

# Megiddo Message

Vol. 79, No. 6  
June 1992



We Have Reason to

# Hope!



## Can I Like Me?

**I** like the person who is unaffected and unpretentious, who is consistently and sincerely true to his convictions.

**I** like the kind of person who can be understanding, who isn't so preoccupied with himself that he can't share another's sorrows and joys.

**I** like the person who has deep, moving convictions and the highest of high aspirations. It thrills me to hear him say, "I can't do that—I'm living for eternity."

**I** like the person who is never satisfied with what he is, who is always working to improve.

**I** like the kind of person who is grateful for all he has, and gives God the credit.

**I** like the kind of person who finds pleasure in serving, giving, loving, helping; whose self-respect is based on the fact that he is striving to be good for something—and Someone.

**I** like the kind of person who gives his best to every task, and who will go the second mile to do an extra good job. God never intended His people to be mediocre.

**I** like guileless people, whose word is absolutely as good as their note, and who don't paint false pictures with deceptive words. You know you can depend on them. You know they mean exactly what they say. And that's that.

**I** like the kind of person whose ideals shine like stars, who is a light for God in a world of darkness.

**I** like the kind of person who can frankly admit a mistake, who doesn't have to beat around the bush, so to speak, or rationalize his mistakes, or retreat from point to point, but who can honestly say, "I'm sorry, I was wrong," and try again.

**M**y greatest problem is being the type of person I like.

**I**sn't that your problem, too?

## 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 and sustainer of the earth, the world, the universes, and all life, in whom we "live, and move, and have our being."
- in the Bible as our only source of true knowledge about God and His purposes and plans for His creation and for the salvation of humankind.
- in Jesus Christ, the Son of God and our Perfect Example, who was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin; who ministered among His brethren, was crucified, resurrected, and taken to heaven and seated at the right hand of the Father, crowned with immortal glory, and who shall shortly return to be king of the whole earth.
- in the Holy Spirit, the openly manifest power of God, which God bestowed at various times and in various ways to reveal His knowledge to humankind, to support His spokesmen, to confirm His utterances, and to demonstrate His supreme power and authority.
- in life as the gift of God, and in our sacred responsibility to use it for God and His coming Kingdom.
- in humankind as providing the raw material from which shall be selected and developed a superior, God-honoring people upon whom God will bestow the blessings of immortal life in His soon-coming Kingdom.
- in ourselves as capable of applying in our own lives the precepts and principles taught in the Word of God, in this way perfecting that high quality of moral character which God has promised to recompense with life eternal in His heavenly Kingdom on earth.
- in the promise of God, that a new age is coming—is near—when the earth shall be filled with His glory, His people, and God's will be done here as it is now done in heaven.

## Soon-coming events ...

### THE HERALD AND THE KING

OUR PLANET will soon witness the greatest events in its history. For centuries God has been silent. But that silence will soon be broken by the arrival of Elijah the prophet, who comes to herald the Second Advent of Jesus Christ. "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord:...lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (Mal. 4:5-6).

Then shall follow the King of kings and Lord of lords, to begin His momentous work of transforming our world into the glorious and eternal Kingdom of God.

The Bible pictures all events, all men and all nations moving together toward this one God-ordained climax, when "the kingdoms of this world" will become "the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ" (Rev. 11:15), a kingdom in which all will enjoy the blessings of peace, equity and prosperity. When the task is complete, our earth shall be numbered among the heavenly, glorified worlds and filled with immortal inhabitants, bringing to reality the promise of our Lord in His prayer: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."

## In this issue ...

### Editorial

CAN I LIKE ME? ..... 2

### Article

JESUS CHRIST THE SAME ..... 4  
YESTERDAY, TODAY, AND FOREVER

### Sermon

GOD IS JUST .....7  
God's acts are predictable, according to pre-defined laws.

### Poem

NO NIGHT THERE.....11

### Article

WE ARE ABLE .....12

### Poem

"GO FORWARD" .....13

### Special Feature

WE HAVE REASON TO HOPE .....14  
When the return of Jesus Christ to earth is imminent

### Article

THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH ..... 16  
The only Divine Spirit that offers eternal life

### Story

OF CAESAR'S HOUSEHOLD..... 18  
Part 6: *Justice or Mercy?*

### Poem

HAIL TO THE LORD'S ANOINTED .....21

### Defending the Bible

BAPTISM FOR THE DEAD? ..... 23

### Article

THE HIGH COST OF GETTING ANGRY .....25

*Lines to Live By*..... 27

### Back Cover

BE STILL MY SOUL..... 28

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# Jesus Christ

## THE SAME

### Yesterday,

***Jesus is always out front. There is no final goal in this Leader's journeyings, this old Leader on the new road. He is ever ahead. He is not dead, but alive for evermore.***

**W**e are prone to speak of "our changing world" as though change were something new and strange, even terrifying, something peculiar to the twentieth century and especially the present decade. Yet the fact is that our world has been changing ever since its creation. And it is still changing. In fact, nothing is permanent except change.

Yet in our immediate world, it often seems that the more things change, the more they remain the same. The centuries bring altered conditions, but no new vices or virtues, and no new problems. Yet since we are creatures of a moment and each of us has his life to live and his lessons to learn in so short a time, the problems are so new to us that we cast about in desperation for a fixed point, a solid rock to which we may tie amid the tempests of life.

This craving is ageless. Through the centuries myriads of inarticulate men and women have eaten their hearts out in the silent, lonely quest for mental and spiritual security. Inspired singers and prophets have phrased it in words which even yet move us to tears by their sheer beauty. "From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart

is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I" (Ps. 61:2). Civilizations have always been collapsing; old values passing away and new ideas invading.

In such a time the immortal Epistle to the Hebrews was composed. We do not know to whom it was addressed, but very likely it was to the mother church in Jerusalem. When the letter was written, the catastrophe of A.D. 70, which overthrew the Jewish state, had not occurred but was impending. If the war was not actually in progress, it must have been close at hand. The oldest church in Christendom was inevitably touched by the confusion and alarm which always accompany a disaster.

The duration of that church in Jerusalem had not been a long one. Thirty or thirty-five years is a brief life for a church, yet it was the oldest Christian Church in existence. By comparison, the mixed churches of Galatia, of Corinth and of Rome were young. Every Gentile community of believers felt like a daughter to Jerusalem. It was entering its second generation, and the past to which it could look back was, to say the least, honorable and memorable. Founded by the very Master Himself, its original officers had been



# Today, Forever

*Hebrews 13:8*

the twelve apostles. Peter and John were its first leaders, James its first president, Stephen its first martyr. Upon its roll of membership there had stood, if they did not still stand, the names of Jesus' own relatives and closest friends; names like Lazarus and Martha, Nicodemus and Joseph, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother, blessed among women.

Small wonder that the unknown writer exhorted this noble church to remember those who had spoken to them the Word of God, and to consider the final issue of their Christian warfare. Yet already it must have seemed to him as though the early force and bloom of the young faith was in danger of passing away. The men who saw and handled the Word of Life; the men whose energy founded, whose fervor warmed, whose blood watered the new Church of Christ—where were they? Gone, most of them, to the congregation of the dead. Was, then, the force they wielded gone likewise? Would this young faith grow old and change with the changing generations? Would its splendid promise fail, would it prove a prey to mutation, and vanish at last as its predecessor Judaism?

The misgiving was a natural one, but it was dispelled as the writer reflected who and what was the sum and substance of this new-old faith, the heart and soul of this young society. A dead man? Never! A dying man, like himself? A changeable man, over whom the years have power? No. But "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and for ever" (Heb. 13:8).

The backward look can be carried too far, as the apostle Paul pointed out vividly to the Judaizing Christians in his own churches; yet somewhere between the extremes of contempt and superstitious veneration lies the right course, the way of salvation, which is Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever. Christ, the true teachings of God exemplified in a human life, the bread which came down from heaven, the eternal principle of which is, Obey and live, disobey and die. Jesus Christ of Nazareth so perfectly exemplified the Word of God in His character that the two Christs, the man of Galilee and the truth of Jehovah which He taught and lived, are inseparable.

What an advantage for us in our human weakness that we have such a pattern in human flesh to be our tower of strength, for we compre-

hend persons far better than abstractions.

So the writer of Hebrews points us to the High Priest of our profession as an unchanging rock. More than that, he goes far back in time and brings before us the long, glorious procession of the heroes of faith, the mighty "cloud of witnesses" by whose example and inspiration our race has to be run. These are the men and women, flesh and blood like ourselves, who do the impossible by faith in a principle which is the same yesterday, and today, and for ever. Consideration of the course of their warfare will lead us to a certain Divine conservatism, a loyalty to the best of our heritage, an assurance that we shall not be carried about with divers and strange doctrines.

The message of the church of Jerusalem, the Christ of yesterday, reached back to righteous Abel, all the virtues of past generations being embodied to perfection in their Master. Their today is our yesterday, and our heritage is enriched by the travail of their souls, the struggles which to them seemed so uninspiring, unromantic and ordinary. Today we are in their place. The times are evil, and no voice from heaven is heard; timid



hearts are quaking. But today, as yesterday, Jesus Christ abides the same; passed into the heavens, able to save to the uttermost, preparing a Kingdom which cannot be moved. New times bring new perils and impose new labors; but no time can rob us of Him in whose strength all past souls grew strong, or quench or dim the deathless presence which burns on through all the ages.

Our problems are peculiarly ours, or so we imagine. But the Word of God, Christ and the law of

***The Christ of today  
is also the Christ of  
tomorrow—and of  
forever.***

truth which He exemplified, can still provide the answers we need, as it always has. Our world is not that of the past. Though human needs and human emotions are unchanged since the dawn of history and hearts break just as they always have, the more complex life becomes, the more we are bewildered. But the Peasant-carpenter of Galilee has a word and a heartbeat for every step of the way. The believing, contrite spirit of one weary of sin stands as close to the Christ of today as did the soul of John the beloved.

