

Megiddo Message



*"Rejoice that God
has given you to live in
these great times, and have your part
in FREEDOM'S CROWNING HOUR!"*

Megiddo Message

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Editorially Speaking...

"Be Strong: Your Work Shall Be Rewarded"

"**B**E strong." This command, so oft-repeated in the Word of God, suggests that by nature we are weak, flaccid creatures. Moral strength is something we must acquire.

How can we become strong? "... He that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger" (Job 17:9). Here is a never-fail formula: the cleaner our hands from every stain of evil, the stronger our character.

Let us recall briefly the story of a certain king of Judah who was commanded to be strong—King Asa. When he took the throne after the death of his father, he immediately removed from the countryside the altars and groves where the people had been doing homage to strange gods. Under his reign, Judah enjoyed a few years of peace; but ultimately the Ethiopians made war against them. King Asa cried to the Lord for help, and the Lord answered his prayer, for we read: "So the Eternal routed the Ethiopians before Asa and Judah; ... they were broken before the Eternal and his army" (II Chron. 14:12-13, Moffatt).

After the battle, the victorious army marched back to Jerusalem, parading the rich spoil they had taken. "At that time the spirit of God came upon Azariah, the son of Obed, so that he went out to meet Asa, and said to him, 'Listen to me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin. The Lord has been with you, because you have been true to him; and if you seek him, he will be found of you; but if you forsake him, he will forsake you. ... Be strong, and let not your hands slacken, for your work shall be rewarded.'"

These words resound to us: "Be strong." Are we letting them move us to action? Literal idolatry was Judah's plague, but we have set up idols in our hearts (Ezek. 14:3)—affections, possessions, interests—which can prevent wholehearted devotion to God. Are we taking courage and putting away these things which the Lord calls abominations?

God is no respecter of persons; He will not overlook our idol simply because we feel that it is too much hard work to remove it. Remember, with the command "Be strong" comes also the assurance that *our work shall be rewarded*. These words gave courage to King Asa to continue his battle against idolatry. And when we look forward to the reward God offers—endless, radiant, immortal life—we, too, will take courage.

God does not ask us to work for Him without prospect of reward. He offers the most generous recompense, with the assurance that no labor of love shall pass unnoticed; no struggle against sin shall be forgotten.

God is faithful, and will repay us abundantly for everything we do in His service. "Be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (I Cor. 15:58).

With such a positive assurance that our work shall be rewarded, why shouldn't we *be strong!* ●●

Freedom's Crowning Hour

*Ye that have faith to look with fearless eyes
Beyond the tragedy of a world at strife,
And know that out of death and night shall rise
The dawn of ampler life:*

*Rejoice, whatever anguish rend the heart,
That God has given you the priceless dower
To live in these great times and have your part
In Freedom's crowning hour;*

*That ye may tell your sons who see the light
High in the heavens--their heritage to take--*

"I saw the powers of darkness take their flight;

I saw the morning break!" --Selected

RESOLVED, "that these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be Free and Independent States. . . ."

On the Fourth of July, 1776, in the history of the United States, the Continental Congress officially approved the Declaration of Independence, and the movement was begun which led to the establishment of a free and independent nation which we, its citizens, are privileged to enjoy today.

We thank God for all the steps that have been taken for us. We are thankful for those forefathers who step by step challenged and broke the power of imperial dictatorship and dared experiment with a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. We thank God for the discovery of the American continent. We thank Him for the spirit that dominated its early colonists, impelling them to declare their independence from the British Crown that a new nation might be born in liberty. And we would not forget the men who gave their lives that that liberty might become a reality. We rejoice that a man like George Washington lived, who at the price of much privation and personal sacrifice led the colonial armies to

victory in the Revolutionary War.

We thank God for the men who framed the American Constitution, giving to all equal rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, insuring to every man the right to worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience. Were it not for the freedom brought about by the founding of these American institutions, it is doubtful that religious liberty as we know it would be ours today.

We thank God for the men who bled and died that the blight of slavery and oppression might be removed from the face of our fair land. We are thankful also for the young men in the First and Second World Wars who, having barely tasted of life, sacrificed their all that we might continue to live in free America. We thank God also for those who since the Second World War have fought and died in the service of their country that we might retain our standard of freedom and honor throughout the world.

When the United States entered World War I, it was the hope of statesmen, churchmen, and all lovers of peace and international good will, that

it would be a war to end wars. On this altruistic basis America consented to take part in the cruel holocaust. After the war, books were written honoring some of the great heroes. In a book written in honor of King Albert of Belgium, the following theme was expressed: "Rejoice that God has given you to live in these great times, and have your part in Freedom's Crowning Hour."

Unfortunately, this noble sentiment did not prove historically correct. Freedom's crowning hour is yet to be achieved. Time and again has the painful lesson been impressed, that war settles nothing. It contributes little, if anything, to the ultimate freedom. Too often it merely inaugurates a new set of oppressors and a new set of slaves.

A number of definite steps must be taken before freedom's crowning hour can become a reality for all the inhabitants of the earth. The Word of God declares that this delightful state of affairs can never be brought about by human instrumentality. Jeremiah foretold that men would be saying "Peace, peace, when there is no peace." And the apostle Paul postulated that when they should say "peace and safety, then sudden destruction" should come upon them (Jer. 6:14; I Thess. 5:3).

The human desire for peace and security is so innate and instinctive that people are inclined to indulge in wishful thinking and allow their hope to outweigh their better judgment. The fact is that as civilization has advanced, wars have grown more numerous and more destructive. And following every major upheaval there have been indications that nations have grown tired of international tension and disillusioned by war. But the lesson is soon forgotten as new tensions arise and force overpowers the yearnings for peace.

It will take divine intervention in the form of the personal return of Christ to bring about universal peace. Human inertia, human selfishness, human greed for gain and personal advantage preclude the hope of freedom from want, from war, and an equitable distribution of earth's natural resources through human efforts. Christ is to come as the "Lion of the tribe of Juda" (Rev. 5:5), conquering and to conquer. It also is foretold that when He comes He will have to "rebuken strong nations afar off," and compel them to "beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks," and "learn war no more" before freedom's crowning hour can become a reality. But should man's efforts for peace be completely successful, this prophecy would be meaningless, for there would be neither swords nor spears to beat into plowshares and pruninghooks, no science of war to unlearn.

The first step toward freedom's crowning hour must be taken by each of us individually now during our lifetime. "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." What shall make us free? Jesus said, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). If the eyes of our understanding have been opened so that for us the shackles of superstition and error have been broken, and the truth that sets men free from false religious beliefs and sinful living has become our prized possession, we should thrill with joy to know that to us one phase of freedom's crowning hour has been achieved.

We can enjoy these things, but that is not enough. We cannot boast of our knowledge of God's plan and the truth that sets us free and continue to go about doing as we please. For Jesus also said: "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (John 13:17). Knowledge without application is like a tree that bears leaves but no fruit. Hence our next step is to live up to what we know.

The Bible authors were familiar with the problem of liberty. The Christian gospel is a gospel of freedom. But freedom as interpreted by the gospel writers is a very different thing from what would appear to be the current concept of it. As a matter of fact, when we read the New Testament ideal of freedom, we wonder whether it is in reality freedom or a new type of slavery. For the Bible certainly does not interpret freedom as doing as one pleases, if doing as one pleases impinges on the rights of others, or on the physical, moral, or spiritual well-being of ourselves.

The New Testament seldom mentions liberty without a warning, as though it were a very vital and potentially dangerous thing. James declares there is a law of liberty by which seekers after freedom are judged. This law demands that man live not for himself, but for others and for his God. Paul says we have been called unto liberty, but we lose that liberty if it becomes an "occasion to the flesh," or a "mere opportunity for your lower nature" (Gal. 5:13, Phillips). Why? "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: . . . so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (v. 14). Dr. Moffatt's translation of I Pet. 2:16 is especially good: "Live like free men, only never make your freedom a pretext for misconduct; live like servants of God."

That just about sums it up: We are free, but we are servants, paradoxical as that may sound. We are free *inside* law. We are free, not to do as we please, but free to do *as we ought*. We are not so much free *from* something as we are free *for* something.

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God At Work

WE live in a world of activity. Everywhere around us are blazoned signs set up for all who have eyes to see: "SLOW—GOD WORKING." All creation speaks of activity, purpose, direction and destiny. God is not asleep. *In* men, *by* men, *for* men, *with* men and *toward* men, God is at work.

The Lord our God is one God, a living God, a working God. Such is the character of the Almighty One that "inhabith eternity, whose name is Holy" (Isa. 57:15). The great I AM that guided Israel through the wilderness is still active today, guiding and directing the lives of all who shall be heirs of salvation.

The Lord our God is a working God. It is this fact which the ancient prophets of Israel and Judah so often emphasized as they dealt death-blows to the graven images so popularly worshiped as gods. A *working* God suggests direction, life, animation, energy and accomplishment. All these are revealed in God's creative activities: "Ask me of things to come concerning my sons," says the Eternal through His prophet Isaiah, "and concerning the work of my hands command ye me. I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded" (Isa. 45: 10-11). "Ah Lord God!" wrote the prophet Jeremiah, "behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee" (Jer. 32: 17). How could anyone be unmindful of the Lord his "maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth" (Isa. 51:13)?

Many a time did the sweet Singer of Israel extol the greatness and majesty of the works of God. "I will extol thee, my God, O king; and I will bless thy name for ever and ever.... I will speak of the glorious honour of thy majesty, and of thy wondrous works.... Among the gods there is none like unto thee, O Lord; neither are there any works like unto thy works.... For thou art great, and doest wondrous things: thou art God alone" (Ps. 145:1, 7; 86:8, 10).

Another Work

When we think of the work of God, we think first of the visible evidence of His activity. "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork" (Ps. 19:1). With the Psalmist we "consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained" (Ps. 8:3). With Nehemiah we exclaim, "Thou, even thou, art Lord alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee" (Neh. 9:6). All these are visible evidences of God at work.

But this creative activity is not the only working of Omnipotence. God is engaged in another work, less spectacular in its display and unknown to the world at large, but a work that is vital to the fulfillment of His plans as they involve the salvation of His earthly children. And this work is His direct and personal effort continuous through all ages in behalf of the prospective heirs of salvation—we might call it Divine Assistance.

God's Plan

Long ages ago God formulated a plan and set it in motion. In keeping with this plan, He gives to all mankind this present life, with the necessary provisions for its sustenance and possibilities for limited pleasure and pain. But at the same time He reveals that this need not be all—He has more, exceeding abundantly more, to give to those who shall choose to cooperate with His higher plan and work with Him.

