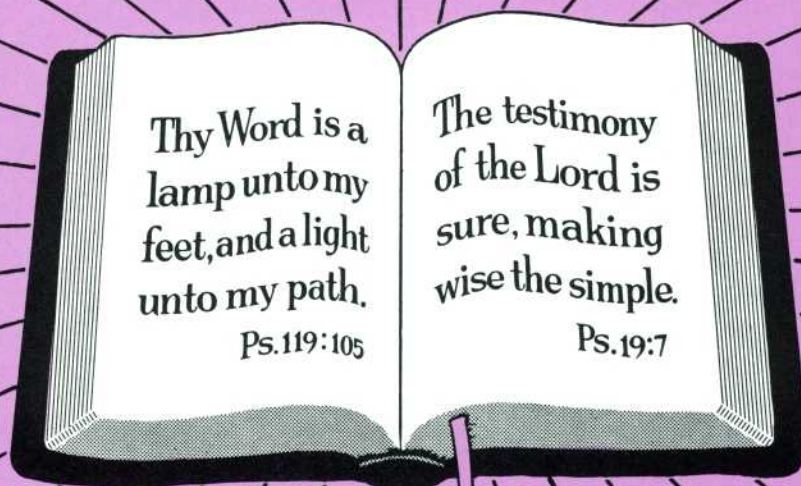


Megiddo Message

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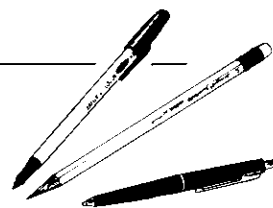
Holiness through Discipline

The "Risks" of Faith

Understanding the Bible

Complaining—All the Way to Canaan

Editorial



The Real Loser

YOU CAN'T "get away with it." The real loser is always you.

"I want what you've got" seems to be a prevailing attitude. Among many it is enough incentive to take what they think should be theirs, even though it belongs to another.

We may try to cover our misdeeds, thinking no one saw, no one knows; but whatever we do, we cannot hide from God.

The men who steal to gain are losers. While they may gain a few paltry dollars, they have put another black mark on their record. This is true of everyone who sins, whether the matter be stealing or breaking any other command of God.

Jesus posed this question: "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matt. 16:26).

In answer, we may observe that while some have profited immensely in this world because of their dishonesty, they have sold their reputations, their characters, and their respectability for a pitifully small sum.

A comparative example in the Bible is that of Esau. The birthright was his, the inheritance that belonged to the eldest son. But in one of his weak moments he sold that birthright for something to eat. Not valuing the heritage that could have been his, he was willing to trade it for something he could have at the moment. He did not look ahead, nor did he realize the value of what he was giving up so carelessly.

How similar he was to multitudes today.

When we do wrong, we instinctively feel that somehow we are going to get away with it. Thieves will wait until no one is around, hoping that they will not get caught. But like the small boy who was watching his chance to take something that didn't belong to him—he looked every direction to make sure no one was watching, and thought he was safe; but a friend observed, "Johnny, there's one direction you didn't look—you didn't look up."

There will be serious consequences for ALL evildoers. People everywhere are selling their opportunities for a small pittance, and the inevitable debt will have to be paid. The apostle Paul was not a person of that nature. He said, "Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (II Cor. 5:9-10).

It would be a good idea for all of us to ask ourselves the question, "Am I selling myself short?" We may not be guilty of housebreaking or petty thievery, but there are other ways of failing—some of which may appear trivial or which we try to defend. But the same law says "Thou shalt not" to every form of sin. The law of God is an excellent measuring device of our love for God, and thus of our obedience to His will. "For this is the love of God that we keep his commandments." This measurement process will tell us whether we gain or lose. When we obey, we gain. When we disobey, we lose. MM

Megiddo means

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

We believe

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

We believe

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

We believe

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

We believe

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

We believe

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

We believe

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

We believe

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

Bible quotations in this issue:

Unidentified quotations are from the King James Version.

Other versions are identified as follows:

NEB—New English Bible

NIV—New International Version

NAS—New American Standard

RSV—Revised Standard Version

TLB—The Living Bible

TEV—Today's English Version

JB—The Jerusalem Bible, Reader's Edition

Phillips—The New Testament in Modern English

Berkeley—The Modern Language New Testament

Weymouth—The New Testament in Modern Speech

Moffatt—The Bible, A New Translation

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

Rotherham—The Emphasized Old Testament

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

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Holiness through Discipline

HOLINESS and discipline are inseparable parts of the Christian life. Without holiness we shall never see God, as wrote the author of Hebrews; and without discipline we lowly, wayward mortals, shall never see holiness.

Our need to maintain discipline is vital, even critical.

If we would retain our sense of direction in a confused and directionless world; if we would live in this world but not be of it; if in the midst of humanism and doubt we would cling to those imperishable values of the Spirit, the highest values of love and peace, goodness and hope, godliness and virtue; if we would escape the shallowness that plagues our crooked and perverse generation, and live for God and holiness; if we would avoid the perils of those who know not God and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; if we would have a well-furnished mind, a dedicated life and a vitally sustaining hope in the reality of God's promises to us; if we would someday be released from the limitations of this mortal existence and enjoy the glorious, eternal liberties of the children of God, *we must have discipline.*

In this age of easy living, easy spending, and easy morals; when religious and moral scruples have all but disappeared among the multitudes, discipline is not a popular topic. When, as someone has said, "sermonettes, preached by preacherettes, have produced Christianettes," discipline is viewed as a remote method of mistreatment belonging to the Middle Ages.

At such a time as this, how guarded should be our defenses, lest we be thrown off balance by the prevailing false standards of value. Does not our Guidebook say, "If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small"? (Prov. 24:10).

Discipline a Challenge

In the midst of so much undisciplined living, we face perhaps the greatest challenge of any people who have served God in any age. To remain true to the faith of our

fathers, to keep ourselves pure and unspotted from the world, to conduct ourselves unblamably and unreprobably in His sight, to maintain an inner standard of character which can be honored by Christ, we must be alert, keenly alert and diligent in the disciplines of our faith. Character will not build itself. Faith will not build itself. Holiness will not build itself. Purity will not build itself. As a thoughtful person of our day has said, "It is either discipline or decadence." If we want life, the abundant, eternal life God has set before us, we must want discipline.

Even in the secular realm, the race belongs to the disciplined. In the battle of ideas, the disciplined mind has the advantage over the scatterbrain. A trained mind can think logically, evaluate evidence, and concentrate on essentials while an undisciplined mind wanders. Little is accomplished in any field without discipline.

A famous Ukrainian-American baritone singer admitted in an interview that, while he started his conservatory training with a large class of promising young people, only one or two actually reached the top. The reason, he said, was that the others were not willing to make the sacrifices required and submit themselves to the grind of years of rugged self-denial. Some fell in love and married; some just became weary of the monotony and regimentation; others became homesick and returned home. Finally the ranks were thinned down to a very, very few. In the course of the interview he told his own experience. He said that he had loved to smoke a pipe. But one day his professor of voice said to him (his name was Igor), "Igor, you will have to make up your mind, whether you are going to be a great singer or a great pipe smoker. You cannot be both." So the pipe went. He was willing to pay the price for mastery.

Christian living is a career that requires the utmost in discipline; it is serious, challenging and demanding. It is not one long, glorious picnic, nor is it a parade in the public eye. Even our Captain "pleased not himself." The Christian life is a field of battle, and its participants can expect some of the rigors of soldier life. The apostle Paul addressed the matter in these words to his son-in-the-faith Timothy: "Thou therefore endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (II Tim. 2:3).

Note: *Holiness through Discipline* is available as a complete church service on cassette. Price: \$3.00

Hardness. Not softness, ease, comfort, and an endless routine of pleasure-filled days, but a life involving difficulty, decision, and—above all—discipline. Paul was telling Timothy that all would not be easy. There would be times when he would have to endure, when he would have to tie a knot at the end of his rope and hold on until either help or deliverance arrived. There would be persecutions, hardships, sufferings for Christ's sake. He would have to be ready also to meet the stinging rebuffs of opposition. Then, too, he was to discipline himself. He must be able to say No—for the sake of Christ—when every impulse within him is shouting Yes. To be a good soldier of Jesus Christ, he must know discipline.

Is not the same true for each of us? Have we not enlisted in the same army? Are we not subject to the same rules?

What Is Christian Discipline?

The term discipline carries a variety of meanings. To the child, it means being compelled to do something he does not choose to do and being punished if he refuses. To the soldier, discipline means conforming to regulations, reveille on cold mornings, instant and unquestioning obedience to orders. To the student it means long hours of tedious study and application to his chosen course of instruction, meeting the requirements, passing the exams. To the Christian, discipline means discipleship, following Jesus, with one's self denied and one's cross carried resolutely.

The child, the soldier, the student, the Christian all have something in common. But there is a difference. To the first three, discipline is something imposed by others. The largest part of the Christian's discipline is *self* discipline. And self-discipline is far more difficult a task than merely submitting to that imposed by another. Did you ever try pricking your own finger? So with Christian self-discipline. So much easier is it to impose standards on another. But Christian discipline is *self* discipline. It means taking *ourselves* in hand, whatever the pain, and applying ourselves to the law and the law to ourselves. And this is no task for cowards. The benefits are supreme, but so is the effort.

Can we picture that ideal person we want to be? He is one who has so disciplined himself that mind, body, will, emotions and affections are all subject to the dictates of the higher power that controls him. He so distrusts his sudden impulses that never will he yield to them except he check them first. Not that he is cold and calculating; he is warm and sympathetic; but he has "grown up...into Christ" and is not "tossed to and fro" and carried about either by "every wind of doctrine" or by every wind of impulse, fancy or feeling.

Christian discipline is a day-by-day, moment-by-moment control of ourselves in all the activities, attitudes

**Faith will not build itself.
Holiness will not build itself.
"It is either discipline
or decadence."**

and aspects of life. It is *won't* power; it is *will* power. It is *don't* power; it is *do* power. It is the mind of the spirit dictating to the mind of the flesh. It is telling ourselves exactly what we shall and shall not do, subject to God's law.

It has been said that the first word in the Christian life is control, the second is control, and the third is control. Control our thoughts, control our words, control our attitudes, control our curiosities, control our prejudices, control our actions and reactions, control our desires and aspirations, control our opinions, control every impulse and inclination within us. Control, control, control. What is sin? It is any normally good quality that is "out of control." In the words of the apostle Paul, "Let your moderation [or powers of self-control] be known unto all men, the Lord is at hand" (Phil. 4:5).

Disciplined Speech

Discipline affects every area of our lives. One of the areas requiring the greatest amount of discipline is our power of speech. The Bible has an astonishing amount to say about this. James clearly makes it the archstone of disciplined living: "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body" (Jas. 3:2). How easily slips the unguarded word or comment. No kindergarten attainment is disciplined speech, but it is within the reach of all of us or it would not have been commanded.

No matter how carefully controlled we may be at all other points, not one of us can qualify for the high rating of perfection so long as we have an imperfect tongue. Our every word must be bridled by prudence and directed by love. "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain" (Jas. 1:26). We may discipline body, mind, will, even emotions, appetites and habits; but a tongue out of control betrays a fatal flaw in the character.

Oh, let us look well to ourselves.

