

# Megiddo Message

*He turns the  
dry land into  
flowing springs.*

*...and they harvest  
their bumper crops.*

*How he blesses them!*

—Psalm 107:35-38, NLT

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## WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME?

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There are those who like to give names to each period and generation. Years ago there was the "Beat Generation," then followed the "Lost Generation," the "Now Generation," and the "Me Generation." Now we have the "Generation X-ers."

What do they all mean? Most of the designations are merely expressing degrees of selfishness. A noted Harvard sociologist calls it egocentrism, which is just another word for selfishness. The slogan of society is "Do your own thing your own way," or, in other words, take care of Number One.

This selfish instinct has been with us ever since Eve did her own thing in the garden and Adam decided to follow her example. Human nature is basically sinful, which means that it is basically selfish. A baby's selfishness is a means for keeping himself alive. The tragedy is that most people do not outgrow this baby instinct.

One would think that those who set their eyes on Zion would be able instantly to do away with selfishness; but the cure is neither immediate nor complete. Unfortunately, most of us are still prone to turn "every one to his own way." The malady shows itself in the one who comes less and less frequently to church because he is "not getting anything out of it," quite forgetting to ask what he is putting into it. The malady shows itself again in the worker who goes looking for a different job simply because he's not feeling "ful-filled" in his present one.

Where in the Bible are we told that we are supposed to "get something out of" church? Somebody has said that the church is like the neighborhood bank--you get nothing out of it until you put something in. And as for the job, who ever said that its main purpose was to bring one to self-fulfillment?

Christians cannot afford to be selfish because they are not their own. Being Christians means that they belong first of all to Christ, and then to each other within the larger body of Christ. This belonging is both a privilege and a responsibility. With the privilege come the benefits of security, confidence, trust, and protection—in exchange for carrying one's fair share of responsibility for helping, supporting and ministering to one another. At least fourteen places in the New Testament we are told to "love one another," and more than sixty times the phrase "one another" occurs. Often it is in the context of another action word, such as "edify one another," "admonish one another," "bear one another's burdens," "forgive one another," "care for one another," and so on. Anyone who takes these commandments seriously will find it hard to be selfish.

On the other side, Christianity is exceedingly personal, individual, and self-fulfilling. The man or woman who chooses to serve and worship God benefits no one so much as themselves. Each is responsible wholly and solely for himself, for God judges by the individual, not the family or the church or the nation. His reward will be to "*every man according as his work shall be*" (Rev. 22:12). God will give "*glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile*" (Rom. 2:10). The gospel of Christ is "*the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth*" (Rom. 1:16). The servants of God "*must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad*" (2 Cor. 5:10). Again, "*Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity*" (2 Tim. 2:19). Again, "*... every one of us shall give account of himself to God*" (Rom. 14:12). There is no escaping the individual responsibility of those who serve Christ.

The Lord does not condemn us for asking what we personally can obtain from our sacrifice for His sake. Like the apostle Peter said to Jesus, "*We've given up everything to follow you. What will we get out of it?*" (Matt. 19:27, NLT). Jesus Himself advised the would-be follower to "*count the cost*," i.e., think about his own benefit—selfishly (Luke 14:28-30). Just as no good business person will undertake a project without first estimating what he will gain in relation to what it will cost, so the Lord expects us to look realistically at what He offers. What is in it for **me**? What will it cost?

God appeals to our sense of values and offers us a 100 percent increase....plus. "*A hundredfold in this life,*" Jesus told Peter, "*with persecutions, and in the world to come life everlasting.*"

But the "Me-first...take-care-of-number-one" attitude is not of God. And it is something we must oppose with every spiritual weapon at our disposal. Let us pray, "*Not my will, but Thy will be done.*" Let us look upon the church not as a place of entertainment where we go to obtain some pleasing satisfaction, to "get something out of it," but as a place of investment where we put something in to yield more in the future. Individual Christianity is important, but it must not remain individual. The Lord's Prayer does not begin with "My Father," but "*Our Father.*" Even when we pray, we cannot ignore one another!