Who is sufficiently interested in His plans to stake their all upon Him? Who is willing to give all His heart and soul and mind and strength to goals which can be seen only by the eye of faith? Who will relinquish everything of *his* present life for everything of *God's* future?

To select from the mass of humankind this special material most suited to the promotion of

His work and purpose, God devised a law of faith and obedience. "Obey and live," He decreed, or "disobey and die." Here was the plan in its essence, as delivered to ancient Israel; to different persons it took slightly different forms, but all focus on one central point: obedience.

To Abraham, the word "obey" meant first a move from a land of prosperity and ease to a rugged nomadic life in the less populous regions of Canaan. Later, it meant long years of clinging to a promise of which he could see not the slightest possibility of fulfillment. The Lord had said to him, "Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be" (Gen. 15:5), when as yet he had no child and no heir. Again, obedience to God meant the willing offering of the child of promise as a sacrifice to God.

To Noah, obedience meant the constructing of an ark for the preservation of himself and his family. To Lot, obedience meant an immediate escape from the doomed city of the plain without so much as a backward glance. To Moses, obedience meant the leadership of a host of uneducated slaves from the land of Egypt to the Promised Land of Canaan. To Esther it meant the courage to defy the law of the king and petition before him for the freedom of her people. To Jeremiah, obedience meant years of preaching to a rebellious and unappreciative people bent on pursuing their own way and forgetting God. To the apostle Paul, obedience meant a life of hardship and travel, with little of ease and comfort and much of suffering and denial as he ministered the Gospel to the Gentiles.

To all, obedience meant sacrifice, surrender; the concentrated effort of "casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (II Cor. 10:4-5). To all it meant the crucifying of the flesh, with the affections and lusts (Gal. 5:24); a daily bearing of the cross of self-denial and self-discipline (Luke 9:23). To all it meant *work*.

All this is work on the part of the individual aspirant to life eternal. But let us return to the thought of *God* at work. How dependent are we on *His* part?

Divine Assistance Needed

A man might aspire to the highest blessings of God; he might conduct his life as perfectly by the laws of God as is humanly possible; yet, without the help of God, he could not qualify for eternal salvation. Why?

Because God has commanded that men should work *with* Him, in cooperation with His plans re-

garding divine assistance. The man or woman seeking eternal salvation is in reality seeking to become the friend of God. And what friend is he who feels no dependence upon the object of his friendship, or who fails to communicate to his friend his joys and sorrows, blessings and needs?

Divine Assistance . . . Through Angels

God's work in behalf of men has taken different forms in different ages. One of the most recognizable means was through the angels.

Abraham received help, advice and commandments from God through direct contact with God's messengers, the angels. An angel, identifying himself as "the captain of the Lord's host," appeared to Joshua at Jericho as a "man with his sword drawn in his hand." An angel from God explained to Daniel the meaning of his vision.

Angels were a source of faith to men as they announced events soon to be fulfilled. An angel announced the birth of Isaac, of Ishmael, of Samson, of Jacob and Esau, of John the Baptist and of Jesus.

An angel prevented the death of Abraham's son, and confirmed the promise to Abraham.

Angels assisted the Israelites by escorting them through the wilderness (Ex. 23:20).

Angels delivered Lot and his two daughters from the doomed city.

Angels were also used as messengers of comfort and assurance. On board the ill-fated ship caught in a stormy sea, an angel of the Lord stood by the faithful Paul.

In each of these instances, angels gave divine assistance where human hands were inadequate.

Divine Assistance . . . Through the Spirit

In this day of a thousand different faiths—and nearly all of them claiming to be led by the Spirit of God—the spirit world is very real and near to many people. Some feel a mysterious, unexplainable power beyond their control or comprehension. Others imagine an invisible person which can communicate with the deceased or thwart their best efforts and intentions. Psychic phenomena mystify and disturb unsettled minds, and spirits transcending the human intellect are believed to be active everywhere.

From time immemorial man has worshiped the spirit world. Spirits were part of most ancient mythologies. Men felt an awareness of an inexplicable power which entered their lives from time to time; such spirits became subjects of worship.

The world which surrounded the New Testament Church traded liberally in the spirit realm. Men

were quite familiar with the idea that a divine Spirit might possess a man. The presence of the spirit, it was universally held, was shown by an unusual ecstatic type of behavior. It was when a man acted like a crazed dervish that it could be known that the so-called spirit had come upon him. Even as much a thinker as Plato believed that a divine spirit could transform men into ecstasies.

Thus it was nothing new when the Hebrew people learned about the "spirit of God." But theirs was a concept entirely different from that of the pagan spirit world.

The Spirit of which we read in the Old Testament is always connected with God. When seeking the meaning of his dream, Pharaoh in Egypt sought a man "in whom the Spirit of God is" (Gen. 41: 38). We read of how the Spirit of God came upon Balaam, or upon Saul, or upon Azariah, and always it is simply a power which makes a man capable of superhuman action. Always supernatural powers were declared to be simply aspects of one power, which was described as a spirit proceeding from God, a mysterious force for the accomplishing of His will. By this spirit, Moses was able to strike the rock and obtain water. Aaron's rod blossomed, budded and bore almonds in a single night. Elijah smote with his mantle, and the waters of the Jordan divided. All these were instances of the Spirit of God actively working by imparting to men superhuman power. And always it had a purpose—to accomplish the plan of God.

The Spirit of God—in the New Testament

The term "Spirit of God" is a term also used frequently throughout the New Testament. It suggests any principle, influence, or disposition of God toward men. It is God at work, fulfilling His plans and purposes in behalf of men. Often the effects of that spirit were through an open revelation of the will of God, a response to prayer, a sense of divine direction, or circumstances which worked together for good.

In particular during New Testament times this "Spirit of God" was manifest in the Holy Spirit power—a special, temporary phase of God's spirit activity in behalf of men that was vividly seen in the work of the apostles. This "power from on high" which Jesus had promised before He ascended to heaven, descended like tongues of fire on the day of Pentecost and sat upon each of the disciples who had tarried in Jerusalem. "And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:4).

This gift of power, also called the "sprinkling rain," the "former rain" of which Joel prophesied,

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was given for a limited time during the apostolic age to confirm the spoken word, and it ceased when its purpose was accomplished.

Of this Holy Spirit power we are told in First Corinthians 12. It was a power by which its possessor could do various types of supernatural work on a limited, partitive basis. To one it meant the power to heal, to another the ability to teach; to another, speaking in tongues; to another, the ability to interpret. It was a temporary power, never superior to the "more excellent way" of "faith, hope and charity" (I Cor. 12:31; 13:13).

But the withdrawing of this one aspect of God's spirit work among men by no means suggests that we today are left without help or divine guidance. When the Holy Spirit was withdrawn, the most essential spirit of the Early Church—which had belonged to God's people through all ages—remained; it is as eternal as the wisdom of God. It is the spirit of which Jesus spoke, that "quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63).

And we should note one point about this eternal spirit or wisdom of God:

The Spirit of God, that is, every expression of the mind of God, His purposes and His desires, is always ethical in its demands. This was the really significant thing about the Spirit which the early Church preached: it demanded a quality of life. Among the pagans, the hallmark of the "spirit-filled" man had been the unusual, spectacular, ecstatic in behavior. To Paul the fruit of the Spirit was "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" (Gal. 5: 22-23). These qualities are not spectacular. They do not immediately impress themselves on the casual observer as did the frenzied behavior of the spirit-filled priests of the pagan gods. But they are characteristic of the Spirit-guided or God controlled life.

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

Divine Assistance...through Prayer

Another medium through which God has lent active aid through all ages to those who would seek Him is through prayer. Hannah, centuries ago, used this divinely arranged means of communication and gratefully received the answer to her prayer. Frequently did David "enquire of the

Lord"; Abraham prayed; Moses prayed; Elisha prayed; Hezekiah prayed; Jeremiah prayed; Jesus prayed. All of God's people in all ages prayed, and with far-reaching results—for "the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5:16).

This is a means of communication that is still open to us. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Ps. 46:1). We can, by drawing near to God in prayer, find that very present help in every trouble. We separate ourselves from this help by our sins. "The Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear" (Isa. 59:1-2). By removing the obstacles of sin, we can place God between ourselves and our foe and find new power to fight.

God is a "present help" in trouble also through the channel of thanksgiving. We may have prayed for patience, and God hems us in with irritating situations. Thank God! Thank Him instantly when confronted with the trial, for "tribulation worketh patience." If a situation arises which would provoke jealousy, thank God for the opportunity to manifest humility. When physical suffering would crush the human frame, when perplexing problems weigh heavily, thank God for the opportunity to prove the almighty strength of His everlasting arms. If temporal privileges are denied you, thank God for the reminder to loosen your grasp on the things which are seen; thank God that the things of eternity can still be yours. Yes, "in everything give thanks." "Pray without ceasing," and insurmountable circumstances will prove favorable.

The Spirit Today?

A correspondent has disagreed with our belief in the Holy Spirit as a power that has been withdrawn. For the benefit of all who may be interested, we will discuss his objections. (Boldface type will indicate quotations from his letter.)

Our correspondent writes:

"Because I find many commendable articles in the *Megiddo Message*, to offer a protest is difficult. Yet, to be honest to my own convictions and experience, I feel compelled by the Word of God to protest your teaching that the spiritual blessing of the Holy Spirit dwelling within the mortal body is not available to my generation.

"In the *Megiddo Message* for April, 1973, under title of Timely Topics, you state that the teaching of

'claiming to have Holy Spirit power [today] belongs to counterfeit religion.' You have given no Scriptural reference, only your own statement that 'that power was to be withdrawn.' In other writings of the *Megiddo Message* I learn that the New Testament Scriptures have replaced the indwelling in the mortal body of the Holy Spirit for today."

You are correct in your criticism that we gave no Scriptural reference to support our statement. This should have been done.

But I fear at the onset that you are misunderstanding what we mean by the term "Holy Spirit." By that term we refer to the supernatural power given the apostles on the day of Pentecost, by which they could perform miracles, or speak in other languages, or prophesy, etc. This special power, given for a limited duration and for a special purpose—"to confirm the word" of the apostles (Mark 16:20)—should not be confused with the help and divine guidance which God gives His people through all ages, namely, angelic protection, communion through prayer, the general arranging and disposing of circumstances, and divine oversight of their lives. The special power of the Holy Spirit, given on the day of Pentecost, was a partitive and temporary arrangement and was withdrawn.

Why was this power withdrawn? We will review the evidence.

Joel 2:23 forecasts a "former" and a "latter" rain. Peter's statement at Pentecost ties Joel's prophecy in with *that* outpouring of the Holy Spirit, listing that event as the first or "early rain," also picturing two rains (Acts 2:16-17), that current outpouring and another for the "last days," corresponding with Joel's "former" and "latter" rains.

