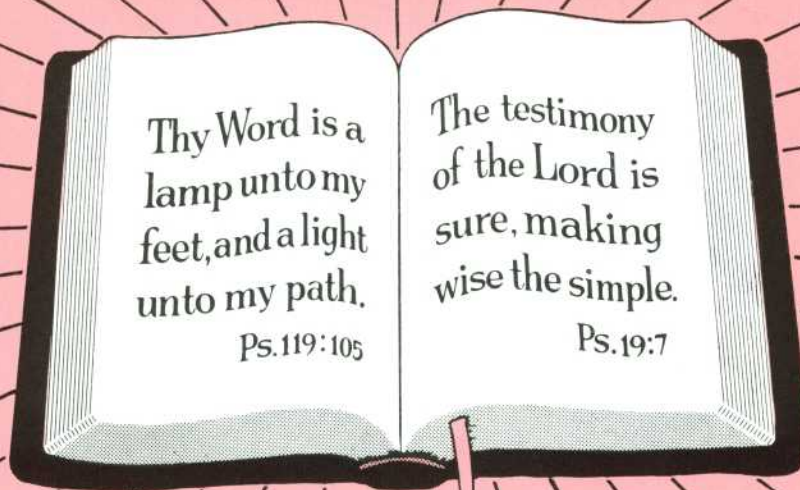


Megiddo Message

DEVOTED TO THE CAUSE OF CHRIST



Journey Toward Life

Should You Love Yourself?

When Christ Is Lifted Up

Tribulation Worketh Patience

There Will Be Turbulence On This Flight

FOLLOW, Follow, I will follow Jesus; anywhere, everywhere, I will follow on."

How easily we have sung these words. And how rightly, for they convey the commitment of a true disciple, ready to follow Jesus anywhere, everywhere.

But do we really understand what they mean?

What did it mean for our Lord? Where did His footsteps lead? Did it not mean a life of cross-bearing? And did not that cross-bearing lead to death, even the last relinquishing of His own will? And will it not mean as much for us to be "always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body"? (II Cor. 4:10).

"Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow his steps" (I Pet. 2:21).

Let us not, however, imagine that following Jesus is a solemn, sad, death-march. Jesus walked *joyfully*—"for the joy that was set before him [he] endured the cross" (Heb. 12:2). In what were almost the last minutes of his cross-bearing, He counseled His followers, "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

If we would follow Jesus, every fact in the life of Christ must become a factor in our lives. The love, the patience, the joy, the courage, the endurance, the fortitude, the faith, the commitment—all must be factors in our life, too, just as they were in His, if we are to be true followers.

Following Christ will be a life involving death—the death of our own wills, our own desires, our own self-appointed ways. God never promised the road always smooth, straight, plain and without problems. Jesus commanded us to follow Him, but He never said it would be easy to do this or that everything would be always to our liking.

But herein lies the opportunity for gain. Jesus said that when we save life for self we lose it. Living for self is a stifling, unsatisfying, unfruitful way to live. We count as foolish the man who wore his glasses on his forehead in order to save them from being worn out. But trying to save our lives for ourselves by not using them for God is no less foolish.

An eloquent expression of the despair to which this self-centeredness plunges one is found in the words of the atheistic philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre: "Man can count on no one but himself; he is alone, abandoned on earth in the midst of his infinite responsibilities without help, with no other aim than the one he sets himself, with no other destiny than the one he forges for himself on this earth." How desperate is a life lived for self!

But when we lose ourselves in following Christ, what a change. However, we quickly discover that the essential ingredient in life is sacrifice.

In cross-bearing, we also find a life of power. As we serve Christ, we attach ourselves to the same life-changing power that dominated His life. We put ourselves in the command of ourselves and the higher power we serve, rather than in the command of circumstances. Jesus, who was able to say not a word before His fiercest persecutors, and very little before Pilate, was in complete command of Himself. There was resident in Him a power that could have called on 12 legions of angels to help; but the same power was able to make Him great enough not to make the call. In so doing He showed His power far more than He could have done by an outward display.

A man who works constantly with bees says he is not afraid of being stung because "Bees never sting when they are making honey." If we spend our time and energy producing for God, we won't become bound up in frustration and criticism. We will be free to bear the fruits of the Spirit.

If cross-bearing brings power, freedom, and the prospect of future life, what then is the problem? It will come, in one way or another. This is what Jesus was saying in Luke 9:23 when some wanted to follow Him. "If any man will come after me . . ." He refused to make the Christian life appear easy or to gloss over its difficulties.

Or, in other words, He seems to be saying, "There will be turbulence on this flight. But fasten your seat belts, and keep flying, and you will reach your destination in due time."

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

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.

Megiddo Message

Vol. 70, No. 6

June 1983

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

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

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

Journey Toward Life

Scripture Reading: Hebrews 12:22-29

LIFE IS A journey. In the poetry of many an ancient race, as far back as recorded history extends, life is a journey and man a traveler. Here we have no continuing city. Pilgrims are we, as were all our fathers. We have no time to settle down and build houses of granite or stone; we have only time enough to pitch a tent, to tarry for a night, and then move on.

Life is a journey; but there are times when someone observing us might wonder where we are headed, which way we are moving—if indeed we seem to be moving at all, so absorbed are we in the thousand little distractions along the way. Why is it? Why do we have such a craving for pleasure and success in this world? It is because we have forgotten that we are in a journey toward LIFE. We have forgotten that here we have no continuing city. We have forgotten that all real living is still ahead.

It has been said of the young generation today that “they don’t know where they’re going, but they’re getting there fast.” Much motion, but no purpose and no goal. There is a general mood of dissatisfaction today, a spirit of restlessness that touches almost everyone. If it keeps us from becoming too satisfied here, from being too settled in this present cosmos, God be thanked! But if it tends to make us skeptical of all goals and all good, let us beware; we have none but ourselves to injure by our disbelief. Whether we choose to acknowledge it or not makes little difference in the Eternal Design. God will accomplish His purpose, whether we choose to accomplish ours or not.

Life is a cycle. We are born into the world, we grow to maturity, and soon begin to decline. Life is a journey, but toward what? Millions of people are being assured by

well-meaning believers that life is eternal, that the dying soul begins a deathless flight to other worlds of life. Impossible? Not at all, they reason. How could God give something so marvelous as life and then take it away or let it pass into nonentity after a mere seventy, eighty or ninety years? Says the poet,

*... The all-imagining Power
That breathed the Cosmos forth as a golden flower,
Had potency in His breath
To plan us new surprises beyond death—
New spaces and new goals
For the adventure of ascending souls . . .
It is not strange that man survives the grave;
'Twould be a stranger thing were he destroyed
Than that he ever vaulted from the void.*

Says another of the journey through life, “These are my drowsy days; soon comes that hour when I shall never sleep again, but wake for ever!” The body dies; but the soul? Never! The very fact that we have within us the desire for continued life proves that it must be. One “feels” his immortality, another “knows,” another “sees” it.

But what are these people seeing, feeling and knowing, when the God who created us has declared in His Word that “the dead know not anything” and that “there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest”? (Eccl. 9:5, 10).

The story is told of a man who filled a huge aquarium with water and placed a large sign over it that read, “See the Invisible Fish.” People flocked to see the phenomenon. Some asked where the fish had been caught. Others were curious about what bait could catch so unusual a specimen. One elderly man even said he had caught just such a fish many years ago, and he recalled the meat was quite tasty.

Note: *Journey Toward Life* is available as a complete church service on cassette. Price: \$3.00

But it was all *imagination*. There was no fish in the fishbowl.

Just so is the immortality which people have seen, felt and known. It is all imagination, because there is absolutely no foundation for the belief. The God of heaven declares plainly that "there is no remembrance" in death, that when a man dies, that "very day his thoughts perish" (Ps. 6:5; 146:3-4). What though a billion people believe to the contrary, does their belief change the facts? Does their confidence alter the truth? We know it does not.

The Destination—of Philosophers

Still, life is a journey, and it is a journey with a destination. Just because we have no immortal soul, just because we do not go to heaven at death, shall we conclude that all hope of future life is a dream and a delusion?

This is the sad and unfortunate prospect of many people living today. In 1974, one hundred twenty of the world's most educated people met in New York and signed a document which they called Humanist Manifesto II. In four thousand words, this Manifesto outlines a program for the salvation of mankind, a salvation to be experienced in this life and entirely without the help of God. "No deity will save us," declares the document that prides itself on being free from religious dogma. "We must save ourselves."

What is the outlook which such a philosophy gives?

Bertrand Russell can tell us. Famous for his books on philosophy and education, hailed as the great defender of free thought, he died in 1970. Shortly before he died, he wrote this evaluation of life. "What is there to make life tolerable? We stand upon the shore of an ocean, crying to the night and the emptiness; sometimes a voice answers out of the darkness. But it is a voice of one drowning; and in a moment the silence returns." Again he wrote, "There is darkness without, and when I die there will be darkness within. There is no splendour, no vastness anywhere; only triviality for a moment, and then nothing." No glory, no future, no hope, what a journey is such a life!

Mark Twain was another of the world's great humanists. He attained worldwide fame both as a writer and a lecturer. Here is his personal testimony about his view of life:

"A myriad of men are born; they labor and sweat and struggle for bread; they squabble and scold and fight; they scramble for little mean advantages over each other. Age creeps upon them and infirmities follow; . . . The burden of pain, care and misery grows heavier. At length ambition is dead, pride is dead, vanity is dead;

*Life is a journey, but toward what?
Where are we going?*

longing for release is in their place. It comes at last, . . . and they vanish from a world where they were of no consequence; where they achieved nothing; where they were a mistake and a failure and a foolishness—a world that will lament them a day and forget them forever."

It is enough to fill us with horror and dread, were this all. But praise be to God, this is *not* all! There is a way out. Thank God, life *can* have destination, glorious destination, even *eternal* destination. That better world of tomorrow is not a dream and a delusion. We know! We can read it in the Divine Record and can know that what we are reading is true. That better Day *will* come, and every faithful servant of God will see it!

The Destination—of Men of God

The expectation of that coming Day transforms the gloom of any present experiences into glory unsurpassable. Listen to these words from one who was facing the end of his journey through life. His time had been spent; he had not many days to live. Yet, was he fearful? tearful? sad? bitter? Hear his words:

"I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing? (II Tim. 4:6-8).