If Jesus Christ be the same yesterday and today and for ever, there is no reason why His people should not be the same likewise. The challenge is obvious. Former generations had no advantage over us. The fountain of their holiness is open to us. The secret of their success is the

secret of ours. The moral principles of the Gospel have always worked, and always will. Honesty will always be better than deception, kindness than cruelty. The Golden Rule has never been improved upon and never will be. In the Christ-world, character is more important than talent; responsibility is measured according to endowment. Neighborliness is defined by the circle of necessity and not by the limitations of race; the success of life is to be measured by its secret fidelities and not by its popular triumphs. The consummation of the believer's ideal is in the pregnant word of our Lord: "One is your Master, and all ye are brethren." Who in any age has ever devised a more perfect formula for society?

"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). The aim of Christ is a man made whole, liberated to his full capacity in body, mind and soul. Any social conditions which thwart this ideal should be changed, and the Christ of yesterday, today and for ever intends to change them—peaceably, if the world will; forcibly if they will not—when He returns.

Meanwhile, the Christ of today walks beside us, strengthening us with the memory of our heritage, and leading us on to a brilliant eternal future, interpreting His eternal truth in terms of today's needs. His religion is rock-like in its strength, yet pliable, adaptable, and spiritual, never out of date or out of order. Because He changes not, He is the source of all mobile life, of such change as accompanies life and progress. This is a part of the paradox of God. New light He gives; new plans He suggests; new forms He finds or makes; new efforts He inspires; and while the past remains forever, a growing heritage of instruction, of example, of encour-

agement, yet in the living present and the men of it He forever lives as the Overseer of our activities and the Rewarder of our toil.

For a blind and slavish worship of days gone by there is no room, because new occasions teach new duties. For a cowardly bewailing over changed times and departed guides, as though heroism, or truth, or Christian success had been buried in their graves, there is again no room. With us, alive and active and working, is the Christ of today, who was, and is, and is to come. For He is also the Christ of tomorrow—of forever.

The old question raised by John the Baptist to Jesus is still echoing: "Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?" We come to Him today, consciously or unconsciously, with the same query. Either He is the answer to the yearning cry of our souls and to the problems of a world in trouble, or else we must look to somebody else. If He is not the one, then there is no one, and hope is dead. But He *is* the one, and the only one.

Our lives come and go, but we know that Jesus lives. The passing of the centuries has not left Him behind. He not only keeps abreast of the times; He goes before. As soon as we have grasped one achievement, He is striding toward another. He is always out in front. There is no final goal in this Leader's journeyings, this old Leader on the new road. He is ever ahead. He is not dead, but alive for evermore. The Word of our God shall stand for ever; His mercy endureth forever; His truth can never die; His kingdom shall never be destroyed; He shall reign forever and ever. His righteous laws and His reign of love shall bless generations yet unborn, as He has blessed and still blesses, for He is the same yesterday, and today, and for ever. MM



# God Is Just!

**F**or centuries unbelievers have criticized the God of the Bible for harsh and unfair dealings with humankind. Without bothering to investigate the facts or understand His plan, they have recklessly blamed Him for cruelty, abuse and injustice.

How are we to answer these criticisms against the God we know to be merciful and righteous? Are there breaches in His justice? Is God like a whimsical parent, sometimes punishing, sometimes blessing as it suits His mood? We know He is not. What, then, is the problem?

The real problem underlying most criticism of God is the plain fact that we mortals have no instinctive love for authority. We think we know enough to command ourselves and do not need God or anyone else to tell us anything to the contrary. Nor do we want to be reminded that we are not supreme, that our judgment is not final, or that our opinion is not the last word.

The first step, then, in contemplating the justice of God, is to see ourselves and the human creation for what it is—finite, transitory, fleeting, here for a moment then gone forever. We are alive because God has given us life, breathing because God has given us breath, moving because God has given us the power. He alone is the source

of life. He alone is omnipotent, eternal, and sovereign.

## The Meaning of Sovereignty

If God is omnipotent and sovereign—and we know that He is—then it follows that He has the power to impose that sovereignty according to any laws which He chooses to decree. And no one within the sphere of His sovereignty has the prerogative to challenge or criticize the propriety of either those laws or His ways of imposing them, for God is *sovereign right*.

What we want to establish, then, is the fact that God is not capricious or unfair in executing His sovereign right; that in His sovereignty He acts in accordance with definite laws He has established, that those laws are fair and equitable and that His ways and means of enforcing or executing those laws are also fair and equitable. In other words, His judgments, opinions and determinations are all “predictable” according to definite established and revealed laws, so that no one need be a hapless victim of His severity who would have been obedient if given the opportunity.

## Because God Is Sovereign

First let us think about God’s sovereignty. God is all-powerful and all-mighty. This means that He is the power behind all in His cre-

ation. He has set in motion certain laws—laws of birth, growth and decay; laws of motion; laws of cause and effect—which we have no power to change. But it is within His sovereign power to overrule in any circumstance He chooses and either limit or extend the effects of those laws. This is what He does when He prolongs a life beyond its normal course; when He restores life to a dead body; when He heals a disease, or interferes with the normal course of what we call “nature,” the natural laws that govern our world. This is what He did when He sent thunder and rain in wheat harvest in the time of the prophet Samuel, or when He withheld rain in the time of Elijah, or when Jesus stilled the raging tempest with His words, “Peace be still.” God was exercising His power to overrule the forces of nature to accomplish His purpose.

Being absolute sovereign, it also follows that God is the ultimate Judge of all within His creation, and that it is His Divine prerogative to say what is right and what is wrong. He also has within His power the ability to either impose judgment or bestow mercy as He chooses.

But God does not operate by caprice or whim. All of God’s actions and judgments are according to a certain plan which He devised centuries ago for the select-



## God Is Just!

ing of the best material from the vast resources of humankind. According to this plan, all humankind divide into two basic categories, those who serve Him and those who do not. As far as salvation is concerned, all mankind are free moral agents, free to decide for themselves whether or not they wish to serve Him. He does not compel any to do either right or

**God is not unfair or capricious in executing His sovereign right.**

wrong against their will. Making the proper choice is always a *human* responsibility. In the words of His spokesman Joshua, "Choose you this day whom ye will serve." And God does not interfere. He does not overrule or reverse the choice of anyone, though it would lie within His sovereign power to do so if He wanted to. But this is not His plan. All are totally responsible for their own destiny. Human clay must voluntarily subject itself to His workmanship.

But once this initial choice has been made, there is a change in relationship. Those who have chosen to serve God become objects of His special concern. From this point forward, God watches over them, planning, arranging and supporting their development into the finished material He is seeking.

Those who do *not* choose to serve God or whom God knows will never serve Him lie outside the realm of His special concern and may be said to be "used" by Him in accomplishing His purposes without their con-

scious consent or even their knowledge. Pharaoh of Egypt in the time of Moses, Cyrus of Persia, and Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon were all "used" by God in this way. But God's "using" them did not in any way hinder their free moral agency in choosing to serve or not serve Him. Had they at any time wanted to turn and serve God, they could have done so.

### God As Judge

Being the source of all power and all knowledge, God is also the source of all law and also of all power to enforce that law. This means that God is *the Judge*.

Upon the sacred pages are numerous examples where God was recognized as Judge. Perhaps the earliest is in the allegory of Genesis, where Adam and Eve heard the "voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day" and ran and hid themselves. Why did they hide? Why didn't they want to face the Lord? Because they knew God was the Judge and that they were accountable, and that they were not ready to face their Judge. They knew that they had sinned and would be condemned.

Abraham recognized God as "the Judge of all the earth" (Gen. 18:25) when the angel came to inform him of the imminent destruction of Sodom. In lofty prayer, Hannah extolled the Lord who "shall judge the ends of the earth" (I Sam. 2:10). Jephthah, concluding his ultimatum to the Ammonite invaders, declared, "I have not sinned against thee, but thou doest me wrong to war against me: the Lord the Judge be judge this day between the children of Israel and the children of Ammon" (Judges 11:27). "God is the Judge," declared the Psalmist (Psalm 75:7); again, "Arise, O God, judge the earth" (Ps. 82:8). In the New Testament, the apostle Paul recognized both "the goodness and

severity of God" (Rom. 11:22), and the book of Revelation foretells the magnitude and finality of the worldwide judgments that will bring His plan to full fruition.

### God Did—and Will—Judge

As we ponder the Sacred Record we are impressed that God means us to take Him seriously, very seriously. For the man or woman committed to God, life is not a chance to get as much of enjoyment and gratification as possible. Life—whatever it brings—is opportunity; and opportunity means responsibility; and responsibility means that ultimately God is going to judge us. In the words of the apostle Paul, "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Rom. 14:12). And in that final accounting, it will make little difference whether our days were filled with pleasure or pain – if only our life record passes the scrutiny of God, if only we succeed in that greatest of all enterprises, the remaking of ourselves and the raw material provided us into a new creature He can use in His eternal scheme. For God will judge, and either punish or reward.

The most important thing now is to remember that we are dealing with Omnipotence, and that someday we will be called to answer for what we have done.

It was so with the people of old. They sinned, and they suffered for their sins. And, in the words of the author of Hebrews, "how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" (2:3).

Again and again throughout the Scriptures is pictured the stark and unalterable reality of Divine judgment. God condemned, God warned, and God punished, and sometimes very large numbers of people were affected because of their iniquity.

It happened in Mesopotamia, in



the time of Noah. The world of the ungodly perished because of their great wickedness and their unwillingness to reform (II Pet. 2:5).

It happened in Sodom. Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities of the plain were all consumed because "their sin (was) very grievous" (Gen. 18:20).

It happened in Egypt. The Egyptians suffered ten devastating plagues because of Pharaoh's stubbornness.

It happened in the wilderness. Thousands of rebellious Israelites who left Egypt were judged and died because of their hardheartedness, their disbelief and their stubborn unwillingness to obey. Even their leaders did not escape the judgment of God. Nadab and Abihu died because they offered "strange fire" upon the altar (Lev. 10:1). Can we imagine the shock of those who looked on? Wouldn't it seem that this was a lesson they could *never, never* forget? Another time, the earth opened and Dathan and Abiram "and all the men that appertained unto them" were swallowed up. And these men were "princes of the assembly," "men of renown" in the congregation—but they were not renowned in God's esteem when they challenged the authority of the leaders He had appointed.

God judged Achan for his disobedience; he and those who conspired with him perished (Joshua 7). Are not these things written for "our learning"—and warning?