In the long run, in serving God we obtain the most for ourselves by being selfless. Those who put the most in get the most out. The person who loses his life for the sake of Christ is the one who will receive the most dividends. Now—and forever! □

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## MEGIDDO MEANS ...

"a place of troops" (Gesenius' Hebrew Lexicon); "a place of God" (Young's Analytical Concordance). Megiddo was and is a town in Palestine, strategically located, and the scene of frequent warfare. In the spiritual parallel, it is a place where soldiers engaged in spiritual warfare gather to renew their strength and courage (2 Cor. 10:4-5).

## WE BELIEVE ...

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

### The Herald and the KING

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

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

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# Megiddo Message

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# Don't Say "TOMORROW" When GOD SAYS

**P**ROCASTINATION. It is the old story of putting off until tomorrow what can and should be done today.

So much has been said and so much has been written about this destructive little habit that it would seem little more can be added. The trouble is, so little has ever been *done* about it. People read, or hear, or relate glowing words, which would seem to incite to immediate action. But there is always some reason why it cannot be done today. Perhaps it is an indication of moral flabbiness or laziness, and we so easily fall into it. The habitual putter-offer has a moral weakness somewhere which he would like sometime to take in hand and conquer, but not today. Maybe tomorrow.

It is a threat in things temporal. If not corrected, it is the route to tragedy in our inner, spiritual lives.

Christ spoke on this point in His parable about the Ten Virgins. *"The Kingdom of Heaven can be illustrated by the story of ten bridesmaids who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom"* (Matt. 25:1, NLT). What a privilege to meet the bridegroom upon his return! But when it was finally time to welcome the bridegroom with lamps brightly burning for the wedding, five of the virgins had run out of oil. What utter shame! What dreadful disgrace! They who had been selected to be there at the auspicious moment when the bridegroom came were unprepared. A hurried last minute dash to the shop procured the oil, but alas! By the time they returned it was too late. The door was

locked, and they were shut out.

Why were they too late? They probably had been waiting for a convenient time to fill their lamps with the oil of faith but never found the perfect opportunity they were waiting for.

The lesson? That it is possible to put off too long—to our own eternal loss. For some deadlines, once missed, are missed forever. There is no second chance.

Right now we need to be preparing ourselves for that deadline. If we don't, we could miss out on the greatest honor of the ages, the honor of welcoming Jesus Christ at His return.

The habit of many people is to do a thing when it is convenient to do it, not when it should be done. And with some that means it never will be done, for that convenient season will never come. The season which God has allotted us to heed His gospel of salvation is our lifetime. The best time is right now; there will be no better time. That is why the writer of Hebrews said, "Today." *"Today if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts."*

Today, not tomorrow. *"Today... harden not your hearts."*

The sapling is pliant, and can be easily trained. But let it grow and then try to bend it. It is stiff, unbending, hardened. So are our hearts hardened by disregarding the voice of God, by postponing our religious duties and neglecting the opportunities He has set before us. Paul speaks of those who were *"alienated from the life of God,..."*

**A**ll the great opportunities of life are opportunities for today, not tomorrow.

# "TODAY"

*because of the blindness of their heart"* (Eph. 4:18). Oh, let our conscience be pricked by every touch of wrong. If we say, "Just a little won't matter, just this once," we open ourselves to any type of poison, for little inevitably leads to more and much.

Let us not become morally insensitive, for insensitivity can lead to our becoming "past feeling," where sin no longer makes any sting. Yes, guard warily against any disregarding of the voice of God. We need Him now, every moment; and we shall need Him desperately in the future.

Noah did not put off until a convenient time his response to God's command to build the ark but

began at once and did exactly as God commanded. And what though multitudes scoffed and ridiculed, saying the flood would never come, Noah kept right on building. Before they realized it, the flood was upon them and they were begging to get into the ark. But they had put it off too long. In the words of the song, "They lingered, refused and were lost. Too late, too late, too late."