At times we may feel inclined to be frank—some even commend themselves for their frankness—"I say what I think," they boast. So does the fool, according to the

Bible. "A fool uttereth all his mind." Frankness may be virtuous when coupled with intelligent, loving tact and discretion. But when it is the unbridled eruptions of opinions without regard to times, places or feelings, what a vice! "There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword: but the tongue of the wise is health" (Prov. 12:18). Wise and noble is the discipline needed to refrain from speaking.

Then, too, discipline means learning to be thoughtful of one another. As Christians we must ever defer to one another and not ask more than is considerate. There is no place in the Christlike life for the philosophy of "I want what I want when I want it." Patience is holy; patience is heavenly, in things great and things small. And this requires discipline. It is holiness through discipline.

Nothing less than discipline, and the right kind of discipline, will bring us at last to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. And that discipline must

be grounded in a bedrock of holiness. At times this discipline may seem to interfere with the normal course of our lives. However, our primary purpose here is not to enjoy life but to extract from it the lessons we need for eternity. This accomplished, what else matters? The spiritual cue for this high aim is a mandate from Jesus Himself: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke 9:23). Jesus called all who would follow Him to a life of self-denial and crossbearing.

Disciplined Following

Let us look more closely at this mandate from Jesus. What is the first qualification of the would-be disciple of Christ? He must be willing, willing to come, willing to follow. He must be constantly aware that he is not leading, but *following*.

Let Us Pray...

Our gracious heavenly Father, through whom we are enabled to do all that we do, and through whom all we have been given has come, may our lives be pervaded by the holiness that is Thine. May we long to possess it so deeply, so intensely, that we will gladly pay any price in discipline and self-sacrifice to secure it. May all we do be in harmony with Thy law, Thy love and Thy exalted standard for us. Help us to find our chief delight in that which forces us forward toward Thy Kingdom, in that which crucifies us to the world and the world to us.

Father, we recognize with shame the inconsistency that has plagued our lives of service to Thee as we have professed to know Thee but in works have denied Thee. Grant that we may grasp wholeheartedly every opportunity to do better, and take more and more seriously the task of self-mastery Thou hast assigned us.

Penetrate, we pray, to the depths of our hearts and expose us to ourselves. Bring to light the hidden secrets of our hearts that all may be purified and cleansed in Thy all-illuminating light. We know that many times we have fallen short of Thy high expectations for us. We have done the things we should not have done and have left undone the things we should have done. Look upon us with compassion and forgive as we repent and reform.

We pray for the discipline that will keep us level and strong even in the face of severe testing. Teach us to be

too big to be hurt by the barbs of those who speak ill of us, and too strong to be overpowered by the thrusts of evil that rise from within. May we ever remember that Thou art the final judge, and to Thee we will have to give account.

Help us to be men and women strong in discipline and character, realizing that our Christian experience must include the shedding of the blood of the old nature before the new nature can be seen in its full strength. Help us to take suffering as a lesson in trust, trial as a lesson in faith, temptation as a lesson in courage, and discipline as an evidence of Thy love for us. May the spirit of ill will never once be seen or felt among us, but as brothers and sisters in Christ may we show one another the highest example of holiness. Help us to submit to one another in love and in the Lord, never finding unnecessary fault or permitting ourselves any indulgence in any feelings of superiority or of ill.

We pray that we may be always self-controlled and vigilant, humbly and gladly submitting to any discipline Thou dost see fit to send into our lives. Thou dost know each one's intent and his need. Thou dost know what chastening we need that the coming Day may find us unreprouvable and unblamable in Thy sight.

Be with Thy people everywhere in the bonds of Christian love and affection; sustain, bless, comfort and support as Thou hast promised. And after we have suffered awhile, a very little while, wilt Thou grant each one a rich and abundant welcome into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who has called us to share His eternal splendour through Christ. All power be His for ever and ever. Amen.

"If any man will come after me." There must be first the willing heart, the willing surrender, the willing commitment. If this willingness is lacking, no following is possible. Jesus' call is to those who *will*—of their own volition—to come.

What is the next qualification of Christ's follower? "If any man will come after me, *let him deny himself.*" Here is the beginning of active duty: "let him deny himself." Let him be ready to relinquish anything the Master may ask him to relinquish, and do anything the Master may ask him to do, whether he understands the reasons or whether he doesn't. He is not his own boss; he is under orders.

If this be our commitment and our attitude, we will be so thoroughly dead to self and to the world, so thoroughly spiritual in our viewpoints and standards of value, so one with our Master in all our attitudes and opinions that the things of this world, the positions of this world, the attitudes of this world, the goals of this world no longer attract us. Jesus said it again in these words: "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15). This fact must be real truth in our lives, not just a threadbare platitude to which we render lip service. *My interests, my loves, my kin, my pleasures, my treasures* must never be more to me than my commitment to follow Christ. His demands must be first in my mind *always*. This is the first demand of discipleship.

Then we should have a clear perception of the losses we may have to sustain. "Let him...take up his cross daily." There will be a cross, something to surrender, something to sacrifice—daily. It may be time, talent, or energy we might have channeled otherwise, but for the call of Christ. It may be a pet project or idea of our own that is not compatible with the demands of Christ. It may be even a voluntary, self-imposed denial—a little self-imposed hardness when the going is reasonably smooth may be an invaluable preparation to enduring hardness which is *not* self-imposed. The end result is the same: a cross to carry. And carrying a cross always means discipline.

This is the object of all self-denial, even in matters of seemingly small consequence. It is not that we wish to make life unpleasant for ourselves, but to make it worthwhile. What is the worth of one who cannot say No to himself? By denying ourselves we check our ability to subordinate natural desire to obedience—so that we may not fail to do the same in matters affecting our eternal destiny. If we are able to deny ourselves in the simple choices of everyday life, shall we not be better prepared to refuse the longings of our naturally sinful hearts? Those who permit themselves every gratification within their power are not seriously shaping themselves into material for God's eternal Kingdom.

Are we willing to pay the price for mastery?

Benefits of Discipline...Future...

This is what holiness is all about: the removing of anything that separates us from God; the breaking down of any sort of hardness or stoniness in our hearts that would render us unfit in His presence; the forming of a character acceptable in His all-righteous sight, a character which He will choose and perpetuate through all the ages of eternity. How can this be accomplished except through discipline?

Such a dedication should humble us; it should touch our hearts' affections; it should move us to desire more and more of that which will make us more like Christ. To think that the High and Mighty Creator could desire our companionship; that He could even look upon us naturally weak and stumbling creatures and offer us a place in His eternal realm.

The heart so touched with the goodness of God will demonstrate a new humility and teachableness that will welcome discipline with a new attitude of love and a new spirit of gratitude. Why? Because of the long-range benefits we can anticipate. Do we not know that discipline is the gate to everything of real worth? Do we not know that the Lord disciplines whom He loves? Do we not know that discipline "always seems for the time to be a thing of pain, not of joy; but those who are trained by it reap the fruit of it afterward in the peace of an upright life" (Heb. 12:11, Moffatt)? The glorious *afterward* makes the difference.

...and Present

But the blessings of discipline are not all future; there is benefit even now. One of the finest benefits of discipline is the ability of the disciplined person to foresee and forestall a situation which might bring grief and tragedy. The disciplined Christian adopts certain basic principles respecting friendships, rules and commitments, and avoids making alliances that contradict these principles. By so doing, he does not have to battle with tumultuous desires and affections later on. Because of his firm self-discipline in every look and word and action, he will not ignite fires which he will later have to fight feverishly to put out.

Furthermore, holiness through discipline provides the power necessary for sustained trial and discipline. An

Christian discipline is self discipline. It means applying ourselves to the law and the law to ourselves.

impulse is not enough. There must be power to keep on denying self when all nature cries out for an easier path. Gusty winds of temptation, or arid plains of monotony may make sustained self-discipline very difficult at times. The steady, day-after-day life of the Christian, not for one year, or two, but for a lifetime, may impose disciplines on a much deeper level. But if it all adds up to eternity, what of it? Ever present is the one, unforgettable dynamic: a desire for life—real life—in the eternal Kingdom of God.

True Christian discipline may at times deny that which is normally lawful, but such denial will be for the purpose of assisting us to greater service and the attaining of greater benefits. This is the reason why some in our age have chosen to sacrifice marriage—in order to be free to serve God more effectively. It is a practical step to a greater liberty in seeking first the Kingdom of God and holiness.

Welcoming Discipline

But discipline, to be effective, *must* be accepted—even welcomed, appreciated, and loved. Taken as medicine, with an unwilling spirit, it loses half its power.

There is a certain amount of “fight” in all of us. There is no question about it, we like our own way best; and we will do almost anything to preserve our way. With such a spirit, we may submit outwardly while we are seething within. We are like the little girl who was forcibly compelled by her father to sit down in her chair, whereupon she said defiantly, “I may be sitting down on the outside, but I am standing up on the inside.” Such inner resentment neutralizes any character benefit of the discipline.

God forbid that we should ever entertain such a feeling. Should we not seek and long for anything which will help us in restraining our irregular inclination, in subduing our tendencies which God does not approve, in making flesh subservient to spirit and God’s law dominant over our own desires?

When we realize the height of our high calling, even to be sons and daughters of God Almighty and heirs together of the riches of eternity, should we not accept with deepest gratitude any restraints that may prepare us to be partakers of His holiness? Should we not even seek for, pray for, long for that which will hasten us

toward the unending future He has set before us?

The unbroken colt is of little value. Whatever value he has is based on the assumption that he will not remain unbroken. And neither can we remain unbroken if ever we find for ourselves a place in the heavenly Kingdom. We must submit to discipline; we must learn now to wear the harness. Life is a bundle of relationships involving give as well as take, and the sooner we learn this, the better. Whatever we do, wherever we work or live, there are rules, codes, regulations, levels of authority to which we must submit. How much more is this true within the body of Christ. And if we are constantly kicking and chafing, we will be unhappy and unprofitable both to ourselves and to others.

Godliness and Discipline

But not all discipline is godlike. Discipline that is an end in itself is not godlike; discipline that begins and ends with self-interest is not godlike; discipline merely for the sake of discipline is not godlike; and discipline that is directed toward the attainments of this world is not godlike. Discipline merely for the sake of discipline is a vain, useless, godless thing.

Nor is discipline a substitute for holiness, though discipline may help us greatly in our quest for holiness. It is possible to be disciplined without being holy; it is impossible to be holy without being disciplined. Discipline is a means to holiness. Discipline equips us for our task; holiness impels, purifies, motivates, blesses. Holiness is the inner, heavenly grace that God will recognize and bless.

The rich man who was ready to tear down his barns and build greater was, as Jesus pictured him, a disciplined man. “Take thine ease,” Jesus has him saying to himself, suggesting that never before had he taken ease. He had hated indolence and ease to such an extent that every ounce of his energy was consumed in his ambition. All his life he had worshiped at the shrine of hard work, frugality and industry. He had been a model of the hard-working, sober, successful man. But God called him a fool. Why? Because he had discipline without holiness. He had left God out.

In the category of this rich man are literally thousands of people our world calls successful—statesmen, politicians, teachers, scholars, physicians, artists, musicians who have reached the top through dint of long years of discipline, but who are far from God. Closely allied with the rich man’s first mistake is the second: that of being self-satisfied and of allowing discipline to be a substitute for true holiness. The person who keeps himself under perfect control and attains his own self-set standards is easily self-satisfied. God is left out, for life is complete without God. He has reached his goals—what more need he do?