We all know this man. He was Paul, that great Apostle and indomitable disciple of Jesus Christ. He had been a man of great intellect, great ambition, and genuine literary achievement; but he was not looking back at these. What mattered was this: that he had spent his life journeying toward *more* life, even endless life; so as he faced the final hours of the first stage of that career, his face was radiant with happiness. Now was that greater life nearer—and surer—for him than it had ever been before. It was perhaps forty years earlier that he had set out, captured by that sublime hope; the further he traveled, the brighter it became. Now he was almost in possession of it. Only a moment of sleep, and the next thing he would know he would be with his Master—forever! How could he be otherwise than buoyant!

The apostle Peter spent his life in this same journey. From the day that Jesus first said to him, "Follow me," to

"There is darkness without, and when I die there will be darkness within. There is no splendour, no vastness anywhere; only triviality for a moment, and then nothing."

—Bertrand Russell

the end of his course, he was traveling. We cannot fail to notice the difference between the young and impetuous Peter we read of in the Gospels and the mature and fatherly Apostle who wrote the two Epistles that bear his name. But it was not a journey without a single misstep or wrong turn. We know of several. Yet, Peter *did* arrive. His Epistles, written in his final years, glow with the assurance of hope that was his and the strong spiritual vitality he had developed. In his first Epistle he writes, "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed" (I Pet. 5:1). Peter was a witness of the sufferings of Christ; he probably never forgot the shame of his failure that night he denied his Master.

But now, looking back over his life, he could say that he had succeeded; he had overcome. Says Peter, I am "a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed." Not that he was already enjoying the full fruit of his labor, but he had it by promise: He was sure that he would be a "partaker" in the Day to come. When would that be? "When the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away" (I Pet. 5:4). Be faithful to your calling, he exhorts. Do your duty, and "when the chief Shepherd shall appear, you and I both will receive our crowns." Could there be a brighter prospect or a grander hope?

Think what this assurance must have meant to Peter. It meant that he would partake of all the promises God is holding in store for His faithful servants, that "inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, . . . that fadeth not away," that "praise and honor and glory" that shall come with the "appearing of Jesus Christ" (I Pet. 1:4, 7). He shall partake of that life which will never end, that glory which will never dim, that joy that will be unbounded, together with blessings beyond what eye has seen or ear heard or the heart of man has imagined. It was indeed a journey toward life, and Peter was sure of it. No wonder he could close his Epistle with these strengthening words: "But

the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever" (I Pet. 5:10-11).

Other Journeys—Toward Life

Abraham . . .

Journey toward life! What could be a more captivating theme in this world of fleeting pleasure and pain. Long, long ago God revealed the possibilities, and a few far-sighted souls caught the vision. Abraham looked forward. By faith he journeyed, seeking "a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. . . . By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise" (Heb. 11:10, 9).

Moses . . .

Moses spent his life traveling. Many were the times he might have given up, but he had caught the vision of the greater life beyond and "esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt." During those forty long years in the Midian desert, time seemingly spent for nothing, he might have given up. He might have given up again when Pharaoh refused over and over to let the people go. He might have given up in the wilderness when the people rebelled and blamed him and sinned

"A myriad of men are born; they labor and sweat, . . . squabble and scold and fight; they scramble for little mean advantages over each other . . . and vanish"

—Mark Twain

against the Lord who had delivered them. He might have given up when the Lord told him he could not go over Jordan—he who was so far superior to the hordes of rebellious people he had shepherded. Should he, just for one small disobedience in one thoughtless moment, have to die short of the Land of Promise? But Moses was not daunted. God would be faithful, Moses was sure, and so he kept steadily on.

A mighty man was Moses. Hear him admonishing Israel to steadfastness and loyalty on the very same day that he was commanded to go into Mount Nebo and die. Hear him extolling the God who had been their rock, their shield, their deliverer, and their strength. There is joy in his words, there is hope, and steadfast love for God. "Rejoice, O ye nations, and with his people. . . . Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day, which ye shall command your children to observe to do, all the words of this law. For it is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life" (Deut. 32:43, 46-47).

How could Moses do it? By looking beyond. He was journeying toward LIFE. Beyond the short sleep in death he knew he would awake, on the bright morning of the Resurrection. Mount Nebo was not the end; those rebellious Israelites were not his only associates. Someday he would have the companionship of all God's people, some glad day when the complainers and the murmurers would all be gone. Being denied the privilege of crossing Jordan into Canaan was a bitter disappointment; but Canaan was not the goal of his life. Moses "had respect unto the recompense of the reward," the eternal reward that God had promised.

Let Us Pray...

O Lord our God, how brief is our life upon earth! The shuttles of life are fleet, and so soon our days are gone. But may we not yield to discouragement as we consider the flight of time. May we take life day by day, as it comes to us, and fill every hour with grateful appreciation and loving service. Remind us that lifetime is working time, and every moment is big with possibilities, if only we are wise enough to use them. May we not dream of future accomplishments at right living, but keep our minds on the right use of today, which alone is ours.

We thank Thee for a gospel which challenges the best that is in us. We are glad to follow a Christ whose leading calls for real manhood and womanhood—character, power, and devotion to Thee, and to the needs of men. We thank Thee for the ideals which were embodied in the life of that holy Man who gave His life as an example and pattern to us, that following His worthy example we

*"The time of my departure is at hand.
I have fought a good fight, I have
finished my course, I have kept the
faith: henceforth there is laid up for
me a crown of righteousness"*

—The Apostle Paul

Samuel . . .

Samuel was another great good man who spent his days in one great journey toward life. His childhood was noble, but life did not hand Samuel everything he might have asked for in one neatly wrapped package. He had many a keen disappointment. His sons failed him, proving themselves selfish and even dishonest while serving as priests of the Lord their God. The people of the nation, whom he served faithfully for forty years, disappointed him, going contrary to the will of the Lord

may do always the things which please Thee, and never try to please ourselves.

We rejoice that even in the midst of this valley of death we can engage in a journey toward life. Death does not need to hold us captive to his determined will. It is possible for us to escape his powerful clutches. Life in the world to come may be ours; a way has been mapped out in Thy Word whereby we can escape corruption, and be given a life that will never end.

We rejoice in the promise that we are coming to mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels; to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven; to Thee, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.

May we look forward with buoyant hope to that glorious era, to the time when Thy voice will shake not only the earth, but also the heavens, man's faulty structure of misgovernment, replacing it with a government whose officers shall be peace and its exactors righteousness. And in hope of receiving a place in that Kingdom that cannot be moved, may we have grace, whereby we can serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In Jesus' name. Amen.

and asking for an earthly monarch in the place of the Lord their God. And the king whom Samuel anointed, Saul the son of Kish, must have been a grave disappointment to Samuel. How his disobediences must have grieved the heart of the aged man of God. But faithful Samuel kept on, serving in any way he could, till the end of his life. How could he do it? Because he was looking beyond the limits of this world, beyond the borders of Israel, beyond the rise and fall of that nation to the day when the Messiah would come and rule in righteousness.

David . . .

David's career, with its many twists and turns, was nevertheless a journey toward life. And beyond the regrets and failures we can read with pleasure the record of his closing years.

They were not uneventful. There was Absalom's rebellion, a wicked thing for any son to do. And there was David's keen disappointment in not being permitted to build the house of the Lord. This would have been high honor; the anticipation of it had given David many a thought of joy. He had it almost in his grasp. God had even given him the plans. All that remained was to execute them. But now God had other thoughts. David should not build it because, in the words of the Lord, "thou hast been a man of war, and hast shed blood" (I Chron. 28:3). This was the word of the Lord, and it was final. There was no need to appeal the decision, for there would be no change of the verdict.

David's reaction could have been bitter. He could have spent the rest of his days lamenting the great denial. But what did he do? He submitted meekly and "gave to Solomon his son the patterns from the Lord and generous provisions for the building." Why the generous provisions? Because, said David, "I have set my affection to the house of my God." Not being able to take part in the actual building or share in the glory of the work, he nevertheless did all he could to advance the good work. Here is the same David who had sinned so shamefully, who had borne punishment at the hand of the Lord, who had been tried and tested through many a stormy experience. Now hear his ringing challenge to the people: "Who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?"

Then what did David do? He resigned his throne and installed Solomon his son in his stead. So far as we are told, David is the only king to have done this. Does it not reveal his high attainment of character to be able to step down while all the honor of the land was still rightfully his, and place *another* on his throne? He even had his men transfer their loyalties to Solomon. The Lord had blessed David richly, and David had the grace to give it all away.

How could he do this? Because he was counting on God's greater blessings in the world to come. He had transferred his affection to the God He served and to the blessings He was offering for the world to come.

Jeremiah . . .

Think what a life like Jeremiah's would have been without the hope God had set before him. Jeremiah had nothing, so far as this world was concerned. Nothing. He had no home or family of his own—the Lord had asked him not to take a wife in that trouble-filled age. He had no earthly successes or joys that we are told of. And what assignment could be more thankless or more unpopular than that of telling his people what they did not want to hear? Nor are we told of many personal friends which the Prophet could enjoy. We are told of one, Baruch, but during much of his life he must have been separated even from Baruch.

Nevertheless, Jeremiah's life was not without its compensations. Compared with the lives of others of his day, Jeremiah's lot was enviable indeed. What greater friend could he have than the God of his fathers? Through all his trials and afflictions, God was with him, protecting, directing, looking out for His faithful servant. And when the city of Jerusalem was reduced to misery during those eighteen horrible months of siege, probably no one in all the city was so well off as Jeremiah. In the streets were young and old, sick and languishing with hunger; how their cries of anguish must have filled the hearts of everyone with fear. All around was despondency and hopelessness, as people in desperation grasped for every bit of anything—plant, animal or human—that might be eaten. But Jeremiah did not even have to see it. He was locked in the court of the guard—a confinement, to be sure; but here was protection, and his rations, though meager, were sure. Best of all, in his heart was peace, for God had revealed what the outcome would be. So Jeremiah's mind was free to think about that coming great Day when "a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth," when "Judah shall be saved and Israel shall dwell safely" (Jer. 23:5-6; 33:14-15).

