

Megiddo Message



*F*ather Eternal,
Light to our blindness,
Be Thou our aid:
Thy Kingdom come, O Lord,
Thy will be done.

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Living Epistles

"Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart"
—II Corinthians 3:3.

The people of God have been described in Scripture under figures many and various. They are as corn ripening for harvest, as cedars of Lebanon. They stand like rocks under fierce blasts. They are as stars fixed in heavenly places, as the sun climbing the heavens and giving light to the world. They are as gold purified and fit for the King, as jewels flashing in sunlight, prepared for the regal crown. They are as vines richly laden with fruit; as pomegranates and figs, sweet and nourishing. In might they are described as the lion and the eagle; their humility is as the lily; their dignity, the palm tree; their usefulness, the salt of the earth.

Paul has yet another simile: "Ye are our epistles, known and read of all men."

Singular, but impressive. These zealous believers are quite literally a Christ-letter. We are accustomed to regarding the Epistles as sacred books, pure, trustworthy, sure in knowledge. Paul told his brethren that they were just such books, epistles of Christ, *living epistles*, moving among men, obscure but ever seen and perused. We regard the Scriptures with reverence. What a thought that we, if truly of Christ, may constitute a part of the great Scriptures of God! The Bible we esteem as sacred. If we are truly "of Christ," are we not called to be likewise sacred, bearing a like witness to the verity of the Christian faith? Could there be a more honorary designation than this, that "You are an epistle of Christ"?

Who composes what is written in these special epistles? They are said to be *God's*

epistles and "of Christ." We must be "of God," "written, not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God" (v. 3). And the writing must be not on "tables of stone" for us, but in "tables that are hearts of flesh" *within* us. Here is the highest form of human life, when it is by God and for God, day after day, hour after hour, obedient to the will of God in our conduct, thoughts, motives and being. We are most noble when we are willing to become most completely the servants of God, and allow God to write our lives. What submission there is in this, what bending to the Divine will, what holiness, what Christlikeness! But how often, by our willfulness, our self-seeking, our sin, we blur the Divine writing upon us, and the manuscript of our life is blotted and defaced.

What kind of epistles will we be? The answer lies with us. For we may be epistles of faith and holiness, or epistles of self; epistles of hope, or epistles of dismalness; epistles of vital and vibrant work for God, or epistles of idleness; epistles of courage, or epistles of hesitation and delay; epistles of sobriety, or epistles of frivolity; epistles of peace, or epistles of quarrelsomeness; epistles that will last through all ages, or epistles of nothingness.

The choice is ours. Christ will do the writing if we but let Him.

Here we are, *living epistles*. What will others read in us? Will it be a writing of our own, about our small, selfishness interests, or will it be God's writing, His message of hope for the ages to come?

Megiddo means ...

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

We believe ...

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

Soon-coming events ...

THE HERALD AND THE KING

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

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

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

In this issue ...

Editorial

LIVING EPISTLES	2
Writing in real life	

Article

"I WILL GATHER YOU"	4
The greatest gathering in history	

Sermon

GOD IS JUST (Part 2)	7
A discussion of God's justice and mercy, past and future	

Special Feature

IT'S TIME TO WAKE UP!	14
When the end of the age is imminent	

Story

OF CAESAR'S HOUSEHOLD	16
Final Part (7): <i>True Beauty</i>	

Article

HAVE YOU BEEN FALSELY ACCUSED?	18
--------------------------------------	----

Meditating on the Word

DON'T GROW WEARY	21
On II Thessalonians 3:13	

Article

FAILURE NEED NOT BE FATAL	23
---------------------------------	----

Defending the Bible

PRAY FOR WHOM?	25
The Evil Spirit that Returned	

Letters	26
---------------	----

Lines to Live By	27
------------------------	----

Back Cover

SEND FORTH THY LIGHT AND TRUTH	28
--------------------------------------	----

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*At the sounding of the trumpet
When the saints are gathered
home,
We shall greet each other
By the crystal sea;
Then to meet again together
On that bright celestial shore
What a gathering of the faithful
that will be!*

*When the angel of the Lord
Proclaims the time of sorrow
o'er,
We shall gather and the
saved and ransomed see,
Then to meet again together
On that bright celestial shore,
What a gathering of the faithful
that will be!*

*At the great and final Judgment,
When the hidden comes to light,
When the Lord in all His glory
we shall see,
At the bidding of the Savior,
"Come ye blessed to my right,"
What a gathering of the faithful
that will be!*

*When the golden harps are
sounding
And the angel bands proclaim
In triumphant strains
The glorious jubilee,
Then to meet and join to sing
The song of Moses and the
Lamb,
What a gathering of the faithful
that will be!*

*One of the happiest occasions in life
is the meeting and greeting of friends
long separated, who are drawn
together by a common heritage, a
common purpose, a common goal.*

We all like to meet people from different places. One of these days, the greatest gathering in the history of our earth will commence. At this gathering will be people not only from different places but also from different *ages*. *What a gathering that will be!*

These distinguished persons will have something in common. They will be all "elect," specially chosen of God.

Jesus told about this very special gathering together, that He will "send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (Matt. 24:31).

John in vision saw this same group gathered on mount Zion with the Lamb, even "an hundred forty and four thousand," all "having his Father's name written in their foreheads" (Rev. 14:1). And we may safely conclude from John's account that these people were enjoying the gathering, because they were all singing; and singing is most often an expression of happiness and joy. They sang "a new song before the throne," to the accompaniment of beautiful "harpers harping with their harps" (Rev. 14:1-3). But most notable was their character, the very highest attainable. We read: "These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth....And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God" (Rev. 14:4-5).

John even recorded for us the text of the song they will be singing. And when we read it, can we wonder that they are happy? For they sing "a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth...And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth...heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever" (Rev. 5:9-10, 13).

We read of another song which the redeemed will sing, the song "of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb,

"I Will Gather You"

saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints" (Rev. 15:3).

Why such a gathering? How does it come about? What or who determines who will be there, and who will be missing?

The Bible has much to say about this gathering of the saints. We know also that all who are resurrected will not be faithful, hence will not be able to share the joy of the winners. This is why John wrote to his brethren, "And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming" (I John 2:28).

To share the joy and happiness of that great gathering, we must be among those found watching, found working, our faith lamps trimmed and burning brightly. This is something we can all do. There is no need to be caught unawares. There is no need for the coming of the Lord to find us unprepared, we who have been informed, we who know the great plan that God is working out on this earth.

The apostle Paul spoke again of this great gathering which God has purposed "in himself: That in the

dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him" (Eph. 1:9-10). In that glorious day, heaven is going to open its doors and take in the earth, and glorified earthborns will become part of God's eternal, heavenly family, His own "sons and daughters" (II Cor. 6:17-18). The bringing of these many sons and daughters into glory is the whole purpose of the plan of God. And when the time arrives, they will be gathered, so that they are ready to be received into His eternal family.

Paul, through the wisdom given to him, told more about this gathering. He writes, "Now we don't

want you, my brothers, to be in doubt about those who 'fall asleep' in death, or to grieve over them like the rest of men who have no hope....Here we have a definite message from the Lord. It is that those who are still living when he comes will not in any way precede those who have previously fallen asleep. One word of command, one shout from the Archangel, one blast from the trumpet of God and the Lord himself will come down from Heaven! Those who have died in Christ will be the first to rise, and then we who are still living will be swept up with them into the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. So shall we ever be with the Lord" (I Thess. 4:13-17, Phillips).

"I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth; Even every one that is called by my name" —Isa. 43:6-7.

"I Will Gather You"

Because the plan of God extends over a long period, even 6,000 years from the time of Adam to the second advent of Christ, the majority of God's servants during this time will have fallen asleep, hence the need for the resurrection, so that all of every age may be gathered together, to receive for what they have done.

Paul says that those living when Christ returns will have no advan-

shall be the day of Jezreel" (Hos. 1:11). It will be a great gathering, on a great Day.

The prophet Ezekiel, writing during the dark hours of the Captivity, was blessed with bright visions of this same time, when Christ will gather His elect from every age. Ezekiel compares this gathering to the tender care of a shepherd for his sheep. "As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is

I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth; Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him" (Isa. 43:5-7). Can we even faintly imagine the honor of being one whom God has created for His glory, whom He can use to bring about the great events He has planned?

The prophet Zephaniah also foresaw this same grand gathering. "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing. I will gather them...and I will save her that hath, and gather her that was driven out; and I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame. At that time will I bring you again, even in the time that I gather you: for I will make you a name and a praise among all the people of the earth" (Zeph. 3:17-20).

Who does not thrill at the thought of being part of that great gathering of the faithful! And how privileged are we, in these closing hours of the age, to be able to look back—and most of all to look ahead. For the greatest events in the development of our planet are just ahead: the arrival of the messenger, the prophet Elijah; the arrival of Jesus Christ and the meeting in the air, the judgment of God's servants, the great Marriage feast, the coronation of the new King and the setting up of a new and righteous government in Jerusalem.

A great gathering is planned. The date has been set, though it is not revealed. That happy gathering *can* include *us*, if—if we are ready.

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"These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth....And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God" (Rev. 14:4-5).

tage above those who have fallen asleep, because the sleeping ones will be resurrected. But notice also that Paul makes a special point of identifying a select few who will be *living* when the great Day comes. He says clearly, "We shall not all sleep" (I Cor. 15:51). And in this he repeats the promise of Jesus, that "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die" (I John 11:26). These statements indicate clearly that some will be *living and believing* when Jesus comes.

Will not ours be a special honor if we may be among that number?

The prophet Hosea pictured this gathering beautifully in a simple drama, which climaxes with this event: "Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together, and appoint themselves one head,...for great

among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country" (Ezek. 34:12-13).