The rich man was one of those who are sharp enough to see the practical value of a well-regulated, impeccable life, yet who are not big enough to recognize their complete dependence upon God. They are too small, and too easily content. In the words of our former pastor Maud Hembree, their small cups are easily filled. Satisfied with a narrow respectability and wrapped in their garments of self-righteousness, they are impervious to any sense of lack. They are not deep enough to be torn by profound questions of life and death and immortality. They are not beset by a hunger and thirst after righteousness.

Oh, let us beware of all such self-satisfactions.

Discipline Only a Means to an End

Then, there are those even today who practice discipline for discipline's sake. Such are not Christians but ascetics. Asceticism calls attention to itself; Christian discipline does not. Asceticism fastens its prohibitions and rules on petty objects; Christian discipline builds holiness and virtue. Asceticism believes that holiness consists in the complete denial of everything that might be enjoyed. In contrast, Christian discipline consecrates earthly blessings to spiritual ends. It demands that we use the temporal to gain the eternal. All must be dedicated to God.

The Jews of Jesus' day were another example of discipline that is not unto godliness. As they multiplied rules and prohibitions about pettier and pettier trifles, their pride was fed. God was not in their thoughts or in their lives. Discipline they had, but there was no accompanying holiness, and Jesus condemned them. "Verily I say unto you, Ye have your reward." And He will say the same to us, if our discipline is to be seen of men.

Without Christlike motives, discipline is an empty, non-Christian thing. Which brings us once again to the apostle Paul: "They do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible" (I Cor. 9:25). How contrasting the two. The corruptible crown is not worth the effort; but the incorruptible!—how can it be earned? Like the noble Apostle, we are disciplining ourselves not to preserve this present life but to secure the eternal, "lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." One cannot search far in Paul's mind without discovering this underlying passion, this deep and overpowering desire for the eternal, even "the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (II Cor. 4:17). Can we not feel his longing? This was the joy upon which he had staked his whole life. This was his reason for discipline. First and last he belonged to Christ.

But why the *continued* discipline? Why did Paul continue to maul and master his body and make it obey the voice of his will even after he had spent many years in dedicated service? Why the continued fight and enduring

The first word in the Christian life is control, the second is control, and the third is control.

and pressing? Is it not possible to endure a brief period of discipline and be done with it? Can it not be laid aside, as the scaffolding is removed from a building?

Jesus answered this question forever in one plain, irrevocable sentence: "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Matt. 10:22). The Christian life is not a forty-yard dash; it is not even a race of a mile or two. It is an endurance test, on and on until the finish line is crossed. This is discipline unto holiness.

But discipline is not the end. More than discipline is needed to make aspiring Christians like Christ. Athletes at the peak of training are by no means examples of superior moral resistance. They must actually go on and achieve, before they can be acclaimed superior. So it is with us. We may learn well in the school of discipline; but only the tests of real life will show our worth—how well we sustain our faith through the steady succession of ordinary days; how well we take the reverses; how trained we prove ourselves in thought, in will and in motive control; how focused is our vision on the crown of life. These are the tests that reveal what good work our Christian discipline has wrought in us.

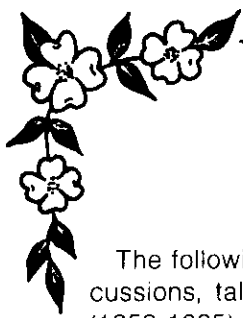
We may think ourselves ever so fit for the new world, but we are not there yet. God wants to use us, but He will not until every inch of our individuality is tempered by the standards of His divine law. Hence the need for schedules, regimes and requirements; reprimands, penalties and demerits. What matter the pain, if only we can come forth as gold purified in the furnace of affliction, and be vessels meet for the Master's use through all the ages of eternity!

God grant that we may share such foresight and insight, that we may accept His disciplines unto holiness, and in the end, everlasting life. MM

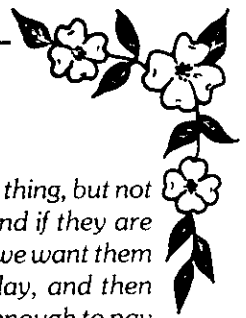
Conceit should not be confused with vanity, which is admiration of self and a craving for the admiration of others.

Conceit is overweening self-esteem that manifests itself in one's expression, conversation, and manner.

Conceit is seen commonly in youth because of its callowness, its inexperience, its limited knowledge of self.



— And Still She Speaks —



Part Seven

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



The truth of God is a mirror in which we can see ourselves, see our shortcomings, see where evil hides. But it will do us no good to see ourselves unless we accept what we see and go to work and change. It will do us no good if we are like the woman who had not looked into the mirror for quite a while and had grown old, with deep wrinkles in her face. It was a good mirror, and when she looked into it she saw the wrinkles in her face; she saw herself as she really was, and it made her so angry that she broke the glass! But that did not change her face any.

This has quite a lesson in it; she saw what the glass reflected. So it is when we look into this mirror of truth. It reflects our weak places; it reflects the wrinkles and disfigurements, and people do not like that; they would rather hear flattering words, telling them they are all right, all they have to do is to say "Lord, have mercy." It reflects to us what we must do; the ugly characteristics of our nature that we must get rid of; the selfishness that naturally dwells within. If we keep looking, it will reveal the pride that will be our destruction unless we get free from it. We will see the jealousy that lurks in the human heart; or the envy toward some individual; or roots of bitterness; and the weights that beset us. And if we will keep looking, the day is coming when we will get rid of them all—and all the natural wrinkles too!



Though the Jews were the chosen people of God, they were cast off because they would not put away iniquity. He would not save them unless they washed and became clean. God is no respecter of persons. Never in the wide world; never, except they fear God and work righteousness. He is just and right. We can love such a God. You might have your millions and billions, but they could not buy you an entrance into the Kingdom of God. You might have good looks and be talented and have the brainpower of a Webster and the language of the greatest writer or preacher in the world, but that would not usher you into the Kingdom. God wants character.

Money is all right if used right; it is a good thing, but not the first thing. Many offer to pay tithes, and if they are able and it is their desire, we accept it. But we want them first to put something away for a rainy day, and then when they have sufficient ahead it is time enough to pay tithes.



Oh, jealousy is a terrible evil! I can well remember in my school days the struggle. Other girls had fine clothes; their parents had plenty; mine were poor. But it was a good thing for me. There is so much in the world to feed pride. I saw in a store window a ring marked \$139 and only \$3 down! Think of enticing women to buy like that in these times of depression! How thankful we should be that we have been changed by this word of the Lord until we have no desire for their adornments. The Lord does not want us to spend our money for such things. Our only adornment must be that "ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price."



God never asks us to go down but always to come up higher, to His ways and thoughts that are as much higher than our ways and thoughts as the heavens are higher than the earth; and we know that His promises to us will be fulfilled.



All we behold in the world of nature—the grass springing forth, the trees yielding their fruit, the garden yielding its increase, or the field yielding its grain—all serve as a living monument to the truthfulness of God's Word, a witness that His promises are just as sure, and that He will bless every humble, obedient one.



I was brought up in poverty's vale. The first money I ever made was when I taught school. It was a little country school, and for the first three months I got \$90.00. My, I thought that was a wonder! I had never had anything like it. I was seventeen and we had never owned a sewing machine, so the first thing I bought was a little sewing machine. It cost one hundred dollars. You had to turn the handle. Think of having a machine with an electric motor now! But I thought that machine was a wonder; never had such a thing before. You put it on the table and sat there turning the little wheel. And I thought that machine was a treasure!

The "Risks" of Faith

THOSE WHO are marketing popular Christianity today have much to say about the benefits—the peace, the joy, the contentment—that come with knowing Christ. Yet there is one aspect about which they seldom speak—the serious “risks” to which it exposes them.

There is responsibility in agreeing to serve God, great responsibility.

The first is the “risk” of seeing ourselves as we are. Naturally we tend to live behind a mask. We tell ourselves what we want to hear about ourselves, and see what we want to see. “Know thyself” was engraven over the entrance to the Greek temple in Delphi. It is a central principle of Scripture. But it is not easy to know ourselves, nor is what we learn about ourselves always to our liking. What we think of ourselves is often what we want others to think we are, not what we are in reality. Self-deception, the device we use so often to escape admitting the truth about ourselves, is always at hand.

We tend to repress anything which conflicts with our self-esteem. We give ourselves plausible excuses for doing what we have already done or made up our minds to do. We see virtues in ourselves which are not there. If anything strips us of these grandiose illusions about ourselves, it is likely to make us desperately unhappy.

Knowing God is a healthful, humbling experience. But it is not “knowing” as we would think of knowing a member of our family, a neighbor or a partner. Knowing God lifts us above ourselves into another realm. It brings us into the acquaintance of One who is as far above us as the heavens are above the earth.

Such an acquaintance brings great

responsibility upon us. There is a “risk.” We look at ourselves; and if we are honest, we do not like what we see. Nevertheless, we must face the truth about ourselves. When we think casually about our motives, our thoughts, our desires, our fears, our loves, our concerns, we may tend to see what we *wish* them to be. But when we evaluate ourselves as in the presence of God, seeing ourselves through His eyes, the process takes on an entirely new dimension and we become conscious of a standard of judgment far above that which would normally concern us. Accordingly we ask ourselves, What does God think of my motives, my dominant desires and wishes in life? What about my attitude toward others? What about my weaknesses? Am I trying my best to overcome them? How do I judge myself in the little events of every day? Do I ever content myself with the thought that I am no worse than some around me—and much better than others—or do I judge myself by the ideal? Am I judging by God’s standard or the standard of men?

In our dealings with God we have to come clean. All our subterfuge, the flimsy excuses we contrive to hide our inner poverty of soul from ourselves, must come down. We must face the truth about ourselves when we ask God to take us and make us what He would have us be. This is the prerequisite to moral progress, but it is hard on our pride.

However, this is good, for is not selfish, self-seeking pride the root of all evil? Is not pride among the seven deadly abominations? Is not pride among the fruits of the fleshly nature? Is not pride destined for eternal destruction?

The second “risk” in knowing God is the danger of becoming more like Him in a world which worships its own gods of pleasure, materialism, and success. As we concentrate on thinking His thoughts and ordering our lives according to His standards, we are drawn nearer and nearer to Him and further and further from the interests of this fleeting world. This means that we will lose the friendship of the one as we strengthen our friendship with the other.

It does not mean that *everything* of this world and its goals is evil. There is nothing reprehensible about success. The fact that one is successful doesn’t prove him a rogue any more than the fact that he is a failure proves him a saint. The qualities that produce success in this world are often admirable, and the very same qualities properly directed can become the building blocks of the godly character that God will seek to perpetuate in His Kingdom. The problem with success in this world is this: that there comes a time in the life of every man when he has to choose between doing the advantageous thing or the *right* thing, and if he chooses the right thing, he must take the consequences.

Christ faced this choice at the outset of His career. The tempter confronted Him with three temptations which had this in common: All were temptations to use His unique power in such a way as to win worldly success and fame. We probably cannot appreciate how severe the struggle was, for we have never been subjected to temptation on the same scale. But we do know that He recognized it as temptation, and conquered it. He did not choose to be smart or popular or famous, but

right. And what did His integrity bring Him? Not fame and honor in this world but rejection, trial and crucifixion. When it came to a choice between going back on His ideals and winning favor in this world, or being true to His ideals and taking the consequences, His choice was made. His life was in the hands of His Father; He resigned His entire will in those immortal words of submission: "Not as I will, but as Thou wilt."