It happened in the nations of Israel and Judah. Again and again "this evil people" were warned by God's prophets of the disastrous consequences of sin; but they refused to hearken. True to the word of the Lord, in due time judgment descended. The northern kingdom of Israel fell victim to the Assyrians and was taken into captivity, and a little more than one hundred years later the southern

kingdom of Judah fell to the Babylonians. God was exercising His authority as Judge.

In New Testament times, God's method of working with men was somewhat different, but His basic requirements did not change, nor was the severity of His judgments moderated. Those who were privileged to share in Holy Spirit power shared also in executing God's judgments upon the disobedient. The power of the Holy Spirit was not entrusted to them merely so

they could gain the favor and goodwill of their fellowmen. It was theirs to be used as God directed, to execute God's will whatever that will might be and however contrary to their natural feelings. Imagine the apostle Peter, in the case of Ananias and Sapphira, meting out God's severest judgment. What was it like for Peter? First Ananias, then his wife Sapphira suffered immediate death for misrepresenting their intentions, and Peter was the instrument executing God's judgment

## Let Us Pray

**L**ord God of morning and of night, whose habitation is justice and from whom mercy and truth continually proceed: we thank Thee for allowing us to come once more into Thy presence and renew our grasp on the things that really matter.

Lord, we are deeply grateful to Thee this morning for all the circumstances that have combined to bring us to this hour. We rejoice that Thou in mercy hast rescued us from the tyranny of ourselves and called us to work for a life that will never, no never end.

We are grateful for all that Thou art providing for our spiritual development: for thoughtful words that deepen our awareness of the real values of life; for meditation that enthuses us and prayer that strengthens; for disciplines that correct us, and for warnings that alert us to our own spiritual deficiencies; for true examples that inspire us, and for loving friends who give us the courage to confront ourselves as we are and who show us what we can become.

Our Father, to whom is known the deepest secret of our hearts, may the reality of Thy justice bring us to a closer examination of ourselves. As Thou hast dealt with others, so wilt Thou deal with us.

Thou hast warned us of the end of those who dally with sin, who play with temptation, who continue to go their own way even after they have been shown the right. May we be warned, may we be alerted to watch as men and women never watched before, lest the end of our day of probation find us with our work unfinished.

We pray Thee to be near to all who are absent from us, who are seeking Thee in sincerity and in truth. Be with those who face trials almost to the limit of their endurance. Strengthen them to know the support of Thine everlasting arms, and gratefully accept each testing as an indication of Thy love, as an evidence that Thou art seeking to make something of us for Thine eternal use. And when this short day of training is complete, grant us the supreme joy of Thine acceptance and a place of honor in Thy eternal Kingdom. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.



## God Is Just!

(Acts 5). Herod, for his pride, was smitten by an angel "because he gave not God the glory; and he was eaten of worms" (Acts 12:23). Elymas was made blind for a time because he opposed the Gospel (Acts 13:8-11).

All this happened; and those who suffered were not asked

***Being the source of all power and all knowledge, God is also the source of all law and also of all power to enforce that law.***

whether they thought God's judgment upon them was just. By our modern standards this would seem unfair, but was it? Is God obliged to accommodate the opinions of humankind?

This, then, becomes our question: Is God bound by any human judgments of fairness? Does He have the right to do as He chooses? Is God just in removing those who disobey, or who interfere with His purposes, or reject His pleadings? Is He wrong in withholding His mercy from those who flaunt His goodness and despise His law? Does God have the right to do this?

This is a question often put forward as a challenge by those who feel no obligation to God. But let us who profess to be His children, we who are called by His name, approach the subject with the humility and awe and reverence that is due in the presence of Omnipotence. Let us feel an over-arching awe and wonderment in

treading, as it were, on "holy ground." For who are we to challenge the God of heaven? Who are we to say what *He* should do, He who has been so good to give us life and all that we have and are, and in whose hand is the breath of every living thing?

The plain fact is that God *does* have the right to judge and punish those who oppose Him, whether those persons be he or she or they or we, and the persons judged have not one word of say in the matter. Ours is not the privilege of *judging* God. *He judges us*. Ours is the privilege of being informed of His ways of working so that we can escape His wrath and receive His mercy and blessings. It is for us to *learn*, not *judge* His ways; He is under no obligation to consult with us or consider *our* opinion before He acts.

Actually, fairness is a term more appropriate in evaluating *human* actions than Divine. Fairness, according to Webster, implies "an eliminating of one's own feelings, prejudices, and desires so as to achieve a proper balance of conflicting interests." There is never unfairness within the realm of God's concern. He has no "feelings, prejudices, or desires" that need to be eliminated. Nor is He obliged to consider human interests or opinions on a par with His own. If opinions conflict, His are *in* and all others—our own included—are *out*. This is part of His Divine prerogative. And whether this is "fair" by human standards is irrelevant.

When we think about God's ways of working, we are more correct if we use the term "just" than "fair." Justice implies "an exact following of a standard of what is right and proper." So our question becomes: *Is God just?*

We believe that the answer is affirmative, absolutely and always: God *is* just. Why? Because God

always acts according to definite, predetermined and unalterable laws. Among these laws are the following:

1) that every person is individually and personally responsible for choosing his own course of action. God never forces a person to do right or wrong against his or her own will.

2) that every person is also responsible for the consequences of the course of action he or she chooses, whether good or bad. This means that

- ◆ God never condemns the innocent with the guilty,
- ◆ God never punishes the righteous for the wicked,
- ◆ God never punishes the children for the sins of the parents, or the reverse, and
- ◆ God rewards every man according to his works.

### Lessons from History

Let us now look at what the Scriptures offer in support of these principles. First let us consider the principle that every person is individually and personally responsible for choosing his own course of action.

This principle was in force in the days of ancient Israel, when the great statesman Joshua proclaimed to his fellowmen, "Choose you this day whom ye will serve...but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Josh. 24:15). Then as now, they were free to choose. "If ye obey...if ye will not obey." Both options were open. The choice was theirs.

The second law is that certain pre-ordained consequences follow specific choices. In other words, the choice determines the end.

Perhaps the clearest statement of this is found in Galatians 6: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that





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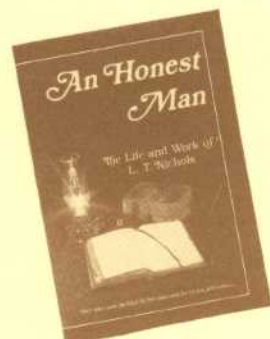
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Truth is the gem for which we seek,  
Oh, tell us, where can it be found?  
For it we search and pray and weep  
That truth may in our hearts abound.

We want the truth on ev'ry point,  
We want it, too, to practice by,  
Divine in nature, 'tis the best  
For truth will ever stand the test.

Seize then the truth where'er 'tis found,  
On heathen or on Christian ground,  
Among your friends, among your foes,  
The plant's divine where'er it grows!

—L. T. Nichols



soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (vs. 7-8). Could words be plainer? "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." In the world of nature, this law is absolute, for, to borrow the illustration of Jesus, who ever harvested grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles (Matt. 7:16)? And as James illustrated, "can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries, either a vine, figs?" (James 3:12). We reap exactly what we plant; there is no chance factor, no unpredictable consequences.

And the one who reaps is not whoever might chance to be the victim of God's caprice but the one who did the sowing. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall *he* also reap"—*he*, and not someone else.

God never condemns one person for the sins of another, nor does He

punish the innocent for the guilty. Neither can He reward one person for the accomplishments of another. All rewards and all punishments go always and only to the one who did the good or evil.

This principle is made doubly clear in Ezekiel 18. Apparently some among the captive Israelites questioned the justice of God's judgments, saying that the children were suffering for the sins of their parents. Not so, objected the Prophet speaking for God. "As I live, saith the Lord God, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel..." (vs. 2-3).

Ezekiel then goes on to cite specific instances. Suppose an evil man begets a son who sees all the iniquities of his father, but himself does that which is lawful and right. Will the son be punished for the sins of his father? No, the righteous son will be rewarded for his own righteousness.

Or suppose a righteous father begets a wicked son. Can this son benefit from his father's righteousness? He cannot.

But apostate Israel were so warped in their thinking that this straightforward logic seemed too credible to be true, hence they asked: "Why? doth not the son bear the iniquity of the father?" (v. 19). The great Eternal then proceeds to state each situation plainly: "When the son hath done that which is lawful and right, and hath kept all my statutes, and hath done them, he shall surely live" (v. 19).

"When the son hath done that which is lawful and right, and hath kept all my statutes, and hath done them, he shall surely live." Is not this principle right and just? Yes, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall

## No Night There

*I see a land where never cometh sorrow,  
Where sickness, pain, and trouble are no more;  
By faith I see the City of Tomorrow  
Securely resting on that golden shore.  
So staunch and firm indeed are its foundations—  
Upon the solid Rock Divine they stand—  
They will survive the crumbling of the nations,  
For they were laid by God's directing hand.*

*Its glory streams from every open portal—  
O wondrous City of the future day!  
As there a multitude of saints, immortal,  
With joy the mandates of their King obey.  
They radiate the glory of their Saviour,  
Whose pattern they once followed with delight,  
And now they share the loving smile and favor  
Of Him who rules the land without a night.*

*The gates of that fair land swing open ever,  
Not shut by day, and night is never known  
In that abode beside the crystal river  
Where God is love, and every grief has flown.  
No one there needs the sun in all its splendor  
To light the way, nor do they need the moon;  
Light streameth from the throne of their Defender—  
God giveth light at morning, night, and noon.*

*I long to tread its streets and share the glories  
Awaiting all who enter that fair land,  
When earth, becoming one of heaven's stories,  
Resounds with greetings of a faithful band;  
To have my age made clearer than the morning,  
With strength renewed, and glory streaming  
bright;  
And heaven's light my every move adorning,  
And live forever where there is no night.*

—L. L. S.



## God Is Just!

be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him" (v. 20).

God's unvarying practice is to give to every man "according as his works shall be." More work, more pay; less work, less pay. Could any plan be fairer than this? Again and again throughout the Sacred Record this principle is repeated. "For the work of a man shall he render unto him, and cause every man to find according to his ways" (Job 34:11). The principle was repeated by David in Psalm 62:12, "Thou renderest to every man according to his work," and in almost identical words by Solomon (Prov. 24:12); by Jeremiah (32:19), by Paul (Rom. 2:5-7), and finally its certainty was sealed by Jesus Himself: "Behold, I come quickly (suddenly); and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be" (Rev. 22:12).