Zechariah pictured them as "the saints" who after the Judgment will stand with Christ upon mount Zion. "And the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee" (Zech. 14:5).

Again the prophet Isaiah pictures this gathering, as the children of God coming from every part of the earth. Looking into the far future, he writes, "Fear not: for I am with thee:

God Is Just

An answer to criticisms brought against God and His Word

We have determined that God is sovereign over all of His creation. This means that *He* sets the standards; *He* makes the laws; and He is under no obligation to consult us; nor will He always do what *we* think He should. This should not surprise us, when we realize that His thoughts and ways are as much above ours as the heavens are above the earth. (Isa. 55:8-9).

The distance is all but unfathomable, but in many areas of our thinking it poses no problem. We never question God's right to establish the physical laws by which the universes are created, guided and sustained—why should we! Nor do we object to His overall plan to fill the earth with His glory.

We still have no objection to laws He has set in motion by which He gives and sustains life. But when God interrupts or cuts short a life, what then? Does God have the right to *take life*?

One point to remember here is God's evaluation of human life as opposed to the inflated opinion of men. Contrary to widespread belief, every human being is not automatically God's special concern simply by the fact of being. From His viewpoint, human life outside a direct working-relationship with

Him counts not at all—entire nations before Him are as a bit of dust on the balance, a "speck," a "drop of water" in a bucket, which can be easily and painlessly removed. On the other hand, the one who serves Him sincerely becomes the most prized commodity in the universe, His treasure, the object of His most loving care and concern.

In our first discussion we established that God is just because He always acts in accordance with certain pre-established laws; because consequences are always predictable. We are not subject to His caprice. We reap as we sow. A specific course of action on the part of man always results in a specific action on the part of God.

When God takes life, He is usually fulfilling His obligation to this law of justice. He is acting to control, punish or eliminate evil or in some way carry out His plans for the benefit of those who are His special concern. He is removing some who are of no special concern to Him, or who have proved disobedient and recalcitrant, who stand in the way of carrying out His overall purposes. Being a God of righteousness, in the end He will have only that which is righteous like Himself—which means that

soon or late, all evil and all evildoers must be removed—including us if we are still contaminated. But even in this He is faithful in His justice.

There is another aspect of His justice that we want to consider: that God never sends judgment without warning, without opening an avenue of escape to those who will take heed and save their lives. He does not punish the innocent with the guilty.

God Always Warns

Always God sent warning in advance of judgment. Whether Sodom, or Ninevah, or the antediluvian world, or the wayward Israelite nation, or Jerusalem, God always warned. No one needed to be taken unawares, if only they would heed the warning. If they waited until the hour of judgment struck, they sealed their own fate.

When the Israelites were yet in the wilderness, when Korah and his company challenged the leadership of Moses, just before the moment of judgment the Lord directed Moses to issue this command: "Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment" (Num. 16:21). Those who obeyed were saved; the rest perished.

God Is Just

When King Jehu was carrying out his mission to destroy the worshippers of Baal, he devised a cunning scheme, inviting all who would come into the house of Baal for a supposed "sacrifice" to Baal. But just before the fate of all those in attendance was sealed, he gave any worshiper of the true God one last opportunity to escape: "Search, and look," he said, "that there be here with you none of the servants

God can judge because He is able to read the heart and foreknows what people will do.

of the Lord, but the worshippers of Baal only" (II Kings 10:23). If any worshippers of the true God perished, it was their own fault.

Jesus, when prophesying the destruction of Jerusalem, offered an avenue of escape to any who would heed His warning and "flee into the mountains" (Matt. 24:16). No one needed to perish in the doomed city.

Again and again God in His justice made provision for the protection and safety of His children, His servants, those who would obey Him. And will He not do the same in the great time of trouble that is coming? What will happen to any God-fearing men and women living then? "At that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book" (Dan. 12:1). "Every one" shall be delivered!—not a single one shall suffer unjustly. "For in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as

the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call" (Joel 2:32).

Judgment upon the Amalekites

With these thoughts in mind, let us look at a few of the criticisms often brought against the Bible.

What about the wholesale destruction of a people, as in the case of the Amalekites in the time of king Saul? Was God just in taking the lives of these people?

In this account is a double illustration of God administering justice, upon the Amalekites and upon king Saul. Judgment was brought upon Amalek because they were "sinners," a "wicked nation" (I Sam. 15:18). Saul was judged because of his open disobedience. Let us read the account in I Samuel 15:

"Samuel...said unto Saul, The Lord sent me to anoint thee to be king over his people, over Israel: now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt. Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass" (vs. 1-3).

Was God just in giving this order? The answer is Yes, because God is able to read the heart and has the ability to foreknow what people will do in later life. He knew that the Amalekites as a nation were sinners and not worthy to live. He knew that these people would never be part of His eternal purpose. God never destroyed anyone who was worthy of living.

What happened? Let us read the account from the New English Bible. "Thereupon Saul called out the levy...There were two hundred

thousand foot-soldiers and another ten thousand from Judah. He came to the Amalekite city and halted for a time in the gorge. Meanwhile he sent word to the Kenites to leave the Amalekites and come down, 'or', he said, 'I shall destroy you as well as them; but you were friendly to Israel when they came up from Egypt.' So the Kenites left the Amalekites" (I Sam. 15:4-7, NEB). Here were some people worthy of being spared, and the Lord gave them opportunity to escape. Is this not an evidence of God's justice? The Amalekites had done evil in the Lord's sight and were to be eliminated; those who had not done evil were spared. The outcome: "Saul smote the Amalekites from Havilah until thou comest to Shur, that is over against Egypt" (v. 7).

The focus of the narrative then turns upon the disobedient Saul—who tried to "improve" upon the Lord's command. He had a better plan of action, or so he thought. "Early next morning (Samuel) went to meet Saul," who greeted him with these self-assuring words, "The Lord's blessing upon you! I have obeyed the Lord's commands." But Samuel, alerted by the Lord, was not so easily taken. "What then is this bleating of sheep in my ears? Why do I hear the lowing of cattle?" Saul immediately put the blame on the people. "The people have taken them from the Amalekites. These are what they spared, the best of the sheep and cattle, to sacrifice to the Lord your God. The rest we completely destroyed" (vs. 12-15, NEB).

Oh, Saul, foolish Saul!—don't we wish we could remind him that the same God who used him to punish the Amalekites was also *his* judge? And do we ever think of God's justly deserved judgments on the world about us and overlook our own *greater* responsibility

before God?

What right did *Saul* have to *adjust* the command of the Lord—and all in a vain and worthless attempt to build himself up in the eyes of the people? But he did it, and even justified himself in doing it.

Can we not see something of ourselves in Saul? Have we never done wrong—when we knew better—and then taken the circuitous route of attempting to justify our action before God, rather than honestly admitting our sin and going to work to make ourselves right before God?

"Samuel said to Saul, 'Let be, and I will tell you what the Lord said to me last night.' 'Tell me', said Saul. So Samuel went on, 'Time was when you thought little of yourself'—hear the godly Samuel striking to the heart of Saul's problem, his pride. "But now you are head of the tribes of Israel, and the Lord has anointed you king over Israel. The Lord sent you with strict instructions to destroy that wicked nation, the Amalekites; you were to fight against them until you had wiped them out. Why then did you not obey the Lord? Why did you pounce upon the spoil and do what was wrong in the eyes of the Lord?" (vs 16-19, NEB).

Still Saul had an answer: "But I did obey the Lord; I went where the Lord sent me, and I have brought back Agag king of the Amalekites. The rest of them I destroyed." Then he put the blame on the people a second time! "Out of the spoil the people"—not king Saul, oh no! "the people...took sheep and oxen, the choicest of the animals laid under ban, to sacrifice to the Lord your God at Gilgal." But Saul was wrong, and he knew it. And Samuel knew it. And God knew it, just as He knows when we

do wrong.

And so the next judgment pronounced is upon Saul. "Does the Lord desire offerings and sacrifices as he desires obedience? Obedience is better than sacrifice, and to listen to him than the fat of rams. Defiance of him is sinful as witchcraft, yielding to men as evil as idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, the Lord has rejected you as king." Only at this

point was Saul finally brought to admitting his sin. Only now did he say, "I have sinned. I have ignored the Lord's command and your orders."

Foolish Saul! We can see him falling so needlessly, so shamefully, into sin. But can we see ourselves? And do we realize we are just as much in God's presence as was Saul, and our motives just as visible to God? Whatever we may

Let Us Pray

O Lord our God, full of compassion; gracious, longsuffering and plenteous in mercy and truth: from our various avenues of life we come to pause in quiet reverence before Thee, to quench our thirst at the fountain of life and be fed with living Bread.

Lord, we come this morning with hearts full of gratitude and praise for every manifestation of Thy goodness to us. We thank Thee for the beauties of harmony, color, symmetry and form, and for our ability to perceive behind them Thy creative hand.

We thank Thee for Thy abundant provisions for both our physical and spiritual well-being, and for every experience that impresses us with our dependence upon Thee. We thank Thee, too, for the graces of Christian love and affection which Thou dost provide to soften the hard places of life and give peace through pain.

Thou mighty God, sifting out of mankind those whom Thou canst use in Thine eternal plan, may we strive harder to qualify for this exalted honor. Thou art faithful and true. What Thou hast promised, either of good or ill, Thou wilt perform. As we study Thy Word this morning, impress us anew with Thy justice and fair dealing with the children of men. And may we be warned by those who have gone before us of the dire consequences of sin; may the things written aforetime alert us to the dangers that threaten us—dangers of self-will, disobedience, and deceit. Thou art our God, Thou art our Sovereign, it is for Thee to command and for us to instantly obey whenever or whatever the command.