Here is the test every follower of Christ faces in every age, that of following Christ down a path that leads to suffering and trial—and full surrender.

But this is not all. In making the choice He made, Jesus was looking beyond the moment to the eternal gain. By submitting to death and remaining faithful to His Father, He was gaining not fame and fortune but—better than these—favor with His heavenly Father and the assurance of eternal honor.

There is yet another "risk" in knowing God, and that is in the danger of having our prayers answered. We pray for patience, and He sends that which seems to irritate.

We pray to be honest. Most of us are honest to a point. We pay our bills. We try to be truthful. Yet all of us who try to face the truth about ourselves are aware of how much insincerity and deceit there is naturally within us. On occasion we shade the facts we relate—if there is some advantage to gain. We say things we do not mean, express emotions we do not feel, praise when we would rather condemn, or try to make people think we are better than we are. Isn't this less than true honesty?

"God, make me honest." But do I really want to give up my pet pretensions? Do I really want to do what an honest man must do, be what an honest man must be?

"Create in me a clean heart, O

God." But think what it means giving up! Do I really want to get rid of all unclean imaginings, all secret lusts, all selfish wishes? Or am I like the man who prayed, "Lord make me pure—but not yet"?

There are calculated risks in Christian living. The expression comes from war, but it is an element in effective living. Anyone who has ever become sufficiently dissatisfied with his moral status to want to do something about it, anyone who has seriously tried to improve his character, or change his habit patterns, knows that it is no simple undertaking. One has to take hold of it with the strong hand of a man who is in earnest, who is undeterred by the prospect of discipline, blood, sweat, and tears, if he would succeed.

God grant us the courage to run the calculated risks of Christlike living, of seeing ourselves as we are, of becoming more like Christ, of having our prayers answered. The benefits are beyond comparison.

The Test of Prosperity

"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). God through the Psalmist has declared that those who would be His servants must be tried and proven. All may not be tried in the same way and to the same degree. Trials which seem overwhelming to one may be borne by another with seemingly little difficulty.

However, there is one trial which someone has classified as the greatest test to individual character. This trial is not struggle, but attainment; not failure, but success; not adversity, but prosperity. When nature wants to put a man through the third degree, she places near him his laurels of victory. She megaphones to him the world's plaudits of success; she clinks his moneybags in his ears, and she tells him confidently of the world-changing power of his influence. She smiles on him kindly, then murmurs, "Poor fellow, is he able to stand it?" Then she sends him for his test through the dark valley of prosperity. Few pass through it immune!

How wise the Almighty when He had his faithful servants pen such choice knowledge as found in Luke 18:25: "For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."

Poverty, struggle, failure and adversity are not in themselves passports to eternal life, but it seems that down through the ages these are the conditions which produced God-fearing people, rather than the easy conditions which wealth furnishes. Few are the Abrahams and Hezekiahs who can rest upon great wealth and still bow to God's will.

Haman could not stand prosperity. He got to be the power behind the throne, but ended up on the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai.

We have many such examples of prosperous persons who could not handle prosperity, to teach us the danger of it. Uzziah was another who could not stand the prosperity of building cities, fortifying his capital, and gaining great wealth in cattle. It went to his head and he thought he could even take on the duties of the priests and enter the Holy of Holies and burn incense there. But God's judgments are sometimes swift—as he found out when leprosy broke out on his forehead and his son took over the throne.

Let us keep in mind that there is only one thing which can be truly called wealth and that is knowledge of the unerring word of God. May we as professed followers of His dear Son prosper in it above all else.

—Contributed

UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God."

APOSTASY: Departing from the Faith

THE HISTORY of the centuries between the fall of Rome and the discovery of America are dark chapters in the lore of humankind.

Although the thirteenth century produced the Magna Carta, there was no noticeable change in the darkness that enshrouded the church. The apostolic church had been extinct since the seventh century, buried under a mass of superstition and error. Among the church hierarchy there had been an occasional pope who made an attempt at reform, but none was able to exert enough power to change things noticeably. Indulgences were still being sold; the wealth of Europe was still being divided with the pope—the pope often receiving more than the sovereign nations, a major complaint of the civil government. It was estimated that "more English money went to the pope than to the state or the king," says the historian, "and this flow of wealth from the English Church to the popes was the major condition that led to the reforms of the next century."

IV. THE FIRST RAY OF LIGHT C. Early Reformers

1. Wycliffe. John Wycliffe, born in England in the 14th century, was the first to attempt to induce reform in the church in that country. Wycliffe's greatest accomplishment was the translating of the New Testament into English. He resolved that the Bible should be available to anyone who could read. Until that time only small portions of the Bible had been translated into English because the popes opposed any attempt to circulate the Bible among the common people.

Wycliffe's reform movement met with much opposition and did little toward divorcing the church in England from the Roman Church. Nevertheless, it sowed the seeds of reform that were to bear fruit in later years under Martin Luther's tillage in Germany.

Although Wycliffe knew only the doctrines of the already apostate church, he opposed what he deemed to be unscriptural. He challenged the theory that the

merits of another could rescue souls from purgatory. He also favored the separation of church and state, believing that the pope should not have the last word over the civil government. He emphasized an infallible Bible instead of an infallible pope.

He miraculously escaped the death of a heretic and died a natural death in 1384, but 30 years later a papal decree had his remains dug up and cast into a river and all his books burned.

Wycliffe was an instrument in God's hands to lay the groundwork for the rebirth of true religion. Had the Roman Church maintained her hold on Europe, truth would have been unable to raise her head.

2. Martin Luther was to Germany what Wycliffe was to England. Born late in the 15th century, he matured at a time when Germany was filled with discontent. The printing press had arrived; the Bible had been translated into German and was being freely circulated. "The spread of the New Testament among the people prepared them for Luther's challenging contrast between the Gospels and the church," writes the historian. There was a thirst for knowledge, and people were beginning to think for themselves.

The Catholic Church was wealthy. According to the historian, "the German church was the richest in Christendom. . . . Nearly a third of the whole property of the country was in the hands of the church," yet the ecclesiastical authorities were always seeking more. "In many towns the church buildings and institutions covered the greater part of the ground." But the wealth was not evenly divided. Often the parish priest lived in poverty while the higher ecclesiastical orders "enjoyed abundant and superfluous wealth, which many of them had no scruples in parading. . . . complaints were loud against the large and frequent sums of money sent to Rome."

Reports of the worldliness of the Roman hierarchy circulated freely in German society. Priests took advantage of the poor by selling indulgences, remitting the money to Rome. Indulgences were forbidden in Luther's province, but he received firsthand information from a neighboring province when purchasers brought him the "papal letters" they had received in

return for money. Luther's ire was aroused. He quickly composed his famous 95 theses on indulgences and posted them on the church door. The reformation had started.

Luther quickly became a thorn in the flesh to the Roman hierarchy. His sharp tongue cut to the heart of the evils of the so-called "Holy See" in Rome. He freely denounced pope, priest, and layman alike. He challenged the authority of the pope, saying that "in the first centuries of Christianity, the Roman See had no more authority than several other bishops of the church." He won wide support throughout Germany, but called forth threats of excommunication from Rome. But he was not easily silenced. He published his answer in a booklet. These are some of his words:

"If Rome thus believes and teaches with the knowledge of popes and cardinals (which I hope is not the case), then in these writings I freely declare that the true Antichrist is sitting in the temple of God and reigning in Rome—that empurpled Babylon—and that the Roman Curia is the synagogue of Satan. . . . If we strike thieves with gallows, robbers with the sword, heretics with fire, why do we not much more attack in arms these masters of perdition, these cardinals, these popes, and all this sink of Roman Sodom which has without end corrupted the church of God. . . .?"

Luther's words reached the pope, who immediately condemned his works and ordered him to come to Rome to recant his statements or be excommunicated. He ignored the summons and continued his fight with his pen. He challenged the pope's claim to superiority over secular rulers (every emperor or king had to be confirmed by the pope before he could assume power); he advanced the idea that everyone had the right to read and interpret Scripture for himself; he declared that Scripture should be final authority in matters of doctrine and practice.

His attack on the Roman hierarchy continued:

"Why should the head of Christendom live in more worldly splendor than any king. . . living chiefly on money from Germany? How comes it that we Germans must put up with such robbery and such extortion of our property at the hands of the pope? Why should we let Roman avarice go free? For he is the greatest thief and robber that has come or can come into the world—and all in the name of Christ and St. Peter! Who can longer endure it or keep silence?"

"We should drive out from German lands the papal legates with their 'powers' which they sell us for large sums of money to legalize unjust gains, dissolve oaths, vows, and agreements, saying that the pope has authority to do this—though it is sheer knavery. . . . Hearest thou this, O pope, not most holy of men but most sinful? Oh that God from heaven would soon des-

troy thy throne, and sink it in the abyss of hell! . . . O Christ my Lord, look down, let the day of thy judgment break, and destroy this devil's nest at Rome."

Luther's words brought an immediate response from Rome: A "papal bull" ordering him excommunicated and his books burned. Luther showed his contempt for Rome by calling his supporters to meet him at the city gate where he personally cast the "papal bull" into the fire—symbolizing his rejection of the authority of the church. The students of the university gathered whatever books of canon law they could find and kept the fire burning for several hours.

The following day he proclaimed "that no man could be saved unless he renounced the rule of the papacy." "The monk had excommunicated the pope," writes the historian.

Luther divorced himself from the pope and was successful in correcting the more flagrant abuses. He succeeded in slowing the flow of money to the popes, but he did little toward reforming the doctrines. He denied transubstantiation, indulgences, purgatory and the worship of Mary and the saints. He believed all other doctrines of the established church, including a literal devil (with which he reported encounters), heaven, hell, the trinity, and the immortal soul. He denounced the philosophers "for trying to prove Christian dogmas rationally," for trying to harmonize Christianity with the philosophy of that "cursed, conceited, wily heathen" Aristotle.

Luther, though successful in reforming the abuses of the Catholic Church, did little to reform himself. The historian describes him as "having a temper like hot lava," with "hardly any of his associates able to escape his anger and humiliations." His later writings heaped abusive language on both emperors and ecclesiastics, even to the point of advocating violence and bodily harm to any who dared cross him. The toleration he sought from Rome found no place in his heart.

Luther lived in a period that was shrouded in religious darkness, but he was an instrument in God's hand to begin a process that would result in freeing men's minds from the darkness of superstition and error. A time was pre-determined by God when the apostasy would end and the true light of God's Word would again shine upon the earth. Rome still held sway over the majority, but without the Protestant Church, true religion would have found no place to lay her head.

3. John Calvin. Luther's tide of reform did not stop at the borders of Germany. While he was still leading the reform in his own country and establishing the first of the breakaway churches, other reformers came upon the scene elsewhere. John Calvin was to France what Luther was to Germany. Born about the time

that Luther was at the height of his career, he began as a lawyer, even though his main interest was theology.

