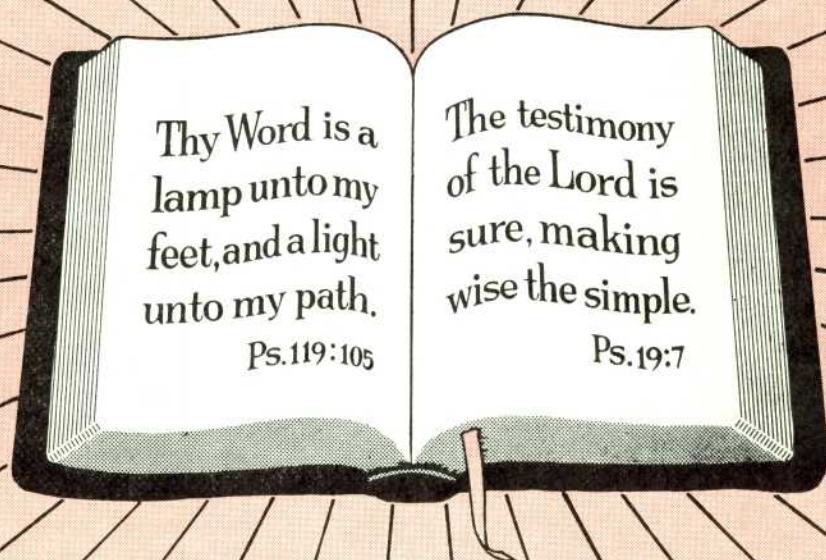


Megiddo Message

DEVOTED TO THE CAUSE OF CHRIST



"Comparing Spiritual Things with Spiritual"

Politics Is Vulnerable

Living the Life of Triumph

"Stand Upon Thy Feet!"

Megiddo Message

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A religious magazine, devoted to the cause of Christ and published for the dissemination of Bible truth alone.

The MEGIDDO MESSAGE will

- Strengthen your faith in the Bible
- Answer perplexing religious questions
- Give you courage for these uncertain times
- Help you live above the world's moral corruption
- Reveal to you how to develop a character acceptable to God
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Editorially Speaking...

How Is Your Appetite?

A lack of appetite for the "whole counsel of God" may result in an unbalanced spiritual diet—and disaster.

Consider the educated man of the world who regards the Bible with a mixture of respect and censure. Among its sayings he finds that which, from a philosophical point of view, is sound thinking and good logic. Again, he finds what seems to him impossible and incredible. Though he classifies portions of it among the best literature of all time, he is preoccupied with his interest in the secular world and esteems lightly what might be the rock of his salvation.

Consider another man who thinks of the Bible as more than good literature. He sees in it the means of God's salvation, and considers himself "saved." Content in this belief, he is not concerned whether all that he accepts is taught upon the pages of the Book, so long as it is comforting and pleasant. Having "itching ears," such a person listens only to the teacher who gives him what he enjoys. Let the speaker fail to conform—deviate from the favorite line—his ears close and his mind rests. Hearing, he hears not; and if the unpleasant theme persists, he simply seeks another teacher.

Then there is the man who studies the Bible and finds in it an outline of God's whole plan of salvation. It is sound, reasonable, and acceptable. He is convinced; but still he has no appetite for the "whole counsel of God." The plan of God as it might involve a change in his own way of living and thinking is too much for him to chew. So he does not try. He prefers to enjoy the light, rich, pleasing morsels from the table of the Lord, and leaves untouched the admonitions and warnings which might, if taken seriously, transform him into a new creature. Discuss a technicality from some verse in Daniel or Revelation, and he is all alive and interested. Dig into the ethics of God's Word, the strong meat, and he has no appetite.

Here is real danger, for such a man cannot grow. He who would be "filled with all the fulness of God" must "hunger and thirst after righteousness." Said Jesus, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled" (Matt. 5:6). Many people suffer seriously from what has been called "the malady of not wanting."

But our appetite must be for *righteousness*. And this suggests the practical, character-developing precepts of the Word of God, thoroughly chewed, swallowed, and digested.

What a choice vessel unto the Lord is the man who takes the whole Word of God as his counsel and guide of life, who chews patiently and thoroughly the meat of the Word. Such a man will not be the "full soul" which "loatheth the honeycomb," but the "hungry soul" to whom "every bitter thing is sweet." And such a man shall be "abundantly satisfied" with the fatness of God's house, and be permitted to drink of the river of His eternal pleasures.●●

"Comparing Spiritual Things with Spiritual"

PRAYER

Our loving Father, Thou Creator of our goodly mortal frame, of the earth we live on; and of the universe which Thou hast permitted us to behold that we may know Thy greatness, Thy infinite wisdom, and the verity of the great things which Thou hast promised.

We rejoice that Thou lookest upon us, poor frail creatures of the dust, permitting us to call Thee our Father. Thou art the Creator and Sustainer of life. We are incapable of living at our best and wander aimlessly when we do not listen to Thee. Silence the things which beg for our attention, and may our ears hear Thy Word, and may our hearts respond to Thy voice.

We thank Thee for the words of the prophets, apostles, and Thy dear Son. Help us to appreciate all that has been done for us, and now demonstrate our sincere belief by doing the things Thou demandest of us to win eternal salvation.

Father, as we study Thy Word may we be willing to compare spiritual things with spiritual, aware that apart from this plan we can never know Thy Divine Mind, or fully understand the things written for our learning.

May our faith not stand in the wisdom of men, in the vain conclusions of men, but may one word from Thee mean more to us than the sayings of all the men in the world combined—including our own.

Change our attitudes where they need changing. Strengthen us where we are weak. Challenge us where we are complacent. Send us forth changed and better men and women as the result of our worship before Thee.

Be with those absent from us who would desire to be with us. Bless all everywhere who are striving to learn and live Thy truth.

Be with the sick and afflicted, and those who are in the throes of trial and affliction.

And when we have worked out our salvation with fear and trembling grant us the full reward in Thine everlasting Kingdom. In Jesus' name. Amen.

August, 1973

DISCOURSE

EVERY science or study which would prove beneficial must be properly approached. No one could expect to apply algebra or trigonometry to his benefit unless he had first learned the laws which govern these mathematics. No engineer would attempt to lay out a complex system of highways without first understanding the laws of engineering. A student of chemistry could scarcely attempt to solve difficult formulae without a thorough knowledge of the language of the science.

In like manner, when we attempt to understand the writings of the Bible, we cannot expect to succeed unless we first learn the basic rules which, according to the Bible itself, must govern our manner of study.

In the First Epistle to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul is answering an objection which certain of the brethren had apparently raised regarding Paul's manner of teaching. It was too deep, too profound, too soul-searching, they complained. In reply to their criticism, Paul does not agree with them but rather, he rebukes them for their lack of spiritual understanding and discernment. Deeper understanding is available to all who are spiritually mature (I Cor. 2:14). His every statement calls for a personal evaluation by the members of the church of their own lives and conduct. "The unspiritual man does not receive the gifts of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned" (v. 14, RSV). The Corinthians were attempting to understand the wisdom of God by comparing it with the wisdom of men which, says Paul, is "foolishness with God."

When Paul the apostle, in obedience to Jesus' command, started out dispensing the gospel to the Gentile world of his time, he did not come to them with the findings of the religious world of that time. Nor did he bear to them the knowledge he had acquired at the feet of Gamaliel. By his own testimony he repudiated the commonly accepted knowledge of the day and broadcast a plan of sal-

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vation which was, to the majority, unacceptable. Here are his words: "But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man, . . . neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal. 1:11-12). His words in I Corinthians 2 bear the same thought: "When I came to you, brethren, I did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God in lofty words or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in much fear and trembling; and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and power, that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God" (I Cor. 2:1-5, RSV).

Paul continues to speak to the Corinthians, calling the wisdom of God a "mystery": "Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect; yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: but we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory" (vs. 6-7).

Why is God's wisdom a "mystery"? The Bible is not a mystery, as many people affirm, in the sense that it cannot be understood. The word "mystery" occurs a number of times in Paul's Epistles, and applies to "that which requires study." The word translated "mystery" means: "a hidden or secret thing, not obvious to the understanding. . . . In the New Testament, it is used of God's plan of . . . salvation; . . . used generally of Christian truth as hidden from ungodly men" (Thayer's *Greek-English Lexicon*).

Therefore we cannot expect to find the wisdom of God properly understood by a majority of mankind. When Paul wrote to his son-in-the-faith Timothy: "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth," he indicated that God's knowledge is not easily acquired, that a proper understanding of His Word cannot come without effort.

The Scriptures often picture the minority as the holders of the real truth and the multitudes as misguided and mistaken. Said Jesus, "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matt. 7:14). And the words of Jeremiah, "O Lord, my strength, and my fortress, and my refuge in the day of affliction, the Gentiles shall come unto thee from the ends of the earth, and shall say, Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit" (Jer. 16:19). Looking beyond the time of Christ's birth, ministry, crucifixion,

resurrection and ascension, the prophet Isaiah foresaw the Christ returning to earth as King and predicted what would be the condition of the religious world at that time: "Arise, shine! for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people" (Isa. 60:1-2).

While no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, and we are strictly forbidden to place our private interpretations upon any part of it, yet it needs study, division, classification. God's complete thought on a given subject is not always found in one text or chapter. Often statements occur that upon surface reading might seem to conflict with other statements. In these instances, right division is imperative, and right division requires careful comparison. In fact, intelligent comparison is recommended as the very essence of right understanding. And here we return to the rule laid down by the apostle Paul: "comparing spiritual things with spiritual" (I Cor. 2:13), that we may know the mind of Christ.

A reader of our literature has written us, taking issue with a number of our beliefs. The nature of the criticisms identifies our friend as an adherent to fundamental religion. But the questions are not without reason, for there are Scriptures which seem to uphold the accepted beliefs of nominal Christianity. But when we find the great burden of Bible teaching to be on the opposite side of the question, is it not logical to suppose that the *apparent* teaching of the texts in question *cannot be the real truth*? We need not admit that the Bible contains contradictions; all becomes harmonious when we "compare spiritual things with spiritual."

Let us remember this principle as we discuss the questions of our friend.

Was John the Baptist "Elijah"?