We pray Thy blessing on all those everywhere who are remaining true to Thee. Strengthen, support and sustain according to Thy will, and may the petty cares of life recede before the vision of Thy holiness. Help us to see each trial of our lives against the backdrop of eternity, not as a detriment but as part of Thy most gracious provision for our eternal triumph. And may we eagerly seize every opportunity Thou dost provide to give up our way, to crucify our fleshly nature, that when we stand before Thee we may be able to render a good account, an account that will usher us into Thy Kingdom. In Jesus' Name we pray. Amen.

think; whatever we may do, we are dealing with the same God, and someday we too will come face to face with the consequences of our sins. How will it be with us then?

The Amalekites were destroyed because they were "sinners," a "wicked nation." And their destruction, while it would not be justifiable as an act of man, was fully justified as an act of the All-knowing God.

Always God sent warning in advance of judgment.

We should also note that not all the Amalekites were destroyed at that time. Some thirty years later, enough of them were surviving to raid and overwhelm Ziklag in David's absence, and take captive the families of David's army who were encamped there awaiting the return of the army (I Samuel 30). Their remnant is reported to have been destroyed in the time of Hezekiah (I Chron. 4:43).

Judgment upon the Canaanites

What about the Canaanites? Was it right for God to order their destruction and give their land to the people He had brought out of Egypt under the leadership of Moses and Joshua?

Again we need to go to the Record to learn the character of the people and God's evaluation of them.

First, the Canaanites were worshipers of pagan gods, a practice abominable to the God of heaven.

Second, the task of expelling and

destroying the Canaanites was an act for which God took responsibility. The men of Israel were only instruments in His hand—they had but to cooperate so that God could carry out His plan. Even before they reached Canaan the plan was clearly stated: "By little and little I will drive them [the Canaanites] out from before thee, until thou be increased, and inherit the land....for I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand; and thou shalt drive them out before thee" (Ex. 23:30–31).

What was the reason? Why were they fit only to be destroyed and their land to be given to the Israelites? Because at this point the Israelites, though rebellious and hardhearted, were a better people and of more use to God than the Canaanites; and God did not want His people to be influenced by their wicked ways. Only by eliminating the source of the evil could the evil be contained. "Thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor with their gods. They shall not dwell in thy land, lest they make thee sin against me; for if thou serve their gods, it will surely be a snare unto thee" (vs. 32–33).

Again and again the warning was repeated. But the Israelites did *not* cooperate with God's plan to eliminate the Canaanites, and all that the Lord foretold came to pass—including these words of the Lord spoken prophetically through Moses: "If ye will not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you; then it shall come to pass, that those which ye let remain of them shall be pricks in your eyes, and thorns in your sides, and shall vex you in the land wherein ye dwell" (Num. 33:55).

God Never Punishes the Innocent with the Guilty

Another evidence of God's jus-

tice is His clearly stated policy that He would never punish the innocent for the guilty. Was this always true? What about the time David sinned in numbering Israel? Was God just in punishing David by slaying the people of the nation?

From a human standpoint, it would seem grossly unfair for the evil consequences of the sins of the ruler to fall upon the innocent people of the nation. But before we criticize let us be sure we have considered all the facts.

In the affairs of humankind, innocent victims often suffer—even die—for the sins of others, though this is not God's doing. It is part of the interrelations of family and society, that one member suffers for the sins of another. It happens where a child is born to unfit parents. The child is not to blame, but the child suffers the evil consequences of the parents' sin. War breaks out between two countries because of the greed and misconduct of their leaders and the innocent people of the nation suffer.

When David sinned. In the case of David's numbering Israel and the punishment that followed, there was no malicious or cruel intent behind David's census-taking. His motive was likely a self-congratulatory pride in his military genius and in the prosperity which the entire kingdom had attained under his leadership. Legally, the responsibility for the offense fell upon him, as he was ready enough to own. Being in the position of leadership, it was his duty to issue either a "go" or "not go" order on any official matter. These are his humble words of repentance after the punishment was executed: "Lo," he said, "I have sinned, and I have done wickedly....And David said unto God, Is it not I that commanded the people to be numbered? even I it is that have sinned and done evil indeed" (II

Sam. 24:17; I Chron. 21:17).

But how do we know that the people did not rally behind David's pride and therefore actually *deserve* the punishment they received?

It is a mistake to assume that David's countrymen were entirely innocent and suffered innocently for David's sin, for we read in II Samuel 24:1, "And again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel"—and this statement is made *before* we learn of David's intention to number the people. Would the "anger" (Divine indignation, or retribution) of the Lord have been kindled against Israel if Israel were entirely innocent, obedient and God-fearing? Also, this was at least a second occurrence because the Record reads "again." Yes, there was sin among the people of Israel, serious sin.

It may well have been that a census was recommended by David's advisers, perhaps both for military expediency and for a more accurate basis of taxation—and to give an exhilarating boost to the patriotic pride of the people. In any case, the plan must have been discussed openly, pro and con, because Joab had opportunity to voice his more-than-mildly-dissident opinion. Disreputable though he was, this time Joab spoke the truth, and spoke it boldly. "The Lord make his people an hundred times so many more as they be," said Joab; "but, my lord the king, are they not all my lord's servants? why then doth my lord require this thing? why will he be a cause of trespass to Israel?" (I Chron. 21:3). How different would have been the outcome if David had listened this time to Joab!

Haven't we sometimes wished we had listened to advice we quickly shunted off because of its source?—as though the Lord had to

*Let me keep silence before Thee, Great God;
let my prayer ascend to Thy holy habitation,
and fill my soul with the beauty of Thy presence.*

*Shake me from the complacency that holds me in
slavery to myself.*

*As I contemplate Thy goodness,
Thy creative energy, Thy omnipotent power,
may I be awed anew with the power of One
who could fashion the universe, far
beyond my finite comprehension, and
could people this little planet and look
upon it with compassion, to save a people
for Thyself. Thy ways are past finding out,
and Thy greatness is unsearchable.*

Know me, Father. Search me. Direct me.

*Loving Father, for faith revived and vision increased,
For hope renewed and trust released,
For love rekindled and hope fulfilled,
I sing Thy praise and seek Thy will. AMEN.*

deliver His message to us by an angel from heaven before we would listen!

The nation of Israel was at the height of its power, which may have made the people feel "big" and strong—and in need of a sharp reminder that it was not by their great numbers that they could prevail but only by God's mercy.

There is yet another evidence that the people shared in David's guilt. All three of the alternate punishments which the angel of the Lord offered to David were punishments upon the people: "three years' famine; or three months to be destroyed before thy foes,...or

else three days the sword of the Lord, even the pestilence, in the land, and the angel of the Lord destroying throughout all the coasts of Israel" (I Chron. 21:12). Shall we think that an omniscient God did not understand the situation He was correcting? Can't we trust Him to be able to identify properly and punish the offenders and not the innocent? Do not these alternatives suggest strongly that the guilt was shared by all Israel, that God felt that the people of the nation should suffer the justly deserved consequences of their pride?

In the days of Amaziah. Still another example of God's justice is

recorded in II Chron. 25:3-4. Amaziah had just ascended the throne of Judah following the death of his father Joash, and was taking action to punish those who had been responsible for his father's death. We read: "Now it came to pass, when the kingdom was established to him (Amaziah), that he

Don't Carry Grudges!

Years ago, before the days of the auto, a bishop drove his horse and buggy to church. He tied the horse and went to the service, and several hours later came out to leave. Untying the horse, he climbed into the buggy and told the horse to go. To his surprise, the horse could hardly move the buggy. Looking back, he saw that someone had piled his buggy full of rocks. Wrapping the line around a post, he unloaded the rocks, and drove off home.

Some twenty years later three middle-aged men knocked at the door of the bishop's home one evening. After a large amount of small talk, one of the men finally asked the bishop, "Do you remember one Sunday morning when there were rocks in your buggy...?" The bishop hesitated, then laughed. "Do you men mean to tell me that you have been carrying those rocks around all these years? I threw them out twenty years ago and forgot them."

slew his servants that had killed the king his father. But he slew not their children, but did as it is written in the law in the book of Moses, where the Lord commanded, saying, The fathers shall not die for the children, neither shall the children die for the fathers, but every man shall die for his own sin." Amaziah destroyed those wicked men who had killed his father Joash, but he *did not* punish the children for the sins of the fathers—because the Lord forbade it.

"Unto the third and fourth generation." Another point often brought up against the God of the Bible is a part of the second of the Ten Commandments, listed in Exodus 20. A religious periodical makes this statement: "Humanity, since the beginning of time, has wondered about sin, pain and suffering and why it is a part of life. The Hebrew people dealt with this and determined that persons could be punished for the sins committed by their parents or even grandparents." To support this conclusion, Exodus 20:4-6 is cited: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments."

Those wishing to criticize the Lord's stated policy of "visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation" usually leave off the last five words: *"of them that hate me."* If the children hate, or refuse to reverence God as their fathers did,

they too will be visited with His Divine displeasure. This thought is placed in meaningful words in Psalm 78:57, where the Psalmist, referring to backsliding Israel, says: they "turned back, and dealt unfaithfully like their fathers." The iniquities of the fathers would be visited upon the children because the children dealt unfaithfully *like their fathers*.

How is God a "jealous" God? The very context implies that the meaning of the term is not as we would think of jealousy. We cannot conceive of God's being jealous in the sense that erring humans are jealous. The apostle Paul contrasted human jealousy and godly jealousy when he declared that he himself was jealous over the members of the church at Corinth with "godly jealousy" (II Cor. 11:2). The book of Hosea pictures Jehovah as Israel's husband, as "jealous" because He is not willing to tolerate the giving to another of the reverence due to Him. The prophet Isaiah also speaks of God's jealousy for that which is rightfully His: "I am the Lord: that is my name; and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images" (Isa. 42:8). His glory is not to be given to any "other," whether that "other" be a god or any interest we may allow to come between us and God.

