

# Megiddo Message



~ Well Done ~

Vol. 74, No. 6  
June, 1987



## Do I HAVE To?

**Do we give God  
the feeling that we  
really do not want what  
He is offering us?**

**H**AVE you ever heard someone say in a groaning tone, usually at the request of a parent to clean a room or wash the dishes—"Mom, do I *have* to?" Most parents look forward to the day when their children will take responsibility with a more pleasant attitude. But all realize that that kind of attitude comes only with time and maturity.

I wonder how God must feel toward us sometimes when we say by our actions, "Lord, do I *have* to?" when He asks us to do something we would rather not do, or give up something we would rather keep.

Try to imagine how *you* would feel if you had given someone a pleasant home and everything they would need for the rest of their lives—which they accepted—and then when you asked them to do something very small for you they responded, "Do I have to?"

Do we give God the impression that we do not really *want* to do what He asks, when He has offered us more than "eye has seen," more than "ear has heard," more than our most extravagant imaginations can imagine? By our slow, halting obedience do we tell Him that we do not feel any strong obligation to Him?

Does He not long to speak sharply to those who should be mature—who are still in the "Do I have to" stage?

The apostle Paul and other New Testament writers expressed their relationship to God as slaves or bond slaves—which they *rejoiced* to be. Over their attitude toward serving Christ was not

the slightest shadow of complaint. They thrilled to be Christ's slaves. It was an obligation and an opportunity. Paul demonstrated in his life that it was not forced upon him but that he *loved* to serve. It was his glorious privilege and continual joy to be able to live, work, serve, sacrifice, suffer, and even die for Christ's sake.

Why can we not have this same attitude today about our lives?

Are you a mature Christian like Paul, or are you still in the "Do I have to" stage, looking at every sacrifice or denial as a weighty burden? Do you see your responsibilities as obligations or opportunities? Do you look at life on a day-to-day basis as a burden or a privilege?

Yes, how do you view the giving of your time, abilities, and energy? When you pray, when you assemble, when you study, is it an obligation or an opportunity?

In other words, do you really *love* and *long* to serve God more than anything else in the world—or do you say by your actions, if not by words, "Do I *have* to?"

If we keep in mind the reward God has offered us, there will be no "Do I have to" obedience in our life. It will all be willing, eager, and loving. We will realize that serving God—whatever the nature of the service—is the most wonderful thing we could do.

And it is our only escape from the bondage of mortality, our only passport into the eternal Kingdom of Christ with all its eternal delights.

MM



## Megiddo means . . .

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

### We believe

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

### We believe

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

### We believe

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

### We believe

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

### We believe

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

### We believe

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

### We believe

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

## Bible Quotations

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

**NEB**—New English Bible

**NIV**—New International Version

**NAS**—New American Standard

**RSV**—Revised Standard Version

**TLB**—The Living Bible

**TEV**—Today's English Version

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

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

**Berkeley**—The Modern Language New Testament

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

**Goodspeed**—The New Testament translated by

Edgar J. Goodspeed

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

**RV**—Revised Version

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

# Megiddo Message

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

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



# THE UNIVERSITY OF ETERNAL WISDOM

## INSTITUTE OF TERRESTRIAL CHARACTER PERFECTING

On The Recommendation Of The Faculty Of Myriads Of Angels The KING OF KINGS  
By Virtue Of The Authority Vested In Him By The God Of Heaven And Supreme Head  
Of The University Of Eternal Wisdom Does Hereby Confer Upon

FAITHFUL LIFE-SEEKER

The Degree Of

DOCTOR OF CHARACTER

AND DOES GRANT THIS DIPLOMA OF IMMORTALITY AND HONOR AS EVIDENCE THEREOF

*John Van Drielant*

*John Roberts Kinsler*



*E. L. Blomker*

*Stephen Vincent Gabriel*

Doctors of Character

"Well done, thou  
good and faithful servant"

**N**OT everyone can be a Ph.D, but every one of us can be a Ch.D, and I, for one, would like to see all of us strive to be just that. If there is one attribute that needs more thought, more diligence, and more attention in these troublesome times, it is sound character, strict adherence to the principles of Christ.

**"Master yourself and you can master anything."**

Each striving Christian recognizes discipline as an indispensable part of forming a Christlike character.

Man has made tremendous strides in mastering his environment. He has unleashed nuclear energy. He has placed artificial satellites around the earth and around our daystar, the sun. He has traveled safely to the moon and back.

We can move mountains. We can change the course of rivers. We can bounce radio signals off the planets. The pace of scientific advancement is continually accelerating.

But there is one thing which science cannot create, and that is character.

Character is something that each one of us must build for himself out of the raw material given us by our Creator. By the law of God, the examples of others, and—most of all—out of trials and errors of daily life, each of us must form a character acceptable to God. This is our life work: to become Ch.D's, Doctors of Character.

Character is the total of thousands of small daily strivings to live up to the best that is in us. Character is the final decision to reject whatever is demeaning and with confidence and honesty choose the right.

Once we make the final choice, we unleash within ourselves a power greater than any known to science—the power of a life firmly grounded on discipline, courage, honor, faith and love. These are the qualities on which our future depends.

Discipline is the first essential to character, Christian discipline that will impel us to live by noble principles and be genuinely virtuous men and women in the sight of God.

Such will be the Ch.D's of the future world.

Have any of us grown to maturity without realizing the transforming benefits of discipline which we received in childhood or in succeeding years—strenuous as it may have seemed at the time? Has any child of God ever attained any height at all in the divine life who is not thankful for the discipline that Christian development brings?

If there is one thing that we should esteem above any other in our probation, it is discipline, for discipline is the mold in which character is formed; and character alone will merit the favor of God Almighty. We surely cannot claim a perfect record for always having loved the training and restraining. But we do know unreservedly that, as trainees for Ch.D's in God's better world, we have need for the schooling of discipline. And we should humbly submit to it in whatever form it comes, whether from our superiors, or from those circumstances in life which tend to control us and help develop a more Christlike temperament.

To realize the dreadful effects of the lack of discipline, we have only to

***"As Chief of  
Research and  
Development for  
the Army, I meet  
with great numbers  
of scientists every day.  
Many of them are  
Ph.D's, Doctors of  
Philosophy in  
various special fields.  
Ph.D's are among  
the finest brains  
and the most  
congenial people  
that I have  
ever dealt with.  
So I hope they will  
forgive me when  
I say that  
what this country  
needs, and needs  
badly, are more  
Ch.D's—Doctors of  
Character."***

***—Lt. Gen. Arthur G. Trudeau***



look at the world about us, where it is manifest in a thousand different ways. By the same token, a self-controlled, godly life is a benefit to the world, a joy to society and a delight in the home. But best of all, a life disciplined by God's exalted rule of conduct will earn its Ch.D in the society of future immortals.

We should be ever on the alert to exercise self-discipline at the upsurge of the slightest feeling in our hearts of any rebellious passion which might bestir opposition to God's law. The standard for the "whole limit" of God's house "upon the top of the mountain" is holiness; and discipline is the restricted path by which we ascend that mountain.

The overwhelming prevalence in human nature of rebellion against authority is typified by one who wrote: "Of course it is essential that the authority of officers in the military service be preserved. That is the reason that they have set rules for the method of communication between privates and higher officers. For, believe me, if there were too much rubbing of elbows between officers and men, it would soon be discovered that there were many captains who should be in shirt sleeves and many in shirt sleeves who should be captains."

This feeling of rebellion against authority is by no means confined to the army, to delinquent youth or to the underworld; it is in the lower nature of every one of us. The higher characteristics of life and standards of virtue set by God for His Ch.D's require long and careful development through discipline and self-denial.

Character never was a result of heredity, or an endowment; and it never came off a production line. You cannot dream yourself into character; you must hammer and forge one for yourself. To be worth anything, character must be capable of standing firm upon its feet in the

world of daily work, temptation, and trial; and to be able to bear the wear and tear of actual life. The discipline which corrects the baseness of worldly passions, fortifies the heart with virtuous principles, enlightens the mind with useful knowledge, and furnishes it with enjoyment from within itself, is of more consequence to real felicity than all the provisions that we can make of the goods of fortune. "A good man shall be satisfied from himself," said a very wise man, "when he sees that he pleases God." Only what we have wrought into our character during life can we take with us through eternity.

Human nature is overdeveloped in many traits that are not of the Spirit,

**Only what we  
have wrought into  
our character  
during life can  
we take with us  
through eternity.**

and God has a pattern of holiness to which He is fitting us. Job fittingly expresses this process of discipline as God "training a worthless creature to be wise, till a wild colt of a man is tamed."

