasure I indulge that is driving me from His presence? Would I be glad for Christ to come and find me anywhere I go? Am I always willing to give up what He asks?

Do I want to please Him, or am I sometimes ready to argue a matter with Him? (How can I, a mortal, think of questioning the mighty God of heaven!) Do I spend time for myself which could be better spent in His service? Do I give more time than is justifiable to the physical aspects of my life and neglect the spiritual?

Thirdly, what does God think of my devotional life? Do I spend enough time in deep meditation upon the promises He offers? Do I live close to God? Do I speak often with Him in communion and prayer? Is God and the sublime hope He has set before me *real* in my thoughts and in my life? Is the prospect of life eternal the impelling power of my life?

Is my life saturated with the holiness of God? Do I say prayers, or do I pray? Is my spiritual life real and vital to me all the time?

Fourthly, what does God think of my Christian progress? Am I growing? Am I better this year than I was last? Is my hope more real to me, my grasp on things divine more secure? Is my faith more settled and my inner peace undisturbable? Can my friends see any difference in me? Are my old weaknesses disappearing, and is the fruit of the Spirit becoming increasingly mine?

Am I making real progress against my besetting sins? Have I conquered any of those sins which once stood conqueror over me? Am I learning to hate every sin, wherever it be found (even in my own heart)? Is there still some cherished idol keeping some part of my affections from God?

And now, having honestly faced these four vital questions, what is the answer? We know we are satisfied with the great things He has offered us. But the question now is this: Is *God* satisfied? Is *He* pleased with *me*?

For in the final analysis, all that will matter is His estimate of us. ●●

It is not what we eat but what we digest that makes us strong; not what we gain but what we save that makes us rich; not what we read but what we remember that makes us learned; and not what we profess but what we practice that makes us Christians.

Don't Say It!

Should you think a thought unkind,
Put it quickly from the mind;
If 'tis wrong to think about,
'Tis much worse to blurt it out;

For some tongues so hasty are
To repeat it, near and far.
Son, this truth I want to teach:
Long of life is hurtful speech.

Praise may not too swiftly spread,
'Tis forgotten soon when said;
But the bitter word and strong
Is remembered much too long.

Better silent 'tis to stay
Than a hurtful thing to say.
Good but briefly may survive;
Evil longer stays alive.

—Selected

TOO MANY KNOTS?

We all at one time or other have seen an oriental rug or a picture of one. They are made in many hues and colors.

It was said that a rug 25 feet by 16 feet sold for \$250,000 imported from Turkey. It took many years to make the rug, and many people worked on it.

It is also said that had one man done the work alone and started at the age of 15, it would have taken him until his 75th birthday to complete the task. More startling, the rug was made up of thousands and thousands of knots.

Into many a Christian's life have been woven trials and disappointments, sickness and the like, which seem like tangles, snarls and knots. However, all unknown to him, all things are working "together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28). Also we know that "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18).

Knots! does life often seem that way to you? No matter what you do, does the skein of life twist and turn in your hands, and failure is all that meets your gaze? Don't be discouraged. You're too close to the tapestry to see the design.

It will take a lifetime to complete the task, but in the end it will be a perfect product, if we follow the pattern God has provided us. ●●

—From A Reader in Wisconsin

UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God."

Death--According to the Bible

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave
Awaits alike the inevitable hour;
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.

THE WORDS of the poet are true; nothing can stay the hand of death. Wealth, beauty, power, glory. Elvis Presley, the youthful hero of the young in the 1950's, had them all. He had wealth to purchase anything his heart desired. He lived in a mansion filled with objects of art and beauty. His fame reached worldwide proportions. He had more possessions than he could have used in two lifetimes. Yet nothing he possessed of wealth or fame could save his life. And in death he is no different than a pauper.

The average man values life above all things. Elvis Presley would have been willing to give much of his worldly goods in exchange for a few more years of life. Given a choice between wealth and life, most men would choose life. But there is no choice; life is a one-way street leading toward death. It has ever been so. "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle," lamented the prophet Job. "O remember that my life is wind" (Job 7:6-7). Life is short and fleeting; death is certain for the rich as well as for the poor. "For what is your life?" asked the apostle James. "It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away" (Jas. 4:14). Death is the inescapable end of life.

It is a sobering thought. Because no one likes to think of himself as worthy of oblivion, theories have been advanced that deny the finality of death. Death is described as simply passing from one life to another through the escape of the soul. As we learned in our last lesson, it was the Greek philosopher Plato who originated the idea of the separation of soul and body at death.

An understanding of the word soul as used in Scripture should put to rest all claims of immortality for it. In general, it is the translation

of the Hebrew **nephesh**, and the Greek **psyche** (pronounced soo-key). The Hebrew **nephesh** is rendered as soul, life, living, a man, a person, self, breath, heart, mind, creature, and is even applied to beasts and to every creeping thing. The Greek **psyche** is also translated similarly, corresponding with the Hebrew **nephesh**.

In reviewing the hundreds of times the word is used in the Bible, both in the Old and New Testaments, not once is it said to be immortal or undying, but we learn that souls die (Ezek. 18:20); souls can be lost (Matt. 16:26); souls hunger (Prov. 27:7); souls can be cut off from God (Lev. 22:3); souls can hear (Acts 3:23); souls were not spared from death (Ps. 78:50), all of which indicate that a soul is a person. Man is not divisible into parts; he does not have a soul; he is a soul.

I. NATURAL DEATH

B. What Death Is—New Testament

Death is the irreversible cessation of all life processes; it is the natural end of life. It is as normal to die as to live. Natural death is not a punishment for inherited sin, nor for a man's own sin. Death is no different in the New Testament than in the Old.

1. **The apostles.** Some writers make the claim that death was looked upon differently in the New Testament than in the Old. But a careful study does not bear this out. **Peter**, speaking at Pentecost, spoke of David as "not ascended into the heavens," but as "dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day" (Acts 2:34, 29). David had died many years before, but he did not go to heaven. He was put in the grave, and his grave was known at that time. Peter knew that the place of waiting was in the grave.

Paul compared death to sleep. Speaking of those who had seen Christ after His resurrection, he said "some are fallen asleep" (I Cor. 15:6), meaning that they had died. Again in verse 18 he mentions those "which are fallen asleep in Christ," meaning believers that had died. Speaking of the resurrection later in the chapter, he says, "We shall not all sleep" (v. 51), referring to

believers living when Christ returns. Just as we are unaware while asleep, so are the dead. We awake in the morning and take up our duties of the day. For the sleeping believers, the time from death to the resurrection will be no different than a night's sleep for us. They know nothing from death to the resurrection.

2. **Jesus.** Someone has said that Jesus said little to help us understand the nature of death. We are confident that Jesus' understanding of death was no different than that of the Old Testament patriarchs and prophets. When He spoke of the resurrection, He spoke of calling the dead from the grave. They will come forth to the Judgment as mortals. There is no indication of reuniting a soul and body (John 5:28-29).