Our correspondent has read our booklet, "*The Coming of Jesus and Elijah*," and comments: "Now you say that Elijah is coming back before Jesus, but Christ says he has already come. I believe you know what the Bible says, but you just quote what fits your doctrine. Do you expect people to take your word and ignore Christ's? Please read Matt. 17:12-13. How can you doubt the inspired word of God? The disciples knew he spoke of John the Baptist."

These texts read: "But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them. Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist."

Yes, we believe that Elijah is coming before Christ, and we have the Book to bolster that belief. We read in Mal. 4:5, "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord." These are the words of the great Jehovah through Malachi the prophet. The promise is definite, "Behold, I will send you *Elijah the prophet* before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord." God cannot break His promise, hence we can know Elijah either *will* come or *has* come. Hence it is a matter of timing, a question of *when* Elijah should come. Malachi is definite on this. "I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the *great and dreadful day of the Lord*."

This statement poses the question: Was Jesus' first coming the "great and dreadful day of the Lord"? No, it was not. He came the first time as a lamb led to the slaughter, "and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth" (Acts 8:32). No judgments were meted out, no force was used to compel men to learn righteousness, no punishments were administered. The "great and dreadful day of the Lord" will be at Christ's second coming, when as the "Lion of the Tribe of Juda" He rides forth conquering and to conquer (Rev. 5:5; 6:2).

Now John was *not* Elijah; his own statements show he knew who he was. When the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask John who he was, he "confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No." Now a man should know his own identity, and John said he was not Elias, or Elijah. "Then said they unto him, Who art thou?... What sayest thou of thyself? He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias" (John 1:19-23). John affirmed that he was not the prophet to come before the "great and dreadful day of the Lord."

Now did Jesus say John the Baptist was Elijah, or that Elijah had already come at the time when He was speaking?

After Jesus had answered the disciples' question and told them of the coming of Elijah to restore all things, He then said to them, "But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not." How had Elias come already? Just as the prophet Isaiah had foretold and the angel Gabriel witnessed, John the Baptist had come "in the spirit and power of Elias" (Luke 1:17). He had come with the same courage to denounce sin as had Elijah. Jesus spoke of both Elijah the prophet who

would come to restore all things, and then of John the Baptist who had come in the spirit and power of Elijah.

Upon surface reading Jesus' words in Matthew 17:12 would seem to contradict what He had just said in verse 11. There is no contradiction, however. He was speaking of *two different men* preceding His *two different comings*. He first spoke of Elijah the prophet whose coming was to precede His second advent, and then of John the Baptist who had come as the forerunner of His first appearing.

It is enlightening to note that John the Baptist had already fulfilled his mission as the first forerunner, had been beheaded by Herod and was dead, when Jesus said, "Elias truly shall [future tense] first come, and restore all things." He certainly could not have been speaking of the same individual in both statements. Verse 13 shows the disciples comprehended His meaning: "Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist."

If the disciples had ears to hear, shall ours be so heavy we will not hear? If they understood of whom Jesus spake, shall our understanding be so dull we will not take it in? How, then, was John the Baptist the Elijah of his day? Because he came in the "spirit and power of Elias" (Luke 1:17).

Are the Dead With Christ?

Then our correspondent continues, "In your book *After Death, What?* you say, 'The dead know not anything.' I'll take Paul's word. He is Christ's greatest writer. He says, 'For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better, Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.' Now Paul thought he would be with Christ if he departed. Do you think Paul was stupid?"

No, we do not. But on the other hand it is not fair to take one part of a man's declarations without taking other parts. The text in question reads:

"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you" (Phil. 1:21-24). Now what did Paul mean by "depart"?

In I Thessalonians 4, he said the dead are "asleep"; and when asleep one knows nothing. In I Corinthians 15, he revealed that all hope of life beyond death lies in the resurrection of the body. "For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised:

and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished" (vs. 16-18). Then why should he say he wanted to "depart" and be with Christ?

A little further on in his Epistle to the Philippians (3:11), Paul reveals that his chief aim was to "attain unto the resurrection of the dead." That was when he hoped to be with Christ.

The Greek word *analuō*, rendered "depart" in Phil. 1:23, is in Luke 12:36 translated "return." The words of Jesus read as follows: "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when he will return [*analuō*] from the wedding." With this plain definition of *analuō* we understand that Paul was simply longing for the return of the Lord Jesus.

Wilson, in his *Emphatic Diaglott*, translates Phil. 1:23-24, as follows: "I am indeed hard pressed by two things;—(I have an *earnest desire* for the *returning*, and being with Christ, since it is very much to be preferred;)—but to remain in the flesh is more requisite on your account."

The foregoing translation agrees perfectly with Paul's other statements which we have cited, also with his plain declaration in II Tim. 4:7-8: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." It was at Jesus' appearing that he hoped to be with the Lord, and not at death.

No, we do not think that Paul was stupid! He knew what he believed, he knew in whom he believed, and was "persuaded" that He was able to keep that which he had "committed" to Him against that day (II Tim. 1:12). By comparing scripture with scripture all is harmonious.

Saved By Good Works

Our correspondent continues: "Here is another saying that you dwell on: 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.' I know that is in the Bible, but there are ever so many promises in the Bible about salvation. Here are a few: Ephesians 2:8-9, 'For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of *yourselves*; it is the gift of God. Not of *works*, lest any man should boast.' "

Let us read the following verse to get Paul's meaning, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." We are not saved by works of our own choosing,

by doing that which seems right in our own eyes, by a self-imposed standard of righteousness, as that of the monks of olden times, or the newer aspects of self-righteousness practiced by the people of the present day. Comparing scripture with scripture removes any seeming incongruity.

Our correspondent then adds: "Here is another, Rom. 10:9, 'That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.' It doesn't say anything there about working for your salvation."

Here is another case where we must compare scripture with scripture, and strike a balance between the two statements. To get Paul's meaning we must take all that he has said. Faith and works must go together. The one is useless without the other. And belief to be potent must be accompanied by action. In Romans 12 and 13 Paul has much to say about action. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. 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... Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil, cleave to that which is good... Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good... It is far on in the night, the day is almost here; so let us drop the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light; let us live decorously as in the open light of day—no revelry or bouts of drinking, no debauchery or sensuality, no quarreling or jealousy. No, put on the character of the Lord Jesus Christ, and never think how to gratify the cravings of the flesh" (Rom. 12:1, 2, 9, 21; 13:12-14, Moffatt). And this is the way we work out our salvation.

If we should read Romans, chapters 4 and 5, without reading the rest of the Epistle, we might feel constrained to believe that Paul taught faith and belief, irrespective of works, will suffice for salvation.

Did we have but Rom. 4:1-5: "What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."

Or if we had to rely on Rom. 5:1-2, 9: "Therefore

being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him."

Or if our only idea of Paul's conception of the plan of salvation was the afore-quoted text in Rom. 10:9: "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

But, we have Rom. 6:11-13: "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God."

We have Rom. 8:13-14: "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."

We also have Eph. 4:17-25: "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: that ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members one of another."

We must Compare Scripture with Scripture

But let us return to the thought of Rom. 10:9: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." To confess with our mouth the Lord Jesus would mean much more than a mere confession that such a man as Jesus Christ once lived. Jesus said to the people who assembled to hear His first

sermon: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21). Such empty confession will bring no results. Under the Mosaic economy when the law and ordinances were read aloud to the people they were to answer: "All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient" (Ex. 24:7). Therefore to confess with the mouth the Lord Jesus is to agree to the necessity to keep His demands. And He demanded obedience.

For example, recall the time when Jesus' mother and brethren arrived but were unable to reach Him because of the dense crowd of listeners. When told that they were on the rim of His audience, desiring to see Him, Jesus said: "My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it" (Luke 8:21). When upon another occasion during Jesus' preaching a woman shouted: "Blessed is the womb that bare thee," He said, "Yea, rather blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it" (Luke 11:27-28).

To confess with one's mouth the Lord Jesus, is to confess with no shadow of a doubt Jesus' teaching, that to be saved one must hear the Word of God and keep it. And if sincere, we must believe and confess that God raised Jesus from the grave. It is a cardinal doctrine of Biblical teaching; we could never be saved without believing it.

"Whosoever Believeth . . ."

Our correspondent continues: "What does John say? I John 5:1: 'Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.' If you notice nothing is said of works, just believe."

Again, let us be fair with John and take all that he says. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (I John 3:2-3). To purify ourselves even as Christ is pure *is* works, and more, it is *work*, and no one who has ever made a definite effort to live up to Christ's high standard will deny this statement.

Our correspondent continues: "What did Peter say? 'To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins' (Acts 10:43). Nothing is said of works, just belief."

A statement such as this is heavily weighted with conjecture. In verses 34-35, Peter had just made it clear that "God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him." Could words

be plainer? "He that feareth him and *worketh righteousness*" will be accepted. Our correspondent's careless survey of Scripture is reminiscent of the plan too often followed by Biblical students. It is wholly unfair to Peter to say that he said nothing of works, just belief, as the following excerpts from his Epistles will show:

"Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy."

"Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby" (I Pet. 1:13-16; 2:1-2). These citations represent work, not just bland belief.

We will let Peter witness further: "Dearly beloved, . . . abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation . . . For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps" (I Pet. 2:11-12, 21). "Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price" (I Pet. 3:3-4).

"Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries" (I Pet. 4:1-3).

The additions listed in the first chapter of Second Peter demand work, not just belief. "Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity . . . Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election

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From A Reader—

YES and NO

A young mother wrote a friend, "As well as saying 'yes' graciously, I am going to have to learn to say 'no' firmly."

Each of us has choices to make in this connection and inevitably some firm "no's" have to be said, and meant. Our 1,440 minutes a day can be spent only once. This limitation calls for some "no's" if we would stand unmovable.

We owe it to our children to learn to say "no" and mean it. "Say 'yes,' Mother," a small child pleads. "Please say 'yes.'" But wisdom demands a firm *no*.

And so it is with us in our striving for the mastery over self. To the tempter who is always about in some form or another, we must say "no" many a time. For this we shall need more than human resolve and firmness.

Spiritual stamina comes only from God. We can approach the throne of God regularly to receive grace to help in time of need.

The exhortation given by the practical James, "Resist the devil" would be tantalizingly impossible without the accompanying, "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you."

In our own strength our firm "no" can be all too easily weakened into a reluctant "yes." We become a prey to our own evil desires.

