

# Megiddo Message



## Spiritual Cannibalism

**C**ANNIBALISM. The term may be shocking, something we associate with the wilds of far-away Africa or with the ancient primitives of pre-history.

But spiritual cannibalism is still around. It is the basic "dog-eat-dog" philosophy that underlies our competitive society. It is the unfeeling, uncompromising one-upmanship that feeds on itself and wants the "top" at any price.

Looking closer, spiritual cannibalism is the spirit to "bite and devour one another" found even among professing Christians. It may be—God forbid—as near to us as our own hearts and consciences.

Each of us has a circle of friends and acquaintances, whom we instinctively categorize. Some are our "inferiors," with whom we are very comfortable, who pose no threat to our self-esteem. Others are our "superiors"—and again, we have no serious problem, for they are on one "level" and we on another.

But there is that third category—those to whom we feel equal—and against whom we continually seek some real or imagined point of superiority. Instinctively we find ourselves working against them. It "feels good" if things work out so that we look down on them, if ever so slightly. We call it achievement, happiness, success.

God calls it cannibalism. "If ye bite and devour one another. . . ."

They are not real friends—much less our brothers and sisters in Christ. They are our rivals, a threat to our "security." There is some instinct that tells us they must be kept in their place or they will challenge and supercede us. Should something happen that would seem to lower them in the eyes of others, we feel a touch of satisfaction. If they seem to get a little more credit than we feel they deserve, we are struck with a strange uneasiness, even despair. If we must live or work with them, then we establish some mutually-defined grounds of "understanding" so that we can communicate.

And the cannibalism goes on.

But perhaps we are not ready to admit to this. Perhaps we prefer to maintain a certain chaste self-deception, telling ourselves that our success doesn't mean that much to us. But still, deep down in our heart, we know it feels very good to see them step down, if ever so little, and so . . . on and on.

But it is all cannibalism, spiritual cannibalism. And God abhors it.

God does not want us feeding our pride on each other's praises. He doesn't want us to be building ourselves up at one another's expense. Any "success" at another's expense is failure.

God does not want *any* of this seeking honor from one another. He wants us to seek *His* good words and *His* commendations.

Pride spoils our relationships with one another. Pride weakens our will to resist many another evil. Pride destroys hope, poisons faith, and breeds ill-will. Pride makes us enemies of God, and enemies of our brethren also.

Pride injures our relationships in this world and cuts us off from those who could help us make real spiritual progress. As long as we are living for pride, as long as we find satisfaction in excelling one another, we are ignorant of what true spiritual friendship is.

While giving us momentary satisfactions, pride does nothing to help us build an enduring relationship with God—which we shall want and want desperately in the Day to come.

What is the solution to this problem? First, we must give up cannibalism, and in its place develop a sincere concern for one another, a love that seeks each others' best and that is continually trying to build up, not tear down.

This requires a total re-orienting of our thoughts and attitudes, away from ourselves and toward God. It is an orientation that removes "me" totally from the realm of rivalry and competition with others—be they fancied superiors, inferiors, or equals—and sets me to con-

*(Continued on page 23)*

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## Megiddo means

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

### We believe

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

### We believe

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

### We believe

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

### We believe

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

### We believe

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

### We believe

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

### We believe

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

## Bible quotations

Unidentified quotations are from the King James Version. Other versions are identified as follows:

**NEB**—New English Bible

**NIV**—New International Version

**NAS**—New American Standard

**RSV**—Revised Standard Version

**TLB**—The Living Bible

**TEV**—Today's English Version

**JB**—The Jerusalem Bible, Reader's Edition

**Phillips**—The New Testament in Modern English

**Berkeley**—The Modern Language New Testament

**Weymouth**—The New Testament in Modern Speech

**Moffatt**—The Bible, A New Translation

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

## About Our Cover. . .

Our cover photograph is of the Niagara River, taken near Niagara Falls, New York.

# Megiddo Message

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

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

# When the River Rises

*Scripture Reading: Jeremiah 12:1-5*

**I**N THE opening verse of our Scripture lesson, the prophet Jeremiah is engaged in an intimate conversation with his true and trusted friend. The God who had chosen him for special service; the God who had supported and strengthened him; the God who had promised such unlimited provisions, and who had opened to him a window of hope through which he could see beyond the present holocaust to a future glory and happiness beyond his broadest imagination—this was the God to whom Jeremiah took his problems.

Is our God the God of Jeremiah? Do we know Him as Jeremiah knew Him, a stay in trouble, a mighty power against all our foes without and within? Is all our life cast within the framework of His plan, His provisions, His love? Do we know the stability of a life linked every moment with the divine?

As the chapter opens, Jeremiah is talking to God from the depths of his inmost soul. He is addressing some very basic issues. Driven by circumstances which seemed almost too much for him to endure, he sends a question heavenward: Why? His courage was strong, yet he was human like ourselves, and subject to the feelings and frailties of humankind. He knew God was with him, yet deep within was an unsatisfied hunger for comfort, understanding, sympathy, support. It is as if he said, Lord, I know you are right in all you do, and just, and fair. But I'm not quite prepared for all this. "Why is it that the wicked live so prosperously? Why do scoundrels enjoy peace? You plant them, they take root, and flourish, and even bear fruit. You are always on their lips, yet so far from their hearts" (v. 1, JB).

## **The Struggle for Jeremiah**

Still in the early days of his great career, Jeremiah had encountered what was perhaps his first great throes of suffering. Called by God, he had done exactly as God had commanded him. He had faithfully preached the

Word of the Lord to all who gathered at the court of the Lord's house. The result: priests, false prophets and people were all stirred against him. They scoffed at his warnings and derided him for his prophecies concerning the temple and Jerusalem. The temple—which had stood for 400 years—would be destroyed and the capital city become desolate? They were enraged. Such a blasphemer should not live. They took him and, but for one man, would have killed him. Only by the son of one called Shaphan was the Prophet's life saved.

Another time, when Jeremiah had faithfully carried out the divine purpose and proved his sincerity to God, the men of Anathoth, his own home town, plotted against him, seeking his life (Jer. 11:19-22)—and for no reason at all, other than his loyalty to God. Jeremiah was as innocent as a lamb for the slaughter.

The question was: How much of this would he have to face? It was a bewildering picture.

Can we visualize ourselves in Jeremiah's place? What would we have done, we who are so blessed with the freedoms and privileges of 20th century America, we who have no fear of physical persecution? How grateful are we?

## **The Right Approach to Problems**

The noble Jeremiah took the right step in dealing with his troublesome thoughts. He did not try to hide, or bury, or forget them. He boldly confronted them—head-on. He addressed his problem as a man of maturity and sought his solution at the Source of all wisdom. He took his problem to God, and God, the Magnificent, Almighty God of the universe, was ready to listen to His servant.

God wants us to approach Him with our problems. Is He not our Father? Is He not the Being in whose hands is our very life, to whom we owe all we have now and all our prospects for the future? Is He not the one

to whom we have pledged our lives? He wants us to acknowledge our dependence upon Him and our need for His guidance. How often the holy men and women of old took their problems to God in humble, earnest prayer. Hannah, David, Isaiah, Paul—all knew their need of God.

Though still young, Jeremiah was one with them in his unshakable faith. Unlike many less sincere, Jeremiah did not let his difficulty drive him from his faith. On the contrary, he used his trial to bring him nearer to God. There was not even the slightest hint of skepticism in Jeremiah's query. Whatever the problem, its solution lay not *apart from* but *in* God.

Life makes constant demands upon the personal faith of each of us. This is God's way of proving us, of separating the gold from the dross, the chaff from the wheat, the *real* believers from the fair weather saints. It is our responsibility to use our trials to build our longing for the future and to draw us ever nearer to Him who is "our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."

#### **God's Answer**

What was God's answer to Jeremiah? Did God send back a letter of sympathy? Did God say He felt so sorry His prophet had to face such opposition and that He would make sure it did not happen any more?

No, God's answer was a realistic facing of the facts. It was an answer addressed to a conquerer, not a coward. In it was both a challenge and a spur. These are the words of the Lord, as rendered in our common version (Jer. 12:5):

"If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustest, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?"

Do we hear the tender rebuke that Jeremiah heard in this reply? Do we feel the spiritual thrust he felt from its forthright tones? God was not coddling Jeremiah. Rather, He was challenging him to greater courage and faith. Strength, He says, is a relative term. If you get tired competing with other runners, what will you do against a horse? And if you get tired running on smooth, easy ground, what will you do in the thickets of the Jordan?

We sometimes misjudge our situation, thinking we need sympathy and comfort when our true need is for challenge. God's people are not lambs that have to be petted and protected. They are to be men and women of fortitude, who are ready for struggle, danger, and opposition. In all ages they have had to withstand diffi-

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***The river will rise, the Jordan will swell, and we must be constantly fortifying our spiritual resources against this inevitability.***

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culties. Should Jeremiah—or we ourselves—be different?

The phrasing of this text in the New English Bible projects its depth of meaning even more clearly: "If you have raced with men and the runners have worn you down, how then can you hope to vie with horses? If you fall headlong in easy country, how will you fare in Jordan's dense thickets?" (Jer. 12:5, NEB).

The wording in the Lamsa Bible is slightly different, but the lesson is the same: "If you have run with footmen, and they have wearied you, then how can you run with horses? And if on the level land, where you have confidence, they have wearied you, then how will you cross the raging Jordan?" (Jer. 12:5, Lamsa).

In Bible times the Jordan River was a dreaded barrier. Especially after heavy rains, its steady flow became a raging torrent. To make the situation doubly bad, a belt of thorny jungle along the riverbed was apt to be half swamp at flood time, inhabited by wild animals.

#### **Jeremiah's Reaction**

Jeremiah may have been momentarily stunned by this reply, but he had the sterling quality of character to take it and profit by it. What is the thrust of the lesson? It is simply this: that if he feels mistreated and abused, the fault lies with him and not his persecutors. His own soul must grow. Indeed, the persecution he has just experienced is small compared to the more formidable trials ahead. As for the persecutors themselves, their fate is not Jeremiah's concern. Jeremiah must look to himself and to the fulfilling of his own obligation. He must use these trials to build up his inner reserves for sterner testings ahead.

