



Megiddo Message

Make Freedom Ring!

*Great was the hour when freedom rang from Independence Hall;
But greater far shall be the summons of the final call,
When we are freed from sinful ways, from evil things and low,
No freedom ever can compare with that we then shall know.
Go forth with courage strong and true; let freedom ring today;
Let sin be overcome with right, let goodness have full sway.*

*Oh, who would not desire to share in that blest time to come,
When freedom shall to all the world ring out its joyful tone?
Not freedom only from our sin, but from mortality;
From earth's remotest bounds shall ring the shout of victory.
Then may we join that happy throng, with angels live for aye,
Because we made true freedom ring deep in our hearts today!*

Accountable to God

WHEN Daniel Webster was asked, "What is the most solemn thought you have ever had?" his reply was straightforward: "My personal accountability to God."

A time of reckoning is coming, and we ought to be living each day in the light of that sobering fact. Things as they are cannot continue. We abide each day by the mercy of Him whose longsuffering hand is stretched out still; but the hour of judgment is coming. Each one who has established a covenant-relationship with God has an appointment with Him. And the time of that appointment draws nearer, nearer.

There are, of course, certain facts about this appointment that we do not know. We do not know the day or hour of Christ's appearing, when we shall be called to account. We do not know just how we shall appear, or in what manner the sentence will be executed. But over-ruling these details is the basic fact that we shall have to give account for how we have used our gifts and opportunities, our powers of body and mind, even for the words our lips have framed. "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment" (Matt. 12:36).

The apostle Paul lived in constant consciousness of the coming day of Judgment, and spoke often in the language of law and accountability, of judgment and court. The useful handicraft of tent-making was not his whole education; he was also trained in the profession of the law, brought up at the feet of Gamaliel. It is possible, too, that he had considerable acquaintance with the civil law-courts, for when he himself had to appear at the bar of Jewish or Roman justice, he proved himself not unfamiliar with the proceedings. On his first missionary visit to Europe, he was dragged before the magistrates at Philippi; another time he stood before Gallio at Corinth; he delivered his defence before Festus, before Felix, and finally before Agrippa at Caesarea; and then, at Rome, he stood before Nero himself. Rome

at the time was the metropolis of the world. To stand at Caesar's judgment-seat was to stand before the highest earthly authority.

Law and justice were ever on Paul's mind, but especially that judgment seat greater than Caesar's. "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Rom. 14:12), he wrote. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal. 6:7). "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (II Cor. 5:10).

That Day which rose so largely in Paul's mind, which stood out so prominently in his mental vision, is the Day which should be of foremost concern to all of us. How shall we stand in "that day"?

The thought of the Judgment, and its unchangeable finality, makes us tremble. If we have had the time we need to complete our work for God, we shall be called to account. If we are approved, we shall be approved forever. If we are condemned, there will be no appeal, no recourse, no chance to improve the careless or imperfect record.

Our personal accountability is a solemn thought, and should keep us mindful of our need to get personally prepared. Thinking of it makes us tremble, but not as cowards. Paul preached repentance, "knowing therefore the terror of the Lord" (II Cor. 5:11). But as he neared the end of his career, he did not look ahead with fear. The Day of Judgment would be for him the glorious Day when the Lord, "the righteous judge," would bestow upon him the reward, the crown of righteousness and life.

Accountability holds no terror to the faithful and obedient. For them, the Day of Account will be the day of blessed release, the crowning day of victory, and the beginning of a life that will grow more and more glorious from age to endless age.

If we are prepared, it will be just such a day for us. ●●

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Megiddo Means

"a place of troops"

—Gesenius' Hebrew Lexicon

"a place of God"

—Young's Analytical Concordance

Geographically, Megiddo was and is a town in Palestine, located at a strategic point, demanding heavy fortification; for Palestine is the age-old gateway between East and West, and the avenue connecting North and South. Supremacy there has long been the envy of aggressive nations, and the prevailing power has guarded it with jealous eye. The famous pass at Megiddo through a solid mountain range is the one means by which this avenue between continents may be traversed.

In the spiritual parallel, it is a place of troops, where soldiers are equipped for spiritual warfare against the forces of evil without and within. "The weapons we wield are not merely human but divinely potent to demolish strongholds; we demolish sophistries and all that rears its proud head against the knowledge of God; we compel every human thought to surrender in obedience to Christ" (II Cor. 10:4-5, NEB).

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Make Freedom Ring!

IN RECENT years, Americans have been reviving an early custom, the tradition of ringing bells in celebration of our nation's independence. For the first hundred years of our nation's life, the ringing of bells was the standard way of celebrating Independence Day. Firecrackers came to the fore only after the Civil War, their childish bangs slowly drowning the more profound voices of bells. When our manifesto of freedom was approved on July 4, 1776, the great liberty bell in Independence Hall sounded forth. This bell weighs 2000 pounds and is twelve feet in circumference at its lip. Its mighty clang pealed forth the news to the citizens of Philadelphia, that this nation had declared its independence.

What a joyous and adventuresome prospect it was, to be free from the heavy hand of despots, free from any shackles of tyranny. We are thankful for those who lived and died to make our country free, for signing the Declaration of Independence did not alone secure our freedom; it took years of blood, sweat, and battle. Our voices today echo in gratitude to those who made the sacrifice that we might live in freedom. Thank God for this land of liberty, the home of the brave and the free.

The early settlers came to the American shores in search of freedom, freedom to worship God as they chose. They came with the glow of adventure in their eyes, and the glory of hope in their hearts. They cherished a vigorous and indomitable faith in God; like a dynamo it sparked their minds to think beyond the present. They sought, and so they fought—and they *won*—freedom, not only for themselves but for their posterity.

That is why we today are free to worship God in truth and holiness. We are free to praise Him with music and singing. We are free to speak and live for God. We are free to study and to keep every precept of God. We are free to choose our livelihood, and to pursue peace and happiness as we desire. We are free to practice in our lives the highest principles and to achieve the highest goal possible, even eternal life. Thank God that the bells of freedom ring!

But let this thought ring in our ears today,

that God is the giver of all this blessedness. It is He who laid the foundations of the earth. It is He who ordained this home of the free. God made this country so fair and filled it with treasures untold. He carpeted it with soft rolling prairies and columned it with towering mountains; He studded it with sweet, flowing fountains and traced it with long winding streams. He planted it with deep-shadowed forests, and made the soil yield her bounties.

God had a purpose at work when He gave us America. He wanted a place where people could be free to set their hearts to the perfecting of their characters in this time, and so be worthy to live in His Kingdom. God wanted a place where people could be free to worship Him and to do His will with all their heart.

The opportunity is ours; what are we doing with it? So much has been done for us; how are we responding?

We are seeking freedom, real freedom which only God can give; we are seeking freedom from mortality, from weakness and weariness, from pain and trouble, from sin and death. At present we are bound to all these, but God is waiting to free us from the shackles of mortality. He has in store for us a crown of life, immortal life, life such as we have never felt pulsating in our bodily frame, life which will enable us to move with the freedom of the wind, with mental powers surpassing all mortal brilliance and beauty that will never fade or decay. But God will not deliver us from our present bondage of corruption until we manifest our supreme desire for that deliverance; He will not deliver us until we free ourselves from our own sinful natures. This we must do to achieve that all-glorious freedom which God holds out to us.

Too often we show that we are not free from ourselves; our evil emotions and impulses are the commanding officers of our lives. They are the tyrants that bind us. They tie us up so that there is little left with which to serve God. It is our task to break their tyranny, to die to the flesh and all its power, that we might be free to live for God with our whole being!

Today the bells of freedom ring throughout our land, but we tremble at the moral peril; it stares us in the face at every turn; it shouts so loud that if it were possible it would drown out everything that is pure and noble. Indeed, freedom is not to let loose our lower natures, to seek our own pleasures or satisfy our passions.

According to the apostle Paul, true freedom is to be dead indeed unto sin and alive unto God. When Paul felt his lower nature seeking to bring the higher into bondage, he exclaimed, "It is an agonizing situation and who on earth can set me free from the clutches of my own sinful nature? I thank God," he said, "there is a way out through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 7:24-25, Phillips).

Jesus was a great example and teacher of true freedom. He said, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). Paul describes beautifully the freedom Jesus taught. He said, "If a man is in Christ, he becomes a new person altogether—the past is finished and gone, everything has become fresh and new" (II Cor. 5:17, Phillips). When we are free, our old ways will be gone; we will be a new person altogether.

The early Americans exercised a brave spirit to gain freedom. We are seeking a far more glorious and eternal freedom; let us then much more apply our hearts and be brave to obtain it. Do our eyes glow with this vibrant purpose? Do our hearts throb with the glorious hope? Is our faith vigorous and indomitable? Do the glorious promises of God spark our minds like a dynamo to think beyond the pettiness of the present? Are we really involved in this struggle for freedom, freedom from ourselves and finally freedom from mortality? If so, we will feel it through and through, and there will be in us a willingness to die for that freedom, die to sin that the likeness of Christ may live in us. Then, born of victory, the bells of freedom will ring in *our* hearts.

Let us watch the foes that would enslave us. Are we free if our mind is continually cluttered with earthly things? Are we held down by multiple temporal duties that rob us of time and thought that should be given to God? We can make freedom ring. A certain busy man named Nehemiah made freedom ring by keeping in close touch with God. One day when the king asked him to give account of himself, he quickly uttered a prayer to God for direction. And God immediately answered him. No doubt Nehemiah was in the habit of sending up many a swift, silent prayer to God. Keeping close to God will help us lift the heavy hand of earthly care. When we take

our troubles to God in prayer, they are no longer ours but His. And wherever we are, there is a way open to the throne of God. Active in business or at home, traveling here and there or taken up with the hundred and one duties of daily life, we can communicate with God a thousand times a day. Thanks be to God, we can make our freedom ring *any* time, *anywhere*.

Are there feelings of jealousy that take hold of us? Is our eye focussed on others, their talents, their prosperity, their possessions, their advantages? We are yet fettered; even a small speck of jealousy will retard our progress on God's free-way. Only when we focus our eye upon God and His approval and seek His goodness can we make freedom really ring.

Is our life for God stinted because we seek the approbation of men? Jesus declared that such have not the love of God in them. He labored intensely to free Himself from this peril. When He was caught in the wave of popularity and the people came to treat Him as a hero, He withdrew Himself and fortified His soul in prayer against all pride of life. Jesus was tempted in every way as we are, but He labored, and watched, and prayed. He knew how to keep Himself free, finishing His work in a very short time. Let us hasten to make freedom ring in our lives; our time may be very short.

