



Megiddo Message

A tree is known...
by its fruit.
Every good tree bears
good fruit. --Jesus

What If...?

- . . . God couldn't take the time to bless us today because we couldn't take the time to thank Him yesterday?
- . . . God decided to stop leading us tomorrow because we did not follow Him today?
- . . . we never saw another shower because we grumbled the last time God sent rain?
- . . . God took away the Bible tomorrow because we did not read it today?
- . . . God stopped loving and caring for us because we failed to love and care for others?
- . . . God stopped being patient and longsuffering with us because we were not patient and longsuffering with others?
- . . . God would not hear us today because we refused to listen to Him yesterday?
- . . . God withdrew His message because we would not listen to His messenger?
- . . . God would not forgive us our sins because we refused to extend forgiveness to our brother?
- . . . God took the same interest in doing for us that we take in doing for Him?
- . . . God stopped correcting us because we did not heed His last correction?
- . . . God refused to walk with us today because we would not walk with Him yesterday?

O God, help me to be thankful for everything You are doing for me, and to give to others what You have given me.

Megiddo means . . .

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

We believe

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

We believe

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

We believe

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

We believe

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

We believe

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

We believe

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

We believe

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

Bible Quotations

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

NEB—New English Bible

NIV—New International Version

NAS—New American Standard

RSV—Revised Standard Version

TLB—The Living Bible

TEV—Today's English Version

JB—The Jerusalem Bible, Reader's Edition

Phillips—The New Testament in Modern English

Berkeley—The Modern Language New Testament

Weymouth—The New Testament in Modern Speech

Goodspeed—The New Testament translated by
Edgar J. Goodspeed

Moffatt—The Bible, A New Translation

RV—Revised Version

About Our Cover

Our cover photo was taken near Rochester, New York.

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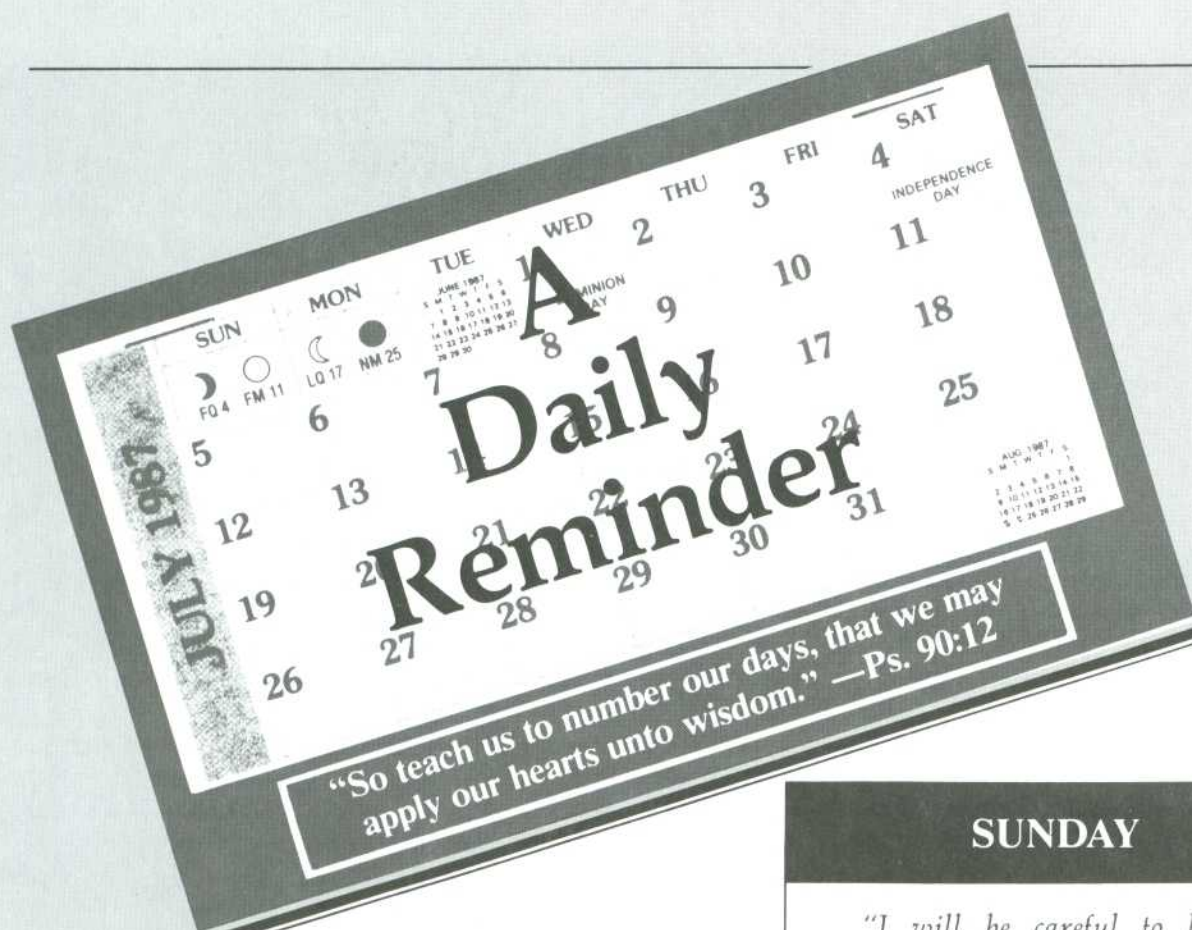
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The MEGIDDO MESSAGE is a religious magazine devoted to the cause of Christ, and published for the dissemination of Bible truth alone. Official organ of the Megiddo Church. L. T. Nichols, Founder; Newton H. Payne, President and Editor; Ruth E. Sisson,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

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



One of the most valued lessons of life is learning to make wise use of each day.

When God designed our world He filled it *full* of little daily reminders of Himself. He built them into every blade of grass, every ray of sunlight, every bite of food, every breath of air. Wherever we are, whatever we are doing, if we are living animate beings, we can—and should—be reminded of Him.

But these, like all other reminders, are not automatic. We must look for them. We must expend the time and effort to recognize them. We must let them penetrate our consciousness and be stimulated by them.

That is what the people of God in other ages have done. They knew they needed reminders, and they looked until they found them. Their experiences, their words and admonitions have been recorded for us to live by. Their thoughts are in the sacred Volume *for us*.

Let us layout a few of these daily reminders, and use them to remind ourselves every day—and see how much growth we can make in one week.

SUNDAY

"I will be careful to lead a blameless life—when will you come to me? I will walk in my house with blameless heart"

(Psalm 101: 2, NIV).

LIKE the rest of us, David was walking through life. When he wrote these words, he had already taken some serious missteps. Now he was pondering how he could better his walk and avoid future falls, hence his noble decision: "I will be careful to lead a blameless life."

David recognized both the perils of prosperity and the perils of persecution. Well he knew that the perils of advancement are often more subtle and more seductive than the perils of adversity. For this reason he promised to "be careful" in both. He would not allow familiarity with holy things to lead him to live carelessly. "I will walk in my house with blameless heart."

Here is a higher resolve than might be immediately apparent. In the privacy of our own dwelling, we might be tempted to do or think or say what we would not want known publicly. Here we might stoop to pleasures or indulgences, or allow carelessness in our walking which we would not allow in the presence of others.

Do we see the nobility of this high resolve? David wanted to be just as blameless in the privacy of his own

home as in public. So he invites the Lord to come and inspect him *in his home*. He promises to live a model life at *all* times. Yes, so far as he is concerned, the Lord is welcome to look in on him *any* time—He doesn't even need to knock—He can *walk right in!* There will be nothing in David's house that will need to be hastily hidden, no unseemly quarrels which he would not want to have overheard, no self-indulgences which he would not want the Lord to see.

What lives each of us would live if we followed David's high intentions! Are we ready to say, "Lord, you can visit me *any time*, for *I will walk in my house* with blameless heart"?

This is the character of a king, the character God is seeking.

There is no greater desire than to desire to have God as our guest. When David uses the words "blameless heart," he is thinking of the standard required of the sacrifices in the temple. Just as the high priest examined with meticulous care the animal brought to the altar for sacrifice to insure that it was without blemish, so David assures the Lord that He may come freely into his home at any time and David will see to it that his heart is as unblemished, as blameless, as acceptable as a perfect lamb for sacrifice.

MONDAY

*"Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil."
(Eph. 5:15-16, NIV)*

WHILE the day is still young, decide immediately that today is going to have opportunities. Today I will be able to show whether I am wise or unwise. How? How can I show that I am one of the wise? By "making the most of every opportunity." Our common version reads, "redeeming the time." Another version reads, "Buy up every opportunity." This means being watchful of every attitude, every thought, every word, for the tongue has been truly called an "unruly member" and "full of deadly poison."

If I would be wise, I must be very careful of my words, for Jesus said, "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Matt. 12:37).

The watchful attitude that I need today was illustrated fittingly in Gideon's army. Those men were chosen by the manner in which they drank (Judg. 7:4-6). The manner in which they drank revealed their inner attitude of heart, and this is what the Lord was judging. He wanted those who were alert, careful, watchful, even while they took necessary care of themselves.