Calvin is described by the historian Durant as a "God-intoxicated man... overwhelmed by a sense of man's littleness and God's immensity." He was a firm believer in the Bible as God's Word, but dark as to its true teaching as others of his time and as intolerant of opposition to his own beliefs as the Catholic Church hierarchy—a fact which caused his chief opposer, Servetus, to be burned at the stake.

Calvin's so-called reform was in doctrine rather than in practice. He is best remembered for his doctrine of predestination: That God pre-determined ages before we were born just who would and who would not be saved. Calvin rejected some of the doctrines of the Catholic Church, including the mass and the use of all images—even the crucifix. But like Luther, he clung to most of the doctrines of the apostate church. Of him the historian says, "It is remarkable how much of Roman Catholic tradition and theory survived in Calvin's theology. . . . Most of the doctrines he espoused as Protestant were but Catholic tradition . . . in milder form."

Calvin was the father of the Presbyterian Church; his doctrine of predestination, somewhat modified and elaborated to accommodate modern creeds and directions of thought, still survives today in the manuals of some churches, though it is seldom heard from their pulpits.

Calvin's churches were noted for their stern morality, a morality stressing personal responsibility. He insisted that to be religious is to be moral. The Puritans and Pilgrims who later settled in the American colonies were both products of his teachings. His churches were the first to be established on the principle of self-rule, each choosing its own pastors and elders. Out of this self-ruled church grew the self-governed towns of the New World and from this small beginning came the self-governed nation of America, the first of its kind in the world, with a democratic form of government heretofore untried.

Calvin, like Luther, though totally ignorant of true Bible teaching in a time of total apostasy, was nevertheless a tool in the Almighty's hand preparing the way for the re-lighting of the lamp of truth, something that could never have happened had Rome been able to keep her hold on Europe.

4. Other reformers. Others who influenced the reform movement are less known but through their work and writing they did much to loosen the shackles of the Catholic Church. Principal among these was John Knox, who founded the Protestant Church in Scotland, and Erasmus, who furthered the work of others with literary support.

As for reform within the hierarchy of the Catholic

Church itself, the need was noted by many long before it actually came. Another reign of terror was to come with many so-called heretics put to death before such practices were outlawed. First attempts at reform brought howls of protest from those who stood to lose their lucrative positions. "A thousand objections were raised," writes the historian. Bishops claimed they would be living in poverty if they held to the letter of the law and collected only legal amounts.

In the year 1536 the pope formed a "reform conference," and "bade them put into writing the abuses in the church" and the measures necessary to correct these abuses. The conference began "by boldly stating that the popes themselves, by their sins, crimes, and financial greed, had been the prime source of ecclesiastical deterioration," an admission that would have brought death to anyone who dared say it a century before. But the conference was allowed to proceed and in the end reform came. Bishops were no longer allowed to hold more than one office; such offices could neither be bought nor sold; indulgences for monetary gifts were outlawed; morals and discipline of the clergy were improved. "All in all," writes the historian, "it was in the end an astonishing recovery. . . . Rome now assumed an uncongenial air of external piety and morality. In Italy—less visibly beyond it—the church had reformed her clergy and her morals, while leaving her doctrines proudly intact. The reform had been long delayed, but when it came it was sincere and magnificent."

The reform was a step in the right direction, but it did nothing to lighten the darkness of the apostate church. "In the end the papal authority was not lessened but enlarged," writes the historian, "and every bishop was required to take an oath of complete obedience to the pope." The darkest of the dark dogmas were reaffirmed, including transubstantiation and purgatory; the Bible was still forbidden the common people, "the church claiming sole right to expound and interpret the Bible," and claiming "equal authority for church tradition and scripture."

A quotation from the founder of the Catholic order known as Jesuits, shows the extent to which men's minds of that age were captive to the heads of the church: "We ought always to be ready to believe that what seems to us is white is black if the church hierarchy so defines it." Multitudes would have affirmed that it was so.

Doctrinally the reform in Europe could be graded zero, but it had served a useful purpose. It had encouraged men to think for themselves, and it had wrested the Bible from the clutches of the church hierarchy. All this had happened because God willed it so, for it met with opposition every step of the way.

16th century has been called the "religious revolution" because it was during this time that many new sects sprang up. For the most part they were but branches broken off the apostate church, rejecting now and then a doctrine or principle but adhering to the majority of the so-called orthodox doctrines and practices, identified as *Protestant* because they protested against some belief or practice of the Catholic Church. An occasional small set had a few ideas in accord with the Scriptures. One "denied the divinity of Christ," saying that "He was only the most godly of men, who had redeemed us not by His agony on the cross but by the example of His life." But the time for the rebirth of the

truth had not yet come; anyone who dared speak these words was put to death as a heretic.

V. NEW FRONTIERS

Just before the end of the 15th century, at the same time that the reform movement was sprouting, the countries along the coast were venturing out to sea seeking trade with foreign lands. Portugal had built up trade with India, sailing eastward around the southern tip of Africa. It was a costly and dangerous route. Mariners theorized that by sailing west far enough they would find India across the Atlantic. The world had not been mapped, and the distance had been greatly underestimated.

After many years of study, interspersed with several adventures on the high seas, Christopher Columbus sought permission from the king of Spain to sail westward in the hope of finding a new route to India. His hopes were rebuffed, but eight years and many attempts later he was granted three ships and funds for the voyage after Spain's finance minister intervened in his favor. On April 17, 1492, the king signed the required papers, and on August 3 of that same year Columbus sailed westward.

Seventy days later the little flotilla reached land—October 12, 1492, the date remembered as "Columbus Day" in our nation. Columbus had not actually discovered America, but islands in the Caribbean. But it marked the beginning of westward exploration, which led to the discovery and settlement of the American continent.

It is interesting to note in the historical record that Columbus and his men, knowing only the religion of the apostate church, believed in God. Their first act after setting foot on land in the New World (which they believed to be Asia) was to kiss the ground and thank God for their safe arrival. "Columbus christened the island San Salvador—Holy Saviour—and took possession of it in the name of the king and queen of Spain, Ferdinand and Isabella, and Christ," writes the historian. Columbus also noted in his log that he gave gifts to the natives because he "knew that they were a people who could better be... converted to our Holy Father by love than by force." God had guided the little fleet westward that the western world might be discovered, a world where a new order of government might arise independent of the old, and pave the way for the end of the apostasy and the rebirth of true Bible knowledge.

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The best cure for fear is faith. When faith universally replaces fear, the greatest stride will have been taken in the history of man.

How Long, O Lord?

THE FOLLOWING article is extracted from an article published nearly 30 years ago by the thoughtful editor of the Alliance Weekly. The author saw vividly the need for preserving sound moral and spiritual values and standards in a decadent world. If his words were timely then—in 1955—how much more now, when morals have plunged to all-time lows! How diligently should every aspiring Christian watch, lest we, too, be drawn in some small way into the corrupt worship of “Eros.”

The period in which we now live may well go down in history as the Erotic Age. Sex love has been elevated into a cult. Eros has more worshipers among civilized men today than any other god. For millions the erotic has completely displaced the spiritual.

How the world got into this state is not difficult to trace. Contributing factors are the phonograph and radio, which can spread a love song from coast to coast within a matter of days; the motion picture and television, which enable a whole population to feast their eyes on sensuous women and amorous young men locked in passionate embrace (and this in the living rooms of “Christian” homes and before the eyes of innocent children!); shorter working hours and a multiplicity of mechanical gadgets with the resultant increased leisure for everyone. Add to these the scores of shrewdly contrived advertising campaigns which make sex the not too slyly concealed bait to attract buyers for almost every imaginable product; the degraded columnists who have consecrated their lives to the task of the publicizing of soft, slinky nobodies with the faces of angels and the morals of alley cats; conscienceless novelists who win a doubtful fame and grow rich at the inglorious chore of dredging up literary putridities from the sewers of their souls to provide entertainment for the masses. These tell us something about how Eros has achieved his triumph over the civilized world.

Now if this god would let us Christians alone, I, for one, would let his cult alone. But the cult of Eros is seriously affecting the churches. Religion is being polluted by the unclean waters that trickle from behind the altars of abomination that appear on every high hill and under every green tree from New York to Los Angeles.

The influence of the erotic spirit is felt almost everywhere.

Religious fiction also makes use of sex to interest the reading public, the paper-thin excuse being that if

romance and religion are woven into a story the average person who would not read a purely religious book will read the story and thus be exposed to the gospel. The whole concept behind the religion-romantic novel is unsound. The libidinous impulses and the deep, moving impressions of the Word of God are diametrically opposed to each other. The notion that Eros can be made to serve as an assistant of the Lord of glory is outrageous. The “Christian” film that seeks to draw customers by picturing amorous love scenes in its advertising is completely false to the religion of Christ. Only the spiritually blind will be taken in by it.

The current vogue of physical beauty and sparkling personalities in religious promotion is a further manifestation of the influences of the romantic spirit in the churches. The synthetic smile and the too, too cheerful voice betray the religious worldling. He has learned his technique from the TV screen, but not learned it well enough to succeed in the professional field so he brings his inept production to the holy place and peddles it to the ailing and undersized Christians who are looking for something to amuse them while staying within the bounds of the current religious mores.

When God's sheep are in danger the shepherd must not gaze at the stars and meditate on “inspirational” themes. He is morally obliged to grab his weapon and run to their defense. It is time for men and women of God to take their stand for truth, purity and righteousness, to make themselves heard and felt. For the last three decades timidity disguised as humility has crouched in her corner while the spiritual quailty of popular Christianity has become progressively worse year by year.

How long, O Lord, how long?

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Complaining



All the Way to Canaan

THE ACCOUNT of the children of Israel and their Exodus from Egypt has been called "the grumbings of a nation." It is one long sad story of complaining and discontent. An entire generation saw firsthand the workings of God's power but could not be inspired or impressed by what they saw. Out of all the multitudes, only two—Joshua and Caleb—came through unstained. The rest complained, and complained—all the way to Canaan.

Complaining seems to be an almost inseparable part of our too-human natures. Sister Hembree said it is as natural to complain as to breathe, and we know that this is true. But perhaps we can review the story of the Israelites and learn from their mistakes.

As we read the Scriptural account of the children of Israel and their amazing Exodus from Egyptian bondage, we are struck with two facts: how much God did for them, and how much they grumbled. The two do not seem to go together. How could people who had so much at so little cost complain so much? But they did. In the brief account of their journeyings, we are told at least 23 times that they murmured.

What did God do for them? When they were slaves in Egypt under a wicked Pharaoh, He heard their cries and chose Moses to deliver them. When Pharaoh gave chase, God was

one step ahead—He made a path right through the Red Sea for His people, and then closed the waters upon the pursuing Egyptians. He guided them with a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. Water out of the rock, manna from heaven, shoes that did not wear out—what more could they ask? Every step of the way He provided, and nearly every step of the way they grumbled.

We marvel, but what of ourselves? Who of us has never been stubborn and rebellious, we whose blessings are manifold more? How often we have

**Every step of the way
He provided, and nearly
every step of the way
they grumbled.**

prayed for deliverance from a trying circumstance and renewed our vow of faithfulness, only to be dismayed at the next opportunity God so kindly provides?

We wonder at their lack of faith. Did they doubt God's power to provide for their needs? Did He not assure them before they left Egypt that He would take them through, all the way to

Canaan? Still, they set themselves to be contrary.