There are so many ways in which we manifest whether or not our hearts are free from the bondage of our old fleshly natures. Every day, every moment is a challenge. We have known many a defeat; but thank God there are also signs of victory! How glorious to go forth each new day prepared to meet another challenge whereby we can prove that we are indeed becoming free. How thrilling to know that we can triumph in the struggle, that we may someday know the genuine delight of being truly free. Let freedom ring! ●●

*O God who dost preserve the stars from wrong;
And the most ancient heav'ns by Thee are strong;
To humbler functions, Lord, thou callest me;
Oh, make me strong to stand. So I commend
Myself unto Thy guidance from this hour;
Oh, let my weakness have an end!
Give unto me, made lowly, wise,
The spirit of self-sacrifice;
The confidence of reason give;
And in the light of truth let me Thy bondman live.*
—Selected.

"If My People . . ."

WE HAVE come together to thank and worship and honor God for His abundant goodness toward us, for "his wonderful mercies to the children of men." As we remember the signing of the Declaration of Independence, we feel especially grateful for our great nation America.

Do we hesitate to call our nation great and to give it our honor when there is so much internal weakness and corruption, when many officials of the law indulge in practices farthest from "Christian," when standards of morality and decency have all but vanished?

We honor our nation because it is part of our obedience to the law of God. These are the recorded words of Jesus: "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's" (Matt. 22:21). The apostle Peter wrote, "Honor all men. . . . Fear God, Honor the king" (I Pet. 2:17)—and we should find it much easier to give honor to our type of government than to a selfish and dictatorial Roman Emperor. The apostle Paul made known to all that he was a citizen of Rome; and he wrote Timothy about his duty toward the state as a minister of Christ: "I urge that entreaties, prayers, and thanksgiving be offered for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead peaceful, quiet lives in perfect piety and seriousness. This is the right thing to do, and it pleases God our Saviour" (I Tim. 2:1-3, Williams Translation).

We thank God for our nation and honor it as the country He has provided for the furtherance of His cause in these last days. For a nation that has always stood for liberty, protection, opportunity and principle, we are deeply grateful. We honor America because of the great idea of the men who signed the Declaration of Independence.

A divine Hand was guiding them, that a nation might arise where men could be free to think for themselves and to believe according to the dictates of their own conscience, without the interference of government. The men who framed and signed the Declaration of Independence were following principles set forth in the Word of God.

We honor America because here we have the right to dissent: We can believe as we wish and practice that belief. In many countries of the world even today this is impossible. A 1975 Comparative Survey of Freedom in the nations of the world showed that less than 20% of the world's population live in "free" countries such as the United States; 35% live in countries classified as "partly free"; and 45%—almost half of the people in the world—have no religious freedom at all. Religious liberty has actually declined in recent years. Should we not thank God from the depths of our heart that our lot has been cast in this free land?

We rejoice in the multitude of blessings that we are able to enjoy as citizens of this great nation; but at the same time we realize that our nation has traveled far from the ideals of its founders. We bow our heads in shame as we think of the tumultuous state of affairs in our own nation. The dire lack of ethics in politics and business. The lack of respect for authority at all levels. The almost total disregard of God. Simple virtues of honesty, hard work and loyalty are out of date, and an undisciplined society feverishly pursues pleasures as the ultimate goal of life. We look upon a nation fast becoming morally and spiritually bankrupt; a nation where secularists and agnostics dominate education; a nation where 74% of the people are "functionally unchurched"—that is, without direct and personal involvement in any religious group; a nation where the majority have forgotten that man is a finite creature who lives and moves and has his being in a supreme Creator, a nation where they reject the fact that God is sovereign and that He has the

NOTE: "If My People . . ." is available on cassette as a church-service recording. Price: \$3.00

sovereign right to impose a standard of righteousness upon men.

The words of a contemporary poet, Helen Steiner Rice, describe the plight of our nation, with a prayer and call to repentance:

"... we've grown so rich and mighty and so arrogantly strong
That we no longer ask in humbleness, 'God, show us where we're wrong.'
We have come to trust completely in the power of man-made things,
Unmindful of God's mighty power, and that He is King of kings.
We have turned our eyes away from Him to go our selfish way,
And money, power, and pleasure are the gods we serve today.
And the good green earth God gave us to peacefully enjoy,
Through greed and fear and hatred we are seeking to destroy.
O Father up in heaven, stir and wake our sleeping souls;
Renew our faith and lift us up and give us higher goals,
And grant us heavenly guidance as war threatens us again,
For more than guided missiles all the world needs guided men."

This important need of our nation was expressed to large audiences of people during the Bicentennial Celebration in 1976 by means of a thoughtful musical, entitled "If My People."* With its combination of Scripture, speaking and song, it was presented on the steps of the Capitol in Washington on Flag Day, then in Philadelphia on July 4. The work is a call to national repentance from our national corruption and lawlessness and an appeal to turn to God. Taking its theme from the words of II Chronicles 7:14, it calls us to humble ourselves under God's guiding Hand, to recognize His authority, to praise Him for His goodness, and to live worthy of His favor and blessing.

Though the musical appeals occasionally to the cleansing blood of Jesus—an idea which the Bible does not support—it sets forth an ideal which if followed throughout our land would result in a sweeping reformation. "Ye shall be holy unto me, for I the Lord am holy" is certainly the highest of high ideals. And the need to remove sin before God can hear our prayers and be entreated of us is exactly what the prophet Isaiah expressed centuries ago: "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear" (Isa. 59:2).

*"If My People . . ." by Jimmy and Carol Owens, published by Lexicon Music, Inc., Copyright 1974.

I would like to quote a portion of its narration:

Before we can expect God to hear our prayers, we need to make sure there's no sin standing between us and the Lord. Jesus said, 'Whenever you stand praying, you must forgive anything you are holding against anyone, so that your Heavenly Father may forgive your sins. But if you will not forgive, neither will your Father in Heaven forgive you your trespasses . . .' (Mark 11:25-26).

Let's not wait any longer to give up our resentments and let the Lord set us free from the dark.

This is the prayer of intercession that follows:

Sovereign Lord, we thank You for our nation, and for its godly heritage. So long as we have walked in Your ways, You have faithfully poured out Your bounties upon us.

But in our prosperity, we have forgotten that all we are and have we owe to Your love and grace. Many in our land have forgotten the God Who made them. Many deny even the basic concept of law. Selfishness and greed, distrust and thanklessness, hatred and indifference to suffering abound. Immorality and perversion, profanity and blasphemy are on every hand. . . .

We have presented an ugly, fragmented picture of Christ to the world by our jealousies and pettinesses one to another. Jesus said, 'A house divided against itself cannot stand;' unite your church in love, O Lord, that the world may believe!

We confess with shame our powerlessness. We have often trusted in our own programs and resources and been led by the traditions of men rather than by the Spirit of God.

Few of us have sought first the kingdom. Where we have confined religion to a few hours a week instead of making it the motivating force of our lives; where we have been idolators by putting other things before You, forgive us.

Forgive us, O Lord, where we have compromised our high and holy calling to be friends of the world.

We have been silent in the face of encroaching corruption. We have tolerated evil. We have been afraid of offending the world rather than keeping the world from offending us. . . .

We have tolerated impurity, rather than disciplining and purging it out according to the command of Scripture.

It is time for judgment to begin at the House of God; but we would judge ourselves, so that we shall not be judged. Therefore, O Lord, hear our confession and pardon our iniquity.

. . . Create in us a hunger for Your Word, that we may all grow to maturity. May there come in the Church a putting away of all that offends You, and a mighty crying out for deliverance. We cry for righteousness to reign, for holiness to preserve our nation. . . .

Move the whole church, . . . that we might see in our time the final great harvest, . . . the return of our Lord Jesus in Power and Great Glory.

We realize, of course, that the majority of the people of our nation are untouched by such a call to repentance. But how serious are these words as they apply to *us*! How grave is the danger in which we place ourselves when we tolerate evil in our own hearts, when we compromise our high

and holy calling to be friends of the world, when we make ourselves idolators by putting other interests ahead of God! How grave the danger to *us* who profess to be God's people if *we* do not humble ourselves, and pray, and seek His face, and turn from our wicked ways; for we are accountable to Him for what we do.

A Great Dedication

Let us go back to the time when the words of II Chronicles 7:14 were spoken and see why God said what He did.

It was a great state occasion: the time for the dedication of Solomon's new temple; it was also the Thanksgiving season—the Harvest festival, the Feast of Tabernacles, was just seven days away.

For seven years the temple had been under construction. Every part of it had been built according to the plans God had given to Solomon's father David; everything about the temple was as perfect as human hands could fashion, for this was *God's* temple—and a type of the finished creation which will be dedicated at the end of the age in which we are living!

Preparations for the dedication ceremonies must have been underway for weeks and months, for everything about the occasion was designed to make it memorable. There was to be something to see—a long procession of white-robed priests, the king in his royal robes, and the grandeur and glory of the sacred building itself; there was also to be something to hear—the voices of a thousand Levites singing praises to God; the sound of one hundred and twenty trumpets, plus cymbals, harps and psalteries. Altogether, it would be something to experience. There would be address, recitation and prayer: nothing that would help religious fidelity among the people had been neglected. When the day set for the great event arrived, all was ready.

The Ceremony

The first part of the ceremony involved the moving of the ark of God from its abode in a tent David had made for it, to its new place in the temple. To do this, Solomon summoned the “elders of Israel, and all the heads of the tribes, the chief of the fathers of the children of Israel” to the tent where the ark rested (II Chron. 5:2). What a procession it must have been, as they all followed the precious ark—now nearly five hundred years old—as it was carried reverently by the Levites in the manner prescribed in the

Law. The ark was sacred. It symbolized the presence of God among them. And it still contained the two original tablets of stone that Moses had placed in it some five hundred years previous.

We can imagine the white-robed priests disappearing with their precious burden into the Holy of Holies—a sacred area that they would never again be permitted to enter. Then, as they emerged, there was a great burst of music and song. Scores of Levites began to play on their cymbals, harps and psalteries, while one hundred twenty priests blew their trumpets and other Levites raised their voices to sing praises to God, “For he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.”

God accepted their offering of praise, for we read that immediately, “The glory of the Lord filled the house of God.”

Solomon was touched; this was a high moment in a career that could—and should—have ended gloriously. How different from the spirit he would show in later years!

Mounting the five-foot bronze platform that had been placed in the midst of the congregation, Solomon “spread forth his hands toward heaven” as he knelt and offered a prayer to God.

“O Lord God of Israel,” he cried, “there is no God like thee in the heaven, nor in the earth; which keepest covenant and shewest mercy unto thy servants, that walk before thee with all their hearts. . . . But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house which I have built!

“Have respect therefore to the prayer of thy servant, and to his supplication, O Lord my God, to hearken unto the cry and the prayer which thy servant prayeth before thee, that thine eyes may be open upon this house day and night, upon the place whereof thou hast said that thou wouldest put thy name there” (II Chron. 6:14, 18-20).