Did Jeremiah get the message? Do we? What is it saying to us?

#### **The Lesson for Us**

First is the inevitability of testing. The river *will* rise, the Jordan will swell, and we must be constantly fortifying our spiritual resources against this inevitability. Life for all God's people is a progressive course in divine disci-

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## ***Do we know God as Jeremiah knew Him!***

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pline. It is not a random, happenstance sort of training but a carefully directed program in which every lesson has purpose, and the lesser tests of faith prepare us for sterner conflicts and nobler victories to come. God is just and reasonable. He does not ask us to bear what we have not been prepared for. But it is our responsibility to recognize the training He sends and profit by it. And our learning must be cumulative. He expects us to use yesterday's achievements as the starting point for today. If we must be constantly repeating the lessons of previous days, we will make no progress.

Second, there is the lesson that the best cure for thoughts of self-pity and mental perplexity is a serious facing of the situation at hand as something allowed by God and which He will strengthen us to meet. The question is not, How do I feel about it? but *What eternal benefit can I derive from this experience?*

But there is always the question: How much am I

learning? As day follows day and lesson follows lesson, what have I to show for the training I have had? How much patience? How much humility? How much gentleness, forbearance, temperance and self-control? How much understanding, brotherly kindness and forgiveness? Intangible values are these, not easily measured or weighed. Yet God is measuring them. He knows whether we are scoring well or poorly. How is our record, yours and mine? How much spiritual strength are we in reality building? If tomorrow the river rises to flood tide, will we be ready to face it?

Besides contending with his own lower nature and normal problems of life, Jeremiah had the added reality of physical persecution. There was no escaping it. If he was God's prophet, whatever service God needed, he had to be ready to give. Being a prophet was no easy task. Was the tender-hearted young prophet ready for the challenge? The warning from the Lord was timely.

### **Within God's Love**

Through this divine admonition to Jeremiah shines an eternal principle of God's love and mercy. It is His kindness and His orderly ordering of events that allows each circumstance of life to prepare us for the next. In this way, the more difficult tests are withheld until we have successfully passed the easier ones. Greater

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## *Let Us Pray . . .*

Eternal Father, Thou who dost never leave or forsake those who are faithful to Thee: from a world divided against itself we come today into this hallowed place to worship Thee.

Lord, Thou canst help when earthly armor faileth; Lord, Thou canst save when sin itself assaileth; Lord, o'er Thy rock nor death nor woe prevaieth. Grant us Thy peace, our evil thoughts assuaging; peace, in Thy church, where brothers are engaging; peace, when the world its busy war is waging; calm Thy foes' raging!

Father, we thank Thee for the comfort and hope that Thou hast provided us, that in a world of fear and uncertainty we may stand secure, rock-sure in the knowledge that all things are working together to fulfill Thy long-range purpose for this earth and that whatever we may have to go through now is less than

nothing compared with the magnificent future Thou hast in store for all Thy faithful children.

Lord, we know that Thou wilt never ask of us what we cannot give; nor wilt Thou allow us to be tested beyond what we can endure. Thou art our refuge in trouble, our strong arm in every trial, and that with Thee we can someday stand victorious in the battle against sin.

Father, we pray Thee to lead in right paths of holiness, peace, patience and faith, for Thy Name's sake. Strengthen us that we may never give in to the strongest or slightest impulse of our lower nature, but like our Great Pattern may our lives be a living witness to the power of Thy gospel to remake us into fit material for Thy coming Kingdom.

Great God, we pray Thee to bless, sustain and guide each one who calls upon Thee in sincerity and in truth. Uphold the weak, comfort the sorrowing, and support the suffering with the surety of Thine everlasting arms.

Wilt Thou grant to all of us a steadfast heart, which no unworthy affection can tempt; an upright heart which no dishonesty may swerve; an understanding heart which no self interest can overwhelm. In the name of Thy Son and our coming King we pray. Amen.

trouble may be seen not as a cause for alarm but as a promotion, and may actually seem easier to bear because of our increased strength.

Testings are fearsome only to the extent that we are unprepared for them. If we are forewarned and forearmed, we have no reason to fear. God can give strength equal to our need, and the sterner the trial, the more abundant His support. As the thought is expressed in our hymn:

*He giveth more help when burdens increase,  
He sendeth more strength when vast struggles arise;  
To added affliction, He addeth His peace;  
To multiplied trials all His mercy supplies.*

God does not want us to fear testing. The only cause for alarm is our weakness, or any misuse of present trials which might prevent us from deriving the intended good and sever us from the divine will and purpose. Rightly used, "each victory will help us some other to win."

Here lies the formula for growth. But inner strength is not automatic. Like Jeremiah, we may be too easily tempted to despair, too ready to give up. There is more power of endurance in all of us than we are ready to acknowledge to ourselves. Life is generally pitched in too low a key; we whine under slight smarts and shrink before little difficulties. Our strength grows with the demands we place upon it.

### **Purpose In Testing**

One more point we cannot overlook: that it is exceedingly needful for us to learn thoroughly the lessons of each day. This warning is not intended to discourage us but to impel us to capture our opportunities as they come. Failure in small things will mean failure in greater things; victory in small things will mean victory in greater.

When God first called Jeremiah as a prophet, He told him that He would make him strong like a defended city, an iron pillar, and a brazen wall against the whole land. "They shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee" (1:19). When Jeremiah found himself in the throes of trial, with his enemies seeking his life, what had happened to this promise? Had God failed? No, God was only allowing the situation to prove Jeremiah's faith.

### **Mutual Obligation**

The contract between God and Jeremiah meant an obligation on two sides. God would strengthen, but Jeremiah had to do on his part. God did not make

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## ***Do we know the stability of a life linked every moment with the divine?***

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Jeremiah strong against his will. He who promised protection said also, "Thou therefore gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee: be not dismayed at their faces . . ." (1:17). God knew whom He was choosing. But He knew also the tests that would come. The river *would* rise. And would Jeremiah prove equal to the challenge? Now was the time to prepare.

And so it should be with us, if we are truly called of God. We have caught a vision of the greatest prize imaginable, even immortality! But oh, the river *will* rise. It will not be easy. There will be testing, discipline, sacrifice. We cannot expect life to be one smoothly paved four-lane interstate highway on which we can ride effortlessly all the way into the Kingdom. Problems there will be.

### **What Will I Do?**

And so the question comes to us: What will I do when the river rises? It may be some new trial that suddenly confronts us, some crisis of health or faith or friendship or circumstance. For each of us it will be ultimately the hour when we are called to stand before the Judgment seat of Christ. Are we girding ourselves with courage and faith to meet that test? Yes, how will we do in the raging Jordan?

God did not put Jeremiah to the swelling of Jordan and leave him to stand or fall alone. He foreknew that the swelling of Jordan would come, and He was with Jeremiah, just as He will be with us. And when the Jordan swells, when the test comes, we will be ready—and God will stand with us.

Jeremiah was ready for the tests of Jordan because he built into his character the qualities that he needed.

### **Qualities We Need . . .**

What were some of these qualities? First we might consider his obligation of duty to God. Much as Jeremiah may have wanted to run away from his duty, his heart said "Stay!" God had called him, Jeremiah had answered the call; and there the agreement was signed and sealed. Henceforth Jeremiah was not his own but



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God's. The same bonds held him that later held the valiant apostle Paul, who said, "Behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: Save that the Holy Spirit witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me" (Acts 20:22-24). Jeremiah stayed at his post because he knew he *ought* to stay. When he uttered the cry, "Oh that I might leave!", he knew that leaving was an impossibility. What is implied is, "I cannot. I must stay."

"I must." That is a word frequently found in the vocabulary of moral giants. "Oh that I might go," he said, "but I must stay. I must; it is part of my duty to God. Whatever happens, I must be prepared to take it." Too easily do we in our modern age consult our feelings when facing unwelcome tasks. Not Jeremiah. He knew his obligation, and was ready to see it through, whether he felt like it at the moment or not.

Jeremiah was bound to God by cords of mighty conviction. He was absolutely sure of the truth of his message, of the God behind him, and the future before him. The fact that men refused to give heed and mistreated him was a very small matter and did not in any sense lead him to doubt the verity of God's message. There were times when it was hard for him to preach. There were times when he even resolved to keep silent. But this resolution was soon consumed because the Word of God was in him as a "burning fire" shut up in his bones. Silence was impossible—unendurable. He was like the apostles who later exclaimed, "We cannot possibly give up speaking of things we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20, NEB). Under the pressure of irresistible conviction he felt compelled to speak.

The record of the life of Jeremiah encourages us, because Jeremiah was not by nature a staunch and courageous man. He had to develop these qualities, just as you and I must develop the qualities we lack. By nature He was sensitive, timid, retiring. But God promised in the very beginning that He would stand close to help. Even in the swelling of Jordan, Jeremiah would not have to stand alone. What a gracious promise!

This same promise is ours also.

### **Inside Braces**

It is easy to find excuses for defeat, far easier than to develop the strength to withstand the temptation. The story is told of an elderly priest who one day met a man in public life who had been caught in a corrupt entanglement. "But Father," replied the man, "you don't know what the outside pressure was." "Outside pressure!" came the indignant answer. "Outside pressure! Where were your *inside braces*?"

The time to build those strong inside braces is *before* we find ourselves at Jordan's brink. Every smallest test of every day is our opportunity to increase our inward strength.

The Christian life is no short snapshot procedure; it is a long time exposure requiring great steadiness and preparation. The demands of Christ are high and exacting. There is a price to pay, a price consisting of sustained training, self-discipline and self-control. His standards are a challenge to the best that is in us, and they can never be sustained by a weak or spasmodic effort.

Anything that would tend to make us soft or insensitive to spiritual values must be shunned. Our inward braces are strengthened as we give ourselves to study, to meditation, to prayer, to fellowship and Christian service, as we give ourselves so completely that every aspect of life is directed and permeated by the spirit of Christ. The godly life and cause of God, not only in the world of Jeremiah but in our own day, calls for moderation and discipline in all things. All our energies, spiritual, mental and physical, must be concentrated on one great goal—to bring us to the standard of Christ and qualify for a place in His kingdom.