A "former" and "latter" rain presupposes a dry spell between when there would be no rain. We believe that that era reaches from the close of the Jewish age until the present time, or until the coming of Christ's forerunner, the prophet Elijah. Hence, we believe that we are now in the dry spell when there is no "rain" or outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

First Corinthians 13 definitely points to a time when there will be no outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Observe the following: "Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge [Spirit-imparted knowledge], it shall vanish away. . . . And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity" (vs. 8, 13). All these Spirit-in-

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Self-Honesty

EVERY American applauds the honesty that storekeeper Abraham Lincoln practiced when he trudged miles to return a customer's change. But this honesty toward others cannot compare in importance to being honest with ourselves.

"Failures in self-honesty," says psychotherapist Dr. Albert Ellis, "are at the root of almost every emotional and mental disturbance."

Self-honesty is not easy to achieve, nor is it something we acquire overnight. It is something we must work for, something that requires a constant probing of our inner thoughts and motives.

The tendency is to equate self-honesty with self-condemnation. But genuine self-honesty includes an appraisal of bad and good. We need to recognize our spiritual weaknesses in order to correct them; we must also recognize our spiritual possibilities that we may develop them.

As Christians, we are Christ's representatives upon earth. We are not promised a smooth, easy road to travel, but "we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14: 22). It is true of all of us, the ultimate test of character comes when trouble and reverses come.

On the other hand, we sometimes find ourselves in trouble because the trouble is in us. But the tendency is to blame someone else. It does no good to pull the bedcovers over our heads and hope the trouble will go away, because it won't. If the trouble is in us, so is the solution.

Self-honesty is rare, as we are forcefully reminded by the Prophet in Jer. 17:9—"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"

God has always demanded a difference in the conduct, the conversation, the thought, the life, and the appearance of His people as contrasted with the world. Christians who do not want to be like the world in principle or character should not desire to look like the world in appearance.

To please God, the Christian's pleasures and recreations must meet the test of I Cor. 10:31—"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

If we would avoid sharing the world's destiny, we must avoid being conformed to it.

People of the world quickly detect the inconsistency of those who profess to belong to God, but whose conduct, conversation, and ideals are worldly, in opposition to God.

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A mature self-knowledge can be very revealing and also rewarding. Let us ask ourselves:

Am I harboring jealous, angry or envious thoughts?

Am I carrying old grudges, resentments and ill-will?

Does the path to Life seem too narrow and restricted?

Do I take questionable liberties with the freedom granted me?

Do I disregard established principles with the excuse that God is not so particular?

Would I be willing to share my inmost thoughts and desires with every godly one?

Do I take God into all my plans, however small they may be?

If we give these questions our candid consideration, we may be surprised at the results.

The strain of modern life makes interior reserves of faith and courage, stability and endurance critically necessary.

The secret of inner serenity is magnanimity. Such nobleness of soul enables one to bear troubles calmly, to disdain meanness and revenge, to make sacrifices for worthy ends, and live above all that is low and ungenerous.

One minister said, "It's amazing how much good can be done in this world if one does not care who gets the credit."

The art of secret altruism does not come naturally. It must be cultivated, for it goes against the natural grain of our ego. There are few human hungers stronger than the hunger for approval and recognition by others. But let us remember, our greatest reward will be given for our most difficult tasks done willingly and well.

It is not easy to take a good, searching look at ourselves and accept what we find there. But to the earnest Christian, self-honesty is more than a formula for temporal success or advantage—it is a vital necessity, it is the Way to Life—Eternal Life.

Let's Think About—

The Church of Pergamos

(Rev. 2:12—17)

The Church of Pergamos had many good things in their favor, but they also had things against them. Unless they repented, the warning was, "I shall come to you quickly, and make war with you, and fight against you with the sword of my mouth."

Let the listener hear and consider his own status with God.

"Only A Housewife"?

IN this modern era when the so-called "Women's Liberation" movement is popular, these words are often spoken derogatively by those wishing to be excused from the everyday duties of caring for a home and the time and effort required in mothering children; or wistfully by those who feel "unfulfilled" with their life's work. This domestic occupation has been too often ridiculed and its benefit belittled. The result is that women are no longer content to stay at home and carry out their domestic duties; they are told that in so doing they are losing their "individuality" (something valued very highly in today's world). Some fulfillment outside the home, something more exciting or satisfying is sought with the hope of living a more complete life. In increasing numbers women are joining men in the work force, or seeking other pastimes. But, while Mother is off "finding herself," her home and children suffer from sad neglect.

However, the woman wishing to fulfill her role of housekeeper and mother with a sense of Christian duty, in the fear of God, will not harbor such dangerous dissatisfaction. The Christian housewife will see her work from an entirely different viewpoint. As a striving life-seeker she will endeavor to be one of those rare women who, completely undaunted by the world's opinion of women's-lib, desire to combine service to their household with service to the Lord; in fact, that the two would be so interwoven as to be one. In so doing, the performance of her everyday round of tasks will not become monotonous, and she will never think of her duties as ordinary or mundane. Even from a temporal standpoint this is not so—they are vital to the physical and mental well-being of her family.

It is with these things in mind that the common duties associated with housekeeping become uncommon opportunities for growth in the spiritual life. They are not an end in themselves, but become steppingstones to the future, to the Kingdom of God which will know no end. God doesn't ask anyone to accomplish great things in the eyes of the world; He asks that we aspire to the honor of the world to come. This can be accomplished by and through the events of everyday living. It is the character which must be formed, the mind which must be controlled; and the housewife can do this as well, and sometimes better, at her sink as

another can in a seemingly more advantageous position.

According to God's Standard...

The world's standard for women changes as the years go by, especially in our time under the "new morality" concept; but God's standard never changes. "Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (I Cor. 10:31) is the command, and it in no way makes provision or exception for the housekeeper. To reach this high standard requires much self-control until the natural mind is completely changed over for the "mind of Christ" (Phil. 2:5)—no room for "individuality" here! Christ did only those things which pleased the Father (John 8:29), and this is the standard for *every* true Christian.

Today's women's-lib candidate is disturbed by the fact that men have been held superior to women in the ladder of society for untold numbers of years. Here again the God-fearer is undaunted, for she knows that with the Lord "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). It is only such that "remember his commandments to do them" who will gain the recognition of God (Ps. 103:18).

Among the Hebrew people, women's rights were limited, although the position of women in Israel was in marked contrast with her status in surrounding heathen nations where women were regarded as no more than things. Israelite law was designed to protect woman's weakness, safeguard her rights, and preserve her freedom. Under the law of Moses her liberties were greater, her tasks more important and her social standing more respected than that of her heathen sister. However, in legal matters she was the property of her father or husband; the married woman owed her husband absolute fidelity. Any prominence a woman attained was usually by the force of her character.*

In the early Church, Christian women were recognized as equal to men. In a Christian marriage, the wife was to derive equal benefits. Though the

* See *All the Women of the Bible*, by Herbert Lockyer (Zondervan Publishing, C. 1967), p. 13 ff.

husband was to be the head of the house, the marriage was to be a co-operation and a partnership (see Col. 3:18-19; Eph. 5:22-25). This plan can be followed successfully today, as indeed it must be if the marriage is to reach the Christian standard.

Motherhood an Art

It is sad that a good percentage of this country's mothers no longer see the art of mothering as something noble, rewarding, and useful. It is an established fact that children of pre-school age need their mothers' care during this crucial and tender stage, because it is during these years that the groundwork for adult life is laid. Authorities admit that there is no substitute for the place of Mother in the life of the young child, who can provide the proper amounts of love, security, protection and interest. Millions of children are currently under the care of babysitters, day-care centers, or private licensed child-care takers (often under over-crowded conditions), or go to work with their mothers. Then there are those who are abandoned during the workday and left to fend for themselves. What is going to happen to all these children is a current problem in our nation.

Psychologists and others associated with the development of children are concerned. In response to "How do you feel about working mothers?" psychologist Dr. James Dobson has this to say: "Motherhood is a full-time job during the child's first five years. I know some families which just can't seem to pay their bills without a supplement to the father's paycheck, but children need their mother more than they do a newer car or larger house. The issue is not so much, 'Should Mom work?' as it is 'Who will take her place?' Is an eighteen-year-old baby sitter going to apply the principles of good parenthood? . . . Is she going to mold and guide and reinforce those subtle but important attitudes that emerge each day? What activity could be more important than shaping human lives during their impressionable and plastic years? I'm afraid I have little patience with the view that domestic responsibilities are not worthy of a woman's time. The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world, yet mom is now told that she should chase around after some additional source of fulfillment . . . The traditional concept of motherhood, *full-time* motherhood, still sounds like a pretty good idea to me" (James Dobson, *Dare to Discipline*, p. 54).

The above is good principle for the conscientious mother who recognizes where her Christian responsibility lies. Especially in this day and age, when evil is rampant and moral values have crumbled, she will realize that she must be on full-time watch

in order to instill Christian principles in the minds of her children. While they are small is her best opportunity, for it is a time in their lives when she provides the most influence upon them. To be a right example of Christian conduct at all times, someone whom she would want her children to emulate, is no easy task. It is a difficult, time-consuming work; but seen as a God-given work it becomes one of the best opportunities for spiritual growth in her own life. The striving Christian mother soon finds that in trying to train her little ones effectively, she is training herself.

The Housewife Has Advantages . . .

How thankful the housewife should be that her homely tasks can be glorified in the sight of God! What meaning every moment of her busy day can hold! She often enjoys many advantages which those of other occupations may not have. Many times she is busy with her hands doing things which leave her mind free to meditate on higher things, if she will. Also she enjoys the privacy of home, away from the noise, confusion, and indecent conduct of the world. She has the privilege of supervising her own work. It is through and under her watchful care that family routine is set up and the daily activities of home life are run.

The Christian woman can have peace of mind surpassing that of any of today's most modern, most educated, most well-known, most accomplished woman of the world. For where are all their strivings for "liberation," all their seekings for a fulfilling life, all their worldly accomplishments going to take them in the final analysis? "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, *in the grave, whither thou goest*" (Eccl. 9:10).

The Christian woman *does* seek to be liberated, but it is with much nobler aspirations. To be liberated from the ways of the world, liberated from the ways of self—this is the liberation which is her chief concern. And of course it is that future liberation, the one which comes from God Himself, which is the most important. What could compare with liberation from the bondage of mortality and freedom from the finality of the grave?

The attainments of the quiet, obedient life of the Christian woman will not be unrewarded, for God will not forget her "work and labor of love" if done in His name. For this reason the standard of a Christian housewife will be a high one, for she knows that to reach it will be more than worth the effort and will bring a great reward, even eternal life! ●●

I Wanted My Own Bible

When I went to school, we had a one-room school, but we always had to have a verse memorized for Friday morning. We also had to learn all the books of the Bible and the Lord's prayer, the Twenty-Third Psalm, the Beatitudes; that gave us something to think on.