Then Solomon made a special request to God, which he repeated seven times. In essence it was this: If the people turn away from God and suffer for their sins, and then repent and turn back to God, will God hear their prayer and forgive and restore them to His favor?

God Heard—and Approved

We know that God heard Solomon's prayer that day and placed upon his work a brilliant stamp of approval, for no sooner had he finished praying than “fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the Lord filled the house” (II Chron. 7:1).

What a sight it was! There was more to see at

the dedication ceremony than any of the people had planned for or could have anticipated. What a testimony of God's approval—that highest aim and foremost desire in the heart of every God-fearer then and now. They wanted God to be pleased with what they had done, and the descending fire upon the altar was unmistakable evidence that He was indeed pleased. The occasion itself was surpassingly impressive; but imagine the sight of fire descending from heaven and consuming the sacrifice upon the altar! This event must have been told and retold a thousand times by the Israelites who saw it.

The effect upon the people was instantaneous: They bowed in reverential worship, "with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped, and praised the Lord, saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever" (II Chron. 7:3).

O that we might have God place His mark of

approval upon *our* work! Should it not be the foremost desire of *our* hearts? If what we are doing does not have God's blessing upon it, it is of little worth and is destined to fail utterly. We have been called to be children of God; this means that we are heirs of that which is of transcendent worth. Should it not call forth from us the deepest joy and the most reverent praise? Should we not also open our mouths to sing the goodness and mercy of the Lord to *us*?

Then God answered Solomon's prayer that day of the dedication of the temple. And the words we are considering today are God's answer. Let us quote them again:

"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land" (II Chron. 7:14).

To the people of Israel—God's chosen people in

Let Us Pray . . .

Our heavenly Father, we thank Thee again for Thy mercy extended to us, and for the grand news Thou hast provided us of Thy glorious coming Kingdom. A day shall arrive when all nations shall bow before Thee and sing to Thy praise. Christ is coming to bring His judgments and the reward. He will dispense peace until wars shall cease unto the ends of the earth, every tongue singing to Thy praise, and every knee bending to Thy sovereign will.

We thank Thee that in this day of trouble when all of man's best efforts have failed to bring peace, Thou hast promised to send Christ to bring about that much-cherished condition, when our officers shall be peace, and our exactors righteousness. Help us to realize that to have a part in that new and better Day we must first bring self into subjection, must rule every thought, feeling and motive, put iniquity far away and let it not dwell in our midst. Alert us that that coming Day and that glory will be given only to the meek and humble ones. Jesus Himself declared, "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth."

Help us then to grow in meekness and humility, and may we not seek the praise of men, but praise from Thee only. Help us to put away anger,

impatience, envy, vice and dishonesty of every kind, to cease to do evil, and learn to do well, wash and become clean as Thou hast commanded in Thy Word.

As we think back over the experiences of that far distant day when Thy first temple was dedicated, may we project ourselves ahead to that more auspicious day when Thy much greater temple will be built upon earth, Thy new order developed, with the result that not only Thy house shall be filled with glory, but Thy glory shall fill the entire earth as the waters cover the sea.

It is now for Thy people who need Thy mercy not only to pray—for Thou hast declared that if we turn away our ear from hearing Thy law, even our prayer shall be an abomination—but we must humble ourselves, and seek Thy face, and turn from our wicked ways; then Thou wilt hear from heaven, and forgive our sin, and will heal our land, bestowing upon us the measureless blessings of the age to come.

Then grant us the wisdom to begin taking these steps, to take them promptly and continuously, until all iniquity and evil has been purged from our lives, and our garment of character has become without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.

We pray to be forgiven for the sins we have turned from and forsaken, and for the determination to continue faithful to the end, that in that greater Day the blessings of the age to come may be ours. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

the time of Solomon—there was promise in these words, promise of blessing and temporal prosperity—"if." Special blessing was conditioned upon special obedience. *If* they obeyed God's laws, they would prosper as a nation. If they disobeyed, they would suffer the consequences of disobedience.

God's Promise—If

To us today there is also promise in these words; and still there is the inescapable "if." It is God's manner of dealing with His people in all ages.

First let us notice that this promise is not offered to all mankind. It is an offer made exclusively to the people of God: "*If my people. . .*" Who are they? Do *we* qualify? Are *we* in God's long-range plans, a part of His family, by adoption, destined to an eternal place among His notable sons and daughters because of the sterling quality of our character?

It is popular among many religious-minded people today to proclaim that everybody is a child of God, that all are precious to Him, that He loves all of us whatever our conduct or character. Believing that Christ died for the sins of all, they say it is our duty to show God's love to everyone without any regard for what that person is, whether thief or drug addict. God loves us not because of what we *are* but simply because we are His children.

But this is not what God or any of His spokesmen say or have ever said. There is no allowance for any idea of universal love in our verse today. "If my people" suggests immediately that all are *not* by nature God's people. There are conditions to be met before any may rightfully call themselves God's people.

There are numerous examples in the Bible of people God did not love. He commanded Jeremiah not even to pray for the wicked people of his time: "Pray thou not for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to me: for I will not hear thee" (Jer. 7:16). Could God love a people whom He would not permit His servant to pray for?

The book of Proverbs records the voice of wisdom, speaking as the voice of God, saying: "I love them that love me" (Prov. 8:17). Nowhere do we read of God's saying, I love them that do not love me; or I love them that hate me. And many have been and are the people who do not love God. Does God love them? He does *not*. The love of God is always conditional.

It is conditional in II Chronicles 7:14. Let us see what the conditions are, as they may apply to us.

The Conditions

"If my people . . . shall humble themselves."

Humility is the first requirement. Humility is a quality in short supply these days. Haven't we sent men to the moon? Are we not the best educated, the most wealthy, and the most accomplished generation that has ever lived? But we are poor, and wretched, and miserable, and blind and needy when we forget that all we have and are comes from and through the goodness of Him who created us.

Humbling ourselves before God means recognizing that "it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23); and this means it is not within you to direct your steps, and it is not within me to direct my steps. We need the wisdom that comes from a higher source; we need direction from above, if our steps are to lead us beyond the limits of this life.

Humbling ourselves before God means realizing our total dependence upon Him. But for the perfect balances in nature, none of us could survive. Let God cut off our supply of oxygen, and all of us would fall helpless in a matter of minutes. The words of the apostle Paul are unalterably true: In God "we live, and move, and have our being." We should keep ourselves in a frame of mind that is continually aware of this fact; it will help us to be more obedient to His mandates.

Humbling ourselves before God also means recognizing His supreme authority over us, His absolute right to tell us what to do and what not to do; and this should stir in us a deep sense of our accountability to Him. It should also make us realize, in all humility, that many times we have done things we could not delight in giving account for. We have not always spoken as we should have, or thought as we should have, or felt as we should have. We have wasted precious hours and days which did not even belong to us, if we are truly God's people. We have splashed around in the shallow waters of limited experience instead of jumping off into the deep waters of complete consecration, where survival depends on perpetual spiritual exertion.

Now let us consider the next condition of God's promise:

"If my people . . . shall humble themselves, and pray. . ."

It has been said that we can no more maintain spiritual life without contact with the Giver of life than an electric bulb can make light without contact with the generator that produces the power to make light. If we would be spiritually alive, we must pray.

Why should we pray? Does not God know our wants and our needs before we ask Him? Does He not know what is best for us anyway? He does, but He wants us to pray; He wants us to show our desire for what He has and our appreciation for what He has given us.

Throughout all ages prayer has been esteemed by the children of God as a holy privilege. Who would be considered part of a human family if he or she made no effort to communicate with the other members of the family? Likewise, how can we consider ourselves children of God if we have not enough interest in our heavenly Father—who gives us everything we have and are—to commune with Him?

The saints of old were often found in prayer and communion with God. Herein was the source of their spiritual vitality and the overruling purpose of their lives. Herein lay their strength in trial and their stability through whatever came. What could they fear on earth with God behind them! As the reverent David said in a moment of deep spiritual insight, "He only is my rock and my salvation: he is my defence; I shall not be moved. In God is my salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God. Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him" (Ps. 62:6-8). This is what David did, and it was his salvation through many a time of trouble, testing and failure.

If we would find God's favor, we need more and more to feel a closeness to God, a constant living in His presence, a fellowship with Him and His people.

The next condition in God's answer to Solomon is closely related to prayer:

"If my people . . . shall . . . pray, and seek my face."

Naturally we seek our own "face," our own glory, our own interests and wishes; God wants us to seek *His* glory, *His* interests, *His* desires. So long as we are all absorbed in our own selfish circle, we have no place for God; and God has nothing for us. To secure His lasting blessings and His eternal favor, we must "seek His face."

Seeking His face goes beyond church attendance, respectability, and perfunctory service. It means we have a deep, stirring passion to know Him and to obtain what He has offered us—even to being willing to surrender all to His control. It means, literally, that we will be truly satisfied with nothing less than actually seeing Him, the Great, Eternal God! And isn't this the promise: "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" (Matt. 5:8). We seek His approval upon our work now, His protection over us, His guarding

presence among us. But if we can answer to all of the conditions that He sets before us, we shall someday have the privilege of beholding Him face to face!

The last condition in our text is all-inclusive:

"If my people . . . shall . . . turn from their wicked ways."

Wickedness, evil, sin, separates us from God and bars us from the sphere of His favor. True repentance always means renunciation of everything God calls wrong. "Turn from their wicked ways" is God's cure-all prescription. It means that we must renounce our coldness, our lethargy, our shallowness, our self-seeking, our pride and personal ambition; we must renounce our waywardness of thought and feeling, our sensitiveness, our lack of faith. It will help us if we can realize how prone to these "wicked ways" our hearts naturally are. Does it sound rather harsh to call our ways "wicked" when they are contrary to God's law? That is what God calls them, and it is *His* approval that we are seeking.

The Blessing

What will happen when we meet these conditions, when we have humbled ourselves, and prayed, and sought God's face, and turned from our wicked ways?

". . . then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."

To Solomon and the people of his time, this was a promise of national prosperity and blessing. But to all who meet the conditions in their fullest sense, it is a promise of the fullest blessing—even "glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life"—a divine healing that will ultimately extend through all the land and which will last forever.

"I will hear from heaven"—it is the promise written by God's prophet Isaiah, "that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear" (Isa. 65:24). Also the promise of God written by David: "Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name. He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him" (Ps. 91:14-15).

". . . and forgive their sin." What could be more wonderful than the promise of divine forgiveness, that the memory of our sins shall be completely erased! Again we have God's promise: "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jer. 31:34).