Our character is but the stamp on our souls of the free choices of good and evil that we have made through life. If we do not strive, in the little circumstances of life, to discipline our tendencies and desires, practicing self-denial and virtue, we will not be prepared for the greater. It is said that "men best show their character in trifles, where they are not on their guard." But a true Christian's character is such that he is never off guard; these Ch.D's live by a rule

which is always at work in their lives.

A tree will not only lie as it falls, but it will fall as it leans. It was probably for no mean reason that Joseph was Jacob's favorite son. It was undoubtedly in those trifles of early life that Joseph's true character shone out or he never would have been the bright star that he was in severe testings. God allowed stern discipline to be laid upon him that he might be one of His favorite sons.

Daniel endured lifelong discipline being a God-fearing Hebrew in a heathen court.

Paul could say, "I am my body's sternest master."

Was it not discipline for a youth with Jesus' ability to remain in the background of life, in a remote village, during those early years when youth is fairly bursting with vivacity and enthusiasm? But His Father planned that He should be a fully developed model of Christianity. These are some of the noble men who have dedicated their lives to receiving God's discipline and have obtained their Ch.D degree.

The standards of modern life call for limitless resources of finance, research and time to develop science and further education, while training in character is often set aside. However, the discipline of character training is destined to be the principal course in our future halls of education. When the graduation exercises are over on the great day when Christ the Dean of this School of Discipline will hand out diplomas, the world will be under the control of these Ch.D's. He has employment waiting for them. Discipline, instead of being rare, will be the order of the day, and all earth's inhabitants will hear: "This is the way, walk ye in it."

This will be the knowledge that will be the stability of our times and the strength of our salvation. MM



**T**ODAY? Yes, if you are enrolled in the school of the Almighty, you were tested today. And what was your score? Did you pass—or did you fail?

Each of us is enrolled in the school of the Almighty, taking courses preliminary to receiving His higher promotions to life eternal. If we can graduate successfully from our present courses of study, someday we shall be permitted to enjoy His advanced training in the real gems of knowledge—how to create, how to think with an immortal mind, how to live—forever!

But first, we must pass the exams of today.

Like the instructors in any school, our Master knows that we do our best work if we are tested frequently. Even daily. He knows our tendency to procrastinate. He knows how easily we will put off the serious work, if we are not given frequent opportunities to prove ourselves. Yes, we are likely to think about preparing for the long, scheduled, difficult—and infrequent—exams; but the little tests of each day, small and unannounced, are most effective in helping us master our subjects. By these little tests He is in a way assuring that we will do the work required, not all in one grand stroke but little by little during each ordinary day. The little tests, given our most diligent attention, can work mightily for our credit. For these daily grades will become a large part of our credit for the course; and conversely, if we cannot pass the small tests of every day, how do we expect to pass the

greater, weightier examination to come?

So God gives us daily assignments, and daily testing—in His love, in His kindness, because He realizes that we must be kept awake. We must be kept working. He is working to prepare us in the common carpenter shop for the coming night in Gethsemane. During many common, ordinary and seemingly uneventful days, He is preparing us for the greater test in which we must triumph. Slowly, daily, He is training us for the high position which only He can know, the glory which only He can comprehend, a glory surpassing anything we can imagine. But for that position He demands that we give our best; nothing less will qualify us, nothing less than daily, hourly, momentary effort.

Why such constant training? Why such rigorous demands? Have we considered the degree for which we have enrolled? Do we realize that it is a Degree in *Life Eternal*? What greater, higher honor could we seek! And the greater the attainment, the more difficult the required studies.

It is easy to agree with all this, but

we sometimes would like the privilege of choosing our own curriculum.

We would like to select our own courses of study. However, in this school of the Almighty, we find many compulsory courses—many which we did not expect, and which we do not naturally enjoy or appreciate. In fact, we find that we must major in some subjects *least* to our liking. One of the first and longest courses required is a course in Self-knowledge. This may seem strange, for why should God require that we know ourselves? But we find that passing this course is fundamental to every other program He has designed. We find, too, and quite to our surprise, that this course is not easy. Why? Why should it be so difficult to know ourselves? Don't we live with ourselves every day? *That* is precisely the problem. We are so close to ourselves that it is *very* difficult to see properly, or judge rightly.

Then, too, there are other challenging courses, in Self-denial, Self-sacrifice, Patience, and Kindness. All require intense concentration and long-term effort. But remember—the degree! (Continued on page 20)

## *Did I PASS Today?*

**God is going to test me today. Am I prepared?  
Will I pass the test?**



## Your Speech Is Sacred



**T**HE gift of speech is among the finest capabilities our heavenly Creator has entrusted to us. Though there are other means by which we can communicate and share, what would we do without words! How many words in our English language reflect this fact. We talk, speak, narrate, explain, shout, whisper—each conveys a certain type of speech.

It is virtually impossible to separate our words from our life. It is equally impossible to segregate them in our responsibility to God. Very early in recorded history, God revealed that He was concerned about man's words—because words are an expression of the heart, of the mind, of the inner life. By our words we address one another, by our words we address God. From the Divine side, words are God's means of communicating to us. Notice how many times in the very first chapter of Genesis we read, "God said." God was speaking—who would listen? God was revealing His plan, making Himself known, laying down His law.

On the human side, the first spoken words to be recorded in the Divine Book are not very flattering. They are words justifying disobedience, questioning God's actions, resisting His judgment. When "the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?" Adam replied, "I heard your voice in the garden, and I was afraid, . . . and I hid myself." As Adam continued to speak, his words became even worse—more self-justifying, more self-condemning: "The woman you gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat."

The improper use of words has long identified those against God, those whose "tongue speaks proud things," who in a God-defying tone say, in the words of the Psalmist, "With our tongue will we prevail; our lips are our own: who is lord over



us?" (Ps. 12:3-4). Words do not even have to be spoken to be heard and judged by God. The Psalmist spoke again of the fool who says *in his heart* "There is no God" (Ps. 14:1).

Do we wonder that the wise man said, "Death and life are in the power of the tongue"? (Prov. 18:21).

The modern day abuse of the privilege of speech is perhaps one of the most flagrant and most common of all sins. We want to look at it on three levels: 1) the use of utter profanity and vulgarity; 2) the use of slang, irreverent words, and God-dishonoring interjections, and 3) the indiscriminate use of sacred phrases, which show contempt for eternal realities; making light of eternal truths.

Even the civil law given by God to Moses shows His concern for the proper use of speech. The third commandment reads: "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain" (Ex. 20:7).

Though we are not bound by the law of Moses today, we cannot escape the force or the obligation of this command, for it was repeated and even amplified by the New Testament writers. For example: "Let no corrupt [unwholesome, filthy, rotten, putrid, foul] word proceed out of your mouth" (Eph. 4:29).

Speech is sacred. The use of speech is a solemn responsibility. It is the one quality that differentiates between men and animals. Why, then, do so many men, women, and even children sink to the lowest animal depths by abusing it?

Jesus said that the words reveal what is in the heart, for "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh" (Luke 6:45). Their words show

that they have no faith or reverence for God.

Some will justify irreverent words by saying—and with perhaps little exaggeration—that "everybody does it." But this does precisely nothing to make it right. As someone has aptly observed, "wrong is wrong, even if everybody does it, and right is right, even if nobody does it."

As Christians, we are called to be a "separate," "peculiar," "holy," "special" people, and all true believers will show themselves distinctly separate in their speech. In the words of the apostle Peter, they will "run not with them [unbelievers], to the same excess of riot" (I Pet. 4:3-4). Christians are called to cleanness, not uncleanness; purity, not impurity. This certainly demands that their language be honoring to the Lord, in sharp contrast to that of the ungodly world around them. The present-day degrading of speech can only be interpreted as part of the downtrend of the age, a fulfillment of the Word of the Lord, a trend which shows itself in the influence of movies, radio, TV, and secular books and periodicals—all of which are in part to blame, and all of which reflect the tastes of the majority. To wholly avoid the effects of language pollution requires extreme carefulness. It is as if the Christian were assaulted with deadly germs wherever he goes. He hears it at work, in the store, on the street, just about everywhere. Of course, some places are far worse than others, and some places can be avoided. But the curse is so widespread that total avoiding of it is virtually impossible. There are persons who, in the presence of a respected, known-to-be-religious friend, will "tone down" their talk out of respect, but others indeed regard neither God nor man. As long as we are in the world, we cannot fully escape these abominations.