The well-known hymn, "Yield Not to Temptation," holds a clue that helps us guard against the wiles of our crafty, deceitful natures.

Ask the Saviour to help you,
Comfort, strengthen and keep you.
He is willing to aid you,
He will carry you through.

He will draw near—near enough to back up our every "no" and make it stick, and to back up our "yes" until it is achieved.

Mrs. L. M. K., South Amboy, N. J.

Every day opportunity knocks at your door; it's born anew with every rising sun. It's yours to grasp if you're wide awake to your chance.

CAUTION: Politics Is Vulnerable

WE have been witnessing days that try the soul of the nation. Suddenly the name of Watergate is known around the world, together with a long category of lawbreakings, deceits, personal animosities and political harassments that ought not to exist in any nation. Though in all likelihood the subject has been excessively displayed, still the facts remain. Whether fully revealed or not, there was too much wrongdoing and wrong dealing in the highest division of our nation's leadership.

All this causes us to think deeply about our nation, its politics, and its future. The words of the prophet Micah come to mind—do they apply in our own land? "The good man is perished out of the earth: and there is none upright among men: . . . that they may do evil with both hands earnestly, the prince asketh, and the judge asketh for a reward; and the great man, he uttereth his mischievous desire; so they wrap it up. The best of them is as a brier: the most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge."

God forbid that our nation shall ever witness the totality of corruption which the prophet describes, but his conclusion is most timely: It is a warning of approaching judgment. Listen: "the day of thy watchmen and thy visitation cometh; now shall be their perplexity" (Mic. 7:2-4). An end is in sight. Christ is coming to earth, and "he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it" (Isa. 13:9).

Among the most serious consequences of the whole Watergate affair are the innocent persons whose reputations and careers have been ruined because they became involved inadvertently. They are persons who had nothing to do with instigating the wrong, but who became its victims because of their position or association in the political world; they were drawn into the matter simply by fulfilling what they assumed to be their line of duty. This consequence points up the wisdom of the apostle Paul's advice to every aspiring Christian as he might be tempted to help the cause of Christ by involving himself in the political world. Paul wrote (his words are addressed to his son-in-the-faith Timothy): "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that

warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier" (II Tim. 2:3-4).

"No man that warreth [in the cause of Christ; the man who is warring against the evils of his own nature] entangleth himself with the affairs of this life." Strange advice, it may seem, when there is such need in our world for all the virtues which the Christian faith upholds. But the voice is that of a man who was himself a true soldier of Christ and who was, in all probability, tempted to take part in the political world of his day.

Why did Paul give this advice? And why is it still wisdom in our day?

First, God demands our wholehearted devotion. When we give our time and thought and feeling to political interests, we divide the loyalty we owe to God; and any division of our loyalty to Him inevitably means defeat. The principle is expressed by Jesus Himself: "No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Luke 16:13).

Second, there is the Bible command to be "separate." This means separation from all that has its end in the present cosmos; separation from all that is low and evil and does not promote the interests of God and His kingdom. Wrote the apostle Paul in another place: "Wherefore, come out from among them [the world and its perishing system], and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (II Cor. 6:17-18). Separation is a God-given mandate. Why should the outcome of the present turmoil concern us when we are aspiring to membership in God's heavenly family? And involvement in politics can easily lead to conduct which is wholly inconsistent with the ideals of God and His family.

Third, involvement in the political world means seeking to please men, and Paul said specifically that he did *not* do this. "Do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ" (Gal. 1:10). How can the Christian promote such a goal when Christ said, "How can

ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?" (John 5:44).

Also, there is the temptation of power. Authority over others, rightly administered, is not to be condemned; in fact, it is a God-given promise that the man who is faithful in ruling himself shall ultimately be seated with Christ in His seat of power over the nations (Rev. 2:26; 3:21). But the time is not yet. Power in this world too often becomes an end in itself, and when it reaches this point, power always corrupts. When a man reaches a position of power in this world, he too easily forgets his accountability to God—a risk which no striving Christian can afford.

Also, involvement in the political world tends toward self-vindication. If your character, or conduct, or judgment is not what it should be, you don't admit that you are wrong. Now this may be politically expedient, but it is abominable to God. God has absolutely no use for the man who is too proud to admit that he is wrong and change his ways.

To the average man, this view of politics may seem irrational, unrealistic and altogether unreasonable. But the world normally regards God's thoughts and truth as nonsense. For the world is operating in the perspective of itself and its own future; while the man who has dedicated himself to God is concerned solely with *His* interests and the total outworkings of the divine plan.

What is the Christian's proper relation to his country and his government? Again we find our answer in the inspired words of the apostle Paul: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil... Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour" (Rom. 13:1-7).

Organized political systems of government, says Paul, are God's own provision, and should be respected. As Christians we must work within the framework of our nation's laws and mandates, insofar as they do not conflict with the laws of God. When such a conflict does occur, we must honor God by submitting to the penalty of the law. For our citizenship in this world, like our life, is a transitory thing. It is not an end but only a *means* to a far greater end—in reality, we are strangers and pilgrims. We are *in* this world, but not *of* it.

Here we have no continuing city, though we seek one to come (Heb. 13:14).

Paul wrote again of our status in this world: "They [the people of this world] are heading for destruction, appetite is their god, and they glory in their shame. Their minds are set on earthly things. We, by contrast, are citizens of heaven, and from heaven we expect our deliverer to come, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will transfigure the body belonging to our humble state, and give it a form like that of his own resplendent body, by the very power which enables him to make all things subject to himself" (Phil. 3:19-21, NEB).

We long to see justice, integrity, love and brotherhood in our world. We want to see our country free from the vices of political corruption and dishonesty. We want to see justice running down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream. But we know that such cannot be—not now. All this is waiting for the dawn of the new age.

As citizens of the world to come, our vision is ahead. We have another Master; our allegiance must be to the new order which is coming from heaven, and from this new order we must derive our ways of thinking, feeling and judging. Therefore, we cannot give too much concern to this world and its way of operating. Our first duty is to be faithful to our Lord—as citizens of the Kingdom to come, our conduct must match our citizenship. We are preparing for that joyous time when God shall call His sons from far, and His daughters from the ends of the earth, everyone that is called by His name (Isa. 43:6-7). Then shall all the ends of the earth see the salvation of our God.

So let us never forget: our central life commitment is to God. His interest, His concerns, His plans and purposes must absorb all our thinking and all our lives. And this leaves no place or time to become entangled in the affairs of this life.●●

A Heart That Is Fixed

Oh give me a heart that's fixed, Lord,
A mind that is stayed on Thee;
A heart that is well established,
Whatever my need may be.
A heart that is never moved, Lord,
By sorrow or care or fear,
A heart that can rest in quiet,
When danger or death is near.
A heart that is never anxious
Because it is filled with love;
So garrisoned by Thy peace, Lord,
That nothing can ever move.

Living the Life of Triumph

THE apostle Paul knew the secret of living a life of triumph. Not everyone learns the secret in a lifetime for the lack of seeking in the right place. It might be learned through trial and error, but were we as Christians to give a little extra thought to Paul's letter to the Philippians we might the sooner learn what living a triumphant life entails.

What is it to live a life of triumph? Paul tells us in just six words: "To me to live is Christ" (Phil. 1:21). For Paul the life of triumph was a Christ-centered life—making Christ the central theme of everything he did. He *sought* the meaning of life in Christ and *found* the meaning of life in Christ. He lived for Christ; and in his letter to the brethren at Philippi he tells us much about what kind of a life he lived and exhorted his friends as to how they should live. We can glean from his letter to the Philippians much about his life and what made it that way. From the day of his conversion, Paul followed Christ. We as Christians, who are likewise to be Christ-followers, would do well to pattern our lives after one who followed so closely. (The following quotations are from the *New Scofield Bible*).

The life of triumph, the Christ-life, *is a life of joy*. "Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, Rejoice" (4:4). Right living brings joy. "Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord, his God" (Ps. 146:5).

It is a life of peace. "Be anxious for nothing, . . . and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (4:6-7). Being not over-anxious over the things of this life brings peace. "Great peace have they which love thy law, and nothing shall offend them" (Ps. 119:165). That is the peace "which passeth all understanding," the peace that comes from keeping God's law. Paul knew this peace.

It is a life of contentment. "For I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, in this to be content" (4:11). Have we learned this? Are we content

to accept the things we cannot change? Paul accepted imprisonment as part of his life for Christ because he knew he could not change it. Could we? Even in his prison cell he was thinking not of himself, but of his brethren in Christ, for he wrote, "Even as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace; for God is my witness, how greatly I long after you all" (1:7-8).

It is a life of power. "I can do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth me" (4:13). Through Christ and the power of His Gospel, Paul knew that he could do all that was necessary to gain life in the future. Knowing that he faced almost certain death at the hands of his captors, this must have been comforting. He was confident that he could win in the race for life.

It is a life of suffering and conflict. "Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him but also to suffer for his sake" (1:29). Paul knew from experience that following Christ could bring suffering, for he wrote these words from a Roman prison. Literal suffering and perhaps imprisonment faced many of his brethren in that day. Today we are spared physical suffering, but should we not accept the little mental suffering we may experience as joyfully as Paul accepted his bonds?

It is a life of humility. "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others" (Phil. 2:3-4). There is no room for rivalry among Christians. The Christian is admonished not to think of himself more highly than he ought. We are to compare self with the rule of God's Word, not with our brother, and this requires humbleness of mind.

It is a life of obedience and responsibility. "As ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only but now much more in my absence, work out your

own salvation with fear and trembling" (2:12). Obedience must be continuous; we can never escape from the eye of God. Our salvation is our responsibility. Only our own work can save us; we cannot claim the merits of another. Jesus said His Father worked and He worked. We too must work, for there will come a time when it is too late to work.

It is a life of urgency. "This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (3:13-14). The past must be forgotten, the future remembered. Paul forgot the things behind him and pressed forward to be worthy of the grand future which he knew lay before him. "This one thing I do," was Paul's watchword. He was willing to give up all of the present that he might gain the future reward.

Paul was making that "living sacrifice" that he exhorted the Roman brethren to make, "being made conformable unto his death," dying to sin that "if by any means [he] might attain unto the resurrection of the dead" (3:10-11). "If by any means," said Paul, and he meant *any means*, for he was persuaded that "neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature," would be able to keep him from that goal.