Even so must I not become so absorbed in ministering to my daily needs that I forget to watch. The enemy is always near, and God forbid that in the midst of satisfying my physical needs I forget my higher studies and prove myself unwise. If I would be wise, whether I eat or drink or whatever I do, I must do "all to the glory of God."

TUESDAY

*"This I say then, Walk in the Spirit and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh."
(Gal. 5:16)*

SPIRIT is always opposed to flesh. I cannot walk in the spirit *and* walk in the flesh at the same time. That would be like taking two roads leading in opposite directions. To go one way is *not* to go the other.

To "walk in the Spirit," my mind must be so impregnated with the mind of Christ that I will no longer desire the things of the flesh. My heart must be continually "inditing a good matter," my tongue the "pen of a ready writer" (Ps. 45:1). This means that all my natural impulses and desires must be subject to the mind of the Spirit.

If the natural impulses choose to say something foolish or impure or to jest, my mind, controlled by the Spirit, will immediately alert me that such an impulse must be put down.

Should I feel a desire for some part of the world around me, some fleshly gratification, "walking in the Spirit" will not allow me to take a single step in that direction. Immediately before my mind will flash these words: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. . . . The world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (I John 2:15-17).

Most often, the greatest temptation of the world will be simply the desire to do as I please, to relax, to take it

easy, to tell myself that the constant vigil is tiring and I "deserve" some time off.

But is it safe to take "time off" in the presence of my enemies? Any thought of relaxing will be halted immediately as I recall, "walk in the Spirit and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh." Why? "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).

I cannot do as I please and "walk in the Spirit." But such walking throughout the day will assure me that my life is pleasing to God, and that He will walk with me.

WEDNESDAY

*"For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light."
(Eph. 5:8, NIV)*

GOD is light, and His light dispels all darkness. I cannot live or walk in His presence and walk in darkness. The only way I can stay in the darkness is to keep far from Him.

But why would I want to do this?

If I live today in hourly communion with Him, keeping a frame of mind such that His Word controls my thoughts, so that His Word is frequently on my lips, then I will be walking in the light.

In proportion as I walk in the light, my path will become more and more brightly illuminated, for "the path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, shining ever brighter till the full light of day" (Prov. 4:18, NIV).

This text should be a constant reminder to me that I am a child of light, and must walk as I profess: in love. If I allow any hatreds, resentments, disagreements, contentions, jealousies, or envies, then I cannot make progress in this holy way.

What a privilege to walk as a child of light, to walk in the presence of God! If I walk as a child of light, my example before others will be one of "uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech that cannot be condemned." In this way, no reproach will be brought upon the cause of Christ through me. I will prove myself a child of light!

THURSDAY

*"Can two walk together except they be agreed?"
(Amos 3:3)*

THAT seems like an obvious fact. If two persons are to walk together, they must agree on the road they are to take, the direction they will travel, and the speed at which they will go. They must be "agreed."

The same is true in the narrow way. It is too narrow for jagged and thorny branches of dissension, too narrow for each to carry along his own little bundle of opinions. In this walking together down the highway to life, each must have the mind of Christ. No individuality here. All that must be left outside.

When I do not seem to agree with another, "Look to yourselves" is the admonition I must remember (II John 8). Think not that when there is a disagreement the blame is always on the one who does not agree with you. Blame there may well be on *both* sides, and each must be willing to concede to the other. I must be sure to do on my part.

I must remember, too, that I do not always see myself as others see me. It is always safer to look through the eyes of another. Then, I must always be ready to accept the judgment of "the law of liberty" above my own.

FRIDAY

*"And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands. As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love."
(II John 6, NIV)*

I WANT to remember today that "I must walk in love." Christ showed His love to the Father by a life of humble obedience, and in the same way I must show my love to God. "This is love: that we walk in obedience."

If I truly love God and all that He has done for me, and all that He has promised to do, I will show my appreciation by not allowing myself to do anything that displeases Him. This is true love. This love will affect my

attitude toward my family, my friends, and everyone I meet. It will affect *what* I do and *how* I do it; *what* I say, and *how* I say it.

Walking in love means not doing anything God forbids. It means I cannot think as I please, talk as I please, or go where I please. Whatever I do, if I would obey, if I would walk in love, I must ask, *Is this what God wants me to do?*

This is the work given me to do today. Whatever other tasks I may have, my obedience to God must be paramount. If my own ways come between, they must be sacrificed. Just as Christ did not please Himself, so I must not live to please myself (Rom. 15:2).

Christ was tempted in all points even as I am, and He obeyed. If He could do it, so can I. As He walked in love, so can I.

SATURDAY

"He hath shewed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."

(Micah 6:8, NIV)

HERE is my whole duty in a nutshell. What does the Lord require of me?

"To act justly"—am I always just and fair in my judgment? Do I question *my* motives as severely as I question

those of others? What is my criterion of justice? God allows me only one: "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment" (John 7:24). I am not free to make any judgment according to my own opinions or ideas. All my judgments must be what the Lord calls "righteous judgment."

"Love mercy"—do I really *love* mercy? Of course I do when it is toward me! Of course I want it for myself. But do I love mercy for others? Do I give to others as generously as I want—and need—it for myself?

What if the Lord showed me only as much mercy as I show others?—that is exactly what God says He *will do*. For "He shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy" (James 2:13).

I should be so grateful that the "mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting," but it will be upon me only as I "fear him, and keep his covenant, . . . and . . . remember his commandments to do them" (Ps. 103:17-18).

This thought should bring me to a contrite spirit, so that I can "walk humbly with . . . God." Humility is not a natural part of human nature, and I am no exception. It is a quality I must cultivate. Today I will remind myself often how small and unimportant I am in the scale of the universe, how wholly unfit to work for God—yet how great I can be as I learn to walk humbly with Him.

And how shall I walk tomorrow? Jesus promised those whose garments were undefiled, "they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy" (Rev. 3:4). This is a walk I am really looking forward to—aren't you?

ONE whole week of reminding. And what shall I do next week? Make another week of reminders. And another.

"So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." MM

**"Walking in love" means keeping a
right attitude toward my family, my friends,
and everyone I meet.**

Don't Ever Be Too Confident

YOU COULD LOSE THIS WAR

There's more to winning than positive thinking. If positive thinking were the secret, Goliath would have had it made. He never thought of defeat.

But he met it... or it met him... head-on. Victory was NOT inevitable. Not when God was against him.



ONCE upon a time, many, many years ago, there lived a boy named Goliath. He was a handicapped child, although he did not know it, nor would he have believed it. Due to some glandular overactivity, he was extremely large for his age. He was not very bright, but he didn't mind that so much. He was so big and strong that all the other boys in Gath were afraid of him and would run when they saw him coming, and Goliath liked that. Being so big and strong, he did not have to be careful about what he said and did, and Goliath liked that, too. Naturally he grew up to be a very careless youth, and not very popular.

In time he joined the army, where his great strength made him useful if not popular. He did not have to be careful about respecting and obeying his officers, as he was bigger than any of them, and might was right with him. Eventually they solved this problem by making him an officer, so he could swagger and domineer to his heart's content. His commission also entitled him to the services of an armor-bearer to carry his



shield when he was not using it. Now as a young recruit he had been taught to be careful and cautious in his dangerous profession, and never to underestimate his adversary, who might always be *expected* to do the *unexpected* thing. He was also taught that a shield was a very handy thing to have close at hand when needed, as many a life had been saved by its use. But it was something of a nuisance a good deal of the time, and Goliath was glad to let someone else carry it. Besides, he was so big that everyone ran from him, so he didn't need to be so careful. He simply couldn't lose.

One summer his division was engaged in a casual war with the neighboring Hebrews. This gave Goliath a chance to show off, which he liked to do. Every morning and every evening he would stand boldly out in front of the armies and challenge anyone to fight a duel with him, the outcome to decide the war. He felt safe in making this offer, and so did his fellow Philistines, for they, too, had an idea that the great Goliath could not lose. No one accepted, and whenever he would advance, the Hebrews would run away, and Goliath liked that. So it went for forty days.

But on the forty-first morning he was surprised to see a man leave the Israelite trench and advance to meet him. As he drew nearer, the giant was still more astonished—and somewhat annoyed—to see that it was not even a soldier, but a youth in the garb of a shepherd. No armor, no sword, no spear, no bow, no shield—only a staff in his left hand. Well, there *was* something in his right hand—a piece of string or something, but Goliath's vanity was touched and he paid no attention to it. It was beneath his dignity, but he would *show* this upstart! He would take the fellow's staff away from him and thrash him with it in the sight of

both armies before cutting him down with a single blow. This wasn't going to be a battle at all. He had it all figured out; no chance to lose.

Goliath began to shout big and insulting words and took a few menacing steps, but the newcomer, strange to say, did not run. Goliath didn't like that. Two rods away his armor-bearer leaned on his mighty shield, listless and bored. Eighty-one times was almost too much to have to listen to this sort of thing: he only wished he were back home, away from it all. Only when David took a stand and began to whirl his deadly sling did the giant's dim wits grasp the pressing need of his shield, and by that time it was too late.

The rest is familiar history.

Many a spiritual lesson may be derived from an analysis of this famous incident, treating it both as a historical event and as a parable. But the one which we are considering is the danger of underestimating the enemy. Overconfidence and complacency have ruined many a man and many a nation. It is said that a good big man always wins over a good little man; but history attests that factors other than size are involved. The big man, with the best of advantages and the best of equipment, may be so careless as to think he cannot lose.