### What God Has Done

Now was this actually practiced? Has God always been this "just"? Has He always rewarded according to "works"?

If we consult the record left by some of the people who had first-hand dealings with God, there is no question about their answer. At the time the Lord first informed Abraham of the pending destruction of Sodom and the cities of the plain, Abraham showed that he was well acquainted with the Lord's justice. These are his words addressed to his angelic informant: "Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein? That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked:...Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Gen. 18:23-25).

*(Continued on page 26)*

## "We Are Able"!



**N**umbers 13:32-33 reads: "So the majority report of the spies was negative: 'The land is full of warriors, the people are powerfully built and we saw some Anakims there, descendants of the ancient race of giants. We felt like grasshoppers before them, they were so tall!'"

The spies returned horrified. They saw giants. Only Joshua and Caleb saw God. Those of little faith said, "We cannot go." While faithful Joshua and Caleb reassured the people: "Let us go up at once and possess for we are able to conquer it."

A mental picture of giants suggests great difficulties. These are everywhere. We find them in our families, in our social life and in our own hearts. So it is vital that we subdue them for our own good. Let it be as the faithful spies said: "It is a wonderful country ahead, and the Lord loves us, He will bring us safely into the land to give to us. It is very fertile, a land flowing with milk and honey. Oh do not rebel against the Lord and do not fear the people of the land. For they are but bread for us to eat. The Lord is with us and he has removed his protection from them! Don't be afraid of them" (Num. 14:8-9).

In other words, "The presence of giants will turn out to be more gainful for us than if they had not been there at all."

Unless we have a winning faith, we will be spoils of war—we will be consumed by the giants we meet on our path. Let us strive to be filled with the same strong faith of the faithful servants of God. Patterning after them, we will see God in all those seemingly insurmountable difficulties and come forth victorious even though we meet them in the path of duty. Whenever Israel was submissive in the desert, not one giant showed up.

Some think that the revelation of God's power in the life of a believer should protect him from all sorts of experiences and struggles. Actually it brings about conflict and struggle "For God hath not given us the



spirit of fear; but of power, and of love and of a sound mind. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God." We may have thought that Paul on his way to Rome would avoid dangers of storms and foes by some miraculous intervention. To the contrary the journey proved to be a struggle to him with the Jews, persecutors, raging elements, etc. In the end he narrowly reached the shores of Malta by clinging to a fragment of the wrecked ship.

Can we not see God's unlimited power in all this? Obviously yes!

Paul explains the same to us. From the beginning of his belief and new life in Christ, his struggle began and continued. In spite of the persecution on every hand, he still became a conqueror through the power of God. He portrays the picture in these words: "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body" (II Cor. 4:8-10).

What an intense and persistent struggle! Anything that God values does not come easily. God's invaluable are not cheap; everything worthwhile costs.

The hard knocks in this school of faith are molding our character. We are not satisfied with a meager existence but desire the victorious kind of life of Jesus which we can attain only through the forming process of struggle and suffering.

How marvelous is our training and preparation for the Lord's Kingdom!

—Contributed (RK)

## "Go Forward"

Exodus 14:15

*"Go forward" with the Lord Himself; His Word shall guide thy way.  
He is thy Lord, He is thy Song, He is thy Strength and Stay;  
He is thy Life, thy Light and Love, He is thy Sun and Shield;  
He is, and that's enough for Faith, to Him then always yield.*

*"Go forward," for the foe's behind and all around is sin;  
Before thee lies the blocking sea, go on and thou shalt win.  
The foe is strong, but stronger He who bids thee onward go;  
And since the Lord is on thy side thou need'st not fear the foe.*

*"Go forward," then, His Song you'll sing, of triumphs He hath wrought;  
The Lord He is a "Man of War;" beyond the puny thought.  
Go on, He'll conquer every foe and bring thee through the sea;  
And thou shalt sing His song of might, and happy thou shalt be.*

*"Go forward"—find the Tree of Life which sweetens Marah's spring;  
The wells of Elim, too, are found, and rest which toil doth bring;  
The manna, too, is in the fore, the Bread of Life which feeds;  
And smitten Rock with water sweet, which meets all human needs.*

*"Go forward" with the man of God, for Amalek's before,  
But with the Banner of the Lord he'll surely make thee score.  
Go on! gain New Jerusalem, for there His Word is found,  
The Law to rule thy heart and life, upon Redemption's ground.*

*"Go forward" when the night is dark, the Light will onward guide;  
"Go forward" when the mists are thick; thou canst in Christ con-fide.  
The path is rough, the way is long, but He will always care;  
He'll hold thee with His own right hand, His glory thou shalt share.*

*"Go forward" to the promised land. He'll roll back Jordan's wave;  
Thy loving Captain leads thee on, and He is strong to save.  
The milk of love, the wine of joy, and corn to make thee strong,  
And honey's Word of Promise sweet, in Christ to thee belong.*

*"Go forward"; let no ill betide to hinder in the way;  
He will be with thee all the while you work and watch and pray.  
The goal of glory in the fore shines clear with luster bright,  
For Christ is coming very soon, and thou shalt see the sight.*

—Selected.





*We have hope,...*

**I**n a world where discouragement and disillusionment overwhelm thousands, the depressed inhabitants of a despairing planet, the Christian believer has reason to hope.

All of us know the feeling of crisis or just plain, unrelenting stress and the day-to-day struggle with inadequacy. At the same time magazines are filled with statistics that demonstrate dark trends. Televisions broadcast evil. Newspapers are inked with depressing events of destruction and death the world over. Without God, the horrors of reality are frightening.

Yet in the face of all this despair, *we have reason to hope*. And this hope is not a blind, fruitless optimism. It is sure because it is hope in God, our Creator, He who gives every one of us life and breath. God has a plan for this earth and its inhabitants, a plan that is going steadily forward. Our world shall not be forever marred by violence, war, and wanton destruction. Innocent victims will not always suffer under inadequate and mismanaged governments. The wicked will not always prosper. Some day this earth will be filled with the glory of God, a righteous people enjoying the benefits of peace and prosperity world without end. This is the hope the Bible offers.

Outside the Bible, hope consists only of a halfhearted optimism unsure of its basis. It has no anchor. It trusts

feebly that there is something better ahead, though the "better" has not been seen. Or its hopes are focused on objects which can bring only a moment's satisfaction at most—a career, a business opportunity, marriage, children, money, a new home, a new car, and so on and on.

In contrast, the Bible offers a hope that is sure and certain. This hope consists of an unrelenting confidence in the God who created us and in the Word He has caused to be written to instruct us. This Word tells us we need not live in a constant conflict between hope and doubt, because God is true. The promises He has made will most certainly come to pass. He has given His word: "But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord" (Num. 14:21).

The apostle Paul gives us a good look at this solidly grounded hope when he writes, "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13). Paul does not say that this is an idea, or a speculation that maybe—perhaps—if everything works out just right—Christ will return. We have no feeling of anxiety as we read his words, no wavering, no wondering, no idea that perhaps Christ is coming but we are not sure. Paul *knew*. His hope was sure.

And that same, solid hope is ours today. Christ is coming. Just as surely as He went away He will return. "This same Jesus...shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11).

That hope in the returning Christ was the basis Paul gave for encouraging others. After describing Christ's return and the hope Christians share in it, He tells His brethren, "Wherefore comfort one another [*encourage one another*] with these words" (I Thess. 4:18). Our



# We Have Reason to

# Hope!

*we have confidence,...we can rejoice,...because our hope is in God.*

hope is a patient, confident expectation that Christ is coming just as surely as He went away. He is coming to set up a Kingdom of righteousness and peace which will extend "from sea to sea and from the river unto the ends of the earth" (Ps. 72:8). He is coming to put down every evil and exalt righteousness, to institute new laws, new government, and a new way of life for everyone on earth. He is coming to fulfill the prayer He taught His disciples to pray, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10).

Our confidence in this hope is unshakable, and every aspect of our life is shaped by this sublime promise. For the coming of Christ will mean the opening of opportunity to a new and better existence for everyone who lives.

This confidence, then, becomes a model for our reaction to all God's promises. Every area of our lives is touched by this promise, that "He that shall come will come, and will not tarry" (Heb. 10:37). This hope gives us a confident attachment to the future that even in the midst of trouble fills us with joy through and through.

At the same time, our confidence of hope must be linked to our lives personally. Here is the real ground for hope, because our share in those coming joys depends directly upon what we are doing now, upon the standard of holiness we are developing in our lives today. Our participating in joys of the future is conditioned upon our obedience now. For example, obtaining the right to eat of the tree of life depends upon our keeping the commandments of God (Rev. 22:14). Securing an entrance pass to the Eternal City depends upon our having in our lives nothing that defiles, "neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie" (Rev. 21:27). Over and over the little word "if" precedes the Divine promise. "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land" (Isa. 1:19). "If" we will humble ourselves and obey and seek His face and turn from our wicked ways

(II Chron. 7:14); "if" we will hearken diligently to the voice of the Lord our God (Deut. 28:1). We have the promise of being sons of God, made physically like Christ. This is our hope. But first we must qualify for these privileges. First we must become like Him morally. For "every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he [Christ] is pure" (I John 3:1-3).

## **Our Personal Hope**

As we progress in the Divine life, as we become more and more like our Master, the confidence of hope becomes linked to our lives personally. This fact is illustrated vividly in the life of Peter, that impulsive Apostle whose leap from despair to hope is among the most spectacular on record.

After the resurrection of Jesus, Peter had to replace carefully every foundation stone in his wall of hope.

First he had to come to grips with his denial of Christ. Yes, he had failed. But he learned that personal failure is not the ultimate. Peter learned the hard way, especially after his embarrassing boast, "Lord, I am both ready to go with you, both to prison, and to death" (Luke 22:33). And only a few hours later, he denied Christ three times (Luke 22:54-62).

Could God forgive such a colossal failure? Could Peter even ask for forgiveness? The answer to both questions is *Yes!* In just a few days, Peter had learned from Jesus Himself that the door of opportunity for him was still open, that he still had reason to hope.

The lesson: Personal failure need not destroy hope.