The book of Jeremiah tells us a bit about his acquaintance, who also lived at that troubled time. It would seem that Baruch may have been one who wanted to get ahead in the world. Perhaps he had a position which made it reasonable for him to expect some influence and authority. But what can a man of this sort look for in a state rapidly declining to its fall? So God gave Baruch this timely advice—which is combined with a promise of protection. We read, "Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, unto thee, O Baruch: . . . And seekest

thou great things for thyself? seek them not: for, behold, I will bring evil upon all flesh, saith the Lord: but thy life will I give unto thee for a prey in all places whither thou goest" (Jer. 45:2, 5). Baruch was not to seek any ambition in the present world, but he was promised deliverance; he would not have to fear for his life. Here was a reward greater than any self-sought goal he could imagine at such a time.

Baruch was to learn that this world is not really living at all—real life is beyond. This life is a journey *toward* life. It is every man's duty to accept the conditions of the time in which he lives—and look beyond. The glory ahead will be all out of proportion to the sacrifices of the present.

It is likely that both Jeremiah and Baruch witnessed the disastrous results of the dire apostasy of their people. We know that Jeremiah saw the first carrying away, when Daniel and his friends were taken to Babylon. And 18 years later he himself was taken to Egypt. Baruch's experience may have been similar, we are not told. But as men of God we can trust that they took it all in stride, regretting only the hardheartedness and stubbornness of the people. How could these faithful souls do it? They were looking beyond, to the glorious Kingdom of God.

Pilgrims All

The example is for us. We, too, are pilgrims. Here we have no continuing city; everything on which we stake our hopes is ahead. Life is ahead; glory is ahead; eternal blessing and happiness is ahead. It will come with the dawning of the new Age. Indeed, that dawning is even now upon us. It is the Day when the Sun of righteousness shall arise "with healing in his rays" (Mal. 4:2, Moffatt). It is the dawning of the great Day of God Almighty, when "the Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake" (Joel 3:16). It is the Day when the desire of all nations shall come and He will fill His house with "glory" (Hag. 2:7).

Whatever life hands us in this world, whether a cup brimming full of fortune and pleasure, or a half-pint of broken promises and disappointed hopes—what does it matter? This is not our rest; we are only travelers in this world. We are journeying toward LIFE.

Oh, how can we hesitate? How can we linger? Life is not a meaningless, pointless round. It has destination, purpose, direction and reward for us if we seek it. All things are building to a grand and glorious climax.

Are we dismayed by the degradation around us, the bungling of man's political efforts, the tumult and uncertainty all about us, the mortal weakness within us? Let us keep journeying. Great events are just ahead!

And in the meantime, let us associate in thought with

those countless myriads of angels who are already part of God's eternal family, who are on our side, who have trod this way before us, who are cheering for our success in the grandstands above. They are coming for the Marriage Supper. Multitudes will be here. Some may have come already and be at our side, watching, waiting while we finish our work.

Soon we shall see; we shall know—if we keep journeying. MM

Blessings, How They Come!

*Blessings, blessings, Lord, Thou givest,
Blessings mortals ne'er could earn;
On the sinner and the righteous,
If they hearken, if they spurn.
From the morning's early dewdrop
Till the last faint rays of day
From Thy hand all goodness falleth,
Thou art with us all the way.*

*And when shades of night are o'er us,
Then Thy hand is outstretched still,
Arranging circumstances for us
While the stars obey Thy will.
Fall and Winter; Spring and Summer—
As the seasons come and go—
Thou providest for us. None are
Ever slighted here below.*

*For the things of this life given,
Hearts and voices swell in praise
To Thee, gracious God of Heaven,
Great Preserver of our days.
But to us the dearest treasure
Given by Thy hand of love,
Given in unstinted measure,
Is Thy Word, sent from above.*

*Thus, our Father, at this season
We would thank Thee o'er and o'er;
For we have the greatest reason—
Blessings now, and held in store
To be giv'n at the coming
Of our Lord, on earth to reign.
Shout the message, He is coming,
Coming back to earth again.*

—L.L.S.

In the Thick of It

THE ESSENCE of life is conflict. If there is no conflict, there is no story. However the conflict turns out, either victory or defeat for those involved, somewhere along the course of action obstacles must develop and the element of suspense must arise. The bigger the obstacle, the greater the element of suspense.

We have heard the oft-repeated sentiment of living "by the side of the road" and being "a friend to man"; but the most useful service does not consist of being by the side of the road. It consists of being *on* the road, getting into the thick of the conflict, carrying our own burden and helping others to carry theirs. A life of ease and luxury, with means to gratify every desire, sometimes looks ideal to the person struggling to make ends meet; but no amount of wealth or luxury will ever enable anyone to escape altogether the element of conflict. Soon or late, every person comes to the rude awakening that life in this mortal state is a struggle.

Instead of trying to get away from the obstacles on our pathway, we must welcome them as a means of strengthening those noble qualities within us: faith, diligence, courage, strength. The trained athlete would not have much reason for keeping himself in prime condition if he did not have competition to meet. Conflict is the essence of every contest. The winner is the one who can best overcome the obstacles along the way. There would be no point to any contest or encounter if

the winner had nothing to overcome.

Worthwhile victory is never easy. We do not reach an advanced position where we can sit back and say the contest is over and henceforth we need only coast. Nor should we *want* such soft and easy living. Instead, we should welcome problems and obstacles that test our strength and stamina.

If the essence of natural life is conflict, how much more the spiritual life! Such rich and dazzling rewards as God has set before us, exceeding all that eye has seen or ear has heard or the heart of man has imagined, cannot come to us without effort. There must be conflict; there must be achievement; there must be victory. Without conflict there can be neither victory or defeat. A life without conflict would be a life without character.

We should always think affirmatively, never negatively. Think in terms of victory. The prize is too great to miss. We can be victorious if we will. Our state of mind will decide the outcome. Unless we think in terms of victory, soon we shall find ourselves among those fainthearted ones who have turned their backs, who could not face the conflict, the thick of the battle. In every battle there comes a crucial point, some formidable obstacle outweighing all others that must be surmounted if we would win. The way the crisis is handled can mean the difference between victory or defeat for those involved in the struggle.

When the Israelites, under the command of King Saul, arrayed themselves

for battle against the Philistines in the valley of Elah, the great obstacle that stood between them and victory was the giant Goliath, who defied the armies of Israel daily for forty days with this challenge: "Give me a man, that we may fight together" (I Sam. 17:10). At this time David, the youngest son of Jesse, yet a mere stripling of a youth, came to the battlefield to bring food for his three older brothers. He heard the defiant words of Goliath. He saw the helmet of brass and the coat of mail, and the shield-bearer going before him. But with all this, did David run in terror back to his father's sheep which he had left in the care of another? Did he say, "Let me run from this place as fast as I can"? No. Rather, he volunteered his own services, saying to King Saul, "Let no man's heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine."

We all are familiar with the result of David's encounter with Goliath, how with sling and stone he struck the giant in the only vulnerable, unprotected spot.

How did he do it? David had said to Goliath: "I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel whom thou hast defied." He knew the time had come for action, and he knew the Almighty God would be with him. And the responsibility was *his* to act. He did not believe in standing idly by and waiting for someone else to undertake the task. It was *his* task.

How similar is the spiritual conflict in each of us. In Romans 7:15-16 (Moffatt's Bible), we find the apostle Paul describing it: "I cannot understand my own actions; I do not act as I desire to act; on the contrary, I do what I detest. Now, when I act against my wishes, that means I agree that the Law is right." He experienced conflict as he strove to live the Christ life. The same sentiment is expressed by James (4:1, Moffatt Bible): "Where do conflicts,

(Continued on page 15)



A Prayer

HELP ME, O God, to do Thy will
 In all I undertake;
 That every deed of mine may be
 For Thy beloved sake;
 That I may spread Thy gospel to
 Wherever I may tread,
 That they may see in my life
 The Book that I have read.
 Help me, O God, to sin no more
 In any shape or form,
 But always to adore Thee with
 A loving heart and warm.
 From this day forth I want to serve
 And strive to make amends
 For every wrong I may have done
 To strangers or to friends.
 Oh, if I stumble and I fall,
 Be merciful to me,
 Give me Thy grace, and light the way
 To Thy eternity.

By keeping steadily on, most of our perplexing questions are answered and our doubts resolved.

LORD, speak to me that I may speak
 In living echoes of Thy tone;
 As Thou hast sought, so let me seek
 Thy erring children lost and lone.

WE ARE LOOKING for Christ's coming,
 When in splendor He shall reign,
 And all earth shall ring with gladness;
 No more sorrow, death, or pain.

Let us search to know the Scriptures
 And to reach the highest ground;
 Keenly search our hearts before Him,
 Lest imperfect we be found.

We must watch each hour, each moment,
 For our days are rushing by;
 Keep the vision bright before us:
 Jesus' coming now is nigh.

Soon we'll see the shining angels,
 Soon the dead in Christ shall rise;
 Soon His servants stand before Him,
 Soon His saints will gain the prize.

Oh, that home Christ is preparing
 For the faithful, pure and free!
 If we're willing and obedient,
 'Tis for you, and 'tis for me.

Teach us to know ourselves better; that knowing our weaknesses we may be on guard.

Life Is . . .

LIFE is a matter of moments,
 Of meeting each problem now,
 Taking the best that is waiting,
 Holding and guiding the plow.

Life is the way that we plant it,
 Pruning and pulling each weed,
 Asking each day for guidance
 To face the daily need.

Life is for searching the Bible
 Whenever our faith would dim;
 Life is a matter of growing
 Up to the height of Him.

Should You Love Yourself?

JESUS made two statements which would seem to be contradictory. One was: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matt. 16:24). The other, really a quotation from the book of Deuteronomy, was: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Mark 12:31). The second statement implies not only that you are to love yourself but also that your love for other persons is closely tied with loving yourself.

How are we to understand this? Is Christianity self-denying or self-affirming? Is it something that denies us the fullness of our potential, or does it help us develop our potential?

Jesus said also, "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10:10, RSV). What did He mean by that?

A thoughtful university student once said quite frankly, "If to be a Christian means that I have to cancel out as a person, I'm not interested." He pointed out a few who called themselves Christians whom he labeled as "non-entities." They were always talking about "self-negation" and never seemed to accomplish any positive good.

A great deal of confusion exists at this point. Is Christianity life-denying or life-fulfilling? Is it a pinched, narrow life or a means to a full, abundant life? Does it call upon us to hate ourselves or to love ourselves?