It is a life of right thinking. Whatever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report; ... think on these things (4:8). Thinking on these things would leave no room for an evil thought. The sure way to be free from evil thoughts is to fill the mind with good thoughts. Paul was the protege of Christ, and Christ had placed evil thoughts at the head of the list of 13 evils, hence the need for these words of Paul.

It is a life of growth. The Christian life must be one of growth, as Paul prayed concerning the Philippian brethren: "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness" (1:9-11). The love in which the Christian is to abound is the love of God which is the keeping of the commandments. By keeping the commandments they would be "without offense" and "filled with the fruits of righteousness."

And today our lives must be lives of growth. We must abound more and more in the fruits of

righteousness if we would have the same confidence of the reward as did Paul.

It is a life of following. "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them who walk even as ye have us for an example. . . . Those things which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do, and the God of peace shall be with you" (Phil. 3:17; 4:9). Paul was following in the footsteps of Jesus and he exhorted the Philippians to follow him. By following him, they were really following Jesus. Paul so lived as to inspire confidence in his brethren. He was an example of the believers and we must likewise follow.

It leads to a life of certain future glory. Paul's words to the Philippians, if heeded, lead to that future glory on which he staked his all. "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our lowly body, that it may be fashioned like his glorious body, according to the working by which he is able even to subdue all things unto himself" (3:20-21, *New Scofield Reference Bible*).

Paul spoke with assurance of the coming of the Lord and the change which will follow. Do we share his confidence? We can if we but live as he lived—triumphantly, victoriously, abundantly, the Christ-life.

Can we say "To me to live is Christ"? Or would we have to substitute "self" for "Christ"? ●●

Words to WALK By

Beware of a rubber conscience and a concrete heart.

It does no good to sit up and take notice if you keep on sitting.

In the Christian life, one cannot be good without being good for something.

Some people try to get into the Kingdom without looking at their compass—they think they can do better without it!

If one wishes to be a critic, he needs neither brains nor education nor good judgment.

There are two sides to every question, and it makes a difference which side you are on.

We prove our faith in the future by the way we use the present.

"It is all right for the ship to be on the ocean, but not for the ocean to be in the ship. It is all right for the Christian to be in the world, but not for the world to be in the Christian."

UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God."

The Ministration of the Spirit

THE God of the Bible is a God of power, a power identified as the Spirit of God in the Old Testament and as the Holy Spirit in the New Testament. Primitive man had believed in many spirits. Anything which happened outside his control, any event in the least extraordinary or contrary to nature, was attributed to a spirit. Thus, when God first made Himself known to men He was thought of as another spirit, an unknown Power. But it was soon noted that Jahweh, (Hebrew for God), the true God, was unlike the pagan gods. Jahweh was a God of action; a God interested in human welfare.

Throughout the period covered by Old Testament history, God's people were constantly made aware of His power. But He asked something in return: He alone was to be worshiped; He was to be acknowledged as the One God, the Only God. "I am the Lord: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another... I am the Lord, your Holy One, the creator of Israel, your King... I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me" (Isa. 42:8; 43:15; 45:5). This was the God that had made a covenant with Abraham, had called Moses to bring His people out of Egypt, had been with them through forty years in the wilderness and had brought them safely to the land He had promised.

The patriarchs and prophets were not about to let Israel forget how God had been with them through the years. The Psalmist reviewed Israel's history from the beginning, showing how God had worked for them through His Spirit: "He divided the sea, and caused them to pass through;... in the daytime also he led them with a cloud, and all the night with a light of fire... He hath made His wonderful works to be remembered... he hath showed his people the power of his works" (Ps. 78:13-14; 111:4, 6). It was the Spirit of God, or the power of God, that caused the waters to part; and it was the same power that was a protector and a guide to them through the wilderness wanderings.

In the book of Nehemiah we find the remnant of the people that had survived the captivity and

exile being reminded of the power of God on their behalf. After the completion of the work of rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem, the Levites reviewed for them the many miracles God had done from the time He called Abraham out of the land of Ur, through their stay in Egypt, their deliverance under Moses, possession of the land of Canaan, the loss of their homeland and their captivity. **All the many miracles that were done on their behalf were the result of God's power, His Spirit working in men, through men, and for men.**

In this lesson we will continue the study of this power, the Spirit of God, following our outline:

II. Definitions

D. The Holy Spirit

III. How God Administers His Spirit

A. Visible Ministration of the Spirit

B. Invisible Ministration of the Spirit

God, being the Supreme Being that He is, has always had all things in control. He knows "the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done," and through His Spirit or Word He has revealed some of these "things that are not yet done." Men are often the agent for revealing His thoughts, but it is not for man to question the operation of His Spirit. God is infinite, man is finite; hence, the workings of the Spirit confound his understanding.

Through the prophet Isaiah, God asks: "Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding?" (40:13-14). No mere man can direct or control the workings of the Almighty: He does not seek counsel of man. And because we lack the powers of the Holy Spirit today, we must confine our knowledge of His Spirit to what we can learn from His Word.

II. DEFINITIONS

D. The Holy Spirit

In present-day theology, the Holy Spirit is usually identified as a person rather than a power.

Most major denominations claim the Holy Spirit to be the third person of the Trinity. **However, both positions are foreign to the Scriptures.** There is nothing in the account of the Pentecost experience to indicate that the Spirit which descended was a person.

The Scriptures do not support the view that the Holy Spirit is a person. This belief came about by a misunderstanding of the Greek word **pneuma** which was frequently translated "ghost" in the King James Version. The error in translation has been recognized in more recent years and the rendering in most other versions of the Bible is "spirit." The King James Version of the Bible was translated when superstition was rampant and ghosts were very real in the minds of the average person. Because the Holy Spirit was something that could not be seen, it was considered of a mysterious nature, hence the rendering "ghost."

The Holy Spirit was an increased measure of the Spirit of God which the prophets had possessed in Old Testament times and which the disciples themselves had had in a lesser degree during Jesus' ministry. The fact is well stated by an early twentieth-century theologian: "The experience of the primitive Church was but a continuation and enlargement of the experience of the Church of Israel which is expressed in the Old Testament. The New Testament doctrine of the Spirit begins where the Old Testament doctrine breaks off. The Holy Spirit of the Gospels and the Acts, of the Epistles and the Apocalypse [Revelation], is still God exerting power, especially life-giving power; the Spirit of God which moved upon the face of the waters, which inspired the prophets and the Psalmist, which guided Israel and those of the nations who were Israelites indeed."*

Another writer of the same period states it equally well: "It is to be noted that Luke's conception of the Spirit is invariably the old Hebraic one. No mystical ideas such as afterwards came in from Greek thought are traceable. The Spirit appears simply as the power from on high which manifests itself in marvellous action, knowledge of the future, right decision in moments of crisis and perplexity. . . a power given from above, to reinforce the natural capacities . . . The Spirit is the gift of Christ to his people, and no one outside of their fellowship can share in it . . . the Spirit was given for the support and advancement of the mission. In so far as they possessed it, the disciples were enabled to defend themselves against enemies, to judge aright in difficult crises, to devote them-

selves fearlessly and unreservedly to the great cause. They could enforce their message not merely by words of human wisdom but by a resistless fervour of appeal and by new modes of utterance which compelled men to feel that they were not speaking of themselves."**

That the Holy Spirit advanced the mission of the apostles is evident from the fact that three thousand were added to the church in a single day. Also, such miracles as the healing of the man at the gate Beautiful brought many into the church. Following Peter's sermon, we read that "many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand" (Acts 4:4). Without the power of the Holy Spirit such a miracle and such wholesale conversion would not have been possible.

III. HOW GOD ADMINISTERS HIS SPIRIT

The Spirit of God in the Old Testament and the Holy Spirit in the New Testament, as we learned in our previous lesson, are simply the power of God transmitted to men. **Always the power makes the recipient capable of doing something that would otherwise be beyond that person's natural capabilities.** With the power of the Holy Spirit men have achieved things which would otherwise have been impossible. In some instances the power concerned the intellect, and in others it was physical power. Sometimes it was the power to perform miracles of healing and on some occasions to restore the dead to life.

The power itself is an invisible power, or influence, but it was often manifested by visible means. We will first discuss visible means of the ministration of the Spirit.

A. Visible Ministration of the Spirit

Throughout the Scriptures the Spirit of God is seen to manifest itself in exceptional actions, always towards the fulfillment of God's purposes. At times ordinary men were made capable of supernatural actions, while at other times unrighteous and even unscrupulous men were used in fulfilling God's purposes.

We will briefly discuss various visible means of the ministration of God's Spirit.

1. Angels. Because most religious literature depicts angels as creatures with wings, the average person today thinks of them that way. Because a bird needs wings to fly and an airplane needs wings to fly, they reason that an angel would have need of wings. The angel Gabriel was caused to "fly swiftly" to Daniel, but he flew with the power of God, hence no need for wings or motors!

* H. B. Swete, *The Holy Spirit*, p. 4.

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

Some denominations describe angels as spirit beings, a phantom, something that comes and goes as the wind, unheard and unseen. Angels can be invisible, but angels are real beings. The angels that were sent from the courts of heaven to deliver God's message or to perform His will in Bible times were **men** in a glorified state.

From the context of the Scriptures it is evident that these angels, also described as men, resembled the men of the particular period of time in which they appeared. Abraham looked up as he sat in his tent door and saw three **men** standing by; Lot saw two **angels** approach the gate of Sodom, two of the three that had just visited Abraham. The two words were used interchangeably.

When "he pressed upon them greatly . . . they turned in unto him, and entered into his house; and he made them a feast, and did bake unleavened bread, and they did eat" (Gen. 18:1-2; 19:1, 3). They washed their feet, and they ate as other men—but they were angels bringing a message of doom to that city.

The Bible pictures angels as real beings with material bodies, but with unlimited power. There is nothing in the Scriptures to indicate that they possessed wings as a bird. Had they had wings, Abraham would have immediately recognized them as unusual. The power of the angels is the power of God, God's Spirit, or the Holy Spirit as it was known in New Testament times.

2. Power manifested through men. God's will was not always made known through angels; sometimes men were the instruments. But when men were used, they were working under an influence beyond their control; they were using a power that was not their own.