Our failures are serious, and God does not mean us to take them lightly. But neither does He want us to park beside them. He wants us to repent, reform, and advance. It is all part of the growth process by which we come to spiritual maturity in Christ Jesus.

A second lesson we can learn from Peter is that cir-

*(Continued on page 24)*



# The Spirit of Truth

*Whether or not you give any credence to the spirit world,  
you will be interested in this one central spirit of the Christian Church.*

**I**n this day of a thousand different faiths and a thousand other philosophies of life, the spirit world is very real and very near to many people. Some feel a mysterious unexplainable power beyond their control or comprehension. Others imagine a sort of invisible person which can communicate with the deceased or thwart their best efforts and intentions. Psychic phenomena mystify and disturb numerous unsettled minds, and spirits transcending the human intellect are believed to be active in the affairs of men.

The New Testament Church also was surrounded by a world of mysticism. Theirs was a world which traded liberally in the spirit realm. Men of antiquity were quite familiar with the idea that a divine spirit might possess a man. The presence of the spirit, it was universally held, was shown by an unusual ecstatic type of behavior. It was when a man acted like a "whirling dervish" that it could be known that the so-called spirit had come upon him. Even as much a thinker as Plato believed that a divine spirit could transform men into ecstasies.

Thus it was nothing new when the Christians began talking about the Spirit of God. But theirs was a concept entirely different from that of the pagan spirit world.

First of all, the early Christians had experienced a special gift from God in the power of the Holy Spirit.

This "power from on high" which Jesus had promised before He ascended to heaven, descended like tongues of fire on the day of Pentecost and sat upon each of the disciples who had tarried in Jerusalem. "And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:4).

This gift of power, also called the "sprinkling rain," the "former rain" of which Joel had prophesied, was given for a limited time during the apostolic age to confirm the spoken word, and it ceased when its purpose was accomplished.

But the essential Spirit of the Early Church was a spirit which had belonged to God's people through all ages—the Spirit of Truth, as eternal as the wisdom of God. It is the spirit of which Jesus spoke, that "quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63).

The really significant thing about this Spirit was its entirely new and different characteristics: it demanded a *quality of life*. Among the pagans, the hallmark of the spirit-filled man had been the unusual, the spectacular, the ecstatic. To Paul the *fruit* of the Spirit was "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" (Gal. 5:22-23). These qualities are not spectacular. They do not

immediately impress themselves on the casual observer, as did the frenzied behavior of the priests of the pagan gods. But they are characteristic of the quality of life that Paul urged men to know.

This spirit, the Spirit of Truth, was not the extraordinary experience of a privileged few but was understood to be part of the normal day-to-day experience of all the people of God. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ," wrote Paul in the negative, "he is none of his" (Rom. 8:9). And again he spoke positively, "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Rom. 8:14).

It is unfortunate that the Gospel is so often preached today as though all that is involved is one moment of decision. True, the moment of decision is significant. The whole of the rest of the life will be changed because of it. But the essential point is that nothing less than the whole of the rest of the life is involved. Christianity is not simply a matter of making a decision for Christ. It is a matter of steadfastly *following* Him day by day, of realizing in everyday affairs the consequences of the decision once reached. It is a quality of life and a life of quality; we must not settle for less.

The New Testament preachers did not offer their hearers some slight thing that might readily be compared with what men found in



other religions. They saw Christians as men and women whose lives were being completely transformed. Thus the Christian is not the "old man" touched up a bit here and there but a totally *new* work of creation (II Cor. 5:17). The "old man" is dead. He has been crucified with Christ (Rom. 6:6). He has been buried with Him (Rom. 6:4), and the Christian thus crucified has arisen to "walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4). "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal. 5:24). Words could scarcely convey more vividly the thought that an old way of life has completely passed away.

And just as the imagery of death is used to indicate the utter finality with which the old way has been repudiated, so the imagery of resurrection is common for the new life. Christians have died to an old way of life, but they have also risen to a new one. Those who were once dead in their sins God has now made alive (Col. 2:13). They are exhorted, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above....Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3:1-2). The transforming power of Christ's life is to be made known to and in them.

Or the terminology of new birth may be used, as in Jesus' words to Nicodemus. Life in Christ is so completely new that we were not alive at all before we came to know Him. To enter the new life means a change so radical that it is to be born all over again. So Jesus could say, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). Apart from this, there is no real life.

Or again, the imagery may be taken from slavery. Men in their natural state are slaves to sin (John 8:34). They are "sold under sin" (Rom. 7:14) to the cruel slave-master of sin. "Know ye not, that to

whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" (Rom. 6:16). In Christ they are free. "Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness;...even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness....What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death" (Rom. 6:17-21).

Or the metaphor may be taken from the homely act of changing one's clothes. Christians have to "strip off" the old man and "put on" the new (Eph. 4:22-24). And there are other ways of expressing it. The New Testament writers were thrilled at their new life in Christ, and they ransacked their vocabulary for ways to express their delight. "But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him" (Col. 3:8-10).

The new life in Christ is characterized by the exercise of qualities like love, which is the first item in Paul's list of the fruit of the Spirit. It is the love of God, not superficial sentimental love, but love that is expressed in a life of dedication, obedience and self-sacrifice. Elsewhere this same Apostle has written a whole hymn in praise of this noble virtue (I Corinthians 13). He leaves us in no doubt that love is supremely important, and that it is a necessary quality in any truly Christian life. In a day when self-seeking dominates the lives of the masses, we need this emphasis on Christian compassion, on that love which has been called "the annihilation of the self-seeking life."

Paul tells Timothy that "God hath

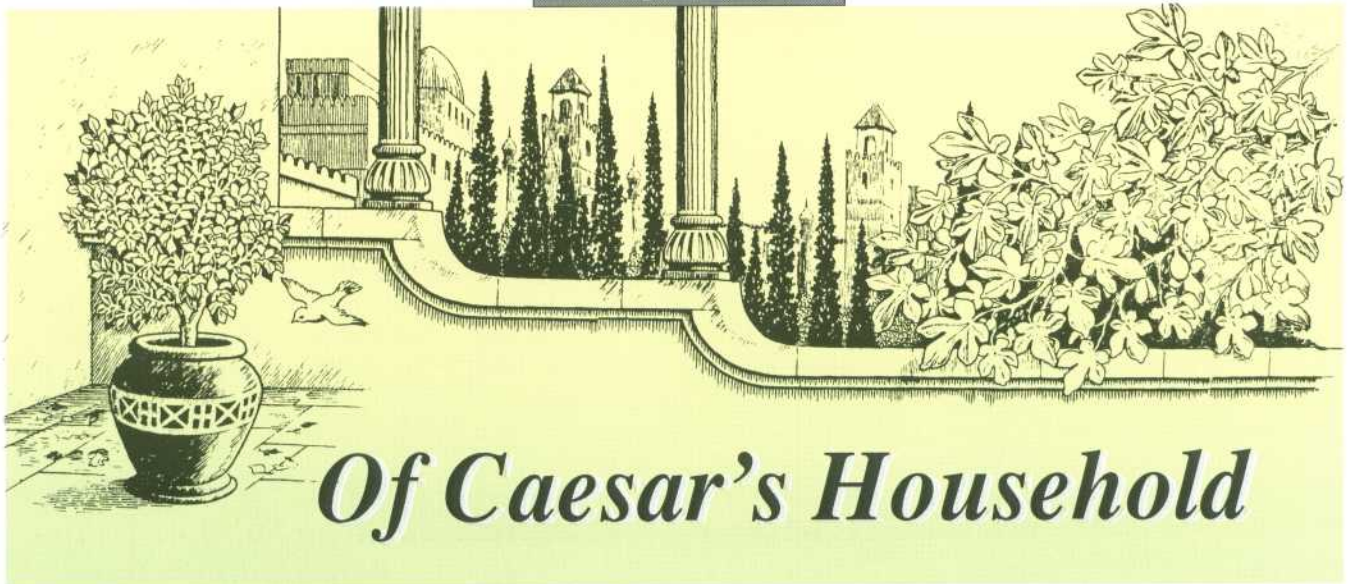
not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (II Tim. 1:7). In a day haunted by fears and forebodings, this emphasis must not be overlooked. The Christian is not obsessed by a concern for security, but he has a sense of security. He is not afraid of what the world news will bring. This does not mean that he has a kind of private line enabling him to know that wars and destructions will

***The Spirit of Truth, was not the extraordinary experience of a privileged few but it is the normal day-to-day experience of all the people of God.***

not take place. He knows no more about these things than do his unbelieving neighbors. But he knows that God is over all, and that this supreme God will accomplish His own purposes, whatever men may do. He knows that God has given him "the spirit...of a sound mind" which can steady him through the severest trial. He lives his life not in craven fear but in trust in the living God.

So the Christian lives his life on a joyful note. He has his share of troubles, but he has the inner resources to overcome them. He is no ostrich burying his head away from the difficulties of life. He is clear-sighted, for he knows positively that *all* things work together for good to them that love God. God is working His purpose out, his life has its place in the Divine plan, and therefore he rejoices in the Spirit of truth. MM





### Justice or Mercy?

It was night, and Luke the physician sat in the solitude of his room, meditating. The outlook for the infant Church was none too bright. After less than half a century of life and action, the first great test had found many of its adherents wanting. The defection of Sabinus promised to be a serious matter, but—"what is the chaff to the wheat?" He comforted himself with the thought that not one grain of true worth should fall to the ground, no matter how severe the sifting.

But, regardless of the future of Christianity, he must give thought to the business of the morrow, for up to the present nothing had developed in the favor of that unfortunate slave-girl Irene. A month ago, he would have needed to take no thought, for his mouth would have been filled by the Spirit of God; but now he must use his natural ability and the knowledge carried over from the old commission. Never before had he testified before a king or emperor; he racked his brain for the most favorable line of approach.

A knock at the door, and a messenger from the palace entered. In a

few excited sentences he told the story of Irene's sacrifice and of her immediate peril. Startled and shocked, Luke sank into his chair. Something must be done; she must be rescued!

He passed a sleepless night, his thoughts intent upon plans for the morrow. After what seemed an eternity, morning came, bringing its daily burden of hope and high opportunity. The doctor immediately set about to learn all he could of Caesar's habits and disposition. He must first get into the palace and interview his client. The messenger of the night before had thought of that, and had brought a pass signed by a friendly officer. Before the sun was high he had found the girl and Miriam.