Let's look a little closer at this "contrary attitude." It did not originate in the wilderness. Even before the Israelites left Egypt they were grumbling at the unbearable persecution of their Egyptian taskmasters. We can be sure that conditions were bad, because God was ready to send deliverance. But the complaining did not stop with the offer of deliverance—this was only the beginning!

When Moses and Aaron risked their lives to go before Pharaoh and demand a release, what thanks did they get? Only contempt and mockery. The Israelites saw no change, except that things got worse. Tightened controls, increased brutality—what did it mean? Their complaints were bitterly indignant. "May the Lord look upon you and judge you," their foremen fired at Moses. "You have made us a stench to Pharaoh and his servants, and have put a sword in their hand to kill us!" (Ex. 5:21, NIV).

Didn't they have any faith that temporary hardship might work out a long-range benefit? Such shortsightedness, we say. But what of us? Have we always looked beyond our present problems to the long-term benefit God may be working out through our trials?

The rebuke Moses received from the foremen was enough to cause

Moses to ask God, "O, Lord, why...? Is this why You sent me? Ever since I went to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has brought trouble upon this people, and You have not rescued Your people at all!" In His mercy God reminded Moses of exactly who He is and what He has promised to do for His people. When Moses relayed this message to the Israelites, were they comforted? We read that they would not even "listen to him because of their discouragement and cruel bondage" (Ex. 6:9).

Nonetheless, the merciful God continued to work in their behalf. Plague followed plague upon the land of Egypt, until Pharaoh finally told them to leave. Briefly—momentarily—the people were moved to gratitude and consecrated themselves to serve their God. They even promised to commemorate the day of their release from generation to generation. How refreshing their faith in this instance.

With hearts strong and heads high several million Israelites made their way toward the wilderness. Now they were free, gloriously free. But only a few days and all their great delight was petrified with fear. The Egyptians were after them. In terror they cried out to Moses, "What are you doing to us? Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? Didn't we say to you in Egypt, 'Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians'? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert" (Ex. 14:11-12).

Such ingratitude. Had they no faith at all? Did they think that the God who was delivering them from Egypt would allow them to immediately be swallowed up by the Egyptians? We can only marvel at the mercy of God, who again stated His promise to keep them safe and urged them to move on and see exactly what He would do for them.

They moved on, and they did see, as the waters opened to let them pass

safely through and then closed upon the stranded Egyptians. For a brief moment they had no trouble praising God. Praise comes naturally in moments of triumph. On this crest of enthusiasm they even renewed their commitment to God and promised to obey His servant Moses.

But the praise was shortlived. As the millions of men, women and children continued their journey into an inhospitable desert, only three days and there were more complaints. This time it was the water—it was bitter. Didn't God know they needed water—good water? Was He bringing them out here to die of thirst? "So the people grumbled against Moses, saying, 'What are we to drink?'" If only they could have had faith and patience to hold out a little longer—surely grumbling wasn't the only way to get what they wanted.

God heard their cries, and sweetened the waters of Meribah. And just a little

"What are you doing to us? Didn't we say to you in Egypt, 'Leave us alone...?'"

farther on they came to Elim, which had sweet water from 12 springs and cool shade from 70 palm trees (Ex. 15:27). Wouldn't this have been an ideal time to declare a Thanksgiving Day in Israel? But there was no thanksgiving, because there was no gratitude in their hearts.

Only days later, in the wilderness of Sin, the children of Israel were mumbling discontent again. This time it was not water but food. "If only we had died by the Lord's hand in Egypt!" they lamented. "There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death" (Ex. 16:3).

As always, Moses took the problem to God, and God answered. Again He

had heard their grumbings, and again He would provide—manna every morning, meat every night. All they would have to do would be to gather it, according to the command of the Lord (everything had to be done according to directions). Moses urged them to follow instructions, and some did. However, greed overtook others, and paying no attention to Moses, they took more than they needed and "kept part of it until morning, but it was full of maggots and began to smell" (Ex. 16:20). Some even tried gathering it on the Sabbath—and there was none to be found, just as the Lord had said. It seemed they just had to do something to show their discontent against Moses and against God.

Is not any disobedience a type of complaining? Every time we do what we know we should not, are we not saying to God, "Your law is not right. My way is better. I want my way"?

The time came when the Lord called Moses to the top of Mt. Sinai to receive a new law for the new nation. But Moses was gone longer than they expected. Again there were murmurs of discontent. What did they do? They "gathered around Aaron and said, 'Come, make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him'" (Ex. 32:1). Truly a weak-willed, no-faith response; yet have we not done the same? How often have we turned from God and placed our confidence in that which we can see, touch, and feel, forgetting all that He has done for us and all that He has promised us for the future?

At this point, the Lord seemed to have had enough. He let them—and us—know that there is a limit to His long long-suffering. He was ready to destroy them all. But Moses pleaded with God to be merciful, and so God spared the nation, but many were nonetheless destroyed as a result of their unbelief.

And still there were more complaints. The first delicious taste of manna had

been like wafers made with honey. But now sheer monotony made it stick in the gullet like sawdust. Mouthwatering thoughts of all the fish and vegetables that abounded in Egypt now produced an irresistible craving. This time it was the Egyptians among the Israelites who aroused the memories. "If only we had meat to eat! We remember the fish we ate in Egypt at no cost—also the

Was grumbling the ONLY way to get what they wanted?

cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic. But now we have lost our appetite; we never see anything but this manna!" (Num. 11:4-6).

Moses was getting weary of the continual grumbling. Who was responsible for these people, anyway, these people who wanted exactly what they wanted in the precise moment they wanted it? Again he confronted God. "What have I done to displease you that you put the burden of all these people on me?...I cannot carry all these people by myself; the burden is too heavy for me. If this is how you are going to treat me, put me to death right now" (Num. 11:11-15). Moses' words drew from God the merciful promise to be with him and also an offer to give them all the meat they asked for—enough for a whole month, until they would be sick of it.

About two years after they left Egypt, they came to Kadesh-barnea, right on the borders of the Promised Land. Surely this would make them smile. Surely this would bring forth a note of praise. But not so. At the arranging of Moses, twelve spies were sent out to look over the land. They returned carrying fruits so marvelous that one cluster of grapes had to be carried between two of them, but the majority report was terrible. "The people are like

giants," they gloomed. "The cities are surrounded by thick walls." "We felt like grasshoppers before them. They will crush us," they bellowed.

The grumbling spread through the whole camp of Israelites like one big wail. In moments it exploded in all-out rebellion. "Let us make us a captain," they shouted, "and return into Egypt." Joshua and Caleb, two of the spies, tried bravely to remind them of the power of God to defend them, but the multitudes were unheeding. They even wanted to kill their deliverers with stones. Only the glory of the Lord, intervening, saved those who were faithful from the vengeance of the rabble.

It was a distressing time. Moses again took the matter to God. What was His answer? "This evil congregation, which murmur against me...I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel,...surely they shall not see the land which I swore unto their fathers....in this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die....Their little ones,...them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised" (Num. 14:22-34). For all their grumbling, the rebels would die in the wilderness. Only their children would see the land of promise—after they had wandered forty years.

At this point it would seem that many in the congregation might have had second thoughts about their grumbling. Each time they grumbled, God gave them what they grumbled for, but He also made them see—and feel—His displeasure with them.

But even this did not silence the complaining. It continued all the way to Canaan. In fact, the Israelites traveled 40 years to obtain an inheritance they could have had in a matter of months had they trusted God. God was ready to do on His part, to fight their battles and wage wars that could have brought them total victory if only they would obey Him. But, when they withheld obedience, God withheld deliverance and victory.

And now what about us? What is the lesson for us in all this complaining? The apostle Paul says it sharply: "Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer" (I Cor. 10:10).

Have we ever complained, we who are so bountifully blessed? Do we ever find ourselves complaining and grumbling that someone else's circumstances are better than ours, that our lot is impossible to manage, that we just weren't meant for the life that is ours? Do we ever wish for less of the discipline God provides, more freedom to do as we please, more options to choose and chart our own course? Shall we repeat the pattern of disrespect that the Israelites displayed time after time?

The testimony of the apostle Paul is a refreshing contrast to this wearying waywardness: "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to

He let them—and us—know that there is a limit to His long long-suffering.

abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:11-13).

Whom shall we take for our pattern, the Israelites or the apostle Paul? Shall we go on complaining, complaining, all the way to Canaan? If we do, we shall surely fall in the wilderness, just as those rebellious Israelites did. God still means what He says, and He has no use for complainers. He wants those whose hearts overflow with thankfulness, whose lives are a song of praise. For these He has reserved a special place in Canaan. MM

Influence and Habit

WE ARE ALL familiar with some version of the story that is told to explain why a certain road happens to be so crooked. Many years before anyone thought of building a city there, a certain farmer's calf wandered across this particular bit of land. The farmer in searching for the calf, followed its hoof marks in the soft clay. Next day a hunter followed this faint path made by the farmer and the calf. One by one others followed the same winding path. A guide on his way westward led a wagon train over this semblance of a trail; the wagon wheels cut a narrow winding road. Next a settler built his log cabin at the side of the road. Others did the same, and soon it became a village street. No one thought of straightening it out until in recent years it became a traffic bottleneck.

In our march toward the Kingdom we mark a path. Whether we will it or not, we cannot journey without leaving footprints; and whether we will it or not, others will follow where we go because we have marked the way. How often have we ambled thoughtlessly through a day, unmindful of this fact.

Our influence has been likened to a pebble dropped in a brook, "just a splash and it is gone, but there's half a hundred ripples rippling on, and on, and on." At times we lose sight of this principle, acting on the assumption that what we do or think can affect no one but ourselves. How often it happens with parents; they carelessly drop a remark and think no more about it—until sometime later they are startled

to hear their child repeat their very words.

It is a serious thought that some careless word we utter may start another upon a downward road. Let no act of ours be such as could lead another astray. A man, it is said, can be a blot or a blessing; but a blank he cannot be. The power of influence is always there. We write upon the hearts of others; we can write a kind word here, a generous act there, or erase a frown and put a smile in its place. But write we must.

The rolling rock leaves its scars and scratches on the mountain; the river cuts its channel in the soil; the animal deposits its bones in the stratum; the fern leaves its modest epitaph in the coal. Nothing is without influence. Who can know the reach of the influence which escapes constantly, imperceptibly, from our daily life? Therefore let us be careful.

Influence becomes even stronger through habit. Once we do or say a thing, it is always easier to do it again, and before we realize it we have formed a habit. The repeated action becomes all the more easily impressed on others, for what they see repeatedly they remember. If not careful, we may awake someday and be shocked at how many crooked paths we have helped to make.

If we look back on the usual course of our feelings, we shall find that we are more definitely influenced by their frequent recurrence than by their weight and importance. The mind takes its tone and complexion from

what it habitually contemplates.

Habit is man's best friend or worst enemy. It can exalt him to the highest pinnacle of virtue, or sink him to the lowest depths of vice. As the snow gathers, so are habits formed; no single flake that is added to the pile produces a noticeable change. Habits are not all formed in a day, and it is the little things that work the greatest havoc in our lives. Our souls fill with sudden bravery and we rise to meet a heavy blow, but how easily our noblest powers decay in the little, feeble woes of every day.