EVERY day of our life as a professed follower of Christ we fight a duel. The adversary is *self*, the most dangerous man in the world. In spite of this well-known fact, we invariably and persistently underestimate him. Because we think we know him thoroughly, we regard him lightly, which proves that we do not know him at all, for to know him is to live in deadly fear of his wiles. We could lose this war. The ancient Greeks had a proverb, "Know thyself." Knowledge of self is the starting-point of self-mastery, and there is no other. We will make no headway

against an unseen and unknown adversary. St. Paul had searched his own heart and honestly faced what he found there, and was doing something about it when he wrote, "I do not plant my blows upon the empty air—no, I maul and master my body, in case, after preaching to other people, I am disqualified myself" (I Cor. 9:27, Moffatt's translation). He was getting somewhere, because he knew what he was fighting against. What had he learned about himself in this examination? "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing" (Rom. 7:18). Seeing the enemy, he hit hard; and while smiting with the sword of the

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Spirit, he always carried his own shield.

If any man has the faintest idea that he is naturally good, he does not know himself. We read or hear of an atrocious crime or loathsome act, and complacently say, "I could never have done such a thing." That is nonsense. We are made of the same clay as other men. Given the same background, education, environment and circumstances, we could be as low, as murderous, as dishonest, as vile as the worst. Paul, the chief of the apostles, acknowledged, "By the grace of God I am what I am" (I Cor. 15:10).

By the grace or mercy of God we

**Just in proportion as men have been able to deny
and discipline themselves for an ideal,
society and civilization have advanced.**

have had such rare advantages and opportunities, that the eyes of our understanding have been opened to see the cheapness of the temporal and the real worth of eternal things, that our feet have been set in the narrow way that leads from the level of the beasts to the level of angels. It is by the grace of God we have cultivated new desires, new hopes, new aspirations. It is by the grace of God that we have learned the glory and satisfaction of self-denial and self-renunciation, and that at last we know *how* to live and *why*. And even yet we could lose this war. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

IF we would fear self as we should, let us consider the background of our race. What the first man was like, where he lived or how he lived or why he was created as he was, we do not know; but be it one million years, or three million years, or even half a million, that is a long time in which to lead a savage, animal-like existence. By the time man was ready for the application of Divine Law, his habits were definitely formed, for better or for worse. And that is the cause of the war.

Old instincts, necessary for the survival of the individual and the species in ruder and more primitive days, had now to be tamed and sublimated, the wild energies of the human spirit turned into channels of law, order and usefulness. This is the purpose of man's creation and existence, and this is what civilization means. Just in proportion as men have been able and

willing to deny and discipline themselves for an ideal, society and civilization have advanced. It has been a long, hard climb up from the mire and darkness of the abyss, but experience has taught us how easily the struggle toward the light can be lost. The gulf can be crossed—backward—in an instant. Men and nations fall with incredible speed, once they let go. The old caveman nature is there, be it buried ever so deeply, and can reassert itself with shocking results under the proper stimuli.

The most powerful and potent civilizing influence in the world is true religion. Nothing else can so completely remelt and remold human nature. It calls for a lifelong war with the beast in us, such a war as few care to begin and fewer finish victoriously. The Way of Christ calls for a degree of discipline undreamed of. The untamed mind can never know the glory of liberation from the crushing, killing weight of the past with its superstitions, its hates and jealousies,

its lust and greed and selfishness. How can so unlikely a creature as man attain to the Divine nature? Cold logic would say that it can't be done; but the Plan of the Ages says that it *has been done*. The Word of God cites case history after case history proving it. In our own generation we have known and been associated with men and women who were overcomers. To say that we cannot rise to the heights is as utter nonsense as to say that we cannot sink to the depths. Faith can be stronger than Flesh, if we make it so.

But after all, our subject is *caution*. Even after overcoming half, or three-fourths, or nine-tenths of the evils of our nature, it is never safe to think we are safely on the way, or that triumph is only a matter of time. We could lose this war, even in sight of victory. All we have to do is to relax, and the force of gravitation takes care of the rest.

It is not enough to take the fort; it must be held against all assaults, including the attrition of Time. Even Solomon, with all his advantages, all his wisdom and all his glory, became careless and lost his war. So long as we are rooted in the earth we are subject to its attraction; we are never, never out of danger while in this mortal state.

Know yourself, and you will never again have confidence in yourself. Know yourself, and you will give the more earnest heed to the command, "Watch." For in spite of all the progress you may have made, you could still lose this war.

MM

**The most
powerful
and potent
civilizing
influence
in the world is
true religion.**

STRATEGY

*"Though we live in the world,
we do not wage war as the world does."*

MAKES THE DIFFERENCE

STRATEGY is perhaps a rather uncommon word and used infrequently in everyday conversation, but don't ever underestimate it! Within the walls of major corporation offices, strategy is a very important part of executive vocabulary. There are staff meetings involving marketing strategy, sales strategy and even forecast strategy. Go a step further and we come to the politician who is deeply concerned with campaign strategy. Then there is the military, where strategy plays an all important role in deciding the victorious outcome of a battle.

So, concisely, just what does strategy mean? We find by consulting Webster's dictionary that it is "the art of devising or employing plans or stratagems toward a specific goal."

In view of the above definition, don't you agree that strategy should be employed to its optimum potential by all striving Christians? Perfection of character is the one goal paramount in our hearts, and strategy is the tool which will enable us to realize our dream. And certainly we have ample incentive to urge us on when we consider the eternal reward offered by a beneficent heavenly Father.

Do you wonder where strategy plays any really tangible role in coping with the deeply entrenched evils to which we

are so prone; that impatient spirit, the fits of bad temper, the jealousy? How can strategy control the all too frequent desire to ease up a bit, to just float along comfortably with the tide? Rather, is there a single instance where a well-planned strategy would not make the difference between victory and defeat? If ever we are to succeed in our Christian undertaking, we must develop our strategies to the finest degree.

Take, for example, the tendency toward impatience and its first cousin, anger. Needless to say, in this rapidly moving society of ours there can be an overabundance of patience-testing circumstances. We hurry to get to work on time, we hurry to attend to our shopping, we hurry to get our meals, we hurry to work in a little time for personal relaxation, we hurry, hurry, hurry. And then when you add to all of this our natural inclination to want what we want *when* we want it and *how* we want it, we have an explosive situation not at all conducive to the "meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price" (I Peter 3:4).

Now, this is where strategy comes into full play. Using a carefully designed strategy, we completely and honestly re-evaluate ourselves and our habits. We learn to look for and recognize the danger signals, we learn to identify areas

where stress is building up, and take corrective measures; and it is surprising how a little change in our own personal habits—or even our attitudes—can remove pressure and free up time. At the same time we redefine our priorities, always with an awareness that we are responsible to God for the use we make of our time. We learn to “count to ten,” so to speak, when vexed by unpleasant situations or individuals who don’t see eye to eye with us. And we don’t tell ourselves “it all happened so quick I couldn’t control myself” or “*nobody* could keep his patience with *that* person around.” Others *do*—and we could have, too, if —.

Now, let’s take our strategy concept a long stride further, deep into that secret heart of ours. Let’s see how effective our present strategy is in coping with an overly sensitive nature and its resultant tendency toward hurt feelings. It is so very easy to misconstrue or misunderstand another’s words or actions. If a workable stratagem is not firmly in place, with practically no effort at all what was very possibly of little or no consequence has grown from an insignificant molehill into a nearly impregnable mountain. We cast around feverishly to find some way of get-

ting even, some way to be sure the person or persons involved get a big dose of their own medicine. And what is the sad result? *We* are the ones who really get hurt!

Doesn’t such a misguided strategy need a complete overhaul? But where do we start? Actually there is only one basic strategy needed, and it is couched in these words: “Great peace have they which love Thy law: and nothing shall offend them” (Ps. 119:165). NOTHING shall offend them. In other words, if we really and truly love His law, our daily life and conduct will be such that no evil can be spoken of us truthfully. Consequently, we will find to our pleasure that we can ignore the seeming slights. Why? Because our God-given strategy stands constantly and firmly between: *Nothing* can offend us.

Strategy makes the difference!

How effective is our stratagem in combating the frequent tendency to be content with less than our best? Are we in reality a “yo-yo” Christian, one day up and scaling new heights in our spiritual growth, the next down in the lowlands of “I don’t care,” just coasting along; by word and action showing that we think there is time enough yet? We promise ourselves we will do so

much better tomorrow—we’ll make up for any time we lost the day before. But remember, there just might not be a tomorrow—today may be all that’s left. Can we afford to take that chance? Isn’t it high time to use some strategy, mount an effective counterattack and bring every latent power to bear against the lethargy which could cost us everything, both now and future?

A sound, impregnable, God-centered, strategy is the one and only key to complete and final success. Doubtless as we progress step by careful step in our quest for perfection of character, we will find it necessary to reshape and redefine our stratagem many a time. But as we daily and hourly, minute by minute continue to exchange the good for the better, and the better for the best, frequent communion with our Heavenly Father and faithful study of His Word will reveal to us the areas that need additional fortification. A well-laid strategy will triumph; strategy will make the difference!