"In two hours," the Jewess told him, "Vespasian sits to hear an important case. When it is finished, before the court is dismissed, make your plea. God grant that he may be merciful!"

Nevertheless, as Luke made his way into the chamber of justice, his heart was anything but hopeful. Previously it had been possible to see a ray of light; but now, as he stood in these awesome surround-

ings, in the presence of the stern lord of the Roman world, he feared. Vespasian was first and last a soldier, a hard old soldier, to whom discipline was everything, and in this particular case Luke could see no reason to hope for mercy. He had heard that in the army, self-inflicted wounds brought the severest punishments upon the offender. Had he only to deal with Titus, gentle, merciful Titus, his task would be far easier; for with all his vices, the young prince was reputed to bear a strain of almost womanly sympathy for the unfortunate. Titus, however, was far away at the scene of war. Well, God helping him, he would do his best. If oratory, logic, and emotional appeal could move this man of granite, his would be the voice to make that appeal.

Upon arriving at the palace, He was heartened to learn that the emperor was apparently in high spirits this morning. Beside him stood an officer, his face weathered to a deep brown by a scorching sun. This, he was told, was Felix, a legate just returned from the front with tidings of the capture of Jerusalem. Well might Vespasian rejoice that after a long, stubborn



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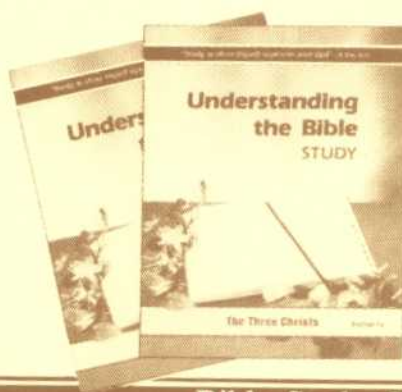
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—Psalm 85:9-13, A Paraphrase*

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and costly siege, the rich prize had at last fallen into their hands. The spoils of the temple and the houses of the rich would be a welcome addition to the treasury, which he was working with might and main to rehabilitate after the ruin wrought by the civil war and Vitellius' extravagance. The habitually strained expression of his features was relaxed somewhat, and he laughed and jested merrily with the officers about him.

Nevertheless, when the offender, a patrician accused of forging accounts on the public treasury, was brought before him, he was once more the man of iron, the inflexible master of the eagles. The man had been convicted in open court, and now the case was being reviewed for final decision. Almost mechanically the emperor recited the sentence, which was degradation from the equestrian order and a heavy fine. As the broken-hearted forger was led away, the herald repeated the formal question:

"Is there any further business to come before this august assembly?"

"There is!" A voice from the rear caused the spectators to turn their heads; Vespasian and his attendants looked up in surprise. Luke the physician, clad in a garment of rich material but simple and unadorned, his beard and hair neatly dressed, and a bearing of ease and scholarly dignity, advanced boldly to the rostrum. Halting before the throne, he made a graceful obeisance and in a clear, well-modulated voice addressed the emperor:

"Most gracious Caesar, illustrious and merciful lord of the Empire, I come before you a stranger, but claiming the right of a Roman citizen to speak, even in your dread presence. Lucas is my name, a man of the provinces but a free citizen by birth. If further introduction is needed, yonder cen-

turion will speak for me."

He pointed with a sudden and dramatic gesture at Julius, who stood at the end of the rostrum. He paused, and without hesitation the centurion stepped forward.

"The speaker is a noble man," he said. "His cause is just and worthy of Caesar's attention."

The two men had not seen each other for years, since the eventful voyage to Rome; but the little drama was as perfectly acted as though it had been agreed upon and carefully rehearsed. Encouraged, Luke proceeded:

"I know that Caesar will hear me, for the case involves a human being's life and happiness. And while to the soldier the lives of all men are cheaply valued, yet each of us, even the soldier, yes, and Caesar himself, considers his own life very dear."

"One moment," Vespasian interrupted. "Has your case been tried before the magistrates?"

"No."

"Then you are out of order. Why do you bring it here? Lictors,—"

"Because, illustrious, it is not a case for the magistrates. It has its beginning and end in Caesar's own palace. It is not the rule to enter the imperial presence to plead for a slave, much less for one of Caesar's own slaves, but that is my mission here today. For even a slave's life is sweet to him, and fortune has made many noble and honest men slaves. And even mighty kings have been compelled by the fortunes of war to taste the bitterness of servitude. If the powers of heaven hear the cry of the humble, surely it is not beneath the dignity of Caesar to lend an ear to their plea."

A knight at the emperor's right hand made a gesture of impatience.

"The man is a fanatic," he said angrily. "Why does he waste our time? Shall I order the lictors to

throw him out?"

Vespasian silenced him with a wave of his hand.

"Peace, my Pollione! He is a Roman, and I will hear him. This promises to be something new. When your counsel is desired, you will be notified."

In a short speech, eloquent and touching, Luke told the story of Irene, relating all except the real reason for her rebellion against the overseer. At the climax of his appeal, a small door leading into a side chamber opened and the victim herself, supported by Miriam and Priscilla, advanced to his side. The girl's face was swathed in bandages, and she was obviously very weak, but she held her head high and looked the emperor frankly and fearlessly in the eye, as though appealing to his manhood and justice rather than his sympathy, as Luke had intended.

Her appearance was greeted by mixed sentiments. Some of the nobles and officers made no attempt to conceal their disgust and impatience, but a sympathetic murmur ran over the crowd in the room. Julius looked on, his eyes dilating, his conscience goading him mercilessly. That he, the veteran of a hundred campaigns, should have been shamed and so far excelled in courage by this slip of a girl! Well, one such lesson was enough. This was the end of his vacillation and cowardice. He awaited the end of the trial with impatience; he must speak to Luke.

Vespasian sat with half-closed eyes, his features emotionless.

"I do not understand," he said at length. "The slave was promoted to a position where she might have gained high honors and freedom. Why in the world should she refuse?"

"It is a matter of her religion, sir," Luke replied, "which is also



mine. She is a Christian, and such a life is forbidden to Christians. Surely you would not compel your subjects to violate their consciences."

"That depends. As I understand it, Christians are the same as Jews, and the Jewish conscience has caused me a lot of trouble. After this tedious and bloody war, I have no patience with Jews. I might tell you, by the way, that our glorious

***"The angel of the Lord encampeth about them that fear him, and delivereth them."***

***—Psalms 34:7***

legions have captured and burned your precious holy city."

"But, Illustrious," Luke protested, "Christians are not Jews. The Jews have no love for us."

"He is right." It was Felix, the messenger from the East, speaking. "They are entirely different. There were a large number of them in Jerusalem, but they did not fight against us. During an interval in the siege they escaped in a body to the mountains."

Vespasian regarded him with interest.

"Really? This is news. But what sort of people are these Christians?"

"A harmless folk, peaceable and honest, so far as I can hear. The Jews indeed hate them, for they refused to join the rebellion; but the Jews hate all men but themselves. True, their religion is a strange superstition, and Nero persecuted

them for it, but to my mind it was an unjust persecution."

It was a bold speech, but Felix's high rank enabled him to speak boldly. Besides, he knew that the head of the Flavian dynasty had scant sympathy for any of Nero's doings or misdoings.

"They are a rebellious lot," growled Ferravius, the tribune. "They refuse to worship the statues of the emperors."

Vespasian laughed. "What of it? I am no god. Even Caesar suffers pain. When I am dead, they can do as they like about my statue, but I have never required any man to burn incense to me. But, Lucas, what is your request for this woman?"

"I desire that she be protected from the vengeance of her overseer, who has threatened her. She is not disloyal to you, O Caesar; she will be faithful in all else. She can perform her regular duties as well as ever, in spite of her ruined beauty. All we ask is that she be persecuted no further, that her courage and her sacrifice shall not have been in vain."

Vespasian lapsed into deep thought for a full minute; then, raising his head, he said slowly and deliberately:

"You are asking me, citizen, to interfere with the discipline of my household, a thing which I have always refrained from doing. I should like to be merciful, but should I overlook this breach, discipline would break down; and with such an example in the palace, every slave in Rome would begin to despise his master and we should have the affair of Spartacus again. Slaves must be taught to keep their place. Religion must not be permitted to destroy law and order. Therefore, in this case, clemency is unwise, even though it might be my desire to extend it."

Luke's heart sank, and Miriam

wept silently. The doctor knew that it was useless and even perilous for him, a commoner, to debate with the emperor. But surely, he thought, there must be a way out. Surely God had not forsaken His people completely. "The angel of the Lord encampeth about them that fear him, and delivereth them." Yes, it was the promise. If Irene were not delivered, without a doubt she would never have finished the work of perfection; sufficient time to perform the task was one of the guarantees in the Contract, so Paul had taught them. So far Irene's fruits had been good; what a pity to see her handed over to the scourge of the brutal Oarses and the malice of the baffled Hippo.

Suddenly there was a stir on the rostrum, and a gray-haired, richly dressed officer approached the foot of the throne, with the confident air of an imperial favorite and privileged character. It was the legate, Flaminius, standing forth to do battle for justice and right. His indignation had been deeply stirred and his disappointment keen upon the emperor's adverse decision; and, recognizing Luke's helplessness, he could restrain himself no longer. He had nothing to fear, for his rank protected him, and he had, not so long before, helped to place Vespasian on the throne.

It so happened that Julius, the centurion, burning with the same desire, had made a step forward, but, divining the intention of Flaminius and deferring to his superior office, he returned to his place.

"Imperator," the legate began, "this case calls for reconsideration. Is it not true that justice is always better when leavened by mercy? You are aware that more friends may be won by kindness than by fear. All men are not like the Jews, who refused all offers of mercy in their fanatical zeal. Even slaves are



more submissive and loyal when treated kindly. How many of Nero's servants, think you, would have defended him with their lives out of love for him? You speak of Spartacus. It is my judgment that if Spartacus had been fairly and kindly treated, he would never have headed that hopeless rebellion.

"A brutal overseer, unchecked by his master's hand, can sow much discontent and rebellion in any household, even driving his people to such extremities as this pitiful case before you. Think you she suffered no pain, even though a slave? And remember that, as Lucas has said, even monarchs are

not beyond the possibility of captivity. She has not rebelled against Caesar, but only against the incompetent, drunken and brutal Oarses.

