

Megiddo Message

"When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are ashamed of? Those things result in death! But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness and the result is eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord"

—Romans 6:20-23,
New International Version

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I Call That Mind Free . . .

I call that mind free, which masters the senses, which protects itself against animal appetites, whose energies are capable of transcending pleasure and pain, which passes life, not in asking what it shall eat or drink, but in hungering, thirsting, and seeking after righteousness.

I call that mind free, which escapes the bondage of trivialities, which, instead of stopping at the material universe and making it a prison-wall, passes beyond it to its Author, and finds, in His radiant signatures stamped upon all creation, helps to its own spiritual enlargement.

I call that mind free, which jealously guards its intellectual rights and powers, which calls no man master, which does not content itself with a passive or hereditary faith, which opens itself to light whencesoever it may come, which receives new truth as an angel from heaven.

I call that mind free, which is not imprisoned in itself, which delights in virtue and sympathizes with suffering, which conquers pride, anger, and sloth, and offers itself up a willing servant to the cause of truth and righteousness.

I call that mind free, which is not passively framed by outward circumstances, which is not swept away by the torrents of events, which is not the creature of accidental impulse, but which bends events to its own improvement, and acts from resolute purpose, from immutable principles which it has deliberately espoused.

I call that mind free, which protects itself against the usurpations of society, which does not cower to human opinion, which feels itself accountable to a higher tribunal than man's, which respects a higher law than fashion, which respects itself too much to be the slave or tool of the many or the few.

I call that mind free, which, through confidence in God and in the power of virtue, has cast off all fear but that of wrongdoing, which no menace or peril can enthrall, which is calm in the midst of tumults, and possesses itself, though all else be lost.

I call that mind free, which resists the bondage of habit, which does not mechanically repeat itself and copy the past, which does not live on its old virtues, which does not enslave itself to custom, but which forgets what is behind, is alert for new and higher commissions from God, and rejoices to pour itself forth in fresh and higher exertions.

I call that mind free, which, conscious of its affinity with God, and confiding in His promises by Jesus Christ, devotes itself faithfully to the unfolding of all its powers, which hopes to advance forever, and which finds inexhaustible power, both for action and suffering, in the prospect of immortality.

—Selected.

MEGIDDO means

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

We believe

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

We believe

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

We believe

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

We believe

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

We believe

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

We believe

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

We believe

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

Bible Quotations in this issue:

Unidentified quotations are from the King James Version.

Other versions are identified as follows:

NEB—*New English Bible*

NIV—*New International Version*

NAS—*New American Standard*

RSV—*Revised Standard Version*

TLB—*The Living Bible*

TEV—*Today's English Version*

Phillips—*The New Testament in Modern English*

Berkeley—*The Modern Language New Testament*

Weymouth—*The New Testament in Modern Speech*

Moffatt—*The Bible, A New Translation*

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Vol. 66, No. 7

July-August, 1979

EDITORIAL

2 I Call That Mind Free . . .

ARTICLES

4 Freedom and Law

by Roger R. Nicole

There is no true freedom outside obedience to the law of God.

7 Building for Eternity

by Rev. L. T. Nichols

Are we building for darkness and death, or for light and glory?

13 You Are Innocent—Aren't You?

A lesson on the real evidence of our Christianity.

18 Does the Bible Forbid Killing?

20 Fighting to Win!

24 That LITTLE Member?

"The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity," when out of control.

BIBLE STUDY

10 Christian Certainties

Twelfth in a Series on the Epistle of First John

REGULAR FEATURES

22 Scriptural Spotlight: *Gadding About*

On Jeremiah 2:36. God demands all our love, all our loyalty.

26 Questions

Concerning justification "by the deeds of the law."

27 Our Readers Write

28 Cover Feature: *Truth Never Dies*

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FREEDOM and LAW

Roger R. Nicole

WHENEVER the word "freedom" is pronounced—whether we call it independence, *Freiheit*, *liberte*, *unhuru*, or the word in any other language—it strikes a responsive chord in the hearts of men. The Christian could well echo the famous words of Patrick Henry: "Give me liberty or give me death," for his ultimate goal is freedom.

The subject of freedom is one which challenges the hearts of men. Almost every country celebrates its national holiday on the anniversary of the day on which it acquired freedom. The Fourth of July is celebrated in the United States. In my native country, Switzerland, the first of August is celebrated in relation to the pact which was established between the three original Swiss cantons back in 1291. In France, the fourteenth of July, Bastille Day, is observed as the day the French freed themselves from the shackles of an autocratic monarchy.

But freedom has a much deeper meaning than in the political sphere alone. This is not to downgrade the significance of political freedom but to stress that political freedom is only one aspect of the total life of freedom which God has provided for us and to which God challenges us in His Word.

In spite of the great importance of the matter, there seem to be quite a significant number of misconceptions. If you ask people to define what they mean by freedom, you are likely to encounter definitions that are very questionable. There are many people who think that freedom is "the ability to do whatever one pleases." Probably this would be the most popular definition of freedom, the one that the man on the street would be likely to mention right away if he were questioned. But if this is what freedom is, then it is something

that we do not have, because very often our wishes are in conflict with the wishes of others. For example, suppose I wish to sit precisely where another person is seated, and suppose he wishes to sit there too. Obviously the two freedoms conflict; there is no way in which both persons' freedoms can be satisfied at the same time.

Some who have recognized this have attempted to adjust the definition of freedom to read this way: "Freedom is the ability to do whatever one desires subject to the freedom of another." But the moment you say "subject to" you have set a limit, and freedom is precisely that which should not be limited if it is to be real.

In any case, even apart from the conflicting interest of the freedom of others, there must be a clear recognition that we simply cannot do whatever we please. Let me say for one moment that I want very much right now to put my finger on the moon. I cannot do it at this moment. There are limitations which bind me inevitably and irresistibly. Therefore, if I say that freedom is the ability to do whatever I please, I indicate at once that this is something I can never possess. It is an illusive goal that cannot ever be attained by anyone.

We need to speak of freedom in a better way, a way that relates it both to the realities of circumstances and to what God Himself has created for us. I would like, therefore, to give a definition which fits better with the pattern which the Bible presents and then show how this constitutes real freedom and indicate how this freedom relates to law.

I would define freedom as "the ability to fulfill one's destiny, to function in terms of one's ultimate goal." For man, the goal is to glorify and serve God in willing obedience. I might say in addition that man's willing obedience involves a responsible and rational process in which man as a rational agent (not a puppet or a robot) is called upon by God to make choices. He is free

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in that sense. I would like to illustrate that this is what must be understood when we talk about freedom and are conscious of what we are doing rather than just speaking generalities.

The first illustration is from the inanimate realm of mechanics. I will talk in terms of a locomotive or train. If the locomotive can be lent a voice for the purpose of this illustration, it might easily come forward with a statement like this: "I am terribly bored in going all the time along precisely the same track. There are many interesting areas to the north and south, and instead of that I am confined strictly to these tracks, seeing the same decrepit houses and the same decrepit factories. I would like to wander around in the hills and meadows and have a chance to be emancipated from this constant following of the tracks."

Suppose for a moment that we humor the locomotive. "All right," we say, "go ahead and leave the tracks if you want to." What would happen? You do not need to be a great train engineer to know what would happen in a situation like this. When the locomotive leaves the tracks, it does not wander in pleasant places, in the meadows or hills, along pleasant streams of water. Immediately it ceases completely to operate. You have what is called a derailment. A locomotive is so heavy that it cannot properly proceed on any other surface than its tracks. When the locomotive leaves the tracks even for a slight moment, what is needed is very heavy apparatus in order to lift it up and bring it back onto the tracks where it can operate. Freedom for the train consists in moving along the tracks that have been prepared. Outside these there is only disaster.

Lets take an example from the animal world. I speak of a fish, and here again I will lend the fish a voice in order to illustrate my meaning in relation to freedom. A fish could say, "I find it very annoying to be always in the water. It is true that on hot days people enjoy it, but I feel confined. Once in a while when I jump above the water I can see that there are some other things than water in this world. There are fields, meadows, houses, and I would like to get to know all these better. Why do I have to be confined to water all the time? Water, water everywhere! Why do I have to have that?"

So we say, "All right, Mr. Fish, you can get out of the water." What would happen? You do not need to be a specialist in marine biology to foretell what would happen. When a fish is removed from the water it dies. Some of the sturdiest might live as long as two hours, but

most of them would not live even that long. The fish has been created to subsist in water. The whole structure of its physiology is related to existence in water. So when a fish moves out of its natural environment, instead of finding liberty it immediately perishes. Freedom for the fish consists in staying in the water.

Let us take an example from the affairs of men. Most of us drive a car, so we understand the kind of wistfulness that may sometimes come into the heart of a driver when he says, "Why do I have to be hampered by all these traffic regulations that limit my freedom? Why do I have to stay on the right side of the road? Why can I not wander at ease on this beautifully paved surface that seems to be so ample? And why do I have to bother about those traffic lights that stop me every once in a while? Why do I have to pay attention to those speed-limit signs which curtail my freedom to move as I would like? I would like to drive this car and not have any laws or policemen to limit my ability to enjoy myself behind the wheel."

Suppose now that the drivers could be granted their wish for just one day and that all traffic laws were temporarily suspended. What we would have is a monumental traffic jam. There would be accidents. There would be no possibility to foresee anything in relation to using an automobile. You would not know whether a trip would take one hour or whether it would take five hours. So the major purpose of owning a car would be defeated. The laws may seem galling at times, but their presence is absolutely essential for the usefulness of the automobile. We cannot dispense with them and gain any freedom.

We know this truth in relation to physical law. We know full well that there are laws that govern our universe and that we are not at liberty to disregard them. If somebody should go to the top of a tower and say, "I am going to assert my freedom; I am going to float on air now, and I will show you how it is done," and then launch out without any kind of aeronautical device, you know very well what would happen. He would not float on air. The moment he would leave the solid support of the tower the law of gravitation would take hold of him and rush him toward the ground where he would be crushed. There is no freedom in breaking the law of gravitation; the law cannot be broken; he can only break himself against it.