Looking forward, what shall be at the end of these warlike days? what shall we have therefore? Listen to the triumphant exclamation from one of God’s greatest warriors, Paul, the dauntless: “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing” (II Tim. 4:7-8). The coming King of all the Earth seals it with His glorious promise: “Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be” (Rev. 22:12), even a “right to the tree of life” and permission to enter the gates into that eternal city (Rev. 22:14).

What more could we possibly ask than this? MM

**An effective strategy is . . .
learn to recognize your own “stress
signals” and take corrective measures
in advance.**

Real Belief Is . . . ?

"Weren't the jailer and his household saved simply by saying 'I believe'?"

Paul's reply to the Philippian jailer has been seized by evangelists for centuries as promising salvation by the simple expedient of saying, "I believe"—as though the only requirement for salvation was a simple vocalized expression of one's belief.

In the light of Scriptural teaching, we cannot believe that this is the thought intended.

The account from which these words are taken is found in Acts 16. It was the time when Paul and Silas had been mercilessly beaten and imprisoned, their feet fast in the stocks—the cruelest form of punishment available to the magistrates of Philippi—yet their songs of praise were heard at midnight. God intervened, causing a mighty miracle by which Paul and Silas, as well as the rest of the prisoners, were released from their confinement, and might easily have fled. The keeper of the prison, awaking suddenly and seeing the prisoners free, was about to kill himself when Paul "cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here." Deeply impressed and grateful, the relieved jailer, whose life might have been taken if the prisoners had fled, came "trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,

and thy house" (Acts 16:25-31).

Paul's answer to the jailer's question was simple and direct: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." The account tells us that the jailer and his household did express their belief, and that they were baptized. But one fact is often overlooked: the narrative says that they believed, *but it does not say that they were saved that night*. Paul and Silas said only, "Believe . . . and thou shalt be saved"—future tense. Salvation at *any* time in the future could have fulfilled that promise. There is no indication that salvation was either promised for that night or was received that night.

This is very often true in Scripture. The entire plan or picture is not conveyed in a single passage; to understand the Bible teaching we must, in the words of Paul, compare scripture with scripture.

In this passage, the disciples did not state the time when salvation would be given, nor did they mention the whole requirement for salvation. But nothing in the passage conflicts with the Biblical requirements for salvation.

It is possible that the jailer and his household did continue in their faith,

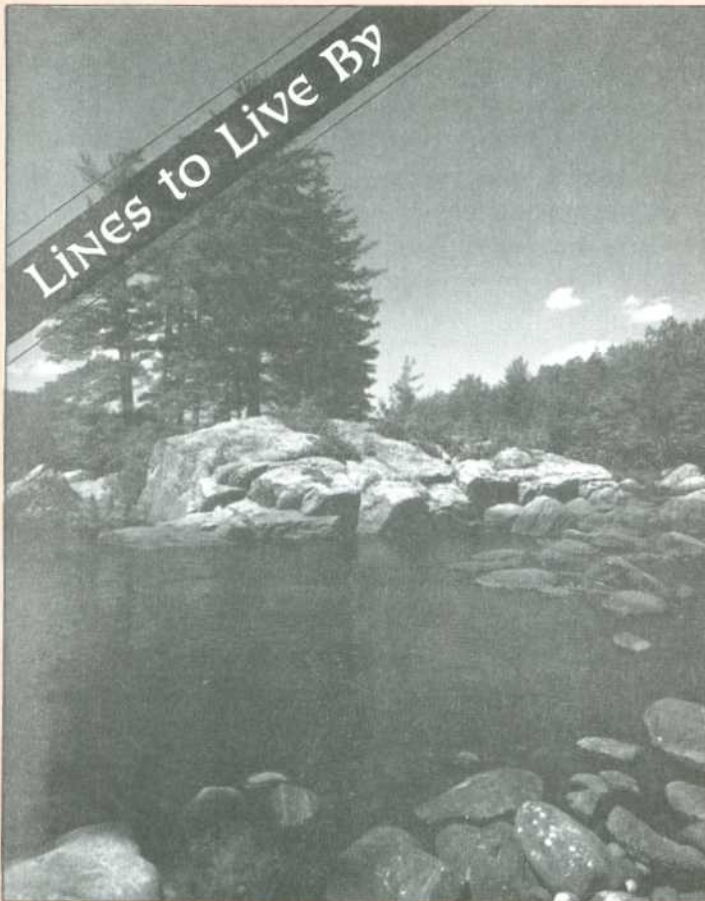
endure unto the end, and become worthy of eternal salvation. Certainly they made a good start. The jailer took the prisoners to his house and treated them kindly and not as criminals; he listened to them expound the word of the Lord and was baptized, together with his household.

But much more than a good start is required to obtain salvation. As Paul wrote in his letter to the Romans, salvation is "to them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality" (Rom. 2:7).

A careful study of the Scriptures leads us to the conclusion that eternal salvation is not conditioned upon a mere verbal statement of one's profession, but upon a belief that amounts to a total commitment. To truly "believe" in a Bible sense means to obey; to support the cause in which belief is expressed. Otherwise there is no real belief. The gospel to be believed is a gospel of obedience, and how can one truly profess belief in the necessity of obedience *unless he obeys*? There can be no real belief without obedience.

Instruction in the Word of the Lord is the first step, but the knowl-
(Continued on page 23)

Real belief and action are inseparable. Imagine that you are at work. Someone tells you your house is on fire. If you believe it, you will act.



Today

*I'll not look back on yesterday, it's useless;
I cannot live one second o'er again.
If I have wasted time and talent given,
If I have caused someone I love despair,
I cannot change the words or acts by grieving;*

*But I can make today a shining light;
All yesterday's mistakes I can turn from,
And have a clean new page on which to write.
I'll work to keep this brand new page all spotless
So that tomorrow I'll have no regret;
And may God grant that all of my tomorrows
May be used well, with not an hour misspent.*

He who gains a victory over other men is popular; but he who gains a victory over himself is all-powerful.

It is not necessary to go to Nazareth or Jerusalem to walk in Jesus' footsteps. You can do it right where you are.

God delights in the humble person and promises repeatedly to exalt him.

If you don't feel as close to God as you once did, you can know who has moved.

People will follow your footsteps more readily than they will follow your advice.

The way out of trouble is never as simple as the way in.

The only conquests which are permanent and leave no regrets are self-conquests.

Waiting, Longing

I am waiting, I am longing, for the dawning of the day
When the sun bursts forth in glory, and the shadows flee away.
When no thick cloud of darkness shall hide my Lord from me,
But His very form and beauty with gladness I shall see.

Oh! what a day to hope for; eternal life and joy,
No single care to pain the heart, no trouble to annoy;
No anxious thoughts to weary, naught that shall mar our peace;
But life that is unending, filled with joy that ne'er shall cease.

It is coming! it is coming! I can tell that it is near.
God's Word sounds through the darkness that tells me not to fear;
But watch and pray in patience until Jesus shall appear,
Who'll give perfect health for weakness, and dry up every tear.

Listen! listen! He is speaking; what do I hear Him say?
"Rise up My love, My fair one, and quickly come away;
The winter's past, its darkness and discomforts all are o'er,
The storms which beat upon thy head shall hurt thee never more.

"The flowers appear upon the earth, the birds begin to sing,
The earth is decked with glory, a never-ending spring;
The gloom for aye is banished, 'tis a bright and glorious day;
Arise, My love, My fair one, and with me come away."

Oh! gladly will I listen, my beloved unto Thee,
And give up all I now possess, that I may be with Thee;
And know Thee in Thy glory, and see Thee as Thou art,
And do Thy will as angels do, with all my mind and heart.

—Selected.

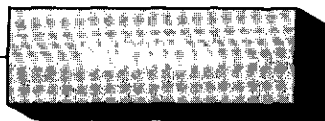
POINTS for the MONTH

Week 1: On the road to life, God's Word should be our steering wheel, not our spare tire.

Week 2: Happiness is a nice little habit to have around.

Week 3: Prayer doesn't need proof, it needs practice.

Week 4: This work can be done, but not by half-hearted workers.



A Steady Faith in Unsteady Times

Scripture Lesson: Hebrews 12:18-29

**"Do not throw away
your confidence,
for it carries
a great reward.
You need endurance,
if you are to do
God's will and win
what he has promised.
For 'soon, very soon'
(in the words
of Scripture),
'he who is to come
will come;
he will not delay;
and by faith my
righteous servant
shall find life.'"**

—Heb. 10:35-38, NEB

WE ARE living in critical times. It would seem trite to say that these are stormy days, or stirring days, or discouraging days, when there is trouble in the Middle East, trouble in the Far East, trouble in Central America, South America, almost anywhere we look.

Nevertheless, with Bible prophecies fulfilled on every hand, these are *encouraging* days. It is encouraging to know that we are living right at the end of the era of man's rule, right at the time foretold by our Lord, when men's hearts are failing them for fear of the things which are coming on the earth; the time when we soon will "see the Son of man coming in a cloud, with power and great glory" (Luke 21:26-27). It is the time when the rightful heir to the throne of earth shall come to claim dominion and reign from "sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth" (Ps. 72:8); with authority to put an end to evil, sin, oppression and violence, and bring health and prosperity worldwide.