What can the serious believer do? First, he can combat it by keeping a

**God is  
concerned  
about  
our  
words.**



**O God, take control of me all through today.**

*Control my tongue, so that I may speak*

*No angry word;*

*No cruel word;*

*No untrue word;*

*No ugly word.*

*Control my thoughts, so that I may think*

*No impure thoughts;*

*No bitter thoughts;*

*No jealous thoughts;*

*No selfish thoughts.*

*Control my actions so that all through today*

*My work may be my best;*

*May I do nothing today of which I will afterwards be ashamed.*

*Amen.*

prayer on his lips. This was the practice of the Psalmist, who wrote, "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips" (Ps. 141:3). Again he prayed, "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer" (Ps. 19:14). A heart that is stayed on God, a mind that is communing with God, will not be penetrated by the evil around it.

God has called us to holiness, and our language must reflect this fact. Our conversation must be above reproach in every respect—in our choice of words, in the tone in which we speak, and in our disciplined manner. Our conversation must be a rebuke to the ungodly around us. If it is not, if our speech is so similar to theirs that one can hardly tell the difference, very obviously *something is wrong!*

If we would uphold our profession as Christians, our speech must be

pure, wholesome, upright, and God-honoring. Nothing rough, filthy, vulgar, coarse, or even tainted with any of these must pass our lips. In the words of the apostle Paul: "Let it not be once named among you as becometh saints" (Eph. 5:3-4). *Not once.*

This text is even more emphatic in some of the newer versions. For example, "But as for sexual immorality in all its forms, and the itch to get your hands on what belongs to other people—don't even talk about such things; they are no fit subjects for

Christians to talk about. The keynote of your conversation should not be nastiness or silliness or flippancy, but a sense of all that we owe to God" (Phillips), "Fornication and indecency of any kind, or ruthless greed, must not be so much as mentioned among you, as befits the people of God. No coarse, stupid, or flippant talk; these things are out of place; you should rather be thanking God" (NEB). What a standard, far above the stratosphere for Mr. Worldling!

Under the old Mosaic law, anyone touching that which was unclean became unclean himself. Do we wonder that the apostle Paul admonished the striving Christian, the would-be son or daughter of God, to "touch not the unclean thing"? (II Cor. 6:17-18). It is a command that can be heeded only by serious, constant watching. Being exposed to the uncleanness and filth of modern day Babylon day after day, day after day—how easily we

**We show  
what we are  
by the way  
we speak.**



may be contaminated, if not exceedingly careful.

When we must be in the company of those whose speech is God-dishonoring, we would do well to put on a double guard. If anyone should say or feel that rough language does not bother him, he is only betraying himself and his compromising. If he is not bothered by it, he is showing his likeness to them, his oneness with them, and his great distance from God.

We show what we are by the way we speak. As someone has aptly described it, "If I have to traverse a very muddy area, I put on overshoes, galoshes, or boots, to keep myself and my clothes clean and dry. And I will get out of there as fast as possible. Turn a hog loose in the same spot, and he will wallow in it all day and enjoy every minute."

The parallel is obvious, unflattering as it may be to flagrant offenders. But let us look to ourselves, lest we offend in some small way. Let us take the lesson to ourselves and be sure that all our speech is God-honoring and pure. MM

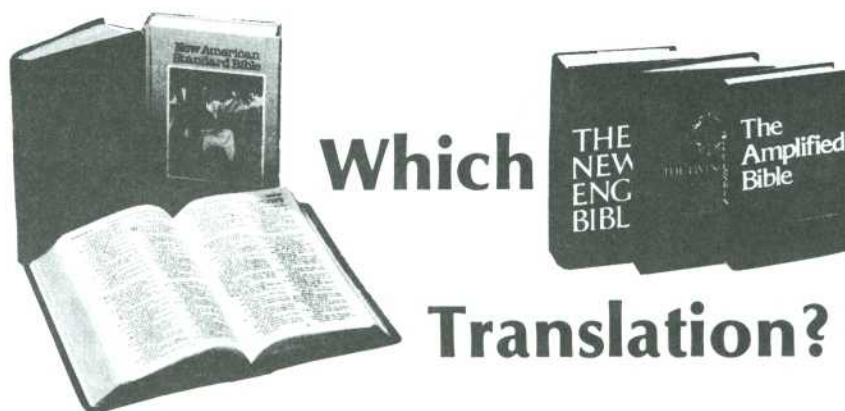
## Rise Up, O Men of God

*Rise up, O men of God!  
Have done with lesser things;  
Give heart and soul and mind and strength  
To serve the King of kings.*

*Rise up, O men of God!  
His coming tarries long;  
Bring in the day of brotherhood,  
And end the night of wrong.*

*Rise up, O men of God!  
The Church for you doth wait;  
Her strength shall make your spirit strong,  
Her service make you great.*

*Bear now the cross of Christ!  
Tread where His feet have trod;  
As follow'rs of the Son of Man  
Rise up, O men of God!*



### IS IT right to use Bibles other than the King James Version?

The answer is yes. Any Bible that we use, including the King James Version, is a translation. And some of the newer translations have been made from manuscripts older and thus nearer to the original than the manuscripts used by King James' translators in the seventeenth century.

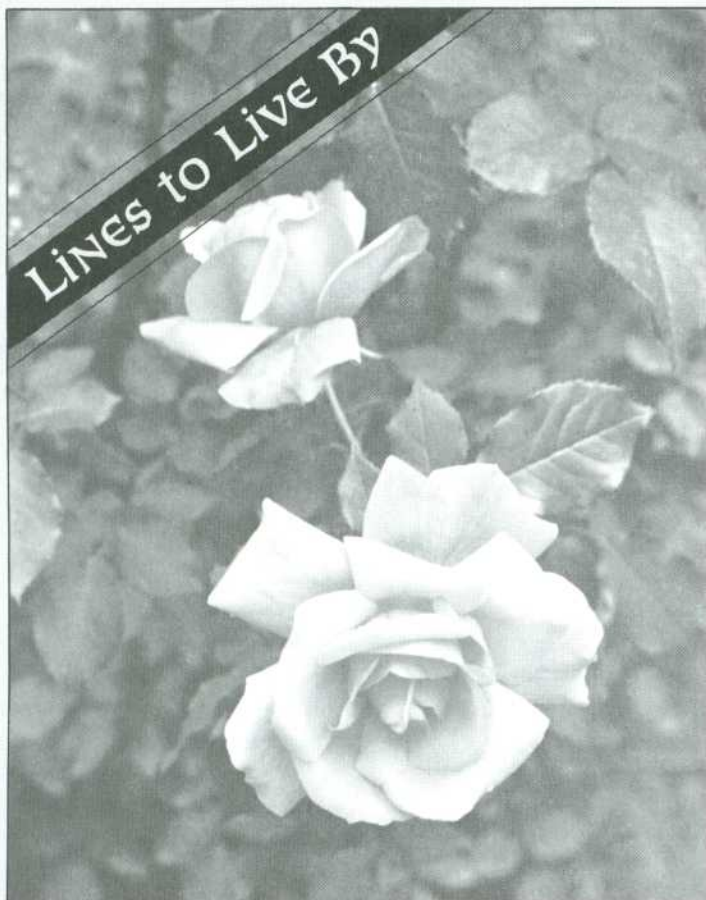
We must keep in mind that no translation—new or old—is completely accurate; nor is any completely free from theological bias. Any translator, coming upon a word for which he must choose one of many meanings, will be influenced to a certain extent by his background, his education, and consequently what he feels is appropriate according to his understanding of the passage.

In this sense, every translation becomes, to a limited degree, a commentary. This cannot be avoided. And we must keep it in mind when we come to certain passages in the Biblical account that seem contradictory.

As for paraphrases, we must remember that they are not translations. When we try to find out the exact meaning of a particular Scripture text, very few lend any help whatever, though for narrative accounts and general admonitions they often make very good, intelligible, direct, practical reading.

Those newer versions of the Bible which are reasonably reliable and dignified (such as the New English Bible, the New International Version, the Jerusalem Bible, the New American Standard Bible, the Revised Standard Version, the New Berkeley Version, and others) are an invaluable stimulus to thoughtful reading and often helpful in understanding an otherwise obscure passage. They give fresh wording to passages the meaning of which may have been all but lost in overfamiliarity. By using more currently understood language, they force us to stop and think about what is really being said. This is good, for the Scriptures contain such a depth of meaning that we need to be continually challenged by it. MM

**A tree will not only lie as it falls,  
but it will fall as it leans**



When God allows a burden to be put upon you, He will put His own arm underneath it to help.

*The best use we can make of life is to spend it for something that outlasts it.*

Behavior is a mirror in which everyone shows his own image.