What people fail to understand is that the laws of God are equally binding. They think they can violate the laws He has established and not bear the consequences. But this is folly. The world

belongs to God, and His will and laws are at the very root of it. Moreover, the laws of God do not represent a painful and tyrannical imposition which God placed upon people who are legitimately opposed to them. They represent the lines of force of the universe that God has created, and so point the only way to true freedom. To disregard the laws of God is not to achieve freedom; it is to sink into futility. It is to break oneself against the structure of the world in which we live.

Think of it in terms of selfishness. God has said that we must not put ourselves at the center of the universe. God must be the center. But people say, "Well, I am interested in myself." And what happens? Inevitably they ruin their relationship with their fellowmen. Instead of having the kind of company and joy they want, they become undesirable people. It is very tiring to keep on serving somebody who is constantly serving himself. So the selfish person makes a void around himself. Instead of having more and more friends, he has less and less, until finally he seems to get what he was wanting: he gets himself. And that is not a big bargain!

The law of God is written deep in the structure of the universe. We cannot break it, but we can break ourselves on it. When we choose to disobey it, that is exactly what we do. We break ourselves against the lines of force God has created.

I have never yet seen a motorist who felt that it was an imposition on him to receive a road map. Most motorists that I know are very happy when they have a good map, because it shows them where they should go and what course they should take. The law of God is a road map which shows us how to guide ourselves in this world. So freedom for man does not consist in the ability to disregard the law or commandment of God. Freedom for men resides precisely in the opposite ability—in obedience—because it is only in this way that he can arrive at any destination.

Obedience to the law of God brings us new power: power to deal with the evil tendencies that we find within us, new power to achieve victory, new power to break the various chains of evil that may hamper and disfigure our lives. "Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness," says the apostle Paul, "so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness. When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are ashamed of? Those things result in death! But now that you have been set free from sin and have become

slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:19-23, NIV).

Here is true freedom. "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery" (Deut. 5:6, NIV).

"The Spirit of the sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release for the prisoners" (Isa. 61:1, NIV).

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free, stand firm then and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery" (Gal. 5:1, NIV).

"Live as free men but do not use your freedom as a coverup for evil, live as servants of God" (I Pet. 2:16, NIV; cf. Gal. 5:13).

"Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (II Cor. 3:17).

"You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free. Everyone who sins is a slave to sin, so if the Son sets you free you will be free indeed" (John 8:32, 34, 36, NIV). ●●

The Pessimist's Creed

What's the use of sunshine?

Only blinds your eyes.

What's the use of knowledge?

Only makes you wise.

What's the use of smiling?

Wrinkles up your face.

What's the use of flowers?

They clutter up the place.

What's the use of eating?

Nothing—only taste.

What's the use of hustling?

Haste is only waste.

What's the use of music?

Just a lot of noise.

What's the use of loving?

Only brings you joys.

What's the use of singing?

Only makes you glad.

What's the use of goodness

When the world's so bad?

What's the use of good health?

You might as well be sick.

What's the use of doing

Anything but kick?

—Selected.

MEGIDDO MESSAGE

Building for Eternity

Rev. L. T. Nichols

IF WE are engaged in the work of the Lord as we should be, we will be building all the time. Building for what? Not for something to pass away, not for something that will last for a day but for eternity, for a long, endless age. What a contrast to throwing all our energy, all our ambition into a work which will not last at all, the thing we arrive at being so transient, so short-lived, a mere speck of nothing. What a contrast between that and eternity. I do not wonder that a thousand years are to the Almighty God as a "watch in the night." I would go a long way to see a man who had lived a thousand years; but that lifetime would not be even a tick on the grand old clock of eternity. What a grand and noble thing to be building for eternity, to build so that there will be no end to our joy and comfort!

If we could only realize the joy and comfort this building brings us in this life, as we follow Christ—we have so much more joy and comfort than those who try to surround themselves with pleasure. To think we can reap joy and comfort now and in the ages of eternity also! So we see that those who are building for eternity will be always pleasant, always joyful, always rejoicing in the Lord. Nothing that comes disturbs them because they know that just as certain as there is a God in heaven, so He has a well-devised plan. And while those around us walk in darkness, we can rejoice in the knowledge of God and know that if only we live in obedience we are building for eternity.

What a good God we have! I do not wonder the Psalmist was led to exclaim, "A day in thy courts is better than a thousand." One literal day of this day of salvation will work out for us billions of years of love, joy and happiness in eternity, if we build firm and straight and true.

What a contrast between serving God and serving self! Look at the two sides, the joys of earth on one hand and the joys of building

for eternity on the other. There is no comparison. To be building and living for a home that will never take wings and fly away—what a privilege!

We went to the cemetery the other day, and oh! what a comfort to think we are building for a place where cemeteries will be unknown! We are all on the brink of death, only a moment and even the healthiest of us could be locked up in the long, dark, dismal tomb. And then to realize that we can build for eternity! To see those who have been locked up in the tomb come forth alive will give a joy that nothing in this world can equal. Such a hope is beyond the power of humanity to put into the hearts of men; it is a hope that can come only from God.

Now we are surrounded by death, sorrow, disease, and woe, the things of this life. But even now we can rejoice in the high and noble things of God, things that can give real joy and comfort. When these blessings come from God, they will be worth something! The grand eternity is just before us—just think of it, brethren, we can build for eternity!

Paul says "we are workers together"; yes, we are working together now. We are building. And what kind of material are we putting into our structure? The question is, Are we putting in hay, wood, stubble, or gold that will not perish? Are we building with wood, or those precious stones that will compose a part of the house of the Lord, that house in which He will take up His abode when He comes?

Are we building that our work may abide? Only so can we have a legitimate hope that we will be a fit abode for His spirit.

Paul says, "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase" (I Cor. 3:6). What are you to increase in? Increase in love, and joy, and peace, and unity, in holiness and virtue. This will cause us to increase in comfort and happiness. We are on a knitting expedition, knitting our hearts together in love. What wonder-

ful knitting to do, being knit to a "full assurance of understanding" (Col. 2:2). Where love is, there can be no evil. Get down into love, be planting and watering with God, be all one in mind and purpose, with no such thing as jealousy. If all are one and realize that no matter who it takes in, "neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase" (I Cor. 3:7), if we could realize this, there would be no such thing as carnality in our midst. None would be jealous of the other. The one that plants, the one that waters, both work for God, and God will give the increase.

If we build with gold and precious stone, we shall receive an eternity; if we build with hay, wood, and stubble, we shall be building only for this life, and it will not endure. "For wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it" (Prov. 8:11). This wisdom of God must be more to you than anything of this life.

Blessed thought! a high and noble position, to be "laborers together with God." A servant would consider it an honor to work with his master, and we should think it a high honor to be workers together with God! He will always work in harmony with Himself, and we must get down and work with Him. While we work with Him, He is working us over for a place in His temple. He is working upon us, working upon us for the purpose of eternity. If in our sober moments we would only realize how very brief are the things of this life compared to the grand, eternal things of the future; if we would only realize how short is our joy and comfort now—if people would only realize it. But then, they are destitute of faith. They say, If I knew there was a grand eternity in store, I could work. But they lack this courage to go on. They lack faith. How we should thank God that He has given us the full assurance, that we can know there is a grand eternity to build for.

Last night as I looked at the stars, they seemed so bright. A brother said, "What causes them to move in their orbs?" Some mighty power is behind them. It will take a few million years to learn about this. It seems you and I would want to build for that wondrous time when we can learn the wonderful things of God. And as we progress in wisdom and understanding, we will progress in happiness too.

In temporal things we can get up early and put in all our energy; but God requires us to be more energetic, more wide awake in these grand divine things, for our eternal home must be more to us than all else. Nothing must be

allowed to come in and eclipse the grand picture. Proverbs 3 says, "All the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her." It matters not what—whether son or daughter, houses or lands, this wisdom of God must be foremost, uppermost, guiding, directing. These are the things for us to constantly, seriously consider, to let into our hearts to see if we are building for darkness or for light and glory.

I do not like to go to a cemetery, but it would be good for some to go every week to have impressed on their minds the end of mortality. This is certain, no guess-work. It will soon be my little home and yours, and our long home, if we have not built for eternity. When we see this, it seems it would cause us to make a change. Of all the countless number in the long resting-place of the dead, just a little handful will ever escape. And but for the coming of the Lord, all would go there. You are nearer it every day. When one week is gone, what pleasure is it to know you are just a week nearer your little home two by six; then a year nearer, one by one? But then to think, if we have been workers together with God, the grave cannot hold us!

Paul says, I do not want you to be ignorant. There is something I want you to know. "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." The grave cannot hold the "dead in Christ."

If we will only get into this work as we should, and let this Word of God work in us, it will change us. The Lord Jesus will come, clad with power from on high, and set us free from mortality, free from all fear of death. What a joy! What a consolation! If death does take us, it cannot hold us. Why will we be so foolish now as to do the things which will cause us to remain among the dead? It seems a strange thing to me that any man will make death his choice.

If we do not get into this work with all our mind, might and strength, soon it will be everlastingly too late. The harvest will be past and the summer ended. Too late, too late.

I am glad to realize there are a few whose hearts have been touched and who are building for eternity. If this gets into our affections, then there is hope of our being among the people of the Lord. If one could go to work and for one week's labor get a beautiful home with the most modern utilities, and with a spacious lawn

Let Us Pray . . .

Loving Father, as once again we draw nigh Thee in prayer, we come with the confidence that Thou wilt succor all who come to Thee for aid. Forbid it Father that we should be so self-reliant as to refuse to come to Thee for help, or lean upon Thine everlasting arm.

We thank Thee for Thy goodness and mercies to us, we know they are more than can be numbered. And as we reflect upon our past life we realize that many times they were more than our halfhearted attitude merited.

We thank Thee for a knowledge of Thy plan for the earth and mankind, glad for the assurance that nations will not always live in deathly fear of each other as they are now doing. Grant, Father, that we may not share the world's fear and perplexity, confident that prevailing conditions are but the darkness before the dawn, and

that nothing which occurs can annul Thy final purpose for the earth.