When I married—it was during the depression years—poor people had very little, but sometimes I think perhaps some were more thankful than they are now, when most everyone who tries can have so much more.

As soon as I got a chance, I picked cotton for 50 cents per 100 pounds. I saved all I earned, so when I picked 1600 pounds, that gave me \$8.00. I ordered a Bible with a leather back for \$1.00 at that time. I still have that Bible. The other seven dollars we used for winter clothing. But since then God has been very good to me. I have been privileged to collect three more Bibles and a New Testament.

We do have so many wonderful blessings to count and be very thankful for every day. First we can thank God for His Holy Word; and we can thank Him for our founder, who led us from darkness to light. We also should be thankful we have had enough education to be able to read and study and learn, and that we have our five senses to use, and a mind to think, study, meditate and pray. We should be especially thankful for *time*, that priceless possession we hardly think of.

We should thank God for so many wonderful promises, and for fulfilled prophecies that have proven the Bible true beyond dispute. We also should thank God that we are living down in the cool of the day when we can believe in God's truths as we should without persecution. To be promised to be a friend of Jesus, I think, is much greater than most of us realize. Of course, it is conditional—it is *if*—if we do on our part. ●●

Mrs. H. C., South Carolina

How foolish it is, O heart of mine, to avoid and evade thy cross! Refuse the burden and thou declinest thy strength! Ignore thy duty and thou shalt feel no inspiration! But lose thy life and thou shalt find it!

Words to WALK By

The Lord gave us eyes to *use*—we never need to stumble twice over the same stone.

What a blessing if those who lose their tempers could never find them again!

There is no ignorance like ignorance of God; no poverty like poverty of soul.

A man who will do faithfully must believe firmly.

Character is pretty much like window glass—when it is cracked on the outside, it is cracked inside also.

He who gives excuses for why he could not do his duty is a liar.

Faith is the tendril by which the soul clings to God.

When the believer rests, he rusts.

Don't be deceived because sin is sugar-coated.

Bible A B C's

(Continued from page 25)

had done to God's people. However, God told Ananias that he should go because Paul was the one who had been chosen to take God's truth to the Gentiles. Ananias did as God told him to do; and when he came to the house where Paul was staying, he found Paul praying to God. Then Ananias put his hands on Paul and Paul could see again. How happy he was!

Paul then became a Christian. A Christian is a person who lives like Christ lived. Paul was anxious to learn all he could about Jesus and His kingdom and what a person must do to live in that Kingdom when it is set up on earth.

In the years that followed, Paul traveled great distances to preach and teach the people of the one true God and what He wants people to do to be worthy of living forever in His kingdom.

The story of Paul has a good lesson for everyone. Even if we have been bad and done naughty things, we can stop being that way and learn to live good lives just like Paul did. Paul was one of the greatest apostles and if we change from being bad to being good, as he did, God will love us; and we will be a true follower of Jesus. ●●

UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God."

The Ministration of the Spirit

PROBABLY no subject of the Scriptures is more widely used and abused than that of the Spirit of God, more commonly known as the Holy Spirit, the term used to designate that power in the New Testament.

The idea of a spirit or an unseen power has been the basis of all religion since primitive times. Pagans, Orientals and Christians alike have recognized a power that they were not always able to explain. Primitive peoples believed in many and various kinds of spirits, both good and bad. A good spirit supposedly made the seed corn sprout and grow; a bad spirit was believed to cause the thunder and lightning. Ancient mythology reflected man's belief in spirits and formed the basis of the religion of many. If the spirit was helpful, it was worshiped; if it was harmful, it was feared. The pagan religions which grew out of such beliefs influenced the thinking of the Hebrews as the people intermingled.

Rather than confine our study to the Holy Spirit of the Apostolic Church, we have chosen the title **The Ministration of the Spirit**. Under this heading we will endeavor to discuss all supernatural ministrations of God in behalf of His human family in all ages, beginning with when "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters," when God first revealed Himself to man on this earth. It was this Spirit of God which spoke to Abraham and called him out of his native land into a strange land; it was the same Spirit which spoke to Noah, instructing him to build an ark for the saving of his household; it was the same Spirit which informed Lot of the impending destruction of the wicked cities and hastened him and his family from the site.

The Spirit of God was a power by which men were made capable of performing tasks they could not have done of themselves alone. Joseph was empowered to interpret dreams, as was Daniel centuries later. David was strengthened to perform valiant deeds and to preserve his life when he was threatened by an angry king. Elijah, after thwarting the prophets of Baal, was given strength to

run before the chariot of Ahab into the city. Kings were directed toward the proper course of action by this same Spirit of God and prophets of God were endowed with knowledge to forecast future events and to record them for our learning. The prophet Jeremiah even received the same message a second time that he might rewrite the roll of prophecy destroyed by the wicked king Jehoiakim.

In New Testament times, the Spirit or power of God was evident before the outpouring on the day of Pentecost. It protected the child Jesus by directing Joseph to "take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt," from the wrath of Herod. In later years, this same power enabled Him to escape the angry mob that would have "cast him down headlong" over a cliff when they disapproved of His teachings. By the same power Jesus was able to perform many miracles, from the feeding of five thousand with five loaves and a few fishes to the raising of Lazarus from the dead.

Jesus was able to impart a certain measure of this power to others. When He sent out the Twelve, He instructed them to "preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick." Healing would have been impossible without the power of God. At the same time He told them it would not be necessary for them to prepare in advance what they would say, "for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you" (Matt. 10:20-21). He was able also to bestow this power upon the seventy whom he appointed to carry the good news of the gospel into other cities.

After Pentecost the Holy Spirit power was the means of the rapid growth of the Christian Church. It is evident from the book of Acts that the belief in the Spirit played an important part in the early Church.

We will begin our study of the Spirit, following our outline:

- I. Why Study the Ministration of the Spirit?
- II. Definitions
 - A. Hebrew Definition
 - B. Greek Definition
 - C. The Spirit of Truth

Today we find a multiplicity of faiths, all claiming to be guided by the Spirit of God. Can it be possible that God's Spirit is leading men in varying directions, but all toward the same city, as is claimed by the popular religions of the day? One of the gifts of the Spirit possessed by the early church was the "discerning of spirits," the ability to recognize the true and the false teachers. Without Holy Spirit power, this gift is lacking today, hence the majority fail to discern the true teaching of the Scriptures and blindly follow those who profess to be led by the Spirit.

In our study we will attempt to discern the true teaching of the Bible concerning the Spirit of God, or the Holy Spirit, using the unerring Word of God as our textbook.

I. WHY STUDY THE MINISTRATION OF THE SPIRIT?

The Spirit of God in the Old Testament and the Holy Spirit in the New Testament have played an extremely important part in God's plan. The Spirit of God might be said to be God in action; God thinking, planning, teaching, directing, acting. It is the life principle of God working and carrying out His plan for this earth.

Since God first spoke to Adam and Eve, all ages have had some contact with the Almighty through various mediums. To some, He sent angels to deliver His message. Some were informed through visions; others in dreams. God was said to have spoken His Word to Moses out of a cloud, and Moses wrote it "for a memorial in a book." It was through His Spirit that all the writers of the Bible received the words which they wrote. This fact is well-stated by Peter: "It was not through any human whim that men prophesied of old; men they were, but, impelled by the Holy Spirit, they spoke the words of God" (II Pet. 1:21, NEB).

The patriarchs and prophets themselves confirm how they received the Word, that these words were not theirs, but God's. We read that "Moses wrote all the words of the Lord" (Ex. 24:4); the "two tables of testimony" that he received on the mount were "written with the finger of God"—that is, they bore God's direct authority (Ex. 31:18). "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue," said King David. "Hear the word of the Lord, . . . give ear unto the law of our God," wrote Isaiah at the beginning of his prophecy. Jeremiah also received his message direct from God: "And the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth" (Jer. 1:9). These testimonies, and others which we might quote, give ample proof that God was speaking to man through

the prophets, that the Bible is not the work of the minds of men, but is the work of God. His Spirit working through men.

The nominal churches of our day invoke the power of the Holy Spirit in their prayers and sing praises to it in their hymns. But it is our conviction that the Bible teaches that the gifts of the Holy Spirit ceased with the end of the Apostolic Age, since the power could not be imparted except by the apostles. For one to claim the power of the Holy Spirit today is to overstretch the promise of the Scriptures, for that promise was for a limited time only. Paul, an apostle chosen by Jesus Christ Himself, stated definitely that the gifts of the Spirit—such as tongues, superhuman knowledge and prophecy—would end and that only "faith, hope, charity, these three," would remain.

The command of this same Great Apostle to us in his letter to Timothy was: "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (II Tim. 2:15). If we possessed the gifts of the Spirit, including the gift of knowledge, our study would not be necessary; we, as the Twelve, would be told what we should say and what we should teach. But lacking the gifts, and possessing only "faith, hope, charity, these three," we are obliged to study to ascertain the true teaching of the Word of God concerning His Spirit.

II. DEFINITIONS

The term "Spirit" as used in the Scriptures covers a wide range of ideas. In the Old Testament it most often appears as "the Spirit of God." or "the Spirit of the Lord." In the New Testament, "the Holy Spirit" predominates, while "the Spirit of God," or "the Spirit of the Lord" is used less frequently.

We also read of a "spirit of knowledge" (Isa. 11:2), a "spirit of judgment" (Isa. 4:4), a "spirit of meekness" (Gal. 6:1), a "spirit of prophecy" (Rev. 19:10), and a "spirit of truth," among others. There are also said to be "familiar spirits," "unclean spirits," "good spirits," "foul spirits," "dumb spirits," a "humble spirit," a "spirit of jealousy," and a "spirit of bondage." This list is incomplete, but is used only to show that the use of the term in the Scriptures is not limited to that which is holy or of God. In our study we will concern ourselves only with the "Spirit of God, or of the Lord" in the Old Testament and the Holy Spirit as distinguished from the Spirit of truth in the New Testament.

A. Hebrew Definition of Spirit

In the Hebrew language, the word *ruah*, also

MEGIDDO MESSAGE

given the English spelling of **ruach**, originally "had a physiological and not a psychological value, denoting the human breath. But since the breath is the symbol of life, and also "the means of expressing emotion and thought, the word naturally passed into higher meanings, such as the principle of life as contrasted with the 'flesh' or material form; the seat of thought and desire, of the rational and moral nature of man."*

The Spirit, in its original meaning, was the life principle of the body without reference to the mental process or mind of a man. Other students of the subject agree. "The idea of the Spirit, as it had grown up in primitive religion, passed over into Hebrew thought, and was denoted from the first by the word **Ruah**. The word itself appears to have the root meaning of air in a state of agitation, and was therefore the usual word for wind. It was also applied to the breath, and since breath is the sign of life, was used for the soul, the disposition, the will. . . it reflects the primitive mode of thinking. Where we now think of an impulse rising within a man, the primitive mind imagined something that entered him from without. There was a force which moved invisibly, like the wind," and entered the man, they reasoned. **

In addition to **Ruah**, or **Ruach**, another Hebrew word, **nephesh**, is also translated "spirit" or "soul." We will study their definitions from **Gesenius' Hebrew Lexicon**.