In Summary

Our surety of the justice of God comes from the fact that God works by certain revealed laws which have pre-ordained consequences. A certain pattern of life and conduct brings certain consequences. And those consequences are as sure as the action itself. There is no blind chance, no caprice, no fatalism. The righteous life will not fail to receive His highest blessing; and just as surely, the careless, disobedient life

will not fail to receive His disapproval and punishment.

A concise statement of God's justice is found in the closing words of the book of Ecclesiastes, 12:13-14: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." Here is the "whole duty of man." We must keep His commandments, because the day of Judgment is coming, when God will scrutinize "every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." What a glorious day, if only it may reveal that "every secret thing" in us is "good"!

How thankful we should be that the God we serve is just and that He has told us what we must do to receive His favor. But His justice will not allow Him to overlook any imperfections in us. His justice means that He will compare us with the standard He has fixed. If we fail to measure up to His standard, we will be rejected. But if we reach His standard, think of the happiness, bliss and freedom that we will be able to enjoy and the endless vistas of glory that will be opened to us world without end!

As covenant-makers with the great eternal God, let us take seriously the tremendous opportunity that this relationship has made possible to us. We are the potential inheritors of the magnificence of His universe—if only we can merit His approval. Let us now be doing everything in our power to increase the possibility of being accepted when we come face to face with His Divine justice, giving ourselves wholeheartedly to completing the work we have begun *before* the day of the Lord arrives.

For lo, it *will* come.

MM

The Fable of "THE NINE"

*Ten willing workers heard God's call Divine;
One departed hastily, that left only nine.*

*Nine willing workers—they could hardly wait;
But father needed one at home, and that left only eight.*

*Eight willing workers, headed straight for Zion;
One got to making money, that left only seven.*

*Seven willing workers—if only each one sticks;
But one dropped out completely, that left only six.*

*Six willing workers for the Lord alive,
One fell heir to worldly wealth—that left only five.*

*Five willing workers, waiting at the door;
One grew tired of waiting, that left only four.*

*Four willing workers, happy as could be;
One went off to join a friend, that left only three.*

*Three willing workers—for the work how few!
One became dejected, that left only two.*

*Two willing workers, a daughter and a son;
One forgot his calling, that left only one.*

*This one willing worker let not the vision dim;
Whatever others said or did, could not make him sin.*

*Body, soul and spirit he to the Lord did yield;
Willingly he labored in the Master's field.*

*Then one day spoke the Master: "You blessed
child of mine,
I'm grateful for your labor—but what about the nine?"*

In a world torn by instability and organized terrorism, conspiracy and deteriorating values, with society threatened on all sides, thousands are learning to close their eyes and ears to it all in a sort of passive denial, as if ignorance could be bliss! Perhaps, they say by their attitude, it is only a bad dream after all.

But to those who are informed of the Divine plan, to those who are looking for God's new and better world, the signs of the times are shouting—screaming—that the culmination is near, that this is indeed the time foretold in the Word of God.

Still we are threatened by dullness, carelessness and neglect. Though surrounded by vivid evidence of the surety of the Divine plan, we are constantly tempted to close our eyes and forget it.

The Bible shouts numerous warnings to help us fight this sleepy condition, this infectious lethargy, this prolonged coma to which we are all subject. Long, long ago the prophet Hosea compared it to Ephraim, unaware of gray hairs and failing strength, "Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not: yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not" (Hos. 7:9). Jesus in His final message warned the church at Laodicea of this same condition—of being "neither hot nor cold," dangerously carnal, heading, as it were, for complete cardiac arrest!

The New Testament shouts many warnings about passive, lifeless drowsiness—the foolhardy "take it easy" approach. And they are not warnings for the world at large. They are warnings recorded for believers to hear and heed, lest they be caught in this same drowsy condition that encompasses the world, and the day of the Lord come upon them unawares.

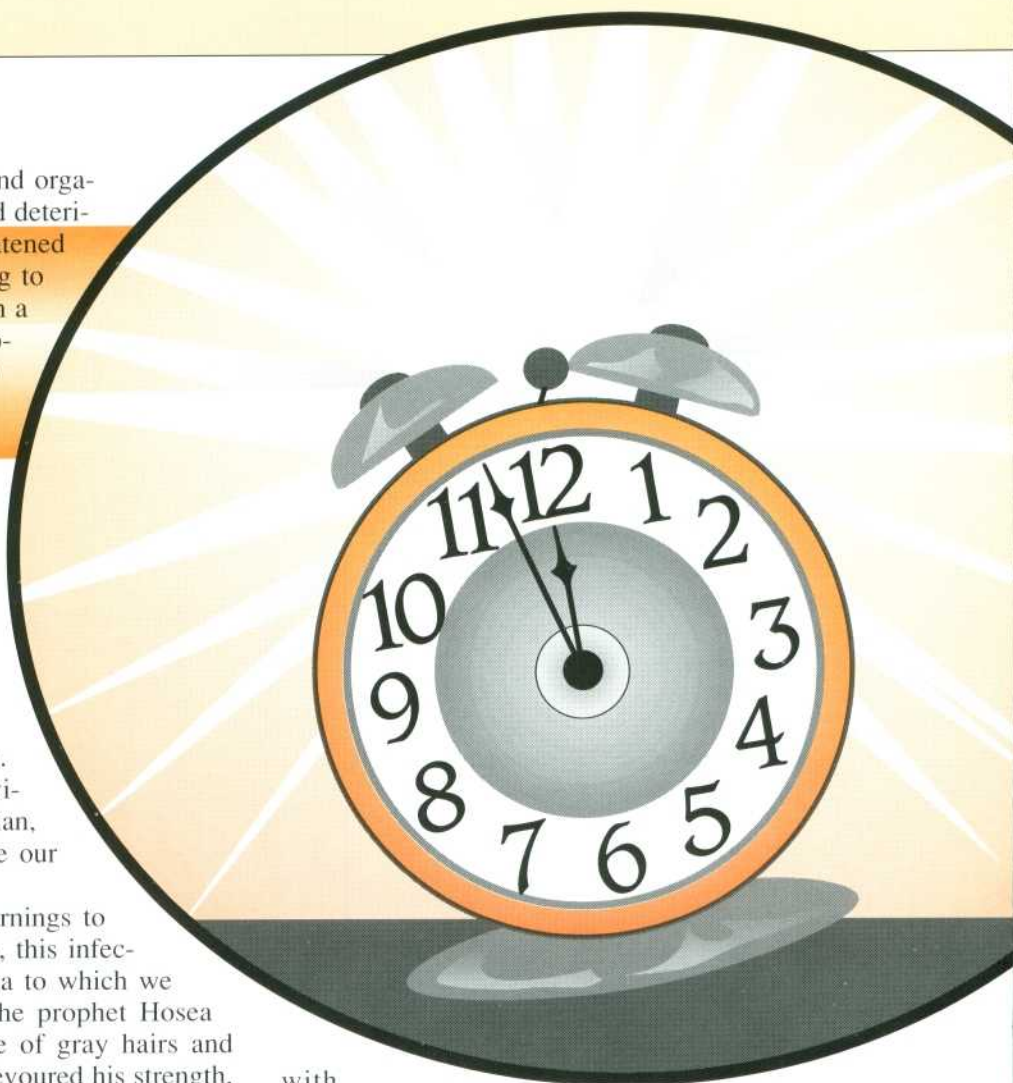
If we look closely at these Scriptures, we can find the God-approved attitude for us in these times of growing stress. And we will find that that attitude is not the sleepiness caused by inactivity but the alertness that comes from lively exercise.

Our minds are so small, our vision so circumscribed, our hearing so defective that even in an age pregnant

with great and significant events, an age consummating all human history, we still go to sleep. What shall we eat? what shall we drink? wherewith shall we be clothed? how shall we find recreation?—all of these monopolize the consciousness of those who should be awake and alert for the return of the Lord from heaven.

The night wears on; and the Master of the house has not yet come. But He has left us a sacred charge: "What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch." "You must be ready dressed and have your lamps alight, like men who wait to welcome their Lord and master on his return from the wedding-feast, so that when he comes and knocks at the door they may open it for him at once. Happy are the servants whom their Lord finds on the alert when he arrives" (Luke 12:35–37, Phillips).

Active, busy, alert—this is the only sure antidote for sleepiness at this late hour. "The night is far spent," warned the apostle Paul, "the day is at hand," and the inevitable drowsiness of the wee morning hours is one of the greatest dangers threatening Christians today. It



Time To Wake Up!

is not easy to stay awake while others nod and doze. It is not easy to maintain a radiant zeal in the face of indifference. It is not easy to retain a certainty of hope under the pressure of the doubts and fears that come with prolonged suspense.

But this is the test. "If he should come just after midnight or in the very early morning and find them still on the alert,...blessed are those servants." Says Jesus, "Blessed are they who have kept themselves in perpetual readiness, in a state of expectancy, that whenever I return they may be ready to welcome Me without delay."

The Master used another simile to stress the need for wakeful watching: the thief who enters under cover of darkness. "You must be on the watch, for you do not know on what day your master is coming. But you may be sure of this, that, if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming he would have been on the watch and would not have let his house be broken into. Therefore you must be ready, too, for the Son of Man is coming at a time you do not expect him" (Luke 12:39-40, Goodspeed). His watchmen can spare no time for relaxation, no time for sleep, no time for weariness. Though the Master seems to tarry, He *is* coming!

Peter, James and John received an unforgettable lesson on watchfulness on the eve of Jesus' crucifixion. They were in the garden, and the Master had said, "Tarry ye here, and watch" while He went on ahead to pray, to fortify Himself against the coming hours. But—they failed; sleep overpowered them.

"Could you not watch with me *one hour*?" was the tender pleading of the Master. This, the darkest hour of night; the night when the arrest, the trial, the mockings, the scourgings, the crucifixion all lay ahead. And His disciples—just when He needed them most—were asleep!