Obedience to a command of God often figured in such manifestations. At the Red Sea crossing, Moses was told to "Lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it" (Ex. 14:16). **Moses did as he was commanded; but it was the Lord, working through His power, that caused the sea to go back (14:21).** Again, when the people murmured for lack of water, Moses was told to "smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it" (Ex. 17:6). **Moses did as commanded and the people had water. As before, it was the power of God which is His Spirit that caused the water to flow from the rock. Moses was God's instrument through which the power was manifested. The rod which he held in his hand in each case was but a symbol of that power.**

This is but a sampling of Biblical incidents where God's Spirit was visibly working through men. Other times were many and varied; the plagues that came upon the Egyptians because Pharaoh

would not hearken to the Lord were all visible manifestations of God's power. At the command of God the plagues came and at His command they ceased. Other visible signs were seen in battle. With God on their side, a small army might rout a host; a shepherd boy with a sling could slay a giant.

3. Visions and dreams. This means of revealing God's will for His people was used frequently throughout the period covered by the Scriptures, but since that time God has been silent. There has been no visible manifestation of God's power since the end of the Apostolic Age when the last apostle completed the book of Revelation.

Dreams and visions might be said to be both visible and invisible. They were visible only to the person concerned, but the outcome of these God-induced dreams and visions were perceivable to many. Through a dream Joseph was warned of a famine and was able to save the people of Egypt by planning in advance. As a youth Joseph had been nicknamed "the dreamer" by his jealous brothers because of his many dreams, all of which concerned his future. There can be no doubt God was revealing His will for Joseph through these dreams since all were fulfilled to the letter in later years.

The Old Testament Scriptures indicate little difference between a dream and a vision. Abraham had many visions during his lifetime, including the knowledge that he was to have an heir, a vital link in establishing God's promise to him.

Visions and dreams, as they came to many in old times, were another facet of God's Spirit, His means of communicating with man on the earth, a means of letting man know that He is God and that He cares for His earthly children.

B. Invisible Ministration of the Spirit

God does not do all His work openly or with sounding trumpets. He has other means of communicating with His people. These we will call invisible means of ministration.

In ancient times, beginning with Adam, God was not silent. Visits from angels, visions, dreams and other supernatural phenomena were common. Men had not reached the state of refinement of our twentieth century and their understanding had not come to the point of accepting what they could not see or feel with the touch. God might simply have spoken quietly to Moses on the backside of the desert, but the burning bush attracted his attention more quickly. Likewise, the law might have been given in an obscure valley of the wilderness, but the clouds, the thunder and lightning, the earthquake and the trumpets that preceded the giving of the law left a lasting impression on all

who witnessed it. They **knew** it was the voice of God; such a scene was not possible with man.

There was a time when the prophet Samuel was a child that "there was no open vision" (I Sam. 3:1). God was silent in those days, temporarily, "and the word of the Lord was precious in those days." We live in a comparable time. We see no visions, hear no voices, perform no miracles—and the Word of the Lord, which is now written, is precious to us.

Nevertheless, God is still at work. He does not sleep. Some of His work in days past was done silently, invisibly. We will review some means He uses and has used in the past, that are invisible to human eyes and unheard by human ears.

1. Inspiration. God, through His Spirit or power, by means beyond the understanding of mortal men, infused the minds of various prophets, apostles and others, that they might record His complete Word. He likewise inspired some of these same men as well as others to speak boldly in the face of opposition. Moses complained, "I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue." But the Lord answered him, "I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say."

2. Impressions. This phase of God's Spirit is not limited in time; it is just as possible in our day as it was forty centuries ago. Paul's words to the Philippians give assurance to us: "If there is any point on which you think differently, this also God will make plain to you" (3:15, NEB). From this verse we understand that if we are among those who will do His will, we will be impressed with whatever is necessary to complete perfection.

3. The written Word. Like impressions, this vital part of God's Spirit is for us of the latter days. Without it we who have lived in the age when there is no open manifestation of God's Spirit would be lost. God preserved His Word through difficult times. There was a time when men sought to destroy the Bible either in whole or in part, but because of His protecting care, it survived intact and we have it today just as it was compiled many centuries ago. Its very survival is proof that it is the Word of God. Prophecies written on its pages that have been fulfilled over the centuries are a further weight of evidence.

4. Human instruments. Most often when God used human instruments in His plan they were very much aware of it. But there have been human instruments used who neither knew Him or His plan. One such unwitting instrument was Cyrus the Great, founder of the Persian Empire. He is mentioned by name in the prophecy of Isaiah and is here spoken of as "anointed." As used here, the word simply means "chosen." Cyrus was chosen

by the Lord to overthrow the wicked King Belshazzar. He later authorized the captive Jews to return to their homeland and to rebuild the temple, as we learn from II Chron. 36:22.

5. Circumstances. This is another means of God's working in our day. Although unseen and unheard, God arranges circumstances so that anyone who will follow His way will learn of Him by some means. We have this promise direct from the Master (as it is worded in the King James Version): "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine" (John 7:17). These words, coupled with the words of the Great Apostle, that we "[have the] promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come," assure us of sufficient time to complete our work if we are among those who "will do."

6. Prayer. The avenue of prayer is likewise still open. It has never been closed to His people. We read that "the prayer of the upright is his delight, . . . he heareth the prayer of the righteous," but "he that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination" (Prov. 15:8, 29; 28:9). And from James we learn that "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (5:16). Notice that in each instance it is conditional: God hears the prayer of all who are striving to be righteous. And whom God hears, He answers.

How to have our prayers heard and answered is well stated in I John 3:22: "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight."

7. Angels. God promises: "the angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them" (Ps. 34:7). Like prayer, this is conditional. The angels watch over those who "fear him [God]." And of them the writer to the Hebrews says, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" (Heb. 1:14).

Though invisible to human eyes, the angels are as much a part of God's work today as they were in Abraham's day. Because we have the written Word, we do not need an angel to appear as to Abraham to tell us what we should do, hence their part today is in acting as our unseen protectors.

MEMORIZE

Psalm 34:7, "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them."

*Reprints of these studies are available
upon request.*

"Stand Upon Thy Feet!"

A stirring address by the late Percy J. Thatcher, President and Pastor of the Megiddo Mission Church (1945-1958).

"STAND upon thy feet." These words were spoken to the prophet Ezekiel centuries in the past. Who spoke these words? It was God. He was about to send the Prophet on a very important errand—to go and cry aloud against a rebellious, stiffnecked, hardhearted and stubborn people. For such a task great courage was needed. It was to be a gigantic undertaking, and for this very reason he was commanded to stand upon his feet. When the spirit entered into Ezekiel, he arose to his feet in an upright position, ready for action and service.

Today can we not hear the Eternal's voice calling through His written Word to hasten and arise to our feet that He may tell us what He wishes us to do or say? "Again if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." Have we not been crawling, crouching, sitting down in the dust long enough; or perhaps, in drowsiness lying down to be caught in a spiritual slumber that ends in eternal death? Many have been nursed, dandled, rocked and cradled so long they forget there is an upright position. It is high time to arise to our feet, ready and anxious for any duty to perform for God, truth and righteousness. It is time to stand upon our feet in the presence of all the evil by which this unhappy, wild, and restless world is afflicted.

Do not crouch before evil as if terrified and dismayed. "Up! Stand upon thy feet!" says God, and defy everything that is low, impure; defy every pagan custom and practice that is contrary to the will of God. So many evils will flee before us like dew before the rising sun, and the most egregious sins can be wiped out when we dare to stand upon our feet. Many will say and have said, "I cannot rise higher and change my position, for every day is alike—work, worry, trouble and business." But every day is *not* alike. Every day is *different*. Each and every day is drawing us nearer the great Tribunal. Each day is sealing our future

for good or ill. Every day means a new opportunity. It lies within ourselves to make each day different—better and still better.

We can make each day different by doing something for Christ, for truth and for God that we have never done before. We can do more for the cause of righteousness than we have ever done in the same length of time before. We can do more of the very thing that we have been doing the most of. We can rise to a higher level of thought and feeling and conduct. No matter how high you have lived, you can live still higher every day. You can climb to higher ground. Some have lived twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, seventy, eighty years. No matter how old, there is something we can do for God and for others that we have never done before.

How often we have cried out as weaklings, "It can't be done. The task is too great, the burden too heavy. I cannot rise above it." Oh, fearful and unbelieving man! Why do we not stand upon our feet? It is high time to cease slumping and drooping. It is time to cease licking the dust like a serpent and to cry out with the Psalmist, "My soul cleaveth unto the dust. Quickened thou me according to thy word." Why do we stay down longer among the low and sensual? Up! the morning is breaking. It will soon be too late to recover our strength and we will go hence to be no more.

Alas for those who cannot face tomorrow with beating hearts, eager to see some fresh unfolding of the power of God. Arise! arise! why sit down longer in the dust? Arise and put on the beautiful garments of salvation. Do not lie prostrate and paralyzed by doubt, fear, and unbelief. Get up from the seat of the scornful. Do not stay there for a moment, no, not for a second. Arise, stand upon thy feet as obedient servants of the King.

Why is it we are ill at ease when there is so much to be done and so little time to do it?

Why is it our spirits are troubled, when He that keepeth Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps?

Why do we hesitate to take a sufficient quantity of the healing balm of Truth that will create new

life, energy, and strength within our members?

Why is it we lack faith to arise and shake off the dust of earth?

Why is it we trust longer in the arm of flesh and the counsels of our own will?

There is a faith that will lift us above it all, causing us to go from strength to strength until we stand upon our feet as a strong man to run a race. Then we shall not quail before our foes. Then we can face the future with undaunted hearts.

Why is it we are so often vocal on every other subject but religion? Why is it we hesitate and let golden opportunities slip by to tell of the glorious majesty of His kingdom? Why do we boast of our accomplishments and seldom count the blessings the Eternal is continually showering upon us? We may call our religion the best in the world, and yet what is its value if it be not a power in our lives? We may have a great and grand series of laws, but the laws may be written upon stone and not in our hearts. If we are not careful, our religion may become a ritual or a pleasant song and not the power by which we live.

Sound faith is a power that lives, and like all other living things it grows, and like all other growing things, it has its enemies and meets with obstacles which may at times seem insurmountable. But when we add courage and rise to our feet, God provides a way through, around, or over these barriers which are cast up in our way. Many a dark cloud will pass before we come within its shadow.