None of us can ever make this hope a reality to us without conscious effort and serious self-discipline. We have to discipline our minds, confining their wanderings to paths where angels delight to walk, always keeping them under full and conscious control. We must discipline our wills, always being ready to give up *our way, our opinion, our idea*, in the interest of that which is higher and better. There is not a day when life does not bring us new opportunities. We need to know the goal we are working for. We need to continually build up our inward braces by keeping our hope alive and vital.

Spiritual strength comes from within. The momentary meditation to determine the right course, the hour by hour reverence, the true godly fear, the day by day consciousness of the divine power that animates us, and the divine law that dominates us—these are the forces that build inward strength and the ability to resist the thousand temptations which pluck at our sleeve. Daily saying "no" to ourselves in small tempta-



tions gives us strength to say "no" in greater trials. A small act, either of indolence or initiative, may seem a very small and unimportant thing. But such acts, repeated, in time form powerful habits which either subdue and master us or give us the power to resist. All that we do today to overcome will help us tomorrow.

If we learn to keep under control the hosts of impressions from outside and draw a tight rein on our galloping ideas and feelings, we will find ourselves strong for whatever comes. There is not a day or hour when we may not have a chance to win a spiritual victory.

### At the Swelling of Jordan

We in this age look forward eagerly to the coming of the Great Day of the Lord, when the heavens shall open and out of the awesome depths of the azure blue shall come the King of glory in all His immortal splendor. Oh day of days! Oh rapture complete! Oh joy beyond all imagining. Think of all that it will mean—no more suffering, sickness or pain; no more war, bloodshed or strife; no more of the thousand aches and ills, mental and physical, which have plagued men and women for centuries. Can we imagine the doors of opportunity that will open at that moment, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels? A brief period of warfare to eliminate the opposition, and all from that time forward will be progress, growth, enlightenment, opportunity!

But . . . have we stopped to think of the other side of this reality, of the meaning of that Day to us? That Day may well be for us the swelling of Jordan, the test that will determine our joy—or grief—through all the days to follow. Then it will be either, I prepared, or I did not prepare. Either we used the little tests of every day to build our stores of faith, courage, fortitude and endurance, or we let the days go thoughtlessly by, giving little or no serious thought to our standing with God. Then, as we stand on Jordan's brink, we will either be secure in God and able to look forward with supreme and rapturous delight to all the events that are to follow, or we will hang our heads in shame for the work we could have done but which, through indolence, rebellion, carelessness, or plain unbelief, we did not do.

Oh, let us be alerted, warned, stimulated. That Day is coming. The river *will* rise. Our test *will* come. And how will it be with us then?

Hebrews 10:36-39 sets the tone for preparation: "Steady patience is what you need, so that after doing the will of God you may get what you have been promised. For in a little, a very little now, the Coming One

will arrive without delay. Meantime my just man shall live on by his faith; if he shrinks back, my soul takes no delight in him. We are not the men to shrink back and be lost, but to have faith and so to win our souls" (Moffatt Bible).

This is the faith we need for each rising river of trial. This is the thought that we need to keep with us through each and every remaining day of our probation, that the swelling of Jordan, whenever it comes, may be for us a day of triumph and delight, and that we may stand there, safe and secure, ready to enjoy our lot in the Kingdom of the Messiah, with Jeremiah and all the saints of the ages.

For lo, it *will* come.

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## SEE WHAT?

**W**E NEED to look at ourselves critically, seeing ourselves as we really are and not as we think we are. We see what we want to see and tend to overlook our flaws, the little things that don't seem important to us.

God demands the very best of us. He inspired the prophet Isaiah to write, "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes. Cease to do evil, learn to do well." This leaves no room for doubt as to what He expects of us. It takes all our time and effort to work on our reflected image, overcoming the flaws. Thank God we have brothers and sisters in the Faith who will point out the things in ourselves that we cannot see.

The Psalmist wrote, "Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head." Instead of getting hurt feelings at being reprov'd we should be humbly grateful to hear of our faults, for then we know where more polishing needs to be done. Perfecting ourselves is the tremendous duty of all of us if we intend to have that glowing character ready for our Lord's return.

Matthew 5:16 in *The Living Bible* says, "Let your light shine for all; Let your good deeds glow for all to see, so they will praise your heavenly Father."

—Contributed.

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# In Defense of Self-Defense

ON THE subject of self-defense, the Bible does not give us a plain "thou shalt" or "thou shalt not." It does, however, suggest some guidelines, general principles and examples which apply, and which may be worthwhile to consider, especially as we find ourselves living in the "perilous times" forecast in Scripture, when "evil men and seducers . . . wax worse and worse" (II Tim. 3:1-4, 13).

There is within the majority of people a strong instinct toward self-preservation. If someone challenges our position, or our opinion, or our property, or our life, something within us springs immediately to the defensive and we are ready to fight for what we believe to be rightfully ours. Without question this instinct is necessary to the continuance of the human family; but the degree to which it should be exercised or restrained is subject to a wide range of opinion, according to how seriously one regards his privileges and his rights as an individual.

Aspiring Christians are by no means exempt from the instinct to self-preservation; in fact, the desire for continued life may be even stronger in them than in the average. This is because the Christian has set his goal on the world to come, and he realizes his only hope lies in the opportunities that come to him in this present life. But for the Christian, the desire to self-

preservation must, like every other human instinct, yield to the control of the law of God. There is no area of life which can remain untouched.

Hence, when we speak of self-defense, we are not thinking of the manifesting of an instinct common to all mankind; nor can we judge an act as it might appear from a human point of view. Our first concern, as candidates for eternal rewards, is, What does God approve? What does *He* call right? How would *He* expect me to act in a given situation? We must be exceedingly careful that our viewpoint is *His*, for as covenant-makers we are accountable to Him; He is judging us, whatever we are doing.

Nor is the act itself the whole matter, from God's point of view. God is as much concerned with the attitude, the feeling, the motive behind the act as with the act itself. In fact, a wrong desire not acted upon, because opportunity did not arise, is as wrong in God's sight as the wrong action itself. The apostle John classified he who hates his brother in his heart as a murderer (I John 3:15); and the author of the book of Proverbs said the "thought of foolishness" is "sin" (Prov. 24:9).

An act of self-defense is usually motivated by, or at least accompanied with, feelings of anger, or hatred, or revenge, or uncontrolled passion, or any combination of these. All of these are caveman

traits in the sight of God and are definitely and absolutely forbidden. The Christian can never, under any circumstance, harbor feelings of anger against his opponent. Again the law is plain: "Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil" (Ps. 37:8).

The Christian can never, under any circumstance, harbor feelings of revenge or a desire to retaliate. The law is plain: ". . . avenge not yourselves; . . . for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord" (Rom. 12:19).

The Christian can never, under any circumstance, pay back evil for evil, or harbor any attitude of "give-him-as-good-as-you-get." Again the law is plain: "See that none render evil for evil unto any man"—no exceptions—"but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men" (I Thess. 5:15). Again, "Recompense to no man evil for evil" (Rom. 12:17).

The Christian can never, under any circumstance, provoke to evil or act aggressively. Once more the law is plain: "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men" (Rom. 12:18). This does not say it is always possible, but it places upon the Christian the duty of doing all he can to promote goodwill and avoid strife.

Jesus both taught and applied in His own life this spirit of peace-making, of non-retaliation and non-re-

venge. Such a spirit was in contrast to the law of Moses, which had permitted an "eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." With Christ came the end of that law, as He restated its new form: "But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also" (Matt. 5:38-39). We cannot believe Jesus meant these words to be taken literally, as though when we found ourselves in trouble we should ask for more; but they certainly express the maximum of self-control, a total absence of any feelings of retaliation or revenge, and an active desire to promote peace.

Such was Jesus' own example toward those who arrested Him and misused Him and crucified Him: "who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously" (1 Pet. 2:23). He left the rendering of all vengeance to God; and so must we.

But assuming that our attitude is only to preserve our own lives; assuming that there is no feeling of ill will or revenge or anger or retaliation within us, and no desire to "get even," does God permit us to take any action to defend ourselves?

We know that God has promised sufficient life in which to serve Him, if we make proper use of it (1 Tim. 4:8). He has also promised protection: "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them" (Ps. 34:7). At the same time, God has always worked on the principle of helping where human strength fails; of doing what we cannot do for ourselves. He has given us life, and He promises sufficient to complete our work if we use it rightly; but at the same time He expects us to do what we can to preserve it, i.e., to avoid unnecessary dangers, to live

sensibly, to be moderate in the spending of our energy and strength. And we also believe God has made some allowance for the defending of our lives against lawless attack.

By what means may we be able to defend ourselves against possible attack? If we do not smite back; if we do not return evil for evil; if we feel no revenge whatever, or any desire to give our opponent what he is giving us, what can we do to defend ourselves?

Let us see what examples we find in Scripture.

THE first means of defense we might consider is a defense by words and sound argument. Is such a defense justified? We find our answer in the example of Jesus. The Jews had accused Jesus of being a deceiver of the people, of being a liar, and of being possessed of what they called a "devil" (John 7:12, 20). Jesus proceeded to defend Himself, showing that He was sent of God, that He spoke only the words of His Father, and that His witness was true. At the same time He told them that they were of their father "the devil," adding, "and the lusts of your father ye will do." Jesus told them the facts. "Because I tell you the truth," He said, "ye believe me not. . . I honour my Father, and ye do dishonour me. And I seek not mine own glory. . . If I honour myself, my honour is nothing: it is my Father that honoureth me; of whom ye say, that he is your God: yet ye have not known him; but I know him: and if I should say, I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you: but I know him, and keep his saying" (vs. 8:44-45, 54-55). Jesus defended Himself against their false accusations by words and sound argument.

Was Jesus retaliating? No, He was stating the facts plainly; but there is no evidence that He had

any feeling of ill against them. And as Jesus did, so may we do. We too may defend ourselves, provided we are moved by the same motive that moved Jesus, that "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). When we defend ourselves, our words must be without any ill feeling, with only one desire: that our opposers may be told the facts.