When God does this for us, we shall be beyond

the possibility of sinning; hence sin will disappear completely from our realm of existence and become part of the forgotten past, never to plague us again. In fact, so absorbed will we be with the new life within us and ahead of us that "we'll forget we ever sinned." What glorious release!

There is yet one more promise in our text: "I will . . . heal their land." In ancient Israel, land that had been healed was land that was once again producing bountifully; and bountiful harvests were always regarded among God-fearing Israelites as a special blessing from heaven.

The great, future healing of land which will result from our obtaining God's favor will bring with it the fullest of blessing—even "life for evermore." A man of God long ago had this glimpse of the promise: "In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore" (Ps. 16:11). What more could mortals desire! "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light" (Ps. 36:8-9). In God is not a measured **portion** of life but "the fountain." In God we shall be able to touch the source of life itself, and feel within us the surge of an existence that we can know will go on and on and on in the midst of every conceivable blessing and pleasure!

But even this is not all that will come with that divine healing, for it is written that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that" humble themselves, and pray, and seek His face, and turn from their wicked ways.

All this!—if we become *His people!* ●●

It's Coming!

This is no time for fear, for doubts, for grief,
For broodings on the tragedies of fate.
This is a time for songs of hope and gladness,
For hymns of joy for better days to come!
Though echoes of old wars depress the heart,
And scars of greed and hate do linger yet,
Though foul suspicions still are felt afar,
This is the time for confidence and praise!
Arise! Awake! The Prophet true has spoken.
Our dreams, our hopes, our prayers are not in vain.
The night is past! The morning light is breaking!
Together let us shout new hope of life!
Our Babels crash. Let selfish flags be furled.
Together let us shout, The Kingdom comes!

Fruitful Fragments



He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.

Why put off the work we know we have to do? Do we think it will be easier another day? We think in vain!

In our haste to deal with the things that are wrong, let us not upset the things that are right.

Kindness is love dressed in work clothes.

The value of the Bible lies not in knowing it but in obeying it.

Don't let your talk be "cream" and your life "skimmed milk."

Beware: A loose tongue may get you into a tight place.

To belittle is to be little.

Apply thyself wholly to the Scriptures, and the Scriptures wholly to thyself.

You must be melted before you can be molded.

He who has no vision of eternity will never know the true value and use of time.

People with sharp tongues often cut themselves.

When your temper gets the best of you, it reveals the worst in you.

We can measure our likeness to Christ by our sensitivity to sin.

Whom God would exalt He humbles.

To master yourself, give yourself to the Master.

There is nothing in the world more confusing than the one who gives good advice while setting a bad example.

UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God."

II. NATURAL DEATH—ITS CAUSE B. Why Men Die—According to the Bible

Death--According to the Bible

DEATH is no respecter of persons. It marks finis to the best of lives as well as to the worst. Nadab and Abihu, the unfaithful sons of the head of Israel's priestly family, died "when they offered strange fire before the Lord" (Num. 26:61). "Moses the servant of the Lord," described as "very meek," "died there in the land of Moab" and was buried in an unmarked grave by the angel of the Lord (Deut. 34:4-5).

Korah, Dathan and Abiram "and all that apertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation" (Num. 16:33). They died at the hand of the Lord; their deaths were not "the common death of all men," but divine retribution meted out for their wickedness.

"Joshua . . . , the servant of the Lord, died, being an hundred and ten years old. And they buried him in the border of his inheritance" (Josh. 24:29). His death was the natural end of a well-lived life in the service of God. Likewise, a good king Hezekiah "slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the chiefest of the sepulchres of the sons of David" (II Chron. 32:32-33), "and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem did him honour at his death."

Joash, the boy-king who was saved from death as an infant by his aunt, grew into a wicked king, forgetting the kindness of others. He killed his own son and was himself slain in a conspiracy.

All died. And where are they? All sleep together in the dust, the good together with the bad. Theology would have us believe that the souls of the good are rejoicing in heaven, while the souls of the wicked writhe in hell. But such is not the teaching of the Bible. Except for those who knew God's law and agreed to keep it, all who have died will "sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake." All covenant-makers will one day stand at the Judgment to be rewarded according to their works.

We have learned that natural death is not the result of Adam's sin or a man's own sin. Why then do men die? Let us go to our textbook, the Bible, to learn why men die.

1. Man is mortal. Contrary to popular teaching, there is nothing about a man that is immortal or undying. Man was not created as an immortal being. The first inhabitants of the earth were as mortal as we ourselves. Scripture writers wrote by divine inspiration and they offer considerable proof of man's mortal state. "Shall mortal man be more just than God?" asked the patriarch Job. "If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come. . . . If I wait, the grave is mine house" (Job 4:17; 14:14; 17:13).

Mortality means the condition of being mortal or subject to death. It is the exact opposite of immortality. The whole human race is mortal, perishing. "All mankind is grass, they last no longer than a flower of the field" (Isa. 40:6, NEB).

The brevity of man's life is pictured in many different ways in the Bible:

a. Life as a shadow. "Our days on the earth are as a shadow," said King David (I Chron. 29:15). And again, "Man is like to vanity: his days are as a shadow that passeth away" (Ps. 144:4). Shadows endure only as long as the sun shines. Could anything be more unenduring?

b. Life as a vapor. "For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away" (Jas. 4:14), or as rendered by the New English Bible, "You are no more than a mist, seen for a little while and then dispersing." When the sun rises, a morning fog is soon gone—forever.

There is nothing about a man that survives death. Without a resurrection, even the best of men would remain in the dust. The Psalmist advised against trusting in man who is powerless to save: "His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish" (Ps. 146:4).

Death is but the natural end of life. This point is well-stated by a contemporary writer: "Man is mortal and finite. Finitude and mortality mean that the whole man experiences death. Death is a normal and natural part of God's good creation, . . . not an exception to the creative purposes of God. We do not die because we must receive punishment for sin, or because we have inherited the penalty or guilt of Adam's sin. We die because we are human beings, creatures for whom death is the natural end of life."

The Almighty holds in His hand the life of every mortal being. "The breath of the Almighty hath given me life," said Job, and "if he gather unto himself his spirit and his breath; all flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto dust" (Job 33:4; 34:14-15). When God withdraws a man's breath, he dies, and unless he has lived so as to be worthy of a resurrection, he will forever remain in the dust.

2. **Man is corruptible.** That which is corruptible is perishable. Paul testified that man is both mortal and corruptible: "For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. . . . then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory" (I Cor. 15:53-54). If man was already immortal and incorruptible, he would have no need of putting on the same. But lacking these qualities, he has need of a Saviour, for without the power of God he will forever remain mortal and corruptible, that is, subject to death.

III. DEATH TO SIN

Christian commitment that ends in eternal life requires change, a change so complete as to be styled death—the death of the old nature. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (II Cor. 5:17). For **all things** to become new, **all old things** must pass away. This change of the old things for the new we call **death to sin**. It is a death that must be accomplished while the individual lives, for change is impossible after death.

Why do we call it "death"? A life, the life of the "old man," or the old nature must be taken. The old nature must die out so the new nature can grow. The conflict between the two natures is pictured as a life-and-death struggle in the New Testament Epistles of Paul. He experienced it and won, and the record of his winning serves to help others in the battle.

Death to sin is death that is "precious in the sight of the Lord" (Ps. 116:15). At first thought,

the death of the saints being precious presents a contradiction because death is an enemy (I Cor. 15:26). But when we understand that death as used in the Bible does not always have to mean physical death we can understand the text. Death that is "precious" is death to sin, not the natural death of the saints. Natural death will be the last enemy to be destroyed at the end of the Millennium. Until then it remains an enemy.

A. Christ's Death to Sin

Christ was crucified; He died physically at the hands of others. But before He suffered physical death, He had already died to sin. His whole life was one of self-sacrifice and complete resignation to the will of His Father. So complete was His commitment to His Father's will that He could say, "I do always those things which please him" (John 8:29). That is dying to sin. His death to sin was so complete that it could be said of Him that He "did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth" (I Pet. 2:22), and became the perfect example for all Christians to follow. Of Him, Peter said, He "suffered for us, leaving us an example, that [we] should follow his steps" (I Pet. 2:21).

Paul testified of His death to sin: "For in that he [Christ] died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God" (Rom. 6:10); and again he said, "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life" (Rom. 5:10). It is by following the example of His righteous life that men may be saved, by dying to sin as He died to sin.

Christ Himself bade others to follow His example and die to sin: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke 9:23). Death to sin is a daily denial, a daily cross-bearing, doing only those things Christ would approve. If we truly follow Him we will be able to say as did He, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matt. 26:39).

B. Paul's Death to Sin

The apostle Paul wrote much about his own struggle with sin and it is to him we are indebted for our subject, "Death to Sin." Of himself, he said he was "always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body" (II Cor. 4:10). He was often in peril and in danger of physical death, but here was a dying which he bore continually: death to sin.

Paul's Epistles abound with evidence concern-

ing death to sin and how it is accomplished. He described it with a variety of terms, but in each case the result is a death to sin.

1. **It is a living sacrifice.** "I beseech you therefore, brethren, . . . that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Rom. 12:1-2).

The one who has died to sin will not be conformed to the world, but will be "holy and without blemish. . . . not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing" (Eph. 5:27).

2. **It is putting off the old man; putting on the new.** "That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt . . . and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. 4:22-24). To be dead to sin, old ways, old thoughts, old deeds, old conversation must all be exchanged for God's ways and God's thoughts; deeds and words must conform to what God approves.

3. **It is a death, a daily dying.** Paul described his own battle with sin as a death. In Colossians 3:5-10 (NEB) he exhorted the brethren to "Put to death those parts . . . which belong to the earth—fornication, indecency, lust, foul cravings, and the ruthless greed which is nothing less than idolatry. . . . You must yourselves lay aside all anger, passion, malice, cursing, filthy talk—have done with them! Stop lying to one another, now that you have discarded the old nature with its deeds and have put on the new nature."

Death to sin entails a complete break with all sinful habits. All who would follow Christ must also follow Paul. "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (I Cor. 11:1), were his instructions. "I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily" (I Cor. 15:31). This constituted the "dying of the Lord Jesus" which Paul was bearing in his own body. He was killing, crucifying his own "old man," his own old nature.

4. **It is a conflict within.** "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake; having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me" (Phil. 1:29-30). Living the Christ-life causes a conflict within, a striving between the better and worst self. To believe on Him requires more than a mental affirmation.

This same conflict is shown in Galatians 5:17: "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." Not doing the things we naturally would is part of the death to sin that is necessary.

5. **It is a crucifixion.** "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. . . . And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal. 2:20; 5:24).

This crucifixion is not the death to which Christ was subjected on a wooden cross, but a death of the old nature, a death of the natural desires. In Scripture, to live to the flesh is to be carnal or worldly, to make desire the basis of any action. All such desire must be put to death, crucified, as it were.