Like the Psalmist, may our soul long, even faint for Thy courts. May one day in Thy courts be better to us than a thousand outside, out in the broad way with the masses headed for destruction. May our growth in the spiritual life be so abundant that it may be said of us, they go from strength to strength; their hands are so clean and their hearts so pure that they daily grow stronger and stronger.

Thou, Lord, art a sun and shield, Thou wilt give grace to every faithful worker in Thy employ, and in the world to come give a glory that will exceed anything that this fleeting present can afford. And Thou art not unfaithful to forget Thy promises, or unmindful of every good thing done in Thy Cause. Thine eyes are open upon us, and we shall receive for every good thing done in Thy name. The man that trusts wholly in Thee will be blessed tomorrow, and tomorrow, and through all coming tomorrows in the world to come. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

well watered, how they would work; but then they could hold it only for a little time. But we for a short time of labor can gain a home which we can enjoy forever!

In Proverbs 16:17 is a grand text: "The highway of the upright is to depart from evil." But as we look around, we are driven to believe the words of Jesus, "Few there be that find it." The facts stare us in the face that few are on this highway to life. "The highway of the upright is to depart from evil." But few are on it; most are in the broad way to death.

The prophet Isaiah says (Isa. 24:16), "From the uttermost part of the earth have we heard songs, even glory to the righteous. But I said, My leanness, my leanness, woe unto me!" There is coming a day when we shall hear songs of the righteous resound. Is not that enough to make us build for eternity? Can we not afford to work? What do we care what others say? God has chosen the despised; can we not afford to be cast down for a moment, if we can be exalted forever? Our day is coming; we are not building for the present. We will hear those songs resound in the future; but the unfaithful will say, "My leanness, my leanness"; yes, they will realize then.

There can be no cause for doubt; no worry, no jealousy, if you are working together with God. It takes away all that makes you miserable,

takes away every vestige of jealousy. What wonderful deliverance.

The question with us should be, must be, Are we building for eternity that we may not be among those who say, "My leanness, my leanness"? Jesus said, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." You cannot be His disciples and enter the portals of everlasting rest if not doing. This will apply to us, too, if we do not get down with all our mind, might and strength. Unless we do, we cannot enter.

We must take up our cross daily, and deny ourselves and thus we will eat so much of these grand truths of God that we will be "fat and flourishing." Psalm 92:14 says, "They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing." We shall flourish in the knowledge of God. The Prophet declares, "Lord, thou wilt ordain peace for us: for thou also hast wrought all our works in us" (Isa. 26:12). Think of being fellow-workers with God! "For thou also hast wrought all our works in us." But are we sure the knowledge of God is working in us? Our every move, our every step will demonstrate.

We can all build for eternity if we will. I would rather have that home than all the wealth of all the world combined. You can get more joy out of one year of that life than from all the wealth this vain, fleeting world can offer.

Will you not be one to build for eternity? ●●

From

John the Elder



Twelfth in a Series on the Epistle of First John

Christian Certainties

A Study of I John 5:18-21

JOHNS the Elder is drawing his letter to a close. Remember that he has written to the various young churches of Asia Minor. Besides, he has written for Christians everywhere and for all time. He has written his great thoughts without any formal arrangement; he has impressed the need of Christian faith being strong and active. He insists upon a pure and holy life, absolutely separate from the ungodly world. There must be a visible expression of brotherly love. Frequently John has repeated his themes for emphasis, always bringing in more light and deeper lessons. And this is true of his concluding words as well. Once again he gathers up the leading thought of what he has already said and lays before his readers the great truths which have already been touched upon. Nevertheless, it is more than a repetition. With three vigorous certainties he forms the climax of his letter.

The First Certainty

"We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not" (I John 5:18).

John is describing the ultimate result which would characterize the child of God. John is saying not that it is impossible for the child of God to stumble or fall in his struggle to achieve this ultimate end; if this had been so he would not have given his frequent warnings. This affirmation comes directly after his exhortation to pray for brothers who sin. Eternal life is the Christian goal, promised by God to overcomers. In his gospel, John indicates that this is an achievement. Speaking of Christ he says, "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God" (John 1:12).

God calls us His sons and daughters even now while we are achieving this status. When we start in the way of life, we are said to be "begotten" or "born" into His family—not that we are saved or already immortal or perfected, but we are what Peter called "newborn babes," ready to learn and grow (I Pet. 2:1-2). Such an earnest babe "keepeth himself" so that the evil cannot lay hold of him and overpower him. He puts forth his best efforts and keeps himself free from sin. He is not one who never falls, but he is one who gets up and goes on every time he falls. John's thought is the same as that of I John 3:9, which the New International Version translates, anyone born of God "does not continue to sin." As we learn to abide with the Father we will learn to keep ourselves from sin. But human nature is weak and prone to yield to the evil impulses of the lower nature which John calls "the wicked one." Everyone understands that the "wicked one" John refers to is the "devil." He is the "devil" in the true sense of the word. In the Hebrew and Greek, the word translated "devil" signifies "an adversary, an opposer, a slanderer or accuser." In the Scriptures, it is applied to wicked men or women. It applies to anyone in opposition to God, whether ourselves or anyone else. The Christians of John's day knew what he meant. Referring to Judas, Jesus had said, "Have not I chosen you twelve and one of you is a devil?" (John 6:70). And to the rebellious Peter he had said, "Get thee behind me, Satan" (Matt. 16:23).

Let us heed John's words and so keep ourselves that no evil will take hold of us.

The Second Certainty

The second certainty that John declares is, *"We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness" (I John 5:19).*

The Christian faith is a matter of certainty and assurance. The Elder does not say "we think" or "we hope we are of God" but "we *know* that we are of God." The true Christian knows because he walks in close relationship with God. He is continually conscious of his sincere faith. His endeavors to follow Christ are real. The genuineness of his character assures him that he is of God.

In dreadful contrast John says that "the whole world lieth in wickedness." It is in the grip and under the dominion of that wicked one, the evil heart of man. Moreover, the world *lieth* there; it is not represented as struggling actively to be free, but quietly *lying*. The "world" includes all who walk in darkness, all who are strangers to the living way.

If our own life is inspired by the world and its goals and ambitions and lusts, we are part of that realm.

John wastes no words, neither does he blur the issue. Everyone belongs either to God or to the world. He makes no distinction between the civilized and uncivilized, between the educated and the uneducated; whether they be the refined Ephesians or the wild Parthians, his judgment is the same; they are the world because they have no interest in the plan of God; there is no intermediate class.

Today we live in a world possessed by evil in high and low places, evil so widespread and so powerful that only God shall be able to deal with it. Without doubt, John would pronounce the same judgment in this time as he did long ago, "The whole world lieth in wickedness." He would urge us to realize the tremendous contrast, and the great need to make certain that we are *of God*.

The Third Certainty

Then comes another blessed certainty which the Christian holds dear; it is that of knowing God, the true God, the real God. John writes,

"And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life" (I John 5:20).

For centuries men have sought to discover the Supreme Being and the destiny of life. Because they are easily satisfied with inferior substitutes, they are still in darkness. But the Christian knows God. Christ has given them understanding whereby they can know God. He came teaching them the way of salvation. In His own life He manifested the holy principles of God. Jesus said to one, "If ye had known me, ye had known the

Father" (John 14:6). Christ showed the way to God and eternal life. God the Father is the source of life and He is the Giver of eternal life through Jesus Christ (John 5:26, 21; I John 2:25). That is the glorious destiny that Christians are certain of if they abide with the Father and the Son.

Some would like to believe that John is here giving unequivocal evidence of the deity of Christ. By the words "This is the true God and eternal life," they say John is referring to Christ, thus stating that Christ is the "true God." While "Christ" is mentioned immediately before, it seems the most natural reference is to the subject not locally nearest but dominant in the mind of His apostle. John has been saying much about God, the true God in contrast to the many false gods.

To show that a pronoun does not always refer to the antecedent immediately preceding, read II John 7. "For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist." If "this" must refer to the nearest preceding person, John would be saying here that Christ was a deceiver and antichrist. But no, John never meant to say any such thing. Neither is he referring to the incarnation in I John 5:20. In an impressive way he is assuring us that the one manifested to us through Christ is the one true God in whom is all blessedness. Thus, "we know that the Son of God [Christ] is come, . . . and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This [the one true God, the divine Father] is the true God, and eternal life."

One Last Warning

As John is about to make the last stroke of his pen, he is reminded that he has done all he is able, impressing the principles of truth and warning the believers that there is something for them to do. With a father's anxiety he warns once more, affectionately,

"Little children, keep yourselves from idols" (I John 5:21).

The New English Bible words it, "My children, be on watch against false gods." Ephesus was the proud center of idol worship, and everywhere in John's world Christians were surrounded by idolatry. Doubtless many of John's readers had come from the ranks of idol worshipers. They must ever be on guard lest the pagan influences around them creep into their lives.

Beside the external images that John alludes to as dangerous, he no doubt has equally in mind the popular philosophical ideas of Gnosticism, sorcery, exorcism, astrology, etc., all of which

were—and are—enemies of the Christian religion.

The term "idol" had wide application. John was giving a solemn warning against anything and everything that would usurp the place of God in their hearts. John insisted that the Christian keep himself clean from all worldly infections.

John's words of caution are as needful for us today as they were for those to whom he was writing. We are in no less danger of substituting other (and lesser) objects, to which we give the affections which are due to God. Some make an idol of riches; they devote all their powers and opportunities in pursuit of them. Others seek pleasure and are willing to subordinate every other interest to seek personal gratification. Some make honor, fame, or power their god, and seek these first in their lives. We may have as an idol a friend or relative, wife, husband or child. It is possible to love a person with such attachment as to effectively exclude God from our heart. Above all, there is danger of worshiping self. As one has said, "It is no difficult matter to keep from dead idols, but take heed that thou worship not the living ones, and especially thyself, for as soon as thou arrogatest to thyself honor or praise or knowledge, or power, thou settest thyself in place of God."