A second means of self-defense of which we find example in the Bible is that of the courts of the law. We find example in the experiences of Paul. On several occasions he made his defense before the courts and officers of the law and availed himself of their protection (see Acts 24:10, 22; Acts 25:8; 26:2).

Paul not only defended himself in the courts but he took advantage of the law by asking his persecutors if it was lawful for them to scourge a Roman uncondemned. This made them afraid. Paul was using his legal rights as a Roman citizen to protect himself. And he was justified in doing this. But even in this there was no spirit of revenge or ill will, only a desire to protect his own life and well being that he might be able to proclaim the gospel and fulfill the commission God had given him.

There may be times, however, when words and sound argument have no affect upon our opponent; and legal means may not be available when we need it most. At such a time we might try to flee from our opponent, using any means of escape we could find. Here again we have example in the apostle Paul, who escaped by being let down over the wall of the city when the Jews were watching the gates of the city day and night to kill him (Acts 9:23-26). Paul did not sit down and wait for an angel to come to his rescue; he, with the help of his friends, did all he could first, and



escaped in safety to Jerusalem.

If argument fails, and we have no legal means at hand, and we can see no way to escape, our only remaining alternative in self-defense is to employ force of arms in an effort to overpower our opponent if possible—either to find someone who is able to defend us or to defend ourselves.

**HAVE** we any example of such a defense in Scripture? Again we look to the experiences of Paul. After Paul had made his defense before the council, the rabble cried out, "Away with such a fellow from the earth; for it is not fit that he should live." Then Paul appealed to the law: "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?" This only angered the Jews, and so Paul employed a different strategy: He referred to himself as having been a Pharisee. This set the Pharisees against the Sadducees (for Paul had perceived that both were present) and they fell to wrangling among themselves. A group of soldiers, under the orders of the chief captain, took Paul by force from among the people and brought him into the protection of the castle.

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defenders: Had any of the forty men attacked, these soldiers and spearsmen would have killed in Paul's defense; such was their commission, and Paul knew it.

Was Paul accepting a service from them which he would not have performed for himself, had it been in his power? We cannot believe that he was; Paul realized it was right to take steps to defend himself, and it was right whether he did it himself or whether others did it for him. If it had been wrong for Paul to defend himself, it would have been wrong for him to accept the protection offered by the chief captain. It is just as wrong for us to engage someone to steal for us, as it is to steal ourselves. It is just as wrong to hire someone to commit a crime for us as to commit the crime ourselves. Likewise, it is just as right to do something for ourselves as to get someone to do it for us. The defense of the soldiers was Paul's last resort against the lawless men who had threatened to kill him. Paul could not have stood against them alone; he had to have help.

Had self-defense been wrong, Paul should have said to the chief captain, "I have faith; I do not believe in taking any life; God will deliver me. Let these men go their way." But Paul did not. He accepted the men who were hired to defend him, and who were ready to fight if it had proved necessary.

Did Paul have in this means of defense any ill feeling, or desire for revenge upon the forty who threatened? There is no evidence whatever that he did. He was defending himself in a manner that was pleasing to God.

Jesus said something about this type of defense when talking to His apostles the last night before He was betrayed. When He had sent them out under a special commission some two years previous, He

had told them they would need to take nothing with them. God would provide for their physical support and protection. But now as He addressed them He told them this commission had ended; now they should be on their own. Lacking Him and His supporting power, they would need money, provisions, even a means of defense against possible aggressive attack. He said: "When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing? And they said, Nothing. Then said he unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one" (Luke 22:35-36). There had been a change. No longer would divine power protect them from every foe; they should be prepared to defend themselves where they could.

**GOD** never sponsored pacifism or a calm acceptance of whatever might come. And He always rated human life on a definite scale of value, according to the use the individual was making of his life. Whole nations to Him are "less than nothing, and vanity" if they give no heed to His laws and statutes (Isa. 40:17), hence may be dealt with accordingly. On many occasions God fought openly for His people, frequently destroying those who opposed His purposes and/or were of no significance in His longer-range plans. Sometimes His angels fought, sometimes He used human instruments to remove opposers, sometimes He called upon His people to rise up and defend themselves.

But all this was under God's direction, and all actions were governed by His knowledge of the worth of each individual involved. Lacking this open direction from God today, and this divine ability to know and properly judge every man,

and being commanded not to become entangled in the "affairs of this life" (II Tim. 2:4), we must not join in any effort to take up arms and wage war under man's direction; we must not fight against other men, or other governments, for as Jesus said, "All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword."

There are still other reasons why we cannot fight and kill in war. War is filled with feelings of greed and hate and vengeance and passion, all of which are strictly forbidden the Christian. And beneath the whole effort of war there is likely to be a feeling that one's own nation is superior to all others; that aggressive action is as justifiable as defensive; and that all other governments should recognize and respect the superior authority and force of one's own nation—all of which is contrary to God's manner of judging men and nations. When we join armed forces, we are under their jurisdiction, to do whatever we are told, hence are making ourselves subject

to principles which as Christians we cannot uphold.

Self-defense is different. When defending oneself, one is the commander of himself and may control his own feelings and act only so far as he deems necessary. Furthermore, in defending oneself, one is not fighting against organized governments (which would be wrong) but only against a lawless element which civil government seeks to control. And God never required His people to suffer at the hands of rebels against authority if there was something they could do.

There are times, however, when all measures of self-defense are unavailing. In such circumstances the early Christians frequently found themselves, at the mercy of the law and its unjust authorities, outnumbered and overpowered. At such times there was nothing to do but trust in God to allow to happen only what was for the best, and to accept whatever might come. Thus they went to the cross, the stake,

or the lions without doing anything to defend themselves—because they had no ways or means of self-defense. What could their ounce of physical force do against the iron hand of Rome?

Christ's willing submission to His persecutors was in the knowledge that such was the Father's will. He had prayed: "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me, nevertheless . . ." and He submitted. In the midst of the ordeal Christ said He could have called upon twelve legions of angels to intervene in His defense, if such had been the Father's will; but it was not. However, the fact that He made this statement shows that self-defense may be justified, if it be within the will of God. Jesus had no power to defend Himself against the force of the Jews and the rabble; the angels could have—and would have. But God said no. However, had any and all measures of self-defense been wrong, Christ would not have said this. MM

## Fill your mind with something useful . . .

YES, but let it be something *eternally useful!*

There are a great many things with which one can profitably fill the mind.

There is knowledge which pertains to our vocation or trade. Such knowledge is very worthwhile, but its usefulness is limited to this short mortal span of life—an infinitesimally brief period compared with the endless ages of eternity in which we are working to live.

Then there are those other great branches of learning which have occupied the minds of humanity through the centuries: science, history, art, music, literature. But for the person who seeks the *eternal*, these noblest of man's achievements are but an incentive to reach beyond to that Day when the fathomless depths of God's infinite wisdom and the joys of an eternal existence shall be his to share forevermore.

Only the Bible, that grand Book of all books, can truly

satisfy our every thirst for knowledge, beauty and inspiration.

The Bible is an inexhaustible storehouse from which we can draw fresh courage. It is a practical Book, meeting the needs of our poor mortal minds and answering with deep sympathy and understanding the soul's longing cry, "What must I do to be saved?"

Here we have a knowledge *eternally useful!* In comparison, the knowledge which stems from the mind of man is shallow, trivial; often bigoted, and more often false. The supreme height of God's wisdom is everywhere manifest in the blessed Volume and is summed up in that text which reads, "Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding."

What a waste when we fill our minds with mere contemplations of the pleasures of the day, with the joys and sorrows of the moment, with such trivialities as, "What shall we eat?" or, "What shall we drink?" or, "Wherewithal shall we be clothed?"

Who can afford such a waste?

No one.



## Lines to Live By

### Ambassador of the King

I have an assignment that I must fulfill,  
And nothing shall hinder my progress until  
I hear from the lips of my Saviour, "Well done!"  
And have the assurance of victory won.  
I gladly accept this position of trust,  
And think the conditions both proper and just,  
In view of the present and future reward;  
Exceedingly more than the world can afford.

Called to go forth to a sin-darkened world,  
To hold up the Light, with His Banner unfurled,  
I am an ambassador unto the King,  
And by His direction glad tidings I bring.  
Yes, I am commissioned to tell of the day  
When Christ shall return, to forever hold sway,  
And spread His dominion all over the earth,  
With wisdom dispensing the grand Spirit birth.

My duty is plain, to turn sinners to God,  
By word and example extolling His Rod;  
So living that others the Christ life may see  
In all of its beauty reflected in me.  
The words that I speak must be meant to inspire  
The hearers with hope, and a fervent desire  
To work for a better, a much richer life:  
With naught said to foment a ripple of strife.

The flag that I carry, the banner of Truth,  
Must wave in the breeze, an incentive to youth  
To enter the ranks of the fearless and brave,  
Who long to deliver some soul from the grave.  
I must not permit it to drag in the dust,  
This glorious Flag of the Holy and Just;  
Nor lie in disuse, to accumulate grime—  
For He must increase with the passing of time.

My work is not in a competitive field,  
For few can be found proudly wearing the shield  
That speaks of His coming; the doubters prevail,  
Who cry from the house-tops, "God's prophecies fail!"  
Their efforts are toward decadence and gloom.  
For Faith, Hope, and Charity they have no room.  
They live for the moment and die in despair,  
With none to remember and no one to care.

But I take delight in proclaiming the news  
That Jesus will come and Jerusalem choose  
To be earth's metropolis, there holding sway,  
Supreme in dominion and glory for aye.  
Yes, I'm an ambassador unto the King,  
And this is my business, His praises to sing;  
Preparing to greet Him, and echo the cry,  
"Behold, all ye doubters—the King draweth nigh!"



venge. Such a spirit was in contrast to the law of Moses, which had permitted an "eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." With Christ came the end of that law, as He restated its new form: "But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also" (Matt. 5:38-39). We cannot believe Jesus meant these words to be taken literally, as though when we found ourselves in trouble we should ask for more; but they certainly express the maximum of self-control, a total absence of any feelings of retaliation or revenge, and an active desire to promote peace.