As usual, Jesus gives the answer, if only we will let Him tell us. He says: "For whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it" (Matt. 16:25, RSV). Does that sound like double talk? If it does, it is only because we do not see the real meaning. Perhaps the Williams translation of the New Testament makes the meaning clearer: "Whoever wants to save his higher life will have to give up his lower life, whoever gives up his lower life for my sake will find the higher life." Jesus is using the word *life* in more than one sense—the lower life of self-centeredness and selfishness, and the higher life which is the developing of our finest potential and our greatest usefulness in the sight of God.

Is it possible for us to "love" ourselves at the higher, God-exalting level, and at the same time deny ourselves at the lower, selfish level? Yes! This is the lesson Jesus is teaching. That is the only way we can love ourselves under God. It is the only way we can truly love our neighbor.

This is an entirely different viewpoint from that commonly accepted. It means that we see every person—including ourself—from God's point of view, from the viewpoint of eternal value and higher worth. Jesus gave us this different viewpoint. He saw every person that way. Every person has worth and value or lacks worth and value just according as he fits himself into the divine scheme. He revealed to us what God is like, and how we can become morally like God. Here is the heart of Jesus' revelation. True love, divine love, is to aspire to God-likeness, rejoicing in whatever God has given us and glorifying Him in all things. This is why Jesus cited as the first and greatest commandment, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. . . . Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Mark 12:30-31). That, Jesus said, is the basis of loving God. It is to prove ourselves wholly committed to God and, in so doing, to one another. In other words, love God, love your neighbor, and love yourself—properly!

There is among some religious groups a long tradition of self-debasement which is not in keeping with the spirit and teaching of Jesus. It was the spirit of the so-called Christian mystics, who believed that anything physical was worldly and should be denied. The more they thought of themselves as "poor weak worms in the dust," the more spiritual they were supposed to be. But that is not Christianity. That is *asceticism*. It is withdrawal from life, denying of all physical pleasures, even self-punishment, not the enlarging, glorifying and exalting of life.

Did Jesus practice asceticism? No. He was not withdrawing and mystic. Nor was He self-denying for the sake of proving what He could endure. He came to dem-

onstrate a superior quality of life right in the midst of daily activities. He lived and ministered among the people. He taught them—more, He *showed* them—the right way. Of course He went alone to pray, and out of His long encounters with God, great power came. But Jesus was not life-denying. He was life-affirming. He was totally unselfish. At the same time He was totally fulfilling. Into even the most ordinary ventures of life He brought great—even eternal—meaning and purpose. Because of Him, common things became uncommon. Life was enriched.

Some people have the idea that if they would be Christians they must despise themselves, hate themselves, deplore themselves. This is true in one sense. When we have sinned we must deplore our sinfulness and repent “in dust and ashes.” We must be humble, not overly self-assured or self-confident. But never must we overlook or deny the potential that God has placed within us, the potential of becoming His own sons and daughters—lest we fail to make fullest use of our possibilities and at Judgment be held accountable for our failure.

God has given us what we have so that we may offer it back to Him in total dedication, in disciplined living, in directed thinking, in motivated living. He wants us to love ourselves and others according to His pattern. He is saying, in other words, Love God, love your brother in Christ, and love yourself—so much so that you cannot bear to have yourself living at any less than your best. Demand the utmost of yourself, in God-glorifying activity. Deny yourself at the lower level of self-consciousness, self-reference, and self-centeredness, that you may be able to affirm yourself in your higher nature—that nature that is God-honoring and God-exalting.

What is this love? It is in making all of life a divine relationship. It is lifting ourselves and our natural desires to the level of God. Not mere sentiment, mind you, but love—creative, uniting, disciplining, healing love. Such love leads to communion, to fellowship, to unity.

But there's a strange pitfall here that we must recognize. An illustration may clarify the point. Attending an interdenominational camp several years ago was a lady who seemed to live in a little world of her own. She was a mystic who was reputed to be very spiritual. She claimed to get all her signals directly from God. You couldn't have conversation with her. All you could do was listen. If anyone else spoke, she seemed to be impervious to their thought. For her, spirituality was a kind of isolation.

Here is a religion that becomes a form of self-worship, a spiritual egoism, a withdrawing into oneself that neither honors God nor benefits men. It was a religious form of self-centeredness, a spiritual egoism. This is not the

Christian standard. True religion impels to meaningful living and serving, not to isolation.

There's another pitfall. It is the notion that when you live close to God, you dare not use your mind and reason, that God does not want you to think. It is the belief that in some mysterious way the Spirit leads you directly, bypassing your human faculties. This notion arises from the idea that the human faculties are somehow opposed to God.

This is not the Bible standard. Again and again we are urged to present all our faculties to God as an act of worship and to prove His will in our conduct. As the apostle Paul says, “I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice . . .” All your faculties—your body, your mind, your emotions, your reason—your *whole being*! And we are to do this to “prove what is the will of God” (Rom. 12:1-2, RSV).

What, then, would God have us do? Deny ourselves all that is low, all that He forbids, all that would weaken us to withstand the wiles of evil. Then we are to strengthen ourselves in the confidence that we can, we must and we will be victorious over sin. For true religion is not life-denying but life-fulfilling, even to fitting us for a place in the glorious and eternal Kingdom of Christ.

As long as you despise yourself, you deny life. When you love yourself properly and give yourself lovingly to God and your neighbor, you fulfill life. And more. You expand life to its fullest potential now, and open the portals to eternal life in the future.

Truly, Christianity is life-fulfilling, not life-denying. Love the Lord your God—and your neighbor *as yourself*. Give up your self-centeredness on the “lower level” and then you will be able to find real life on the highest level attainable, even in the Kingdom of God. MM

*Diamonds are only chunks of coal
That stuck to their jobs, you see.
If they'd given out like most of us do,
Where would the diamond be?
It isn't the fact of making a start,
It's the sticking that counts, I'll say.
It's the fellow who knows not the meaning of fail,
But hammers and hammers away.
Whenever you think you have come to the end,
And you're beaten as bad as can be;
Remember that diamonds are chunks of coal
That stuck to their jobs, you see. —Sel.*

And Still She Speaks

Extracts from sermons, discussions, talks, comments
by Rev. Maud Hembree (1853-1935).



Our old nature, our "old self," must be crucified with Christ in order that we may live with Him eternally.

We can have our own way, God says; we can live to the flesh if we want to. But if we want something better than this life, we must cease letting our natural desires rule us.

Pride is a terrible evil in human nature, pride in what we can do, pride in ancestry, thinking we are somebody. Pride is as natural as the breath we breathe. But actually we are nobody in God's sight. The only nobility the Lord has are those that have a contrite spirit and tremble at His Word. The Lord is selecting a nobility who have learned to rule themselves.

Would you not like such a wonderful home as that? Christ will dwell with all that glorified band who have overcome all evil, and there shall be no more death, nor any more pain. Why do you not go to work and do better to gain that blissful home? It is certain to be yours if you do on your part.

There is something to do if we would be accepted of the Almighty, but it will make us happier in this life.

The literal sacrifices offered under the Mosaic law were for a good purpose, but they could never avail to salvation. It is not possible for any literal sacrifice to take away sin.

Every one called out of darkness into the glorious light of God—Abraham, Isaac, Samuel, Deborah, Paul and others—all that are called out during the six thousand years, are members of the body of Christ.

God is a just and righteous God. We cannot gain salvation in any other way than by righteous deeds and good works. We will receive according to what we have done.

We beg, we plead and implore men and women to turn from every evil way, from jealousy, deceit and dishonesty. We try to persuade them to be determined to let the law of God rule them and not these evils.

We must become one with God mentally by believing His truth, and one with Him morally by obeying His truth, then Christ will make us one with Him physically in that grand Day when He returns.

We have all felt jealous; some people are more jealous than others, and do not see themselves. One said, "I am not jealous!" and there he had the green goggles on and could not see himself! We have all been jealous, every one of us. There is not a man or woman living that has not had jealousy rankle in the breast.

Is it not wonderful to have old things, old thoughts, miserable old feelings, envy, jealousy, anger and bitterness all pass away, and to become a new creature? We look at the natural man and we see that he is a slave to his own desires. How wonderful to get free! It is wonderful for a people to be free from literal slavery, but how much more wonderful to be free from our own ways. What will set us free? Jesus gave the answer: "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

Be more anxious to learn the principal things of God's law, then your mind will expand and will grow; and you will be able to take in the depths of this wisdom of the Bible, and in the future can gain greater wisdom. What will our minds be when "this mortal" shall have "put on immortality"!

In the Thick of It

(Continued from page 10)

where do wrangles come from? . . . Is it not from these passions of yours that war among your members?"

This inner conflict is waged between the "new man" and the "old man." Truly this "old man" has been, as Saul said of Goliath, a "man of war from his youth," but we must fight him to a finish. This "old man", our old nature, must die. Before we can know the full joy of life in Christ, the head of this "Goliath," self, must be severed. We read: "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin" (Rom. 6:6-7). We must "put off . . . the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and . . . put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. 4:22, 24).

In this the "cool of the day" of salvation we truly are fortunate that our conflicts come principally from within. Certainly we have no trials such as God's people encountered before and during the Apostolic Age. They had "cruel mockings and scourgings, . . . bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, . . . were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented" (Heb. 11:36-37). Dare we say—even whisper—that our lot is hard?

Knowing that this warfare must be accomplished—if we want life—let us go forth with determination to conquer this giant, for we know God will aid us in all our conflict for Him. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31).

Let us get into the thick of this battle, "join the ranks of those who bear suffering, like a loyal soldier of Jesus Christ. No soldier gets entangled in

civil pursuits; his aim is to satisfy his commander. Again, a competitor in the games is not crowned unless he observes the rules" (II Tim. 2:4-6, Moffatt). And remember this, there is no "discharge" in this war (Eccl. 8:8) or "casting off weapons," as the marginal reading gives. "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every

thought to the obedience of Christ" (II Cor. 10:4-5). If Paul had to watch his thoughts and actions continually, do we think we are not in danger?

If we *really* want life, we must get into the thick of the fray and stay there until the enemy is vanquished. When we can truthfully say that we have brought every thought into subjection, then the "old man" will be dead at our feet, and we shall be conquerors. We shall have resisted unto blood, and gained the greatest battle on earth. MM

I Am Ready

OUR PHYSICAL health is of great concern to us; for if we have not made great strides forward in conquering our evil natures before health problems come our way, how much more difficult it will be then. Let us take heed to our thoughts.

There is a characteristic phrase of Paul's which we meet often in his writings: "I am ready." We, too, should be ready—living all the time such a life that if Christ were to come today there would be no surprise, but only a joyful greeting.