Anything that drags us into miserable slavery—be it the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, or the pride of life—is idolatry. That which drives the living God from our hearts and weakens our zeal for the fellowship of God is idolatry.

For every soul there comes a time when the need of God is felt. How awful when a man perceives that the idols in which he has trusted have disappeared like mist from his sight, that they have no power or peace to offer him; how sad then if the fainting soul has lost the strength to pierce through the surrounding mist and find God.

Unsuspected as the presence of idolatry may seem, there is yet urgent need of the Apostle's warning:

"Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen." ●●

*You are writing a gospel, a chapter each day,
By the deeds that you do and the words that you say;
Men will read what you write, whether faithless or true—
Say, what is the gospel according to you?*

The fact that you attend a religious service no more assures that you are a Christian than falling into a lake assures your being a fish.

Do You Know?

Do you know the person with whom you rise
At the early dawn of day?
Is he one who brightens the dulllest skies
And chases the clouds away?
Or does he begin the day with a frown,
Does he dress in a robe of doubt,
Do the corners of his mouth turn down
In a perpetual pout?

Do you know the person with whom you ride
As you travel to your work?
Is he one you are glad to sit beside?
Is he one who will never shirk
An unpleasant task that is his to do?
Are his thoughts and his motives pure?
Does he keep the promised reward in view?
Is his step both firm and sure?

Do you know the person with whom you walk,
As you journey on through life?
Would you check him off as a man whose talk
Is free from folly and strife?
Does he feel a thrill when he hears the sound
Of the glorious gospel note?
Do his songs with praises to God abound
As upon the air they float?

Do you know the person with whom you live
Twenty-four hours a day?
Is he quick to help? Is he sure to give
A smile as we pass his way?
Is he slow to anger, and slow to speak,
Weighing his words with care,
But quick to encourage the humble, meek,
Ready their griefs to share?

If you are uncertain of him with whom
You keep closest company,
And would help him flee from impending doom,
His faults you must plainly see.
Just look in the glass that God provides,
The wonderful mirror of His truth,
There is naught in the whole wide world besides
That shows us the sins of youth.

The Word is a mirror both certain and true,
Revealing each blemish and flaw;
Which none can remove, excepting they do
God's bidding, and keep His law.
And if you would see all your gross defects—
The sordid and worthless dross,
Just gaze at the image this Mirror reflects,
When stripped of its sheen and gloss.

You Are Innocent—Aren't You?

REAL CHRISTIANITY is a religion of the heart. The man who would be a Christian must be "like Christ" to the very center of his being. If he is not, he is not a genuine Christian.

The following playlet illustrates this fact by depicting what we might call a lesson in reverse—a lesson in what *not* to be. It points out the stark truth that many who call themselves Christians do not bear in their inner lives the stamp of Christ's character. God is a God who weighs the thoughts and intents of a man's mind, and only when these are Christlike is the man fully identifiable as a Christian in the courtroom of God.

The playlet provides a striking lesson on the difference between being dead earnest in our Christian living, or merely having a name that we live when we are in reality dead. To be a Christian means to be like Christ. And Christ's daily living was no make-believe program, trying to appear what He was not. By His own testimony He did "always those things that please" His heavenly Father. The moment He learned the will of His Father for Him, He immediately set to work to perform it. And if we are in reality to bear the name of Christian, we must do the same. We must live as Christ lived, a fully consecrated life. If we do not, the evidence of our life will not be sufficient to convict us of the "guilt" of being a Christian, and our doom will be sealed; the word from the great Judge will be, "Depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

With this serious thought in mind, let us examine ourselves. Let us put ourselves in the place of Matthew Brown. Are we content merely to profess an outward form of our religion, or is it a controlling power in our lives? Are we "Christians" only on the surface, or are we willing, even eager, to respond to our high calling with all that is in us and take our religion into the secret depths of our innermost souls?

For the subject of this playlet we are indebted to the kindness of Lon Woodrum.

July-August, 1979

SETTING: *A Courtroom.*

CHARACTERS:

Judge

Bailiff

Defense Attorney

Prosecuting Attorney

Defendant *Matthew Brown*

Witnesses *Mr. Bitter*

..... *Mr. Breaker*

JUDGE: Order, please. The court is now in session. This is case number 7—the State of Communia versus Matthew Brown. The charge: Christianity. The Attorney for the State of Communia will now give his case.

PROS. A: Thank you, Your Honor. We will here attempt to prove that the defendant, Matthew Brown, is a Christian. I would like to call my first witness to the stand.

JUDGE: Witness Number One will take the stand.

(BAILIFF brings in MR. BITTER. They stand before the witness chair and face each other.)

BAILIFF: Raise your right hand. Do you solemnly affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

BITTER: I do.

BAILIFF: You may take the chair.

PROS. A: Your name?

BITTER: Thomas Bitter.

PROS. A: I understand that you live next door to Matthew Brown. Am I correct?

BITTER: You are correct. We have been neighbors for ten years.

PROS. A: Then you would say you know the defendant quite well.

BITTER: I sure do (*gets excited*). And I know for a fact that he's guilty of being a Christian. Why he...

JUDGE: (*interrupts*) Just answer the questions, Mr. Bitter.

PROS. A: What kind of neighbor is Mr. Brown?

BITTER: Friendly, charitable—you know, a do-gooder.

PROS. A: What do you mean by “a do-gooder”?

BITTER: He’s always ready to help someone. He donates to needy organizations, and he’s active in community projects.

PROS. A: I see. Do you know whether Mr. Brown attends church?

BITTER: He certainly does. I see him go every Sunday.

PROS. A: Does he own a Bible?

BITTER: Yes. I see him with it often. He takes it to church, and he reads it. . . .

PROS. A: How do you know he reads it?

BITTER: Well, I called on him one day and he came to the door with a Bible in his hand. He started talking about religion right away.

PROS. A: Well, then, he has talked about religion to you?

BITTER: Oh! yes. He’s very religious. Why, he even has Bible mottoes on his walls.

PROS. A: Very well. Thank you, Mr. Bitter. (*turns to Defense Attorney*) Your witness.

DEFENSE: Thank you. Now, Mr. Bitter, you say that my client attends church every Sunday.

BITTER: Yes.

DEFENSE: Could you say that a person is a Christian just because he goes to church?

BITTER: Well, . . . ah, . . .

DEFENSE: Let me put it this way: Do *you* go to church?

BITTER: Well, yes, sometimes.

DEFENSE: Have you ever been accused of being a Christian?

BITTER: No, of course not!

DEFENSE: Then we would have to admit that just going to church does not make a person a Christian.

BITTER: I suppose so. . . . But he reads his Bible!

DEFENSE: Yes, yes. He reads his Bible. And **what kind of example** does he show to the world to prove that he *understands* what he reads?

BITTER: What do you mean? I said he was a do-gooder!

DEFENSE: Do you know others who help people and give to charity?

BITTER: Yes.

DEFENSE: Are all of them Christians?

BITTER: Well, no, but . . .

DEFENSE: Then being a do-gooder isn’t a measure of Christianity. Isn’t Christianity supposed to go deeper than outward show?

BITTER: I don’t understand.

DEFENSE: Let me explain. Even atheists do good; Christianity goes deeper, into the mind. Can you honestly say, Mr. Bitter, that you know what goes on in Mr. Brown’s mind—what his motives are?

BITTER: (*defeated*) No.

DEFENSE: That’s all, Your Honor.

JUDGE: You may leave the stand.

(BITTER *steps down and leaves*).

JUDGE: Next witness.

(BAILIFF *brings in* MR. BREAKER. *They stand before witness chair and face each other.*)

BAILIFF: Raise your right hand. Do you solemnly affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

BREAKER: I do.

(BAILIFF *directs* MR. BREAKER *to the witness chair.*)

PROS. A: Your name?

BREAKER: Lincoln Breaker.

PROS. A: What is your association with Matthew Brown?

BREAKER: (*enthusiastic*) Brothers in the Lord, Sir!

PROS. A: (*amused*) In other words, you go to the same church?

BREAKER: That’s right!

PROS. A: Does Mr. Brown take an active part in the church?

BREAKER: He sure does! He’s on the church board. He’s in the chorus and plays in the band. And he volunteers to be in all the committees.

PROS. A: That’s quite a good standing, wouldn’t you say, Mr. Breaker?

BREAKER: Why of course!

PROS. A: You haven't noticed if Mr. Brown is willing to donate to the church financially?

BREAKER: Oh, yes! He's very willing. One time I saw him put a ten-dollar bill into the collection plate.

PROS. A: That's a good sign. But of course, we've all got to remember that just giving money isn't sure evidence that one is a Christian. It does go deeper. Judging from Mr. Brown's actions in church, would you say he takes his religion seriously?

BREAKER: Oh! yes, very much so. I've noticed that he prays quite fervently, sings loudly and enthusiastically, and after church he's always ready with a smile and a handshake.

PROS. A: Very well! The Bible does say "Pray without ceasing," does it not?

BREAKER: Yes, it does.

PROS. A: Thank you. (*turns to Defense Attorney*) Your witness.

DEFENSE: (*addresses the Prosecuting Attorney*) I am glad and thank you for realizing that Christianity does indeed go deeper than appearance. (*turns to MR. BREAKER*) Mr. Breaker, you do agree on this, do you not?

BREAKER: Why certainly I do.

DEFENSE: With this in mind, Your Honor, I would like with your permission to call my client to the stand to testify in his own behalf.

JUDGE: Are there any objections?

PROS. A: (*puzzled*) No . . . Your Honor.

JUDGE: (*to MR. BREAKER*) You may step down.

(*MR. BREAKER leaves the stand*)

JUDGE: Matthew Brown, please take the stand.

(*BAILIFF comes forward and he and MATTHEW BROWN stand before the witness stand.*)

BAILIFF: Raise your right hand. Do you solemnly affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

BROWN: I do.

(*BAILIFF directs MR. BROWN to the witness stand.*)

DEFENSE: (*very confident*) Mr. Brown, now it has been established that you are an avid churchgoer, and that you do carry and read your Bible. Correct?

BROWN: (*proudly*) Yes. That is correct.