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or the lions without doing anything to defend themselves—because they had no ways or means of self-defense. What could their ounce of physical force do against the iron hand of Rome?

Christ's willing submission to His persecutors was in the knowledge that such was the Father's will. He had prayed: "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me, nevertheless . . ." and He submitted. In the midst of the ordeal Christ said He could have called upon twelve legions of angels to intervene in His defense, if such had been the Father's will; but it was not. However, the fact that He made this statement shows that self-defense may be justified, if it be within the will of God. Jesus had no power to defend Himself against the force of the Jews and the rabble; the angels could have—and would have. But God said no. However, had any and all measures of self-defense been wrong, Christ would not have said this. MM

## Fill your mind with something useful . . .

YES, but let it be something *eternally useful!*

There are a great many things with which one can profitably fill the mind.

There is knowledge which pertains to our vocation or trade. Such knowledge is very worthwhile, but its usefulness is limited to this short mortal span of life—an infinitesimally brief period compared with the endless ages of eternity in which we are working to live.

Then there are those other great branches of learning which have occupied the minds of humanity through the centuries: science, history, art, music, literature. But for the person who seeks the *eternal*, these noblest of man's achievements are but an incentive to reach beyond to that Day when the fathomless depths of God's infinite wisdom and the joys of an eternal existence shall be his to share forevermore.

Only the Bible, that grand Book of all books, can truly

satisfy our every thirst for knowledge, beauty and inspiration.

The Bible is an inexhaustible storehouse from which we can draw fresh courage. It is a practical Book, meeting the needs of our poor mortal minds and answering with deep sympathy and understanding the soul's longing cry, "What must I do to be saved?"

Here we have a knowledge *eternally useful!* In comparison, the knowledge which stems from the mind of man is shallow, trivial; often bigoted, and more often false. The supreme height of God's wisdom is everywhere manifest in the blessed Volume and is summed up in that text which reads, "Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding."

What a waste when we fill our minds with mere contemplations of the pleasures of the day, with the joys and sorrows of the moment, with such trivialities as, "What shall we eat?" or, "What shall we drink?" or, "Wherewithal shall we be clothed?"

Who can afford such a waste?

No one.





## Lines to Live By

### Ambassador of the King

I have an assignment that I must fulfill,  
And nothing shall hinder my progress until  
I hear from the lips of my Saviour, "Well done!"  
And have the assurance of victory won.  
I gladly accept this position of trust,  
And think the conditions both proper and just,  
In view of the present and future reward;  
Exceedingly more than the world can afford.

Called to go forth to a sin-darkened world,  
To hold up the Light, with His Banner unfurled,  
I am an ambassador unto the King,  
And by His direction glad tidings I bring.  
Yes, I am commissioned to tell of the day  
When Christ shall return, to forever hold sway,  
And spread His dominion all over the earth,  
With wisdom dispensing the grand Spirit birth.

My duty is plain, to turn sinners to God,  
By word and example extolling His Rod;  
So living that others the Christ life may see  
In all of its beauty reflected in me.  
The words that I speak must be meant to inspire  
The hearers with hope, and a fervent desire  
To work for a better, a much richer life:  
With naught said to foment a ripple of strife.

The flag that I carry, the banner of Truth,  
Must wave in the breeze, an incentive to youth  
To enter the ranks of the fearless and brave,  
Who long to deliver some soul from the grave.  
I must not permit it to drag in the dust,  
This glorious Flag of the Holy and Just;  
Nor lie in disuse, to accumulate grime—  
For He must *increase* with the passing of time.

My work is not in a competitive field,  
For few can be found proudly wearing the shield  
That speaks of His coming; the doubters prevail,  
Who cry from the house-tops, "God's prophecies fail!"  
Their efforts are toward decadence and gloom.  
For Faith, Hope, and Charity they have no room.  
They live for the moment and die in despair,  
With none to remember and no one to care.

But I take delight in proclaiming the news  
That Jesus will come and Jerusalem choose  
To be earth's metropolis, there holding sway,  
Supreme in dominion and glory for aye.  
Yes, I'm an ambassador unto the King,  
And this is my business, His praises to sing;  
Preparing to greet Him, and echo the cry,  
"Behold, all ye doubters—the King draweth nigh!"

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Lord, keep me still.

Thy way is best;  
So let me rest.

Let come what may  
To me today.

Sunshine or rain,  
Pleasure or pain,

Gladness or grief,  
Distress, relief,

May I believe  
All I receive

Is sent in love  
Down from above.

So let me rest;  
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Much has been won, though much there is to win.  
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There is no standing still! Ev'n as I pause,  
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Movement was safety; by the journey-laws  
No rest is giv'n, no safe abiding-place,  
No idling in the pathway hard and slow:  
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I will go up, then, though the limbs may tire,  
And though the path be rugged and unseen;  
Better with the last effort to expire  
Than lose the toil and struggle that have been,  
And have the morning strength, the upward strain,  
The distance conquered, in the end in vain.

Ah, blessed law! for rest is tempting sweet,  
And we would all lie down if so we might;  
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As she sat on a stone bench, her eyes fell on a little rosebush which only a few weeks ago she had watched the old gardener prune. How sad it had looked, all shorn, with nothing left but little stumps. When she had said as much aloud, Rufus looked up and a faint smile lighted up his kindly eyes as he said, "Pruning, my dear, is one of the most important steps in gardening." And sitting down beside her, he had explained, "It is the same

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As she gazed at it now, she saw fresh green leaves shooting from the dead-looking branches. Old Rufus was right—she knew he would be. "Maybe that is what God is doing to me," thought Naamah: "pruning." The little green shoots seemed to be saying, "Don't be discouraged. I was all cut and bleeding, too, but look at me now. I am growing. See how pretty and green I am!"

Lost in thought, she didn't hear the approaching footsteps and was startled when a gentle hand touched her shoulder.

"It is only I," laughed Adah. "When I didn't find you in your room, I just

thought I'd find you here. How are you feeling?"

"Better, thank you," replied Naamah as she fixed her gaze upon a star that had just appeared near the horizon.

Adah said nothing for a moment. Then she sat down and laid her hand on Naamah's arm, saying softly, "It's Mara, isn't it?"

"Well, yes. I displeased her this afternoon."

"I gathered as much from little Benjamin. Apparently he displeased her too," Adah sighed.

Naamah shifted her gaze and looked off into the deepening shadows. She seemed for the moment to have forgotten her companion.

"You know, I feel sorry for Mara," she said at last.

"Sorry?" her mistress queried.

"Yes. She must feel very alone. Loving or caring for no one but herself. She doesn't seem to enjoy life very much."

Together they talked of Mara, David, old Rufus, and the rose bush. They both started when a voice behind them said with a feigned growl, "What now! Are you two going to stay up all night?"

Adah looked around in surprise. "Why it is night, isn't it!"

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Recently Naamah had noticed a change in her master. He was very preoccupied. At times she would see him pacing the floor with a worried expression on his strong brown face, and oblivious to her presence. He rode into the city often and seemed to be weary when he returned. And from the scraps of conversation which she heard between Ithamar and Adah, Naamah felt she knew what was bothering him. Such words as revolt—conspiracy—strengthening—Absalom—vows at Hebron—King David—fleeing—which she had picked up fit in with the gossip and discussion that she heard at the well and market place. Absalom was conspiring to take over his father's throne.

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"Yes. I shall tell him you are here. Won't you come in?" She stepped into the house, followed by the two visitors.

"Peace to you, my young friends," Ithamar greeted them heartily as he entered the room where they were waiting. "You came in time to share our noon meal with us."

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"Never mind. I've already told Naamah to set the table for two more, and praise the Lord there is always plenty of food."

"Thank you for your hospitality," Jonathan laughed. "As a matter of fact, I'm starved and we'll need something to sustain us." And he added quietly, "We are on our way to En-rogel."

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## Facing the Facts

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Our awareness also brings to us a keen sense of urgency. The vital issues of life come into such sharp focus that we are activated to do something about our spiritual condition now. We are reminded that today is the day of salvation, and now is the accepted time to clear up all unfinished business with the Lord.

## What Is Sin?

ONE of the basic meanings of sin is "missing the mark." To live in harmony with the will of God is the highest target man can hit. If he zeroes in on this mark he finds satisfaction and happiness. If he misses this mark he is restless, frustrated, and disgusted.

Sin is like a gravitational pull that leads man to miss this mark. But sin is also binding; it distorts our vision until it makes life lived out of harmony with God's will seem normal and desirable. When the Spirit of Truth reproves of sin, we see how twisted and perverted we have become.

When our sin is revealed, we are under conviction. Often we think of a conviction as a standard of conduct or an ideal. When tempted to be less than our best, we say, "I cannot do that because it would be against my convictions." In this light, to be under conviction is to see how far we have fallen below our best.

This is a crucial moral moment, because we are forced to make a choice. We must choose whether to take the path that is worst for us, the path of least resistance that leads down to destruction or to follow the one that is best, following God's way that leads to life."

## Spiritual Kinship

When we become members of God's spiritual family, we join a select company with whom we enjoy a closer kinship than with our relatives outside the brotherhood. Communication in the spiritual family is enriching and ennobling. We speak the same language, love the same things, and live for the same purposes.

From "Everyday with Paul," by Mendell Taylor. Copyright 1978 by Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City; used by permission.



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Since the Garden of Eden, man has been blaming everyone but himself for his wrongdoing. The spotlight of truth strips us of all escape mechanisms, and helps us to acknowledge that we are wholly responsible for our sins. At this point we blame no one but ourselves. We face the facts realistically, declare that we are wrong and guilty; if we had what's coming to us, we would be hopelessly lost.

Facing the facts is accompanied by a heightened sense of accountability. We come face-to-face with the fact that "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ," where we shall give an account of the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or bad, whether they be known or secret.

Our awareness also brings to us a keen sense of urgency. The vital issues of life come into such sharp focus that we are activated to do something about our spiritual condition now. We are reminded that today is the day of salvation, and now is the accepted time to clear up all unfinished business with the Lord.