A peasant once admonished a church saint, "Take heed that thou be as good as men believe thee."

This is good advice for us too. We must be honest, sincere and humble, for if we fall it may cause others to stumble as well.

We are the only ones who know our secret thoughts, besides God, and even when one who professes falls, it is not easily discerned whether a good man has gone wrong or a bad man been found out. But whatever the case it would be better for this man had a millstone been tied around his neck and he were drowned in the depths of the sea.

Let us strive to put away all falsehood, be exactly what we profess to be and eager for the coming of the Lord.

Let our prayer be: Our Father, well we know that it depends upon ourselves whether the coming of our King shall bring joy or terror to us. If our life were ended tomorrow, would we be willing to have it judged as to its sincerity of motive, its earnestness of endeavor, and its faithfulness and loyalty to our Lord? Or would we beg for a few more days in which to prepare to meet the Judge?

Help us, O our Father, so to live each day that we may be among the number whom Jesus pronounced blessed, whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching.

"The last day lies hidden; therefore, watch every day."

—Contributed

When Christ Is Lifted Up

THE RELIGIOUS world lay great stress on a statement by Jesus recorded in John 12:32-33: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die."

Indeed, these are Jesus' own words, and it is a fact of history that His death was on a cross rather than by hanging, or stoning, or any one of a number of violent deaths that men inflicted upon one another in those days. However, Jesus' words, if taken literally, are a misnomer. He has not drawn all men unto Him. He predicted that His true followers would be few, and His prediction has proved true. By any numerical scheme men might devise, He comes far short of drawing *all* men to Him. Statistics show that the non-Christians on earth outnumber the so-called Christians almost two to one.

Lifting Up . . . only on Calvary?

What shall we say? Shall we disbelieve these words of the Master, or shall we allow that this forecast of a "lifting up" could have other applications as well as His literal "lifting up" on the Roman cross of crucifixion?

A reference to a "lifting up" occurs elsewhere in the records of Jesus' words. Let us read John 3:14-15: "And

as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." Again the question poses itself, what did "lifting up" mean? Did Jesus here refer specifically to His literal death on the cross? We do not believe that He did.

In John 8:28, Jesus made clear that the Jews were going to lift Jesus up to crucify Him: Then said Jesus unto them, "When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things." Again there is no evidence that the lifting up for crucifixion was the only lifting up He was to experience. (If Christ had been crucified and left in the tomb, would His statement have become true: "Then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself"?) The claim that the lifting up on the cross was the singular purpose of Jesus' life is without Scriptural support.

The popularly held view, that the important lifting up of Jesus was His death on the cross on Calvary, and that the purpose of that one act was to provide a magnet that should draw all men to Him, lacks conclusive evidence.

John 12:32 in the New Catholic Edition of the Bible reads, I "will draw *all* things to myself," rather than "all men." Obviously He did not literally draw all things to Himself. The Berkeley version words it: "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, shall draw everyone to myself," and in a footnote, "Gentile as well as Jew." This suggests an entirely different thought—likewise unfulfilled by His literal death on the cross or at the time of His literal crucifixion; for God never accepted *all* Jews, nor will He ever accept all Gentiles. God's call has never received universal response.

There are several other "lifting ups" that are significant in the life of Jesus and which we must not overlook.

Lifting Up . . . Resurrection

Very soon after His crucifixion Jesus experienced a very great and significant lifting up in being resurrected from the dead—a lifting up far surpassing in impact His lifting up on the cross. So important was His resurrection that it is mentioned twelve times in the book of Acts, twenty times in the Epistles. His death on the cross is cited only 11 times. From the statistical point of view the resurrection exceeds in importance, 32 to 11.

Lifting Up . . . Ascension

There is yet another lifting up which Jesus experienced, the lifting up when He ascended to the Father. At the time He ascended, "the people answered him, We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever: and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up? who is this Son of man? Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you" (vs. 34-35). Here was a repetition of what He had previously said to the Jews, "Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto him that sent me. Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come" (John 7:33-34). He knew in advance of the Father's plan for Him to ascend to heaven and be seated by Him in His throne—truly a glorious lifting up.

What, then, *might* we conclude that Jesus was saying in John 12:32-33? Combining the above possibilities, we might paraphrase His thought as follows: "After I shall have died and risen again, and ascended to the Father, by the preaching of my word and the influence of My spirit I shall attract and illuminate both Jews and Gentiles." According to ancient prophecy, one of the singular characteristics of the Messiah was that unto Him should "the gathering of the people be," as Jacob prophesied when blessing his sons (Gen. 49:10). That is the great work which Christ is destined to accomplish. And before He can accomplish this great work, He shall be "lifted up" or exalted.

Lifting Up . . . Recognition

Another prophecy to which our Lord might have referred has also to do with His ultimate lifting up. It is found in Isaiah 11:10: "There shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious." There seems to be an allusion here to a custom followed in ancient wars. The ensigns of colors of commanders of

regiments were elevated on high places, on long poles, that the people might see where the pavilion of their general was, and so flock to his standard. What a fitting simile of the time when Christ is raised to the highest position as King of the whole earth, and all mankind shall be drawn to Him!

Lifting Up . . . Kingship

Another lifting up is revealed by Jesus' answer to Pilate's question concerning His kingship. Jesus replied in the following manner: "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world" (John 18:37). His destiny was to be a King, not a crucified Saviour! Without doubt, the impact of this great exaltation had a far greater effect upon the people in the early Church than did His lifting up on the Roman cross.

Lifting Up . . . Exaltation

The ultimate in lifting up is the glorious future exaltation, when Christ is inaugurated as King of the whole earth. Though now at the Father's right hand, He is not always to remain there. He is not always to fill a secondary role as the King's Son. The day will come when He will be King in His own right, King of the entire earth. This is why He has been given a "name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:9-11). All aspects and orders of the New Creation will be subject to His exalted command.

David, King of Israel, speaking of his greater Son, Christ, vividly pictures the exalted position He will fill when His lifting up is complete: "Give the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king's son. He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment. . . . In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace

so long as the moon endureth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. . . . Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him. . . . His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed" (Ps. 72:1-2, 7-8, 11, 17).

In the final consummation of God's promised lifting up, Christ *shall* literally draw all men to Him. God's will is destined to be obeyed universally, all opposition completely abolished. "For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted" (Isa. 60:12). Then shall be fulfilled the words of the prophet Daniel (7:27): "And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him."

Revelation 5:13 pictures beautifully the time when all mankind will have been drawn with cords of love to the great King, who shall then have been lifted high above all earthly authority and power: "And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

Christ's lifting up will then be complete, and all things will be drawn to the great King when the sons of God come into their own and God's declared purpose to fill the earth with His glory is complete. The promise is definite, and the infinite power of God Almighty is behind it. Someday the bliss portrayed in the angels' song at Christ's birth will become reality: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." MM

Tribulation Worketh Patience

TRIBULATION worketh patience," says the Apostle. Life rarely runs with any of us exactly as we wish it would. Seldom is it a broad river, keeping unhindered a quiet course, and at last with measured outflow reaching the ocean of the great future we envisioned.

Life is often a dashing, boiling, turbid stream; turning frequently on itself, fretted by rocks, broken by falls, or crowded between narrowing banks. Lived according to our own natural impulses, life is often a bitter disappointment. The seeds we planted do not yield the harvest we had hoped. Sometimes the crop fails completely.

But life lived according to the plan of the Great Lifegiver is not a disappointment or a failure. It may be filled with hindrances, interruptions, obstructions, and heartbreaking trials; but Brother Paul, who endured trials and persecutions unknown to anyone in our day and called them "light afflictions," said, "tribulation worketh patience." Tribulation—that is, all these apparently hindering providences, these embarrassments, these interruptions, these discouragements: tribulation worketh patience. Patience—that is, submission to God's will and a determined doing of duty: patience worketh experience. Experience—that is, a larger and truer conception of God's way of dealing with His children: experience, this ennobled view of the Divine plan, worketh hope. And what is hope? It is a restful certainty that

God will lead things to the wisest and most shining issue for our eternal good.

Let us look at an actual example of just such a providentially *hindered*, and yet every time providentially *helped* man. And in the light of this example let us seek to win a little more of the Christian grace of patience—that quiet submission to God's will, that steady doing of His commandments in the face of all obstacles; for in the Christian sense, a patient man is a strong man and a conquering man.

Consider David, a mere boy among the sheep. Yet he had been chosen out from among his brothers, out from all Israel, and anointed by the prophet Samuel. David knew well enough the meaning of that ceremony. It was no usual thing for the venerable Prophet thus to call and consecrate. David knew what the Prophet had done meant kingship. But at present there is neither crown nor kingdom. David is but an anointed shepherd. He is there on the hillsides, doing only what he was doing before the consecrating oil had touched his forehead. He is only feeding sheep and defending them from the prowling bear and lion. Far is he from the throne to which he has been called.

But an evil spirit possesses Saul the king. It is not a literal demon, but rather a bad mood of despondency and brooding, most likely over duties undone, the work of life neglected, the laws of God consciously broken, promises unkept. Such things as these could surely open the gates for the coming of

such an evil spirit into the heart of any man. Such things as these will clash their discords even amid the harmonies of the best palace. And through the more thoughtful hours of King Saul, that wild lawlessness when he dared to do the sacrifice fit only for priestly hands, that avaricious saving of the best of the spoils of the Amalekites and the false excuse for it that it was for God's sake when he knew it was for his own, and the prophecy of doom falling from the lips of Samuel—all of these doubtless haunted the king and thrust their disturbance into every attempted joy.

And so an "evil spirit" possessed King Saul. There was sought out through all the coasts of Israel a young man who was skilled on the harp. Music might be the medicine for the gloomy king. David was chosen; thus David was introduced at court. He became the favorite of the king.

Surely now the road toward the kingdom is opening for David. At court the king's chosen friend, David can now certainly begin to see at least the first unfoldings of Samuel's prophecy. But David's music charms the evil spirit off. Saul measurably forgets his troubles and regains his cheerfulness. David, like many other court favorites, is forgotten. The use for him is done.

So back to the sheep-feeding and the sheep-guarding. The road toward the kingdom twists strangely. It seems to double on itself. David must learn in God's school the lesson of delay.