II. NATURAL DEATH—ITS CAUSE

Death is nearly as common as life. For every three births in our nation, there are two deaths. We have all known someone who has died.

Why do men die? The question is frequently asked. Does God single out certain individuals and mark them for death? Is death the result of man's sin? Or is man condemned to die because of the sin of his earliest progenitor, Adam? Or do men die simply because they are mortal? Let us study the Bible to learn the cause of death.

A. Why Men Die—According to Theology

It is generally accepted throughout the so-called Christian churches that the human race was condemned to death because of the sin of Adam. "The disobedience of one man, Adam, brought death upon the race," says one. "Because Adam, who was the head of all mankind, committed sin, the guilt of his sin has been inherited by all his descendants," writes another.

This belief, called "original sin," came largely from Augustine, one of the early church fathers. Briefly, the doctrine holds that "God created man a perfect being even though it was possible for him to sin. . . . Adam lived in a paradise, . . . fully aware that if he ate of the fruit of the tree in the midst of the garden he would die (Gen. 3:3). After the act of disobedience man found himself in a state of sin, that is, it was no longer possible for him **not** to sin. The result of his sin was to be driven from the paradise of Eden and doomed to return to the dust from which he was taken. . . . Man was now a sinner and the consequence of his sin was death, both physical and spiritual.

"The assumption of Augustine was that the account of Adam's sin was a literal, historical narrative. Augustine thought of the Fall as a heinous, wicked corruption brought on by an evil will." He

further held "that sin was inherited physiologically from generation to generation. Thus death and sin were inherited by all the descendants of Adam."**

Augustine and his followers based their interpretation of sin and death on Paul's discussion in Romans 5:12-21. He believed that Paul explained the origin of sin through inheritance, thus "the descendants of Adam suffer two consequences of the Fall: first, an hereditary moral disease, the tendency to sin; and second, the guilt and punishment of Adam's sin. In Augustine's thought the Fall took man from a natural state of perfect fellowship with God to an unnatural state of sin and depravity which ends in death.

"The Augustinian interpretation of sin and death became the official teaching of the Church in the Middle Ages. From the 16th century to the present the mainstream of Protestant orthodoxy has continued to teach that death is an unnatural event, the result of man's depravity and sin. All this is based on the view that Genesis 3 is a literal account of the first man, his Fall from perfection, and the transmission of his sin and guilt to all men."**

Mr. Doss is not in agreement with Augustine's interpretation of sin and death. He agrees with a Dutch theologian who says that "man as he was created was, and was willed and intended by God to be, a mortal being. We must deny," he says, "that death is something unnatural, a break in God's creation." Nor does Mr. Doss agree with the immortal soul theory. "Man is mortal and finite," he writes. "Finitude and mortality mean that the whole man experiences death. We are born and we die. . . . Death is a normal and natural part of God's good creation, . . . not an exception to the creative purposes of God. We do not die because we must receive punishment for sin, or because we have inherited the penalty or guilt of Adam's sin. We die because we are human beings, creatures for whom death is the natural end to life."**

We agree with Mr. Doss, but because the majority agree with Augustine, let us analyze his doctrine concerning the cause of death. First, it is based on three false assumptions: 1) That Adam was created in the image of God; 2) That death would have been unknown had Adam not sinned; 3) That all men are the physical descendants of Adam and Eve.

1. Adam and Eve were not created perfect. Contrary to the thinking of Augustine and others

**Richard W. Doss, *The Last Enemy*, pp. 68, 69.

since his time, there is nothing in the Scriptures to indicate that the first man was created perfect. It is adding to the Word of God to make such a claim. The reason for the misunderstanding lies in a literal interpretation of the Creation allegory. Adam and Eve were representative of the first men and women to be called into God's service, not the first two humans ever to inhabit the earth. They were the beginning of God's work with men on earth. (For further explanation concerning Adam and Eve, send for our booklet, *God's Spiritual Creation*.)

2. Adam and Eve were not created immortal. The belief that Adam and Eve would have lived forever had they not sinned stems from Genesis 1:26 which describes man as created "in the image of God." Again, the fault lies in a literal approach to the Creation allegory. Mortal man cannot be said to be "in the image of God." Had Adam and Eve been in the literal image of God, they could not have sinned.

Mr. Herbert Haag, writing in the book "*Is Original Sin in Scripture?*" says, "It is an estab-

lished fact that when the Bible speaks of man as created in the image of God it does not mean that man was furnished with supernatural powers; it refers, rather, to the essence of man as a morally responsible personality."

The man made in God's image represents a class of people who are now being made over into His image. When completed, this composite man will form a part of His eternal creation, the Kingdom of God. This creating process will continue until the whole earth is brought into subjection, with Christ as King.

3. Adam and Eve were not the progenitors of all humanity. To say that all humanity literally descended from Adam and Eve is to say that they were the first and only humans on earth at that time. Science has proven beyond doubt that men inhabited this earth thousands of years before Adam and Eve. Adam, "in Hebrew *ha adam*, does not mean a single masculine individual, but mankind as a species and in both sexes" (*Old Testament Theology*). We are not told when God first created man, but it was ages before Genesis.

Does Romans 5 Teach Original Sin?

THOSE who believe in Adamic condemnation, that the human race is subject to sin and death because Adam sinned, go to Romans 5 to support their belief.

Surface reading of the chapter, verses 12-21, may seem to support the popular belief. But we cannot believe this was the Apostle's intended thought; Paul's thinking was deep, and his writing often complex, his grasp of the language often being above that of his peers. That is why the apostle Peter found it necessary to write of him as he did in his Second Epistle: "Our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, speaking of this [salvation] as he does in all his letters. There are some things in them hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other scriptures" (II Pet. 3:15-16, RSV).

Before studying the passage in Romans 5, which Augustine and a host of theologians since have used to claim that physical death is the result of the sin of Adam, let us consider some of Paul's plainer statements on this subject. Did the Apostle say anything else that would indicate that physical death is the result of Adam's sin and its effect upon the whole human race?

In Romans 1, Paul is condemning a large number of people because of sin. Let us read a few verses to see exactly why they are being condemned. "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; . . . because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful" (Rom. 1: 18-21). This surely sounds as though the transgressors themselves are blameworthy—there is nothing said about Adam's sin. "Who knowing the judgment of God"—they knew the consequences of such voluntary sin; "that they which commit such things are worthy of death"—this does not sound as though they were condemned *prior* to their own transgressing; "Who knowing the judgment of God, and that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them" (v. 32). Paul even says that the wrongdoing was voluntary—they did evil when they knew the consequences of sin and knew how they could have escaped this condemnation.

Romans 2 continues the same thought: "Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, . . . thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the

same things" (v. 1). Again the evildoer is being condemned for his own evil-doing. Romans 6:23 is clear: "The wages of sin is death." James defines the entire process of sin's development. "Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (James 1:14-15).