All this is in the prophetic Word of the Lord.

With prophecies like these in mind, we can square our shoulders and declare proudly, "It's a *great* time to be alive." Indeed, it is.

But many do not recognize it. In this age of ages multitudes are meeting life with a spirit of fear, cynicism, and despair. Multitudes are living from day to day in a climate of uncertainty and

dread. Many a man and woman is asking, "Whatever happened to the American dream?" An elderly woman, disillusioned with life, says cynically, "This world won't be too difficult to leave behind." And many a young person takes the attitude of "I couldn't care less. What's the future for, anyway?" In some student groups the old slogan is reported being revived: "Blessed is he who expects nothing, for he will not be disappointed."

Other Stormy Times

We are not the first generation to be caught in a whirlwind of revolution. There have been times before us when it seemed that the earth and the heavens—the political authorities of the world—were shaken and everyone was listening to the counsels of despair. What was it like to live through the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar in the seventh century B.C., just before the Captivity? What was it like to live in Jerusalem in the year A. D. 70, or in the city of Rome in the year 410, or in Europe in 1914?

Yet in comparison with them all, our time is destined to be the most climactic. Today there is something dangerous and momentous about the very fact of being alive. These are days tense with expectancy, for we are living right at the point of culmination. We are on the verge of the greatest change in the

Note: *A Steady Faith in Unsteady Times* is available as a complete church service on cassette. Price: \$3.00

Today there is something dangerous and momentous about the very fact of being alive. These are days tense with expectancy, for we are on the verge of the greatest change in the history of our planet.

history of our planet, when the heavens and earth of the present political system will be convulsed and replaced by a new and infinitely better system. The prophets of God appropriately called it a "shaking." No part of the present system will escape. Haggai, speaking for God, used these dynamic words: "For thus saith the Lord of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord" (Hag. 2:6-7).

This shaking will topple the kingdoms of men and in their place will rise the eternal Kingdom of Christ.

The Shaking Foretold

In several prophetic passages the prophet Isaiah describes this mighty shaking and who will feel its effects. In all cases the ones who suffer from it are those who do not fear God and are not prepared to meet it.

First it will be against the idolaters—and let us remember that an idolater is one who allows any interest to come ahead of God. We read: "The idols he shall utterly abolish. And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth."

So violent will be the social and political upheaval that people will not even want to be seen with the very objects which they set up to

deliver them. "In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats; to go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth" (Isa. 2:18-21).

The shaking will cause the downfall of all who proudly exalt themselves and defy God—and lest we think only of the pride of the world at large, let us remind ourselves that God despises these vices even more in His own than in those who know Him not. "The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. For the day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low" (Isa. 2:11-12).

Again, the Prophet says that the shaking will be against all "sinners" of the land—and again let us realize how far-reaching is this word, that much more severe will God be in dealing with sin in those who are under His law than in the masses of mankind. Says the Prophet, speaking of the Lord: "... he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. And," he continues, "I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible.... There-

fore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the Lord of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger" (Isa. 13:9, 11, 13).

The prophet Joel speaks again of this mighty shaking: "The Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake." Then, changing his tone, he includes this comforting message of hope and security for all who rightly call themselves "his people": "but the Lord will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel. So shall ye know that I am the Lord your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain" (Joel 3:16-17).

Several hundred years later, the apostle Peter was informed of the same cataclysmic event. Though we do not usually place him among the prophets, his Second Epistle contains a sure word of prophecy. After speaking of the flood which swept to destruction the "heavens and earth" of Noah's day, he describes the fate of the present cosmos:

"But the heavens and the earth which are now," he says, speaking of the civil governments and polities of earth, "by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.... The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of

the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." Peter's primary prophetic symbol of divine judgment is "fire" rather than shaking (II Pet. 3:7-10); but the result is the same. The present system will come to an abrupt and disastrous end.

The convulsing of the powers of earth, in whatever way He chooses to do it, will be God's way of commanding the authority that is His due, of letting men know His word is law and that its effects will be felt by everyone who lives. The prophet Ezekiel, also speaking for God, says that "all the men that are upon the face of the earth shall shake at my presence. . . . Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the Lord" (Ezek. 38:20, 23). That "knowing" will be more than a casual awareness of certain facts. When God is "*known*" in the eyes of many nations," He will be recognized, acknowledged, respected, revered.

Men may criticize, may defy His laws and set themselves against Him, if they choose; but they shall harm only themselves; His law and His authority shall remain.

A Time for Confidence

The author of the book of Hebrews focused some very sound advice around these coming events. First he surveyed the life and fortunes of his church. It was not an easy time to be living, even then. It was an age of active persecution, and the faith of many was being tested sorely. Some were meeting the onslaught of persecution with steady faith, endurance and resolute hearts. Others were living to themselves, having lapsed from

their Christian commitment and become indifferent to its claims. "Do not then throw away your confidence," was his warm, loving appeal, "for it carries a great reward. You need endurance, if you are to do God's will and win what he has promised. For 'soon, very soon' (in the words of Scripture), 'he who is to come will come; he will not delay; and by faith my righteous servant shall find life'" (Heb. 10:35-38, NEB).

He then called their attention to their favored place in the scheme of God—and shall we think of ourselves as *less* favored? He says, and we quote again from the New English Bible (Heb. 12:18-19, 22): "Remember where you stand, not before the blazing fire of Sinai, with the darkness, gloom, and whirlwind, the trumpet-blast and the oracular voice,

**Have we bound
ourselves,
steadfast,
unmovable,
to the things
that will remain?**

which they heard, and begged to hear no more; . . . No, you stand before Mount Zion and the city of the living God, heavenly Jerusalem, before myriads of angels, the full concourse and assembly of the first-born citizens of heaven, and God the judge of all, and the spirits of good men made perfect, and Jesus the mediator of a new covenant." What favor! what privilege theirs—and more especially *ours*, we who are living right in the era of its fulfillment. In light of all this, how vital the warning that follows: "See that you do not refuse to hear the voice that

speaks. Those who refused to hear the oracle speaking on earth found no escape; still less shall we not escape if we refuse to hear the One who speaks from heaven."

The spectacle at Sinai was fearsome, when the mountain shook with the voice of the Lord. But that was nothing compared with what is to come, the mighty shaking foreseen by the prophets of old. That shaking, he says, will strike "the earth and the heavens," every part of the present arrangement.

"Now he has promised, 'Yet once again I will shake not earth alone, but the heavens also.' The words 'once again'—and only once—imply that the shaking of these created things means their removal, and then what is not shaken will remain."

The Unshakables

"What is not shaken will remain." For people of faith there was an eye of calm at the center of the hurricane, a solid certainty on which they could depend. Everything was *not* to be shaken. If God, the mighty God of heaven, was their strength, and if they were on His side, they were standing on that which is in the fullest meaning of the term *unshakable*, and "the things which cannot be shaken shall remain."

Upon this same unshakable foundation of faith we stand today. And it is just as solid, just as secure as it has ever been. Though God is silent at the moment, His plan is going steadily forward. And we may know that however stormy the nations about us, we have a solid foundation under our feet.

Do we appreciate it? Do we really believe it?

There is something strange about us mortals. We do not question the record of past events. But when it comes to what is ahead, we are skeptical, hesitant, slow to believe. We have a right to be skeptical when our

information comes from the speculations of men; but when word of the future comes from the Lord God Almighty, is not the *prophecy* upon which He puts His signature just as sure as the *history* He writes? Does He not know the future fully as well—or better—than we know the past? Is not His prediction of an event just as factual and just as dependable as if that event had already occurred?

We have a further problem with our mortal makeup. We believe what we see, and disbelieve what we cannot see; in fact, what we cannot see *isn't*! Going one step further, we tend to believe that what is now will always continue—though we know well enough from our own experience that there is nothing permanent but change. Still the illusion persists, and we must make a mighty effort to overpower it.

Walking by Faith

Here is the test of faith that must be part of the experience of God's people in all ages. Like Enoch, Noah, Abraham and Moses, we must live by faith and *walk* by faith—and walking means action and progress, going forward. We are not to stand still simply because we cannot see all the steps ahead of us. We must take God at His word and trust Him for what we cannot see, knowing that His promise is as certain as our existence. "The things that cannot be shaken shall remain." *Some shall remain*. It is the promise of the Lord, in which we may confidently trust: "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear" (Heb. 12:28).

Let us now consider what are the things that "shall remain."

Again we must rely on the promise of the God of heaven: "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not

be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad, and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy" (Isa. 65:17-18). A whole new heavens and a whole new earth, both of God's creating, fashioned according to His standard of excellence, composed wholly of men and women whom He has approved. Will it not be glorious?

Seven thousand years have been set aside for the completing of this new creation, this new heavens and

earth; and these shall *remain*. In the words of the prophet Daniel, they "shall stand forever" (Dan. 2:44).

The shaking is not to result in total destruction; the destruction is only to remove the opposition and make room for that which *deserves* to abide, the "things that cannot be shaken."

More Shaking Foretold

In the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, Jesus gives us some profound insights into the divine scheme. It is

Let Us Pray

O God our help in ages past, our hope for years to come: we draw nigh Thee this morning to renew our grasp on the things that matter most. As we approach Thee, we realize anew Thy greatness, and our littleness; Thy all-encompassing might, and our weakness; Thy eternity, and the brevity of our life.