DEFENSE: You have been classed as a do-gooder. Are you a do-gooder, Mr. Brown?

BROWN: Well, I like to help people.

DEFENSE: And you do take an active part in the church. Am I right?

BROWN: Yes. I sing in the chorus, play in the band, and serve on the church board.

DEFENSE: Very good! Then these are all things that a good church member should do.

BROWN: I've always felt so.

DEFENSE: But it has been agreed, has it not, that these are mere outward show, and that Christianity goes *deeper*?

BROWN: Why, yes. I practice prayer and study my Bible. And I'm careful what I believe—I don't accept any false doctrine or any doctrine the Bible does not uphold.

JUDGE: These questions and answers have already been established, have they not?

DEFENSE: Yes, Your Honor, but I felt they were necessary in leading up to the point that my next set of questions will bring out more fully, and which I have been trying to make very clear—that is, that being a Christian involves more than appearance. We have not yet gone deep enough.

JUDGE: Very well. You may proceed.

DEFENSE: Thank you, Your Honor. Mr. Brown, are you aware of the testimony found in First Corinthians 13, verses one through seven?

BROWN: Yes, I believe so.

DEFENSE: With your honor's permission, I would like to read these verses.

JUDGE: Permission granted.

DEFENSE: (*picks up Bible and reads verses*) Now this text says charity is all important. And charity is love. The Bible defines love, as stated in First John 5, verse 3: "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous." Am I correct?

BROWN: Yes.

DEFENSE: All right. . . . Now let me ask you: Do you always rule your tongue and speak only what is edifying?

BROWN: (*somewhat taken back by the directness of the question*) I don't use a lot of slang,

I don't lie or joke and tell stories, good or dirty.

DEFENSE: Do you always redeem the time as a Christian should?

BROWN: I spend an hour every day reading my Bible. I read it all through once every year.

DEFENSE: Do you always place the seeking of God's Kingdom above every earthly interest?

BROWN: Well, . . . ah, . . . well, a lot better than some folks. I'm a firm believer in getting to church fifteen minutes ahead of time, and I go rain or shine.

DEFENSE: Do you consider that *that* is making first things first in your life?

PROS. A: (*jumps to his feet*) I object, your honor.

JUDGE: On what grounds?

PROS. A: That the Defense Attorney is getting into things which aren't really necessary or relevant to the case—all these fine points!

DEFENSE: But your honor, that is just what I mean by "going deeper." We brought out earlier in the trial that Christianity goes right into the mind. No one but Matthew Brown himself could testify as to where his mind is, and what his motives really are.

JUDGE: Objection overruled. (*Prosecuting Attorney returns to his seat*) The witness may answer the last question.

BROWN: Could I ask that you repeat your last question.

DEFENSE: Certainly. Do you consider that getting to church fifteen minutes ahead of time, and always going to church, whatever the weather, means that you are putting first things first in your life?

BROWN: I believe these things are important. I know the doctrine of the church.

DEFENSE: Do you seek honor of men, or are you willing to abide God's time to bestow honor?

BROWN: I've never run for any office.

DEFENSE: Can you take second place and like it, if that is where the Lord has assigned you to work?

BROWN: I help the older members and treat them with respect.

DEFENSE: Do you show any sign of displeasure when another can do something better than you?

BROWN: Well, after all, I am quite talented, and of course there aren't too many of us.

DEFENSE: Mr. Brown, it sounds like you think quite highly of yourself.

BROWN: What do you mean? With all of my talents, I am perfectly justified in thinking quite highly of myself! (*with emphasis*) Let me tell you . . .

JUDGE: Just answer the question, Mr. Brown.

DEFENSE: That's quite all right, your honor. I think he has answered my question and also my next two, which concerned taking reproof with humility and letting patience have her perfect work in a provoking situation.

BROWN: Why, that . . .

DEFENSE: That will be all. Thank you.

JUDGE: Would the Prosecuting Attorney care to question the defendant?

PROS. A: No, Your Honor.

JUDGE: The witness may step down. Are the lawyers prepared to give their closing statements before the jury?

PROS. A: (*arising*) Yes, your honor.

(*facing the jury*) Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, you see before you Matthew Brown, a man accused of being a Christian. Now let me ask you, would he even be on trial before you today if he had not shown definite signs of Christianity?

Just as there are differences in individual kinds of people, so there will be differences in individual kinds of Christians. We can't delve too deeply into these things. In my opinion, the Defense Attorney has gone altogether too far. We certainly couldn't judge everyone by these rigid standards! Why, there wouldn't be very many Christians in the world. His questions were highly irregular.

The basic issues brought out by the witnesses are enough evidence to prove that Matthew Brown is a Christian. The fact that he attends church so regularly, is so active in it, and that he brings his religion into his home are sure signs that he is a Christian. You heard it brought out that he has Bible mottoes on his walls at home, and that he reads his Bible and studies it every day. Add these to the fact that the man helps others and the basic evidence is unmistakable.

I implore you, ladies and gentlemen, to remember these testimonies in rendering your verdict. And do not be too swayed by those little trivialities brought up by the Defense.

DEFENSE: Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, my client Matthew Brown sits before you accused of being a Christian. You have heard the evidence in this case; you have, I trust, listened carefully to the witnesses. Now you must reach a decision as to the innocence or guilt of Matthew Brown. You have heard the witnesses for the prosecution. You have heard Mr. Bitter say that my client attends church, reads the Bible, gives to charitable organizations. You have heard Mr. Breaker testify that Mr. Brown is active in the church and contributes financially, that he prays fervently and that he sings loudly.

But I would have you bear in mind, ladies and gentlemen, that my client is not on trial for being a church man. He is not charged with being a charitable soul or a do-gooder. He is accused of being a Christian! And again I would like to bring before you the fact that the only things brought out by the witnesses concerned outward show. Christianity goes deeper. It goes to the thoughts and intents of the mind. When Matthew Brown took the stand in his own behalf, I am painfully aware that he seemed to want to establish his own guilt. But when I got down to questioning his motives, he evaded the real issues involved. When I asked him if he always rules his tongue, and speaks to edification, he said he doesn't joke, etc. And when I asked him bluntly if he seeks God's Kingdom above everything else, he said he knows the doctrine and emphasized his punctuality. When I questioned his being able to take second place, you saw for yourselves how he lost his patience just as any other non-Christian. You remember his answer, I am sure.

Ladies and gentlemen, my client did not need any witnesses in his behalf to disprove the charge against him. He was his own witness! His own testimony proves that he is not actually a believer! I tell you, members of the jury, my client is innocent! The charge that he is a Christian is utterly ridiculous. That he is a good man, a church man, there can be no doubt. But to charge him with being a Christian—a true imitator of Christ—is altogether outrageous! I ask you in utmost sincerity to render an honest verdict in this case and set my client free!

JUDGE: (*to jury*) Have you agreed upon a verdict?

JURY REPRESENTATIVE: Your honor, we find him not guilty!

BROWN: (*to DEFENSE ATTORNEY*) I can scarcely believe it. They found me innocent!

DEFENSE: (*staring at him suddenly*) Certainly they did! You are innocent—aren't you?

In Conclusion

Someday every covenant-maker will appear before the Judgment seat of Christ. There will be no lawyers to plead our case, no jury to make the final decision. Our only witness will be the record of our lives. The Judge Himself will render the verdict. And how will our record stand? Will we be found "innocent"—much to our chagrin and eternal sorrow? or will we stand among the joyful "guilty" ones, the faithful whose work will be pronounced "well done"? The great Judge will justify only those who through tireless effort at holy living have perfected a character worthy of being perpetuated.

What does an earnest, striving Christian desire more than a clean moral character? The beauty of righteousness far exceeds any splendor obtainable in our mortal existence. Amid the pressures of modern-day living and the wickedness of the world by which we are surrounded, we can work unceasingly to live higher, to overcome the evil that besets us, even to the point of replacing every evil thought with a good thought.

Jesus taught that true morality is inward. He declared, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Today the record of His holy example remains to inspire us to attain the same moral beauty in our lives. We as individuals can reproduce the clean and beautiful life of the Master by following the pattern which He left us.

How can this mighty task of moral reconstruction be accomplished? By faith! We have faith that God is creatively at work in us today, that He has given us His Word as a sure guideline to the kind of living He requires. We have faith that He will give us the strength and power to withstand every temptation to sin. We have faith that He can and will be true to His every promise and will fulfill His Word. And with such faith, we *can* live a successful Christian life. We *can* fortify our minds with the moral wisdom He has provided us in the Bible until in our very inward natures we become new men and women.

Then when our name is called and we must give account of our life work, we will not have to evade the issue; we will not have to boast of our good qualities; and we will not need anyone to speak on our behalf. Rather, our holy and righteous character will speak for us.

Let us not lose the prize through any indifference, carelessness or self-interest. Let us ever remember that an outward show avails nothing in God's sight, that His standard is absolute purity of character. Only by meeting that high standard can we be found "guilty" of being a Christian. ●●

Does the Bible Forbid Killing?

SOME well-meaning people take the position that it is criminal to kill any living creature, that the killing of animals is a transgression of God's law. If this be true, then no matter how fierce an animal, or what depredation it might be committing, it is wrong for man to kill the animal. Under such a law it would be illegal to destroy a horde of locusts that were destroying a crop; it would be illegal to kill flies or mosquitoes, even if those insects were spreading disease which was killing hundreds of people. Carrying this concept still further, it would also seem wrong to kill a living germ that was causing a person to be physically ill; a germ is as much a living organism as a larger animal. Under such a law, a bear could attack and kill a man, but the man would have no right to harm the bear. And it would be wholly wrong to kill an animal for food. Furthermore, it would never be right for one human being to kill another.

As a basis for this position, the sixth commandment of the law of Moses is cited: "Thou shalt not kill," and its application is extended to the killing of animals, fish, fowl, or any living creature.

There are ten Hebrew words translated "kill" in the Old Testament, and there are six Greek words translated "kill" in the New. Without attempting to give the meaning of all these, it will be helpful to note the meaning of the Hebrew word rendered "kill" in Exodus 20:13. The word is *ratsach*, and means "to murder, pierce." To "murder" is to kill a human being with malice aforethought, or with a definite purpose formed beforehand; one does not commit murder when he kills an animal for food, or swats a mosquito.