In Romans 6:6, Paul makes clear the meaning of this crucifixion, showing that it is death to sin: "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him [Christ], that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." It is the sin that must be crucified, so completely removed as to be termed dead. As natural death is a complete cessation of all life functions, so death to sin is a complete cessation of all sin.

IV. DEATH IN SIN

Another death spoken of in the Scriptures is the state of being "dead in sin." Ephesians 2:1-5 pictures this condition: "Time was when you were dead in your sins and wickedness, when you followed the evil ways of this present age. . . . We all lived our lives in sensuality, and obeyed the promptings of our own instincts and notions. In our natural condition we, like the rest, lay under the dreadful judgment of God. But God, rich in mercy, for the great love he bore us, brought us to life with Christ even when we were dead in our sins; it is by his grace you are saved" (New English Bible).

These verses describe the condition of all of us before we first heard the sound of the saving Gospel, before we learned His ways and agreed to follow Him. It is through God's grace, or mercy, that He forgives sins that are past if a man will turn from and forsake them. He gives one that is "dead in sin" a chance to change and become "dead to sin." Through the prophet Ezekiel God promises that if a man will turn from his sins, "he shall surely live, he shall not die."

None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him" (33:15-16).

To be alive and yet dead in a Bible sense is to be alive to the world and dead to God. Paul's words in his letters to Timothy describe such an one: "Now she that is a widow indeed, . . . trusteth in God, . . . But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth" (I Tim. 5:5-6). Again, in his second letter to Timothy he describes a class of people "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof . . . lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God" (II Tim. 3:5, 4). Such are dead in sin; pleasure is their god. They are as those of whom Job wrote. "They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave. Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways" (Job 21:13-14).

To be "dead in sin" is fatal. It is to be "without Christ, being aliens . . . , having no hope, and without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12). But change is possible. Whosoever will may come; sins confessed, forsaken, and forgiven are as though they had never existed. Dead in sin can be changed to dead to sin.

V. THE WAGES OF SIN—PENAL DEATH

"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23). Here is death which is final, death from which there is no escape. It is death as a result of knowing God's law and breaking it. This death is vividly pictured in Revelation 21:8: "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."

To a fundamentalist this verse is a picture of hellfire to which many still believe God condemns the wicked. But note the last phrase of the verse: This is "the second death." God does condemn to death as punishment, but He never condemns anyone to an eternal fire. A God whose attributes include love, mercy, justice and judgment would never condemn the worst criminal to such punishment and such is not taught in His Word. Penal death is simply death, final and everlasting.

Jesus pictured death that has no escape as destruction, saying, "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat" (Matt. 7:13). Those who enter this wide gate are not victims of penal death, but like the vast hordes of mankind who never sought God or agreed to serve Him,

their end is destruction, death with no hope of a resurrection. So far as God's law is concerned, they never did good or ill, never having covenanted to serve Him, but their death is as final as penal death.

Penal death follows the Judgment, for none can be deemed worthy of penal death until he has been judged after Christ's coming. It is "when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance upon those who do not know God and upon those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They shall suffer the punishment of eternal destruction and exclusion from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints" (II Thess. 1:7-10, RSV).

For many, penal death will be literally the "second death." All those who covenanted to serve God and who have died will be raised at the resurrection so that they may stand in the Judgment to receive according to their works. All whose works are judged unworthy will be turned to the left, and after these individuals have fulfilled their part in the conquest of the nations of earth they will die the second death, never to rise again.

In Summary

The Bible tells of four deaths:

- 1) **Natural death.** "So Joseph died, being an hundred and ten years old" (Gen. 50:26).
- 2) **Death in sin.** "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1).
- 3) **Death to sin.** "Likewise reckon ye also . . . to be dead indeed unto sin" (Rom. 6:11).
- 4) **Penal death.** "For the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23).

All of us were at one time **dead in sin**, not knowing the way to life. After we hear and learn of God, we must accomplish the all-important **death to sin**. Then, should we be sleeping in the grave when Christ returns, we shall be worthy of a resurrection.

Of the four deaths we find in the Bible, **death to sin** is the one which should concern us most. Many are they who spend their latter years getting ready to die; let us spend our time getting ready to live, dying to sin so completely that we may escape forever that second, **penal death**.

*Reprints of these studies available,
10 cents per copy*

Demas the Deserter

"Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world"—II Timothy 4:10

SUCH A disappointing sentence. It is the last in the story of a potential saint. So far as we know, Demas never came back. "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world." He was gone when this pathetic line was penned, and he remained gone.

"Demas hath forsaken me." It is a tale of tragic breakdown. But this sentence tells more than a disappointing present; it tells also of a glorious past. It reminds us of those good days in the life of Demas when he was the companion of Paul. It reminds us of that day when he was Paul's fellow-worker in the Lord. Demas had shared the great hopes of this great missionary with whom he was privileged to be associated. He participated in his glowing dreams and prospects. He had a part in the fair and glorious visions. Paul's purpose was also in some measure the purpose of his friend Demas.

Not only did this young man share in the purposes of Paul, he shared also in his efforts toward the realization of that purpose. When Paul had gone forth to preach the gospel, Demas was walking at his side. When Paul had faced dangers, Demas had been there facing those same dangers with him. When the foundation of a new church was laid, Demas was there sharing in the joy. Demas had shared Paul's vision, and he had also shared Paul's task.

But that experience is past; that fascinating and heroic chapter is in the past. Demas is no longer found at Paul's side. Demas no longer shares Paul's purposes. He no longer labors at the high task that still engages the great Apostle. He has deserted his brother-in-the-faith, Paul; he has deserted his Master, Jesus Christ. Paul writes with sorrow, "Demas hath forsaken me."

What was the matter with Demas? Was he attacked by some insidious disease? Did Demas commit some crime that made it necessary for him to leave Rome? Did Demas get his hand into the coffers of the church and take that which was not his? Did Demas allow some ugly sin to grip him and fling him away into the garbage can?

No, Demas was guilty of no crime, nor was he the victim of any sudden act. The foe that wrought the ruin of Demas appears so innocent and harmless that we would scarcely regard it as a foe at all. What proved the undoing of Demas? The answer is in the text: "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world."

What does this mean? It means that if a man loves this present world, he will cease to love God. It means that the love of the world and the love of God cannot live in the same heart at the same time. This is a truth taught clearly in the Word of God. John says, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world" (I John 2:15-16). When the love of the world comes in, the love of God goes out. And James makes the truth even more emphatic when he declares that the love of the world is enmity against God. That is, the lover of the world is not only not a lover of God, but is God's personal enemy. Paul wrote of those who were "enemies of the cross of Christ." They were His enemies because they minded earthly things (Phil. 3:18-19). They were in love with the world.

Jesus spoke the same warning. He told His disciples that they were not of the world, even as He was not of the world, hence they could not expect the world to love them (John 17:16). This separation even causes enmity. "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (John 15:18-19).

What is the world we are forbidden to love?

Surely it is not the physical universe of mountains and hills, of rivers and seas, of skies and stars. Jesus Himself used these as sources of His illustrations and inspiration. He saw in all of them the handiwork of His Father.

To love the world is to be in bondage to anything that keeps us from being like Christ. What keeps this everyday life we are living here and now from being heavenly? It is the evils that

proceed from our own evil hearts. One hindrance is selfishness. It is so easy to put forth our utmost effort to please ourselves. To be dominated by this spirit of self-pleasing is to love the world. So the text might read: "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved to please himself."

If we would belong to Christ and His cause, we must give up our desire to do as we please. We must surrender to Him our all; our will to His, our tastes to His, our opinions to His, our thoughts and ways to His thoughts and ways.

To love the world is to place our affections on anything that is passing away. This was Paul's advice: "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." To be governed by the love of things earthly, to have the seeking of the satisfactions of the present the moving power in our lives is to love the world. So the text about Demas might read: "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved the satisfactions of the present."

If we would belong to Christ and His cause, we must give up every other allegiance; our hearts' affections must be centered on things above.

As Demas worked at Paul's side in the great city of Rome, he began to feel his love of the world tugging at his heart. He thought about it. He dreamed about it. Who could compare the wretched prison cell—where any Christian might suddenly find himself any day—with the world's dazzling halls of merriment, filled with music and dance! How could he risk it?

Paul did not seem to think about these things. He was all the time rejoicing in the hope of future joys, in the meanwhile laboring constantly to perform Christ's will. At the same time he was constantly concerned with controlling his fiery temperament, directing his stubborn determination, cleansing his pride-filled heart. So much effort, it seemed to Demas. Demas began to grow tired of it. There were people all about him in Rome who were going their own way and seemingly making a great success of it. He could not shut his eyes to this fact. He could not keep from asking himself the inevitable question: "Why can't I taste life as they are tasting it? Why can't I enjoy life as they seem to be enjoying it?"

It is night, and the two men are walking down the streets of Rome on their way to a gathering of the brethren. Around them are the splendors of the city grown drunk on the vintage of pleasure. The atmosphere is perfumed with glee and is vocal with joyous laughter. Beauty is passing, offering her charms for the taking. Paul walks face forward and seems not even to see the gay sights about him. But Demas sees. Demas considers. Demas ponders. And as he ponders, he begins to

wonder if the sacrifice is really worth his while. Might he not be better off to grasp the joys that he can *see* and *touch* and *feel*?

But the lights are growing dimmer as they approach the edge of the city. At last they come to their destination, as weird and dreary and repulsive as death itself. It is a tomb, one of the catacombs. A few of the brethren, their faces radiantly alight, are gathered there.

Demas sits down among them, but his thoughts are not there. His heart is still out on the brilliantly lighted street. Suddenly his mind is recalled from the gay scenes to what Paul is saying: "The things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen are eternal."

Demas wonders.

Paul continues: "This great city of Rome that seems so abiding is only a passing show. A few more years and a bit of wreckage and a stain of blood and a handful of bones will be all that will remain to tell future generations that Rome passed this way, camped for a night, and then went into utter silence forever."

Demas wonders, and doubts the words of the great Apostle.

A few days later the same group meets again, but this time Demas' place is empty. He has fallen in love with the world. His heart has gone to the world, and he has followed his heart. Desiring to please himself, he has left Paul and Paul's Christ and has journeyed to Thessalonica. He wants a life that is more colorful and gay, less dull and drab and demanding. He is in love with the easy-going world. Paul may have his life in Christ, if that is what he wants; but the world is for Demas. Demas is going to please himself awhile.

And so he goes the way of the world.