In another Epistle, Paul shows again that death is not an inescapable punishment resulting from the evil and blame we inherit, but that it is the result of our own wrongdoing. "He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption." Death is the end result of sowing to one's own flesh. And it can be avoided: "He that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Gal. 6:7-8).

With these thoughts in mind, let us return to Romans 5 and see what Paul is saying.

Verse 12. *"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."*

Theologians obtain from these words the thought that all men of all time are sinners and have died physically because Adam sinned.

To understand Paul's thought, we first need to know who is the "one man" by whom sin "entered into the world." It appears to many that Paul is alluding to Adam. But must he be speaking of the literal man Adam as he speaks of "one man"? In I Corinthians 15, Paul speaks of a "first man Adam" and also a "last Adam," indicating that the term can be used in a figurative sense, for literally there was only one Adam.

The man Adam may be said to be the originator of sin in that he was the first to sin under law, the first to be held accountable to God for his sin. But the "one man" in Romans 5 is a representative Adam including all who covenant to obey God's law and fail to keep their vow. This "one man" by whose disobedience sin entered the world is a composite man, a corporate person, a group of individuals who sin knowing the law. They are sinners because they themselves sin *like* Adam sinned, not *because* Adam sinned. This is what the verse says: *"And so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."* If death passed directly upon all men of Adam's posterity because Adam sinned, why did Paul add this last phrase: *"for that all have sinned"*?

Paul is speaking of those who sin knowing the law, "As many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law" (Rom. 2:12). All who know God's law and fail to keep it compose the one

unfaithful man by whose unfaithfulness death—*penal* death, not natural death—comes into the world. It is a death from which there is no hope of release.

This same "one man," the one unfaithful man, representatively called "Adam," is also mentioned by Paul in I Corinthians 15:21-22. "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." It is the same man, the one unfaithful man, represented by Adam, that has sinned and so brought death into the world, *penal* death.

This passage is also used to support the theory of death through original sin inherited from Adam. But if we were to accept literally that all men everywhere die because Adam sinned, would we not also be compelled to believe that all men everywhere are redeemed from death by Christ? And if the death spoken of be physical, then physical death should no longer trouble the human race, since Christ has come to redeem us. No, this is not what Paul is teaching. The idea of original sin finds no support in Scripture. "His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins" (Prov. 5:22)—*his* sins, not Adam's. And, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him" (Ezek. 18:20). It was never God's policy to condemn the children for the sins of their father, and we can be sure Paul did not contradict it. The penalty for a transgression falls upon the transgressor, not upon his posterity.

Paul's point in Romans 5:12 is man's accountability for sin. All who sin under law are held accountable, and must die for their sin if they do not repent; all of this "one man" must die *because all have sinned*. In the next verse Paul states it even more clearly: *"For until the law [prior to the giving of the law] sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law."* Sin was in the world prior to the time of Adam's covenant with God and God's giving of His law to men; men acted contrary to God's wishes and design for them; but sin was not held against them, nor were they liable for punishment, because they were not "under law." "For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law" (Rom. 2:12). This is God's merciful provision.

Paul explains his point even further in the next verse: *"Nevertheless death reigned from Adam*

to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression." Those who sin "after the similitude of Adam's transgression" sin *under law*. Those not under law cannot sin as Adam did. And this is the class Paul speaks of here, those who lived and died "between Adam and Moses" and who died without knowing the law of God. Over these people, as over all who lived before Adam, "death reigned." They died natural death, and it is a death as final as penal death, for there is no escape for them; they will never be called to account, having died without knowledge of God's law. It is a restatement of Romans 2:12; those who sin without knowing the law are not subject to it and perish without prospect of judgment.

In Romans 5:15-18, Paul compares the power of sin with the power of God's grace, His knowledge, His saving Gospel. God's *charisma*, translated "free gift," can overpower the strongest forces of sin and death. He says, "*But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead [the offence of this "one" composite man affects the "many" who compose it], much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.*" God's provision that a man may turn and repent of his sin, and by doing right free himself from the penalty of sin, shows God's boundless mercy or grace. It is the promise assured to us by the prophet Ezekiel: "If the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him" (Ezek. 18:21-22). Once the wicked has forsaken his evil ways, God will "abundantly pardon" (Isa. 55:6-7). This is how the "*grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ [a composite "Christ" including all faithful covenant-makers], hath abounded unto many*"—and shall abound in the age to come. The "gift by grace" is eternal life, which all members of this class will receive.

Verse 18: "*Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.*"

Again Paul speaks of this one unfaithful man, all who sin under the law, contrasted with the faithful who inherit eternal life. This verse cannot possibly be true in the sense popularly believed, for "all men" have not even heard of Christ, much less received "justification unto life."

Paul is not teaching that through Adam's offence all men are condemned to die, for that would

be contrary to the whole tenor of Scripture. The Bible principle is: Every man shall die for his own sin. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." Sin results in death, eternal death. Righteousness leads to justification and life in the world to come.

Verse 19: "*For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.*" Paul is repeating his thought. Adam's disobedience did not mean that all men necessarily and without their consent sinned; neither did Christ's obedience mean that henceforth all men were righteous. But as by the disobedience of this one composite "man" (the unfaithful covenant-makers) the "many" who compose it were made sinners, so by the obedience of the one composite "man" (Christ and all His saints) shall the "many" who compose it be accounted righteous.

Verses 20, 21: "*Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.*"

In these verses Paul summarizes his argument. The law was given to "increase" or make clear the sinfulness of sin, as he stated in Romans 7:13, "That sin by the commandment [under law] might become exceeding sinful." When the sinner recognizes that his sin is leading him to death, turns from it and does what is right, then "grace," God's favor or mercy much more abounds. As sin has reigned, or will reign, unto the ultimate death (penal) of the sinner, God's "grace," or favor will "reign" or prevail over death unto eternal life for those who have followed Jesus Christ, allowing righteousness to reign in their lives.

Can this possibly be Paul's thought? His next words leave no question: "*What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?*" (Rom. 6:1-2). If "grace" were ours without our having to meet any qualifications whatever, we would surely be tempted to "continue in sin, that grace may abound." But such is not God's plan. Each of us has an "old" nature that is sinful, and to this old nature we must become "dead" (Rom. 6:6), that "*henceforth we should not serve sin.*" Only in this way may we be "*made free from sin, and become servants to God,*" and have our "*fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death [eternal death, penal death]; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord*" (Rom. 6:11, 22-23). ●●

"They Laughed Him to Scorn"

IT WAS sixty-six years on April 14, 1978, that the pride of British shipbuilding, *The White Star S. S. Titanic*, sank with 1500 men, women and children on board. Who could even begin to believe that this wonderful ship, which the shipbuilding engineers with all their experience and skillful know-how declared to be "unsinkable," could indeed sink on her maiden voyage?