1. **Ruah**, or **Ruach**. The primary meaning is "spirit, breath, breath of the mouth. . . Used of anything quickly perishing, as in Job 7:7, 'O remember that my life is wind.' Often used of the vital spirit, or breath as in Job 17:1. Breath of the nostrils, breath of air, air in motion, breeze, the wind. The air was supposed to be put in motion by a divine breath, therefore the wind was called the blast of God."

2. **Nephesh**. This is another Hebrew word that is used for "spirit," and the Hebrew word most commonly used for the Spirit of God or of the Lord. Its primary meaning is "breath, life, the vital principle, which shows itself in the breathing of the mouth and nostrils (whether of men or of beasts)." The Lexicon gives as further definitions, "the rational mind or spirit, . . . the Spirit of God, rarely the Holy Spirit of God; the divine power, which, like the wind and the breath, cannot be perceived, and by which animated beings live, as in Job 27:3, 'All the while my breath is in me, and the spirit of God is in my nostrils' [margin: the breath which God gave him]; by which all the universe is animated, filled with life and governed."

Gesenius states further that "the Old Testament refers to the divine Spirit, peculiar endowments

of mind, as a personification of the prophetic Spirit, as of an interpreter of dreams," concluding that "in the golden age [the reign of the Messiah] it is to be conferred upon all men."

As used in the Old Testament, "the Spirit of God is the vital power which belongs to the divine Being, and is seen to be operative in the world and in men. It is the Divine Energy which is the origin of all created life, especially of human existence and the faculties of human nature. To its action are ascribed gifts of bodily strength and physical courage, as well as mental and spiritual capacities . . . it is regarded as the source of the gift of prophecy. The prophet is a man of the Spirit; the Spirit of God falls upon him, fills his mind, and speaks by his mouth; he finds himself at times dominated by a spiritual force which comes from without and from above . . . The nation of Israel as a whole had been under the Spirit's guidance from the time of the Exodus."*

B. Greek Definition of Spirit

The Greek words for "spirit" correspond with those of the Hebrew as well as the Latin in the Septuagint (The Latin copy of the Old Testament). The Americanized versions of the Greek words most commonly translated "Spirit" are **pseuche** and **pneuma**, the latter being the one generally used to denote the Holy Spirit or the Spirit of God. We will study the definitions of these words from **The Greek-English Lexicon** by Arndt and Gingrich.

1. **Pseuche**. This word is most commonly used for life, the life principle, the soul, meaning the complete person. Its primary definition is "of life on earth in its external, physical aspects, as a rule of human beings; earthly life itself; the soul as seat and center of the inner life of man in its many and varied aspects." It is also used "of feelings and emotions." This Greek word is never used to refer to God's Spirit or the Holy Spirit.

Some examples from the New Testament of the use of **pseuche**, meaning "life," are: Acts 20:10, "And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing him said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him." In this instance, the young man had been restored to natural life by Paul; the Greek **pseuche** is used for "life." It was his breath that Paul restored.

The same Greek word also appears in Luke 12:

* H. B. Swete, *The Holy Spirit*, pp. 2, 3.

** E. F. Scott, *The Spirit in the Old Testament*, p. 14.

19, translated "soul," meaning the person. The rich fool in the parable is represented as saying, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee." He was a soul, a person; his soul that would be taken from him was his life, **pseuche** in the Greek.

2. Pneuma. As with many Greek words, this one has many shades of meaning. Some of its definitions are: "wind, the breathing out of air; breath, blowing, spirit; the spirit as a part of the human personality; the source and seat of insight, feeling and will, . . . spirit as compared to flesh, . . . It can mean self, a person's very self, or ego; also, spiritual state, state of mind, disposition; a spirit as an independent being, in contrast to a being that can be perceived by the physical senses" (belief in spirits, good and bad was common among the Greeks).

The same word is also used of "evil spirits, or spirit-beings which were thought to cause illness; demonic powers, especially as in the accounts of Jesus' healings in the Gospels." (See Matt. 12:43; Mark 1:23, 26; Luke 8:29; 11:24, and many others.)

The Lexicon also gives "the spirit as the divine power that produces all divine existence, as the divine element in which all divine life is carried on, as the bearer of every application of the divine will."

"The Spirit of God, of the Lord. . . . The Spirit of Christ. As possessor of the divine Spirit, and at the same time controlling its distribution among men, Christ is called Lord of the Spirit. Because of the heavenly origin and nature, this Spirit is called the Holy Spirit. The Divine Spirit reveals its presence in various ways. . . . it inspires men of God in their capacity as proclaimers of a divine revelation. . . . it leads and directs Christian missionaries in their journeys as in Acts 16:6-7 (by dreams, among other methods, v. 9)."

This Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, controlled by Christ, is the Spirit with which we are concerned in our lesson. In the Greek, we learn that when **pneuma** refers to the Holy Spirit it is used with the Greek **hagios**, meaning "holy." This differentiates it from other uses of **pneuma**, such as "breath," or "wind." The number of times that **pneuma** is used to refer to the Holy Spirit or the Spirit of God is comparatively few in relation to the total number of times the word appears in the New Testament.

C. The Spirit of Truth

In His last message to His disciples before His

crucifixion, Jesus said: "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth . . ." (John 14:16-17). What is this "Spirit of Truth"?

Jesus, possessing all knowledge and able to foresee the future, knew that His disciples would need help to carry on after His departure. At the time He spoke these words (John 14) they were not yet able to comprehend the meaning of His death and resurrection; but He had been given advance knowledge from the Father, hence He was preparing them for the separation that was inevitable. The promise of the Spirit, and of "another comforter" are important parts of His after-supper discourse.

"Another comforter" is commonly rendered in the newer translations as "Advocate," meaning a "supporter," or "helper." This helper, or comforter which will abide for ever is the "Spirit of Truth," God's Word, a vital part of God's overall plan on this earth. We must remember that Jesus was speaking not only to the eleven disciples on this occasion, but also to all those who would believe, even in our time, and for us the written Word is vital. Without it, we would have no part in God's plan.

Jesus defined the Spirit of Truth in His words to the Twelve in John 6:63: "It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."

The "Spirit of Truth" is also spoken of as the "paraclete," meaning "one who aids another, a helper," from the Greek word **parakletos**, meaning "call to one." According to one writer, this word has two senses, one of calling to some one by way of encouraging or exhorting him, and the other to call on someone to summon him to your aid. The Scriptures might be said to fulfill both senses of the Word. Through His Word, God not only encourages and exhorts us, but also aids us to the end that we may gain eternal life.

TEST YOURSELF

1. What are the two original Hebrew words translated "spirit" in the Old Testament? What are their meanings?
2. Define the term "Holy Spirit" as used in the New Testament.
3. Define the "Spirit of truth" as used by Jesus in John 14:16.

Reprints of these studies are available upon request.

Are You Afflicted With

Spiritual Myopia?

WITH the successful conquest of the Promised Land the twelve tribes of Israel settled down to enjoy the fruits of their victory. Although a strong chain of Canaanite cities remained in the valleys, there seemed plenty of land for the newcomers to sprawl out in the foothill and mountain country. As Joshua's generation passed away the ardor for invasion was spent. In widely scattered settlements the new generation soon became absorbed in farming. Immersed in the narrow interest of their own little individual valleys the Israelites slowly but surely succumbed to a lethargic individualism. Their fear, One Almighty God, was compromised for the worship of lesser gods. Satisfied with local gods they felt no concern for anything which lay beyond their immediate horizon. They settled down to slow but sure stagnation.

But the Canaanites in the valley did not stagnate. Fully aware that their formerly formidable enemies had holed-up in isolated villages, the Canaanites began to move boldly out to take control of the country. Under the vigorous leadership of Sisera, the kings of Canaan turned fiercely upon the Israelite settlers. Highways became deserted, because travelers were compelled to keep to the byways to avoid being robbed and plundered. Vital streams of trade were reduced to trickles. Borderland inhabitants fled for their lives. Even the farmers went into hiding.

Into such a situation came Deborah, long-time judge of the people, and prophetess of God. She knew her people and her people knew her. Doubtless her influence had been growing over many years, until in her mature years she was known throughout the tribes. Convinced that with the help of God the Israelites must unite and throw off the impending threat of Sisera, she sounded the trumpet call to arms. The immortal Song of Deborah is her challenge to all Israel. Her roll call

of the tribes is a jewel of daring faith. Their response or their indifference to this desperate situation stamps the indelible judgment of history upon them.

Naphtali and Zebulun literally risked their very existence for the salvation of the people. Issachar's chieftains rallied to the call while the men of Benjamin shouted "We follow you." But across the Jordan River it was a different story. Feeling safe behind a wall of water, the Gileadites said in effect: "The Canaanites won't come over here. We hope you win but we won't be sending any men for the army."

Over the next ridge sat the tribe of Reuben, so busy bickering in petty debates and divisions that it had no time or energy left for God's call to arms. To another tribe (Gad) Deborah posed a cutting question, "Why did you lounge by shepherds' cotes, with only an ear for pastoral notes?" Lulled to sleep by the power of positive piping, Gad had no power or interest in such a demanding decision.

To the far north Dan had built a profitable shipping operation. Just now he couldn't possibly afford to leave such a booming business. Neighboring tribe Asher also enjoyed prosperity on the seashore. Safe, satisfied and settled within his limited landscape, Asher, in the derisive but descriptive words of Deborah, "sat clinging to his creeks."

A superficial study of the tribes which ignored the challenge of Deborah brings us to one conclusion. They all had fallen victim to that *undreaded* disease known as myopia. With eyes constantly concentrated on things near at hand they had unconsciously succumbed to nearsightedness. They could not see beyond the next ridge. Forgetting to recognize and worship the true God, they soon lost their spiritual concern. The local landscape was the limit of their vision. If there happened to be a

higher horizon than the rim of their valley, it was no concern of theirs. The circles of their little world diminished day by day until their only concern was their own selfish selves. No. They were not idle. They were not lazy. There was plenty of activity. Each tribe had work of its own to do, its fields to plant, its crops to harvest, its strifes to settle. But the tribes were each a unit by themselves—they were not God's tribes. They were satisfied with their own concerns, too satisfied to answer the summons of their distant God-appointed judge. They were victims of spiritual myopia.