"What, could ye not watch with me one hour?" We feel the disappointment in His words. Could you not even do *this much* for Me?

How those words should ring in our ears and alert us to our spiritual laxity and indifference. "Could ye not watch...*one hour*," just one short hour, every second of which is precious?

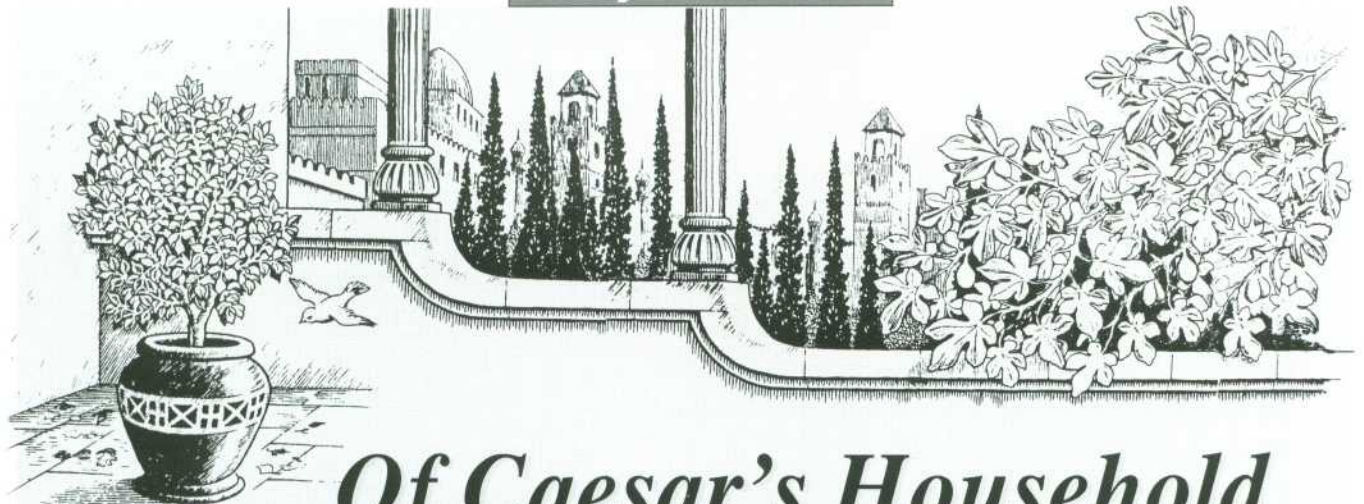
In these words lies a deep spiritual lesson for all who have entered the service of the Lord. We, like the apostles, have agreed to watch with Him for one short hour in this night of darkness. We have promised to go down with Him to death, even death to sin. Shall *we* fall asleep in this brief hour, with the enemy so close at hand and the multitude just outside the gates?

Encircled by midnight darkness, surrounded by evil that is daily waxing worse and worse, beset on every hand by the promptings of the carnal mind, every disciple of Christ must watch—constantly vigilant—if he would keep awake. On his watching depends his eternal life.

To stay awake and alert in the midst of a world slumbering in languid indifference will require phenomenal strength, intensity, determination and activity. But our Master would not ask what could not be done; and He has given command: "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matt. 26:41). If we do not watch, His sudden coming will find us sleeping.

In situations involving physical safety, we instinctively bend every energy to the task of watching. The jet pilot never for a moment relaxes his vigilant watch of his instruments. The safe and sane motorist rivets his attention on the road before him, cautious lest he meet with accident. The general in the army is alert to all that pertains to the welfare of his soldiers, constantly anticipating danger; for tragedy might attend any failure of foresight on his part. The captain of the ocean liner or

(Continued on page 17)



Of Caesar's Household

True Beauty

There was great joy in the house of Aquila. True, there were vacant chairs at this meeting, for since the change many had fallen away, either to Sabinus or the world; but God still protected His people. Once more He had proved it by delivering Irene, who was no longer a palace slave but a free woman. The inquiry had revealed that she had been illegally seized, and Vespasian had immediately freed her and bestowed upon her a small pension as amends for her long period of unjust servitude. Pale and weak, still bandaged, but too happy to remain in her room, she sat beside Priscilla as the leader gave thanks publicly.

In the front row of seats, beside Luke, sat Julius the centurion, in civilian clothing. Since the trial the two men had had several long and earnest talks, and the officer was more than ever determined to make the sacrifice, to take the step which he knew he should have taken long before.

"I am eligible for retirement," he told Luke, "and I shall apply for it at once."

"Where will you go then?" the disciple had asked.

"Well, I am entitled to a grant of land, and I have long dreamed of the peaceful life of a shepherd on the hills of Greece. It's a great old country, I tell you. And with a few acres of land and a little house and a flock of sheep I could live happily the rest of my days, far from this sink-hole of corruption, which I have always hated. To live where the air is pure, away from the clash of arms and the sight of these gilded trappings of royalty; to lie in the sun and gaze at the blue sea below, to live simply—a little milk and bread and cheese and fruit—to wear only a robe and sandals instead of armor, to hear the song of the birds at dawn and sunset—that is my dream.

"But, after thinking it over, I shall not go there as yet. I shall, for my own good, stay in Rome with your people, sharing their trials and persecutions, should any arise; learning from them how to live, proving that I can be a Christian in the great world of men as well as in the peace and quietness of my little farm. After I have served my apprenticeship here, I will ask for a

letter to one of your congregations in Greece, with whom I can meet and worship.

"By the way, Flaminius the legate wants to hear more of this way. He has asked me several times in the last few days where you can be found. He is not satisfied with the gods or philosophies of Rome, and he lives generally above the Roman level. Should he see the Light, he can be of great service to the Church. He told me yesterday he would like to do something to help us."

Luke was thinking fast. He knew of a way in which the rich legate could be of service to one member of the Church. The case of Arthur, the stalwart young Briton with the worst position in Rome, had been much on his mind. It was a precarious position for the lad, living continually in the midst of idolatry and under the shadow of the *lanista*, and the question of raising money to purchase his freedom had been discussed. But inasmuch as so many of the Roman believers were also slaves, it was unwise and unfair to liberate one at the expense of the Church and leave the rest in bondage. Therefore action had been

deferred until the matter should become urgent. Here, however, was a ray of sunshine. He told Julius of Arthur and his embarrassing position. If Flaminius would buy him and remove the threat of the amphitheater, it would be a great and laudable service to a fellow-being. And Arthur was a useful man, so his investment would not be in vain.

"He'll do it!" Julius cried, joyfully. "If he doesn't, I will, although I am not a rich man."



"Why, certainly, I'll buy him," said Flaminius, when the centurion broached the subject to him. "The old fraud who owns him will undoubtedly ask an outrageous price, but I can pay it. Better still, I

have a big Liburnian who is a hopeless heathen, and who would be only too glad to work in the temple. I'll arrange a trade, and the haruspex will not refuse; I know him—and he knows me. If I like the boy, I may free him. . . This Christianity, Julius, interests me. Tell me more about the people and their meeting."



Irene stood before her mirror. The bandages had been removed, and she hardly recognized the reflected countenance. Great, livid scars, nearly healed, took the place of what was once a fresh, clear, unblemished skin glowing with health and youth. She had done her work thoroughly. For some time she looked, thoughtful.

"Horrible face, Sister," she said to Priscilla, "but I guess its good enough. At any rate, it won't get me into any more trouble. As you often say, beautiful deeds and a lovely character are more lasting than fleshly beauty, anyway. And if I just go on from this point and be a good girl and make myself worthy, some day I'll have a new face."

The motherly Priscilla gathered the girl into her arms affectionately.

"Yes, daughter, if you will make yourself beautiful before God, in that day the promise of old will be yours: 'Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people and thy father's house, so shall the King greatly desire thy beauty, for He is thy Lord, and worship thou Him.'"

(The End)

Time To Wake Up!

(Continued from page 15)

the submarine studies his compass, looking well to his bearings lest he encounter iceberg or storm, or lest he stray from his course.

To the Christian, the duty of watching is likewise paramount. The beloved Paul commanded his son Timothy to watch, not only in one thing, or two, or three or four things but "Watch thou in *all* things." This is the watching that pleases the Lord. Our primary duty is to watch our own hearts, our own motives, our own conduct, for "it is from inside, from men's hearts and minds, that evil thoughts arise—lust, theft, murder, adultery, greed, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, arrogance and folly" (Mark 7:21-23, Phillips). Gideon, in selecting his men for service, chose only those who were alert, keenly watchful, never off guard. Those he chose were so watchful that they even watched as they drank! The rest he turned aside; they did not pass the test.

Had Saul, when he went up to Gilgal, been watchful, had he been intent on obeying exactly the command of the Lord, he would not have impatiently gone ahead and offered the burnt sacrifice in the Prophet's absence.

Had Judas been watchful during his days of opportunity, determined to conquer his covetous nature, of which Jesus had warned him (John 12:3-6), his name would not have received the everlasting stigma of "the betrayer."

The prophet Habakkuk gave some excellent advice on watching: "I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower." If we are doing thus, if we are upon the tower, we will be watching our every motive, thought, affection and desire.

*The world is very evil,
The times are waxing late;
Be sober and keep vigil,
The Judge is at the gate:
The Judge that comes in mercy,
The Judge that comes with might.
To terminate the evil,
To diadem the right.*

Jesus' words to His disciples stress the need for vigilance (Mark 13:35-37): "Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch." MM



Have You Been Falsely Accused?

Who has not experienced it: a pointed remark that cuts deep into the tender flesh; or a comment that brings up facts which we had hoped were long forgotten; or a simple statement that makes us look worse than we are, or does not give us as much credit as we feel we are due; or that accuses us of something that never entered our mind to do or say.