If some brave person had dared to stand on that ocean-going liner and warned the passengers in a strong, loud voice that "God hath declared that this ship the *Titanic* will never reach America, but will take its travelers into a cold, watery grave"—who would have believed him?

Imagine the excited feelings of those about to make the voyage of a lifetime in such a wonderful vessel. It was a great occasion; the bands were playing, people shouting their good-byes to friends ashore, streamers flying from ship to shore as slowly the *Titanic* slipped away from the dockside, as the little tugs took over and slowly nosed this huge ship toward the open sea.

Later that night dinner would be served, and afterwards there would be dancing and various other entertainments, each passenger finding his own type of enjoyment.

But what of the person who had dared to say that the *Titanic* would sink? If he had persisted with the warning, he would have been locked safely away in his cabin with a severe warning to keep the peace.

My friends, the unthinkable did happen, the unsinkable ship sank.

Noah was a real man of God, and because of it, God spoke to him, "Noah, this world is so wicked, I am going to flood it to wipe out all those wicked people. So Noah, I want you to build an ark, to save yourself and your family also. You may take with you two of every kind of your animals into the ark."

Brothers and sisters, can you just imagine what Noah's neighbors said to Noah as he started to build the ark that God had commanded him to build?

"What on earth are you building, Noah? It's such a huge thing. What is it for?"

"I am building a boat. God has ordered me

to do so, for He intends to send a great Flood."

Can you see those wicked people believing Noah's story? Can you not see them laughing him to scorn?

"Here we are in a desert-place, and here you are talking about a flood. Why! We have hardly enough water to quench our thirst; besides, who is this God you speak so often about? Why doesn't this God of yours ever speak to *us*?"

"How do you expect God, who is holy, to speak to you, when you are all so wicked? I'll tell you what, though; help me build this ark for God, change your wicked ways, and tell God you wish Him to be your God. Then perhaps God will allow you, too, to enter the ark, before He sends the flood."

"You must think we are as daft as you are, Noah," and with that they leave, laughing as they go.

It could be, though, that one or two of the young men who, short of money, returned and asked Noah for some work for payment; or perhaps Noah employed carpenters and blacksmiths to help him in this great task. It is even possible that some of the helpers were close by when the ark neared completion and Noah and his family started moving in. They may have started to have second thoughts about Noah and his God—especially when it started to rain. But alas! too late, for Noah and his family were safely on board, and the last of the animals tucked away. And God had shut the door.

It was now too late for them to change their minds, too late now to heed the warnings, too late to start and believe Noah's words; now the rain had started, and the fountains of the deep opened and the flood waters came gushing forth.

What must have been the thoughts of those who had almost been persuaded to enter the ark? Now they struggled in the swirling waters, crying in vain for help as they saw the great ark float away and as they saw their loved ones one by one sink beneath those awful waters.

We can see by these two stories how easy it is to form in our own minds those things which we think are impossible, taking no thought that God is able to do the impossible. We may even think that there isn't a God, yet whatever we think about it

doesn't alter the fact that He *is*. We might reason, How can there be a God without beginning or ending? There can be no such thing; yet we have only to look up into the universe and view the distant stars to see that here we have something without beginning or end. Travel through a thousand galaxies, and yet there are a thousand more, and then still a further thousand. Here is something we cannot understand, because it is so vast. Our God is just the same; He is too vast for our understanding, yet we believe in Him and try to serve Him.

We have all laughed in disbelief sometime or other. Even Sarah laughed when the angel of God told her she would bear a son in her old age. Today we have those who laugh when told that Christ Jesus will return again to earth to form His kingdom. Even many of the religious preachers of today try to explain away the coming of the Lord to set up His kingdom, as some kind of myth, forgetting that in the very prayer that they use, "The Lord's Prayer," are these words, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Is there any wonder why people laugh at God's Word when so many blind are leading the blind?

Just as the day came for which the Jews waited, when a virgin would bring forth a man-child, the Son of God, so the day will come—and very soon—when that same Son of God will come in all His wonderful glory. The warnings have long gone forth. A way of escape has been provided. Do not wait until the trumpet of Christ's return has sounded, for then it may be too late. Turn to God now.

There are those who have tried and have failed; do not be like those who helped Noah build the ark, and yet were lost.

God never puts upon us more than we can bear; if you have failed, then try again. Approach God through our great Intercessor, and then determine in your heart to keep on until you reach that state of perfection that God requires.

Do you really think that your faults are so terrible that you cannot turn from them and be forgiven? Remember the sin in King David's heart—murder and worse; yet he came to God in prayer, he acknowledged his sin and turned. Read his prayer in Psalm 51. Here is a part of it:

"Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. . . . Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a

right spirit within me. . . . O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise. For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Ps. 51:1-3, 10, 15-17).

David failed when he fell in sin; but God knew that David had really repented of that sin, and so forgave him. Let us as children of God learn from David's mistakes, for is not this why God allowed this part of David's life to be recorded in His Word?

We are not unsinkable; we are like the Titanic, we *can* fail. We, like the people who helped Noah, can help in God's work, only to find in the end that we are not worthy of God's best and will be sucked under the awful floods that will carry away this world's iniquity and sin. Yes, we can even laugh in God's face because we think we know best, because we underestimate the power of our God and overestimate our own power. We can laugh; but when calamity comes upon us, it will be God's turn to laugh, and there will be none to help us.

We are as strong as we will allow God to make us. "I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13). So let us put on Christ our example, and like Him determine in our hearts to let God have His way in our lives, no matter what the cost. Then we will be unsinkable. ●●

This article was contributed by a member who resides in Nottinghamshire, England.

Teach Me Thy Will

Search me, O God, and know my heart,

Try ev'ry thought each day,

Bid ev'ry evil thing depart,

Lead me in Thine own way.

Make me to hide Thy blessed Word

Deep written on my heart,

Then shall I keep from sin, O Lord,

Never from Thee depart.

Give me an understanding heart

That I may know Thy will,

Thy saving truth to me impart,

Thy law in me fulfill.

Teach me to do Thy will, O Lord,

Teach me to know Thy way,

Help me to walk in Thy perfect will,

And there to live each day.

—Selected.



SCRIPTURAL SPOTLIGHT

"My heart was hot within me, while I was musing the fire burned: then spake I with my tongue, Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am"
—Psalm 39:3-4.

NOT A faint flash in that moment of reflection; not a spasmodic burst of light; not a weak, flickering ray from the Infinite; "the fire burned."

What graphic language! Fire suggests something hot and devouring, something that claims total attention. There is nothing indifferent, neutral, or secondary about fire; where there is fire there is heat and burning.