This pernicious disease of nearsightedness has not been confined to the 12th century B. C. It has not been limited to tribes, clans, or nations, but has arisen to curse and constrict the lives of covenant-makers throughout the ages. The malicious malady has shown itself in innumerable ways. It has stunted the lives of potential heroes, choked off splendid intentions, snuffed out the high ideals of youth, and stopped ears to the life-giving words of Christ, and dried up the lifeblood of the Church.

Have *we* become victims of this malicious malady, this spiritual myopia?

When our guide first pointed out to us that City in all its splendor, where no sorrow, sickness, pain or death could enter, we were overjoyed. We were enthusiastic. We hailed, with delight, the opportunity to engage in such a cause and win such a reward. We set forth with zeal to conquer the land that God allotted us. We vowed that nothing could bar us from performing our full share of the conquest and winning our full share of the victory.

When weary with the struggle, we lifted keen eyes. The sight of the distant city filled us with fresh vigor and impetus to press ever forward.

Has our vision grown dim? Has our fear of the One Almighty God been compromised for the worship of lesser gods? Have we become so satisfied with the immediate results of our labors that we have forgotten the God who gave us this good land? Are we no longer concerned about what lies beyond our immediate horizon, beyond the limits of the things that are seen? With eyes constantly concentrated on things near at hand, have we unconsciously succumbed to nearsightedness? If so, we have settled down to a slow but sure stagnation.

God forbid that we should settle for less than fully conquering the Land. The enemy never stagnates. Said David, "But mine enemies are lively, and they are strong." Have we not felt—do we not feel—that the foe we fight, the evils that are within, are lively and strong?

What alertness, what energy, what zeal, what courage, what instantaneous action is required to

rouse our most formidable enemy—self.

It will require a growing honesty, a desperate concentration, a sense of eternal life versus eternal death, an overpowering love of life, an eternal vigilance if we are to come forth more than conquerors. We must have other interests, other concerns, other attitudes than the world about us.

Once afflicted with spiritual myopia, we need not continue suffering this terrible eye disease. By fixing our gaze on eternal rewards, and working with all our heart to obtain them, our spiritual sight can once more become keen and penetrating. We can lift our eyes above the petty and enticing interests of this life. There is ever the need to be upon the watch. The Christian must never come to think that he is living in a permanent situation. He must be a man who lives in a permanent state of expectancy. We must live forever in the shadow of eternity, in the certainty that we are people who are fitting or unfitting ourselves to appear in the presence of God. The bliss is not to everyone. The bliss is to him who overcomes, to him who remains faithful when everything seeks to seduce him from his loyalty, to him who remains pure when everything seeks to lure him from purity.

A sure sign of myopia is a lack of concern for our brother's spiritual needs and his welfare, a lack of response to the daily opportunities to show kindness, love and consideration to each other.

A minister summarized the disease of spiritual myopia thus: "Spiritual myopia is largely acquired in childhood and youth. It may well be encouraged with a rousing chorus of 'Brighten the Corner Where You Are,' with the overtones, 'don't worry about anyone else's corner.' Year adds unto year and we grow up, at least physically. We may even make a little mental growth! But spiritually we are still back in the Beginner's Department. It seems to be more comfortable there. It is less demanding there. Clutching our little candle, we stay in our corner. Even though our flame is pretty thin, we like it because we are safe and cozy. Year by year slips by and we continue to cling to our little sphere. God challenges us to mighty conquests, but protected eyes accustomed to soft candlelight go blind in the face of the light of God's penetrating Word. He beckons us to strike out to new and high horizons of spiritual achievement, but, strain as we may, our myopic vision reveals only a blur, and we dare not give our lives to a blur. The old corner has got us. We choose to live there the rest of our days."

As impaired spiritual vision leads the individual into a drab self-centered existence, failure to grasp the eternal perspective has deadened the effectiveness of many a potential life-seeker. Surely our

vision has become short and we know it not, for in the strain of patting our own backs, we have turned our eyes away from the Eternal. If not exceedingly careful, the humble walk will no longer be a part of our activity-crammed program.

The perils of prosperity are very much with us. They have a very subtle way of making us soft and satisfied.

Professor Laurance E. Morehead likened modern America to a sea squirt, which in middle age settles down and attaches himself to a rock or piling and develops a large gill system through which he allows food-rich water to pass until his tail gradually sloughs away, leaving only a "limp mass which yields to pressure readily or without resistance." Can we say that we have not fallen victim to this subtle inertia? Are we satisfied with ourselves as we are? This was the kind of unforgivable sin of self-satisfaction which blinded the Pharisees when they were confronted by the truth of Jesus Christ. It is the kind of myopia which had blinded them beyond cure. Too often the sin of satisfaction takes its tragic toll on us and we know it not!

It is extremely difficult to be brutally honest with oneself.

Until there is a divine disturbance and a holy discontent within us, there is not the slightest chance of curing our myopia. The seed of divine dissatisfaction is most essential to our salvation. Until Gad became fed up with pleasant piping of his own lyrics; until Reuben wanted to move as a force; until Dan, through brotherly concern, was jarred loose from his seaboard; until Asher could see and accept responsibility beyond his own little creeks, the Eternal God could not use them in His higher service.

If we dare to open our eyes and look at the meaning of this hour, we will see God working. We will find that He demands that we mature to our rightful responsibility. The perspective of God should shake us alive to a holy discontent where we can be truly receptive to what He wants us to do. Although it is more comfortable merely to listen to the Word—God's Word calls for dynamic action on our part—the living Word sets us upon our feet, challenges our best, shakes us alive and alert to the real need at hand. It changes looking into seeing, staring into observing, unholy satisfaction into holy discontent, and self-righteousness into repentance.

One more fact must be noted about impairment of vision. Myopia is almost exclusively a condition acquired by the strain we impose on our eyes with close-in work. We bring on our own nearsightedness. The only cure is the faraway look, to the

larger dimensions and broader horizons of God's new world.

It must be our earnest prayer to give up our little creeks of our own pursuits, divorce ourselves from preoccupation with our limited interests, from our petty bickerings and divisions, to redeem us from smug satisfaction with ourselves.

Thus by the grace of God, freed from the curse of contemporary concentration, we may be loosened and lifted to serve the eternal truth of the Eternal God through an eternal day. ●●

God At Work

(Continued from page 8)

duced "gifts" had been enumerated in the last part of the preceding chapter (12), hence it is obvious what Paul was referring to in chapter 13.

You state that we believe "the New Testament Scriptures have replaced the indwelling in the mortal body of the Holy Spirit (for today)." Perhaps you have misinterpreted our teaching. It is our belief that when the collection of sacred writings now composing the New Testament was completed, the Holy Spirit power which the apostles had possessed was no longer needed to confirm their spoken word, and that the power was subsequently withdrawn. One of the purposes of the Holy Spirit power had been to impart to the sacred authors the divine knowledge and authority they needed for their writings—to "bring all things to [their] remembrance." Once the task was accomplished and the Bible was complete, that information was no longer needed. First Corinthians 13: 9-10 points out this fact: "For we know in part, and we prophesy in part." The giving of the gifts was a partitive arrangement, some possessing one power and some another (see I Corinthians 12). "But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away."

As translated in several of the newer versions, this text suggests a time when the Bible is complete, when the revealed will of God is delivered to mankind in its entirety, "when the time of fulfillment comes" (Knox), "when the complete comes" (Phillips), "when perfection comes" (Williams). The same word is used to describe that which befits the "will of God" in Romans 12: 2, "that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

The Greek word translated "perfect" is *teleios*, which may be used either to suggest a point of completion in time or a point of achievement in

perfection of quality, As defined in *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*, it is "complete, completeness: of full age, perfect," derived from the word meaning "the point aimed at as a limit, i. e. the conclusion of an act or state; result; purpose." The Holy Spirit power was given to "confirm the word" (Mark 16:20), and when its purpose had been accomplished, or when it had reached its limit, or when the perfect and complete *written* Word of God had superseded it, the power was withdrawn.

Weymouth's translation of I Cor. 13:8-10 suggests the same meaning: "If there are prophecies, they will come to an end; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will come to an end. For our knowledge is partial and so is our prophesying; but when that which is perfect is come, all that is partial will come to an end."

The power of the Holy Spirit with its various gifts was to be superseded, made void by that which would be superior in its power to save—the perfect Word of God. The Holy Spirit power being no longer needed as an informer, and miraculous phenomena no longer needed as evidence of the genuineness of the message given, it was permitted to lapse.

What Is the Spirit of Truth?

"The statement that the 'Spirit of truth' is synonymous with the written Word' is erroneous. Christ Jesus in John 14:16-18 refers to the 'spirit of truth' not as a common noun, such as a written document, but as a personal pronoun, namely Himself. Notice the words 'he,' 'him,' and 'I.' "

Jesus' use of the personal pronoun when referring to the "Spirit of truth" is perfectly consistent with the custom of the language in which these words were written, Greek. All words in the Greek language have gender, that is, masculine, feminine or neuter; and this gender is without respect to the word or its meaning. For example, the word for "day" (*hemera*) is feminine; the word for "age" (*aion*) is masculine; "fruit" (*karpos*) is masculine; "place" (*topos*) is masculine, and "city" (*polos*) is feminine. A pronoun always has the same gender as the word to which it refers, thus, when speaking of a "day" one would use the feminine personal pronoun (literally "she"); when referring to "fruit," the pronoun would be the masculine personal pronoun (literally "he"); for "city" the pronoun would be feminine, literally "she." (This last example occurs in Matthew 10:11, where the translators, according to English custom, have supplied the word "it.")

When Jesus spoke of the "Spirit of truth," He

called it the "comforter," a masculine noun; (*parakletos*) thus when referring to it in pronoun form He had to use the masculine personal pronoun; but such a reference by no means suggests that the comforter was a person, any more than the above-mentioned reference to "city" suggests that the city was a person. A few of the newer translations have observed this fact, and have used the pronoun "it" in place of "He" in John 14:16 (see the *Concordant Version*, *Goodspeed*, and the *New World Bible*; also *Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott*).

As for the "I" of verse 18 (John 14), Jesus is making a personal promise: "I will not leave you comfortless [orphans, margin]: I will come to you." But what could Jesus have meant by the words "I will come to you?" How could Jesus have expected them to be comforted by His personal return which was to be some 19 or 20 centuries future?

After Jesus had been in heaven at the Father's right hand for a number of years, He sent a message back to His loyal followers. The message, the book of Revelation, was sent by the hand of His angel to His servant John. He came to His disciples with this one final message, completing the "Spirit of truth," or divine Word which was to abide forever and not to terminate as did the partitive arrangement by which they had special power to prophesy, special revelation of divine knowledge, or the power to perform miracles.