"In the hour of your glorious triumph, O Caesar, is it not unworthy of the purple that the might of the Empire should be called upon to crush this poor child, this broken

*"It may be noon or evening when He comes to claim His bride,  
So I'm watching and I'm waiting as the moments softly glide;  
Oh, it makes the day go faster and the trials easier borne  
When I'm thinking every moment, 'Today the Lord may come!'"*

*Hail to the Lord's anointed,  
King David's royal Son!  
Hail, in the time appointed,  
His reign on earth begun!  
He comes to break oppression,  
To set the captive free;  
To take away transgression,  
To rule in equity.*

*He comes with succor speedy  
To those who suffer wrong;  
To help the poor and needy,  
And bid the weak be strong;  
To give them songs for sighing,  
Their darkness turn to light,  
Who, languishing and dying,  
Are perishing from sight.*

*Through changing generations,  
With justice, mercy, truth,  
While stars maintain their stations,  
And moons renew their youth,  
He shall come down like showers  
Upon the fruitful earth,  
And love, joy, hope, like flowers,  
Spring in His path to birth.*

*Before Him on the mountains,  
Shall peace the herald go,  
And righteousness in fountains  
From hill to valley flow.*

*With offerings of devotion,  
Ships from the isles shall meet,  
To pour the wealth of ocean  
In tribute at His feet.*

*Kings shall fall down before Him,  
And gold and incense bring:  
All nations shall adore Him,  
His praise all nations sing.  
For He shall have dominion  
O'er river, sea, and shore.  
Far as the eagle's pinion  
Or dove's light wing can soar.*

*For Him shall prayer unceasing  
And daily vows ascend,  
His Kingdom still increasing,  
A Kingdom without end.  
The heavenly dew shall nourish  
A seed in weakness sown,  
Whose fruit shall spread and flourish,  
And shake like lebanon.*

*O'er every foe victorious,  
He on His throne shall rest;  
From age to age more glorious,  
All-blessing and all-blessed.  
The tide of time shall never  
His covenant remove;  
His name shall stand for ever,  
His great, blest name of Love!*



flower, to send her to a fate worse than death? Your son, the brave and illustrious Titus, with whom I have fought in a score of campaigns and who has so gloriously ended the present war, would not so desire it. Let this day rather be an occasion of pardon, of forgiveness, that the Roman people in after years may speak of you as 'the good Vespasian.'"

His manner changed, and his words became deliberate, legal, incisive, aggressive.

"Besides all this, I am convinced that this girl is unjustly held in slavery. She should be as free as any citizen of Rome. I remember the case well. Her father Dumnorix was indeed a rebel, and perished, as was proper and right; but Roman law does not punish the minor children of a rebel unless they have voluntarily aided his cause. Nero had no right whatever to enslave the daughter, no matter what her father's crimes had been. I demand that the records of this case be investigated, and all living witnesses be called here to testify. To this work of simple justice my time and my fortune shall be dedicated, until the truth of the matter is brought to light."

He ceased, and the emperor's head once more sank on his breast in profound study. The court-room waited, tense, eager. Even the bored and hostile nobles were interested, for it was so utterly incongruous for a man of Flaminius' standing and influence to plead the cause of an unknown slave before the emperor. When Caesar raised his head, he spoke with more feeling.

"My dear Flaminius, with your eloquence you have convinced me. I shall give the girl protection for the present, and appoint my own physician to attend her until her wounds are healed. With all his faults, Vespasian knows how to be generous, even though he may not

agree with the object of his generosity. Neither Oarses nor Hippo shall touch the maiden. And an inquiry will be begun at once into the legality of her detention. It shall never be said that the Flavian line knowingly perpetuated the injustices of the Claudian. There have been better Romans than Nero." He was about to arise when Julius stood shoulder to shoulder with Flaminius.

"Illustrious," the centurion said, "the noble legate has appealed to your generosity with great success; now let me appeal to your justice. This Oarses, who I know is no better than a pig, struck the girl brutally after she had disfigured herself, and also struck this older woman"—indicating Miriam, whose eye was fearfully blackened—"when she interposed. Is it right that this dog should go unpunished?"

"You have a point of law and justice there, centurion," replied the emperor, now in good spirits again. "Lictors, bring in Oarses and Hippo at once. We will stay right here until they come."

In a few minutes the culprits were in the court, the one scowling and sullen, the other in a state of abject terror. The lictors had told them something of the proceedings.

"Hippo," said the emperor, sternly, impaling the Greek upon his merciless, sharp gaze, "what is this I hear of you? Why have you caused this trouble in my palace? Had you not enough dancers and entertainers?"

"No, sire; I did it in all good intention, for the glory of the palace and the entertainment and diversion of Caesar," stammered the frightened ballet-master.

"My entertainment!" It was evident that Hippo had made the wrong answer. "Listen, Greek! For myself, I care not a farthing for all your productions. Were it not that I

must entertain foreigners and some of my helpers, I would not have you in the palace over night. It costs money to train and equip actors and dancers, and Rome has no money to spend for such luxuries just now. You will get along with what material you have; I am going to keep an eye on you, and if anything like this happens again, out you go. And some day I may come down and clean house in your putrid old school."

Then, turning to the fat, beetle-browed eunuch, he addressed him with contempt.

"As for you, Oarses, the man who degrades himself by striking helpless women is not worthy of being my overseer. You are through; I have a better candidate for your post. I think I shall send you to my estate in Gaul, and give you a taste of farm work. And that is not all your punishment. Antony, is there a real tough gladiator around the place?"

The lictor addressed was prompt with his answer.

"Yes, illustrious. Finn, the big Hibernian, drifted into the guard-room last night slightly under the influence, as you might say, and tried to beat up the whole squad, so we put him in the prison until he cooled off."

"Well, throw this Egyptian swine in with him, and tell him to do his duty. Not to kill him, you understand, but teach him a lesson. I think after all these years of ease, it will do him a world of good."

As the lictors started to lead the wailing Oarses away, Vespasian added.

"Take the little Greek along, too, for a course of the same treatment. Finn can teach him some new dances!" He laughed heartily as he arose and stretched himself. The court was dismissed. MM

*(To Be Continued)*





## Baptism for the Dead?

**“What did Paul mean by ‘baptism for the dead’? What do you think about this?”**

Baptism for the dead is mentioned only once in Scripture, and it is 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?”

Strange as it may appear on the surface, Paul is using baptism for the dead as yet another reason for the necessity of the Christian's belief in the resurrection: Why be baptized for the dead *if the dead rise not at all*?

This verse has been used to support several false beliefs: 1) that the dead are “alive” and through baptismal rites performed by the living can receive forgiveness of sin; thus the state of death is a state of consciousness in another realm; and 2) the belief that all the dead will be resurrected.

The plainest Bible teachings declare that there is no consciousness in death. “The dead know not any thing...for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest” (Eccl. 9:5, 10). We know also that when a person dies, his record before God is fixed, and nothing a living person does will change the dead person's status before God. Even the pleas of righteous persons such as Moses and Samuel will not avail (Jer. 15:1; Ezek. 14:14). When we die, our

record is closed, and by it we shall be judged. “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).

All through I Corinthians 15, Paul's theme is the resurrection of the dead. Clearly and forcefully he explains that all hope of future life depends upon a resurrection.

What, then, was Paul's reason for mentioning “baptism for the dead”?

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.

But what about baptism *for the dead*?

A comment in the *New Scofield Bible* seems to 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 benefits of this life, if there is no life after death?”

This may well have been Paul's thought. Paul was living during a time when believers were continually threatened by persecution. And

Paul's reasoning is sound: Why should new believers (newly baptized into the Christian ranks) place their lives in jeopardy to fill the places of those who had died—if there was no future hope, no resurrection of the dead, if all ended in death?

This thought harmonizes perfectly with Paul's teaching in the chapter. Paul's whole argument is in defense of the absolute necessity of the resurrection. All future life depends upon it; without a resurrection both hope and faith are vain. So why be baptized into the faith, to fill a place left vacant by a deceased believer—perhaps one who had lost his or her life in persecution—if there be 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.”

Surely it is a powerful argument in favor of the resurrection, which has been the cornerstone of the faith of Christian believers in every age. Knowing that there is life beyond death for every faithful believer, they can forgo the pleasures and comforts of this world, and even risk their lives if need be, knowing that in Christ they have hope. MM



cumstances are not permanent. They are simply God's means of training us for something better.

This was true with Peter's trial, and after the resurrection of Jesus Peter found a whole new set of circumstances awaiting him. He had been called to go out and preach, to defend the very cause for which Jesus had suffered, and which he himself had denied.

But he went out with a broken and a contrite heart, and a heart broken with penitence is a giant step toward hope. It is that "godly sorrow" that "worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of" (II Cor. 7:10).

Peter's third lesson was that we are inherently responsible for all we do, and this is sure ground for hope. We are not mere things to which events happen. God has given us the ability to make things happen. This means that we can actually take the steps to make our hope real and certain for us. God in His Word has told us what we must do to have hope, and we are able to do it.

And what must we do? What will make our hope real for us? The apostle John gives us the answer while reaffirming his own vital hope. We read: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (I John 3:2-3). Notice that "every man that hath this hope in him"—no exceptions—"every man...purifieth himself, even as he [Christ] is pure."

We have hope, living hope because God has given His Word, revealing His plan and His manner of dealing with us. Our circumstances are not a barrier but our means of responding to Him, obeying Him, living according to the laws that govern His family. And it is this obedience to God that gives us hope. Rather than being a burden, our circumstances become the means of giving us hope.

Paul shared this same solid confidence in hope. He wrote, "For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it" (Rom. 8:24-25).

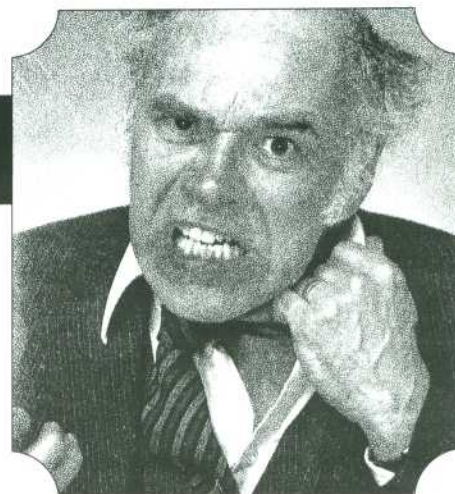
However dark and hopeless our surroundings, *we have reason to hope* because our confidence is in God, and God will never disappoint us. He has a plan in view, a plan that is as sure of fulfillment as His own existence (Num. 14:21), as sure as the fact that day follows night and spring follows winter (Jer. 33:20, 25; Isa. 61:11).