What became of Demas we do not know. But for the sake of argument, let us imagine. Let us assume that loving the world, he won the best it could offer him. Imagine his to be the most palatial house in Thessalonica. The finest carpets were the carpets on his floors, and the finest tapestry was that adorning his walls. There were no feasts in all the city like those at the house of Demas, one-time friend and fellow-worker of Paul.

Imagine that one night Demas entertains. As the guests are leaving, one of them stops to congratulate him upon the great success of his entertainment and finds him with care lines deep in his face and a cheerless heart aching with sadness. "Demas," says the stranger, "I congratulate you upon your vast wealth. But I shall not be coming anymore. I wish you could meet the new friend I have found. I'm sorry to say that he is in prison

over in Rome, but he has joy, Demas, *great* joy. His name is Paul. He could do much to help you."

At the remembrance of the great Apostle, Demas' face shows a glimmer of a long-forgotten happiness. "Paul—do you know Paul? The best friend I ever had. God forbid that I should have left him! A thousand times while I have been money-grubbing here in Thessalonica I would have given everything I have to have been at his side once again. Oh, my shameful desertion!"

The stranger turns from this chilling atmosphere to visit the prison cell where Paul is being held. The Apostle is writing a letter. As he writes, a chilling breeze comes in through the prison window and fans the thin hair about his temples. He shivers but writes on. He feels behind him as if searching for a wrap, and then smiles and says to himself, "My cloak. I remember now; I left it at Troas with Carpus." And he writes, "The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, Timothy, bring with thee. And do thy best to come before winter."

For the great Apostle there has been many a conflict, many a persecution, many a sleepless night, many a heartache, and many a tear. But the old hero looks upon it all with a smile of victory as he takes up his pen and writes: "I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith."

Here he pauses and looks out through another window. It is the window that looks into the future. His face brightens as he pictures himself among those who are being crowned. Again he writes; "Henceforth, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day. And not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (II Tim. 4:7-8).

And then he thinks of Demas, his friend not too many years ago. Timothy knew Demas. He would surely want to know. So Paul, writes, sadly, "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world."

Demas could have been one of that glorious group receiving the crown of life someday, had he not loved this present world. But the world passes away, and those who love it pass away with it. Only he who does the will of God abides forever. ●●

Know the Bible in your mind,
Keep it in your heart,
Live it in your life,
Share it with others.

The Things We Can't Afford

*We can't afford to win the gain
That means another's loss;
We can't afford to miss the crown
By stumbling with our cross.*

*We can't afford the heedless jest
That makes us break God's law;
We can't afford the laugh that ends
In bitterness of gall.*

*We can't afford to play with fire
Or tempt a serpent's bite;
We can't afford to think that sin
Brings any true delight.*

*We can't afford for hate to give
Like hatred in return;
We can't afford to feed sin's flame
And make it fiercer burn.*

*We can't afford to lose our soul
For this world's fleeting breath;
We can't afford to barter life
In mad exchange for death.*

*When blind to right we are apart
From Thee, all-seeing Lord;
Oh, grant us light that we may know
The things we can't afford.*

—Selected.

"All that the human mind can conceive of, all that this world can possibly give is nothing compared to what the wisdom and understanding of God will bestow.

"Let me ask, What would you give in exchange for a home in that summerland of love? You may answer, 'I would give ten thousand worlds like this, with all their wealth, honor, beauty and fame.' But be careful how you answer, for if you cannot live each day wholly to the Lord for a few years, how can you expect anyone to believe that you would give a much greater amount?"

"When we are thinking about the matter, we seem to think we would give anything, yes, just anything and everything to obtain the great reward. But alas! we—or some of us—seem to forget so quickly the value that a spotless life will be to us in the great Day of reckoning which is coming.

"O let us arouse from every drowsy feeling and pay more attention to our everlasting safety, security and salvation."

—Rev. L. T. Nichols



SCRIPTURAL SPOTLIGHT

"This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord" (Isa. 54:17)

GOD has provided us a book filled with treasures, rich treasures of truth. They were recorded by a variety of people over a wide span of years. But they are all treasures.

Among the greatest of these treasures are the writings of the prophet Isaiah. Some have called him the "prince of the prophets." And indeed he was and is. The Book of Isaiah is one of the clearest and most detailed foreviews of God's plans and purposes for His people to be found anywhere in the Sacred Writings. After the Prophet expounds upon it all, he says, "This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord."

It is spiritually heartwarming to realize that the words of Isaiah are the words of God Himself declaring His goals, for "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (II Pet. 1:21). Thus the Prophet's words are in the truest sense part of the Word of the Lord which will "not return unto Him void," as the Prophet himself declares (Isa. 55:10-11). What God has decreed *shall be done!*

In our present critical period of history when the majority of mankind reject God's revelations from former days and pay no attention to what He is about to do, we need to encourage our hearts repeatedly with God's own assurance that He is nonetheless moving toward the great Day of fulfillment. However the course of world events may attempt to divert our attention from the end God has in view and focus it instead upon the world of despair and trouble, we *know* the Prophet is *right*. Our divine heritage gives us hope.

Isaiah, speaking for God, does not allow any separation between history, heritage and hope. All are one in God's economy; all three amount to the same thing, the fulfillment of one goal, the working out of one purpose. Our earthbound minds cling

to concepts of past, present and future as separate and distinct because we have been so thoroughly trained in terrestrial perspective. But today more than ever before we need to practice that discernment that sustained the apostle Paul: "We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (II Cor. 4:18).

While "looking after those things which are coming on the earth" would tend to fill the heart of any man with fear, we who know the prophecies of men of God like Isaiah must remain calm, confident and full of hope. We have divine promises for our heritage!

There is some danger, however, that we may oversimplify our concept of God's purposes and feel that events will take their course and all will turn out well. This is not faith; this is irresponsible optimism. Things must get worse before they can get better. And idle optimism will never better any situation. Only as we accept God's promises as certain and pursue faithfully our own responsibility to Him can we realistically see in the present chaos our own redemption drawing nigh. Nothing less than faithful performance of all of God's commands can certify the future to us.

Isaiah tells us we can have perfect inward peace, but that inward peace does not imply pretending that all is well because God is in heaven. It does not imply the lack of struggle, or a satiated contentment which destroys effort. It does not imply the lack of that which opposes inward peace.

Inward peace comes from implicit confidence in God to fulfill His plans, combined with our own unfaltering obedience to His every precept. These together produce a faith so strong that fear has no power to penetrate. Such a faith sees Isaiah's

picture of future realities more clearly than anything of the present.

Life is our opportunity to develop the mature beauty of holiness, that righteousness which pleases God. In eloquent language Isaiah addresses the individual who is striving for righteousness as God's own possession. Though at present he may be tried by personal turmoil, his heart filled with the restlessness of exile, his unregenerate mind continually challenging his better judgment and telling him the pilgrimage is too rigorous and the discipline too demanding to be endured—this man hears the Prophet say that all such are God-given occasions for shaping His children into something of greater value in His eyes.

Isaiah invites us to the unshakable assurance that the wrath of man can never alter or override

the purposes of God (Isa. 54:15-17). Evil men may seek to destroy the purpose of God by rebellion, by lawlessness and rioting, by atheistic and unmoral pursuits, but they will not succeed. Though they may dominate for a season, they cannot interfere with the outcome God has declared shall be.

Whatever men may do, they cannot deter God's purpose. This fact we must believe and stand up boldly and defiantly against the tide of evil in the world and in ourselves. God has laid up for us the greatest heritage possible—even life for evermore—if we will qualify as His people. No mortal hand can thwart it; for it is the promise of God. It is a heritage "incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven"—for that great Day when Christ will come and bring it to all His faithful servants. ●●

Should Women Cover Their Heads?

"How do you account for Paul's advice in I Corinthians 11 about women covering their heads? What is the significance of this for us today?"

WE CANNOT believe that Paul is saying that it is necessary for women to don a ribbon or veil or hat in order to worship publicly today.

In I Corinthians, chapters 11-14, Paul seems to have been discussing specific problems which the Corinthian church was having at the time. The first part of chapter 11 deals with the question of head covering; the second part concerns disorders in the communion service. Chapter 12 discusses the gifts of the Spirit, how they were distributed and how they should be used; chapter 13 concludes the thought of chapter 12 by showing the overruling importance of "love." Chapter 14 is directed against the disorders caused in the church by the misuse of the gift of "tongues."

In considering the meaning of chapter 11, we need to remember that like many passages of Scripture, the words may have an immediate and literal meaning, as well as a spiritual application that projects a far-reaching and deeper truth.

The immediate problem Paul seems to have been addressing was physical: The women of the church were abandoning the practice of covering their heads, particularly during worship services; and Paul condemned the change. He may have referred

to the women's custom of wearing of veils in public, which was accepted as a standard for respectable women at that time—and still is in some Eastern countries; or he may have been speaking to some women who had cut their hair short, the hair being a covering provided by nature (vs. 14-15).

Why should a change in such practices have concerned Paul? Why should he have opposed the change? Did not Paul teach that in Christ there is "neither male, nor female" (Gal. 3:28)?

He did, and this very point may have been the reason why the women were abandoning the head covering as a non-essential. They were coming to realize that in the Christian Church there was no superior position granted to men; in Christ they were all equal and (being human) perhaps they were a little anxious to let others know about their new freedom!

Paul condemned the change. But what concerns us is not so much Paul's specific advice as the principle underlying it. First, why did the women of the time wear veils or head covering in public?

Head covering for women was a practice which dated back more than a thousand years. In the days of Moses God had commanded that there should be a distinction between the apparel of the man and that of the woman (Deut. 22:5), and through the years the Hebrew people had

maintained that distinction. The "unisex" appearance, so popular today, was strictly forbidden; a marked difference was to be preserved.

The veil came to be one item of apparel that women wore—both for the sake of modesty (as a distinguishing item for women) and as a sign of subjection, or belonging to her own husband and family. All respectable women wore veils in public. When a woman appeared in public bare-headed, it was an indication that she was a woman of loose morals. Often the hair of the immoral woman was also cut very short, to let everyone know that she was under obligation to no one. (Paul alludes to this in I Corinthians 11:5-6). A head covering was a mark of propriety and even of chastity.

Why did Paul consider it wrong for the Corinthian women to lay aside their head covering?

There were two basic reasons:

1) The Christian woman should do her best to appear moral and upright before heathen on-lookers. It was a matter of Christian prudence. The women should not lay aside that which was a mark of modesty and decency. True, in Christ there was no superiority of male over female; men and women could work and worship together. But they should be careful to maintain the highest moral principles and should preserve a marked distinction between the sexes. There should be no men-women or women-men in the true Church, nor should anything be done that might suggest such a practice to outsiders. For women to declare their "rights" in Christ by laying aside their head coverings was not wise. To those outside, such an act would surely appear as the usurping of an improper position or a flaunting boldness, which would be offensive. Women should be attired in a manner to represent—and never to conflict with—the highest proprieties. Any step which could in the least degree cause the principles of Christ to be perverted or misunderstood should not be taken.