Two Comforters

In John 14, we should observe that Jesus speaks specifically of two separate comforters. In verses 16 and 17 He speaks of "another Comforter" which He calls "the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you" (v. 17). If by this comforter Jesus was referring to the Holy Spirit, He could not have said that it "dwelleth with you," for at that time the disciples had not received the power of the Holy Spirit, for the day of Pentecost had not yet come and Jesus was not yet glorified (Acts 2:1; John 7:39). This "Spirit of truth" that should abide forever was a term Jesus used to apply to the whole system of divine knowledge and truth, the same spirit which, as He had already told them, was the words which He spoke—"The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."

Jesus continues in John 14 to discuss this "Spirit of truth," which was shortly to be written into one harmonious book, the Bible. "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father. . . . If a man love me, he will keep my

words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (vs. 21, 23). Here again is the "Spirit of truth," "my words," "my commandments."

Then at verse 26 another thought is introduced with the word "but": "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." Here is a comforter which is clearly designated as the "Holy Spirit"—it is not called the "Spirit of truth." And these are precisely the functions for which that special power was sent, to "bring all things to your remembrance" that the Word of God might be completed in written form. It was a power for a temporary purpose and was given only for that age; Jesus did not say that it should abide forever—He said nothing here of its duration!

A Blessing or a Curse?

We quote again from our correspondent:

"To be left with the New and Old Testament Scriptures is indeed a blessing—or a curse, if your claim is correct. For what is the 'written word'? Is it not a record of the teachings, blessings, promises, and experiences of the people of God's calling? The experiences of God's people under the Old Testament economy were intended to inspire 'patience and comfort' in the New Testament saints of the first century after Christ's death, resurrection and ascension. Just so, as we today read of the experiences of God's saints under the New Testament economy should not we also expect to receive inspiration toward patience and comfort?"

You are certainly correct in your deduction that as the saints of the New Testament received inspiration and hope from reading of the experiences of the people of the Old Testament period, so in like manner the Christians of today should receive inspiration and hope from the experiences of the people of the New Testament. But to receive such inspiration, all our experiences, advantages and disadvantages need not parallel theirs. Everyone of the New Testament people who read the story of Elijah did not have the power that Elijah had, but everyone could be inspired by Elijah's character. Everyone of the New Testament people did not have the advantage of personal contact with angels, which Abraham and Moses, Gideon and many others of the Old Testament had, yet the New Testament people could be inspired by their experiences and examples. Your analogy may seem logical, but it does not prove that we must have the Holy Spirit if we are to receive inspiration from those who had that power.

Truly we of this century *can* receive inspiration and hope from reading of the experiences of people of the first century, but that is no proof that our experience is to duplicate theirs in every detail. We might like to have the help of the Holy Spirit power as they had, but that is no evidence that it is God's will for us to have it. And God has amply provided for this very situation. We read that He has "tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked" (I Cor. 12:24). The verses that follow picture that lack as the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Hope—Only through the Holy Spirit?

"I read that the first century saints not only were inspired with a 'hope' of immortality and eternal life in God's future Kingdom to come to this earth, but also that they had actually experienced in their mortal bodies the Spirit of Christ dwelling within. In fact, the mortal body blessings of the New Testament are 'spiritual blessings,' and how can one enjoy spiritual blessings apart from the Holy Spirit?"

Again I must question the logic of your position. What Biblical text says that spiritual blessings are the result only of intimacy with the Holy Spirit as those of the Apostolic Age enjoyed? To be able to come "boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16) is in itself a spiritual blessing, but where is it conditioned upon possessing the power of the Holy Spirit? To abide in God's love would surely be a spiritual blessing, and Jesus said that this blessing is the result of keeping His commandments (John 15:10). To be honored of God would be a spiritual blessing, and Jesus conditioned this blessing upon serving and following Him (John 12:26).

Spiritual blessings are often the result of familiarity with the Word of truth and a working relationship with God. We read: "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life" (John 6:63). "This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me" (Ps. 119:50), said the Psalmist. "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord. According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue," said Peter (II Pet. 1:2-3). All spiritual blessings—"all things that pertain unto life and godliness"—come how? Through the power of the Holy Spirit working within us? No, "through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue."

Hope, assurance, a faith founded on evidence—all these spiritual blessings are available to us

through the knowledge of God which is revealed to us through the medium of the written Word, the "Spirit of truth" which Jesus said should abide with us forever.

No Spiritual Blessings Today?

Our correspondent continues:

"You claim that these spiritual blessings passed away after the end of the Jewish Age, about A. D. 70. Then what blessing can I possibly receive from reading the written Word that describes these spiritual blessings?"

Certainly we living today can count our blessings that we do not have to experience all that the people of the first century experienced, namely, active persecution.

But you are incorrect in assuming that because the Holy Spirit power was withdrawn, all spiritual blessings were withdrawn with it. The Holy Spirit was a spiritual blessing—it imparted power from God to perform miracles, or to speak a language one had never learned, power to foreknow the future, or the ability to teach, etc. But the Holy Spirit should not be confused with the divine help and guidance which the people of God in all ages are promised—the power of prayer, divine oversight of our lives, and fatherly help when and where we need it. "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them" (Ps. 34:7)—here is a spiritual blessing available to all who "fear him"—there is no time limit given. Because we do not possess the power of the Holy Spirit to perform miracles or speak in other tongues is not to say that we are bereft of all divine guidance and protection.

The Holy Spirit—and Character

Our correspondent asks further:

"The first century saints had the Holy Spirit's help to conquer sin and to become the righteousness of God. Am I to understand that God requires my generation to conquer sin and become the righteousness of God without the Holy Spirit's help? How cruel can God be? Why call the written Word a blessing, when all my generation is left with is a record, without the experience?"

God is not cruel. He has provided us with all the tools that we need to accomplish our work of self-purification. Said Jesus, "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you" (John 15:3).

Most certainly the manifestations of the Holy Spirit power were a help to the people who possessed that power, and the stirring events of those salient years must have been a real help to the

striving Christians. But the Holy Spirit did not remove all the problems associated with working out one's salvation. We have no record where the Holy Spirit made any man or woman righteous in the sight of God. Paul's parting exhortation to the people of Lystra, Iconium and Antioch was that "we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22).

What was the purpose for which the Holy Spirit power was sent? Jesus foretold that it would *confirm the word* (Mark 16:20). It was to be a visible manifestation of the power to convince the hearers of the verity of the words they were hearing. Throughout the New Testament there is no suggestion that the purpose of the Holy Spirit was to perform within us the work which we fail to do for ourselves.

And Paul's own personal experiences in dealing with sin shows positively that the power of the Holy Spirit (which he possessed) did *not* cleanse his character. He wrote to the Romans (I will quote from the *New Testament in Modern English*): "My own behavior baffles me. For I find myself not doing what I really want to do but doing what I really loathe. Yet surely if I do things that I really don't want to do, I am admitting that I really agree with the Law. . . . I often find that I have the will to do good, but not the power. That is, I don't accomplish the good I set out to do, and the evil I don't really want to do I find I am always doing. . . . My conscious mind wholeheartedly endorses the Law, yet I observe an entirely different principle at work in my nature. This is in continual conflict with my conscious attitude, and makes me an unwilling prisoner to the law of sin and death" (Rom. 7:18-23).

Again in his letter to the Corinthians, Paul describes his problem of keeping himself under the law of God: "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."

No, God has tempered the body together in a manner which is without flaw, giving the more abundant honor to that part which lacked—lacked Holy Spirit manifestations.

Hope Is Ours!

Our friend concludes:

"What good is 'hope' of immortality and eternal life, without the possibility of attaining to that hope? Is my generation left to endure the wretched experience of having no deliverance from the law of sin that continuously wars within the members of our mortal bodies? If the neutralizing law of the Spirit of life

in Christ Jesus cannot be our experience today, then the law of sin and death will certainly frustrate our hope of immortality and eternal life."

You seem to feel that our position that the Holy Spirit power is not with us as it was with the people of the first century leaves us without hope or without help. But no, God's hand is not shortened that He cannot save, neither is His ear heavy that He cannot hear (Isa. 59:1). The promise of Psalm 34:7, which we mentioned before, is as unfailing as it ever was. God still proffers His help and protection to all who belong to Him, who fear Him and work righteousness. And the promise of John 7:17 is as strong and as definite as any promise could be: "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine."

And contact with the throne of heaven still functions perfectly: "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:15-16).

And your concluding lines are certainly correct: "If the neutralizing law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus cannot be our experience today, then the law of sin and death will certainly frustrate our hope of immortality and eternal life."

But thank God! that spirit of life in Christ Jesus *can* be ours today. It is Jesus Christ—His message, the whole system of divine Truth—the same yesterday, today and forever. And the guidance and help of God, though not visible in all ages, is nonetheless active and working. The Spirit of truth—though possessing numerous forms of ministration in different ages—includes our faith in God, and all that we need to make our prospects of immortality a reality in our own experience. Today His Spirit is ours through the written Word, and through all of God's invisible helps to our wholehearted Christian endeavor.

Indeed, God is still at work! ●●

Freedom's Crowning Hour

(Continued from page 4)

Free—yet servants. That means we operate within bounds, within the limits of the Law of God. One side of the enclosure is responsibility. There is

no surer way to lose one's liberty than through irresponsibility. A man may say, "This is a free country, and it is my privilege to live in it as I please." He has responsibility to nothing. Usually we find that such people, as Peter says, use their liberty as a pretext for misconduct, and by becoming slaves to their own selfishness they lose their freedom.

The person who sets his aim on being a Christian finds there are many things he cannot do even in a free country. Every place he turns he is faced with a responsibility to himself, to his fellow Christian and to his God. And yet, strangely enough, he who obeys those demands takes on himself chains that are far less confining than are the shackles of self-indulgence.

Which person awakens in the morning with the more unfettered heart—the one who operates in the irresponsibility of doing what he pleases, or the one who is operating within the bounds of a sacred responsibility?

Liberty is not the right to do as we choose; it is the responsibility to do what is right.

But freedom from self due to the restraints of the Law of God is not the Christian's only goal. It is but the means to a much greater end. The supreme triumph of Freedom's Crowning Hour remains yet future when God's will is done in earth as in heaven. And, thank God, that hope is not a fantasy, not a vain wish dependent upon man's ability to resolve the world's dilemma. God Almighty has promised this better world, and in the near future His unlimited power will be used to bring it about. Christ Jesus will appear as King of the whole earth. The promise is: "In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth" (Ps. 72:7-8).