*Many are willing to serve the Lord—in an advisory capacity.*

*Would I be called a Christian, if everybody knew  
My secret thoughts and feelings, And everything I do?  
Oh! could they see the likeness of Christ in me each day,  
Oh! could they hear Him speaking in everything I say?*

*Would I be called a Christian if everyone could know  
That I am found in places where Jesus would not go?  
Oh! could they hear His echo in every song I sing?  
In every word I utter could they see Christ, my King?*

*Would I be called a Christian if judged by what I read?  
By all my recreations, and every thought and deed?  
Could I be counted Christlike, as I now work and pray?  
Unselfish, kind, forgiving to others every day?*

*Soon comes our Blessed Saviour, and shall it then be told  
That I have been a Christian with character of gold?*



## Wit's-End Corner

*Are you standing at Wit's End Corner,  
Christian, with troubled brow?  
Are you thinking of what is before you,  
And all you are bearing now?  
Does all the world seem against you,  
And you in the battle alone?  
Remember—at Wit's-End Corner  
Is just where God's power is shown.*

*Are you standing at Wit's-End Corner  
Blinded with wearying pain,  
Feeling you cannot endure it,  
You cannot bear the strain?  
Bruised through the constant suffering,  
Dizzy and dazed and dumb?  
Remember—at Wit's End Corner  
Is where Jesus loves to come.*

*Are you standing at Wit's-End Corner  
Your work before you spread,  
All lying begun, unfinished,  
And pressing on heart and head,  
Longing for strength to do it,  
Stretching out trembling hands?  
Remember—at Wit's-End Corner  
The burden-bearer stands.*

*Are you standing at Wit's-End Corner?  
Then you're just in the very spot  
To learn the wondrous resources  
Of Him who faileth not.  
No doubt, to a brighter pathway  
Your footsteps will soon be moved.  
But only at Wit's-End Corner  
Is the "God who is able" proved.*

*Faith draws the poison from every grief; takes the sting from every loss; and quenches the fire of every pain, as only faith can do.*

*Do all the good you can, by all the means  
you can, in all the ways you can, in all the  
places you can, at all the times you can, to  
all the people you can, as long as ever you  
can.*

### Your Bible:

*Dig it up,  
Write it down,  
Pray it in,  
Live it out,  
Pass it on.*

## POINTS for the MONTH

- Week 1:** We die by living to ourselves; we live by dying to ourselves.  
**Week 2:** We should use with a high sense of obligation the advantages God has given us.  
**Week 3:** True Christianity demands a creed, a work and a sentiment: head, hand, and heart.  
**Week 4:** The Lord will strengthen the will of the willing.



# The Spirit of the Lord, Then and Now

*Scripture Lesson: Acts 2:2-11*

**All through the ages  
God by His Spirit  
is working steadily  
in behalf of  
His children.**

**E**VERYTHING during the last few months had been so sudden, so unexpected. Now it was all over, and Jesus had gone to heaven. His loyal disciples were waiting. Yes, just waiting, in obedience to Jesus' command. Just before He ascended, Jesus had told them to "tarry in Jerusalem" until they would be "endued with power from on high." So they were tarrying. Waiting.

They were waiting in expectancy for—how could they know what? Yes, they were expecting "power from on high," but what would it be like? Little could they imagine of how it would come.

Ten uneventful days had passed since Jesus had left them, ten days of waiting. Now the day of Pentecost relieved the monotony, as it brought to Jerusalem people from all parts of the empire. Pentecost was an ancient Jewish festival, recognized widely by the Jewish people. It was still early in the morning, and already the streets were filled with the buzz of the crowds and the general commotion caused by a multitude of people.

But the believers were not among them. They, about one hundred twenty all together, were congregated once again in that large upper room, waiting. And as they waited, they wondered: just how and when would the power come? They had no doubt that He would fulfill His promise, but *when*? They won-

dered, too, what was happening even now around the Father's throne in heaven. What was Jesus doing?

They could not see, and they could not know, but they could pray. And they *did* pray. We read that they "all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication" (Acts 1:14). And they talked—we can imagine that they talked about their Lord and what He had taught them. How they missed His company, He whom they had come to love and appreciate, He who had been their close connection with the Father. We can imagine, too, that they talked about others in former days who had received power from God, men like Elijah, and Elisha, and the prophets—how did it come to *them*? They talked on, and then they prayed again.

## **Power from On High**

And then . . . in the midst of it all . . . "when the day of Pentecost was fully come," as "they were all with one accord in one place," "suddenly"—just as God always works—it happened! Much as they knew something was coming, its arrival was still startling, shocking. "Suddenly there came."

What came? What happened? It was not like anything they had imagined. There was something to see, something to feel, something to hear—something to experience! It *sounded* like "a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty

Note: *The Spirit of the Lord, Then and Now* is available as a complete church service on cassette. Price: \$3.00



wind" that "filled all the house where they were sitting." It *looked* like "cloven tongues . . . of fire," and—most mysterious of all—somehow it physically "sat upon each of them." No one present could fail to see the effect: "they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:1-4).

The onlookers were astounded. We read, "They were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?" (vs. 7-8). The Holy Spirit broke language barriers as had never been done in the history of the world.

What was it all about? What did it mean? The apostle Peter stood up and began to speak. "Ye men of Judea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, . . . hearken to my words." And in a very calm, straightforward manner he explained what it was all about. This was something that had been foretold; if only they had read the prophets they might have expected it. "This is that," he began, "which was spoken by the prophet Joel" (Acts 2:16). Here it is, he says, right in front of your eyes. And if you think this is spectacular, just realize what is still ahead. Amazing as all this is, it is only a light summer shower, a few sprinkles of rain, compared with the heavy downpour scheduled for the last days!

For "it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire,

and vapour of smoke: The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come" (Acts 2:17-20).

We can scarcely begin to imagine what that Pentecost was like—and what will the Greater Pentecost be, when the power of God is poured out upon all who live!

In addition to the experience of power, that Pentecost brought a gigantic confirmation of the disciples' faith. If there was any faltering, any hesitating, any skepticism after the wonders of the Resurrection and the Ascension, Pentecost dispelled them.

#### **Sudden, But Foretold**

The event was sudden, and in a sense unexpected, but not because Jesus had withheld information about it. Actually, He had spoken on several occasions of the power He would be sending. "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of him shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Spirit was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified" (John 7:38-39).

Just before His ascension Jesus had told them explicitly to wait in Jerusalem, for, said He, "ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you" (Acts 1:8).

On the night before His crucifixion, in His last Passover sermon, Jesus spoke of the power He would be sending, comparing it with what He possessed. These are His words: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father" (John 14:12).

Again in that sermon, He told about this special provision for their support, calling it a Comforter. He would be going away, He explained, but He would not leave them alone.

A "Comforter" would come, "which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26). The apostles heard, but little did they realize what the fulfillment of that prophecy would be—and right within themselves.

What was the purpose of this Comforter, this power? Why would it be sent?

First of all, in the words of Jesus to His apostles, it was to "teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said

**"Time and chance  
happen to all,"  
but above all  
is the Divine hand  
guarding, guiding,  
working all things  
together for  
eternal good.**

unto you" (John 14:26), so that an accurate documentary could be written of Jesus' ministry and teaching and of the knowledge God wanted preserved.

Second, it was sent to confirm their spoken word, to add force and power to their message in an unbelieving world (Mark 16:20). It was given also, in the words of Paul, "to confirm the promises made unto the fathers: and that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name" (Rom. 15:8-9). Again Paul says, "For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which

**Just as surely as the heavenly power descended at Pentecost, just so surely will God bestow upon each faithful one the blessings of immortality.**

Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed, through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God" (Rom. 15:18-19).

#### **The "Rain" Ceased**

This outpouring of power, the "sprinkling" or "former rain" of Joel's prophecy (Joel 2:23), was for a limited time and for a specific purpose. Like any period of "rain," it was not to be perpetual; when its purpose was accomplished, it ceased.

In I Corinthians 12 Paul discusses the various gifts which were part of this special power. Different persons had different gifts. To one was given power to heal, to another the ability to teach; to another, the ability to speak in tongues; to another, the ability to interpret, and so on. But it was all temporary. None of the prophecies of this outpouring ever said that it was to be eternal, perpetual, or forever.

And in due time, when its purpose had been accomplished, it ceased, just according to the Apostle's prophecy: "When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away" (I Cor. 13:10).

As translated in several of the newer versions, this text suggests a time when the Bible would be complete, supplying divine knowledge in such a sufficient measure that knowledge and power by the Holy Spirit would no longer be essential. It was to be "when the time of fulfillment comes" (Knox Bible); "when the

complete comes" (Phillips), "when perfection comes" (Williams). The same word is used to describe that which befits the "will of God" in Romans 12:2, "That ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." According to the Lexicon, the Greek word translated "perfect" (*teleios*) may be used either to suggest a point of completion in time or of an achievement in quality.