Strange, isn't it, that we are so sensitive! The issue may be petty, yet something in us refuses to forget it. We have been falsely accused.

If it weren't for our old nature, the false accusation would die quickly—for the very fact that it is false. But our instinct for self-preservation will not let it die. We must defend ourselves. We must seek justice. And so the spirit bristles, the blood pressure rises, and we are ready to retaliate—unless we have learned to commit all to the great Keeper and Guardian of our lives.

Taking false accusations in good grace seems to be part of the required curriculum for every student in God's school. In fact, *our* experiences of this nature have probably been among the mildest. Have we ever been threatened or reviled as was Jesus? Or have we ever been accused of making an uproar and leading into the wilderness 4,000 murderers, as Paul was? (Acts 21:38). Or have we been beaten and put in stocks as Jeremiah was, simply for speaking the message the Lord had given him? (Jer. 20:1–2). Or have we ever had someone seeking our life, as Jezebel sought Elijah's, and had to flee into the wilderness? (1 Kings 19:1–4).

Yet God does not measure the size of our test, but only how we take it. And if we would be right before God, we must be right in all things, great or small.

Why is a false accusation so hard to accept in good spirit? Because it threatens our self-esteem, it injures the reputation we have been working hard to build. It hurts our pride—and here is another problem because, as has been well said, one cannot suffer from hurt pride who has no pride to hurt.

Or the pain of the accusation might be partly due to a deep inner disap-

pointment or hurt, a sudden realization that our friends do not think as well of us as we thought they did. This reveals another weakness—that we are working for *their* approval, not God's—which we are strictly forbidden to do. For if we were not seeking their favor, we would not be hurt when their favor was lacking. Here is another opportunity to take another long step toward the Kingdom by rising above our natural instincts and severing this tendency of the flesh.

How should we react when falsely accused? What is the proper response to a statement about us which we feel is not true?



Our first instinct is to retaliate, to accuse our accuser. He had no right or reason to say what he said. Or he is prejudiced against us, or he is trying to put us down in order to promote someone else. Or he is not being truthful. Or he has ulterior motives. Or, or, or...

But before we let our imaginations add sin to sin, let us look honestly—objectively—at the facts. Still more, let us look and look hard for any grain of truth that might be couched in our accuser's words. Perhaps his accusation *is* wrong, but what made him say it? And if we *were* right this time, had we fallen on this point before? Is it a weakness he has often observed in us? Is it a point of danger that we need to watch?

Whatever the wrong, we must be willing and anxious to face it for what it is, and correct it. For while the accusation may not have been altogether fair, if it contains even a kernel of truth, we must grasp it

eagerly, gratefully. For above all, we want to be right before God.

Then there is another point to consider. Perhaps what we said or did was not wrong in itself but we were unwise in the way we acted. It takes real honesty of heart to evaluate fairly our own conduct before God.

If we acted or spoke unwisely, we should remind ourselves of the words of Paul, "Abstain from all appearance of evil" (I Thess. 5:22). This means avoiding what might appear wrong though from our view it is not actually wrong. Here is true brotherly concern, Christian example, godly concern.

Then there is the further danger that we may have done the right thing from the wrong motive. If our accuser realizes this, is he not our best friend to tell us, even though his method is not what we most appreciate? Or he may be warning us, if unkindly, of a danger we did not sense. Shall we be wise enough—humble enough—to take the warning to heart, and get the benefit?

Whatever another may say or do to us, we never have any right to even desire to retaliate. This was the example of Jesus, who "did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously" (I Pet 2:22–23).



When we are falsely accused, embarrassed, insulted, or "put down" by another, the best reply is often no reply at all. We should remember Peter's advice: "Be one in thought and feeling, all of you; be full of broth-

erly affection, kindly and humble-minded. Do not repay wrong with wrong, or abuse with abuse; on the contrary, retaliate with blessing, for a blessing is the inheritance to which you yourselves have been called" (I Pet. 3:8–9, NEB).

The best reason for no reply is the extreme danger of saying something we will later, in saner moments, regret. Then, too, it gives time to think through the situation and prepare to answer wisely. Again, it restrains our instinct to retaliate, to save face, or justify ourselves. There is a fine line between self-justification and

Taking false accusations in good grace seems to be part of the required curriculum for every student in God's school.

explanation, which often is hard to discern, but which we dare not overstep.

If we are truly interested in being right before God, we will not want to reply until we have had time to think through the accusation and look closer into our own heart and character.

When we realize the weight of our own obligation before God, that we are responsible for everything we say, everything we think, everything we do, we will learn to move carefully, especially when our strongest instinct is to justify ourselves. At such a high point of dan-

Have You Been Falsely Accused?

ger, not to step is safer than to misstep.

When we are falsely accused, we have the additional task of keeping our feelings under control, so that we do not conjure up feelings about how our accuser is trying to harm our reputation, or belittle or demean us.

The Psalmist followed the plan of no reply when accused. He said, "Those who wish me dead defame me, those who mean to injure me spread cruel gossip and mutter slanders all day long. But I am deaf, I do not listen; I am like a dumb man who cannot open his

***One can never
suffer from hurt
pride who has no
pride to hurt.***

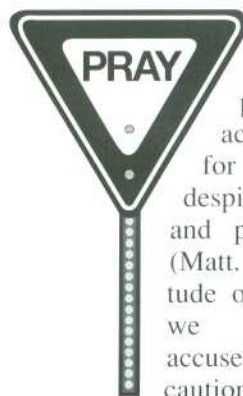
mouth. I behave like a man who cannot hear and whose tongue offers no defence" (Ps. 38:12-14, NEB). David's attitude was right. He said, "I am indeed prone to stumble,...I make no secret of my iniquity and am anxious at the thought of my sin." He was not trying to cover his wrongs, but at the same time he knew that his accusers' purpose was wrong. "Those who repay good with evil oppose me because my purpose is good." At the same time he could be strong in God. He was willing to trust all to God, to let God answer the false accusations. "Lord," he prayed, "do not thou forsake me; keep not far from me, my God.

Hasten to my help, O Lord my salvation" (Ps. 38:17-22, NEB). This will be our attitude also, if we are right before God.



Jesus gave definite instructions about what to do in this special situation if being falsely accused. What did He say our attitude should be? Just one word: "Rejoice."

It is part of His first sermon: "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you" (Matt. 5:11-12). Why rejoice? Why be "exceeding glad" at this very difficult moment when we are accused, even persecuted—and innocent? Because God is our judge, and He knows the facts. And so the accusation becomes only an opportunity for us to prove our inner strength. The only caution here is to be sure that the accusation is indeed *false*.



Then Jesus went one step further: we should pray for our accusers: "Pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Matt. 5:44). An attitude of prayer when we are falsely accused is a sure precaution against any feeling of retaliation, or justifying ourselves, or returning evil for evil, or making unwise and unneeded remarks which we will later regret. For as in every other

situation, most important is our own attitude before God. We cannot control the other person's motives, we cannot read another's heart, but we can know our own. And we can keep our own heart right before God. With an attitude of prayer we may even feel sorrow for our accuser, and be more ready to pity than to condemn.

Prayer puts us in the proper frame of mind toward ourselves, toward our accuser and toward God. With an attitude of prayer we are more able to see ourselves and any evil that is lurking in our heart. Even though we are sure that we were indeed falsely accused, we should be anxious for God to search us, and pray in the words of the Psalmist, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Ps. 139:23-24). Here is a power-filled prayer. When we pray, "Search me, O God," we are saying, scrutinize me, and know my heart. David wanted God to scrutinize his heart, and if any sin was there, he wanted God to find it. He did not want the Lord to depend on his outward appearance, but to thoroughly investigate his heart.

And so should we pray, especially when we feel falsely accused. There is always something we can learn, something we can gain, some benefit we can derive if only our heart is open to the right impressions, humble and contrite before God. There is nothing we can gain by justifying ourselves to ourselves, proving ourselves "right" in our own eyes. But there is everything to gain by acknowledging the wrong, confessing it to God, and setting about to amend our ways. Everything of forgiveness, and blessing, and happiness, and life for evermore.

MM

Don't Grow Weary

"But ye, brethren, be not weary in well-doing" (II Thess. 3:13).

The fact that we are urged by the Apostle not to be weary in well doing, shows that we are required to do well. It also shows a point of our nature, that we grow tired of doing even the best things. Is it possible that those who share our high calling in Christ could ever grow weary in the pursuit of it? The answer is Yes! Hence the timeliness of this warning.

The Bible lists many reasons why we might tend to grow weary in well doing: pride, procrastination, covetousness, cares of this life, deceitfulness of riches, trials, impatience, anger, jealousy, the lust of life, and so on and on. The sheer pleasure of living from day to day is an exciting and time-consuming activity for many people. If we take the trouble to look about us we can readily discover those whose chief concern and activity is one or more of the above.

Of what does well doing consist? Jesus tells us that it means to love the Lord our God with all our heart, all our soul, and with all our mind; and to love our neighbor as ourselves (Matt. 22:37-39). Paul tells us that it consists of being made over into new creatures, armed with the mind of Christ

(Eph. 4:22-24). He also says that it consists of killing out the old man which is in our own nature, and replacing it with that which is clean and pure and godlike.

But however we define well doing, a little experience will soon reveal to us that it is work. Indeed, we read in Eph. 2:10 this very thing: "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

Spiritual effort, like physical, is wearying; at least it is wearying to the "old man" until he has been completely made over into a new creature. The one quality of character necessary to keep from growing weary in well doing is endurance. This is why James writes (1:2-4 Moffatt), "Greet it as pure joy, my brothers, when you encounter any sort of trial, sure that the sterling temper of your faith produces endurance; only let your endurance be a finished product, so that you may be finished and complete, with never a defect." Only spiritual endurance will carry us through to a successful completion of our work.