Why are we so doleful? Why do not our hearts sing and our faces shine? Why are we not radiant and jubilant, rejoicing always in the truth? There is but one answer—we are not yet on our feet. That is the reason we tremble at appearances and our goodness seems so weak and evil seems so strong; truth so feeble and falsehood so mighty; love so fragile and hate unconquerable. But, do you know, this all seems so because we are not on our feet. Thank God, truth is stronger than error; righteousness is mightier than falsehood, and the love of God is eternal.

We hear of giants in the land and when we behold them we become like grasshoppers. Men and women who feel like grasshoppers in the presence of evil are never allowed to take possession of any land of promise. He that will not arise to his feet and become more than a grasshopper will never get further than the wilderness. He will die there. Oh, why do we not stand up and cry aloud, first against ourselves and then against others, instead of acting like grasshoppers? We may wince to arise and speak the words of truth and soberness to the rebellious and stiffnecked, but God says,

“Stand upon thy feet.” Go right on speaking, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear. Too often we have become cowards in the presence of some sin, or some old whim or whine or notion. And that is the reason we are still in the wilderness.

The cowards and slaves to sin, the murmurers and complainers, are buried in the wilderness; the Joshuas and the Calebs rise to their feet and press on to the Promised Land. They go in and possess it. Why are we so fearful? Why do we shrink back? Why are we afraid? Our fathers in the faith, God’s prophets and seers, were not grasshoppers in the presence of evil or before the kings and rulers of earth. They were not grasshoppers in the presence of giants. Was Paul a grasshopper in the presence of Agrippa? Was John the Baptist a grasshopper when he reproved the mighty Herod? Was Jesus a grasshopper before Pilate? He was not afraid of Pilate, but Pilate was afraid of Him. Time would fail to tell of the many bold and courageous ones who stood before the Goliaths of sin and rebuked them for their iniquity.

We as Christians are under bonds to use our voices not only for the purpose of defense but for the purpose of attack. We all need to blow the trumpet in the defense of our faith and to be willing to stand and die for its principles. No doubt we have all used our lips to make a little noise, but we must go further than that. We must allow all the energy of the body to come into our tone. Do not spare, do not hold back; lift up thy voice like the sound of a trumpet; lift it up when sin appears in ourselves or in others. This was the exhortation needed in Ezekiel’s day. It is the exhortation we need today. And it is certain that unless we have strong conclusions and convictions regarding the blessings which lie before us, we shall never speak with the voice of the trumpet.

For over twelve and one-half centuries the trumpet was still; not a soul to listen or sound its clarion note; but today God says, “Use it. Arise, stand upon thy feet. Lift up thy voice with strength and say unto Israel, ‘Behold thy God, prepare to meet him!’ ”

Too often when we speak the sound of the trumpet is so weak that it never sets the nerves vibrating; it never awakens the mind; it never causes a stir. When our voice is used as a trumpet, it will move to action; it will bring some to their feet; it will appeal to the will, thrill the heart and bring conviction. Oh, that today we might all have the voice of the trumpet, first to stir ourselves and then to cause men and women to cry out as did the jailer, saying, “What must I do to be saved?”

A man passing through the convalescent state

never made real progress until he was able to stand upon his feet. It is there that he gathers great strength, and renewed life and action begin to fill and thrill his being. And so in the realms of the spiritual, we have all been down even to the dust, the whole head so sick it could not be up-lifted; yes, sick from head to foot. We may have attempted various moves and adjustments, prescriptions and cure-alls; watched with great carefulness the thermometer to detect the rise and fall of our spiritual temperature; we may feel the pulse hourly to see whether the heart is beating with greater religious activity; but the fact remains that it is only when we are able to arise and stand upon our feet that the real vigor and strength is ours to enjoy in service for our God.

We hear much about things in a nutshell. What more could be packed into a little space than the power that is wrapped up in the words of the beloved John when he said, "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world"? But we cannot overcome the world with iniquity hanging over our head. We must arise and see to it that it is put under our feet; not be overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

I sometimes wonder how Jesus crowded so much of living into so short a time. He drew down from the unseen so much of the glory of God that His life became incandescent. Perhaps the great reason is that He lost no time in standing upon His feet to proclaim the glad tidings of the Kingdom, to perform His Father's will and to do so perfectly the things we know we ought to do.

It is time to arise upon our feet and leave forever those who put far away the evil day. They perceive not that God's judgments are near at hand. They lie upon beds of ivory and stretch themselves upon their own couches and eat the best of the flocks. They invent and chant their own music and drink wine out of bowls. Their own pleasure is all they desire. They eat the bread of wickedness and drink the wine of violence. The wine of Babylon is more delicious to their taste than the wine which God has mingled. They stretch themselves in their own pleasures, ways and thinkings till they are overtaken by the Day of the Lord, and the night of their pleasure is no more. When they attempt to arise to their feet, it is too late; they stumble into everlasting darkness.

We will wait in vain if we think the Eternal is going to reach down and by some miraculous power lift us up from the dust of human thought and practice. The wisdom from above is higher, and if we desire to partake of the fruit of righteousness that hangs on the topmost branch, we must arise

to our feet and reach to our very limit ever to grasp and taste of its sweet and delicious juices. Too often we have been down hoping some trial or bitter disappointment might be taken away from us, but every soul who has bravely risen to his feet and determined to drink it, has found that which seemed to be a cup of gall turned to a cup of blessing.

There comes a time when we all must decide which way to take. Before us lie two roads. One leads to certain defeat, the other to victory. We may give up and go down, or, on the other hand, get up on our feet and go on. Which will we do?

A man will never be able to stand upon his feet until he stops lying to God. He will never stand upon his feet until he stops deceiving himself. He will never rise to an upright position until he ceases to call evil good and good evil. If we are saying by word and action "the Lord delayeth His coming"; if we speak not to edification; if we shoot out bitter words; if we murmur or complain about everything and everybody but ourselves, we can rest assured our mouth is still in the dust. When we talk like that we are far from standing upon our feet. If we seek the fair speeches and plaudits of man or are vainly puffed up by anything which proceeds from the flesh, we can rest assured we are still in the low and groveling position. When we live so that God is satisfied with us, we will be standing upon our feet, ready to go where He wants us to go and be what He wants us to be.

What great opportunities we have lost and let slip by in refusing to stand upon our feet as examples of the goodness, power, and mercy of God, especially as examples to the young! We talk about faith, but too often refuse to exercise it. We speak about trust in God and His Word, then refuse to make the experiment. We may even have quoted, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee"; and then at the first sign of trouble failed to stay our mind on God.

There is a proverb that says, "Physician, heal thyself" or, Reformer, reform thyself. To certain reformers Jesus said, "Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye and considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?" The Moffatt Bible translates it, "Why do you note the splinter in your brother's eye and fail to see the plank in your own eye?" "Isn't it too bad," we say, "that he is so conceited?" and never suspect that there is any conceit in ourselves. Or sometimes we say, "What a pity it is that he who has so much gives so little," and fail to realize that we ourselves in proportion to what we have, give so very little. We condemn others for what we uphold

in ourselves. When someone else loses his temper, we reflect that he should have exercised a little more self-control. If *we* lose *our* temper, we reflect that we are tired or have been working too hard. When others become stubborn, irritable, or peevish, we simply cannot understand, and perhaps say, "Won't they ever grow up! They are certainly old enough to stop acting like spoiled babes." But when we ourselves do the baby act, people should remember that we have a headache, or our sleep has been interrupted, or our food is not digesting properly. And so we continue to deceive ourselves until the mote in our brother's eye has become so big it shuts out all consideration for the size of the beam in our own eye.

We may and can be so misled by the carnal mind that when conceited we really believe we are humble. We may be obstinate and suppose we are courageous. We may invite criticism of our life and daily conduct as others see it, and still resent or feel hurt by the criticism. Too often when some one of our nearest kin mentions to us that we might have acted differently, the response is likely to be, "*As usual, I am the one to blame.*"

It may be a shock to us to be told we are not all we supposed we were, that we are not as big and good as we had dreamed. If we have anything objectionable in us that will cut us off from enjoying the inheritance with the saints in light, the sooner we find it out the better for all concerned. Nothing is lost in the end by a brave facing of facts. The words of Jesus are appropriate, "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free"; not alone in doctrine but in practice also. The mirror of God's Law will show us in our true make-up. And having seen ourselves, we then should lift ourselves from our cramping limitations and rise to our feet, a bigger and better-looking person in the sight of God.

Some years ago in the State of Oklahoma a young couple from the Carolinas took up a claim and for years eked out a bare existence by farming. One day some men stopped at their well to drink and took away a sample of the water in a bottle. A short time afterwards they returned and offered the couple a price which seemed quite reasonable for such a poor farm. Then began the sinking of some of the greatest oil wells in Oklahoma. As the wells began to pour forth the "liquid gold," the people rushed in from far and near to see the sight. Among them was the couple who had sold the farm. The wife was heard to say, "O John, if we had only known of these great reservoirs of wealth lying beneath our doorstep, we would have been on our feet years ago." The difference between

the Carolina couple and ourselves is that we have been made acquainted with the great fact that reservoirs filled with the rich oil of God's truth are lying before and all around us, and there is none to blame but ourselves if we fail to tap these great reservoirs.

Let us gather fresh strength each day to stand upon our feet and resist every evil within and without that we may be able to stand—not only through life's fleeting day but be permitted to stand with Christ and all the saints upon the earth made over new. ●●

Bible A B C's

(Continued from page 22)

courage to do right because many people will try to get Christians to do things that God does not approve of. It takes much courage to stand for the right every day. We can ask God to help us, and He will provide a way of escape if we will only look for that way of escape and then take it. ●●

Comparing Spiritual Things

With Spiritual

(Continued from page 8)

sure: for if ye do these things ye shall never fall . . . Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless" (vs. 5-7, 10; 3:14).

Belief, to be genuine, induces *works*. A man or woman may be a member of a political party, but if he or she does nothing to help along his or her party, the party wouldn't place much value on them as members. To believe in Jesus you must live His life, otherwise your belief is a dead issue. He Himself said: "Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."

"God So Loved the World . . ."

Our correspondent continues: "Now what does Christ Himself say? 'For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' And again he says, John 5:24, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my words and

believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death into life.' If you notice nothing is said of works. There are over fifty promises in the New Testament where it says to believe and be saved. Don't you believe these inspired witnesses of God?"