We do not know where David was when he had this experience, when he felt this consuming zeal; it may have been while he was being pursued by the angry Saul and had to flee in terror for his life; it may have been while he was hiding in exile; again, it may have been while he enjoyed the peace of the Judean hillsides; we do not know. But wherever he was, David was consciously creating his own inner environment, and it was warm, stirring, and spiritually enlivening. Why? Because the inner fire of spiritual devotion was blazing. What was causing it to blaze? The cause was David's own thoughts. He was meditating upon the meaning of life, his own frailty in comparison to Divine Omnipotence. And while he was "musing," meditating, reflecting, "the fire burned." Higher and higher it blazed until it broke out in such intensity as to claim his complete attention.

This was David's experience. Has it been ours? Have we felt divine zeal in our hearts like a burning fire, generating spiritual warmth and the very glow of heaven in our lives? If not, why not? Perhaps it is because we are yet captives in our minds; perhaps we have not yet learned that special type of thinking that David did: meditating.

All of life is a learning experience. It begins the day we are born, and every day thereafter we add to our knowledge in some small way. Whatever our point in life, we can look back upon things we have learned. We have learned to walk, to talk, to coordinate mind and muscle

to be useful to ourselves and others. We have learned to read, to write, to study, to reason. We have learned to perform probably thousands of small operations that are part of everyday life. But have we learned to muse—to meditate?

David found meditation to be like a fire, glowing, consuming, penetrating to every area of his life. It was not just a spontaneous, emotional experience that died in a moment. It was a fire that affected his whole life, dominated his actions, tempered his spirit. It was a fire of holy purpose. It was a fire of realization and deep impression. "Help me to know mine end, and the measure of my days," he implored.

Through meditation we are able to see a ray of purpose gleaming through the confusion of our world. We are able to see all things working together for good, to them that love God. We are able to see all things working together as God wills.

David found life a thrilling experience, when his life was set aglow by the fire of holy purpose.

The fire that burned in David's soul was also a fire of self-recognition. It caused him to implore, "Deliver me from all my transgressions" (Ps. 39:8). The heat of this fire caused him to see himself as he had not otherwise done.

To live life on the highest level, we must face up to ourselves as we are, see wherein we lack, and go to work to change. It was when Isaiah was in the presence of God that he saw himself as he really was. "Woe is me!" he cried, "for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips" (Isa. 6:5). In the presence of the Divine he saw his sin.

Most of us put up a facade of goodness. We profess what we do not possess, hoping someday to possess more. In the meanwhile we live on a form of pride, a pride that keeps us from being honest with ourselves and with God, a pride that

keeps us from confessing our sins and going to work to eradicate them. Pride makes us shrink from the heavenly fire that can cleanse and purge the evil in our lives. Let us stop and think, meditate. "While I was meditating," said David, "the fire burned," the fire that can consume the evil, and stir the good.

The fire that burned in David was the fire of hope. In David's heart hope was alive and burning. "And now, Lord, what wait I for? My hope is in thee" (Ps. 39:7).

We need to feel this fire in our hearts, the fire that can consume the evil and kindle hope and

every good, the fire that can cause us to see ourselves as God sees us and turn humbly to him as we offer our wholehearted obedience. We need to realize the brevity of our days, and our total dependence upon the God who gives us breath, for "every man at his best state is altogether vanity" (Ps. 39:5).

We need to realize it, before too late.

O God, teach us to meditate. Kindle such a fire in our hearts now; for we are strangers with Thee, and sojourners, as all our fathers were. O spare us, that we may recover strength, before we go hence to be no more. ●●

With One Accord

(Continued from page 7)

hearts joined "with one accord" in a divine fellowship. Their relationship shows the strength of unity that is possible even under adversity. Out of all the chaos of the time and the disorder of their lives there arose for them a new and beautiful world of peace and contentment. It was the miracle inner world created by the death of self. Jonathan forgot his heritage and David his ambition, and the two became one in their love for God. Jonathan's princely soul had no room for envy or jealousy. David's frank nature rose to meet the greatness of his friend. They agreed to be true to each other in their difficult positions, as each maintained a close fellowship with God. Close and tender was the bond which joined them together, and it had its fruit in dedicated lives.

True, wholesome and pure was the desire that drew Mary to the feet of Jesus to hear more and more of the gracious words that flowed from His lips. The same bond of unity drew Mary Magdalene to Jesus. When they met in the garden after Jesus' resurrection, Jesus knew her whole heart and He knew that they were both serving the same God and were members of the same family; hence He could say to her, "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God" (John 20:17). Not only was God the Father of Jesus; He was the Father of Mary Magdalene, and of every other earnest, sincere believer as well. It was the unity for which Jesus prayed that night in the upper room after that last Passover supper with His disciples; "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are; . . . that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may

be one in us, . . . that they may be made perfect in one" (John 17:11, 21, 23).

This is true unity, that one accord in which godly character may grow and blossom and bear fruit unto eternal life. It is divine fellowship which enlarges the soul and binds men of God to each other with unbreakable cords of love and faithfulness. It is fellowship which has vitality enough to grow in any soil that is good and honest—it is not dependent on outward circumstances; it is fellowship which brings us together in one accord now and can keep us living and working together through all eternity. It is the binding power of the Church of God. What more blessed bond could we seek!

One Body

The oneness among the members of the true Church is so strong, so complete, so functionally perfect, so fully coordinated, and so capable of accomplishing active service for God that the apostle Paul compared it to the physical body of a living person. In his letter to the Romans he described this composite "body": "So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another" (Rom. 12:5). It is one body composed of many members. "Just as a human body, though it is made up of many parts, is a single unit because all these parts, though many, make one body, so it is with Christ" (I Cor. 12:12, Jerusalem Bible). For the development of this body, Paul writes how God gave different persons to fill different roles at various times: for "the building up of the body of Christ. So shall we all at last attain to the unity inherent in our faith and our knowledge of the Son of God—to mature manhood, measured by nothing less than the full stature of Christ" (Eph. 4:11-13, NEB).

"One body" requires one head; and this being the "body of Christ," Christ Himself is the Head,

the coordinator, the governor of all the body's activities. "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence" (Col. 1:18). "He is the head, and on him the whole body depends. Bonded and knit together by every constituent joint, the whole frame grows through the due activity of each part, and builds itself up in love" (Eph. 4:16, NEB). What is the purpose of this arrangement? "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are in earth; even in him" (Eph. 1:10).

A perfectly united body means that all individualism must go. All must be subject to one head, one directing power. Should any organism be divided into countless little bits of life and energy, each finger or each toe wanting to go its own way, the organism would cease to be a body. The Roman Empire for a short time tried dividing the top authority between two men, thinking that "two heads are better than one." But the arrangement proved entirely unworkable. Without one head, and all the members of the body joined under the direction of that one head, there can be no working body.