There is no evidence whatever in Scripture that killing animals for food was forbidden. There were even times when the Lord gave specific command that certain animals should be killed and eaten. In Exodus 12, we read, "Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats: and . . . the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening. . . . And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire; . . . with bitter herbs they shall eat it"

(vs. 5-8). This was the Lord's command for the observing of the Passover, which was to be done annually throughout their generations.

Again we read in Leviticus of those animals which might be killed and used for food, and those which should not be eaten. "And the Lord spake unto Moses and to Aaron, saying unto them, These are the beasts which ye shall eat among all the beasts that are on the earth."

The entire system of sacrifice under the Mosaic law was instituted by God, and it ordered the slaying of many hundreds of animals each year. Many of the animals were used for food, others were burned.

In Genesis 18, we read where two angels appeared to Abraham, and he "ran unto the herd, and fetched a calf tender and good, and gave it unto a young man; and he hasted to dress it. And he took butter, and milk, and the calf which he had dressed, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree, and they did eat." Here was an instance where angels ate meat. If the eating of flesh was contrary to God's law, certainly angels would not have eaten it.

In the time of David, when Abigail the wife of Nabal sent provisions for David's men, among the gifts were five sheep ready-dressed (I Sam. 25:18). Apparently David and his men had no compunction against eating meat.

When Isaac was an old man, he called Esau his son and said, "Now therefore take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field, and take me some venison; and make me savoury meat, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat" (Gen. 27:3). Jesus mentions that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob will be with Him in the Kingdom (Luke 13:28). If they ate meat, what could be wrong with *our* eating it?

In the New Testament, we read where John the Baptist ate locusts and wild honey. When Jesus fed the five thousand, He started with "five loaves and two fishes." If anyone should know that the eating of fish was a transgression, Jesus should have known. He certainly would not have done anything that would cause five thousand people to sin.

The apostle Peter had a vision which con-

cerned the eating of meat. He saw "a certain vessel descend, as it had been a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came even to me; upon the which when I had fastened mine eyes, I considered, and saw fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. And I heard a voice saying unto me, Arise, Peter; slay and eat" (Acts 11:5-6). God was using this means to show Peter that both Jews and Gentiles were accepted; but Peter would not have been commanded to "slay and eat" if slaying animals was contrary to God's law.

The Scriptures condemn the use of animals as sacrifices to pagan gods; however, it was not the fact that the animals were being sacrificed that brought the condemnation but to whom or what they were being offered. For many centuries, animals were killed and sacrificed by God's people, according to His command; in fact, *not* to kill and sacrifice animals at that time would have been a transgression of the law.

To condemn the killing or eating of animal food, fowl, or fish is to go beyond the Word of God and add to the words of the Book. In Romans 14, Paul gives some specific advice in regard to eating. "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him" (vs. 1-3). It is evident from Paul's words that the eating of meat was not condemned. It would be wrong for us to condemn someone else for eating meat if we should choose to eat only vegetable food; likewise it would be wrong for them to condemn us if we chose to eat both meat and vegetable food.

If a person should feel that from a physical standpoint it is better for him to eat only vegetable food, he has a perfect right to do so; that is his decision alone, however, and by it he does not obey or disobey the law of God. Again, it would be wrong for another to criticize him for so doing; and it would be wrong for him to criticize others for eating both meat and vegetable food.

The important point to remember is, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (I Cor. 10:31).

There are even instances in the Bible where the killing of human beings was commanded by the Lord. The same law which said "Thou shalt not kill" directed that death should be the penalty for certain disobediences of the law (i.e., sabbath-breaking, blaspheming, etc.). At the command of the Lord, Samuel killed the wicked king Agag,

who had killed and tortured the Israelites. In fact, almost all of the Judges were raised up by God to slay those who were oppressing His people and making them to suffer. In New Testament times, the apostle Peter caused the death of Ananias and Sapphira, who had lied to the Holy Spirit. The administering of punishment for evil-doing is not popular today, especially if the punishment be death; but there is no denying that under divine guidance it was done, and that the people of God benefited.

There are two other reasons advanced to support the theory that it is criminal to kill any living thing.

1) Some believe that God is in everything, therefore to kill even the smallest thing is to kill a part of God.

First, let us say that there is no such statement in Scripture. God is a "being," having substance and an image. There are several references in Scripture to the "image" of God, and an "image" is both tangible and visible. In Hebrews 1:3, we are told that Christ was made in the "express image of his [God's] person." If God is a "person," how can He be in everything?

The original Greek word translated "person" is *hypostasis*, and means "having substantial nature, essence, actual being, reality," and the Lexicon gives Hebrews 1:3 to explain the use of the word, translating it as follows: "The Son of God is an exact representation of his [God's] real being."

Many were the times recorded in Scripture that God destroyed. An angel of the Lord slew in the camp of the Assyrians 185,000 in one night (II Kings 19:35). In the time of Noah, God sent a flood which destroyed many thousands. He sent fire which destroyed the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and the other cities of the plain. And when Christ returns, two thirds of the inhabitants of the earth will be destroyed because they will not submit to His righteous rule (Zech. 13:8). It seems incongruous that God would destroy any, even evil persons, if everything that lives is part of Himself. This is impossible.

Neither God nor Christ is the inept, indulgent parent often described in some religious circles. The apostle Paul fittingly refers to both the "goodness" and the "severity" of God. He is extremely good to those who love Him and keep His commandments, and He is severe with those who disobey His laws.

2) Some people believe a doctrine of reincarnation, that it is wrong to kill because the animal, bird or insect may contain the soul of another human being.

This is a pagan concept and totally foreign to the teaching of the Bible.

The only communication we have today from the Creator of the universe is through the writings of His prophets, apostles, and Jesus. This being so, the written Word must furnish His one plan for the salvation of mankind, and all its writers must agree when correctly understood. If we put our own interpretation upon any given passage without first determining the general teaching of the Bible, we create confusion where no confusion exists, and contradiction where there is none. To kill another human being with malicious forethought, or in war, or without divine command, is forbidden. To kill animals with malicious intent would also be wrong. To eat meat or any food or drink in gluttonous fashion is forbidden. To make an animal sacrifice or any sacrifice to a pagan god is forbidden. To try to substitute any burnt offering for the "sacrifices of righteousness" is also forbidden.

But there is no evidence in the Bible to uphold the idea that it is wrong to kill animals for food, or that it is wrong to defend one's own life against animals. The evidence is all on the other side.

There is another type of flesh, however, which the Bible forbids us to eat. It is the "flesh" of our own lower, carnal nature. This symbolic type of flesh is what the fool, figuratively speaking, feeds on: "The fool foldeth his hands together, and eateth his own flesh" (Eccl. 4:5). In Romans 8:12-13, the apostle Paul also speaks of this same type of "flesh": "Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." We are to "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh" (II Cor. 7:1), this flesh of our lower nature. We are even to "crucify" this "flesh, with the affections and lusts" (Gal. 5:24); for "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (Gal. 5:17). But this type of "flesh" is strictly figurative; it has no reference to the eating of animal flesh-foods.

There is yet another type of figurative "flesh" which we are specifically commanded to eat if we would gain eternal life. Jesus refers to this "flesh" as His "meat." He says, "Labour not for the meat which perisheth [literal meat as food has no long-lasting value], but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you" (John 6:27).

And then He proceeded to give them this spiritual "meat" or "flesh." He says, "My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed" (v. 55), and then in verse 63 He explains what this means: "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh [literal] profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." He had been speaking figuratively of His words as something to be eaten. As Jesus told His disciples, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work" (John 4:34). This is the "meat" we all must eat to obtain salvation. The eating of literal meat is optional with each individual; but to gain "life everlasting" the eating of this spiritual meat is mandatory. ●●

Fighting to Win!

VICTORY is a wonderful word, a wonderful happening. It is the opposite of defeat. And what a happy time it is, when it is the end product of all the effort, heartbreak, anxiety, and everything else that goes into waging total war.

The elderly today will tell of the happy days when in 1918 an end was brought to the world's most horrific war. People all over the world were beside themselves with joy. In the streets of London people sang and danced for a full week, while there were ticker-tape showers in the streets of New York.

In 1945, victory in the West and victory in the East once more brought joy to the victors. Again there was singing and dancing in the streets of London and New York, even bonfires in the middle of the road. It was OVER. We had come through alive and we—thank God—were victorious.

How much greater will be the joy when by God's help we shall come out victorious over sin—if victory be ours. On that Day when Christ returns to take His place on the throne of His Father's Kingdom, what joy there will be! What a day of rejoicing, when not only wars will have to cease but the dreadful curse of disease and illness will have been conquered.

Christ had His battles in life, and He won them. As He hung on that cruel Roman cross, He could cry out, "It is finished" and know that He had been victorious; all His efforts, all His

sufferings were not in vain. The victory was His!

There was a famous British ship named "Victory." To give its full name, it was the *H. M. S. Victory*. Today it is in dry dock at Portsmouth, England. It was the famous flag-ship of Admiral Nelson, who was the most famous of all British sea fighters. The ship was well named, for it was in this ship that Nelson defeated the French and the Spanish navies at the Battle of Trafalgar in the year 1805. Nelson's ship was victorious and the war was won, but the victory cost Nelson his life.

Christian, if you are to be victorious for the Lord, that victory will also cost you your life—the life of your old nature. You will have to become a new creature, a different person, all new. "That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. 4:22-24).

There will be battles in your life; time after time you will get knocked down. But as you live close to God, in the forefront of your mind will be Romans 8:18, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

As the gallant Admiral Lord Nelson lay dying on the lower gun deck of the mighty fighting ship the *H. M. S. Victory*, after his 27 British ships had defeated the 33 combined French and Spanish fleet on their way to invade England, his last words were, "Thank God, I have done my duty."

What rejoicing will be heard by those who have overcome self, who have through their lives put God first, following after Christ, who in His darkest hour was able to say, "Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done" (Luke 22:42). They will hear those wonderful words, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant" (Matt. 25:21).