Just as surely as the power came, so surely was it "done away."

#### **What the Power Did**

The Holy Spirit was a marvelous gift, but it was not a gift essential to salvation; nor did it directly aid its possessors in attaining salvation. Nothing is said to indicate that it purified the heart or in any way accomplished the transformation from the old creature to the new. The disciples who had it still had all the work we have to do, to bring themselves to the mental and moral likeness of Christ.

**When we manifest  
a sincere desire  
to be part of His  
family, He gives  
us family care.**

Paul—who had this power—testified personally to this fact: "My own behavior baffles me," he wrote. "For I find myself not doing what I really want to do but doing what I really loathe. . . . I often find that I have the will to do good, but not the power. . . . My conscious mind wholeheartedly endorses the Law, yet I observe an entirely different principle at work in my nature. This is in continual conflict with my conscious attitude" (Rom. 7:18-23, Phillips). He also labored diligently, lest, as he wrote, "when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away" (I Cor. 9:25-27). He had no idea of depending on the Holy Spirit for credits to his salvation.

Nevertheless, there were advantages to those who had the Holy Spirit—tremendous advantages. We might say that the power gave them a direct link with God, and was this not a boost to faith and courage such as we have never known? How could anyone possessing the power ever lose faith!

The Holy Spirit gave its possessors a special point of contact with God, special power from God, special knowledge from Him, and special insights into the wonders of His plan. As Paul said, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But," he continues, "God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit" (I Cor. 2:9-10).

Wouldn't we like to know more



of what the Spirit revealed to Paul, what special insights into the future he enjoyed? What was the special measure of divine knowledge granted him through "the abundance of the revelations" he received (II Cor. 12:7)?

Then, too, think about John on the Isle of Patmos, and all that he saw and heard. And think of the vision granted Stephen in those last moments, as he saw the heavens opened and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. Was that not a magnificent privilege?

Think, too, of the earlier prophets who had received knowledge from God long before the bestowing of the Holy Spirit. Think of the prophets and all that was revealed to them by God, knowledge reaching far into the future. Think of Daniel in Babylon as he saw in vision the kingdoms of men all crashing in defeat, and one little stone growing and growing until it filled the whole earth.

The dispensing of the Holy Spirit had significance, too, from another aspect. It was God's "deposit in advance," we might say, on His promises; a written guarantee of future blessings. This fact was vivid in the mind of the apostle Paul. He described his brethren as "sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory" (Eph. 1:13-14). The Holy Spirit was God's open warranty on His word, proof positive that He *would* do as He had promised. Paul wrote it again in his Second Epistle to the Corinthians: "Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts" (II Cor. 1:21-22). He said it yet again in the same Epistle (5:5): "Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given

## Let Us Pray

**O** Thou Holy One who hast made us for Thyself, whose beloved Son hast taught us the high reaches of prayer, we come to Thee in the quiet of this sanctuary to receive the benediction of Thy presence.

Breathe upon us, O Breath of God, and fill us with new life, that we may love what Thou dost love, and do what Thou wouldst do. Take from our minds the strains and stress, and teach us to look forward to that time Thou wilt again visit Thy people with power from on high, and we shall do greater works than Jesus did. And alert us, Father, that to rejoice in that great coming Day, we must now be working steadily each day to fulfill the trust committed to us, to form the character Thou canst approve.

We thank Thee for the assurance that is ours, that soon Thou wilt again work openly among us; and help us to direct every thought, every motive, every decision toward preparing for that time. Help us to be intensely concerned about the things that really matter, and make everything else secondary.

Father, as we sense anew our responsibility to Thee, grant that we as Thy people may be one in Thee, united in the bonds of Christian unity. Grant that we may be one in mind and heart, all striving together for the faith of the gospel.

We pray for a stronger faith, for a greater determination to do right. We pray for sharper vision that we may see more clearly Thy will for us, and see our own shortcomings, that we may correct them before everlastingly too late. Give us more humility, more sincerity, more endurance. May we never grow weary in well doing but hold out with steadfastness to the end, whatever may come.

May Thy spirit be upon all those whom we love, and with those we ought to love. May Thy blessing be upon the sick and afflicted, and wilt Thou lead them gently and lovingly to the wellsprings of peace and health. May Thine angel encamp about all who are striving to apply Thy holy precepts to their daily living. Forgive us as we turn from our fleshly ways, and when we have worked out our salvation, save us with Thine everlasting salvation world without end. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

unto us the earnest of the Spirit."

Do we wonder that apostasy was a sin unpardonable for those who had shared in this privilege, who had felt this power from God in their own being, who had handled the word of life at such close range, and even been given privileged glimpses into the wonders of eternity? (Heb. 6:4-6).

A foretaste for them, and a confirmation for us—the Holy Spirit

gave benefits that continued even after it was withdrawn. For just as surely as the heavenly power descended at Pentecost, just so surely will God bestow upon each faithful one the blessings of immortality.

Shouldn't we be grateful? Was not *their* gain *ours* also?

The Holy Spirit benefited us in yet another way: it made possible the arrival of the second "Comforter."

When Jesus on the night before

**When we are someday permitted a glimpse inside the control room of heaven, we shall see a system more intricate and complex by far than our most creative imaginings could have conceived!**

His crucifixion spoke of the first "Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit." He spoke also of "another Comforter" which is "the Spirit of truth," which would be sent to "abide for ever." We read of it in John 14:16-17, "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." Here is something which would give support, guidance, and strength, and *it was promised to "abide forever"*—nothing like this was said of the first Comforter. But the first Comforter (the Holy Spirit) was necessary to make possible the second, so that the New Testament writers could accurately record what they had seen and heard. What they wrote is part of the second Comforter, which we today have as the Bible, the written Word of God.

Do we realize the value of the treasure we hold, this treasure from God? A book which reveals what we need to know of God's plan and how we may become a part of that plan—what more wonderful Comforter could God have given to humankind!

#### **God's Work in Our Behalf**

The Holy Spirit power was temporary; and when its purpose was accomplished, it ceased.

Should we today feel ourselves

outside the plan of God because we have not this power? In no way. Actually, the Holy Spirit power was only one part—one *small* part—of the work of God in behalf of His human family, only one aspect of a ministration that has been *continuous* in behalf of those who would be heirs of salvation.

The Bible speaks of this ministration in many ways. Often it is referred to as the activities of God's "Spirit." By this is indicated literally God's "breath," meaning that which emanates from Him. Figuratively, it is used to refer to His influence, His power, His knowledge, His understanding; that which is literally "God-breathed."

All through the ages God by His Spirit is working steadily in behalf of each and every one of His prospective children. And does not this work reach even to us, giving us priceless heavenly resources upon which to draw? Who can know fully the value of the written Word that is our prized possession, from which we may draw strength, knowledge, and insight any day, any time, any where? And who can exhaust the other resources available to us—of communication with our heavenly Father through prayer, of courage to tackle any stronghold of sin, of strength for every test, and the assurance that every trial that comes to us has been pre-measured to our ability to endure? Then, too, who can tell how much we receive from God through impressions, through circumstances,

through human instruments, and through events in our lives as He silently directs and oversees the delicate arranging of all for our eternal good? Cannot each one of us say with the Psalmist, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee"? (Ps. 116:7).

With all the resources made available to us by our loving God, who of us can afford to risk any word, any feeling, any thought, any motive that might remove us *outside* the realm of His concern?

Is not the whole plan designed around those who are His? Indeed, is not the whole creation for *them*? Is not God's whole concentration—past, present and future—on the participants in His eternal plan?

Oh, who can know how intricate is the design for the development and perfecting of His own! No small or simple project is this making of sons and daughters for His eternal purpose. When we are someday permitted a glimpse inside the control room of heaven, we shall see a system and a plan more intricate and more complex by far than our most creative imaginings could have conceived!

God does not call His children and arrange for their enlightenment, and then leave them to the blind forces of chance. Those whom He has chosen to be objects of His special care, those upon whom He has set His love—will He leave them outside, as it were, on their own—in



the hands of their enemies? Will He require of them a transformation so drastic that it involves their whole life and being, remaking them from their natural state into beings mentally and morally like God—shall He require all this and then leave them without help or guidance in performing it? We know He will not.

There is nothing haphazard about the plan of God. "Time and chance happen to all," but above all is the Divine hand guarding, guiding, working all things together for the eternal good of those who are His.

Have we not seen it for ourselves? Can we not look back and see the hand of God in our own lives, bringing us step by step to where we are this moment? And how often have we seen another, less fortunate, less

privileged than we, and been moved to humbly acknowledge, in the words of Paul, that "there but for the grace of God go I."