With the fulfillment of that promise shall come Freedom's Crowning Hour: freedom from want, freedom from pain, freedom from aught that can bring discomfort or distress, freedom from the limitations of mortality. We shall be made equal unto the angels, never again to know the shackles of suffering and death (Luke 20:35-36).

And now, in hope of ultimate victory, let us re-consecrate ourselves to the Cause to which we have pledged our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor, to carry on the work of the Lord that others may share in the glorious freedom which it brings.

Let us live like free men, never making our freedom a pretext for misconduct, but living as servants of God, that when Freedom's Crowning Hour arrives in its fullness, we may share in its unspeakable delights. ●●

LETTERS

Our Pledge

No matter what country we are citizens of, we have made a pledge of allegiance to God, and this must be a most meaningful pledge. It will have to be, indeed, if we ever see God's Kingdom. We should reflect upon our agreement, for it is a serious declaration to make, and one we must fulfill to the best of our ability. If we fail this crucial test, we have lost the greatest of all prizes ever offered mankind. We would do well to try to be faithful in this obligation of fidelity.

Hamilton, Ontario, Canada

Mrs. W. H. Y.

Continuing On

Thank you for not removing my name from your mailing files as inactive, even though I did let my subscription lapse. I would like to say to you that I hope that you would never give up on me or any person in this world unless they had requested it themselves. I am trying real hard to live a personal life that would be pleasing to our Lord.

Midvale, Utah

K. M.

Thoroughly Impressed

Having read your set of booklets and a few issues of the *Megiddo Message* I am thoroughly impressed with those principles which your founder, Rev. L. T. Nichols, has resurrected. In particular, I enjoyed the excerpts from the "Full Surrender," published in the October issue last year, which proclaimed the principle of perfection of character. Now I read the Bible with new insight for God's commands and eagerly await the next *Megiddo Message*. I feel as the Rev. Maud Hembree felt when she said, "If this Bible is true, Mr. Nichols is right, and I am going to buy a Bible and investigate for myself."

If it were not for those copies of the *Megiddo Message* in the local public library, I would not have found you. Thank you very much.

Russellville, Kentucky

G. L.

Looking Ahead

It would seem when we think of the wonderful eternity in which we may be permitted to view the handiwork of God, that we would be more anxious to be overcomers. Paul kept his mind on the end of the matter. He suffered persecutions; he counted all but light afflictions, for he looked to the end of the matter.

So if we keep our mind on the great reward, we will receive the help we need to grow in spiritual things. We will be asking ourselves, Am I living right? Am I setting a good example for others to follow?

It is work to keep our minds on things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report, but if we remember

our perfect Example, our future King, Jesus Christ, we can do it.

Laurel, Indiana

E. M.

Thankful Always

We can be thankful in all circumstances; we can begin to look for reasons to be thankful even in the face of the unpleasantness and the heartbreak that come into each of our lives, and that we can eventually see them as blessings in disguise. It is in the struggle to rise above handicaps that strong characters are formed.

St. Joseph, Missouri

H. W.

Obituary

Ralph C. Barber

The apostle Paul termed death an enemy. And so it is, especially when it strikes upon one who has enjoyed a life of vigorous health and activity and has scarcely felt the pull of its decline.

Such was the life of the friend and brother to whom we paid our last respects on May 31, 1973, Brother Ralph C. Barber.

Brother Barber's passing was the first break in a happy trio composed of himself, his sister, Ethel Ruth Barber, and his brother, Clarence William, who made their home together for many years.

Brother Barber was very young when his parents became acquainted with the teachings of the Megiddo Mission Church. In 1924 he became a member of the church and took an active part in its activities. Besides playing in the Megiddo Band, he also sang in the choir, where his splendid singing voice was much appreciated. He carried a leading role in the many religious dramas presented in the church—a field where he showed extraordinary ability. He also took an active part in the many improvement projects in connection with the church and its buildings, where his skills made him very useful.

Our Brother's passing at the age of 67 years and at a time when so many are enjoying life into their eighty's and ninety's points up the uncertainty of mortal life and vividly alerts the living to make use of the time while they have it. For lifetime is working time. And, "Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation."

Interment was in Mount Hope Cemetery, where rest other of our beloved dead, awaiting the Day when the trumpet shall sound and the dead in Christ shall rise. ●●

Bible A B C's



P IS for Paul.

Paul was born in the city of Tarsus many years ago. We do not know if he ever saw Jesus or heard Him preach during the three years that Jesus traveled about through the cities and villages preaching the Kingdom of God; but after Jesus ascended into heaven, Paul became one of His most faithful followers.

Paul was a man who was well educated and had much natural ability. He worked hard for any cause that he thought was right. At first, Paul did not believe in Jesus or His teachings. He thought that Jesus' followers were doing very, very wrong when they taught the people about Jesus or His kingdom. He believed they should follow *Moses'* law, not Jesus.

When the young man Stephen was arrested and brought before the rulers for teaching about Jesus, Paul was among those who thought that Stephen should die for what he had done. In fact, Paul stood by the garments of the men who stoned Stephen. Probably Paul was very surprised when he heard Stephen praying to God and saying,

"Lord, do not lay this sin against them." Do you know why Stephen asked God not to let this terrible deed stand against them? It was because he knew that some of those who took part in it would become sorry for what they had done and would turn to God and serve Him. It could be that God had revealed to Stephen that Paul would someday be a great apostle and that he would suffer much because he taught the Word of God so tirelessly.

And after Stephen's death, Paul was determined to put everyone in prison who believed in Jesus. He was so determined to carry out his plans that he asked the high priest to give him letters to the rulers in Da-

mascus that he might bind anyone who believed in Jesus and bring him to Jerusalem as a prisoner. The high priest did what Paul asked, and Paul set out on his journey.

But on the road to Damascus, a wonderful thing happened to Paul. When he came near the city, a bright light from heaven shone around him. The light was so bright that Paul became blind. He heard a voice from heaven saying, "Why are you persecuting me?" Paul answered, "Who are you, Lord?" Paul was trembling and astonished as he said, "Lord, what do you want me to do?" Jesus told Paul to get up and go into the city and there he would be told what he should do. When Paul got up from the ground, the men who were with him took him by the hand and led him into Damascus, because he was blind—he could not see.

Paul was in Damascus for three days without his sight. He prayed to God, and God sent a holy man named Ananias to visit him. At first, Ananias was afraid to go because he had heard what terrible things Paul

(Continued on page 12)



"HOW poor are they that have not patience," exclaimed the poet. A deep poverty indeed, for without this simple virtue a man or woman is utterly at the mercy of the rough and fickle winds of circumstance. He who has not learned "to labor and to wait" will have misery enough in this life and no part in the life to come. It is true that there are times when, as the old adage puts it, patience ceases to be a virtue and swift action is indicated: but that is a different sort of patience and impatience. The familiar kind that makes us fidget, worry and waste our energy and lose our temper is an unmitigated vice, and one to be shunned and overcome with all possible speed.

Like many a universal failing, impatience is regarded by the masses as a minor affair, often confessed half-boastingly. It would be nice, they say by their attitude, if one could always keep control and take things calmly, but it is just too much trouble. But let no one deceive himself. Patience is not an optional virtue—not if we value eternal life. It is a "must," as much a direct command as truthfulness or chastity or reverence or brotherly love. Unless the apostle James was writing to no purpose, if his words mean anything at all, patience must be developed to the point of perfection, nothing less.

Impatient people must admit that they never feel better after indulgence, and that the serene in spirit lead a much happier life; but often they are prone to shift the blame to differences in temperament. This is a cheap and cowardly evasion. Temperaments do differ, but the law of God recognizes no such thing as temperament; and this is fair. Our human nature is not a heritage with which we are saddled to our dying day, for better or for

"But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing"

—James 1:4.

worse. In the hands of a determined seeker after salvation, temperament is plastic. We can make of it what we will. One man may control more temper

or impatience every day than another in a year; but the point is, he can do it if he will, and his reward will be greater. Perfect control is the minimum requirement. When we come to the bar of Judgment, the thing examined will not be the disposition with which we started, but the works with which we finished. The only thing that counts in any race is the finish; and between start and finish is the same amount of distance, in deeds if not in years—a nature to conquer.

Important as is the ordinary meaning of the word patience, a deeper and even nobler significance is embedded in the original Greek of our text. Moffatt renders it, "Only let your endurance be a finished product, so that you may be finished and complete, with never a defect." The Concordant Version and Weymouth also translate it "endurance," while Goodspeed and the Revised Standard Version substitute the word "steadfastness." Endurance—steadfastness; what noble virtues are these, and how much needed in a world and a time like this! For life is, first and last, an endurance test. "Many are called but few chosen" because they do not endure. "He that endureth unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Matt. 24:13), and no one else. The sands of time are whitened with the bones of those who began the work but failed to see it through, who couldn't "take it." The historical Scriptures are replete with examples of men who, after a promising start in the way of righteousness, weakened or took a wrong turning, making shipwreck of their whole career. These things, Paul tells us, are our examples, "and are

Meditations on the Word

written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come" (I Cor. 10:11).

Probably the most numerous class of the unfaithful are those represented in the parable of the Sower by the "stony ground," the many who hear the Word and "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" (Mark 4:16-17). They were the weaklings who couldn't—or wouldn't—take it. In our time, the "cool of the day," active persecution is replaced by unpopularity, ridicule, a deadly indifference pervading the surrounding world, and the slow attrition of time—enemies far more deadly than scourge or rack, cross or flame.

"Thou therefore endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ," wrote the Apostle from the depths of his own experience. Salvation, like other worthwhile things, never comes easily. The new recruit in the Army of the King may be assured that there is much to be endured if he is to be a good soldier. Temptations, for one thing. They surround us on every hand, they cannot always be avoided, but they can be endured and overcome. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation," said James, "for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life which the Lord hath promised to them that love him" (1:12). It is well to remember that "there hath no temptation taken you but such

as is common to man" (I Cor. 10:13), also that our great Example, young as this world count years, met these same temptations and overcame them. He lived His short life in a corrupt and decadent age, when His own nation was falling to pieces of its own rottenness, when Imperial Rome's vices were pervading even the remote provinces; yet the world left no mark on Him. He was a man, with all a man's desires. What man has done, man can do and is required to do. "Follow thou me," were among His last recorded words.

"This is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully." That one is a real test, but it can be done. It will help to "consider him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself," "who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not" (Heb. 12:3; I Pet. 2:23).

Just as hard or a little harder to take is correction for our faults. Yet nothing is more important; nothing is better medicine for sick souls. "If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" (Heb. 12:7).

Our text in all its translations ends with the note of perfection. "Perfect and entire, wanting nothing." That is the ultimate, the superlative. God is not so pressed for time and material that He will perpetuate an imperfect character. Jesus was not thinking wishfully or speaking lightly, but in real seriousness when He said, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." ●●

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