## What Is Sin?

ONE of the basic meanings of sin is "missing the mark." To live in harmony with the will of God is the highest target man can hit. If he zeroes in on this mark he finds satisfaction and happiness. If he misses this mark he is restless, frustrated, and disgusted.

Sin is like a gravitational pull that leads man to miss this mark. But sin is also binding; it distorts our vision until it makes life lived out of harmony with God's will seem normal and desirable. When the Spirit of Truth reproves of sin, we see how twisted and perverted we have become.

When our sin is revealed, we are under conviction. Often we think of a conviction as a standard of conduct or an ideal. When tempted to be less than our best, we say, "I cannot do that because it would be against my convictions." In this light, to be under conviction is to see how far we have fallen below our best.

This is a crucial moral moment, because we are forced to make a choice. We must choose whether to take the path that is worst for us, the path of least resistance that leads down to destruction or to follow the one that is best, following God's way that leads to life."

## Spiritual Kinship

When we become members of God's spiritual family, we join a select company with whom we enjoy a closer kinship than with our relatives outside the brotherhood. Communication in the spiritual family is enriching and ennobling. We speak the same language, love the same things, and live for the same purposes.

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## The Rose

(Continued from page 17)

"I think so, if it is acceptable to her, and I think it will be."

"Then the plan will be for you to find out through Hushai whatever you can of Absalom's plans. You will tell Naamah and she will come down to En-rogel early tomorrow morning to let us know the facts, and we'll get word to David as quickly as we can, right Ithamar?"

"Right. Now shall we speak to the young woman?" He went to call her from the garden.

The two couriers rose and bowed slightly as Naamah reached the top of the stairs and approached her master. She could not imagine what *they* could want of *her*, but she silently asked her God to give her wisdom and courage to meet the situation.

"Naamah, we would like to ask a favor of you."

"Anything, Master," Naamah murmured, "to serve you."

Ithamar frowned slightly, but the two onlookers knew that he was not displeased. "No, Naamah, this is no small thing. You will be serving your people, your king, your God."

"Yes, sir," she answered simply. "What would you have me do?"

Ithamar briefly went over the plans. "We all feel that it would be unwise to send a man to such a place as the well, where only women go. No one would be likely to suspect a woman. We felt that you could be trusted to keep the information a secret and to deliver it safely to our two friends here. Will you do it?"

Naamah's eyes showed her answer. "Oh sir! I shall be very happy to do what I can."

Ithamar, obviously pleased, smiled broadly and glanced at the men. "Very well, Naamah. Jonathan and Ahimaaz can tell you where you are to go."

So the final plans were made. As they began to descend the stairs

Ahimaaz asked Naamah, "Tell me, do you think Absalom will be successful?"

"Oh! No!" she answered confidently, "for our God is with King David."

"Naamah," Jonathan spoke in a low voice, "the good Lord grant that you are right."

. . .

Early the next morning while it was still dark, Naamah started down the familiar path through the valley to the well. She hurried, hoping to arrive before any of the other women, who occasionally went to draw water very early. Her heart beat faster as she neared the place which the men had described. Yes, there it was—two large boulders. Then a small bush. She was to go down between the rocks by the bush. Sure enough! There was the woody spot where Jonathan and Ahimaaz were supposed to be concealed. It was indeed a good place to hide, for it was dense with vines and underbrush. She looked all around before she continued down the path. Forcing herself to walk calmly, she went over in her mind what she was to tell them.

Reaching the edge of the woods, she parted the vines and slipped through; not seeing any signs of the men she whispered shakily, "Jonathan! Ahimaaz! Where are you?"

Looking around again, she saw the grinning face of Ahimaaz protruding from a mass of leaves. In a moment Jonathan's face appeared. "Here we are," they said in unison. Jonathan untangled himself and crawled out first with Ahimaaz right behind him.

The men were eager to know what the outcome of the council meeting was. But first, Jonathan spread his cloak on the ground and bade Naamah to sit down.

Naamah sank gratefully onto the proffered garment, and began to relate all that Ithamar had told her about Absalom's entrance into the city and Hushai's offer of allegiance to him;

Ahithophel's advice to pursue King David, which was actually sound advice over that of Hushai, and Absalom's preference for the latter plan. The couriers snickered at Absalom's stupidity.

"It is the hand of the Lord," mused Jonathan.

"Undoubtedly," rejoined Ahimaaz. "Remember David's petition when he heard that his counselor was favoring Absalom—that Ahithophel's counsel would be rejected?"

"Verily, I do! But go on, Naamah, excuse the interruption."

"Hushai wants you to report to the King about the two men's advice that his was preferred, but as a safeguard they should not stay on this side of Jordan tonight but should cross over the river as quickly as possible. Absalom may decide that Ahithophel's counsel is best after all."

"Well, let's see," Ahimaaz frowned thoughtfully. "We can't leave here until the morning water carriers are gone, can we?"

"That will be a few hours still," Naamah ventured.

"That's true," added Jonathan, "and we want to get there as soon as we can. Maybe we can sneak out before too many start coming."

With that plan decided upon, Naamah bid the two farewell, saying that it wouldn't do for Mara to miss her for she had an avid curiosity.

"Peace to you, Naamah."

"And to you, peace."

Naamah crept up to the path cautiously. Some loud talking and laughing told her that some one was on the way to the well. Crouching behind the rocks until the voices trailed away, she proceeded cautiously up the path and seeing no one, she stepped gingerly onto the path.

. . .

The family, plus Jonathan and Ahimaaz, were sitting together once more. One person was missing—Mara,

who had retired a few days before, claiming that she was getting old and was no longer able to do the work. The two guests were telling about their exciting mishap on their way to the king.

"A mischievous fellow of our acquaintance at the palace," Ahimaaz was saying, "spied us and made off with haste. Where? We could easily guess."

"Very fortunate for us that we recognized him!" Jonathan went on, "and that that kind woman in Bahurim was on David's side and had so much common sense. She told us to jump into a well that she had, and she would cover it with a cloth and put some drying corn on it. We had just tumbled in—"

"When along came Absalom's men," finished Ahimaaz, "and galloped right up to the poor woman."

"Ooooh!" squealed Benjamin. "That must have been—" he shook all over.

Ahimaaz smiled and continued. "'Did those two rascals come around here?' one of Absalom's men growled."

"'Y-yes, s-s-sir!' the woman spoke mildly. 'Right over there they went, sir,' she must have pointed to the brook, and they dashed on, splashing right through it. Then she stuck her nose under the cloth and said, 'Stay there, they'll be back.'"

Everyone laughed. "What happened then?"

"Well," he said, "we didn't feel like laughing much right then, let me tell you. Those fellows came storming back. 'You lied, woman,' one snarled. 'We searched everywhere. No one is in sight. But no matter, we'll get them all in the end.' 'You, too,' another flung back as they clattered away—but they didn't."

"Upon my word, they didn't." Ithamar slapped his knees triumphantly.

Naamah slipped away unnoticed, and went out to the garden. The splash of deep red caught her eye. It

was from her little rosebush, which had leafed out, budded and now one bud had opened up into a perfectly beautiful blossom. The whole bush seemed to be so alive that she could almost hear it saying, "Look at me, now. Behold the perfection of my flower, my buds, my glossy leaves. Feel the soft, velvety petals of my flower and smell its sweet perfume. Ah! The pruning was not in vain, nor was the pain too much to bear.

The gardener knew best." A gentle breeze caught the buds and they seemed to nod their rosy heads in assent.

"I thank Thee, God!" Naamah breathed, "for the love and care Thou hast for Thy earthly children. And thank you for the wonderful lesson I have learned from this little rose. Prune me, O Father, as you see my need, so that I may be fit to live in Your ETERNITY." MM

## On Guard

**I**T LIES in each of us to be on our guard at all times and watch what we are doing and what we are thinking about. Would God be pleased with us? If we keep these thoughts uppermost in our mind at all times we could make much faster progress in the divine life.

We must sell out all and leave nothing with which to serve the flesh. This is a great work but it can be done. The sure reward before us is a great incentive to press on with all our mind, might and strength, ever watchful. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

Do we unquestioningly believe in God? Do we unquestioningly believe in a future life on this planet, a life of eternal joy, happiness and beauty? Do we believe that such a life can some day be our very own? Most importantly, do our daily lives prove that belief by our loyalty and allegiance in our everyday conduct, speech and action making us ready for that "last day" when the great Judge shall call us to account?

If we let these questions sink deep into our heart and if we truly believe, they will move us to action. We must have faith that the work can be done. God has promised to be with us every step of the way. He said so, and we know His promises are sure. O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven" (Psalm 119:89). He will not change; what He has said He will do. And we can say with the Psalmist: "I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved" (Ps. 16:8). "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?"

We must fear self above all else. He is our worst enemy. As Brother Flowerday said, "We want the moral stamina to say a decided No to self when tempted to step aside out of the narrow way."

We are indeed treading on holy ground. Let us fear lest some subtle besetting sin bar the gate forever.

Time is short and we must make haste. We do want to hear the "Well done," do we not?

—Contributed



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# Have A Problem?

**D**O YOU have a problem? Do you know anyone who *doesn't* have?

To be alive is to have problems—problems of health, of home, of job, of finances, problems of youth or of age, problems ad infinitum. But are you on top of your problems? Or are your problems on top of you and getting you down? What are you doing about them? Can your problems be solved by talking them out?

Have you tried talking your problems over with God? It is a good way to begin the day with God in prayer, and after thanking Him for all His benefits toward us, tell Him your problem. You cannot expect an answer by the “still, small voice” in this age, but you can know that God will send what He sees best for you.

Talking about your problems with a trusted friend or counselor may bring some benefit, but mere talking never accomplished anything. “All hard work brings a profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty” (Prov. 14:23, NIV). This is true regarding our labor for our daily bread, and it is also true regarding our problems. To talk over our problems and do nothing but talk is not a Bible concept and does nothing toward solving the problem. Just as there is no faith without works, there can be no solution to a problem by simply talking about it.