Belonging to the body of Christ has its price; and that price is the value we place on our right to be individuals. But if we prefer to remain as individuals, we are not part of the body. If we would belong to Christ, all our longing to be seen, to be noticed, to be praised as a distinctive individual must be forfeited; all must be exchanged for the greater honor of being part of the body of Christ, the true Church. For an honor it is—as we strive for one standard in Christ—to someday be part of a body which will live on and on forever and ever, a part of the eternal creation of God! What is our individualism worth compared to membership in such a body!

The life of the body of Christ lies in each member coordinating with every other. This means that selfishness must give way to selflessness; pride to humility. Resentment must be replaced with kindness, and anger with patience. Slander and malice must be removed and truth and love must fill their place. Hastiness must be superseded by careful judgment, fault-finding completely extinguished by understanding.

Do the requirements sound narrow and exclusive, unkind to those who might like to belong but who do not wish to come to the standard? They are. True religion is always exclusive. It is continually excluding those who oppose the high principles of Christ, those who will not align their lives

with its high demands of speech and conduct. And the requirements of this fellowship will exclude you and me if we have other interests which come first, goals in this world, and ideas which have no foundation in Christ. Christian unity means unity in Christ, all coming to the one standard that He has set. Not that we must agree on the color of our house or the variety of our food, but on every principle of belief and moral practice we must agree.

Growing Together

There is nothing automatic about this unity. Those who were all "with one accord" on the day of Pentecost did not just *happen* to be that way. We can be sure there was a large measure of bending and growing prior to that occasion.

Paul found unity difficult to achieve in his churches. Wherever people unite in a common interest, there are bound to be common differences. For the sake of comparison with the "one accord" at Pentecost, I would like to read a few verses from the apostle Paul's letter to the Galatian brethren. Among the Galatians were trouble-makers who were applying for a license to compete and criticize, and their efforts were causing divisions in the church. To them he wrote, "All the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another" (Gal. 5:14-15).

Wherever life touches life, there are bound to be differences. How is unity possible? As long as we seek to "bite" and "devour" one another, to compete with each other rather than to coordinate and cooperate, to promote our own opinion and our own "rights" rather than the interests of the group, there is sure to be strife and division. But when we learn to govern our lower nature which moves us to want our own way, then we can live in harmony. As Paul says, "If you go on fighting one another, tooth and nail, all you can expect is mutual destruction. I mean this: if you are guided by the Spirit you will not fulfil the desires of your lower nature. That nature sets its desires against the Spirit, while the Spirit fights against it. They are in conflict with one another so that what you will to do you cannot do" (Gal. 5:14-17, NEB).

Unity Essential?

Just how necessary is unity in the body of Christ? Is this high standard of Christian oneness really a serious matter? Must we who profess the name of Christ agree on every principle of belief and practice?

God does not leave us in doubt. Throughout His Word there is great stress on unity. Many times are we admonished to strive for that perfect oneness, that holiness, that whole-devotedness without which "no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14).

The words of Paul are clear and forthright: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (I Cor. 1:10). "Agree among yourselves, and avoid divisions; be firmly joined in unity of mind and thought" (NEB). "Make up the differences between you, and instead of disagreeing among yourselves, . . . be united again in your belief and practice" (Jerusalem Bible). Paul's words are a challenge and a command. The church at Corinth was being torn by divisions. "I have been told, my brothers, . . . that there are quarrels among you," he wrote (I Cor. 1:11, NEB). "Can you not see that while there is jealousy and strife among you, you are living on the purely human level of your lower nature?" (I Cor. 3:3, NEB).

Concerning the necessary unity between man and his God, the prophet Amos asked: "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3). Can we walk with God unless we agree with His commandments, and live by them; unless we agree with His people and walk with them; unless we set our faces in the direction of what He offers and pursue it with all that is in us?

Unity Is Restrictive

A large part of learning to live in unity and sharing the fellowship of the saints lies in exchanging our thoughts for God's vastly higher thoughts. And when this means giving up our own private opinion, many of us find we have wills made of something related to iron. My will, my opinion is intrinsically valuable to me! As an unknown author has described it,

**The only thing I really owned,
The one thing I wanted to keep,
The only thing that I could give,
The one thing He wanted to have:
MY WILL.**

So I must surrender my will for Christ's. Easy? Not at all. But how else are we to walk in unity? My own way is right to me, and your way looks right to you—how can there be any unity except as both of us give up our way and accept God's? If you are walking toward the Kingdom, and I am walking toward the Kingdom, should we not

be able to walk together and so help each other? And when someone else sees where we are taking a wrong turn, should we not be anxious to be shown the right way? Should we not be glad for any help we receive?

A young man was looking for a small settlement named Cedarville in the prairie lands of the Midwest. Being totally unfamiliar with the area, he had borrowed a map which he was attempting to follow. After taking what he supposed were several correct turns, and still failing to find the settlement, he gave up in despair and stopped to inquire of a native. He was sure he was on the right road—why didn't he come to Cedarville? The native told the young man that he had quite a distance yet to go, and proceeded to direct him down one road, across on another, left here and right there, until the man was thoroughly confused. "Sir," the young man protested, "how far is it to Cedarville if I keep right straight on down this road?" "Well," the native looked puzzled, "I can't really tell you, but it's just about 25,000 miles further than if you go the way I am directing you." Isn't that the way we must look to God when we try to tell Him which way we think we should go?

Complete unity with God restricts and controls our use of our functions of sight, hearing, and thought. It tells us what to look at, what to listen to, what to think about, how to spend our money, our time, our talents, our all. Unity with God is unity in the strictest sense of the word, and it cannot be accomplished until we are willing to release our hold upon every impulse of our own and bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

But how glorious is the exchange—as we come into union with a power which can sustain and perpetuate life, the All-powerful, All-wise God of the universe! Our own strength is so small; united to the power of God and the source of life we tap a source that is inexhaustible.

Glorious Unity

Do we want to be of those who are "with one accord," the body of Christ, the fellowship of the saints and of the household of God? Do we want to be able to claim as our brothers and sisters those thousands of known and unknown men and women who in their day kept the faith, fought the good fight and served God's cause loyally? Do we want to be part of the great tradition, the noble succession of the servants of God, the "cloud of witnesses," the heroes of faith? Then we must be in one accord with them now, must share their faith and their conviction; we

must work as they worked and live as they lived. We must, like them, be persuaded of those things in which we believe, and show the same strength of faith in our lives—whether at home, in the office, in the factory, on the job, in the church—wherever we are. The day to which they looked forward *will* come.

The fellowship of those of “one accord” can include us, if we will but qualify. Membership is still open. And as we progress in our union with the Author of love and the fellowship of those who have gone before us, we shall find that we enjoy a higher, richer association with our brethren in the faith. The nearer we get to the center of the circle, the nearer we get to each other.

Dearer than the tie of blood; deeper, higher, stronger and closer than the strongest bond of kin is the unity of those who are with one accord in the fellowship of the true Church. There is nothing else to compare with it. And this fellowship is the only permanent relationship in the universe. “For the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever” (I John 2:17).