Let us not look with dismay upon our circumstances, or our surroundings, or the hopelessness that engulfs the world. But rather let us look up to God, and see to it that we are taking the steps that will make our hope sure to us. The humblest circumstance, the severest trial can become for us a steppingstone to eternity.

This life is brief, only a flash, a breath, a shadow. But we have hope, we have confidence, we can rejoice, because our hope is in God. In spite of our failures, in spite of our circumstances, we are responsible beings with power to purify ourselves even as Christ is pure, and so to become part of that life in Him which is permanent.

We have reason to hope, because our hope rests in the Lord God of Eternity!

MM



A current health letter postulates that a bad attitude may contribute to coronary disease. The same anger-provoking situation triggers greater reaction in hostile people than in those who are even-tempered. They experience more dramatic increases in heart rate, blood pressure, and possibly in the output of hormones such as adrenalin.

"Some researchers speculate that those physiologic reactions could eventually damage the arteries and encourage arteriosclerosis, the build-up of fatty deposits, in the blood vessels."

While researchers still speculate, the benefits of happiness were identified long ago by the sacred writers. "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones" (Prov. 17:22). Again it is said of the words of life, "Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart. For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh" (Prov. 4:21-22).

Psychiatrists and almost everyone agrees that we need a "vent" for our anger. There is questionable merit to the suggestion. We certainly do not need to mull over a disagreeable situation. But are we not encouraging our anger when we "vent" it? Is not the "venting" process a form of violence, which is a contradiction to the principles of our faith?

What is the real cause of our anger? When Jesus was looking for the cause of the sins that afflict us, He did not look at



# The High Cost of Getting **ANGRY**

situations that might be irritating, but rather He looked for sin where it originates: inside the human heart. "And he saith unto them, Are ye so without understanding also? Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him;...That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man" (Mark 7:18, 20). Where, then, should we look for the source of our anger? Inside.

Just learning this should kick out a big log from under the boiling pot. But do we say, "Of course this is true, this is what Christ taught"? True, but do we really believe it? Who does not have a tendency to blame someone else, or a circumstance, for some frustration? This shows we have not really taken to heart the words of Christ. At best, it will take some major effort to break the habit.

The law of God is definite: we *must* break it. "Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil" (Ps. 37:8). The statement is simple and unambiguous, leaving us no leeway for even the most irritating, most aggravating, most upsetting circumstance. "Cease from anger." All of it. Now.

Let us try to understand a little more about anger. We think of anger as a physical expression, we "see" it in others. But Christ points to our

own thoughts as the seat of the defilement, and here is something we can't "see." We can often see the outward manifestations of these thoughts or attitudes, but most often we do not recognize them. For example, impatience and fear may be expressions of anger. Others may include nervousness, headache, anxiety and poor concentration. Of course these may have other underlying causes, but all are accompanied by inner dissatisfactions.

The apostle Paul admonished Timothy to study that he might be approved of God. Fixing our minds on the right subjects is a valuable assist in shaping and even altering our thoughts and attitudes. As for the "right" subjects, the Word of God has no rival. Its Divine Author certainly knows most about how we humans think and act.

While scientists and research doctors speculate about the causes of anger, we find the real answer in the Bible. Cain slew Abel: the cause: jealousy. Saul was angry with Jonathan, again due to his jealousy. Ahab was angry, due to his uncontrolled greed when Naboth would not sell him his vineyard. Naaman became angry when Elisha through his servant directed the general to wash in the Jordan River. Asa and Azariah became angry when reproved, again due to pride. Pride

and jealousy thus appear as leading causes of anger. If only we can learn to see ourselves in true perspective, and get rid of these miserable feelings of pride and jealousy, we would find that we had much less temptation to anger.

We can learn to be happy only as we cease from anger. And what makes one happy? "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding... Happy is the man that feareth alway... Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God.... Happy is the man whom God correcteth... If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (Prov. 3:13, 28:14; Ps. 146:5; Job 5:17; John 13:17).

How does the happiness of the righteous compare with that of the wicked? Any happiness derived from sin is, first of all, short lived. "The joy of the hypocrite" is "but for a moment" (Job 20:5). Also, "The hypocrite's hope shall perish" (Job 8:13).

On the other hand, what do we learn of the happiness of the righteous? While the pleasures of sin are short and soon end in death, the pleasures of righteousness are ever increasing. "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that

*(Continued on page 26)*



getteth understanding. For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies; and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon

her: and happy is every one that retaineth her" (Prov. 3:13-18).

The happiness of this world is shallow and fleeting, and the one who seeks it is nearsighted and lives in a very small world. But the one who seeks his happiness in God has his eye on eternity, and how happy he is walking blameless before God. Of such we read, "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and

thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light" (Ps. 63:5; 36:7-9).

What reasonable person would choose to pay the high price for the questionable satisfactions of anger and forfeit the immeasurable—and eternal—happiness which can result from obeying the law of the Lord?

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## God Is Just!

(Continued from page 12)

The great lawgiver Moses had many direct experiences with God's justice and judgment—he even addressed specific questions about God's justice directly to God. At the time Korah and his company challenged the authority of Moses and Aaron and God revealed His displeasure and His intention to punish, we read that Moses and Aaron "fell upon their faces, and said, O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and wilt thou be wroth with all the congregation?" (Num. 16:20-22). God's reply was a command to separate the innocent from the guilty. Let those not sympathetic with the offenders *prove* their innocence by separating themselves. So Moses "spake unto the congregation, saying, Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest ye be consumed in all their sins" (Num. 16:26). Keeping company with the offenders was an evidence of sympathy with their cause.

On another occasion, Moses clearly revealed God's fair practice: "For the Lord your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward" (Deut. 10:17). He "regardeth not persons"—is not partial in judgment.

The book of Job teaches the same principle: "Far be it from God, that he should do wickedness; and from the Almighty, that he should commit iniquity...Yea, surely God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment....He will not lay upon man more than right; that he should enter into judgment with God" (Job 34:10-12, 23).

Solomon witnessed to God's justice in His prayer at the dedication of the temple. These are his words: "If

any man trespass against his neighbour...then hear thou in heaven, and do, and judge thy servants, condemning the wicked, to bring his way upon his head; and justifying the righteous, to give him according to his righteousness" (I Kings 8:31-32).

King Jehoshaphat recognized that "there is no iniquity with the Lord our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts [bribes]" (II Chron. 19:7).

King David in his deep reverence and awe extolled the justice of God. "Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne," he wrote (Ps. 89:14). And again, "Righteous art thou, O Lord, and upright are thy judgments" (Ps. 119:137). Nehemiah also testified to God's justice: "Thou art just in all that is brought upon us; for thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly" (Neh. 9:33).

Daniel testified to the fairness of God in these words: "O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day;...for the Lord our God is righteous in all his works which he doeth" (Dan. 9:7, 14).

Do these great men of old leave us with any reason to complain against God? Should we not rather thank Him for letting us know Him, His greatness, His providence, and His unfailing justice?

How the justice of God should move us to greater diligence in serving Him, when we realize that His justice reaches even to us. Let us remind ourselves often that we are subject to the justice of God, and shall experience it firsthand; that exactly as we sow we shall reap. If we are negligent and careless in our sowing, He will punish us; but if we labor faithfully, we can know absolutely that He will bless us beyond anything we can think or imagine, that not a single good work will go unrewarded, for "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." MM



*I usually feel more certain about history than prophecy. But not with God's prophecy. For Him, prophecy is just as sure as history. When God makes a prediction, it is just as certain as if it had already happened. With Him, all history was first a prophecy.*

*Character cannot be purchased, inherited, or imported. It must be cultivated.*

*Faith will fade unless it feeds on the promises of God.*

*Those who live for self never succeed in satisfying self, or anybody else.*

*To be a Christian means far more than wearing a label. It means living a life.*

*If you can't see the bright side of a thing, then polish the dull.*

*Let the glow of love destroy  
Cold obedience faintly given;  
Wake our hearts to strength and joy  
With the flushing eastern heaven.  
Let us truly rise, ere yet  
Our sun be set.*

*With the first waking consciousness of the day, take a serious view of what lies ahead. You know pretty well what is likely to come, where your difficulties are likely to lie, whether in being irritable, or domineering, or shrewd in bargaining, or self-absorbed, or whatever it be. Now, in this early quiet hour, take a good, full look at your enemy, and make up your mind to beat him.*

*It is a good time, too, to get your day into the right perspective before you begin it. What should you think about? What should concern you? What is your prior obligation?*

*Think these things over, before you begin. Then go with God.*



*I am resolved no longer to linger,  
Charmed by the world's delight;  
Things that are higher, things that are nobler,  
These have allured my sight.*

## **We Work for God!**

**W**hen we begin to work for God, no area of our life is unaffected. We are responsible to Him for everything, and that "everything" includes what we do or think about, even how we plow corn, or file papers, or drive nails, or talk to our children. Every waking moment, whatever we are doing, we are God's.

**L**et this thought permeate every moment of the day, and what a difference it will make!



*Be still, my soul: the Lord is on thy side;  
Bear patiently the cross of grief or pain;  
Leave to thy God to order and provide;  
In every change He faithful will remain.  
Be still, my soul: thy best, thy heavenly Friend  
Through thorny ways leads to a joyful end.*

*Be still, my soul: thy God doth undertake  
To guide the future as He has the past.  
Thy hope, thy confidence let nothing shake;  
All now mysterious shall be bright at last.  
Be still, my soul: the waves and winds still know  
The Christ who ruled them while He lived below.*

*Be still, my soul: the hour is hastening on  
When we shall meet our Saviour and our Lord,  
When disappointment, grief, and fear are gone,  
Sorrow forgot, love's purest joys restored.  
Be still, my soul: when change and tears are past,  
All life and blessing we shall know at last.*

—Selected.