After this battle in which Nelson was victorious, the battle of Trafalgar, some 71 volunteers of other nationalities—American, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Norwegian, Swiss, Dutch, Italian, and Hindu—tried to bring the ship back to her former strength. But with all their efforts they were too few, for the *Victory* had had a full force of 850 officers and men. Nevertheless, they did what they could. Whatever the background and nationality of the crew, they

were shipmates who pulled together in a common cause.

Are we not like them in our Christian endeavor? "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God" (Eph. 2:19).

Those of us who are separated from those of like faith and who have little hope of being able to join in fellowship with like-minded Christians find peace and joy in the knowledge that we are not really alone, for we are all at one with each other, having one purpose, pulling towards one end—eternity in Christ's Kingdom. Through the exhortations sent to us in Christian love by those more fortunate, we find encouragement to press on.

Nelson's message to his fleet as they sailed toward the enemy was, "England expects that every man will do his duty." Sailors are not born; they are made through hard work and dedication. Failure to do one's duty in the British navy meant harsh punishment; but Nelson's sailors did not fail. They had faith in their Admiral and fought their way through.

Can we not do as well as Christians? "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Rom. 12:1).

Every country has its heroes; every country has its men and women ready to die for it. But what of us who are seeking God's best? Can we say we are as dedicated? How willing are we to give the last full measure of our devotion?

Can we say with the apostle Paul, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" (Rom. 8:35).

If we are true soldiers of God fighting for the victory, we shall say all this, and more: "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."

—Contributed by a member in
Nottinghamshire, England

You cannot hope to lead others effectively until you first are led by God. Where is pride, stubbornness, or rebellion clouding your relationship with God? Deal with it now. Ask God where *you* need to change in order for you to be His instrument to help others.



SCRIPTURAL SPOTLIGHT

"Why gaddest thou about so much to change thy way . . . ?"

—Jeremiah 2:36.

THE PROPHET Jeremiah is deploring the vacillation of his nation in the most important matter of all—her loyalty to God. His illustration is meaningful. Judah was seeking friendships with many nations—now Egypt, now Assyria, now Babylon—gadding about.

In the beginning of the chapter, God recalled Israel's earlier devotion, her tender loyalty, her unmarred purity. Now she was running after the ways of those nations around her, worshiping their gods, pursuing their pleasures.

Jeremiah issued a warning, but the people did not like to hear it. He spoke again, and again. He described their unfaithfulness in plain language. Again, he likened their rebellion to oxen that break their yoke, asserting stubbornly that they would *not* serve. Again he spoke of Israel as a choice vine, a pure seed that God had planted, now become a wild, estranged and degenerated plant.

The Prophet compared Israel's guilt with a dirty face that cannot be washed with soap or lye. The cleansing had to come from within. Long continuance in sin hardens the sinner until he becomes so indifferent to the consequences of his sin that there is little hope of redemption. Jeremiah says further that the people of Judah are like a "swift dromedary," wandering hither and yon over the desert without the direction of God, running wild.

These warnings are impressive and timely; kept before our mental vision, they could prove a stay to us in these last days. Human nature is the same and there is much in the world that would call us. If not in body, we may in heart and mind be playing the part of the swift dromedary, wandering far from God, gadding about.

God loves loyalty; He demands loyalty. From the beginning He claimed Israel's absolute devotion. He allowed no fence straddlers, no serving

God along with lesser loyalties.

The Almighty permits no rivals. It will not do to turn our backs and not our faces to God. Jesus reiterated the law, saying, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength" (Mark 12:30). And Paul exhorted, "Be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord" (I Cor. 15:58). This steadfastness toward God is a holy quality impelled by deep individual desire and effort.

What is the difference between those so impelled and those who are, spiritually speaking, "gadabouts"? Gadabouts are unfixed. They fluctuate and vacillate, searching here and there for happiness and finding it not. As a child once said, "Sometimes they are up, and sometimes they are down; most of the time, they are upside down." Concentrated effort is necessary to achieve any goal, especially in the matter of salvation, the great enterprise for eternal life. No gadabouts can succeed here.

In the gadabout nation of Jeremiah's day there was a small minority of persons whose minds were steadfast toward the living God. Among these was a youth deported with the captives to Babylon. His name was Daniel. Daniel's moral fiber was tested through and through in that far-away land. He endured servitude and exile. Yet through it all, he trusted and served his God faithfully, even in the face of death. Determined that it would be easier and far safer to separate himself from the evil of his surroundings, the self-indulgence, the idolatry, the moral degeneracy, he practiced self-control, dauntless courage and constant integrity. He kept in touch with God. And when God placed him in favor with Babylon's mighty monarchs, he did not turn his head from the right. He humbly shunned earthly praise and ascribed all glory to the Giver of all wisdom

and power. Speaking to Daniel, the Lord said, "Thou art greatly beloved." And the angel assured him that he would "rest in the grave and then rise to enjoy" his share in the Kingdom of the Messiah "at the end of the days" (Dan. 12:13, Moffatt).

How happy and satisfying is the life of one in fellowship with God!

In contrast, the gadabouts throughout the Bible are continually warned of the fate they will suffer unless they turn to God with their whole heart. To stand in God's favor and attain the great reward of life eternal, we cannot be gadding about, partly serving God, partly serving this and that fleshly interest. "Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord, in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten" (Jer. 50:5). This shall be the call of the dedicated in the coming age. Let it be our desire now, for "Blessed, happy, fortunate, spiritually prosperous and to be envied is he who waits expectantly and earnestly—who endures without wavering beyond the period of tribulation" (Dan. 12:12, Amplified Bible).

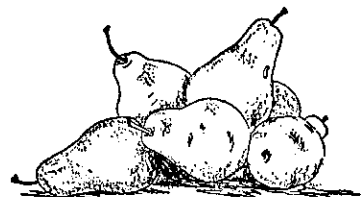
Such a man is not a gadabout. ●●

A Recipe for Happiness

Mend a quarrel,
Make a friend.
Dismiss suspicion,
Show your trust.
Write a letter.
Share some treasure.
Give a soft answer.
Encourage youth.
Manifest loyalty.
Don't give up.
Keep your promise,
Find the time.
Forego a grudge.
Forgive an enemy.
Examine your heart,
Apologize if you were wrong.
Be understanding.
Root out envy.
Think first of someone else.
Appreciate, be kind, be gentle.
Enjoy your work.
Do a good job.
Deserve confidence.
Reach out.
Fight prejudice.
Praise God.

—Sel. and Alt.

Fruitful Fragments



When a man strives earnestly, God lends a helping hand.

The most important thing is not so much where we stand as in what direction we are moving.

What you dislike in another, take care to correct in yourself.

God never says "Forward" to His people without first leading the way.

The way to avoid great faults is to be aware of small ones.

There's no right way to do a wrong thing.

God sends trials not to impair you but to improve you.

Our problem is not knowing what is right; our problem is doing it.

Contentment is finding as many benefits for not getting what you want as you would for getting what you want.

Clouds in life are many times sent to bring showers of blessing.

Any man wrapped up in himself makes a very small package.

Sin is the greatest of detectives; be sure your sin will find you out.

In spite of inflation, the wages of sin remain unchanged: "The wages of sin is death."

Whatever your lot in life, cultivate it.

Do not pray for an easy life; pray to be a strong man or woman.

What decision must you make today? Talk through your problem with God first. God delights in guiding those who acknowledge their need of Him and are striving to obey His precepts.

That LITTLE Member?

SAIID a wise old sage, "Many of us are like a pair of old shoes, all worn out but the tongue!"

It was with good reason that James focused attention on that little member. "We all make mistakes in all kinds of ways, but the man who can claim that he never says the wrong thing can consider himself perfect, for if he can control his tongue he can control every other part of his personality! . . . The human tongue is physically small, but what tremendous effects it can boast of! A whole forest can be set ablaze by a tiny spark of fire, and the tongue is a fire, a whole world of evil. It is set within our bodily members, but it can poison the whole body, it can set the whole of life ablaze" (James 3:2-6, Phillips).

Have we ever considered that the secret of the tongue is in the heart? Our tongue is but the expression of the mind. "Tongue" therefore refers to our thoughts, to our inward desires, to our imaginations, and in a very real sense to ourselves. The words we speak are our inward ideas being formulated and spoken.

James helps us to see that the tongue, small as it is, expresses our mind, ourselves; all the perils of our human imagination, including covetousness, envy, jealousy, lusts, and our private thoughts, rage like a forest fire when they reach the tongue. "Watch it!" he warns, "you can't control it without God's help."

Someone has said that there are three weaknesses of the tongue. They are:

1. *We talk too much at the wrong time.* It has been suggested that when you are ready to go on a trip, it is wise to reduce your luggage by half and double your money. We would do well to reduce our talking by half, and double our thinking.

Words are like leaves, and where they abound, much fruit of sense is seldom found.

They think too little who talk too much, or they talk most who have the least to say.

Those who have but little business to attend to are the greatest talkers. The less men think, the more they talk.

Great talkers are said to be leaky vessels; everything runs out of them.

2. *We exaggerate too much when our emotions are aroused.* We talk the most when we are thinking the least. The wisdom of the farmer says, "An empty wagon makes the most noise." The urban statement of the idea is, "She put her mind in neutral and her tongue into high gear."

3. *We are tempted often by the third weakness. We speak too quickly*—"shoot from the hip"—before we see what we are shooting at. We fight back too quickly by cutting our seeming enemy down to size.

The person who becomes mature spiritually has learned to master these three weaknesses of the tongue.

Oh, the wasted words, and the opportunities that vanish like vapor, because we *must talk!*

If we were called upon to read over, especially in presence of others, every word we spoke in just one day, it would no doubt bring a blush of shame and embarrassment, unless we are far along on the road to perfection. There is so much talk, talk, talk, with little regard for the material or the effect of our conversation.

How often we wish we could recall some word said in a weak or hasty moment. We too often have a tendency to "run off at the mouth."