The force of habit renders pleasant many things which were at first intensely disagreeable or even painful. As the poet expressed it, "We first endure, then pity, then embrace." We bind ourselves by chains of our own weaving; we do that which we are accustomed to do even when we know it can yield no eternal profit. When we resolve to escape the grip of a bad habit, we will often not succeed in the first attempt. Just dealing it a blow once in a while will never conquer it. We must deal some mighty blows, blow upon blow.

Habits of virtue are not formed by a few faint resolutions; not by accident, not by fits and starts; being one moment alert and attentive and the next falling into indifference. Good habits are formed only by steady, persistent effort. If we acquire them in youth, like letters carved in the bark of a tree they will grow and widen with the years.

Now is the time to begin. Now is important; it is the only time that is really our own. Hold it up to a mirror and it spells "won." Now is the time to say the kind word, resist the temptation, practice to form the good habit. Now is the time to get ready to say, "I won."

MM

With the evidence we have of the truthfulness of God's Word, it seems it would make us like a steam engine, so we could plow through anything. —L.T.N.

Meditating on the Word



“ONE THING...”

“One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple”
(Psalm 27:4)

“ONE THING have I desired of the Lord,” wrote the Psalmist; “that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple.” Here was David expressing his longing for a part in God’s future, eternal temple, that perfect temple of which Solomon’s was to be a type. He loved the service of God, and he had but one desire—to dwell in the house of the Lord, to behold His beauty, and to meditate in His temple.

This “one thing,” this one desire, this one aspiration has filled the lives of all God’s people in all ages. It impelled Abraham to obey—to ascend the rugged mountain and offer his only son to the Lord. It strengthened Noah to build and keep on building the ark for 120 years amid the scoffs and scorns of the faithless multitude. It hastened Lot and his family from the doomed city before destruction descended upon it. And it was the direct cause of John’s exile on lonely Patmos, where he received visions and revelations before unknown to mortal minds. This same one desire fortified Jesus against Herod and Pilate and the angry mob. He was looking ahead to the day of triumph—the day when He would be glorified in His Father’s presence.

What is this “one thing” to us? To Abraham it was a city having real and solid foundations, a city of which God Himself is both architect and builder (Heb. 11:10). To Job it was the day when, after being thoroughly tried, he should come forth as gold (Job 23:10)—pure gold for God’s eternal temple. To Daniel it was the day when, after a long rest, he should rise and stand in his lot at the coming of the Messiah (Dan. 12:13). To Jesus it was the joy set before Him, for which He gladly endured the cross and despised the shame. To Jeremiah it was the day when the Lord shall perform that “good thing” which He

has promised, a day when His people shall be to Him a name of joy, a praise and an honor before all the nations of earth; a day when Israel will come and sing in the height of Zion, and “flow together to the goodness of the Lord, for wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock and of the herd: and their soul shall be as a watered garden; and they shall not sorrow any more at all” (Jer. 33:14, 9; 31:12).

“One thing is needful,” said Jesus to Martha (Luke 10:41-42). And “one thing” we desire. Do we really long for the best the universe can give? We shall find that it comes not by idle waiting but by labor—diligent and earnest labor. The words of the Psalmist imply effort, not idleness: “that will I seek after.” The depth of our desire is proved by the intensity of our effort. “What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil, and do good” (Ps. 34:12-14).

Are we making this one thing our sole purpose in life? or do a multiplicity of other interests absorb us? This life is too short to explore every road, therefore it is necessary for us to choose the pursuit which promises the greatest rewards. And to those who have faith in the Word of God, the highest rewards of earth sink into utter nothingness when compared with the glories offered by Wisdom to her faithful disciples: “Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honour.” Eternal life, eternal health and vigor, eternal glory and power and dominion with Christ! All this—and a hundredfold in this life besides! Where are the tinsel joys and honors of earth, compared to such? Can we not say with the Psalmist, “One thing I desire?”

Too often we allow secondary interests to distract us. We absorb ourselves in our business, our homes, our

duties, our necessities, forgetting that above all must tower our one supreme ambition—eternal life.

Wrote Paul to the Colossian brethren: "Give your heart to the heavenly things, not to the passing things of earth." Such a reward as the Almighty offers us, if worth anything at all, is certainly worth an all-out effort, all we have and are bent to one end. Only such an effort can or will succeed. If we win our desire, nothing else will matter. If we lose, we shall have lived in vain.

One thing we desire—eternal life. We can never hope to earn it—the prize is out of all proportion to our best efforts. Enough for us to make ourselves worthy of receiving it by changing our lives completely and utterly, crucifying every manifestation of the flesh.

"One thing" is our desire. Says James, "A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways." To avoid this instability we must be single-minded, giving our all to this one thing. As Paul wrote to Timothy, "Give thyself wholly." Not halfly, or even mostly, but *wholly*. This thread of singleness of heart, of one central theme, of one increasing purpose, runs through the entire sacred Volume.

Let us, like Paul, learn to count all things but loss except this one goal. Let us say, "*This one thing I do*" that we may, like him, have laid up for us "a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge shall give...at that day." Then we shall behold the beauty of the Lord, a world—our world—filled with immortal, glorified beings, pillars and stones of the temple that shall shine forth as the sun throughout eternity. MM

Forgive Me For Time Lost

God of the ages, I come unto Thee in penitence for the time I have lost.

For the hours spent in aimless talk on small things while the high themes of Thy universe had to wait.

For the messages of lesser value that I take unto myself from the press and radio and the screen.

For the time that I waste because it is not planned, or is planned for a shortened purpose.

For my selection of music and pictures and friends that fall short of the best.

For my unwise choice of books.

For my idle thoughts that regard not the things that are lovely and of good report.

For these, my Lord, I come in penitence to Thee.

And as I resolutely create a new plan for a wise use of time, grant me an awareness of Thy forgiveness and an ever richer gratitude for time still extended. Amen.

So What Do You Know?

What do the following books of the Bible have in common?

1. Luke and Acts
2. Ruth and Esther
3. Galatians and Titus
4. James and Jude
5. Malachi and Revelation
6. Isaiah and Ezekiel
7. Ecclesiastes and Proverbs
8. Mark and John
9. Habakkuk and Jonah
10. Numbers and Deuteronomy
11. Judges and Kings
12. Obadiah and Jude
13. Jeremiah and Lamentations
14. Haggai and Ezra
15. Matthew and John

Answers:

1. Both were written by Luke and addressed to Theophilus
2. Both were named after women.
3. Written by Paul
4. Thought to be written by half-brothers of Jesus
5. Last book of Old Testament, last book of New
6. Both major prophets.
7. Both written by King Solomon
8. Both are gospels
9. Both minor prophets
10. Both books of the law (Pentateuch)
11. Both books of history
12. Each book has only one chapter.
13. Both were written by the same author.
14. Both were written after the captivity.
15. Both were written by apostles of Jesus.

But the truly great mind is not conceited. It may be self-confident, if confidence is warranted. It will be self-respecting and have a proper amount of self-esteem; but however brilliant, it will recognize its limited significance in the universal order of things.

HOW MUCH does the Holy Spirit do, if anything, in making us holy, righteous, and acceptable to God? A friend writes from the state of Washington:

"I take liberty to make a few comments on the article 'Yearning for Newness.' My heart was touched with sadness not because 'newness' is undesirable, but because the Megiddo brethren fail to understand that the essence of the New Covenant is in Christ's 'blood.' It is evident that this word 'blood' is figurative language relating to the 'life' of Jesus Christ. This 'life' is the atonement or remedy for man's 'sin' problem; and since man's sin is 'living in him,' and is 'at work within his members,' somehow this 'life' or 'blood' of Christ has to be imparted within man's 'body of death' (Rom. 7:17, 23-24).

"How is this done? By the Holy Spirit, according to Romans 8:1-2. The Scriptures that speak of Christ's 'blood' washing, loosing, freeing, cleansing, forgiving, justifying, sanctifying, are figurative language of the impartation of the Holy Spirit into the conscience of the Christian. There are many Scriptures that bear this out. I direct your attention to these few:

Gal. 3:13-14	Heb. 9:14
Eph. 1:13-14	Heb. 10:29
Eph. 3:14-21	Heb. 12:24
Eph. 4:30	I Pet. 1:2
Eph. 6:17-18	Jude 20
I Thess. 5:19	

"The blessing of having the Holy Spirit as one's supervisor is evident. One's conscience is supersensitive to God's will, and there is no need to 'examine ourselves' in the very presence of God, because the Holy Spirit will inform one (Rom 9:1) who deviates from the 'righteousness of God's law' (Rom. 8:4). Blessed is the truth that when one's mind is set on what the Holy Spirit desires, he is not only no longer under law, but against such things as the Holy Spirit inspires there

Cleansed by the Spirit?

is no law (Gal. 5:23-24). Those who live by the Holy Spirit's leading will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

"Praise God, it is for this freedom from law and sin, made possible by the Holy Spirit's supervision of one's life, that Jesus the Christ has set the Christian free. True, this sounds too good to be real. But, thanks be to God, this is the message of the New Covenant in Christ's 'blood.' Amen.

"This blessing was not only for the first century Christians, but it is for every age wherein the New Covenant message is in force. Otherwise God would be unfair to require the second and onward centuries of Christians to fulfill the righteousness of His law without the help of the indwelling Holy Spirit that was within the first century Christians. Only the indwelling Holy Spirit is sufficient to neutralize the 'law of sin' that works within our members. God knows this, that's why He made available this great blessing."

In Reply:

We appreciate your recognizing of the "Christian obligation to be following after holiness and righteousness in this age of substitutionary righteousness." However, your position that the "following after holiness and righteousness" is entirely dependent on the presence of the Holy Spirit of God within us comes perilously close—in effect if not in intent—to the "substitutionary righteousness" which you condemn. What is the difference, whether we say that Christ's literal death on the cross atones for our sins,

or whether we say that the Holy Spirit comes into our lives and does the work for us and in us? Is it not merely another way of circumventing the fact that God requires us to do something of ourselves?

We agree that the "blood" of Christ is used in the Bible as figurative language, relating to the "life" of Christ, rather than to His literal blood. We also agree that the Scriptures speak of Christ's "blood" as "washing, loosing, freeing, cleansing, forgiving, justifying, sanctifying," and that these terms are figurative language. However, before we can accept your position that all this is accomplished in us by the "impartation of the Holy Spirit into the conscience of the Christian," we must have Scriptural support, which we feel is lacking.

The Scriptures you offer seem inadequate. We will discuss them later.

If...

If the new covenant in Jesus' blood simply assured us that the Holy Spirit would guide us in every affair of life, why did not Jesus make this fact plain? And why would He commend the bride of Christ (Rev. 19:7-8) for making herself ready if not she but the Holy Spirit had done it? The text reads: "And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints."

Also, why did Jesus say, "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life" (Rev. 22:14)? Is not the tree of life

what we would all like to have right to? And is not "doing his commandments" the key to that right?

If the apostle Paul understood that the Holy Spirit in us would accomplish all that is necessary, why did he write to the Ephesians (chapter 4), "Let him that stole, steal no more....Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth....Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another"? And why do we find so many words in the New Testament which suggest such total effort, i.e., "strive," "fight," "run," "press," "endure," "overcome"? Is the Holy Spirit going to do all this suffering, dying, fighting, running, pressing for us because we are under the New Covenant? I certainly wish this were true, but I could not be honest and accept it.