When John the Baptist came

preaching, he made those who heard him suddenly aware of their sins. Realizing they had a problem, they said to John, “What shall we do?” John gave them a straightforward answer. If they would be right with God, there was something they must do: those who had an abundance of goods should share with the poor; tax collectors who had been collecting too much should collect only the legal amount. Soldiers should not use their position to the disadvantage of others.

In other words, whatever their position in life, they must make an about face and do what was right. It was not enough to listen to the words of John the Baptist, they must go home and put those words into actual practice to make themselves right with God. Unless they *heeded* the counsel, it was of no value.

There is such a thing as receiving good counsel concerning a problem, but failing to take heed. The rich young ruler who came to Jesus is a case in point. When the young man came to Jesus to ask Him, “What shall I do to inherit eternal life?”, he found that he had a problem. He had kept the commandments, but one thing stood between him and eternal life: his riches. Jesus told him how to solve his problem: “Sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me” (Luke 18:18-

22). But the young man went away sorrowful; he was not willing to give up all and follow Jesus.

The young man had heard that Jesus was a Prophet and a great Teacher. Perhaps he had expected to hear something out of the ordinary from Him. What Jesus asked was so simple and yet so hard. He had not the courage to take up the cross and follow; for him it was too much. He had thought that he had it all wrapped up, but what Jesus said seemed to make salvation very difficult to obtain.

Are we any different today? Do we take heed to the good counsel we receive every day? Or is it for us a “hard saying?” Unless we *heed* the advice given from the Word of God, we do indeed have a problem, a very serious problem. The apostle James gives good advice: “Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says” (Jas. 1:22, NIV).

Jesus told a parable of another rich man who had problems. His farm produced so plentifully that he didn't have room to store all his produce. He thought to himself, “What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.” Then he had an idea: “This is what I'll do,” he said. “I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I'll say to myself, ‘You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take  
(Continued on page 27)

## “Drum Major” Instincts

**“For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted”**  
**—Luke 14:11.**

**T**OO often humility is thought of as debasing, belittling, not giving us what we are worth.

This is not God's viewpoint. In His way of evaluating, humility is the way—indeed, the *only* way—to honor. Far from debasing, humility exalts. “Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased,” while “he that shall humble himself shall be exalted” (Matt. 23:12).

Humility exalts both now and in the world to come. Even now it sets us apart as persons of keen judgment, who realize what real worth is and who are willing to forego the lesser satisfactions in exchange for credits of real worth.

Humility removes the small selfishness that would stand in the way of true greatness and lifts us to lasting exaltations. It is the difference between trying to *appear* big and really *being* big. Humility makes a person *really* big.

So taught Jesus. He was surrounded with people dreaming of grandeur. The Romans lorded it over the weaker peoples of the world, trying to appear what they were not. All levels of society clamored for an importance they were not prepared to handle. That is why so few understood what He meant when He said, “Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humbleth himself shall be exalted” (Matt. 23:12).

God has called us to humility, but He has also given us the potential for greatness. Woven into the human nature of each of us is a desire to excel. Someone has called it our “drum major” instinct. There is no need to deny it; something in us feels the happiest when we are just a little better than someone else. To lack this impulse is to be powerless to rise. But there is need to control and *direct* it. God has made us to rise. It is because we want to excel that we are interested in what He has offered us.

But true “greatness” is not available to us through our natural image of “self.” Self is not even to be allowed to remain in the picture; all self has to be left behind in humil-

ity, in resigning ourselves to obey God whatever He asks, in placing His wishes above our own. If we fail in this, if we use our drum major instinct to promote ourselves, we will miss true greatness; for those who exalt themselves will be abased. But if we clothe ourselves in humility and use our desire for excellence in promoting not ourselves but the cause of Christ and His coming Kingdom, we shall someday receive the greatest exaltation.

By exalting God in our lives now, by submitting ourselves to the direction of His law, we are laying the groundwork for Him to exalt us in the coming age of glory. And far be it beyond us to imagine the possibilities of that exaltation! The Divine promise is: If thou shalt honor Me, “not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words”—that is humility—“then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it” (Isa. 58:13-14).

The exaltation is sure, if only we can acquire the humility. And how can we accomplish this? We know we cannot *think* ourselves into being humble, or imagine that we are when we are not, or we are likely to be proud of our humility. There has to be a change of heart, a change of direction in our lives, a change of level in our thinking, a total change in the object of our first loves and loyalties. God and His purposes have to become first and everything else—even *ourselves*—has to be secondary. Then the way is open for us to make tremendous strides in our development, as we accept the challenge of God and realize our complete dependence upon Him.

And as we grow to realize our real worth in the sight of God, what we *are* and, most especially, what we *can become*, we shall find that we are able to grow faster than we ever dreamed possible. Then when the time for exaltation comes, we shall be ready.

MM

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## Spiritual Cannibalism

(Continued from page 2)

tending vigorously against myself.

With such an inner disposition of will, it becomes utterly impossible for me to be touched in my self-esteem by the fact that someone is clearly ahead of me, nor do I find any satisfaction in noting that I am ahead of someone else. My goals and my objectives are all totally apart from any question about my place in the social pecking order. The result—my natural cannibalistic appetite is gone; and in its place is a strong inner confidence that I can find all my satisfactions in becoming what God wants me to be.

Here are grounds for security incomparably surer than any ever found by those who believe in themselves because of those who look up to them.

This is not to say that the ideal is to think ourselves worthless. Such an attitude is as unholy and unchristian as pride. We *must* believe in ourselves, but our standard for comparison must be the standard God has set up. We must get the message through to our innermost heart that we are here to *help* and *encour-*

*age*—not *rival*—one another; and that what other people think means little or nothing at all. What God thinks means *everything*. If we can get that message through, we won't be grasping for self-esteem at the expense of others and cutting ourselves off from our greater possibilities.

Far more secure than the self-esteem that competes with others is the self-confidence Christ calls humility. It is a character quality so strong that all comparisons with other people, whether selfishly advantageous or otherwise, slide off like water off a duck's back. Inequalities fade into a background of inattention. Competitiveness disappears; superiority and inferiority in every respect cease to touch us—because all our hopes of success and commendation are bound up in pleasing God!

What is necessary to produce a spiritual cannibal? Just feed your pride, and watch the appetite grow!

But if you want lasting satisfaction, give up the spiritually destructive practice of feeding on others, and seek God's favor alone.

This is the only way to happiness—and life. MM

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## Satisfied?

**A**RE we satisfied with this present life?

Our answer as aspiring Christians must be a resounding No! We can never be satisfied after knowing what *can* be ours: more than we can even ask or think or has ever entered into the heart of man to imagine.

To say that we are not satisfied with this life may seem to say that we are unthankful. But this should not—must not—be true. We, above

all people, have most to be thankful for. True, this life does have its heartaches, disappointments, fears, pain and eventually death. It is even as a vapour that appears for a little while and then vanishes away (James 4:14).

Sounds pretty dismal? Not much to live for? No! a thousand times No! Not when we understand the plans of God. This life, short though it be, is a stepping-stone toward a never-ending life; a life so filled with

joy, peace and love that it has no boundaries. This is why we can thank God for this life—even thank Him for the trials; yes, for the disappointments, heartaches, pain, and even the embarrassment when we thought we were all right but were all wrong—thank Him, because of the lessons life teaches us.

How thankful we should be for all those things that seem to hurt so much but that bring us closer to the realization of the wonderful life He has promised. If we are in earnest, we will make our trials work for us. "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy" (1 Pet. 4:12-13).  
—Contributed.

## • Love Your Enemies?

***"What did Jesus mean when He said, 'Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.' How are we to pray for those who 'despitefully use' us? Can you offer any thoughts?"***

In Matthew 5, Jesus was setting a very high standard of heart quality, in sharp contrast to the law of Moses with its simple outward requirements.

The text you cite (Matt. 5:44) is Jesus' counter to the old Jewish law: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy."

In the time of Jesus, "Love your enemies" was a new thought to Jews who delighted in hating anyone who opposed them or disagreed with them, including Gentiles, Roman officials, promoters of heresy, etc., etc. Enemies were hated, and that hatred was considered to be in harmony with the Jewish standard of religion. The ancient world was ruptured by many deep and often violent hatreds. When Jesus came saying, "Love your enemies," He was making an unequivocal and startling demand that cut sharply across Jewish ethics and morals.

In the New Testament there are three different words translated "love." One indicates physical romantic love; another, the love that binds a family and friends; and third—the one used in Matthew 5:43-44—is a love which expresses persistence in goodwill in Christ. We are not to love everyone with a natural and spontaneous affection; rather, Christ tells us to act in goodwill from God toward all men.

This command was especially meaningful to the Jews of Jesus' day who sought to justify their hatred of Roman authority by their interpretation of the law of Moses. They made no attempt to control their bitter, hateful feelings, and this, said Jesus, was wrong. They were jealous, revengeful, hating Jesus—even to the point of wanting to kill Him.

While Jesus told them the plain facts, He did not harbor any feelings of revenge. He did not wish them

harm or seek to injure them. He did not stir up His apostles and disciples with feelings of hatred or ill will. When Peter cut off the ear of the high priest's servant, Jesus rebuked Peter and restored the ear (Matt. 26:51; Mark 14:47). When the disciples James and John asked Jesus to command fire to consume the Samaritans who would not receive them, again Jesus rebuked their impetuous spirit. Jesus never justified any ill feelings.

This does not say that Jesus condoned evil. He condemned it, and He separated Himself from it; but had He had ill feelings or feelings of revenge toward those who opposed Him, He would only have been adding to their evil a stain upon His own character. Thus, as our perfect Example, He taught us how to maintain a spirit of goodwill and benevolence even toward our enemies.

Paul tells how we should love our enemies in his letter to the Roman Church: "Never pay back evil for evil to anyone; aim to be above reproach in the eyes of all; be at peace with all men, if possible, so far as that depends on you. Never revenge yourselves, beloved, but let the Wrath of God have its way; for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will exact a requital—the Lord has said it.

"No, if your enemy is hungry, feed him, if he is thirsty, give him drink; for in this way you will make him feel a burning sense of shame. Never let evil get the better of you; get the better of evil by doing good" (Rom. 12:17-21, Moffatt Bible).