Years afterward—it must have been many years; for David, a boy when he first came to Saul's court, had now so fully grown that Saul no longer recognized him; years afterward, during all of which only the quiet duties of a shepherd had filled his days, David finds the army of the Philistines in rank against the army of the Israelites. It was when Goliath with his massive shield and spear and mountain weight of armor had stood forth for forty days to dare to single combat. Then David with his shepherd's staff and simple shepherd's sling appears as his antagonist. He flings the stone. The aim is true. The giant falls. Israel is triumphant.

Once more David is installed in court. He becomes the king's son-in-law. He is commander-in-chief of the armies of Israel. He is everywhere successful. He is within one step of the throne. Surely the prophecy of Samuel hastens to its fulfillment. How wide, how smooth the way for David's feet!

But God's thoughts are not David's thoughts, nor are His ways David's. The hosts of the Philistines have been put to flight and all Israel rings with David's praises. From throngs of Hebrew maidens sounds the song, "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands" (I Sam. 18:7). Saul's jealousy is aroused at the success and consequent reputation of David. Now his place at court, his place in Saul's household, his command of the armies—all these things are torn from him. There is the gradually formed belief that David is the man who shall at last possess his throne; there is the determination of Saul to slay him.

Then comes the hurried flight; the warnings of Jonathan; the secreting in the cave of Adullam; the resorts of Engedi; the pursuits and bafflings of Saul; the flight of David and his men to the Philistines; years of torturing anxiety, of precarious livelihood.

And now the last limit of wretchedness is reached, the last and bitterest cup is to be drained. These are David's

thoughts; he says in his heart, "I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul: there is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines; and Saul shall despair of me, to seek me any more in any coast of Israel: so shall I escape out of his hand" (I Sam. 27:1). So David goes over to the Philistines, and the king of the Philistines gives him a city, Ziklag; and he brings his own wives there, and his followers bring theirs. And in the kingdom of this city there begins to come to David and his followers something of rest and peace.

But the rest and peace are of short duration. David and his men are absent from Ziklag on an expedition, and when they return, behold, it is burned with fire, and their wives and their sons and their daughters are taken captive. "Then David and the people that were with him lifted up their voice and wept, until they had no more power to weep." David was greatly distressed, for now not only was Saul his enemy but his own people turned against him, "because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters" (I Sam. 30:4). But what did David do? "David encouraged himself in the Lord his God" (v.6).

And now, at last, God's time has come. This trial for David is substantially done and his reward begins. The burning of Ziklag is the turning point. The prophecy which had waited so many years begins now to blossom into fulfillment. The spoil is recovered from the Amalekites; Saul is shortly slain by the enemy. David goes to Hebron and is made king over Judah, and seven years later all Israel owns his sway.

So David was placed under, or rather carried through tribulation. And David, notwithstanding, held himself to God. In the deepest trial he "encouraged himself in the Lord his God." He possessed his soul in patience. So did God bring him out at last to victory, into the kingdom, into honor.

Is not David's life an illustration, an example for us—often thwarted, often disappointed, often full of sorrow, weighed down with burdens, stumbling, falling, and rising again? We are seemingly thrust into the furnace, driven into exile, tested, tried. But this is the test of the Christianity of a man: under the pressure of just those burdens, amid the white heat of just that furnace, amid the desolation of just that exile, to believe firmly that God will sustain and in His own good time relieve; to take to oneself this promise, that God will not suffer me to be tempted above what I am able to bear; that He will lead me out of trial into final peace and sunshine.

In the light of this example of patience, let us seek out certain truths which shall encourage us in this grace of patience.

FIRST: A man must grow.

Growing means waiting and struggling toward the end. In the Divine plan no man leaps into place and power. No man attains the stature of the Master at one bound. Even Christ learned obedience by the things which He suffered. We look at some noble life, great in worth, throwing its healing and helping shadow across the ways of other lives like a palm amid the desert. We are fired with enthusiasm for holy emulation. Let me live like that, we say. Let the rich fruit hang upon the fruitful boughs and the grateful shadows fall from the thickening verdure of my life. There is the plan of the life before us. I will be like that, we say.

We look at one side—life's completed plan. We forget the other—the minute's work, the first step to the plan's completeness. We are too apt to think we should bound into goodness, and are not willing to walk up to it step by step, minute by minute. Men are like trees in this growth into the Divine image—first germ, then sprout, then rising trunk, then spreading branches. The giant tree, shooting its pinnacles of green far into the sky, is only the result

of the many minute growths of the days and months and years.

David at Ziklag, where his destiny turned; at Hebron, at Jerusalem, where he wielded his scepter and wore his crown, was a very different person from David the shepherd boy on the hillsides, or from David fingering his harp before the moody Saul.

We must be patient for our growth, encouraging ourselves in the Lord.

SECOND: Varied experiences are needful for the upbuilding of a man, not only sunshine and calm and light, but shade, storm, and darkness.

Men grow by trial as trees grow by tempest. The compacted purpose, the unflinching resolution, the real worth of inner integrity as compared with mere outward profession, of eternity as compared with time—all these come through trial. Sin in the human heart, righteousness in the heart—from these two opposites, trial inevitably results; trial that cuts away the sin so that righteousness may grow.

Sometimes it may seem to us as though God's entire dispensation toward us were one of trial; as though the night were vastly longer than the day, the tempest than the calm. There are times in some lives when trials pile mountain high. Darkness succeeds darkness; fresh disappointment treads upon the heels of disappointment; burden is laid above burden until it seems as though the back of endurance must break. But wait, be patient!

If the night did not wrap the tree with gloom and damp; if the storm did not stiffen and try its fibers; if there were always stillness and sunshine around it, there would be no tree. Character is a growth, and trial is an essential means of growth. If we value truth and purity and nobleness; if we would have them ours, then must we be tried, we must endure tribulation. How thoroughly David was tried! through what years of exile and persecution

and disappointment was he carried! Yet through all this time David's character was growing; God's hand was fashioning him for his destiny.

Be patient, therefore. Encourage yourself in the Lord your God. He has meaning in your trial.

THIRD: There is divine and precise adjustment in all our trials. Knowing the story of David as we do, knowing the disorganized state of the kingdom when he received it, knowing the wars he had to wage during his whole reign, can we conceive a better method of discipline than that through which God led him? It took a great deal of costly training to transform the shepherd boy into the king. He would not have been the king he was had he missed this training. God knew his need.

We are training for a higher kingship, a loftier empire—to become kings and priests with Jesus on this earth when His power has conquered the unrighteous kingdoms of men. God knows just the discipline we need to prepare us for so high a station. "Every man according to his several ability." The greater the ability, the greater the trial and the sterner the discipline. Our cross is the lightest one God can lay upon us consistently within His magnificent design for us.

Let none of us think that we shall escape trials and persecutions in this world. The haven of rest lies not down a placid river, but beyond a stormy sea. Amid the billows of temptation and affliction let us never bewail nor magnify the hardships. Think of the crown, not the cross. Remember that "there hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (I Cor. 10:13). If the way of escape does not appear immediately, be patient. God is faithful. When we are sufficiently refined, deliverance will come.

The Captain of our salvation was made perfect not through protection and shielding from the rough winds of adversity but through suffering. Are we better than He? God's law has been compared to the anvil upon which the hammers of criticism are constantly being broken and worn out. If that law be in us and we in it, we become a part of the anvil and cannot fail to feel the vicious blows of the assaulting hammers. But the qualities which absorb and dissipate the shocks are faith, trust, patience.

If innocent of any wrongdoing, the darts of the enemy can never slay us. "Blessed are ye," said our Captain, "when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake" (Matt. 5:11). Watch carefully, lest impatience beget rebellion and give the adversary a just cause for accusation. Emulate Daniel, whose enemies could find no fault in him except concerning the law of his God. "It is better . . . that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing . . . For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God" (I Pet. 3:17; 2:20).

To the man reckoned among the saints, the reproach of Christ becomes a badge of honor. "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye . . . If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but . . . glorify God on this behalf" (I Pet. 4:14, 16).

The powers of evil may rage, but their time is short. Let them do their worst, for "the Judge standeth before the door." Help is at hand. It will not be long. The hope of that long sweet rest from all trials will nerve us for the few remaining miles.

So when a way for action appears, act. When a blank wall confronts you, "stand still and see the salvation of God." Here is the highest form of patience the Christian can attain. MM

On Love and

I Corinthians 13

THE THIRTEENTH chapter of I Corinthians is certainly a masterpiece and a gem in the writings of the apostle Paul. It is said that some men take an occasional journey into this chapter of the Bible. However, we cannot journey in and out of this chapter at our caprice but must dwell there constantly if we want to accomplish what we have set out to do.

Life is full of opportunities. Life is not a holiday, but an education. What makes a man a good linguist, a good printer, a good painter, a good musician? Practice. Likewise, the Christlike nature in its fullest development can be obtained only by ceaseless practice.

Comparing is selfish. Once a small boy exclaimed happily, "There! I jumped two feet high that time." But his older brother spoiled his happiness by countering, "You think that's great, do you? Why, I can jump four feet high!" Comparing is selfish. Love thinks not of self, to boast what it can do; love thinks of others. Love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up.

There is an Eastern proverb which says, "By patience, and perseverance and a bottle of sweet oil, the snail at length reached Jerusalem." It seems the meaning of the bottle of sweet oil is the oil of courtesy to help others along the long, rough road of life. One who is ruled by love will not be guilty of rude manners or discourteous deeds of which he will surely be afterwards ashamed, for love doth not behave itself unseemly.

Man certainly is on a collision course with catastrophe of his own making at the end, and he does not know which way to turn. Only the Lord knows how to solve the problems of earth. And soon He will.

—Contributed

Virtues to Emulate

Fill in the blanks with words from among this beautiful collection:

holy	harmless
strong	clothed with humility
kindly affectioned	at peace
pure	perfectly joined together
agreed	zealous
steadfast	clean
unmovable	perfect
blameless	wanting nothing
spiritually-minded	gentle
separate	patient

1. "Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be _____" (I Pet. 5:5).
2. "To be carnally minded is death; but to be _____ is life and peace" (Rom. 8:6).
3. "That ye may be _____ and _____, the sons of God, without rebuke" (Phil. 2:15).
4. "He hath chosen us . . . that we should be _____ and without blame before him in love" (Eph. 1:4).
5. "Come out from among them, and be ye _____" (II Cor. 6:17).
6. "Quit you like men, be _____" (I Cor. 16:13).
7. "Be _____ one to another with brotherly love" (Rom. 12:10).
8. "Acquaint now thyself with him, and be _____" (Job 22:21).
9. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye _____, _____, always abounding in the work of the Lord" (I Cor. 15:58).
10. "Can two walk together, except they be _____?" (Amos 3:3).
11. "That ye be _____ in the same mind, and in the same judgment" (I Cor. 1:10).
12. "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be _____ therefore, and repent" (Rev. 3:19).
13. "The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be _____ unto all men, apt to teach, _____" (II Tim. 2:24).