## Storming it...

What is our speed toward holiness? Are we taking it leisurely, comfortably, doing what is convenient? Or are

*(Continued on page 6, Bottom)*

### *A Lesson from Felix:*

## He Wanted to Wait

**S**ome nineteen hundred years ago God laid a great opportunity in front of a man who turned it down. And the opportunity never came again.

The man's name was Felix.

Felix was no budding saint. Governor of Judea from about AD 52 to 59, he was a most unlikely candidate for the Kingdom. Only the mercy of God could give a man like Felix a chance. Yet He did. Even Felix could have changed, for God made a way for him to hear the Gospel message, and straight from the lips of one of His greatest spokesmen, the apostle Paul. Felix could have responded. He could have said "Yes" to Faith and transformed his whole life from that point forward. But instead, he put it off. He put it off for "a more convenient time"—which never came.

Felix said "Tomorrow" when God said "Today," and the opportunity went away, never to come again. Here is a lesson for us.

How did God give Governor Felix an opportunity?

It all happened as a result of Paul's being captured in Jerusalem. Under normal circumstances he

would have been brought to trial there, for the governor made frequent trips to Jerusalem. But when a plot to kill Paul was uncovered, the authorities immediately decided that he should be moved from Jerusalem to the government headquarters in Caesarea.

Governor Antonius Felix was not a man of high character. He obtained his governorship only through the influence of his brother Pallas, who happened to be a favorite of Emperor Claudius. For Felix's own record was one of avarice, fumbling, dishonor, corruption and misrule. Tacitus, a historian of the times, describes him as "a master of cruelty" who "with savagery and lust...exercised the powers of a king with the disposition of a slave" (Tacitus, Hist. 5: 9), and was utterly merciless in crushing opposition.<sup>1</sup> Even in the brief Biblical record, his characteristics stand out, for what can be said of his

*(Continued on page 6, Top)*

<sup>1</sup>*The New Bible Dictionary*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.) 1962.

## He Wanted to Wait

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ability to keep order when the safe transport of one political prisoner (Paul) from Jerusalem to Caesarea required an escort of 470 troopers!

Yet this was the man to whom the great Apostle opened the door of opportunity. He could have changed—if he had wanted to.

When Paul arrived in Caesarea, the trial was quickly arranged, the Jews hiring an orator named Tertullus to present their case.

Picture that royal courtroom, with Felix seated on his throne and his wife Drusilla at his side, while their many attendants stood nearby. At a gesture from Governor Felix, Tertullus took the stage, and with excessive courtesy delineated the charges against Paul. When he had finished, the Governor beckoned to Paul to present his defense.

Can't we imagine Paul, a prisoner in rough clothes, strong and confident in the power of God, his eyes glowing with the hope that filled his heart? See him looking over his pompous guests—and thanking God he was not in their place! But oh, how he longed to say something that would kindle his faith in their hearts.

After giving the details of his innocence, the great Apostle went on to speak of the matters nearest his heart—the faith of his fathers, the sacred Scriptures, and the hope of the resurrection, a hope shared alike by the majority of his nation. Along with this firm belief he voiced his constant deter-

mination: to maintain a clear conscience toward God and men alike.

No doubt Felix and Drusilla smiled as he talked of their common heritage, for Drusilla was herself a Jewess. Then, as he neared the end of his speech, he turned his topic to the ethical demands of faith. For the faith of Jesus Christ was not something to talk about, he said, but something to *live*. The God of heaven is real, and He is a God who will have the last word. He will send judgment on all workers of evil. He who dares disregard God does so at his own peril.

For Felix and Drusilla the defense had taken an uncomfortably personal turn. It certainly was not at this point an abstract discussion. On the contrary, they heard him talking about such practical teachings as righteousness, self-control, and judgment to come—three subjects which, in Paul's view, the couple especially needed to learn about.

How were his words received? Felix began to feel alarmed, terrified, afraid, and wished to interrupt Paul. He trembled but did not repent. He had heard enough of this for the time being. "You can go," he said. "When the right time comes, I will call for you."