Yes, we are every one deeply indebted to God's goodness. God does nothing that interferes with our free will; every step we take is our decision. But behind that step, supporting, directing, protecting, and encouraging is God. When we manifest a sincere desire to be part of His family, He gives us family care. And never for a single moment from that time on are we outside His providential concern.

Indeed, the plan of God is so vast, the workings of His providence so intricate that we poor mortals cannot begin to fathom them. Why, then, do we hesitate to trust Him? He who

orders the workings of all His vast creation, can we not trust Him to order our little lives aright? Can we not trust His guidance in every aspect of our life, with full confidence that He will supply all our needs? And can we not show this confidence by living without the least fear or dread of what the future may bring?

Thinking even further, can we not trust Him to provide *all* the testing, discipline, strength and protection we will need? What more could we ask? Can we not trust Him to turn every event of our life to good, *long-term* good?

God is doing on His part—abundantly. The wonders of His workings are with us continually. As much as in any age past, God has work to be done, and He needs human hands

## Promises, Promises, Promises . . .

READ the ninety-first Psalm, and notice the tender, reassuring promises it contains. Notice, too, that there is no time-limit on these promises. "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." Here is a special dwelling place: "in the secret place of the most High, . . . under the shadow of the Almighty."

"I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust." Can we even begin to know how many times God has defended us, how many times He has proved our refuge and our fortress? Again, do we know how many times we have been lifted out of danger by angel hands, rescued from a peril we never saw? This, too, is part of His promise, "He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone" (vs. 11-12).

In the final three verses of Psalm 91 are eight promises of God's providential care. Read the passage and notice what they are and whom they are for: "Because he hath set his love upon me, *therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high*, because he hath known my name. He shall call upon me, and *I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him. With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation.*" Here are promises of deliverance, exaltation, heavenly response, heavenly protection in trouble, honor, the satisfaction of every desire, and finally one unfathomable, all-encompassing promise: He is going to take us around and show us His salvation!

MM

and feet to do it. He needs representatives to show in real life the transforming power of His law. He needs real people to show in real life the likeness of the remade man.

Do we realize what we are saying when we profess to be His people, His tools, His instruments, the "sheep of His pastures"? Does it not humble us to think that God may use even the most ordinary hands—like our own—to do His work on earth? Shall we fail in this magnificent responsibility?

The greater Day of Pentecost is coming, is almost upon us, when there will be an outpouring of divine power such as has never been before. The signs in the sun, moon and stars, the political powers of earth all speak to us that it is near.

And I wonder, where will we be then? How will we feel when we see these things so long foretold begin to happen? Will we rejoice and praise God that we are able to be a part of it all, or shall we hide in shame because we did not do the little He asked of us?

Shall we show ourselves unconcerned about the things that concern Him? Shall we let our lives be contaminated by the poisons of neglect and indifference? Shall we allow sensitiveness and jealousy, pride and self-will to blot our record before Him? Shall we who are called to be His heavenly children allow ourselves to be ruled by brute instincts?

Why are we not anxious to submit ourselves to the transforming power of God's law? Why are we not glad to let others know that we are indeed becoming crucified, that we are giving up our way, changing our tastes, and remaking our wills? Why are we not eager to exchange our naturally strong will for an attitude of meekness; our godlessness for Godlikeness, our selfishness for loving concern for one another's good? Why will we not avail ourselves of

**He who orders  
the workings of  
all His vast  
creation,  
can we not trust  
Him to order  
our little lives  
aright?**

that undisturbable peace that comes from complete surrender to God?

Oh, in this final closing hour, let us not fail in the magnificent responsibility that has been placed upon us. Let us take our trust from God seriously, and live worthy of our calling. Let us open our hearts and minds to receive the impressions God is giving us, lest we overlook some thought, some insight, some guidance that He intends us to recognize.

For the great Day of Pentecost is coming . . . is near. May we be waiting . . . ready. MM

*Heavenly Father, we seek renewed impressions of heart that will cause in us deep searchings of heart, that we may continue the remaking of our lives to the likeness of Christ.*

*Impress us anew that the Greater Day of Pentecost is coming, that just as surely as Thy power was out-poured on that day so long ago, just so sure is Thy promise that it will be restored.*

*Help us to show that we are intensely interested each and every day in preparing for that coming event, that we may someday be granted an eternal place in the eternal Kingdom of Christ. In His worthy Name we pray. Amen.*

## **Did I Pass Today?**

*(Continued from page 7)*

Actually, all the courses in His school may be grouped under one heading: self-mastery. All His graduates must be masters of themselves.

To attain this mastery requires work. We must study, practice, prepare; study, practice, prepare. And if we would succeed, if we would pass the final exam, we must do well in the little tests of every day; for our grade in these will determine our standing at the end.

The tests He provides are not designed to make us fail, but to help us learn. They are designed to show us our true measure of preparedness. Each morning we should say to ourselves, Today, God is going to test me. Am I prepared? Will I pass the test?

Each test of each day gives us another opportunity to raise our grade on the books of the Almighty. But if not watching, we will find that they have the opposite effect, and we will have to put forth twice the effort to improve our standing before Him. Each time we yield to temptation we lower ourselves in His esteem.

Another problem in the school of the Almighty is the very ordinary appearance of our classroom. Yes, it is right where we are, the common everyday scene with which we are so familiar. The home, the office, the shop, the store, wherever we live—whether in Australia or England, Canada or America—wherever we happen to be is our classroom, our place for testing, our place to learn.

Someday God is going to show us our record. And lest we be unduly astonished when that day arrives, let us check on ourselves frequently as we go along. Let us watch how we are doing on each little test. Let us ask ourselves, On what was I tested today? When I was tempted to



become impatient, did I yield? How did I score? Or when I felt like pitying myself, and feeling sorry for myself, or discouraged with myself—did I turn my mind immediately to the higher realm of the spirit? Or when my mind wandered to topics not upbuilding, did I quickly bring it back and direct it into right channels? What about that time when someone did not do something just exactly as I wanted it done; did I stifle all feelings of superiority, unkindness, or irritation? Did I maintain that “meek and quiet spirit” that is priceless in God’s sight? Or did I let them know by my attitude that they should have known I was right?

All unchristlike attitudes must go. We must learn to keep our minds filled with correct responses. Like our Master we must learn to say “It is written.” We will, if we want to receive the degree which He has offered us.

We want what God has prepared. We want to participate in those future courses of real life. We want to be among the shining, glorified graduates of the school. But it all depends on what we do in the little tests of every day, the little unannounced problems that we must solve, the little challenges, the little tests.

How are we doing, you and I? Did I pass today? MM

*Just as a road map has little value when used as a tablecloth but is indispensable when we take a trip in unfamiliar territory, so our Bibles are valueless as shelf ornaments but priceless as guides to daily living.*

---

## NOT When to Apologize

**D**ID you ever hear a doctor apologize for a great cure which had been discovered? or a mechanic apologize for finding the remedy for the car that would not start?

Did you ever hear of a general who apologized for designing the strategy that won the battle? or of an elected political officer who apologized for the fact that he was elected? or of a winner of a race who apologized for winning?

Of course not!

Then why is it that we are sometimes tempted to apologize for the high standard we uphold, or for the things we cannot do as Christians, as though we were doing something we should be ashamed of?

Should we apologize when we must stand by our convictions and say “no” to someone’s request for us to do something questionable?

Should the young girl apologize for refusing to lower herself to the loose morals of the present-day Sodom?

Should the young man feel “sorry” when he refuses the cup that turns thousands of men and women each year into dejected, hopeless alcoholics?

Should the man in business apologize for refusing to be party to a shady deal or questionable activity?

There is a time to stand up and show our colors, as the saying goes.

And when we are sure we are doing right is one of those times.

“Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels” (Mark 8:38). MM

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# Is God Good?

**How can we know the "right" way to live? How are we to understand the obligation of man to God?**

**F**OR centuries philosophers have been working to discover the source of goodness and moral conduct, and to understand the mind of man. As "thinking" men they have sought for answers to what governs the conduct of man and what gives happiness. Together they have written tons of literature on the "ideals," ideal behavior, ideal government, the ideal state, and how men should act toward one another to be happy.

But were we to begin reading these theses, we would soon learn that it was all only just another man's opinion—and what is that worth? "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps," sounded the booming voice of Jeremiah the prophet as he was moved by the Spirit of God ages ago (Jer. 10:23). And it is still true today.

"The major difficulty with Christian ethics," according to one present-day philosopher, "stems from its assumption that the moral code (assumed to be the Ten Commandment law) expresses God's will. A violation of this code is thus equivalent to disobedience toward accepted authority. Immorality in this view is equated with disobedience.