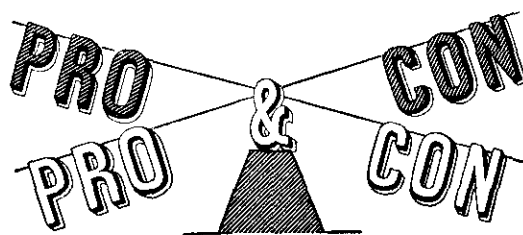
Can we not draw closer together and rival one another’s love and good works, rather than promoting strifes and divisions among us? Can we not unite our hearts and minds on every principle of divine obedience—and “so much the more as [we] see the day approaching”? Can we not face the crisis hours ahead of us so strongly united in faith that “neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:38-39)?

Nearer, nearer draws the Day when the Holy Spirit shall be renewed—and right here among us! What shall be our feeling then? Can we not remove everything that tends to divide us now, that when that greater Day of Pentecost is fully come, it may be written of us: “They were all with one accord in one place.” ●●

Watch and Pray

Being on watch often changes the character of our prayers. We blunder, and fall, and have to pray for forgiveness. Had we been watchful, it would have been a prayer for help, and then praise for victory.

Is not the prayer to be forewarned better than the prayer to be forgiven?



A Column for Open Discussion

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

● Who Is Michael?

“On page 3 of your booklet, *The Coming of Elijah and Jesus*, in paragraph 4, you say ‘Michael’ is Christ. Where is that supported in Scripture?

The text you refer to is Daniel 12:1. The meaning of Michael in the Hebrew is, “Who is like God?”

The first three verses of Daniel 12 refer to the time of Christ’s coming. This fact is unmistakable from the events which are to take place, as the passage relates:

“There shall be a time of trouble such as never was”—the great contest between the forces of evil and the forces of Christ and the saints.

“All thy people shall be delivered.”

“Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake”—the resurrection.

“They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament”—the rewarding of the faithful.

All these events are to take place at or following Christ’s second advent. So it seems logical that “Michael, the great prince” in Daniel 12:1 is Christ. We know of no one else who would fit this description.

“Thank you, but your answer does not satisfy my mind and heart.

“Regarding Michael: Why can’t he just be Michael, one of the chief princes, as it says in Daniel 10:13?”

There are many phrases in the Bible referring to the future age which cannot be pinned down

exactly. We can only determine their meaning by the context in which they are used. We cannot be positive of the meaning of every detail.

Our church had always taken the position that the Bible is specific on what we must do to obtain salvation and this should be our first interest. It certainly will have the most far-reaching effects on our future life.

As far as the term "Michael" is concerned, it means "Who is like God?" and may be used in Scripture to picture more than one outstanding personage. The text you mention (Dan. 10:13) does say this Michael is "one of the chief princes." In Daniel 12:1, the application to Christ seems appropriate, however we are told that Christ will be accompanied by holy angels (Matt. 25:31), and one of the angels accompanying Him could be named Michael.

• More About Elijah the Prophet

"Thank you very much for your booklet. I surely would like to know more about Elijah. I have believed for some time that he truly shall come first. You do not believe he has already come, do you?"

M. S., Brookhaven, Miss.

No, we do not believe Elijah has already come. We are looking for his coming soon. Just how soon, we do not know, but we believe we are living in the "times and seasons" forecast for the return of Christ. Malachi said definitely that Elijah would return before the "great and dreadful day of the Lord" (Mal. 4:5-6). Jesus also stated in plain words that Elijah would come (Matt. 17:11), and at the time He said this, John the Baptist had already come, had fulfilled his mission, and was dead. He had been beheaded by Herod.

Elijah will come to herald the arrival of Christ, fulfilling Malachi's prophecy, "lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (4:6).

"What about others that claim to be Elijah? Which one is true? How can we know?"

No man or organization or group of people on earth today has any authority for claiming to be Elijah or to be doing the work of Elijah. The Bible says, "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord."

When the real Prophet appears on the scene, he will have sufficient power to prove beyond any doubt who he is, even as he did in the days of King Ahab (see I Kings 16-17). Jesus said that

he will come to "restore all things" (Matt. 17:11). No one today has been able to do this.

"One other question have I in regards to Elijah. What signs and wonders will he perform that other men haven't already done, to prove that he is Elijah? There was a man in this generation that claimed to be or at least made reference to Elijah; a man who claimed to have been visited by angels, raised the dead (I've talked to one), healed the sick (talked to many), and did many other wonderful works including the manifestation of power over nature. He discerned the thoughts and intents of people's hearts and lived a humble Christian life, never asking for money like so many are doing. The power and spirit of Elijah seemed to have been upon this man, although he was not the personal Elijah, and never claimed to be. This man's name was William Branham. Have you heard about him? Of course there have been many impersonators all through the ages, but there has to be a genuine somewhere.

We have heard of William Branham, but must count him among the false prophets. Anyone claiming to be able to heal or raise the dead by the power of the Holy Spirit in this age is the worst kind of deceiver. They have no power from God, despite claims to the contrary.

Here is a simple test that will determine the authenticity of any "divine" healer:

Ask him to go to the cemetery where one of your relatives is buried, and raise him or her from the dead. Failing that, ask him to go to the hospital and raise the victim of an auto accident who has been dead for four hours or more. If that is too difficult, ask him to replace an ear or a finger which has been severed. If he refuses, ask him to walk on the water as did Jesus.

Or ask your friend who has Holy Spirit power to go to a river, throw in the head of an axe, and then cause it to float, as Elisha did. This last is a very simple feat compared to raising a dead person or restoring a sick person to health.

If you can find anyone anywhere who can do any of these miracles that you can see with your eyes, please call us at once and tell us where it can be seen, for we have never yet seen a miracle beyond the understanding of physicians or scientists.

We do know that when Elijah comes, he will be able to perform these miracles and others even more spectacular. Let us repeat the words of Jesus: "Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things" (Matt. 17:11).

● Will the 144,000 be Jew or Gentile?

"You say the Bride of Christ will stand with Him upon Mount Zion. According to Revelation 7 and Revelation 14, are not these 144,000 all out of the tribes of Israel? I always supposed the Bride of Christ was non-Gentile."

To understand Revelation 7:1-5, it is essential to realize that the term "Israel" in the Bible does not always refer to the natural-born Israelite. The apostle Paul, himself a natural Jew, was specific: "For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children" (Rom. 9:6-7). Again: "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God" (Rom. 2:28-29).

Therefore we cannot believe the 144,000 consist of natural-born Jews. God is "no respecter of persons: but in every nation, he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted with him" (Acts 10:34-35). If God accepted only natural Jews, this statement would be false.

Revelation 5:9 indicates the 144,000, the redeemed of the Lord, come from nations beyond the borders of Israel: they are "out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." God gave the Jewish nation a special opportunity, but He never accepted them and rejected all others on the basis of nationality; He wants the best quality of character, whatever its source.