Much is spoken that is not to edification. Some things may not be especially harmful, but neither are they helpful. They do not edify. One can engage in conversation which is true; he may state that which is factual, and still not edify the listeners. No, we seldom regret our silences, but how many bitter moments our words have given us!

Most devastating is the sin of slander and gossip! How many hours are spent in gossip, hours worse than wasted. In a few moments gossip may tear down the good thoughts that took years of laborious work to build up.

There is in the book of Jeremiah an arresting word spoken by the enemies of the heroic prophet. "Come," they said, "and let us smite him with the tongue" (Jer. 18:18).

On the surface the threat is absurd. A man would have a hard time killing even a fly with his tongue! In actuality, however, that threat of Jeremiah's enemies expresses a terribly real danger. With the tongue a career may be smashed, a reputation blasted as by a high explosive, or a life withered, shriveled and finally killed. We have been warned more than once of the danger of evil-speaking among Christians.

It is a sad fact that the tongues of professing Christians are often all too busy with non-essentials and even worse.

For instance, there is a self-righteous use of the tongue that is particularly deadly; it smites the reputation of others. Some people think that as long as they are technically truthful in talking about another, they are not guilty of the devastating sin of slander. Slander is a very serious sin. By one hour's slander, a man may inflict greater injury to the cause of Christ than he will do good by twelve month's hard work. Slandering is cruel. It is very unkind to spread one's faults and infirmities, thereby doing him untold injury, merely from motives of envy or some other uncharitableness, or for the mere pleasure of talking; especially is this true when there is no necessity to do so, or when no good end can be served by it.

Slander is cowardly. No one should say behind a person's back what he would not dare to say to his face. Slander is unscriptural. It is in direct contradiction to the Word of God which says, "Speak evil of no man."

Few things could work toward more true unity in the Lord's service than for every Christian worker to ponder the sin of slander and make every effort to avoid it.

No one will tell a tale of scandal except to him who loves to hear it. Learn, then, to check and rebuke the detracting tongue, by showing that you do not listen to it with pleasure.

Do *we* spend our time discussing the faults and failures of others? Do we find it a sweet morsel to discuss another's past deeds that should have been forgiven and forgotten? Who has not been guilty of starting a rumor which, afterwards, was deeply regretted! But alas, the spoken word can never be recalled. How diligent we should be to think twice before we speak, especially when ill is the burden of our talk.

When I want to speak, let me think first: Is it true? Is it kind? Is it necessary? If not, I must refrain. This will eliminate idle and hurtful gossip and slander from my conversation.

Since our tongue is but the expression of the mind, how very important that we lay up lofty thoughts and motives, that we fill the mind to overflowing with the grand, glorious thoughts of God; for Jesus warned, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Luke 6:45). The oft-abused tongue is merely the outlet.

One of the first things a physician says to his patient is, "Let me see your tongue." A spiritual adviser might often do the same.

Now let us look at the good that can be accomplished by a controlled tongue. What a power

for good the tongue is when directed by a godly mind. It can build faith, encourage watchfulness, stimulate Christian action, reinforce godly determination to do right.

The blessed Word of God is overflowing with the glorious promises of our Creator, and we are admonished to stir each other up continually, provoking one another to love and good works, exhorting one another "and so much the more as we see the day approaching."

God's command to Moses was, "Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, . . . and ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." No room for non-essentials or gossip here.

So great is the value placed on speaking aright that Malachi wrote: "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name" (Mal. 3:16-17).

Much of this speaking one to another will be to help each other on in the practical Christian walk, helping each other to remember His commandments to do them. And God so prizes such speaking that in the day when the books are opened and He gathers His jewels, we will be His own prized possessions!—if we have learned to speak aright. He will spare such "as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." Can we stir up our minds too often for such a reward?

The Psalmist expressed spiritual-mindedness when he said, "I will speak of the glorious honor of thy majesty, and of thy wondrous works" (Ps. 145:5).

If fearing the Lord and thinking upon His name, if the hope of eternal life and of sharing the blessings promised to the righteous is a stimulating, activating force in our lives, our conversation will be overflowing with that hope. It will be the joy of our lives and the topic of our conversation.

Let us form the habit of weighing our words before the Judge weighs them in His uncontestable balances. ●●

Think all you speak, but speak not all you think. Thoughts are your own; your words are so no more.

A superior man is modest in his speech but exceeds in his actions.

Questions

"How can you dare to stand before God at Judgment relying upon the merits of your own moral efforts and accomplishments when Scripture warns that no one shall be justified by God on the basis of law-keeping? See Romans 3:20, 'Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.'"

For nearly two thousand years men have been trying to find an easy way to salvation, and they have succeeded in deceiving many followers, as the prophet Jeremiah said of those in his time: "A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof? (Jer. 5:30-31).

In Romans 3:20, Paul is referring to a certain type of law-keeping—the keeping of the law of Moses, which could not save anyone. This fact is plainly stated in several passages. "For the law . . . can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. . . . For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins" (Heb. 10:1, 4). We must not confuse the keeping of the rituals and sacrifices commanded by the law of Moses with the works demanded by the law of righteousness, which we are commanded to keep. "Blessed are they that do his commandments" is part of Jesus' last message to men. Why is this obedience required? "That they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" (Rev. 22:14).

In Jesus' parable of the wedding feast, "when the king came in . . . he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: and he said unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen" (Matt. 22:11-14).

Now what is the wedding garment and who puts it on? Revelation 19:7-8 tells us, "Let us

be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints."

If Christ's literal death or blood took away all our sins just by our acknowledging Him as our Saviour, why was the man in Jesus' parable cast out? Why did Jesus say, "Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21)? Popular religions have long taught that all that was necessary to salvation was the acceptance of Christ's atoning death on the cross. But this is a plain distortion of the facts. It uses part of what Paul and other Bible writers say on a subject in a way they never intended and disregards the great bulk of what they did say.

If we would understand the Scriptures, we must harmonize all that the writers say before we can arrive at the truth of God's Word; otherwise we shall have only chaos.

As far as standing at Judgment and depending on our own moral efforts is concerned, this would seem the only safe policy in the light of Revelation 22:12, "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." If we are to be rewarded according to our *work*, what shall be our fate if we have no work to present? ●●

Hearts of Oak

THE BRITISH fighting ships were no ordinary ships. The shipwrights who built them insisted on using only the finest wood in their construction—nothing less than hearts of oak. About 2250 trees were felled to obtain wood for a single flagship. Only the heart of the oak—the finest part—could be used.

In like manner does the Lord seek men to serve Him. He wants the best. No weak-willed type of man could ever endure the life of a true Christian. It is stouthearted work; and any man or woman who is less than stouthearted would crack under the strain. It is a test which calls for men and women with hearts of oak.

Do we qualify? Are we hearts-of-oak Christians?

—Contributed.

MEGIDDO MESSAGE

Our Readers Write...

While We Still Have Time

IN THE not-too-distant future, great changes will be taking place on this earth of ours. What our standing will be at that day depends entirely upon our present conduct in the time intervening.

The coming of the Lord has been discussed by believers for years. Not a day goes by but that we think about it, talk about it, and long for His coming. However, the long-suffering of God is wiser than we. His merciful providence still provides us time for last minute preparations. Every opportunity for cleansing our spiritual robes is being made available. But to be without a defect or a blemish means increased effort, linked with unrelenting vigilance on our part. Every unholy desire must be subdued or controlled and the sluggish will be made to obey God. And that is work.

No one will be allowed to enter into the glories of that day without first seeing himself as he is and complying with the stipulated changes demanded in the Word. God is a God of knowledge, and by Him actions alone are weighed. To merit the reward of eternal life in a land of never-fading beauty and happiness will take all of our strength and intellect.

Our Lord, being the firstfruits from the dead, is enjoying His reward at the right hand of His Father. But why did He gain immortality? Not because He was the Son of God with nothing to give up or take up. The cross of daily self-denial was just as much a necessary part in the remaking of His character as it must be in ours.

God grant that in all our ways we may refuse to think, to say, or do anything except that which Jesus our example would have us to think, say and do. May it not be said of us that we had every opportunity and advantage to purify self but for one reason or another failed to do it; that we waited for the Lord, but in waiting we did not work; that trials came and went but were unrecognized by us as part of our process of purification necessary to get us into the Kingdom. Oh! may it never be said of us, "Too late!" Prepare now to enter there.

—Contributed

Whence the Cure?

Our relationship to Christ might be compared with that between a doctor and his patient. The patient is sick; and unable to cure himself, he seeks help. The doctor in taking the case expects to have full control of what is done, and he also expects the complete cooperation of the patient. The doctor diagnoses the case and recommends a program of treatment. He will do certain things, and the patient will undergo certain treatment, but the doctor will also instruct the patient to do certain things for himself. Though he be the best doctor in the world, he can do nothing without the patient's full cooperation and interest. Here lies the patient's responsibility—obedience—though the ultimate responsibility for the cure may be said to lie with the doctor who prescribed the course of treatment. And when the cure is complete it will be correct to say that the patient was cured by the doctor and not by himself. For it was the doctor who diagnosed the disease and directed the treatment; thus the doctor deserves the credit for the cure.

In like manner we place ourselves under the care of our Great Physician Christ. He sees our need, and prescribes how we may be cured of our spiritual diseases. But to be cured, we must comply with His prescriptions; we must follow His instructions implicitly, if we are to enjoy abundant spiritual health. Nevertheless, when the cure is finally effected, the credit belongs to Christ; though the healing cannot be accomplished without our obedience and cooperation, it is correct to say, as with the doctor, that we are cured by Christ and not by ourselves, for it is He who outlined the program of treatment—and even demonstrated it in Himself. ••

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Truth Never Dies

*Truth never dies. The ages come and go,
The mountains wear away, the stars retire,
Destruction lays earth's mighty cities low;
And empires, states and dynasties expire;
But caught and handed onward by the wise,
Truth never dies.*

*Though unreceived and scoffed at through the years,
Though made the butt of ridicule and jest;
Though held aloft for mockery and jeers,
Denied by those of transient power possessed,
Insulted by the insolence of lies,
Truth never dies.*