"Some philosophers have pointed out that this is an accepted moral position only if it can be shown that God is good. Why obey the prescriptions of a Divine Being who may be evil? And why is disobedience in itself bad if one is disobedient toward a malevolent authority?" His logic is correct. Obeying a power of evil is of no value whatever.

He concludes, then, that we must justify God's goodness before we concern ourselves with obeying His laws—and, as he sees it, justifying God's goodness is impossible with "the existence of evil such as pestilence, plague, cruelty, premature death, disease, etc." As he sees it, these are "powerful arguments against the unqualified goodness of God."

What is a truly Christian view of all this? How are we to know the "right" way to live? How are we to understand the obligation of man to God?

First of all, we cannot say that the Ten Commandment law embodies the whole law of God which He gave to govern human conduct. The Ten Commandment law demanded only an outward obedience, it was not a law of the heart. Those who served God in ancient times required in themselves an obedience reaching far beyond the demands of the Ten Commandments. For example, David, when he wrote, "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer" (Ps. 19:14); or, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Ps. 139:23-24). David believed that he was accountable to God not only for his outward conduct but also for his thoughts and attitudes.

This is true for all who are serving God. Nothing less than obedience to the whole transforming law of God for the inner life can accomplish the total re-



making of the inner man. Nothing less can assure a standard of conduct that will survive the stresses and strains of the years, and the stress of old age. How many times have we seen the stresses of old age disclose one's true—and often faulty—character. Again, we have seen that when the law of God had been made the dominant force through one's life, its sustaining, lifting power brought blessing to age.

No, the Ten Commandment law does not express God's entire will for our conduct. In the words of Jesus, as He repeated an ancient law of God which reached far beyond the authority of the law of Moses, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment" (Mark 12:30). Here is a law which Jesus said was of "first" importance.

But what about the goodness of God? Is God being unjust to require our obedience, and then allow such evils as pestilence, cruelty, and premature death? These may seem like "powerful arguments" against the goodness of God, but only when we do not understand His plans and workings with humankind as revealed in His written Word.

**L**ET us observe the following principles, as revealed in the Word of God.

First, He has made man a free moral agent. He is free to choose his course in life. God does not compel him to serve. He does not force anyone. "Choose you this day," was

the word of God through His spokesman Joshua (Josh. 24:15).

There is nothing cruel about this.

Second, He has set in motion a grand and supreme plan for this earth. He has set in motion a set of laws which support and perpetuate the human race. He gives mortal life to all. And, during the past six millenniums, He has been calling men and women to work for Him. Those who agree to serve Him are accountable and will be judged and rewarded for what they have done (II Cor. 5:10). Those who do not agree to serve Him simply live and die outside the law, without punishment or reward (Rom 2:12-13).

There is nothing cruel about this.

Third, God has no concern for those who have no concern for Him. If one dies a premature death, it is no cause of God. Mortal life is free and without guarantee to those outside His plan. "Time and chance happen to all." However, in looking out for His own, as we know He does (Mal. 3:16-17; Ps. 34:7-8; Ps. 91:14-16), He may at times allow the removal of those who threaten His own. But would we not expect as much from an Almighty Being?

There is nothing cruel about this.

This is why Israel was commanded to destroy the heathen nations of the land they were to inhabit—because God knew that by their idolatry they would turn Israel away from Him to serve strange gods. Evil, if allowed to remain, would flourish.

God destroys, and God builds up. But there is a cause for all. He does not destroy willingly, just for the sake of destroying. He has no plea-

sure in death, even of the wicked (Ezek. 33:11). He desires only that "the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"

What may seem cruel to those unacquainted with His workings with man and His ultimate goal for this earth may be what is necessary for the establishing of a kingdom for the benefit of the good. He cannot forever allow evil to flourish, and at the same time assure the triumph of righteousness. And if He does not assure the triumph of right, no one will benefit, no one will be able to enjoy His eternal goodness.

Actually, the restraining of evil is part of His goodness, wisdom, and foresight. Failure to restrain evil is one of the major causes of the unhappiness in our world today. Man, left to himself, would likely destroy himself, given enough time.

When God created this earth, He set certain laws in motion, laws that govern conditions throughout the world. But man, through greed and wastefulness, has abused these laws. If man wastes fertile topsoil and causes famine; if man destroys life that he could support; if millions starve in Ethiopia because of mismanagement and injustice and unequal distribution of the earth's resources, is God to blame?

The Lord informs us that the heart of man is desperately wicked, and can we deny it? (Jer. 17:9).

God has seen fit to allow mankind to rule themselves, for a limited time. He foresaw, however, that men would

*(Continued on page 25)*

## **What are we doing with the life God has entrusted to us?**

## Baptism for the Dead?

***"I have heard of performing baptismal rites for the dead. What do you think about this?"***

Baptism for the dead is mentioned just once in Scripture, in Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians (15:29). The text reads: "Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptized for the dead?"

This verse has been used to support certain false beliefs: i.e., that the dead are "alive"; that the dead can receive forgiveness for sin through baptismal rites performed by the living; that the state of death is a state of consciousness in another realm; that all the dead will be resurrected.

We know from other plain teachings of Scripture that there is no consciousness in death. "The dead know not anything." "For there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest" (Eccl. 9:10). And nothing that a living person can do will change the status of the dead person in the sight of God. Even the pleas of righteous persons such as Moses and Samuel will not avail (Jer. 15:1); how much less the performing of any baptismal ceremony. When we die, our record is closed; by it we stand or fall. "If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth: and if the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be" (Eccl. 11:3).

What then is Paul's thought when he speaks of "baptism for the dead"?

We should keep in mind that Paul's main point in this chapter is not baptism, or the state of death, but the resurrection. He has just said clearly, forcefully, and in many different ways that all hope of continued life depends upon a resurrection.

We also know that during the Apostolic Age, baptism was a requirement. Jesus commanded His disciples to "baptize" (Matt. 28:19). Baptism was a symbolic rite by which new believers were formally accepted into the church.

The *New Scofield Bible* offers a comment on "Baptism for the dead" which does not conflict with any other statement of Scripture and may express Paul's thought in this passage. We quote: "Paul is not speaking of baptizing living believers in place of either believers or unbelievers

who are now dead. There is no assignment of saving efficacy to baptism. The argument is: Of what value is it for one to trust Christ and be baptized in the ranks left vacant by the believing dead, if there is no resurrection for believers? Why place life in jeopardy and forfeit the benefits of this life, if there is no life after death?"

This thought harmonizes perfectly with Paul's teaching in this chapter. Paul's whole argument is for the absolute necessity of the resurrection. Here he adds the thought that it is the event upon which all future life depends, without which hope and faith are vain. Taken in context with the chapter, which is a dissertation on the resurrection, his argument is forceful: Why be baptized into the faith, to fill a place left vacant by a deceased believer, or believer who had lost his or her life in persecution, if there is no physical resurrection of the dead.

*Unger's Bible Dictionary* offers a similar thought: that "the dead" referred to "might be other believers who, by firmness and cheerful hope of resurrection, have given in death a worthy example, by which others were animated to receive baptism. . . . Christ might also be considered among them, by virtue of whose resurrection all His followers expect to be likewise raised."

### • Parents, Children and Accountability

***"I have read that God does not condemn the children for the sins of their parents. But what about Hosea 4:6? Doesn't it sound like God will forget the children because of the sins of their parents?"***

The text in questions reads, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children."

Hosea prophesied in a time of apostasy from the true God. God had favored Israel with a knowledge of His plan of salvation, but the majority had rejected it. God warned them what would happen; that if they forsook Him, He would forsake them.

True to His word, again and again, God often allowed Israel to be harrassed by their enemies because of their rebellion against Him.



But what about the children suffering for the sins of their parents?

God is just and righteous, and it is not His way to cause the children to suffer for the sins of their fathers. It is a long and well-established principle with God that He does not punish the children for the sins of their parents. "His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself" (Prov. 5:22).

God had warned Israel that He would cast them off because they had not kept His law. But would He hold the next generation responsible for the sins of their parents? God is "merciful and gracious, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy" (Ps. 103:8). Can we believe that He would be angry with the children for the sins of their parents? Not that the children of evil parents do not suffer, for such is often the case. Children born into a family that does not revere God start out at a distinct disadvantage. More than likely they will not be taught the word of God, and the evil lives of their parents will have a detrimental effect on them.

On the contrary, it is clearly stated in Ezekiel that if a man shall "beget a son, that seeth all his father's sins

which he hath done, and considereth, and doeth not such like, . . . he shall not die for the iniquity of his father, he shall surely live" (Ezek. 18:14, 17). Only the children who themselves do wickedly will suffer. Each individual is responsible only for his own sin: "His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins" (Prov. 5:22). He cannot be held responsible for the sins of another.