Father, we thank Thee for the measureless blessings that Thou hast showered upon us, and for the countless ways in which Thou art working for our success; the only force working against us is self.

We thank Thee, too, that Thou dost never leave or forsake those who are faithful to Thee. They are Thine, and no untoward circumstance of life can pluck them out of Thy loving care.

We thank Thee for the solid foundation which Thou hast provided us, that in a world shaking with fear and uncertainty, we stand rock-sure, knowing that all things are working together to fulfill Thy purpose on earth and that whatever we may have to go through now is less than nothing compared with the magnificent future Thou hast in store for all Thy faithful children.

Grant that among the trials and disillusionments of the present our hope may shine brighter and yet brighter as we see ourselves growing into holiness. May all the experiences of life deepen our trust in Thee and strengthen our confidence that we *can* perform the things that Thou requirest at our hand, and that no good work will ever be in vain.

Father, we confess being given to self-will, self-pity, and foolish pride. We know that we are not our own; all that we have is Thine. Grant us a fresh supply of courage to make the drastic change from the old creature to the new. Give us the honesty to see ourselves as we really are, and the willpower and determination to carry the work we have begun to a triumphant end.

We pray Thy blessing upon all Thy people everywhere. Keep and direct us in all our ways. According to Thy most gracious will, deliver Thou our soul from death, our eyes from tears, and our feet from falling. In the name of Him who is our Deliverer, our Refuge, and our coming King we pray. Amen.

How many times is it necessary for God to warn us before we will believe and take action—and save our lives?

His temple sermon, the last He preached before He was crucified.

First Jesus pictures the things that can and will be shaken, the authorities of men. He forecasts the cataclysmic shaking of Jerusalem, and its total downfall. Then He foretells the Apostasy, and the end of it. Then bringing us right down to our very own day, He pictures His second coming, comparing it to "the lightning" that "cometh out of the east and shineth even unto the west" (Matt. 24:27).

Looking still further, He sees another shaking, the tribulation that will follow the coming of Christ, when "the sun shall be darkened and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven shall be shaken" (Matt. 24:29).

As the Days of Noah Were . . .

Then, commenting on our very own day and the time when all these things shall be, He compares the time of His second coming to the days of Noah. "As the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Matt. 24:37).

Perhaps no more fitting illustration could be found than is contained in this comparison of our Lord's. In numerous ways Noah's day parallels our own.

First, in the certainty of divine judgment. As surely as the flood came in the days of Noah, just so surely will the end come in this

age. God has spoken, and His word "shall not return unto Him void."

Second, in the imminence of divine judgment. God had given Noah His word, that a flood *would* come; so has He foretold the end of this age, and we today find ourselves living when that "end" is right upon us.

Third, in its results. The flood resulted in the destruction of a wicked and godless race; and "so shall the coming of the Son of man be." And just as surely as some survived the cataclysm in Noah's day so surely shall some remain from our day.

Fourth, in its demands upon the believer for faith and courage. End times are times of extreme stress, and bring their own special tests of character.

Jesus made the comparison especially for the benefit of those who would be living in the era of His return. Like the time of Noah, the time immediately preceding His return would be one of special testing, a time that would demand the utmost in unshakable faith.

How did Noah respond to the test? We read in Hebrews 11:7, "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith." Do we wonder that Jesus used Noah as an example to us?

Like Noah in his day, we today confront the test of time. When the divine hand seems to tarry, there is a strong temptation to lose faith. With the passing of time, the test

becomes more and more acute.

We can imagine Noah with genuine enthusiasm in his voice and a deep fear and reverence for God in his heart, relaying God's warning to his people. A great flood was coming, and they would die unless they believed and entered the ark. Doubtless many ridiculed, disbelieved, and scoffed. But some believed.

Noah set the example of faith by immediately commencing work on the ark. And as he worked, he continued to preach. Some listened, and were genuinely glad for the early warning.

But days came, and days went; suns rose and suns set, and . . . no flood. What was this that Noah had been saying? Was he mistaken?

Days added up to months, and months grew into years. And still . . . no flood. Surely something was wrong. . . . And one by one, his followers began to drift away. Generations came, and went. And still . . . no flood. By this time, some who had believed at first began to wonder.

Wondering led to doubt, and doubt to gross unbelief. Unbelief spread like wildfire. Was there nothing *new* from the Lord? No update or confirmation of His plans? What if it had been all a dream, all a mistake or misunderstanding on the part of Noah. Was it wise—even sensible—to build so much on one solitary message from the Lord—and that more than one hundred years ago? If it was such an important message, why was He so silent?

Yes, Noah agreed, God was silent.

How he longed and prayed for another word from the Lord. If only he could find out if the Lord was pleased with his work; if only he could *know* that he was doing all that was expected of him at that critical, pre-flood hour.

But there was no further word from the Lord. And what difference did it make? Noah knew what he was to do, and all that remained was for him to *do* it; the rest was *God's* responsibility.

Does something about this seem strangely familiar? Have we ever wondered how many times it was necessary for God to speak before men should believe and take action—to save their lives! God had said the flood was coming, and when the time was right it *would come*. Now was their *opportunity*—their *only* opportunity—to get ready, and they should be doing it, or they would die in the flood.

Still the unbelievers doubted. With the sky so clear and the sun so bright—who could worry? Even some who had once believed lost faith and began to feel sorry for Noah, the poor, deluded old man who had dreamed so greatly and whose years and years of good-intentioned hard work were destined to be so sadly disappointed.

Is not all this parallel to our own day? Wasn't Jesus right when He said that those who should experience the last hours of the day, those who should have the privilege of living to see the Son of man come, would experience tests that would require the strength and faith and endurance of Noah?

What was Noah's secret source of spiritual strength? We read that Noah was "a just man and perfect in his generations." In the midst of that corrupt and desperately wicked people "Noah walked with God" (Gen. 6:9). No ordinary accomplishment this; and what better example could we have? Do we wonder that he was

able to maintain his faith through all those years, despite the scoffs of the multitudes? If Noah could walk with God in *his* day, in the midst of that exceedingly wicked world, can we not do it today?

And if Noah was a man of faith, and showed his faith by his actions, can we not share the same steadfast faith today?

Then, too, for Noah, there was the further test of obedience. We don't

Comparing . . . Noah and Us

"As the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Matt. 24:37)

Parallels between Noah's day and ours:

- **The Certainty of Divine Judgment**

As surely as the flood came in the days of Noah, just so surely will the end come in this age. God has spoken, and His word "shall not return unto Him void."

- **The Imminence of Divine Judgment**

God had given Noah His word, that a flood *would* come; so has He foretold the end of this age, and we today find ourselves living when that "end" is right upon us.

- **The Results of Divine Judgment**

The flood resulted in the destruction of a wicked and godless race; and "so shall the coming of the Son of man be." But just as surely as some survived the cataclysm in Noah's day, so surely shall some remain in our day.

- **The Demands upon the Believer for Faith and Courage**

End times are times of extreme stress, and bring their own special tests of character. Noah needed special faith and courage to withstand the faithlessness and indifference around him. Our need is the same.

- **The Test of Obedience**

Without doubt Noah had other interests and other occupations when God told him to build an ark. But God had told Noah he would be safe IF . . . And God's command came first with him. So must it be with us.

- **The Test of An Unknown Deadline**

If we only knew when the "end" was coming, we say. But we do not know; neither did Noah know. But he kept working. His one concern was to finish his God-assigned task. May that be our concern also, and when the storm strikes we shall be safe in the care of God.

know what Noah did to support himself and his family during his first six hundred years, but when the command came, "Build thee an ark," that had to come *first*. Noah might have said, Yes, Lord, but when do you expect me to plant my crops, or cultivate and prune my vineyards?

But whatever his accustomed pattern of life, Noah did not hesitate. He "moved with fear" and went to work. His first and only concern was to obey God, and in doing this he was preserving his own life and that of his family. For God had said that a flood would come, and Noah believed God.

Then there was the test of an unknown deadline—and do we not experience this also? If only we knew, we say; if we only knew how long time as we know it will continue. But we do *not* know; and Noah did not know how much time he would have to make this ark. There might be plenty of time; but there might *not*. His whole concern was the completing of his God-assigned task. The Lord had told him he could be safe *if*—but the rest was *his* responsibility. And suppose—suppose he had been working too slowly . . . ?

And so he worked—steadily, diligently, lest the flood come before the ark was finished. And while he worked, he preached; Noah was a "preacher of righteousness," right-doing. A flood was coming, he said, and the most important thing in the whole world was to get right with God.

The time seemed to tarry. The people asked "Why?" Noah himself might have been tempted to ask "Why?" Yet Noah knew, for the ark was not yet done.

Noah needed the time; still it was a test.

And what of us? Is not our situation the same? Are we not grateful for every day extended us? And still it is a test.

The Test of Time

How shall we meet this test of time? Will we be able to sustain our concentrated effort over time? Can we keep up our zeal and determination and enthusiasm day after day, year after year, while the Lord seems to tarry?

The ark neared completion; it was almost done, still no flood in sight. This was another test of faith, when the task was almost done.