*We must do what we can to reduce, not increase, tensions.
We must do what we can to present only the facts as we know them,
not as we imagine them to be.
We must learn to live with crises in an age which calls for cool heads
and accurate appraisals.*

“I Will Meditate”

“I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways. I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word” —Psalm 119:15-16

WHAT A happy quadruplet we have in this psalm of David. “I will meditate . . . have respect . . . delight . . . not forget.” It is all a matter of properly directed and disciplined thought.

Seldom do we consider sufficiently the magnitude and power of our thoughts. We are, in reality, not as we seem, or even as we act, but as we *think*. Our thoughts, not our deeds, are the true substructure of our character. In our thoughts we “meditate,” “have respect,” “delight,” and do “not forget.” This means that on our thoughts depend our victory in all areas of spiritual conquest. As we think, we are.

When we have learned to meditate constructively, to think on all that is true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report, we have within us the most powerful elements of strength and endurance that can be found.

Meditation is thinking deeply upon that which will develop and fortify our powers to endure; it is feeling a deep and overpowering respect for God and whatever He dictates; it is remembering the things we ought not to forget, and forgetting the things we ought not to remember. Such meditation is a mighty force to keep us in the way to life—for who will easily set aside that which is the delight of his heart?

True spiritual growth begins with deep, heart-searching meditation, searching to see what God requires of us and what iniquities stand between us and Him. In the words of the Psalmist, “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. . . . ’Tis inward truth that thou desirest; grant me then wisdom in my secret heart” (Ps. 51:10, KJV; 51:7, Moffatt Bible).

As we meditate on the law of God and compare our lives with it, we get a true picture of ourselves and can ask: “What does my conduct indicate that the future holds for me?”

Numerous passages in the Divine Law impress upon

us our need to meditate. If men and women in former ages needed to meditate—men and women whose experiences with the divine far surpassed our own—what of us?

We are told in Mark 1:35 that “in the morning, rising up a great while before day,” Jesus, our great example, went out and departed into a solitary place, and there communed with the Father. Here we catch a glimpse of the secret of Christ’s great spiritual strength. He felt the need to draw near to God, thus gaining strength for the hours of trial ahead. So consecrated was His life to His heavenly Father through prayer and meditation that to the tempter He always had the ready answer, “It is written.”

Of Isaac it was said, “And he went out to meditate in the field at eventide.” God, speaking through Moses, commanded, “Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes” (Deut. 11:18).

Joshua was admonished: “This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein” (Josh. 1:8).

The song of David was: “O how I love thy law! it is my meditation all the day.” And again: “I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches.”

The Wise Man wrote: “My son, keep thy father’s commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother. Bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck. When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee” (Prov. 6:20-22).

Paul admonished Timothy: “Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may

appear to all" (I Tim. 4:15). And his admonition to us is: "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope" (Rom. 15:4).

One of the most important and far-reaching lessons of life is to bring into subjection the impulses of the natural mind. Our hopes, our desires, and all our soaring ambitions must be guided. We cannot allow ourselves to think even for one moment as we naturally would had not the law of God touched our lives.

In the hours of meditation we must formulate our plans for victory over our lower nature, breathe our prayer for victory, and pledge eternal loyalty to God in the battle against sin. In these still moments of thought we can rally our moral forces, pledge them to duty, and call for aid from above to accomplish our solemn work. Others may assist us by encouragement, by advice and helpful warnings; but the accomplishment must be our own. By forming the habit of obedience, passions become powers of noble import, contributing energy and determination that will wrest victory from every conflict and success from every struggle.

We are each one personally and individually responsible for our own inner purity. We may be so careful to say only the right things, may collect outstanding thoughts to give others, may even go out of our way to help and encourage another on the road to life eternal; but does our life bear out our words, or are we in our inner meditation planning ever so subtly to satisfy our own desires? Is our sincerity overflowing and inspiring others to press onward?

If ours is a burning desire for the reward of eternal life, if our mind is single and our every thought consecrated to the honor and glory of God, we will do as Paul did: forget the things behind and press forward with all our might to the prize ahead, even life eternal and all its glory.

He who cannot command his thoughts cannot hope to control his actions. MM

Be What You Profess To Be

A professed Christian sold a load of poor hay to a certain colonel, who rebuked him.

The church member whined, "I am a soldier, too!"

"You?" questioned the colonel in a tone of utter disgust. "What kind of a soldier are you?"

"I am a soldier of Christ," was the reply.

"That may be," replied the colonel, "but you have been on a furlough ever since I knew you."

Never Look Back

There Sodom and Gomorrah stood,
Two wicked cities of the plain
Whose dwellers, rather than do good,
So often took God's name in vain.
They loved the pleasures of the day,
The fleeting joys that license brought;
They ate and drank, and rose to play—
God was not in all their thoughts.

For many years God's mercy flowed,
But they continued deep in sin,
And failed to show their gratitude
By striving to be clean within,
Till God said they should flaunt no more
Their wickedness, or be employed
In seeking pleasures by the score;
For they were doomed to be destroyed.

But there was one, a righteous Lot,
Whose soul was vexed from day to day
By what he witnessed: he would not
Take part with them in any way.
To him two angels came one night,
And, warning of disaster near,
Said, "To yon mountain take your flight,
With every one whom you hold dear."

Then Lot went to his sons-in-law,
And warned them that they, too, should flee;
But with a saddened heart he saw
They would not listen to his plea.
He seemed to them as one who mocked,
So calloused were their hearts, and seared;
And so they shrugged his kind words off,
And reveled while disaster neared.

At dawn the angels gave command
To Lot, his wife and daughters, too.
And, taking each one by the hand,
They bade that wicked place "adieu."
Saved by a just and righteous God,
They pressed ahead, until Lot's wife,
With heartstrings where her kin abode,
Looked back and thereby lost her life.

The record of events long past,
All kept for our instruction now,
Will aid us if we will hold fast
The angel's hand, and not allow
The things of earth to interfere,
Lest we should make a crooked track;
For once again destruction's near,
And we must never once look back.

—L. L. S.

• More on God's Love for Sinners

"After reading the article 'God Loves Us . . . Or Does He?' in the November 1982 issue of the Megiddo Message, I found myself reflecting upon what the author had said—or rather what he had not said.

"One of the first thoughts that came to me was that 1) we are to love God with our whole being and 2) to love our neighbor as ourselves. Jesus amplified this to the lawyer when He said who our neighbor is (Luke 10:25-37). The Samaritan helped his enemy. Jesus told the lawyer to do likewise.

"In this illustration Jesus had given us something new which was not directly referred to in the Old Testament nor the writings from previous religions of the East. In Luke 6:27-38, we are instructed to 'Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you.'

"Is Jesus being a hypocrite? Heaven forbid. Since Jesus does only what the Father does (John 5:19), is He instructing us to do something other than that which He sees the Father do? Hardly. I believe that He is telling us that the Father does indeed love all of us regardless of what we have done or not done. One point that I feel most people overlook is that although God does love us, and always will, nevertheless justice must be exact.

"Although Jesus died on the cross we do not have the right to continue an unholy life once we know the Truth. If we do not repent completely, then justice demands that the penalty be invoked. Just as a child's misbehavior invokes a spanking from the father does not mean that he does not love his child, so God hates evil actions, not people.

"Therefore, I believe that God loves each of us equally but that we will be treated in accordance with our own actions. To those who try to keep the Word of God will the treasure go; but to those who do not, they will reap what they sow."

As I am sure you realize, the subject of the love of God is a very broad and deep subject, and—it seems—grossly misunderstood by multitudes of people who speak freely about "the love of God."

As you say, Jesus did indeed amplify the meaning of "love" with His teaching, "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you." Far removed is this from the "eye

for eye, tooth for tooth" law under the Mosaic arrangement.

But perhaps we should try to clarify just what we mean by the word "love" in saying that God does not "love" everyone. The first definition of love in the Winston English Dictionary is, "a strong feeling of affection; fond and tender attachment."

God is the Creator of all mankind and there is no denying that God loves all, as we said before, in a certain sense. He sends sunshine and rain upon all, and gives to all this present life and the capacity to enjoy it. But beyond all this, He places men here on probation to test their worth. Those who submit to the testing process and serve Him faithfully become His precious jewels (Mal. 3:16-17). He has a fond and tender attachment for those people. He will reward them with eternal life. Those who do not serve Him and obey His laws live their life outside His plan and die, neither rewarded or punished.

During the time that God was taking an active role in the affairs of men, i.e., from the time of Adam to the end of the Apostolic Age, those defying God were punished or destroyed. Now we cannot conceive of God destroying an individual for whom He has "fond and tender attachment." He could wish that they would turn from their evil ways and "do justly and love mercy and walk humbly" (Mic. 6:8) but He could not "love" them as He would His faithful servants.

Since the days of the Apostles God has been silent in the affairs of men. Those who defy His laws are not punished as they were during the period covered by Bible history. But that time is soon coming to an end. With the arrival of Christ this condition will be reversed and all who do not love God will be destroyed. And of what does love toward God consist? Jesus makes this clear in John 14:21: "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me, and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him and will manifest myself to him." Whom does the Father love? Those who keep Jesus' commandments.

In Proverbs 8:17, Wisdom is quoted as saying, "I love them that love me, and those that seek me early shall find me."

No doubt you are thinking that we have omitted from this discussion the greatest manifestation of love that the

world has ever known, that of God giving His Son as a sacrifice to appease His wrath against all sinners thereby blotting out all our sins. However, this concept is not a demonstration of love; it is exactly the opposite. It is cruelty of the deepest dye. There is not a judge in this country who would sentence a righteous man to die for the sin of a wicked man. Yet the religious world continue to saddle the All-wise Creator with the stigma of a heathen God accepting human sacrifice.

Psalms 51:16-17 states the sacrifice that pleases God: "For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." This type of sacrifice runs counter to the preaching of the vast majority today. But we are committed to the truth of God's Word, rather than the teaching that "tickles the ear" and relieves man of responsibility for his own conduct.