"Now regarding the 144,000: Why is every tribe of Israel mentioned in Revelation 7, if Israel is not in question? There are three million or so Jews in Israel, but not all of them are Israel, only 144,000."

You will notice the Bible tells several very special qualifications of the 144,000.

1) They had their Father's name written in their foreheads (Rev. 14:1).

2) They were redeemed from the earth, from among men (Rev. 14:4).

3) They were "virgins" (Rev. 14:4).

4) They followed the Lamb "whithersoever he goeth" (Rev. 14:4).

5) "In their mouth was found no guile" (Rev. 14:5).

6) They were "without fault before the throne" (Rev. 14:5).

Could anyone find 144,000 Jews in the land of Israel today who could meet these qualifications?

No, the 144,000 of Revelation can refer only to those people who have made themselves worthy of this high honor, or, as stated in Revelation 20:4, "which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands."

Referring to this same group of people, Revelation 5:9 says, "And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation"—not out of the nation of Israel alone. "And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth" (v. 10). These people are named after the twelve tribes of literal Israel, but they are definitely not all literal Jews. And they are not taken from the contemporary state of Israel. They are the faithful servants of God from all the six thousand years between the time God called Adam and the second advent of Christ. They are the spiritual seed of Abraham. ●●

God Knows

There are several things that bear the stamp of approval and truth: 1) If we trust in God to lead us, the end is always nicer than as if we had had a paper and pen and were able to plot it ourselves; and 2) you never develop unless you have a stern problem or path to follow that requires effort and diligence. There is no easy path or route to becoming a Christian. It is the hardest, toughest, most demanding course in life to follow.

The destruction of our idols is painful and the old man inside does not die easily; he fights with a never-ending zeal and uses every trick in the book. Anything worthwhile in this life requires a large measure of concentration and motivation before the fruits can be eaten and enjoyed; the same is true in the life of a Christian. The pull of the flesh is indeed strong.

There is so much that I don't understand about how God works in the affairs of men and nations, but I can know that He knows. To challenge the unsearchable wisdom of the Father is folly, and only a fool would try. Nevertheless, we are promised eternal life, and in time we will come to a better understanding. Then I know I will stand in awe and hold my mouth that I ever even contemplated questioning the wisdom of God. For a certainty, His thoughts are so far above mine that a comparison of heavens above the earth does not do it justice. ●●

—From a Reader in Louisiana

Our Readers Write...

A Wonderful Reward, If—

The literature and letters from the Mission are a very great help in strengthening and encouraging us to keep pressing on more strongly for the great prize, making the very most of this precious short time given us to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh to make ourselves worthy of our Master's approval. In all our daily affairs, we cannot be too careful in this great work to please our Master.

Keeping our thoughts always under control of God's Word is the main point. We are trying harder to impress upon our minds the great importance to give the more earnest heed to the words of the Prophets, Jesus and the Apostles, and all admonitions of our brethren in these last days and strive to make much better use of these remaining days so kindly given us to overcome our old self on all points. A very great and wonderful reward will be ours if we qualify, if we be found watching and ready when our Master returns.

Vernon, British Columbia, Canada

Z. S.

Ready for Inspection?

My husband served as guard at a bakery last Saturday. He came home with an interesting account of how the bread is made and how clean the room must be kept, for if the inspectors find dirt even in a crack in the floor, the "clean-up crew" are in trouble. I thought, I wonder if we had inspectors looking for our faults of selfishness, envy, and the thirteen evils, what would they find? I know the Lord will not take anyone into His Kingdom who hasn't put all these evils away.

It is a great work to keep our mind clean so God's inspectors will find us ready to enter the Kingdom. What a clean-up work it is! I want to get busy and get my house ready for such an inspection. It could be that Elijah will come soon.

Davenport, Iowa

W. P.

Keep the Faith

Life, we find soon enough in our Christian walk, is a fierce battle, even for those who have a strong faith. Great are the problems that beset us in our homes, business, and even in our relationship with other believers.

We often tend to let the grasp on our faith slip a bit, as if it were a hindrance to our everyday walk. But it is not, and we must not let it slip, for our heavenly Father has promised to give us the needed strength to meet each need for the day.

To those who have learned to trust Him and keep their faith in Him strong, the Eternal One is a never-failing source of strength in every time of need. They find His strength sufficient in each time of need, whether it be sickness, bereavement, poverty, loneliness, or any affliction.

Let us be determined to trust Him and walk the ways of His appointment more closely.

Wausau, Wisconsin

E. S.

June, 1978

Late, Very Late

Well, this season will be over soon now, and so it is with our lives, one by one the years slip into the past. Well and good, if those years were fruitful and productive in the Master's vineyard. However, each new day can always be the beginning of a better day. While life lasts and the Lord still gives us time, corrections can be made, but made with haste. The trumpet is giving no uncertain sound, it is now or never.

We can see the things of the present doomed to destruction. It is a world of selfishness, greed and dishonesty. There is no concern to do good and much less to *be* good, in so many. This tendency can be seen as you watch the children today.

But let us get back home, to ourselves. God will deal with them but He will deal with us even more severely. We have the saving knowledge, we are responsible. Responsibility involves our all in His service. We cannot sit back and not give of our time and of ourselves in this way to life and expect God to give us the payment for dutiful, uncomplaining service. We must keep on applying God's knowledge to the utmost in our daily life to make us in the moral image of God. I can see more and more how we need to get hold of ourselves and make ourselves do the things required of us, be determined the first thing in the morning to carry them through the day. It is only with such resolve that we can do it. Let us press forward relentlessly; the hour is late, very late.

South Amboy, New Jersey

L. M. K.

Do Not Slip Back

God's Word makes sense; there is sense in being a Christian. It is easy to say we believe on the name of the Lord Jesus; but we find in Revelation 19:13 that His name is called the Word of God, and in the Epistle of James he tells us that we must be doers of the Word, and not hearers only.

Much evil is done at night, so in this night of spiritual darkness there is every form of wickedness; but we being children of the day need have no part of that darkness.

Let us ever remember that we do not have to go very far to slip back into that darkness.

Selma, Iowa

G. M.

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*Build it well and build it straight,
Strong enough to buffet fate,
Staunch enough to bear the blow
Life compels us all to know;
Have it rugged, have it clean,
Nowhere false and nowhere mean,
Whatsoever be your post
Make your character your boast.
Build your character to be
Fit for every eye to see;
Never let some secret sin
Or some shameful thing creep in;
He gives power to his foe
Who must hide what he may know.
But who keeps his record true
Has no foe who may pursue.
Spite of loss or spite of gain,
Let your character remain
Free from blemish, free from guile;
Let it sing and let it smile;
Keep it cheerful, keep it kind,
Big of heart and broad of mind;
Then, whatever may befall,
You may triumph over all.*

-Selected