But Noah did finish the ark. And then the rain began, and the people went in—did the Lord tell them when it was time to go inside? We do not know, but we do know that the angel of the Lord shut the door. And how many were safe inside? Only eight. Only Noah and seven members of his own family.

One hundred twenty years of preaching and building, and only eight believers. Was it worth all the effort, we ask, for such a few?

Yet what would Noah have said; or any of the seven who escaped with him?

Likewise we may ask in our day: With so few believers and so few to benefit, is it worth the effort to keep on, to keep doing the things we have been doing in obedience to the command of the Lord?

The answer is a resounding Yes, it *is* worth the effort. The salvation of each single individual means just that much to God. They are each one a jewel, a precious treasure, a son or

daughter, and God has planned His whole creation around them. Look at the tremendous effort God has expended to enlighten and develop them. It is truly so much for so little; but the work is God's; and all the resources are God's—so what can be lost? And shall we consider *anything* too small to do *for God*—especially when the benefit is *our own*?

If God chooses to have only eight, or eighteen, or twenty-eight, that is *His* concern—not ours. We can only be humbly grateful that it is our privilege to be part of that number—and someday, part of the things which cannot be shaken, the things that shall remain. For we have the divine promise: "the things that cannot be shaken shall remain. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken . . ." How do we become a part of this kingdom which cannot be shaken? It is all a matter of character; and the foundation of that character is an unshakable faith in the God of heaven and in His promise to recompense each faithful one.

Is *our* faith like this? Have we that solid, unswerving commitment that we will be faithful, loyal, wholehearted, come what may? Have we committed ourselves, without reservation, to total obedience? Are we each day renewing that relentless determination that will see us through all the way to the end of this age and into eternity? Have we bound ourselves, steadfast, unmoveable, to the things that will remain?

In this time of unrest, let us hear again those words of assurance from the book of Hebrews and, like Noah of old, be warned; be moved with fear, moved to action, we who have been offered "possession of an unshakable kingdom. Let us therefore hold on to the grace that we have been given and use it to worship God in the way that He finds acceptable, in reverence and fear." MM

**Are we each day
renewing that
relentless
determination that
will see us through
all the way to the
end of this age
and into eternity?**

Real Belief Is . . .

(Continued from page 13)

edge of God is more than something to assent to; it is a life to be lived.

Jesus spoke of the necessity of bearing one's cross of self-denial, and being ready to meet Him when He comes. The first command, He said, was to "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). He exhorted His followers to "Seek . . . first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness"; "Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able"; again, "Not every one 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. 6:33; Luke 13:24; Matt. 7:21). These are commands that require much more than a mere vocalized expression of one's belief.

Contrary to popular assumption, Paul did not teach a different means of salvation than did Jesus. His writings are filled with direct commands that must be obeyed if salvation is to be achieved. He exhorted his readers to "work out your own salvation," to "study to show thyself approved," to "put off" the old nature and "put on" the new (Phil. 2:12; I Tim. 2:15; Eph. 4:22-24). He spoke of the conflict between flesh and spirit, of not doing the things that he would, of a death to sin, of pressing for the prize, of fighting to keep the old nature under (Phil. 1:29-30; Gal. 5:16-17; Rom. 6:10-11; Phil. 3:13-14; I Cor. 9:26-27). These are all *action* words, words that pull us to our feet and start us running; they indicate much more than a mere outward profession of belief in Christ.

Knowledge is the first step toward belief or faith in Jesus. Before we can really believe in Jesus we must understand what He requires of us. We must study God's Word to obtain a knowledge of His law. We cannot

say that we believe until we know what to believe.

After we have acquired this knowledge, we must put it into practice, for as the inspired author James writes, "by works a man is justified, and not by faith only" (Jas. 2:24). Faith must lead to works of righteousness, for as James says further, "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works" (Jas. 2:17-18).

The apostle John went so far as to say that "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (I John 2:4). In other words, if we say we believe in Jesus and keep not His commandments, we are not "saved" eternally—far from it, we are classified as "liars," and according to the Revelator, "all liars shall have their part in the . . . second death" (Rev. 21:8).

Real belief is . . . action!

MM



Talking with Kings

Who said to whom . . . ?

1. "Thou art the man." _____ to _____
2. "I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision." _____ to _____
3. "Thou art this head of gold." _____ to _____
4. "Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another." _____ to _____
5. "Thou hast spoken well, I will see thy face again no more." _____ to _____
6. "When thou wast little in thine own sight. . ." _____ to _____
7. "What is thy servant, that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I am?" _____ to _____
8. "... Thou lovest thine enemies, and hatest thy friends." _____ to _____
9. "Behold, the half was not told me." _____ to _____
10. "If thou return at all in peace, the Lord hath not spoken by me." _____ to _____
11. "I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house." _____ to _____
12. "I have found thee: because thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the Lord." _____ to _____
13. "Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live." _____ to _____
14. "Surely, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would not look to thee, nor see thee." _____ to _____
15. "Why should not my countenance be sad, when the city . . . lieth waste." _____ to _____

Almighty Creator and Father,

*In whom my life finds purpose, direction, and a goal;
Your grace has brought me to this hour:*

*May my first thought on waking be Your praise,
and my last thought before sleeping be gratitude to You.*

*My Father, I am grateful to You
For those realities of faith which keep me from
Parking by my failures,
Nursing my ills,
Flaunting my achievements,
Or giving in to despair.*

I pray that You will match my dedication with my deeds.

*Wrap my desires around Your will,
And lead me in Your way of understanding.*

*May Your Spirit prepare me,
Your love surround me,
Your assurance prod me,
Your hope possess me,
Your light direct me
along the path of service today. Amen.*

16. "The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him." _____ to _____
17. "Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour." _____ to _____
18. "O king, . . . let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request."
_____ to _____
19. "I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, . . . I will not take any thing that is thine."
_____ to _____
20. "It is the voice of a god, and not of a man."
_____ to _____

Answers:

1. Nathan to David, II Sam. 12:7
2. Paul to King Agrippa, Acts 26:19
3. Daniel to Nebuchadnezzar, Dan. 2:38
4. Daniel to Belshazzar, Dan. 5:17
5. Moses to Pharaoh, Ex. 10:29
6. Samuel to Saul, I Sam. 15:17
7. Mephibosheth to David, II Sam. 9:8
8. Joab to David, II Sam. 19:6
9. Queen of Sheba to Solomon, I Kings 10:7
10. Micaiah to Ahab, I Kings 22:28
11. Elijah to Ahab, I Kings 18:18
12. Elijah to Ahab, I Kings 21:20
13. Isaiah to Hezekiah, II Kings 20:1
14. Elisha to Jehoram King of Israel, II Kings 3:14
15. Nehemiah to King Artaxerxes, Neh. 2:3
16. Ezra to King Artaxerxes, Ezra 8:22
17. Haman to King Ahasuerus, Esther 6:9
18. Esther to King Ahasuerus, Esther 7:3
19. Abram to King of Sodom, Gen. 14:23
20. People of Tyre and Sidon to Herod, Acts 12:22

The “Double Portion” for Elisha

“What was the ‘double-portion’ of power Elisha received from Elijah? Does this mean that Elisha had more power than Elijah?”

We read the account in II Kings, chapters 1 and 2. After Elijah had chosen Elisha to be his successor, when he knew that he was to be taken to heaven, he said to Elisha: “Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee.” And Elisha answered, “I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me.” And Elijah said, “Thou hast asked a hard thing: nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so” (II Kings 2:9-10).

Elisha had been only Elijah’s servant, but his master had chosen him to be his successor. Like Solomon before him, Elisha did not ask for riches or earthly glory, but for the spiritual endowment to fill the place of Elijah. There is no evidence that Elisha had previously been a prophet but only the servant of a prophet, and Elisha may well have felt that to fill Elijah’s shoes would require an extra measure of courage and fearlessness—had he not seen these qualities in his master time and again, as when he was dealing with the wicked King Ahab and his more wicked wife Jezebel?

Elijah’s answer, that Elisha had asked “a hard thing,” indicates some singular difficulty in granting his request. Perhaps he said this because he knew that only God could designate the office of a prophet and bestow on him the power of His Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, he seems to have known God’s choice, for his reply indicates that he was confident God would grant the request.

Elijah made one stipulation: that Elisha must see him taken up to have his wish granted. This may have been simply to test the younger prophet’s fidelity.

As to the meaning of the “double portion” Elisha requested, we need not think that Elisha asked for or expected literally a “double portion,” as meaning twice the amount of Holy Spirit power possessed by Elijah. Rather, the phrase is understood by Bible scholars as signifying the portion reserved for the firstborn son, as established in the Law. According to the law, when the inher-

itance was apportioned among the sons, two portions (called a “double portion”) went to the firstborn son (Deut. 21:17) as part of the right of the firstborn, not double what the father possessed. In asking for a “double portion,” Elisha was simply asking to be treated as a firstborn son.

Elisha doggedly followed Elijah from one city to another to be sure he met Elijah’s conditions and received the promised blessing. When Elijah was taken up, the mantle fell on Elisha just as Elijah had said it would. Elisha went immediately to test the mantle by parting the waters of the Jordan. This was proof to him that God was indeed behind his ministry and would be with him as He had been with Elijah before him.

● Concerning Adam and Eve

Is the account of Adam and Eve a myth?