When the right time comes... tomorrow. Felix was a victim of tomorrow. If yesterday has slain its thousands, tomorrow has slain its tens of thousands.

Felix said "Tomorrow" when God, speaking through the voice of the apostle Paul, said "Today." □

## Don't say "Tomorrow" When God Says "Today"

(Continued from page 5)

**H**e who dares  
disregard God does  
so at his own peril.

we among those eager souls who are "storming" their way into the Kingdom? (Matt. 11:12, Moffatt Bible).

Do we feel, as Paul wrote to Timothy, "an urgency in this work, in season and out of season" (when it is convenient and when it is not)? Remember, "now is the accepted time;...now is the day of salvation" (2 Tim. 4:1-2; 2 Cor. 6:2).

When the apostle Paul heard the call of Christ on the Damascus Road, he did not procrastinate. He did not say, "Let me first go and think about this awhile, then I will give you an answer." No, he was immediately obedient. It is written that he "conferred not with flesh and blood." If he had, that convenient season would never have come to him.

### Contrasts

The Bible is full of striking contrasts.

Very early it gives us Abel and Cain, standing before the altar of God. There are Elijah and Jezebel, Jacob and Esau, Jesus and Pilate. At the Last Supper there are Judas and John. And here in the palace of the Governor at Caesarea are Paul and Felix. What a contrast! On the throne sat Felix, the hard-set pagan, greed, cruelty and lust stamped upon his countenance. His administration was marked by injustice, extortion and violence. By his side sat the sophisticated Jewish teenager, Drusilla, youngest daughter of Herod Agrippa I. She had first been married to a Gentile, a Syrian petty king, by arrangement of her father. Then Felix had won her from her husband, and was now living with her in sin and shame. All that was dishonorable was represented by that couple as they sat on the throne.

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# The Late Great Term Paper

An editor of note, Leonard E. Lesourd, once wrote of a personal encounter with his own procrastination. In the following essay he lets us feel the pain of his lesson. He writes:

"I was a senior at Ohio Wesleyan, struggling to keep a B average. In the fall term I signed up for a course in European history. Since I always did well in history, I counted on an A, at least a B.

"Doctor Eells was a stickler on certain matters. He assigned one major term paper each course, and it counted for half the grade. 'The paper must be in my hands no later than 9 AM on Saturday, November 15,' he told us firmly.

"As a senior in college I faced a lot of distractions. I kept putting off the writing of the term paper until the last week. Then the research proved to be more complicated than I had thought. For four days I worked hard compiling the material. On Friday, the 14<sup>th</sup>, I began writing.

"Interruptions. By midnight I was only half-finished. At 4 AM I still had five or six pages to go. Bleary-eyed, I lay down for a few hours sleep.

"It was 8 AM when I awoke. Instant panic. 'I'll never get it done by nine,' I said to myself. Then I rationalized. 'If it's only a couple of hours late, that won't matter.'

"At 11 AM I walked to the professor's front door and rang the bell, term paper in hand. Doctor Eells opened the door. I smiled warmly, explained I had done an extra-careful job on my paper and was sorry it was a bit late.

"He looked at me coldly. I'll never forget the feel of that look. 'It's too late,' he said. 'I explained that all papers had to be in by 9 AM.'

"I was slightly dazed. 'You mean you won't accept it?'

"That's right. Your grade on the paper is an F.'

"But I really blaved over it. Stayed up most of the night.' Self-pity was sweeping over me. He stood silent, unmoved. Near tears, I stood there holding my paper, hardly able to comprehend the disaster.

"Well,' I suggested. 'at least you could grade it for me.'

"He shook his head.

"Frustrated and angry, feeling persecuted and abused, I turned and walked away. I seethed about the injustice of it all for days. Later, in class, Doctor Eells made this point. 'Several of you got F's on your papers and I know you feel I was unjust. But there are other important things besides grades. You need to learn to obey rules. You need to develop the discipline of getting things done when you're supposed to do them.'