Yes, indeed, we do; but we believe *all* that they say, not just a part. Belief is necessary, but it is also imperative that we *act* on our belief. Paul's words in Phil. 1:29-30, strike like an arrow to the mark: "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." Suffering and conflict must accompany belief.

Jesus also said, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." And again in Jesus' final message, the book of Revelation, He said: "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" (John 14:2; Rev. 22:14).

Salvation may be promised over fifty times in the New Testament on the ground that one believes; well, at least forty times it is based on good works, and roughly two hundred times are blessings to the *righteous* either expressed or implied.

If we compare scripture with scripture, accepting all that God has caused to be written for our instruction, we will understand that God "so loved" the world of believers, that "He gave His only begotten Son" (as an example) that "whosoever believeth in him" to the point of acting on his belief, "shall not perish, but have everlasting life."

If we compare scripture with scripture, and base our belief on the overall teaching of the Bible, when we read Jesus' words in John 5:24, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life," we will understand Jesus to mean that to hear His words and believe on the Father that sent Him, is to have an active, practical belief, a belief which will induce action, a drastic change in the believer's life. When Jesus says the believer "hath everlasting life," we will not suppose He meant he has everlasting life as a present possession, for Titus 1:2 lists it as a hope, an unfulfilled hope: "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began." A hope of the "grace," or reward, to be brought at the "revelation of Jesus Christ" (I Pet. 1:13).

When Jesus says the believer has passed from August, 1973

death unto life, we will not take Him to mean he has passed from mortality to immortal life, for that change is yet future. "Our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body" (Phil. 3:20-21). But we will know He meant to teach that the believer has passed from a state in which he was dead in trespasses and sins, without God or hope in the world (Eph. 2:1, 12), to a state where he becomes a living branch in the true vine (John 15), with a hope of being given eternal life when Jesus returns to judge and reward every man according as his work shall be.

Solemn and thought-provoking is the assurance that all who have entered God's service must "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." There will be no chance then to dissemble beneath His all-seeing eye, but every unpurged sin will stand out as an ugly blemish on our robe of character; and whereas we could have heard the joyful words, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, and share with Me eternal life," we shall receive the doleful sentence: "Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity. You have persisted in following the broad easy way with the masses, destruction shall now be your portion."

"Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." Remember, only the doers of the commandments shall inherit the blessing. Let us hasten to do the work that we may stand approved in that great day. ●●

My Prayer

Give me, O Lord, a heart to love and praise,
A song for dull and cheerless days;
A sense of Thy eternal power,
A joy in sorrow's darkest hour;
Thy peace when fears and doubts assail,
The faith to know Thou wilt not fail;
The eyes to see another's need,
Thy grace to keep from selfish greed;
The will to live as Thou hast taught,
The mind to be all that I ought;
Thy strength to conquer day by day;
The strong desire to follow Thee, and then
The blessed hope which lights the darkened way;
Give me an entrance to Thy home.

Amen.

Bible A B C's



Q is for Queen Esther. Queen Esther was a very brave woman. She lived in the land of Persia, but she was a Jewish girl. Her mother and father died when she was only a little girl, but she had a cousin named Mordecai who was very kind to her. He took her to his home to live with him and his family, and Mordecai brought Esther up as his own little girl. He taught her about God and His laws and he taught her to be an obedient child.

Esther grew up to be a very beautiful young lady and King Ahasuerus chose her to be his queen. But he did not know that Esther was a Jewess.

It so happened that King Ahasuerus had appointed a very wicked man as his prime minister. His name was Haman. Haman was the most powerful man in the kingdom next to King Ahasuerus, and the king had commanded that all the people should bow before Haman. Mordecai did not obey the king's command, and this made Haman very angry. So he planned to have all the Jews in the kingdom destroyed. Haman sent out letters with the king's seal on them

to all the governors and officials in the empire, ordering that all the Jews be destroyed.

Mordecai was very sad when he heard of this. He tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and ashes, and cried with a loud noise. This was the way he showed his great sadness; for he was a Jew, too.

When Queen Esther heard what Mordecai was doing, she sent her servants to find out what the trouble was. When her servants came back and told her, she was very sad, too. Mordecai sent a message to Queen Esther to go to the king and plead for her people. It was against the law for anyone to go into the king's presence unless he had summoned him. If anyone did,

he would surely be put to death.

Queen Esther and her maidens fasted for three days, and Mordecai and all the Jews in Shushan did the same. Three days later Queen Esther put on her royal robes and went before the king. When he saw her, he welcomed her; he held out his golden scepter to her, and she touched it. This meant that she would not be put to death. Esther then invited the king and Haman to a banquet that day. At the banquet, King Ahasuerus asked Queen Esther what she would like to have. She invited the king and Haman to another banquet the next day. At the second banquet, when the king asked her what her request was, Queen Esther told him how the wicked Haman had planned to destroy her people and asked the king to help to save them. King Ahasuerus granted her request and punished Haman for his wickedness.

It took a great deal of courage for Queen Esther to go before the king when she had not been sent for. It could have meant death for her.

A Christian always needs
(Continued on page 20)



Thankful

I receive so many blessings each day that it is almost impossible to count them. I'm so thankful for this opportunity to work for the Lord, to try to do the things He would have me do.

To crucify our flesh is to conduct our daily lives in direct opposition to our natural desires. And it will take our entire lifetime. Think of the opportunities we all have if we will open our hearts and invest all our time and talents and possessions in the work the Lord is calling on us to do. We should keep renewing our strength by thinking of the wonders of the future.

With God's help we can sweep out the selfish desires and make room in our hearts for the King of kings and Lord of lords.

Laurel, Indiana

E. M.

Enthusiastic

I have attended church faithfully for as long as I can remember, but your literature has run along with my thinking better than any I have ever read anywhere.

Thank you very much for all your publications have meant, are meaning and will mean to me. I didn't see any of your publications until a little over a year ago. I went to the library and saw a sample copy of *Megiddo Message*, with the offer to give the library a free subscription. I was so enthusiastic about it that I asked the librarian to fill out and sign the card, and I mailed it to you in my envelope with my own subscription. I felt led by God to do this. I have a childlike faith in God.

Commiskey, Indiana

I. G.

Learning From Nature

I think nature is a great example for the Christian.

I go out to my garden every morning to look at the flowers. The other day I was surprised to see an Irish bluebell in blossom. Then I thought of the garden as an example. If we look at our Christian garden, we may be surprised to see a beautiful flower of self-sacrifice, or a bud of love, or any of the beautiful flowers of joy, peace, long-suffering, goodness and peace.

My garden is beautiful when all the flowers are in blossom. And so will our spiritual garden be if we weed out all the roots of self—all the evil things that spring from within the heart and defile a man. We must keep weeding, or the weeds of evil will kill out all good we have planted.

Once in a while I have a plant that is hit by the blight and dies. We must not let the blight of wickedness kill any of our beautiful spiritual flowers.

If we keep up this spiritual weeding, we will hear the

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Master say, "Well done, good and faithful servant." I want to see how many weeds I can kill in my spiritual garden before my flowers bloom again.

Holley, N. Y.

C. B.

Steal No More!

There seems to be no end to the wickedness of the heart, and we have to keep a tight rein on ourselves; it is so easy to get worse instead of better.

For instance, right from the time I was a youth of sixteen years I have tried to serve the Lord, and one thing I would never have done was to steal. But I backslid and let myself go, and it wasn't long before I started taking things from work, making the excuse that the things I took made up for the poor wages. It became my boast that if my firm had it, I could get it. I wasn't only stealing for myself—I was stealing for anyone who would ask, "Can you get me this or that?"

But when I realized that I had been serving a false Christ, and that God was slowly maneuvering me into the truth, I had to make a change; I started to take back some of the things I had stolen from work and to read my Bible again. I read, "Let him that stole steal no more." God was talking to me. And to me, this is the greatest thing—to be tuned in to what God has to say to you and to be man enough to obey. This was really an easy victory for me, for my heart was never fully in the stealing; but I still have many evils to conquer. With the Lord's help, I shall overcome. For "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

Nottinghamshire, England

H. L.

"Watch"

One of my daily endeavors is to keep my spiritual alarm clock in good order, and regulated to continually tick off the good news, to mark out my service for God, and to observe if I am running down and getting slack in my work, or going too fast in a wrong direction. Wrong-doings have no place in the house of God. I have my alarm clock (an alert mind) set to warn me of the present evils that I must avoid. I am waiting for that perfect "good morning" that is just around the corner; it is not far away, and may be very much nearer than we think.

It would be very well to take heed to that word so vital and important spoken by Jesus—"Watch." We must spend our time wisely. Great storms are brewing, and we must be very vigilant in our own lives. "Watch" is a little word, but it imposes upon us a great individual responsibility. Many will not listen, but will say to themselves, "Why worry, later on will do." The pleasures of this world are very strong and alluring.

Let us make the best use of the time that remains at our disposal, and let our meditation be on spiritual matters. Our lives are affected by our thinking. For our spiritual welfare and safety's sake we must guard well the gateway of our mind that no evil thoughts enter in.

Auckland, New Zealand

R. L.

From Abroad

I was thumbing through an old issue of *Organic Gardening* of March, 1968, which I got from a relative in the USA, and suddenly saw your advertisement: "Coming Soon! Divine Intervention. Prophet Elijah before Jesus Christ. Positive Bible Evidence." This sounds interesting. If you do not still have the literature, explain to me!

Sjovik, Sweden

P. B.



Meditations

On the Word

JESUS had just finished healing the man born blind. After many years of sightlessness, the unspeakable joy of sight was his. For the first time he was able to behold the light of day, the beauty of the landscape, of blossom, and the plumage of brightly-hued birds. For the first time he could enjoy the glow of

of the joy-lit countenance, to say nothing of the privilege of looking into the face of his kind Healer, the Master Himself.

We can imagine this post-blind man's astonishment when he learned of the skepticism of the Pharisees—men who always had enjoyed physical sight such as he was experiencing for the first time—and had seen and were familiar with the great works Jesus was doing. It was a mystery to him how they could be so unbelieving. He dismissed their wily intrigue with the terse statement: "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see."

Rich indeed was the privilege of those who lived in the days when Christ walked among men, those who met Him where life's pathways cross and were thus the recipients of His healing touch. A never-to-be-forgotten moment that, when first their eyes beheld the light of day.