Only if the children themselves sin will they be condemned as it is stated in Deut. 24:16: "The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin." As given in the law to Moses, the statement concerning sins of the fathers being visited on the children to later generations, is limited to "them that hate me."

What, then, can we conclude about the children whom God says He will forget in Hosea 4:6? We may safely conclude that if God forgets them, they, too, are among the transgressors. They are following in the footsteps of their parents.

MM

## Is God Good?

*(Continued from page 23)*

fail to bring peace and plenty for all. He foresaw that His Divine help would be needed to right conditions, before a glorified state could be achieved.

And this He will do. God will intervene, and nothing that defiles or hurts will be allowed (Isa. 11:9). God's plan for this world is that it be inhabited by those worthy of life. He will fill the earth with His glory (Num. 14:21). There will be no more pain, no more sickness, no more starvation, no more injustice, no premature death. Everyone who lives will be worthy of living, and will *enjoy* living. When all God's work is finished, there will be one glorious day spanning eternity for all.

Is God not good—surpassingly good—when He has planned all this? Is God not good when He invites men to enjoy all this?

The philosophers of men go even

further, to question the very existence of God. But what truly thinking person can? What thinking person can accept evolution as *the* answer for all existence? Suppose, for a moment, that everything did come into being by chance. How is it that pine trees bear pine cones, not pineapples? Why not peaches on apple trees or grapes on bramble briars, or peanuts on an oak? If man did evolve from the ape, why would there not be apes, men, and whatever the in-between stages might look like? How could we be sure that the man down the street wasn't really an ape that just looked like a man—or really a man that looked like an ape?

Who can look at the wonders of creation, the perfection and beauty of the physical world, and not know in himself that there is a plan, a design, and above it all a supreme and intelligent Creator!

The fact of life itself, the fact that you and I exist, along with and all that is in the sea and on the earth,

and in the air, and in the heavens—all attest to the wisdom and work of the Supreme Designer.

And when we look at His Word, we see another world of wonders. There are prophecies—hundreds of them—that we can read, and know that God does indeed exist. No human can foretell even what will happen one hour beyond the present moment. Yes, man can speculate and guess correctly on occasion, but never has man been able to accurately forecast the future as we find in the Bible.

Knowing these things, what is our reaction? What are we doing with the life God has entrusted to us?

God grant that we may know and feel indeed that He is good, that we may serve Him now with all our heart and soul, that it may be His pleasure to share with us the eternal riches of His goodness world without end.

MM

# The Lord's Prayer

Thou to the mercy seat  
Our souls dost gather,  
To do our duty unto Thee. . . . *Our Father*  
To whom all praise,  
All honor should be given; for Thou  
Art the great God, *Which art in heaven.*  
Thou with wisdom,  
Rul'st the whole world o'er.  
Forever, therefore, *Hallowed be Thy Name.*  
Let nevermore delay divide us from Thy  
Glorious face, but let *Thy kingdom come.*  
Let Thy commands opposed  
Be by none, but Thy  
Good pleasure and. . . . *Thy Will be Done.*  
And let our promptness to obey be even  
The very same, *On earth as it is in heaven.*  
We also pray Thee, *Give us this day*  
The food of life wherewith  
Our souls are fed,  
Sufficient raiment and. . . . *Our daily bread.*  
With every needful thing do  
Thou relieve us,  
And in Thy mercy, Lord, *Forgive us*  
Our misdeeds, *Our trespasses,*  
Forasmuch, O Lord, as we believe  
That Thou wilt pardon us *as we forgive.*  
Let that love teach,  
Wherewith Thou acquaint'st us,  
To pardon *Those who trespass against us.*  
And tho' sometimes Thou findest  
We have forgot this  
Love for Thee, yet help. *And lead us not*  
To desperation, nor let  
Earth's gain drive us *into temptation.*  
Let not the soul of any true believer  
Fall in the time of trial, *But deliver,*  
Yea, save them from the malice  
Of the evil, and both in  
Life and death keep us *from evil.*  
*For Thine is the Kingdom,*  
This world is of Thy works  
With all its wondrous story,  
To Thee belongs *The power and the glory;*  
And all Thy wondrous works have  
Ended never,  
But will remain forever and. . . . *For ever.*  
*Amen.*

## Good Trees

Trees are a beautiful handiwork of God and we value them for their many uses. What would our earth be without them? A barren stretch of land, with not much to attract and delight the eyes.

The Lord compares people to trees, and rightly so. Some are good trees, some are not so good, and some are no good at all. Jesus said "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them." By and by there will come the process of separation. We want to be the trees of the Lord's own planting so we can be spared.

No denying literal trees are useful and we cannot be without them. But how much more useful are the spiritual trees of righteousness to the Almighty. God put man in the midst of beautiful earthly surroundings, and He wants us to delight in His vast creation of wonder beholding scenes. But that is not His sole purpose. We the trees of His own planting must become His people formed for His delight to show forth His praises, to forever remain on this earth made over new.

We must realize our greatest work is to grow more spiritually minded putting forth our best effort in pursuing the course of action which we know will give us the most peace and happiness in this life and in the end world without end.

When we extend our spiritual roots all the way into the Word of the Lord, drinking deeply of the water of life, we will be in the condition to listen to God. The result: we will do all He asks us to do so we will fit into the eternal temple of God.

New Jersey

L. K.

## Appreciative

I saw your magazine for the first time, and I was very impressed. I read as much as I could, time permitting.

I would like very much to have the *Megiddo Message* sent to me.

Tennessee

Mrs. E. W.



## Choose, Choose

My life is a series of choices. I chose the way of following Christ and worshipping God many years ago. The Lord has corrected my choice, has changed the direction that I thought was right in the beginning. I appreciate that change very much. This is the beginning. We have to make the choice between what is wrong and right, what is good and better, what is important, more and most important.

There are so many situations in our life which are challenges for us. Sometimes there is time enough to think something over, sometimes we have to choose quickly. We must not be contented with what we are. Even while enjoying what we possess we must remember that all we have belongs to God and we are responsible to use it right.

Somebody wrote, and I think it is true, too:

*A man without a purpose  
Is like a ship without a sail,  
But the purpose without ambition  
Is like a storm without a gale.*

Certainly it must be an ambition in the right direction. To be like Jesus has to be our aspiration.

I read once that, "Patience is a flower not grown in everyone's garden."

Poland

E. K.

## Flying?

Oh! my, yes, how the days do fly by and I sometimes wonder if I am flying down that straight path fast enough to keep up with what God requires of me. Sometimes I think I have used my time to my best, and other times I feel that I am not doing what I can to get the most out of the time that God has allotted me—or, I should say, *given* me, for most certainly time is a gift from God.

Maine

R. D.

## A Two-Edged Sword

Thank you very much for publishing such a good Bible teaching book. It has helped me several times over the years. It is like the Bible, a two-edged sword.

God bless you in your work.

Montana

J. B.

## Our Breathtaking Creation

I was reading about the recent discovery of a new galaxy twice the size of the one in which the earth resides at a distance of 12 billion light years from here. The dimensions and magnitude of the discovery were breathtaking to the discoverers.

Such discoveries only add to the infinite character of our Father in heaven that dwarfs our opinions and ideas of His finiteness. All that we can do or accomplish in a physical sense is nothingness when compared to the majesty and awe of His creation. This can only lead a rational man to a serious consideration of what is really important and what is trivial and of no significance.

Louisiana

D. K.

*Back of the loaf is the snowy  
flour, and back of the flour the  
mill; And back of the mill is the  
wheat, and the shower, and the  
sun, and the Father's will.*

## WHO RECOMMENDS Broad-mindedness?

NOT the chemist. When he writes a chemical formula, he wants it to be exactly what it was the last time. No deviation.

Not the music director. The director does not want his first violinist to play so much as a quarter note off pitch.

Not the mathematician. Neither geometry, calculus, nor trigonometry allows any variation from exact accuracy. The solution to a problem is either right or wrong. No tolerance here.

Not the biologist. One varying result out of a thousand experiments would invalidate an entire theory.

Not the athlete. The contestant who runs to win does not want any deviation in the time clock. He wants it to be as it was. No tolerance.

Not the mechanic. When he is repairing an automobile, the piston rings must fit the cylinder walls within one thousandth part of an inch. There is no room for any variation if the motor is to run smoothly.

*And certainly not the Lord.* He wants us to come to His standard. Exactly. No tolerance for individual preferences. It's either right, or wrong. "Be ye holy, for I am holy." No tolerances.

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