"Looking back now, that was the most helpful experience I had in school. I won a victory over my self-pity. I fought down the anger and resentment, and worked hard to get A's on all my tests in this course so that at least I could come up with a C.

"Months later, Doctor Eells approached me on campus. 'Do you still have that term paper you wrote last semester?'

"I do, sir,' I replied.

"I've changed my mind about one thing,' he said with a twinkle in his eye. 'I will read it and grade it if you would like me to. It won't change your semester grade, of course.'

"He took the paper, evaluated it carefully, and gave it a top grade. I still have it among my possessions.

"I have something else too—a conviction developed through the years about the importance of not putting off, about seeing procrastination as the enemy it is to all achievement." □

*I knew I'd miss the deadline by a couple of hours, but what difference would that make?*

Don't say "Tomorrow"  
When God Says "Today"

**P**aul spoke the truth and spoke it boldly, even to Felix and Drusilla.

And then before them came this man, with chains on his arms and his body scarred with the marks of his sufferings for Christ's sake, his coarse garment contrasting distinctly with their rich velvet and purple.

Felix had thought it would be interesting to hear Paul speak. Or perhaps Drusilla, being of the Jewish race, wanted Felix to accompany her to the audience chamber so that together they could hear this famous Hebrew preacher. In either case, they came.

Great was the responsibility of the apostle Paul on this occasion. How easy it would have been for him to tone down the truth in the presence of his distinguished audience. How easy for him to have preached on vague generalities or harmless platitudes, or to have bestowed upon Felix and his mistress fulsome flattery and hollow eulogy. But with Paul, it was always, "Woe is me, if I preach not the gospel!" Instead of flattering his distinguished audience, he told them of their sins and of the great realities of righteousness and the judgment to come. Flattery had no place in Paul's message. He spoke the truth of God and spoke it boldly, even to Felix and Drusilla.

It is one thing to preach *before* a congregation. It is another thing to preach *to* them. Paul was the kind of preacher who preached *to* the congregation.

### A Three-headed Message

Paul's sermon had three heads. He reasoned (spoke at length) on three topics: righteousness, self-control, and the coming Judgment. Paul was a great reasoner, a great thinker, a great logician, as well as a great believer. Christianity is the most reasonable thing in the world, and those who preach or teach it must know how to reason about it. It is likely that we have in our Bible only a capsule summary of what he said, but we have enough to get the message—for them and for ourselves.

The *first* head of his sermon was **righteousness**. Other translations use the word "justice," or "morality," "uprightness," "purity of life," "the good life." When Paul began to talk about such topics, no doubt Felix and Drusilla looked at one

another in surprise. That was not the kind of entertainment they had been expecting. Perhaps they thought Paul would offer some deep thoughts on the relationship of Christianity to Judaism, or some mysterious subject that would entrance them. Instead, Paul talked about such practical issues as upright living, moral purity, justice, right doing. There was no escaping the message underneath his words: God issues the commands, and man has no right to parley with them.

How uncannily Paul's words seemed to uncover the past of Felix. He thought of the bribes he had paid and received, of innocent men and women he had cast into prison, of people in the streets who had been run down by his soldiers, of homes and towns that had been desolated at his command. All these things he could justify in his own mind. It was the duty of his position, or the custom of the day. But now, as Paul preached about righteousness, that terrible past seemed to accuse him.

Felix and Drusilla had not recovered from their astonishment when Paul launched into the *second* head of his sermon: **temperance, or self-control**. Now their faces blanched, as the words of Paul said plainly to Felix, "Thou art the man," and to Drusilla, "Thou art the woman." Drusilla is decidedly uncomfortable. She thought of her shameful escapades, of the husband she had abandoned, of her unlawful union with Felix. Instead of hearing a sermon about some deep mystery, something upon which she as a Jewess might have made a comment, what she heard was really a sermon on the Seventh Commandment, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." Self-control of one's passions, emotions, desires, and interests was a topic about which she had—and perhaps wanted to have—little knowledge.