In explaining the Parable of the

Sower in Mark 4:16-17, Jesus says, "And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness; and have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended." If pride, covetousness, or the pleasures and riches of this world are keeping our hearts stony, the Word cannot take root and we will endure but for a time. The reward, then, is not for us. James tells us (1:12), "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him."

Let us check up on ourselves: Do we endure without complaining the cares and petty annoyances of every day? Do we endure without looking back the heavier trials that at times seem almost more than we can bear? Do we endure with patience life's reverses without losing sight of the prize? Can we endure unjust criticism with fortitude, knowing the time is short? Do we endure without repining the loss of pleasures we once held so dear,

Don't Grow Weary

knowing the prize is sure? If so, we are enduring without growing weary, and we may know that when our Saviour returns ours shall be the crowning reward of eternal life which He has prepared for all who love [obey] Him. "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous (I John 5:3).

It is easy to deceive ourselves and believe that we are doing well when in reality we are failing miserably. Paul tells us in Gal. 6:7-8, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." Sowing to the flesh is not always doing those things of deepest worldly dye; but in the words of our founder, we can sow to the flesh as easily as we can sit in our easy chair with folded hands, by allowing our mind to wander to topics not edifying.

When we feel that living according to God's righteous command-

ments is becoming a burden to us, then we are certainly growing weary in well doing. Jeremiah tells us (23:33) that when anyone speaks of the burden of the Lord, we shall then say, "What burden?" He further says (v. 40) that if we refer to our work as the burden of the Lord, He will forsake us and will bring an everlasting reproach upon us, and a perpetual shame which shall not be forgotten.

In the 11th chapter of Hebrews we read of some of the pilgrims of the six thousand years who pushed on against great odds without growing weary in well doing. How could they do it? The answer is given in verse 16, "But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city." They had a great goal—that heavenly, eternal City. And so, by faith, they pushed on without growing weary. The 15th verse tells us that they could have looked back, they could have returned to the country from which they came, but instead they forged ahead. What lay ahead was incom-

parably better than what they had left behind.

If we, too, keep this vision, we will be able to push on without becoming weary in well doing, and we shall reap the same reward when Jesus comes to give to every man according as his work shall be.

As Christians looking for our Lord's returning, we should be concerned about the things that make us weary. Do we recognize them? Do we fear them? Are we anxious to put them far away? Apparently Demas did not maintain this attitude of mind, because it is written that he loved this present world, and as a result, grew weary in well doing. Phygellus and Hermogenes were others who grew weary and turned away from the great Apostle when all Asia forsook him.

As Jesus did always only those things which pleased the Father, so also must we put away the things of the flesh and do only those things which please the Eternal Father. Then we can be sure that we will not grow weary in well doing but will reap in due season the full reward, even life for evermore. MM

Take Heed!

*LIFE is too rare a gift for thoughtless living,
Would that I had known in bygone days;
But youth finds age so tender and forgiving,
It never thinks to change or mend its ways.*

*Now I am older grown, and life no longer
Lures me out to pleasure's rosy way.
Had I been wiser, now I should be stronger,
Braver and fitter for my task today.*

*I have been foolish in my selfish-seeking,
I dashed my friendships, run my chances through,
Injured good people by my careless speaking,
Spoiled by sorrow much I tried to do.*

*My record's down, and sadly now I view it,
I am not all I had the strength to be.
I took the gift of life and soon ran through it
As though life would renew the gift for me.*

*Some take the gift and squander it in pleasure;
Some stain it dark with little sins and mean;
God pours out life from His abundant measure
And age—too late—learns what it could have been.*

—Selected

FAILURE

Need Not Be Fatal

Abraham Lincoln is recognized as one of our greatest presidents. Yet he failed eleven times prior to being elected the sixteenth President of the United States.

He failed in business in 1831.

He was defeated for the Legislature in 1832.

He failed again in business in 1833.

He suffered a nervous breakdown in 1836.

He was defeated for Speaker of the House in 1838.

He was defeated for Elector in 1840.

He was defeated for Congress in 1843.

He was defeated again for the same office in 1846.

He was defeated for the Senate in 1855.

He was defeated for Vice President in 1856.

He tried again for the Senate in 1858, but was defeated.

Most men would not have placed their names in nomination for dogcatcher after so many defeats, but Lincoln ran for President of the United States just two years later, and won.

Does Lincoln's experience tell us that there is some virtue in failing? No, but it tells us that failure need

not be fatal. There can even be virtue in failure—if we use it right.

We all experience some failures in life. Especially do we fail in our efforts to live the ideal life to which we aspire, the life that pleases God. Again and again we resolve, and again and again we fail and must recover from our failure.

Perhaps we are failing this very moment. We are doing or thinking or feeling what we know we should not. Our failure may be only an attitude, but there it is. How do we change it? It may be as visible as the nose on our face, or it may be hidden to the eyes of all around us. But it is not hidden to God. He sees, and He knows—and we know.

It might be a habit we have decided to break. Habits have a way of getting hold of us. When we are forming them, we think we can quit anytime. But when we come to breaking them, we find it is not so easy.

Or our failure may be past, but now we must live with its consequences. David had this bitter experience. He sinned, and he repented. But for the rest of his life he could not escape its baneful effects.

The Bible is filled with examples of those who failed in one way or another.

Samuel knew the pain of failure.

Having grown up in the house of Eli and having witnessed the shame which Eli's sons brought upon Eli and Israel, Samuel probably vowed again and again that no son of his would ever act like that. He would see to it that they were brought up right. His sons would be models of righteousness.

But Samuel's sons did not follow the path of their godly father. There may have been no fault on Samuel's side, but he had to live with the stigma, and the recognition that they were not what they should be, and it was not a secret he could keep to himself. Everyone knew that Samuel's sons were wicked. But Samuel did not let this failure hinder his own spiritual growth. He knew that he would stand or fall by his own record and not that of his sons. And thus he used this failure to detach himself from earthly affections and draw nearer to God. He did not let the failure be fatal. Many times he may have asked himself, "Where did I go wrong?" But he knew also that he was not responsible for their wrong decisions. He might influence or admonish but he could not compel.

David knew the bitter pain of failure. God had given him success after success, victory upon victory. And there was still more to come.

But suddenly David found himself in a great sin. It was his own fault. He should have been like Joseph years earlier and said a positive *no* to the first whisper of temptation, but he did not. When the reality of his sin struck him, he could only pray for mercy. A lesser man would have given up all hope of repentance. But not David. He was humble, and willing to repent, and God accepted his repentance and change of heart. It was not a failure he could forget, but he did not let it be fatal.

Peter failed. He had been so sure of himself. All others might deny Christ, but not he! What a positive thinker he was! If positive thinking would keep one right, Peter should have had no problem. But he denied the Lord—not once, but three times, and all in one night! It was a failure hard to face, but Peter

did not let his failure be fatal. Jesus gave him another chance, and Peter rose up and went on—to a life triumphant. Hear his ringing words, written to encourage all others who fail: "...Make every effort to supplement your faith with goodness, goodness with knowledge, knowledge with self-control, self-control with steadfastness, steadfastness with piety, piety with the spirit of brotherhood, and the spirit of brotherhood with love. For if you have these qualities in their fulness, they will make you neither idle nor unproductive when it comes to the understanding of our Lord Jesus Christ....Therefore brothers, make all the greater efforts to make God's call and choice of you certain. For if you have these qualities, you will never stumble, for then you will be triumphantly admitted to the eternal kingdom of our Lord

and Saviour Jesus Christ" (II Pet. 1:7-11, Goodspeed).

What fitting admonition from one who had failed, telling us that failure can be avoided. "If you have these qualities, you will never stumble."

Failures may have major life consequences—an unhappy marriage, broken health, a failure in business, a lost job, an unwise investment, or any one of a thousand different experiences life can bring. At best the future looks uncertain—from human point of view. But why take that view of our lives? Why keep our eyes focused on the earth, when God has told us to look up? Why concentrate on our failing when He has promised that "there hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (I Cor. 10:13).

Let us take a lesson from Abraham Lincoln and those who have gone before us and not be discouraged by our failures, for as long as we have life and opportunity, our failures need not be fatal. Even if there is no hope of that type of achievement in this world, we can use the experience as a stepping-stone to our higher goal. Whatever comes, nothing can cause us to fail in attaining the great goal God has set before us unless we allow it. And what will matter a thousand failures and disappointments in this life, if only they add up to eternity!

Every failure can be another lesson learned, another victory on our record before God. It all depends on how we take it, how we command ourselves, how we use it to push us forward in the virtues of patience, humility, Christian love, kindness, and endurance. MM

*Almighty God, whose face is veiled from us,
whose majesty is robed in wonder,
whose ways are awesome and mighty,
Make me sensitive to the ways of spiritual maturity.
Make me aware of how Thy holy law of truth
can address the everyday situations of my life.*

*Reveal life to me as a growth—
growing in knowledge of Thee, of Thy truth,
and of myself.*

*O God most holy,
lead me to act on the faith that I have today
that I may have more faith on which to act tomorrow,
and may my trust be always manifest in eager,
humble obedience
that I may rejoice in the Day
when I shall stand before the Christ of the ages.
Amen.*



Pray For Whom?

“Is it right that one cannot pray for any but a true believer, that is, one who is obeying the commands of God?”

The Bible gives us many examples of persons for whom prayers were made. Most of these were prayers *of* believers and *for* believers.

But there are others.

The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy that in his general meetings prayers should be made for “all men,” whom he specified: “for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty” (I Tim. 2:1–3).

On numerous occasions Moses prayed to God in behalf of the children of Israel, who were disobedient and rebellious, and God heard and answered him. (See Num. 14:15–22; Num. 21:1–3.)