• Christ Is God?

"I am writing to ask a question and would be thankful for your answer.

"One of your Bible Studies said that there is no proof that Christ was God. Well, I have always thought that Hebrews 1:8 teaches that Christ is God. Please tell me what this verse means."

We are aware that our understanding of this important subject does not agree with that of most denominations. We will admit that there are certain texts in the Scriptures which seem to say that Jesus was God, or that He always existed, or that He came down from heaven. On closer study and taking into account all that the Biblical writers have said on the subject, including Jesus Himself, we believe that the true teaching is that Jesus is the Son of God, conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary. Hence, Jesus is not God nor was He ever equal to His Father, God. Jesus said, "My Father is greater than I" (John 14:28).

We are aware also that Jesus said in John 10:30, "I and my Father are one." However, in John 17:11, Jesus prayed to His Father, that His disciples might "be one as we are." No one would say that Jesus and His disciples were all one person, but they were one in mind, one in purpose. Christ and His Father were one in the same way—one in mind and purpose, not one in person.

When we say that Christ is not God, we mean that He is not the great eternal God who is supreme in the universe, the Being that we refer to when we pray, "Our Father which art in heaven" and to whom Jesus referred as "My Father."

There is, however, a sense in which Jesus is God to us. He is "Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with

us" (Matt. 1:23). He will be the ruler of this earth when He returns in His glory to set up His Kingdom. He will be King of kings, and Lord of lords (Rev. 19:16).

In Hebrews 1, the writer begins by talking about God (vs. 1). He then speaks of Christ as God's Son and the inheritor of His Kingdom, greater than the angels (vs. 3-6), then of the angels (vs. 6-7).

Verse 8 speaks clearly of the Son as the future Ruler of the earth: "Unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom," referring to Christ's future Kingdom. Christ will be in a position of authority on this earth, and Christ's throne when established will be forever and ever.

To understand the nature of Christ we must keep in mind the difference between the Father who is the supreme God of all the universe, and the Son who will be God with us when He returns as King of the earth.

• Who Are "Strangers"?

"Who is Peter talking to in I Peter 1:1 when he refers to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia? Verse 12 mentions 'the Gentiles among whom the strangers were.'"

The original word translated "strangers" means "residing in a country not one's own, a sojourner." Peter being of Jewish descent would quite naturally refer to Gentile believers as "strangers." But wasn't it said of all the saints mentioned in Hebrews 11 (many of whom were Jews) that they "confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (Heb. 11:13)? They were not at "home" in this world because they were seeking a better country, "that is, an heavenly" (v. 16).

When you speak of verse 12, you must mean I Peter 2, "Having your conversation [conduct] honest among the Gentiles." The suggestion is that believers who are living among non-believers (as we do today) might be termed "among Gentiles."

"Gentiles" seems to be more a term for "strangers to the true religion" than for an ethnic group. In another sense, the Gentile believers were not really "gentiles" anymore because they were now members of the "household of faith."

• Islam in the Future?

"Will the Islamic religion play an important role in the future?"

Of this we have no knowledge. It is possible that there are prophecies in the Bible which may properly be applied to them, but we have no way of knowing and do not like to speculate. MM

Preparing

We have the prophecy in Zech. 14:9 that "The Lord shall be king over all the earth; in that day shall there be one Lord and his name one." Jesus said in Matt. 25:31, "When the Son of man shall come in his glory and all the holy angels with him then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory." When He comes, His reward will be with Him and will be "exceeding abundantly above" all we can ask or think (Eph. 3:20). We must work harder than we have ever worked to make sure we share in that glorious time. As Brother Flowerday often stresses to us, "Make the very most of your time."

We must be very careful we do not let our spiritual zeal falter. Yesterday is gone forever, but tomorrow is yet to dawn—and another chance to redeem the time. Our day of probation is fast drawing to a close. We must apply ourselves more diligently than ever before to win this great race before us. It has been done by others and we can do no less.

In these dark days of distress when men's hearts are failing them for fear, we have an anchor for the soul. We can look to the future. We know a higher power is going to intervene and man's rule will end.

The only fear we have is the fear of doing wrong, so let us keep our lamps burning and keep watching for the Master's return.

Newfoundland

G.W.

Avoid Temptation

Avoiding temptation is as important as resisting it. We dare not approach the tree with the forbidden fruit. It is no good to trade with Satan.

Iowa

G.M.

Living in Hope

I cannot help being impressed by the swiftness with which time is passing away. I am reminded of what Job said, "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle" (Job 7:6). Therefore, it is imperative that we make the most of our time that we may be ready to meet Elijah when he comes or that our work may be finished when death comes.

Death is an unpleasant thing to think about, but if we are working with all our energy and putting God's commandments first in our lives, we can have hope that eternal life lies ahead for us. We may die if the Lord does not come soon, but for us the grave will be only a temporary resting place. Jesus said, "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:2-3). This promise is to all the faithful whether they are dead or alive at His coming.

How true are Paul's words in Romans 8:24, "For we are saved by hope." It is the hope of eternal life which keeps us going. In fact, if there were no eternal life to work for and look forward to, a life of self-sacrifice and righteousness would hardly be worth the effort. However, with the bright hope before us we can give up all this world has to offer—not grudgingly, but cheerfully—knowing that by so doing we can gain a glorious eternity. There are some good and desirable things in this life, but they all pale into insignificance when compared to the eternal future world, which will be more beautiful than we can imagine and which will never end. Let us keep up the good work, for God is true and will do all that He has promised.

Tennessee

S. K.

For Our Enrichment

The greatest blessings are coming to us in these last days. These blessings are ours to use and employ for the enrichment of our characters. God grant that we may awake to righteousness and go forth to walk more uprightly than ever before.

Georgia

S. J.

Blessed Abundantly

God has put so many beautiful things in this world for us to enjoy. We can have so much peace of mind, faith and hope if only we will study the Scriptures and do as God wants us to do.

God has blessed us all in allowing us to have Bibles, teachers, and sisters and brothers to help us on the way. It is our own fault if we fail to choose the good. His offer is now and always will be, Obey and live, disobey and die.

We thank God that He has allowed us this life and all the good help to clean it up so we can become new creatures. God has seen fit to bless us in so many ways; and if we aren't thankful and do His will, we are not worthy of all that we have enjoyed.

South Carolina

E. C.

To Be "Good and Faithful"

How happy I shall be if at Judgment the Master says "Well done, good and faithful servant." Remember, when he says "good and faithful servant," that will mean we have made it. We have worked out our salvation and won the eternal reward.

Just think of all the blessings we will receive, blessings above all we can ask or think. And as mortals, we can think of a lot of things we would want. But the Lord says it is above all we can ask or think. What a reward!

New York

C.B.

Nothing Too Small

How apt we are to brush aside the little stinging, petty irritations of daily life that trip us as too insignificant for the Almighty to consider as evil. But when we read what Jesus said in Matthew 5:48, "Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect," we must conclude that perfection is a complete whole neither marred nor spoiled in its entire dimension. "That he might present it to himself a glorious church not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish." Here is conclusive evidence as to what is required.

We have enrolled in God's school of learning to be trained, to be tried, to be purified. His wisdom knows all our needs and His loving concern provides all things necessary for character formation. We cannot get away from life's demands, nor evade the daily cares that press us, nor bypass the burdensome problems that must be met. They are there for a purpose and come to us in many guises. Great or small, they can and must be met in quietness and much self-control.

God is as much concerned with how we take the little things of life as He is with how we meet the great things of this life.

In our growth to perfection, seeking the Lord must become a daily habit with us. Many a time we must plead on bended knees for divine assistance. The flesh, being weak, easily succumbs to the promptings of the lower nature and we would almost give up. As we seek to do God's will, strength is renewed and with fresh courage once again we are lifted above ourselves and the petty annoyances besetting us to go forth with power to victory over sin.

The moments left are few. Make haste, O man, to live, for thou so soon must face the Judge to give account.

New Jersey

L. K.

A Sure Foundation

All who have been enlightened know that the Day of the Lord is near and hasteth greatly. We want to work for that time that is coming, directing every thought and action toward the goal we are seeking, so that we may be acceptable in the Lord's sight. The apostle Peter admonishes us to "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ" (II Pet. 3:18).

It is good to know of the truth that gives us a sure foundation. We are temples of the Lord's building. It is up to us to use the materials the Master Architect has provided, to build a temple that will be enduring.

We cannot be thankful enough that

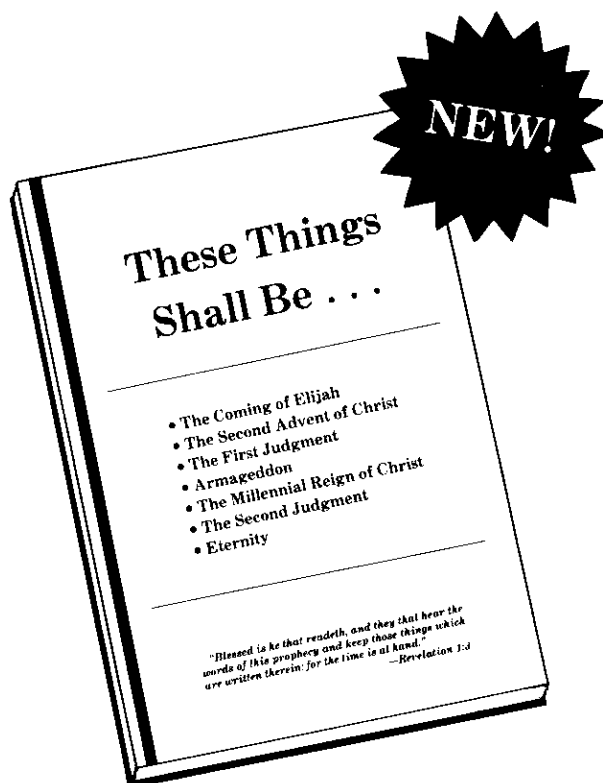
we have such a grand opportunity before us.

An opportunity to grow
Presents itself today,
To leave my former self behind
And walk the narrow way.
Rise far above the bitter word
And evil thoughts that blight,
Seek honor only from my God
And sink all self from sight.

An opportunity I have
To heed God's warning voice
To flee from each besetting sin,
This make our only choice,
To bear my cross always
And never once complain,
Pressing forward, upward, on,
Perfection's heights to gain.

Missouri

H. W.



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