Jesus then goes on to command us to pray for our "enemies": "Pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you." The primary purpose in such prayer would be to pray that they see their error, repent and turn from it.

Adam Clarke calls Jesus' command to "pray for them . . ." an "exquisitely reasonable precept. I cannot change that wicked man's heart; and while it is unchanged he will continue to harass me: . . . then I must implore him to do that which will at once secure the poor man's salvation, and contribute so much to my own peace."

Jesus goes on to say how God shows love to His



enemies: "for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good; and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (v. 45). We can do no better than to imitate God's pattern. If God had not had mercy on us even while we were dead in sin, we should never have had opportunity to become His children. We can do no less than extend the same kindness to others.

### • What is the "bruised reed"?

***"Please explain Matthew 12:20, 'A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench.'"***

This text is part of a passage Jesus quotes from the prophet Isaiah applying it to Himself. It reads in our Common Version: "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall show judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory. And in his name shall the Gentiles trust" (Matt. 12:17-21). The passage is quoted from Isaiah 42, which is only slightly different in the last part of the passage: "A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law."

This dual description of Christ's work is the result of the Prophet's vision spanning many years and including both the first and the second advent of Christ. The portions of the passage describing Christ's gentle manner of dealing—"He will not strive nor cry . . . a bruised reed shall he not break," etc.—apply to His first advent, the portions describing "judgment" and "victory" apply to His second coming. The distinction is perhaps clearer as paraphrased in the Living Bible, "Look at my Servant. See my Chosen One. He is my Beloved, in whom my soul delights. I will put my Spirit upon him, and he will judge the nations. He does not fight nor shout; He does not raise his voice! He does not crush the weak, or quench the smallest hope; He will end all conflict with his final victory, and his name shall be the hope of all the world."

Christ first came as a man meek and humble, doing His Father's will, forming a character worthy

of the great honor His Father was to bestow upon Him. He spent His life forming the character God requires. During His brief ministry He healed the sick to demonstrate the power of God and tried to turn His fellow Jews from the dead works of the law to the superior principles of the law of faith and obedience. He did not come to "fight and shout" but was meek and obedient, as a "lamb led to the slaughter."

But at His second coming the situation will be different. He will then come as "the Lion of the Tribe of Judah . . . conquering and to conquer" (Rev. 5:5; 6:2). At that time, "all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch" (Mal. 4:1-2). His second advent is to be a time of judgment. In the words of the prophet, "who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appear-eth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver" (Mal. 3:2-3).

MM

*AND IS there, Lord a cross for me  
As through this wilderness I stray,  
Which, if I would, I must not flee,  
But Thy Divine command obey?*

*I would not, Lord, pass by that cross,  
For Thou hast placed it in my way;  
To turn aside would be my loss,  
I, therefore, lift my heart and pray—*

*"Show me the cross that I must bear;  
Bend my proud heart that I may take,  
In holy faith and humble prayer,  
The cross of shame for Thy dear sake:*

*"So will I take my cross with joy,  
And bear it onward to the end;  
My shame and pride, O Lord, destroy!  
My faith and hope on Thee depend.*

*"If I will bear this cross each day,  
Thou'lt place a crown upon my brow  
In that bright world of endless day,  
Where I no more a cross shall know."*

—Selected

## Bright Bits from Poland . . .

I am informing you with greatest pleasure, we are living in a new apartment. It is a wonderful thing to have under its own roof its own head, where a human being can have at last its own life, forming a healthy, Christian family—a place in which reigns nice, cordial atmosphere full of Christian spirit, a place in which there is no room for anger and exasperation.

We realize that the best place for living in this world and to create a new man is Megiddo Church. Therefore, we would like to transfer ourselves for permanent residence to Rochester. However, until the time it can become real, our own place is sufficiently good for us in order we can form a really Christian family, improving our own characters, eliminating bad features and gaps. My wife and children are willing very much to get acquainted with the Church, personally, and to share the joy of all spiritual blessings of which I just had the opportunity to avail myself.

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Thank you very much for the teaching of our Lord's Word on "We can overcome." It is very valuable and always in force, making us very much stronger in our belief and in our resistance to evil as we progress on our way to the eternal life. The sole guide and example in our life is our Master.

\*\*\*\*\*

We are settled in our new quarters and now can live as we please in accordance with our conscience as a true Christian family should, mutually filled with loving consideration for one another.

Where hearts beat as one in the same faith and understanding of God's truths, with none to annoy the other for their difference in religious beliefs

or where truly God's peace reigns in cordial atmosphere, what a blessing. For this I have longed all through my life. Now the Lord in His great love has arranged this for us. All praise be to Him.

At the same time, it is a great responsibility which hangs over all of us. With all the material blessings we have received we must keep in mind not to be all absorbed in matters of this world but use the free time (our most prized possession) wisely to God's honor and for our spiritual buildup, towards our daily discussions with my wife and children, toward a better understanding of the solid Bible teachings as they are found in the Megiddo brochures and literature.

\*\*\*\*\*

We wish to bring up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

I am receiving the Messages presently, all arrive in due time, plus the cassettes with sermons. Sincere thanks to you, and I look forward for the next.

As soon as we were settled in our new home, we established a daily family altar, as it is done in the Church.

\*\*\*\*\*

Indeed we are living in the last stages of this old world. The world is in deep spiritual darkness. We particularly experience it here in Poland. The people are like the stormy seas, fomenting new troubles all the time, one group protesting one thing, another something else, the high food prices, strikes, etc. But we are not unduly disturbed. We believe God's care and love is over those who love God and keep His commandments. They who continue in truth are working to perfect their character to re-

ceive spiritual qualifications for life eternal.

This we have experienced in most wonderful manner.

In our spiritual growth we should reflect how we have spent our passing day, what good we have done, what needs to be improved upon in order to bring forth good fruit. I am thankful to God for opening the eyes of our understanding.

\*\*\*\*\*

Every day I thank God for all we have. Our home will always remind me that I owe it all to God, and may I never forget it, as did Solomon.

It is a little different here in Poland, just before the pagan Christmas, than in America. We do not witness the many pagan decorations, but there is a great deal of running after food. I dislike these holidays. It is complete madness, holidays for the stomach.

\*\*\*\*\*

In next letter will write of new things I have learned. Of some of the Church's teachings, I must get a better understanding. We have a lot of reading to do together.

\*\*\*\*\*

Praise to the Creator for blessing us so greatly. But we realize a great responsibility lies before us now. These abundant provisions of livelihood which were bestowed upon us are really giving us a chance to work towards a noble character. They also serve as a means in attaining life eternal. And there's not too much time, Elijah will soon be here! That is why our efforts must be all the more concentrated in this work on self, so we can renew our character, reflecting in everything our Lord Jesus Christ.

I began reading with great joy and enthusiasm from the rich literary storehouse which I brought with me from Rochester. I can now freely and entirely give my whole attention to the deep study of the Word in this very lovely Christian atmosphere of family and home minus fermentations and interruptions.

The Megiddo literature is rich, full of spiritual nourishment. Truly if we only take it deep into our hearts, it is all-instructive. And if we adopt all its contents as well as that of the sermons on the cassettes into our daily practice, it will become a fountain of living waters in us, gushing up unto eternal life.

Already we are beginning to watch every word we are about to utter. We are noticing spiritual growth and that proves we are on the way, the way which can lead us to eternity if we are constant to the end. I am thankful God gave me this chance in life, to know and enter this way.

Youth is enthusiastic and energetic, and can do more than the aged and sick. It is good to begin the work on our character when young. The chances for better results are greater, that is, if we are inclined that way. By starting young we have more time. Then too, we will not have to be so ashamed for wasting our years in life—and on nothing! There's still so much to do!

\*\*\*\*\*

With great interest, I read every *Message*. It is the best literature on earth!

In this splendid atmosphere we can do more. We are spending more time in the evening discoursing on the Bible which is very educational for the children.

As for me, I long so much the more to be with you even though I have my own place. I still would have been more fortunate if I could have been able to live with my family with all of you. I miss very much that daily contact with those of the same faith. Oh, if only the good Lord might arrange it that it would not be too long before we were together in one place as pilgrims traveling towards the Kingdom of God. I know that is impossible right now, but maybe the Lord willing, maybe some time in the future. I sincerely believe it will happen.

Poland

The K's

## Have A Problem?

(Continued from page 21)

life easy; eat, drink and be merry' (Luke 12:18-19, NIV).

The rich man had a plan for solving his problem without God; he would expand his business to accommodate all his abundance. But God had different plans for him; there would be no tomorrow for him to take life easy and enjoy his abundance of all things.

In the parable, Jesus was teaching that it is foolhardy to make plans without God. The Apostle James shows the folly of such planning: "Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, 'If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that'" (Jas. 4:14-15, NIV). The Wise Man said, "Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth" (Prov. 27:1). Only if God is willing, will tomorrow come. Unless God is taken into our plans, there is no need to plan.

What is your problem—health, wealth, work, friends, relatives? Do you think that no one ever had such a problem as you have? Remember that there is "no new thing under the sun"—not even a new problem. We may suffer from headaches, insomnia or allergies. But what is that? We may have to work side by side with someone not to our liking; we may be slighted by our friends and relatives. But what does that amount to? We have never been beaten, stoned, imprisoned or shipwrecked. We have never been in real mortal danger; we have never been really hungry or thirsty.

Think of the apostle Paul. He endured all these and more. In his letter to the Corinthians he testified of the manifold hardships which he and his companions had endured for the sake of the gospel. These are his words:

"I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches" (II Cor. 11:23-28, NIV).

What are our problems? Nothing, by comparison. Light afflictions at best. For if Paul could endure all these things and call them light afflictions, we have suffered nothing. By comparison, most of us have never had a real problem!

But with the problems we do have, let us not let them pass by unclaimed. They are our steps to the future. They are our means to better things coming. They are our lessons by which we can train for eternity.

In this perspective, *who* has a problem!

MM



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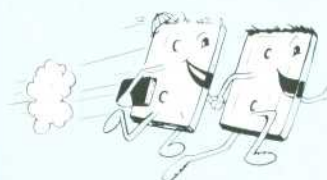
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