Just what will the Holy Spirit do for us? Surely it will do nothing against our will. If I wish to tell a lie to get out of a bad situation, will the Holy Spirit in my heart keep me from saying it? Or if I say it, will the Holy Spirit nullify the condemnation which would rightly be mine for lying? How does my "supervisor Holy Spirit" save me from needing "to examine myself in the very presence of God," as you say, when I am expressly commanded to do this (II Cor. 13:5)? You cite Romans 9:1 as evidence that the Holy Spirit will inform one who deviates. It reads: "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit," and Paul goes on to tell about his deep concern for his fellow Israelites. There seems to be no relevance between the point you make and the point the apostle Paul is stating in the context of Romans 9.

You say also that "when one's mind is set on what the Holy Spirit desires, he is...no longer under law." It is important to remember that generally Paul used the term "law" to refer to the old Mosaic law, which had been done away in Christ. But the removing of the

law of Moses does not in any way suggest that Christians are not subject to law. Paul said also, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man" (Rom. 7:22), and "the doers of the law shall be justified" (Rom. 2:13). Here is a law to be obeyed; it is the law of Christ. Jesus Himself said, "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein" (Rev. 1:3). There is no slight suggestion that serving Christ makes one automatically "free from law and sin...by the Holy Spirit's supervision of one's life." We agree, this is too good to be true—it is not true.

God never has seen fit to use miraculous means to make men and women righteous. It was always an individual matter, requiring individual effort. Jesus left no question as to what makes us righteous when He said,

God never has seen fit to use miraculous means to make men and women righteous.

"Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:...And everyone that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand" (Matt. 7:24-26). What made the difference between the wise and the foolish man? Just one factor: doing. We are aware that this practical "doing" approach is condemned by perhaps 99% of the theologians in Christendom. But should not one word from Jesus mean more than all the sayings of all the men?

There is no question but that those who are sincere in their effort to do the will of God receive His help and aid,

His support and guidance. But there is no evidence that the Holy Spirit was given for this purpose, or that it was intended to aid anyone in the developing of a character acceptable to God. It was given to confirm the words spoken by the apostles (Mark 16:20). It was given to add force and conviction to their message, to demonstrate the authority behind them.

You say that this "blessing [of the Holy Spirit] was not for the first century Christians only but that it is for every age during which the New Covenant message is in force. Otherwise God would be unfair to require the second and onward centuries of Christians to fulfill the righteousness of His law without the help of the indwelling Holy Spirit that was within the first century Christians." Your reasoning is certainly valid. If the Holy Spirit was necessary to the people of one age, it should be equally necessary to those of another. But there are two problems with your conclusion: 1) We do not have any evidence that the Holy Spirit assisted those who had that power in the refining/developing/purifying of their characters before God. This was not the purpose for which it was given; and 2) we do not have the Holy Spirit power today. The Holy Spirit was not intended to be for all people in all ages. It was given only for a limited period of time and for a specific purpose, after which it was to be withdrawn (see our booklet, *Treatise on the Holy Spirit*). Not being a permanent institution, succeeding generations did not have its help.

Nor do we have it today. We have no power to do the works which those who had the power demonstrated. We cannot heal the sick, raise the dead, open blind eyes, or understand languages we have never learned. And no one today possesses the power. Why? Because it was withdrawn, as prophesied. The commission under which it was given was fulfilled (see Matt. 28). It was given to assist in spreading the gospel during that time; and this accomplished, it was taken away. Now

abideth only "faith, hope, charity, these three" (I Cor. 13:13). Now all we have and all we will have until the power is restored is the word of God, the Bible, to guide us.

From Genesis to Revelation the Bible presents one plan of salvation. We do the Book an injustice when we try to read one plan into the Old Testament and another into the New. The theme of the whole is, "Obey and live, disobey and die." Anyone who tries to circumvent this plain simple requirement does so at his own peril.

What about the various texts you cite to bear out your thought that the impartation of the Holy Spirit into the conscience of the Christian is the whole remedy for sin and sinfulness?

Gal. 3:13-14: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us:...that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." In this text Paul refers to the Gentiles sharing literally in the power of the Holy Spirit, which was a present blessing for them. Nothing is said of the Holy Spirit making righteous, or fitting any for eternal salvation.

Ephesians 1:13-14: "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye

were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise." These people again were possessors of the Holy Spirit power; the power was to them a guarantee of the promise of God. However, a guarantee of the promise is not a guarantee that it would be fulfilled. They still had to be loyal to their covenant; they still had to prove their faith by obedience.

Ephesians 3:14-21: "That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man." Those who had the power were strengthened by it; we who have not the Holy Spirit to strengthen us are strengthened by the Word of God, by the inspired record which God caused to be written for us.

Ephesians 4:30: "Grieve not the holy Spirit of God." This command again was addressed to those who had the Holy Spirit power, and seems to indicate that those who had the Holy Spirit *could* sin against it—Paul is warning them not to "offend," or "wound," or "grieve" it lest they lose out on the promised redemption. There was responsibility to be fulfilled on the part of the possessor. It would not keep them pure and holy without effort on their part.

Ephesians 6:17-18: "And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." Here is a clear definition of the "sword of the Spirit"—it is not supernatural power that works in us without any effort on our part, but simply "the word of God."

I Thess. 5:19: "Quench not the Spirit"—another direct reference to the Holy Spirit power, which we do not have. We may apply the principle and not stifle any good work for God, or any work motivated by His "Spirit," His Word, His law.

Hebrews 9:13-14: "For if the blood of bulls and of goats...sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh [under the old law]: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works

to serve the living God." Again the contrast is between the old law of Moses, which had been withdrawn (Heb. 8:13) and the living law of faith and obedience by which we can be saved. If sacrifices under the old law served to purifying from "sins" of the flesh, how much more the spiritual sacrifice such as Christ offered for Himself, the complete death to sin which He accomplished, and which each of us must also fulfill to "purge [our] conscience from dead works to serve the living God." The rendering in the NEB is clearer: "he offered himself...a spiritual and eternal sacrifice." This is what each of us must do to be cleansed, sanctified, free from the defilements of sin.

Hebrews 10:29: "Of how much sorer punishment...shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace." What need to warn brethren about the unpardonableness of apostasy for those who were partakers of the Holy Spirit if the Holy Spirit kept them from sinning? Why should they who sin having the Holy Spirit be thought worthy of "sorer punishment" than others if the Holy Spirit was their divine supervisor? But no, there was danger. With great privilege comes great responsibility. Those who had the power of the Holy Spirit were not automatically exempt from sin; but they were obligated to keep themselves from sinning against the Holy Spirit; from such an apostasy there could be no restoration. This again is a sin we do not have to fear, not having the Holy Spirit power today.

Hebrews 12:24: "And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." We are part of the new covenant, as opposed to being subject to the law of Moses. With Abel, the loss was of literal blood; our sacrifice is of a spiritual nature, the daily sacrificing of our-

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selves, a "living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God".

1 Peter 1:2: "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." This text does not say that we are saved by "the Spirit" but that by it we are hallowed to serve—"unto obedience." Whether we understand the Spirit as the Holy Spirit power which those people possessed, or the Word of God which we possess, it is only a means to a greater end: obedience.

Jude 20: "Building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit." Those who had the power of the Holy Spirit did pray "in the Holy Spirit." We who have it not cannot do this, but we can still build up ourselves in our most holy faith and pray. This is part of our service to God. We are incapacitated because we have not the Spirit.

What is there to indicate that the Holy Spirit is God's miraculous provision for remaking our lives without any effort on our part? Nothing.

What, then, is the remedy for our sinfulness? It is simply this: "Go and sin no more." MM



Letters

Use Self-Control

Not only must we use self-control in curbing our appetites, but we must use self-control for impatience, for watching our thoughts, for ruling the tongue and for helping us to be kind and forgiving. Ephesians 4:31-32 are verses I like to keep in mind.

We must curb our pride and stubbornness, and must cultivate the desire to be obedient and submissive to what God says is right and not what we like to think is right in our own minds.

God knows what will make us work for the Kingdom. How thankful we should be for our testings.

Davenport, Iowa

W. P.

Appreciative

Is it not amazing how many different religions people have made from the Word of God, His Holy Book? It causes us to appreciate the true Word of God even more. We compare Scripture with Scripture and find no contradiction there. The doctrines are plain and clear if we understand them the way God intended us to, with no private interpretation.

Conyers, Georgia

C. P.

Tests of Life

The tests of life will help us or be against us as we allow them. The blow to the outward man is very often the greatest blessing to the inner man. We know as long as we are in this mortal frame we will suffer many adversities. Jesus spoke of this in John 16:33 when He said, "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

We will be tried and tested, but must not be cast down with these reverses. They are needed to make something of us. The adversities of today are but preparatory for the higher life.

Jesus, our Great Example, was meek and lowly and has left us a pattern to follow; and we have to cut, carve and shape our lives by His Pattern. It will bring trials and great wrestlings with self to follow this pattern; but it will bring also peace and happiness, now and in the future, joy unspeakable!

*If today has brought us trials
And perhaps a bit of sorrow,
Aren't we glad in just a while
There'll be a new tomorrow?
And aren't we glad for grace that makes
Our troubles all seem lighter,
And for faith that future days
Will be happier and brighter?*

May we keep pressing on for that better Day, that is so soon to come. "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us" (Rom 8:18).

St. Joseph, Missouri

H.W.

Overflowing

I am so glad that I can listen quietly to the cassette sermons, reaching forward to the future. It's no use looking backward. As a result of listening, I am resolved to do better; there are so many points on which I can improve.

This age in which we now live is most favourable. We have freedom of religion and evidence of prophecy. I am so thankful for the promise of eternal life and for companions in faith. I am more and more pleased about receiving these helpful cassettes. It is essential that we work to eradicate the deep-rooted aspects, suspicions, etc. For me, hearing the spoken Word sinks in better, gaining knowledge which is not imparted anywhere else.

My cup overflows. I want to thank you all for giving me so much encouragement to press on. God is so good.

Crewe, England

N.T.

Swift as an eagle's flight,
When hastening to his prey,
So, Father, in Thy sight,
Our moments pass away;
*Yet not too swift their course shall be
If they but bear us, Lord, to Thee.*

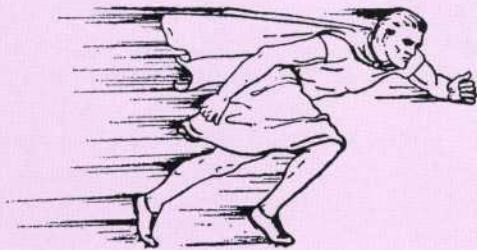
Time

As morning mists, that fly
The footsteps of the light;
As evening clouds, that die
Beneath the touch of night;
*So fly our years—Lord, let them be
As friends, to speed us on to Thee.*

Flies!

Thy mercies past we sing,
The praise is Thine alone;
What future days shall bring
To none but Thee is known:
*Yet, whatso'er our portion be,
Conduct us safe to Zion and Thee.*

Amidst the stream of time,
Teach us to seize each hour;
And form with them a jeweled chain
Which Thy love will adore;
*So shall our days be wisely spent
And all our hours to Thee be lent.*



On life's fast rushing tide,
Where dangers hover near,
If Thou wilt be our Saviour, guide,
We shall no shipwreck fear;
*But joyful breast the stormy sea
And land at last in Zion with Thee.*