In the time of Samuel, the people had apostatized from God, but when they were in danger, and needed deliverance, they “cried unto the Lord, and said, We have sinned, because we have forsaken the Lord, and have served Baalim and Ashtaroth: but now deliver us out of the hand of our enemies, and we will serve thee” (I Sam. 12:10). They continued by demanding of the Lord that He give them a king to reign over them. When the Lord

sent thunder and rain, the people’s heart was changed and they pleaded with Samuel to pray to God for them. “And all the people said unto Samuel, Pray for thy servants unto the Lord thy God, that we die not: for we have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king” (I Sam. 12:17–19). Apparently they felt that Samuel’s communication lines with God were better intact than their own. And Samuel replied, “Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way” (v. 23). Samuel was willing to pray for them, as long as they were willing to work with God. And when they turned against God, Samuel could pray that they return to God, see the error of their ways, and seek forgiveness.

God expressly told Jeremiah not to pray for His people, who had proved utterly rebellious and hard-hearted and impenitent. “Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to me: for I will not hear thee” (Jer. 7:16).

In John 17 we find a long prayer of Jesus’. First He is praying on His own behalf; then He intercedes for His disciples. Then, at verse 9, He says, speaking of His disciples, “I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou

hast given me; for they are thine.” They had received His words and believed on Him. Hence Jesus had special concern for them. And because He was going away, He knew that they must continue on without Him in the world, and so He prayed the Father that they might be kept from the evil that is in the world.

Then in verses 20–21, Jesus prayed for others: “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;...that they also may be one in us.” Jesus had loving feeling toward His own, yet He looked forward and prayed even for those in the far-distant future who would believe—His prayer reached even to us.

In Prov. 28:9 we read that “He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination.” God does not hear all prayers. He reads the heart, and knows who He will hear and who He will not.

It is also proper to pray for the weak, for those not fully keeping the commandments of God, remembering that we ourselves sometimes fail. Jesus prayed for His disciples when they were not perfect; He prayed that they might be kept from the evil in the world. He prayed for Peter when He transgressed. He said, “I have prayed for

thee, that thy faith fail not" (Luke 22:32).

We can safely follow the example of Paul, Samuel, Jesus, and Moses, and pray for those not obeying the commands of God, if we ask only that which is in accordance with the will of God (I John 5:14).

◆ The Evil Spirit that Returned

"What is the evil spirit that returns bringing seven other spirits?"

The narrative is in Matt. 12:43-45: "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return unto my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first...."

Jesus' parable may have been suggested by the case history of an insane man who was thought to be healed. It may frequently have happened that one seemingly cured from demoniac possession suffered a relapse, and that his state became worse than before.

The demon, expelled from a man's house of life, wanders in a wilderness. Then, homeless, returns to look from far at "my house". Finding it swept and set in order—but empty—he summons seven other devils each worse than himself; and they, in alliance too strong for the man, come to possess him. His "last state is [thus] worse than the first." Empty houses never remain empty. Dust gathers in the corners; rats gnaw at the floorboards.

There is a terrible persistence in wickedness: it returns, and the soul

not indwelt by the rightful tenant is always beleaguered. Reformation is never enough, no matter how thorough the cleansing. At best it is only a prelude to a new loyalty. Nature and human nature both abhor a vacuum: no faith is almost worse than a bad faith, for no faith invites a swarm of bad faiths; no life remains empty of worship. It doesn't greatly help a man to know what he does *not* believe, unless he knows also what he does believe.

The Pharisees had cast out the gross sins, but they left life empty of any loyalty beyond themselves. So seven other devils arrived, such as money, greed, self-righteousness, and contempt for those without the Law. But the followers of Christ had invited Him to live in a house which, when He first came, was not even swept or garnished. Yet soon their table was spread, for He was their Bread of life. They feared no darkness, for He was their Light. Death held no terror, for He was their Resurrection and Life. When shall we learn that our hearts are made for a Divine indwelling? When shall we learn to say, "I believe with all my heart"?

Our world needs that passionate and positive commitment. Otherwise our emptiness invites a worse fate. When Christ comes to live in us the devils keep their distance.

The last part of v. 45 shows Jesus' meaning: "Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation." In the form of a parable our Lord foretells the degeneration of the people who imagine that they have nothing to learn from Him, although He has more wisdom to impart than Solomon gave to the queen of Sheba. The people were in danger of a relapse into even greater evil if they did not open their hearts to receive the words of Jesus.

A spiritual lesson vital to the alert Christian also can be drawn

Pleasing Whom?

We all like to be well thought of, but that doesn't make us any better in God's sight. And if we please God, we won't please man, or ourselves.

Jesus tells us that all that defiles comes from the heart of man. He mentions thirteen evils. Evil thoughts is first on the list.

We can't keep the thoughts from coming into our mind, but we don't need to keep them there.

Paul says "work out your own salvation." No one can do our work for us, but we can help each other. We have everything to gain and nothing to lose if we keep trying.

Indiana

E. M.

The Great Deceiver

"Self" is our worst enemy. It deceives. It is always ready with an alibi when we give it a foothold, and it soothes us when we have stumbled by making us think that to err is human and not really serious. Self is the sly old fellow who trips us up at every opportunity.

But God's mercy is endless if we are truly trying to overcome that old self. What tremendous pay if we succeed in putting him to death, permanently. And what a joy when we can say we've won complete control over "self."

New York

L. S.

from this parable. Normally, in our unregenerated state, our house of life was the abode of many unclean spirits; we were harboring many fleshly ways, many unchristian interests and attitudes. Once the way of Christ is presented to us and we accept its challenge, we attempt to reform our lives, with the result that our house becomes swept and garnished; the old evil propensities are forced out. But the flesh is weak and the evil is strong, and the process of keeping our house clean and free from the demon self proves more drastic than we suspected. Our worst self is ill at ease in such a wholesome atmosphere.

Let us beware of such an "evil Spirit" that, once banished, can return.

MM

*The things are few on earth
That wishes can attain;
Whate'er we want of any worth
We've got to work to gain.*

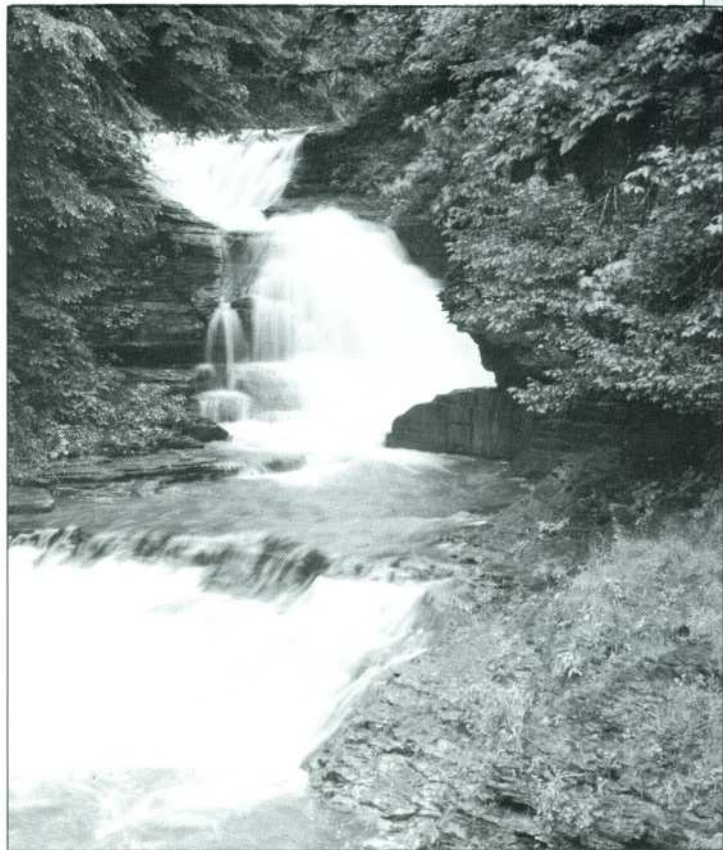
Many people don't fail—they only succeed in the wrong things.

The father of success is work and the mother of achievement is ambition!

The prayer that ascends highest comes from the lowest depths of a humbled heart.

Do right, and God will recompense you by giving you the power to do more right. Give, and God's reward to you will be the spirit of giving more. Love, and God will pay you with the capacity of more love. Work, so that one day God may reward you with the abundance of His eternal blessings.

Be a lamplighter, then no matter which way you go you will leave a lighted path.



*None the place ordained refuseth,
They are one and they are all
Living stones the builder chooseth
For the courses of his wall.*

Slowly, through all the universe, this temple of God is being built. Wherever, in any world, a soul, by loving obedience, catches the fire of God's likeness, that one becomes a part of His growing wall, a living stone.

When in your hard fight, your tiresome drudgery, your terrible temptation, you catch the purpose of your being and give yourself to God, and so give Him the chance to chip and hammer you into a living stone, so you are taken up and set into that growing wall.

Wherever souls are being tried and ripened, in whatever commonplace and homely ways, there God is hewing out the pillars for His temple. Oh, if the stone could only have some vision of the temple of which it is to be a part forever, what patience would fill it as it feels the blows of the hammer, to know that success for it is simply to let itself be wrought into whatever shape the Master wills!

Send Forth Thy Light and Truth

*S*end forth, O God, Thy light and truth,
And let them lead me still,
Undaunted, in the paths of right,
Up to Thy holy hill:
Then to Thy altar will I spring
And in my God rejoice;
And praise shall tune the trembling string,
And gratitude my voice.

O why, my soul, art thou cast down?
Within me why distressed?
Thy hopes the God of grace shall crown;
He yet shall make thee blessed:
To Him, my never-failing Friend,
I bow, and kiss the rod;
To Him shall thanks and praise ascend,
My Saviour and my God.

by John Quincy Adams, 1767-1848