The fact that such phenomena is wholly unknown to medical science today is no evidence that Jesus did not accomplish the feats the gospel writers accredit to Him. It would be base shortsightedness on our part to deny that such feats could be performed, merely because we never saw them performed and had no knowledge of how they were done. Many of the scientific marvels of today, such as radio, television, radar, atomic power, as well as many of the less spectacular developments, would have been considered miracles had they been

"Then again called they [the Jews] the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner. And he answered and said, Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see"

—John 9:24-25

demonstrated a hundred years ago, yet we do not doubt their reality. The time is not yet ripe for the fulfillment of Jesus' promise: "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do" (John 14:12). But at His coming the power of the Holy Spirit shall be restored,

and these promises shall then be fulfilled.

Everyone will agree that physical blindness is a serious handicap. It is an affliction none of us would choose to suffer. Yet there is a greater affliction than to be deprived of natural sight. The Word of God pictures the morally blind, those whose judgment is so corrupted by the taking of bribes that they cannot or will not discern between right and wrong. We see this condition all about us in our modern world. The prophet Micah could have described existing trends no more accurately had he written today in place of 650 B. C.: "The good man is perished out of the earth: and there is none upright among men: they all lie in wait for blood; they hunt every man his brother with a net. That they may do evil with both hands earnestly, the prince asketh, and the judge asketh for a reward; and the great man, he uttereth his mischievous desire: so they wrap it up" (Micah 7:2-3).

The term moral blindness seems especially to describe those who know not God or recognize His divine authority. Then there are the spiritually blind, those whose eyes have been enlightened but who refuse to see themselves. Examples of this type of blindness are numerous in the Bible. Paul speaks of those who walk as the Gentiles walk in the vanity of their mind as "having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them be-

cause of the blindness of their heart" (Eph. 4:18). Jesus rebuked the blind Pharisees for thinking they could cleanse the outside of the cup and platter while allowing the inside to remain filthy, that is, feigning to cleanse their lives outwardly while leaving their inner self untouched (Matt. 23:25-26).

How rich is our portion who have received the gift of spiritual sight! The brilliant floodlight of divine knowledge has streamed from the throne of mercy, filling our souls with heaven's holy light. Though many in the world grope about in total blindness, unable in spiritual matters to discern their right hand from their left, by the grace of God the eyes of our understanding have been opened to behold wondrous things out of His law. Through the entrance of God's Word our blinded eyes can see the matchless harmony of the inspired Word; we see precise fulfillment of prophetic utterances; we clearly see life's meaning and man's destiny.

But can it be, amidst this priceless clarity of vision, that we are complacently tolerating a more horrible sightlessness? It may be we have eyes, but see not ourselves. Eyes which see the failures of others can at the same time be blind to see self. Until we have looked into the "perfect law of liberty" with eyes that have seen our unregenerated self as a dreadful looking creature, diseased from head to foot, in whom dwells no good thing, we are blind.

The first expression of sight, that is, of this rare inward sight, is and ever has been as uttered by the faithful Job: "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:5-6). At last all the trials, scourgings and pain which had crowded into Job's life had fulfilled their purpose, giving sight to his blinded eyes. With sight there came abhorrence, repentance, reformation. From the depths of spiritual gloom Job had arisen to a majestic tableland where he possessed the depth of vision to see himself. Affliction's hand was removed, and the narrative reads, "The Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning." Throughout his remaining mortal days he basked in the effulgence of the Lord's manifold blessings such as a blind man has never perceived.

Have we yet given voice to this model expression of sight, saying, "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes"?

It is the apostle Peter who gives us further expression of spiritual blindness. He tells us: If there is a deficiency in our faith so that the mountains of sin seem austere, immovable; if we lack the

courage to command our will power; if our self-control is inadequate to see us through life's netting situations; if our patience has any limit; if goodness is not firmly woven into the warp and woof of our souls; if a scarcity of brotherly kindness prevents us from voicing a warning or encouraging word in season; if our love of God is suppressed by the fear of man—if we lack these additions, we are blind.

Ere our spiritual blindness becomes incurable, let us cry mightily unto the Eternal, saying, "Consider and hear me, O Lord my God: lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death." ●●

From A Reader—

Never Alone

One of the greatest aspects of our spiritual life is the fact that we are part of the great fellowship of Christians throughout the world. When Daniel was cast into the lions' den, he was alone. All other people were obeying the edict that required one to worship the king. But strangely, Daniel was not alone. An angel came to be with him as he stood among the lions, just as an angel had appeared with the three men in the furnace.

Like Daniel, we are never alone if we are with God. We have the company of fellow-believers. And more, we have the presence of our God, to sustain and help us through every experience of life. In joy, in sorrow, in trial, there are those who minister to us and share our experiences by their presence. God ministers through His Word and through those "ministering spirits," angels, who labor in behalf of those who shall be heirs of salvation (Heb. 1:14).

Daniel provides for us an example of one man's complete love to God. We see in his experience the unfaltering devotion of one of God's children. But Daniel is more than an example. His loyalty also represents a goal for us to strive for as we go about our daily routine.

To be constant in our love, undivided in our loyalties, and firm in our convictions: these are the objectives in our spiritual life.

Mrs. W. S., North Rose, New York

If the world hands you a lemon, squeeze it, sweeten it, and serve lemonade.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

"At times I read ancient writings such as those of Homer, Virgil, Socrates, Plutarch and others, and my thoughts become occupied with the accessibility that some have to the Holy Scriptures, and the seeming inaccessibility in regard to others. The question comes to me as to why God seems to favor some with His revelation of Holy Scripture and deny this to others."

Your observation that the Holy Scriptures have through the ages been more accessible to some than to others is correct; but to classify this as unfair favoritism we hardly can, as the whole plan and scheme is operating under the direction of God Himself while He is selecting those who shall be heirs of salvation and become a part of His eternal purpose. He knows in advance where He will find workable material for His kingdom, and where He will not; thus He knows where to make His saving knowledge accessible and where it will not be used. The prophet Isaiah describes this omniscience of God as His ability to declare "the end from the beginning" (Isa 46: 9-10); thus He is able to judge what work is worthwhile and what is not, far in advance of the judgment of mortal men.

We might compare your question with the parable of the Sower. The Sower (the Lord) went forth to sow seed (the Word of God); but he did not cast his seed upon all the various types of ground upon the face of the earth. He did not choose to sow seed in a forest or upon a rocky summit or in a swamp or upon a roadbed. He chose areas where it had some prospect of germinating and bearing fruit. And even much of the ground where He did choose to sow seed proved itself unable (or unwilling) to support productive growth. The seed by the wayside did not yield a harvest; likewise the seed among the thorns did not prosper—it was too crowded (by worldly interests); neither did the seed which was cast upon stony ground produce. Only that which fell in good and honest hearts germinated and brought forth fruit (Luke 8). Thus God in sowing seed for His kingdom does not spread a great quantity of seed and care where He knows in advance that there is no prospect of growth.

We might also make a comparison with a present-day drilling concern prospecting for new oil fields. They do not go to all the expense and labor of drilling an oil well where they know there is

no prospect of finding oil; they choose areas which are geographically promising. Likewise God in choosing the human material with which He will work, does not choose that which He knows will yield no success; rather He chooses the material which He knows will be most worthwhile in producing the finished product He desires.

For many years God saw fit to work principally with the nation of Israel (though not exclusively; foreigners were never rejected because of nationality—on occasion they proved to be material of quality superior to that of the "chosen" race). But we cannot call God's selection of Israel "favoritism," though it appeared that way to many. It was simply an example of God in His infinite wisdom, and knowing the end from the beginning, choosing the best material available for the purposes He had in mind. He knew the soil.

When the nation of Israel proved unworkable material as a whole, He discontinued His extra beneficence in their behalf as a nation and turned to the Gentiles, that is, other nations. The apostle Paul spoke of this change using the simile of the tree and its branches—the first branches (Israel) were cut off because of their unproductiveness, and new foreign branches (Gentiles) were grafted on; but their term of life in the tree depended on their productiveness also—if they failed to bear the fruit of the original root (contrary to natural grafting) they also would be cut off (Romans 11:15-22).

And we must remember that "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine" (John 7:17). It is God's promise that He will make His saving knowledge available to all who will make use of it.

"I have been reading your booklet, *A Treatise on the Holy Spirit*, and find that it pertains to Joel's prophecy. How can you figure that 70 A. D. is the end of the Jewish Age when it was only 3831 by the Jewish Calendar? Is not an age supposed to last one thousand years?"

The date of A. D. 70 is commonly accepted as the date of the fall of Jerusalem.

I know of no Biblical rule which states that an age should represent one thousand years. Christ's birth did occur about four thousand years after the time of Adam, and His second coming to earth, or the beginning of the Millennium, will be approximately two thousand years after the time of His birth, making a total of six thousand years. This period is foreshown by the six days of labor under the Mosaic arrangement; and Peter's explanation, that "a day with the Lord is

(Continued on page 27)

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Questions and Answers

as a thousand years" (II Pet. 3:8), suggests the division of the six thousand years into six periods of one thousand years each. But this in no way supports the idea that one thousand years is an age.

You ask how we can relate the year of the Common Era, claiming the destruction of Jerusalem occurred A. D. 70, with the Jewish year 3831.

The Jewish year is not accepted by scholars as being in any way absolute time measured from the actual date of creation. *The Book of Jewish Knowledge* by Nathan Ausubel gives us the following: "The idea of counting time from the date of Creation was thought of as early as the second century, but it did not become popular until the tenth century. In 987 a religious leader of the

August, 1973

Babylonian Jewry decided to date from the time of Creation. This was arbitrarily made to coincide with the year 3760 B. C. E., a point of historic time no modern person could be expected to consider seriously."

If you can't be a wave, be a ripple.

If you can't be a forest, be a tree.

If you can't be a rock, be a pebble;

But the thing most important is to "be."

If you can't be a king, be a peasant.

If you can't be an A, be a Z.

For the joy, it will never be lessened

If you're ALL you can possibly be.



Light Shining Out Of Darkness

*God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.*

*Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never-failing skill
He treasures up His bright designs,
And works His sovereign will.*

*Ye fearful saints fresh courage take;
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.*

*His purposes will ripen fast
Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower.*

*Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan His work in vain;
God is His own interpreter,
And He will make it plain.*

—William Cowper