This same reasoning may have prompted Paul's statement about long hair and short, that long hair is a "disgrace" to a man and a "glory" to a woman. A woman's long hair was a sign of her purity and principle to those outside the church. It was the distinction that was important: The woman should never try to appear as a man, or the man as a woman. The woman's long hair also served to distinguish her from the immoral woman, whose hair was often trimmed very short. To change one's custom simply to show one's new freedom in Christ could have no good result.

Paul's advice certainly shows that a style of hair and of dress should be used which is repre-

sentative of the best interests of the Christian faith, and which preserves a definite distinction between the man and the woman.

2) The laying aside of the head covering was apparently causing disorder during worship services, and this was Paul's second reason for condemning the change. Nothing should be done which would distract any worshiper. Christian worship should be a time for the soul to enjoy and to grow. Therefore, every effort should be made to preserve perfect peace and order, so that everyone's full attention may be directed to spiritual things. When one is distracted by the material, due attention cannot be given to the spiritual, and spiritual life is sure to suffer.

Externals can never substitute for inward conditions, but Paul's words show that externals are significant and should not be neglected. When we worship, we present ourselves before God, and we should dress appropriately. The condition of our heart is, of course, of first importance, but what is on the *inside* will be reflected *outside*. Nothing should be done which in any way distracts from the worship of God. All things must be done "decently and in order" (I Cor. 14:40).

In this passage, Paul alludes to another point which is meaningful to us: The man and the woman together in the Church, each in their proper roles, constitute what will someday be the "Bride" of Christ, who must always be subject to the one Husband, Christ. "The head of every man is Christ" (I Cor. 11:3).

This brings us to a point of spiritual truth which this passage may illustrate. In this sense, the "woman" may be seen as a generic term including all men and women who compose the Bride of Christ. This woman must be subject to her one Husband, Christ, and be covered with His covering. Her mind must be covered, enveloped, lost in the mind of Christ. She is not free to do as she pleases, to find her own pleasures, or to speak her own words. This is the covering of "charity," which the apostle Peter says will "cover the multitude of sins" (I Pet. 4:8). ●●

There's the courage that nerves you in starting to climb
The mount of success rising sheer;
And when you've slipped back there's the courage sub-
lime

That keeps you from shedding a tear.
These two kinds of courage, I give you my word,
Are worthy of tribute—but then,
You'll not reach the summit unless you've the third—
The courage of try-it-again!

— Selected

Shut-Ins

JUST about everybody knows at least one shut-in of some kind or other—maybe a victim of accident, maybe someone who is very aged, or someone who has been stricken with crippling disease. These people have our sympathy, encouragement and good cheer. There are other shut-ins—volunteer shut-ins. They are shut-in for experimental, or scientific purposes. Take the astronauts, for example. Theirs is very selective work, and they are chosen with care and “shut-in” for long periods.

Who was the first shut-in? The Bible tells of one named Noah, then six hundred years old. We read, “The Lord shut him in” (Gen. 7:16).

Noah became a shut-in in the ark. Being shut-in *that* time was the greatest privilege—it was the means God had provided for the survival of him and his family. God shut them in for their benefit.

Imagine what it must have been like for Noah and his small family. Just eight persons, and numerous animals, cut off from all communication with all other people. Contending with the monotony of close quarters and all the problems it brought would be no small test, yet it was a small price to pay for the wonderful deliverance that was theirs. It also must have been for them a period of testing and faith. When they stepped out of the ark, might they not have been more refined in patience, forbearance, and faith than when they went in?

Noah wasn't God's only shut-in. Moses had a period in his life when he must have felt quite shut-in. Adopted by Pharaoh's daughter and schooled in the palace, he could have become great in the Egyptian world. Yet, because he desired to help his own people, who were slaves of the Egyptians, Moses shut-out the fleeting glory of Egypt and became God's shut-in.

However, God knew Moses wasn't ready to lead His people at that time. He first needed forty years in the desert of Midian, living the life of a shepherd. Those were years for character training. Those were years when he started earning the title of “the meekest man on earth.” God always has a reason for shutting people in.

Joseph joined God's shut-ins when he was sold into slavery by his jealous brothers. Cut off from his home and beloved father, and not knowing what was in store for him, Joseph was truly shut-in. How did he use those “shut-in” years?

To him they were years to serve God, to grow in character. He remains an outstanding example to us of longsuffering and forgiveness. So remarkable was his growth that he could actually welcome and forgive the very brothers who had betrayed him.

Another shut-in was David. As a boy, he was anointed by Samuel to be king; yet he had to spend many years as a shepherd boy on the hills of Bethlehem before the kingship actually became his. Even when his brothers went off to war, he was left at home to look after the sheep.

God has promised *us* a grand future—even to be kings and priests with Christ! But the time has not come. Do we have the patience to endure through a long period of waiting?

One of God's greatest shut-ins was the apostle Paul. After his conversion he retired to Arabia, no doubt to begin a tremendous inner reconstruction of his religious thinking. He must have used this period of retreat to gain a strong hold on the faith and to build up the strength he would need for the task which lay before him. Old friends became foes; and slowly old foes became loyal friends.

Many times during his term of Christian service, Paul found himself shut-in by his enemies and had to find a way of escape.

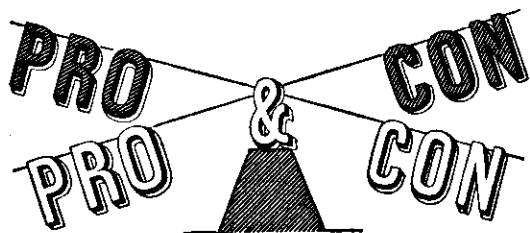
What of us? Are we forced by circumstances to be some kind of shut-in? We should remember that God has a special plan and purpose; He may have shut us in to test our dependence upon Him, or to teach us humility through suffering. Like Christ, we must learn obedience—which may mean being shut-in for Christ.

In a sense, all striving Christians are God's shut-ins. To be a part of God's church puts us in a special position; we are on the inside looking out; shut-in with God, and all the world shut out. What a privilege! How else could we develop characters fit for the society of angels?

Being a shut-in for God involves every part of our lives. Our work, our recreations, all our activities, everything we do and say and feel and—think. Jesus called this road to life the strait, narrow way, a shut-in way. What could shut us in—and the world *out*—more than controlling our every thought?

But what could reward us more?

In a sense, Christian workers are like the shut-in astronauts. God's requirements are exact—and exacting. He chooses only the finest material, and He develops it often in small spheres. But think of the reward that lies ahead! The fame of the astronaut is nothing in comparison with what God offers. *(Continued on page 26)*



A Column for Open Discussion

All our readers do not agree with us. If you are among those who differ on some point, write us your views and we will consider them in the light of Scripture teaching. Our policy is the Apostle's injunction: "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."

•What About the Devil?

"I received my first copy of the Megiddo Message, and have read most of the articles. The article, 'The Devil of the Bible,' Part 2, was an eye-opener. I have heard infidels, atheists, and non-Christians express the view that there is no personal devil, that the devil is only the evil in man; but coming from a Christian organization that claims to be devoted to the cause of Christ and truth, it is nothing less than downright falsehood and utter blasphemy because you make out God and Jesus as liars. If they are, the Bible cannot be depended upon as inspired. You would undermine the Word of God and the teachings of Jesus in regards to the devil. The devil is never happier than when humanity teach he does not exist. This theory works very well with his plan to destroy and deceive.

"The Megiddo Message has falsehood mingled with truth. This pleases the devil because he knows that in order to deceive he must tell some truth.

"I challenge you to reply, and I challenge you to print this brief summary of Bible truth to your readers.

"The devil is referred to not less than 48 times in Scripture, and Satan not less than 40 times. He has many other names as well: our adversary, the dragon, the serpent, father of lies.

"The Old Testament teaches a personal devil and so does the New Testament. Most important of all, Jesus taught and believed in a personal devil. Contrary to what you say,

the Scriptures very definitely teach the doctrine of a real devil.

"You are treading on dangerous ground. Every person is tempted of the devil, but he has not the power to force us to yield to the carnal nature. That is man's choice."

—E. A. P., Armstrong, B. C.

"I have read in your magazine where you say there is no devil or Satan. You say there is only an adversary or an opposer.

"I feel inclined to write you and ask you to read your Bible. The devil is an opposer and adversary, yes, and he IS REAL.

"I am a Southern Baptist and I strongly disagree with your ideas on the devil. Perhaps my letter can help someone see the truth. I will pray for you and I hope you pray for the truth in this matter."

—D. V., Ripley, Tennessee

We cannot print all the letters of objection we have received regarding our position on the devil of the Bible, but will discuss the foregoing as they cover in a comprehensive manner the traditional view of the subject.

Our friend in British Columbia makes the statement that "The Old Testament teaches a personal devil, and so does the New Testament. Most important of all, Jesus taught and believed in a personal devil."

Now it is one thing to make a statement and quite another to prove that statement correct. The phrase "personal devil" cannot be found in the Bible. It is not there. If you are convinced that an all-wise God would stoop to the disreputable act of creating a personal devil to tempt His children to do evil, you can find texts that seem to lend credence to that idea. But you must read the idea **into** the Bible, you cannot read it **out** of the Bible.

Let us investigate this subject with an open mind and try to determine what the Bible actually teaches.

The whole subject of the Devil and Satan rests on the meaning we attach to the words. The words themselves mean nothing, only as they have acquired a thought-picture through years of use.

Take for example a simple word such as **can**. Its first definition is "to be able"; 2) "to possess power, physically, morally or mentally"; 3) "Colloq. to be permitted." As a noun it is "a metal cylinder for holding liquids (called a tin in Great Britain); to preserve fruit or vegetables in metal or glass containers."

Here is a simple word we all use every day, yet it has several different meanings and uses.

If 2000 years from now a person not familiar with the English language should try to translate this word into another language, he might have serious difficulty arriving at the meaning we gave the word.

A similar situation exists with the word "devil" or "Satan." I doubt if there is any word in the Bible which has over the centuries been more distorted than the meaning of "devil" or "Satan."

There is no question but that the Bible uses the words "devil" or "Satan." The question revolves around what these terms mean. If we were to ask those who believe in a so-called "personal devil," each would have a slightly different description of the monster, or the force, or whatever word they would use to describe him, her or it.