No. There was a literal man named Adam and a literal woman named Eve. However, Adam and Eve were not the first two persons to live on the earth but the first called to serve God and the first informed of His eternal plan. And they were used as representatives of all who serve God in every generation between their time and the second coming of Christ.

The Genesis account of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden is most meaningful when viewed as an allegory, Adam and Eve representing the portion of mankind who learn God’s law and agree to serve God, and the garden representing their field of service.

For a more complete explanation, send for our booklet, “God’s Spiritual Creation.”

● Jesus and Temptation

Could Jesus be tempted?

The answer is Yes. We read that He was “tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15).

Because of this fact He is able to understand our need and help us. “For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted” (Heb. 2:18).

MM

We Can, If We Will

**There is absolutely
no reason that
every one of us cannot
succeed if we will.
It is up to us.
We have within us
the power and the
will, if we only
summon it.**

GOD *wants* us to succeed. His whole plan is built around the winners. He is not working *against* us but *for* us! Why did He create this earth? Why has He spent the past nearly six thousand years hunting out those whom He could crown and eternally bless? Why did He send Christ to be a perfect example—if He is not interested in winners! And coming closer to our own situation, why has He spent so much time and effort in our day, that a few might be ready to welcome the King when He returns?

We cannot begin to even faintly appreciate the effort God has expended to make possible our success. He has created the world for our use, and given us this mortal life in which to prepare. He has given precepts to instruct us, laws to guide us, angels to protect us, brethren to help us, along with His guarantee of sufficient mental and physical strength to accomplish the work. How much more can a gracious God do for us!

And He has our interest at heart. In the words of the apostle Peter, He is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Pet. 3:9). See how long His mercy waited in the days of Israel, to give opportunity to any who would repent. "Return unto me," He pleaded, "and I will return unto you." All He asked was that they take the first step. Again and again He sent His prophets, "rising up early and sending them." Again and again He pleaded, as through the prophet Ezekiel: "Why will ye die, O house of Israel?" (Ezek. 18:31). But His en-

treaties, for the most part, fell on deaf ears.

The same was true at the close of the Jewish Age. Thousands of Jews perished, but God was not at fault. Jesus warned them—He even wept over Jerusalem, "Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" (Matt. 23:37). What was the problem? "I would," says the Lord, "*but ye would not.*"

There must be initiative on the human side before there can be deliverance from the divine side. Jesus said it again in John 6:37, "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out"—but *we* must do the coming. He would "have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (I Tim. 2:4)—*He* would, if only *they* would. They must take the first step. But He is not trying to make it difficult—only to make it *possible*.

Think of the magnitude of the opportunity that is ours, that we have been selected by the God of the universes to compete for a life that will go on and on and on through all the cycles of eternity! Is it not exceedingly gracious of Him even to think of us? He asks only that we prove our desire by our lives; that we prove our loyalty, our devotion, our love. We must take the first step. There is no problem, except as we make one by our unyieldingness. As we submit our will to His, we will find that His "yoke is easy" and His "burden light." The problem is

not on God's part—the only force working against us is *we ourselves*.

Then, too, we can be so thankful that He has tailored His requirements to our resources. He never asks what we do not have. He does not require great physical strength, or money, or outstanding intellect, or any of the standards men so often set up to judge one another. He asks only for those inner heart qualities that are within our reach. Yes, we *have* what it takes—or we would not be here.

This is God's plan. Before He calls anyone, He knows their possibilities. In Romans 8, Paul said this meaningfully of those who are "called according to his purpose": "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his son" (v. 29). "Whom he did foreknow"—He knows in advance what we can do. If we could not qualify, He would be wrong in calling us. And once we are called, we must come to the standard He predestinates—He does not prede-

termine our success or failure, but only the standard. And it is a standard we *can* reach.

To what purpose would be any of God's efforts in our behalf if we were not capable of "making the grade"? What would we think of a teacher who would set goals that he knew his pupils could not reach, and then would not allow any to graduate who did not reach them? Would he not be working against himself? How much more unjust for God to set before us a prize so great, and then withhold it from us by tying our hands, so to speak; by asking what we could not give!

No, He has set everything within our reach, and has provided every possible encouragement besides. Let us not fail to appreciate it.

We are not tackling a new project, untried and unknown. Thousands, even millions of billions of people before us have done it—every one of those shining inhabitants of the worlds above us

have done it, for all is according to His "eternal purpose." Shall we think, even for a moment, that *we can't*?

We have right among us the proof that it can be done—because we have seen it. Not thousands of miles away, and not thousands of years ago but right in our own day, right in our own midst. It gives us the spirit to say, "Yes! If you can do it, so can I. And what I *can* do, with God's help I *will* do!"

There is no encouragement that can compare with that of seeing the work actually done, the victory actually won. And besides telling us it is possible, it shows us what it is worth, imparting a thousand fold of contentment and peace now—even in the midst of suffering—because it sees everything in the light of eternity. And in this light, all things take on their true proportions, and present troubles are reduced to what they really are—only slight momentary inconveniences, soon to be forgotten in the delights of immortality. MM

The Devil: "Bound" or "Dead"?

"I HAVE more trouble with myself than with anybody else I know." These words of a sage of yesteryear speak a truth known to us all. Conquering a weakling does not seem to be what it's all about!

All of God's people have had great internal battles, for they are people with drive who want to succeed in whatever they tackle. They have to be strong-willed people to accomplish the task set before them and therefore must experience these horrendous internal battles to bring themselves into submission to a greater authority.

God is not looking for "yes-men" but for those who will be furiously patriotic for His cause.

I always admire the angel mentioned in Exodus 23:21. He is furiously patriotic to his Master, and his Master knows it for this is what He says of him: "Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions; for my name is in him."

Conquerors of great cities in Bible times were always strong-willed people, and yet the Bible tells us that he who can control himself is greater than they. This is really, in Bible terminology, conquering "the devil," our own old nature. Those who conquer in this seemingly small realm have great willpower—and gain greater won't-power.

God knows we have strong wills to overcome all that comes our way, else He would not have chosen us. But the strong will must be subdued. Even more than that, the old devilish nature in us must die.

It's a "high noon" confrontation, a battle to the death.

A "devil bound" is not enough for salvation. Ours must be a "devil dead"!

—Contributed

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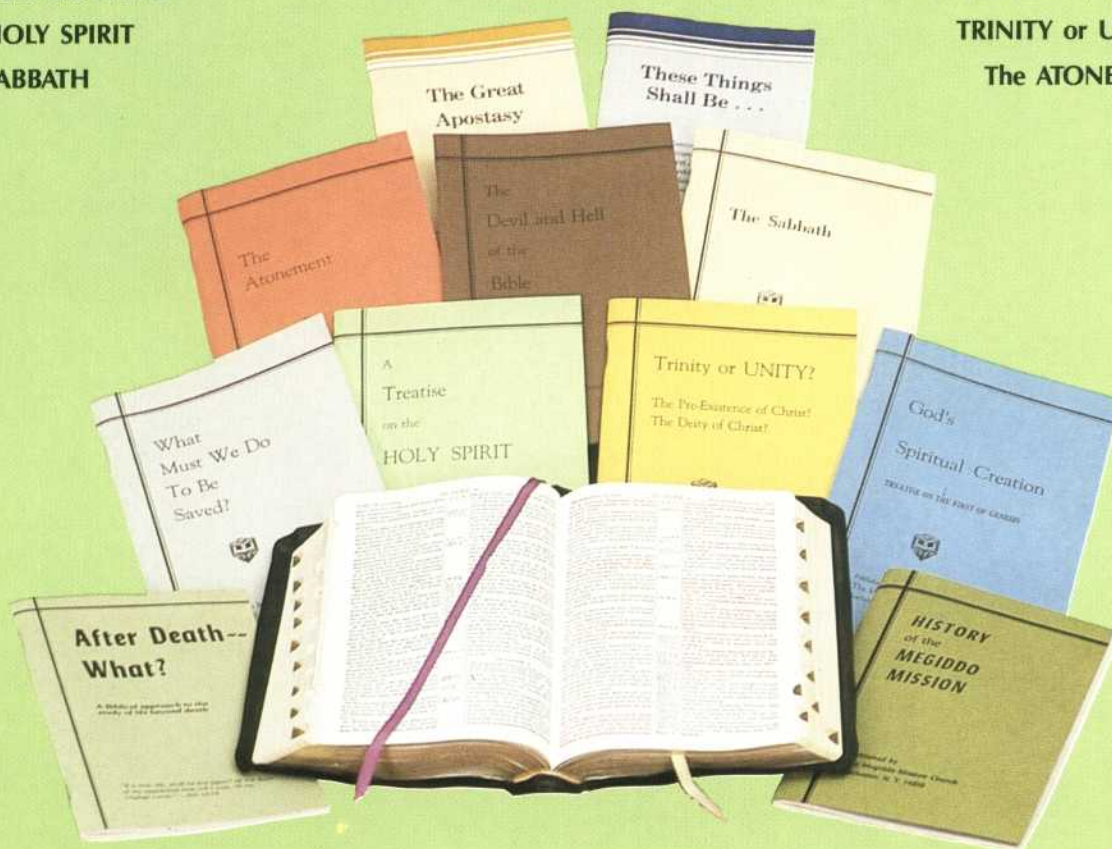
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