Their conceptions might be summarized as follows:

The devil is:

- 1) a serpent that talks
- 2) a ghost that haunts you at night (Martin Luther's description)
- 3) a real personal being which was cast out of heaven with his angels, and which roams the earth, though always out of sight
- 4) little gremlins which can get inside you and cause all kinds of harm, but which can be exorcised under the right conditions
- 5) an invisible spirit affecting your life and conduct
- 6) a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns with a tail long enough to draw a third part of the stars of heaven (yet never seen)
- 7) a being with horns, a short tail and a pitch fork, who presides over hell (wherever that is).

Just thinking about these ideas of the devil is enough to make one shudder. The whole collection seems unworthy of intelligent consideration. Its roots are found not in the Bible but in pagan cultures, in superstitions and in Greek mythology.

The *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* comments on "Satan" as follows: "The Hebrew root from which the name Satan derives means primarily 'obstruct, oppose'. . . . Nowhere in the Old Testament does Satan appear as a distinctive demonic figure, opposed to God and responsible for all evil. . . . It is simply an appellative, not a proper name—i.e., it merely defines the role which the being in question happens to play in a particular situation."

The word Satan is from the Hebrew root *stn*, which means "to block," "to attack," "to malign."

The Megiddo Church does not believe in a literal monster or a supernatural spirit of evil or power of evil that tempts men, for the following reasons:

First: The Bible teaches that God is the Creator of all things. If we accept this fact, we must believe that God perforce created the devil; hence, God must be the original source of our temptations. There are a number of Scriptures in opposition to this idea. "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man" (Jas. 1:13-14). How, then, is man tempted? "Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed" (Jas. 1:14).

It is impossible to misunderstand Jesus' words in Mark 7:14-23, that the source of evil is none other than the human heart. "There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man. . . . That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts," etc.

Second: If the devil be the source of evil, a just God is doing wrong to destroy wicked men and women—would He not be much further ahead to deal with the evil at its source? Why not destroy the source of the evil and allow the poor helpless victims to live?

Third: In Ephesians 6:11, the apostle Paul lists the "armour" necessary to "stand against the wiles of the devil," and that armor consists of such weapons as "the shield of faith," which is able to "quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." Is this not proof that the "devil" and the "wicked" are one and the same?

Fourth: Nowhere in either the Old Testament or the New are the words Satan or devil used except in connection with a person who is a tempter, or who is wicked, or who is sick.

The Greek word *diabolis* is the equivalent of the Hebrew *stn* and means "an accuser, calumniator, one who defames or reviles." It was this word *diabolis* that Jesus employed in John 6:70 when He said of Judas, "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" Note that Jesus does not say one of them is possessed of a devil but one of them is a devil.

(To Be Continued Next Issue)

Part of today belongs to tomorrow; tomorrow is a shoot growing out of today. Not to do right today may ruin tomorrow.

Tomorrow cannot ruin today; time's wheel cannot run backwards.

Fill today with faithful work, with kindness and courage and hope; so will you make tomorrow a good, honest today when it comes.

*I do not ask for any crown
But that which all may win;
Nor try to conquer any world
Except the one within.
Be Thou my guide until I gain,
Led by Thy mighty Hand,
The happy vict'ry over "me"
And take supreme command.*

Signs of the Times

The signs of the times are all about us, vivid and unmistakable. Who can shut his eyes and ears to the fulfillment of Paul's prophecy in Second Timothy 3 and say that those conditions do not exist?

The daily headlines remind us. It is evidenced in the homes, the schools and churches and in every aspect of public life that men love pleasure more than they love God; and too often they are bent only to do evil.

But as truly as we are aware of these things, we must be even more acutely aware of our own conduct before God. We should understand and appreciate God's Word the more fully, and earnestly live by it.

The prophets and apostles witnessed some very demoralizing scenes. Nevertheless, though in the world, they had no part in its ungodliness. Their first business was to attend to their own salvation. Ignoring the world as much as possible, they lived apart. The impurities and standards of the world did not infiltrate their spiritual lives. They were too busy studying and applying the living truth to their personal character. God had selected them to be "a light to the nations," and they were just that in the midst of a "crooked and perverse nation."

As followers of Christ, expecting His soon return to earth to right all wrongs, we should be seriously concerned about our troublesome traits and tendencies and hasten their exit out of our lives.

While "my troublesome me" and "your troublesome you" are very much a part of us, they can be gotten rid of. The Lord has provided for our release from the bondage of sin. In His book He gives specific remedies for specific besetments. They are all workable if given our wholehearted effort. No matter how baffling our spiritual sores may be, they can be healed.

We have much to do and no time to waste. ●●
—Contributed.

Changing Treasures

IN AN out-of-the-way corner of our dining room stands the family "secretary." It's an old-time creation we picked up at an auction several years ago and rejuvenated with a good bit of paint remover, elbow grease and shellac. Even so, it isn't much to look at, but it serves the family in a very special way. Each member has a corner in the secretary which is exclusively "his" or "hers."

While housecleaning last week, I found myself sorting through my eight-year-old daughter's "treasure" drawer in the secretary. It was a curious collection indeed: a few bits of shiny, painted glass, some rocks, a cork, an eraser, a broken pencil, a few dirty stamps, and so on. As I dusted around them, I wondered what she saw in these bits and pieces that made them so valuable to her. If I could lay these treasures away and pull them out ten years from now and present them to my daughter, she too would wonder what she ever saw in them!

Then I thought about my own treasures; they, too, have changed. Things that used to seem like the most wonderful things in the whole world—well, they just don't seem to be worth much anymore. And some things I thought I could never do without—can you believe it, I'm actually thankful I don't have! And—still more astonishing—some of the things I thought I could never *stand*, I would be lost without!

Even some of the very *best* things this world has to offer—well, they are beginning to look like my daughter's shiny bits and pieces will look to her in a few years.

What is making the difference? Why the change? Is it possible that maybe—maybe—I'm *growing up*? ●●

—Contributed.

Shut-Ins

(Continued from page 23)

Christians, everything for us lies ahead! Our goal is not yet reached. As voluntary shut-ins for God, let us be willing and glad to live in a limited sphere now in order that we may enjoy the unlimited glory and pleasures of unending universes in the future.

Don't feel shut out by being shut in. Don't entertain any bitter feelings; don't fight against circumstances. Make the most of them; you have the opportunities you need for the same character growth as God's great shut-ins of the past. ●●

Our Readers Write...

Grasp the Lifeline

We need to take a firmer hold on the truths of God, for to know of them and to give ourselves to them wholly means life indeed. That was Paul's advice to Timothy; also to hold fast the "form of sound words which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus." How we need to guard the treasure given to us, by walking the way of God's commandments, that its saving light may shine out in our daily lives.

The lifeline God has given us to grasp is multiple in its strength and blessings. It will lead us to all the virtues of righteous living, and our lives will be fully consecrated to the Lord. And God in His wisdom has woven these virtues, as it were, into one strong life-saving cord; either we grasp it, and work along with God, and become that "new creature, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness," or we hold it loosely and the ways of this world, the ways of our fleshly nature, creep into our lives and cause us to lose our hold on the eternal promises.

Now is our time and opportunity to get right with God, so that the lovely spiritual virtues may beautify our lives.

As children hearkening unto the voice of Wisdom, we should "see to it, therefore, that we conduct ourselves ever so carefully, not as foolish, but as wise people who make the best possible use of their time, because these are evil days." We need to gain insight into the Lord's will for us, for the great reward is so grand, so glorious, so beyond our comprehending in this present state; yet God has given us a glimpse, as it were, into that glorious future, and can we afford to let it slip by as meaningless to us? Surely not!

Then let us be strong and of good courage, for God will never leave us nor forsake us. Our sure hope does give us a wonderful life, even of heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

Warwick, Queensland, Australia

A. B.

Eat the Right Seeds

I have been looking out the window, watching the birds at my feeders. They look for their feed every day.

There are other birds that never come to the feeder; they live on weed seeds.

We can take a lesson from the birds. Some are beautiful and some are not. Now let's say the Bible is the feeder, and the words are the "feed." We are the birds of different races. Some of us go to the feeder and pick up the seeds of righteousness; others eat the weed seeds, the seeds of man's own planting.

The birds at the feeder seem to be much more beautiful than the birds that eat the weed seeds.

So it is with us; we will be more beautiful and better-looking to God if we eat His Word, than we could ever be by eating our own ideas.

The seeds we should eat are found all through the Bible. Some are found in Romans 12, some in Galatians 5, some in Philippians 2, and other places. So let us go to the feeder often and fill up on these seeds. This will bring us everlasting life in the end. Those who eat the weed seed will end in death.

Holly, New York

C. B.

Same Standard—Obey and Live

Since the first man was placed in the vineyard of God, the same standard has been in force: Obey and live, disobey and die.

Esau sold his eternal blessings because he wanted the little this life could give. Down through the ages a host of others have done the same. We, too, can come short of those wonderful blessings if we persist in having our own way in a single thing.

Moses was directed to build the tabernacle with the greatest of care and according to specifications. If we strive for masteries, we will not be crowned unless we strive according to the instructions we have been given.

The prophet Samuel told the people to consider the great things the Lord had done for them. We, too, can consider the great things that He has done for us. While the world at large are busy eating their meal and having their pleasures, we can prepare to enjoy ours through eternity.

Selma, Iowa

G. M.

Refreshed

To be constantly refreshed in our most holy faith will take a definite act of the will to stay true to the vows we have made to our God. If we would grow healthy, vigorous and happy in the divine life, we have no time for stagnation.

The Word of the Lord is the source of all spiritual wisdom and the fountain of all comfort. We may draw from it all the year through, at any time of day, if we will.

As Christians we must speak to edification. It is a vital necessity that cannot be stressed too often. Our tongues are naturally glib and do not need much coaxing to run off on just anything. Complete mastery of the tongue does not come all at once, but it can be accomplished if we are determined enough to do it. Wise words will build, give encouragement or warn, when spoken at the proper time.

South Amboy, New Jersey

L. M. K.

Notice

We have received word of the death of Mrs. Matilda LaChance of Brunswick, Maine. Sister LaChance was a subscriber to the *Message* for fifty-four years, and wrote frequently of her zealous hope.

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He Comes

*O North, with all thy vales of green,
O South, with all thy palms;
From peopl'd towns and vales between,
Uplift the voice of psalms;
Raise, ancient East, the anthem high,
And let the youthful West reply.*

*Lo, in the clouds of heav'n appears
God's well-beloved Son;
He brings a train of brighter years;
His kingdom is begun.
He comes, His faithful ones to bless,
And rule the earth in righteousness.*

*O Father, haste the promis'd hour,
When at His feet shall lie
All rule, authority, and power
Beneath the ample sky;
When He shall reign from pole to pole,
The Lord of ev'ry human soul;
When all shall heed the words He said,
Amid their daily cares,
And by the holy life He led
Shall seek to pattern theirs;
And He who conquer'd death shall win
The mighty conquest o'er earth's sin.*

--Selected.