Both Felix and Drusilla now wished they had never invited this preacher in. Can't you imagine Drusilla saying to Felix, "Why don't you stop this man? Why did you bring me here to listen to a sermon like this? Is this my lord's idea of entertainment?" And Felix answers, "I had no idea that he would speak in such a fashion. I would like to

stop him; and yet, I dare not."

Paul then came to the *third* element of his sermon: **Judgment to come**. Here was the real climax of his message, a subject often omitted in sermons today. Paul did not leave it out. The Bible does not leave it out. Christ did not leave it out. It is easy to say that we know nothing about the judgments of God, that it is better to confine ourselves to our duties here and leave the future to itself. But Paul was preaching not only to the times but to the eternities. And so he told Felix and Drusilla that this life is not all, that there is an accountability, that their pleasures of wine and chariots and villas and finery will all end in destruction.

### Reaction

What was the reaction to his sermon? "*Felix trembled*." Other translations word it, "*Felix was terrified*"... "*alarmed*." Felix was the last man one would expect to be disturbed by any preacher. He had listened to all kinds of orators, mystics, enthusiasts, philosophers. But never had he heard about such topics as Paul presented: righteousness, self-control and future judgment. He had never heard the Word of God, which is quick and powerful, sharper than a two edged sword, a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart (Heb. 4:12).

This is why Felix was "*terrified, alarmed*." Paul had brought the Governor to the door of repentance.

But Paul's powerful preaching was a failure, because Felix would not go through the door. He did not repent. The failure was not because of the message, or the preacher, but because of the man who heard it. Nothing was accomplished. Instead of repenting and crying out as did the Philippian jailer, "*Sir, what must I do to be saved?*" Felix brought the session to an end by saying, "*That will do for the present... When the right time comes I will call for you.*" The right time, the convenient time, the right moment of leisure, the perfect opportunity—Felix decided to wait for a time that never came.

And so he passed from the stage of the New Testament drama, a man who might have been persuaded but preferred to wait until tomorrow.

Felix was a victim of tomorrow.

### No Tomorrow

All the great opportunities of life are opportunities for today, not tomorrow. To say "tomorrow" to them, as Felix did, is to say goodbye to them. Forever.

The one who says that when he has more time, when he feels more like self-denial, then he will apply himself, will never do it. This is true also of acts of kindness, words of appreciation, and ministries of good. They have their now, their today, but no tomorrow. If we say, "*Go your way for this time, when I have a more convenient season I will call for you,*" we miss our opportunity.

And so it is with the greatest of all opportunities, that of knowing and serving God. If we say "tomorrow" when God says "today," we say farewell to God. We don't need Him, if we don't need Him today... because none of us can be sure of tomorrow. We have only today. Tomorrow quickly becomes yesterday. Nothing is so fragile as our hold on life. It is easy to think all others mortal but ourselves. But who of us knows that he will be here next week? The only time that belongs to us is today. Not tomorrow, but today. Not then, but now.

The second reason is that delay is always dangerous, sometimes fatal. The impression that is made today on the soul and conscience may vanish by tomorrow. Impressions are good, but they are not enough. They must be acted upon before they become real in our lives.

Imagine that you can follow Felix after he dismissed Paul. For a little time, no doubt, he is impressed by Paul's manner, his convictions, his words. That night at the games he does not seem quite as engaged as usual, nor does he take just the same delight in the voluptuous charms of Drusilla. Nor does the theater so engross him

this week as it had formerly. But the next week his discomfort is not so keen, and the next still less so. A short time and he is his old self again, his own sinful, sensual self. The image of the better self Paul had pictured before him has vanished.

How many will repeat the story of Felix? If only history could be rewritten! If only all hearts whose consciences had been stirred would have been moved, softened, and turned to God! But so often they

*Delay is always dangerous, sometimes fatal.*

said, "tomorrow" when God said "today." They said, I will come, but right now it's not convenient, right now I want to plan my own time, enjoy what I please, and just take things easy. Some day I will decide to act. Tomorrow, not today.

And so the opportunity goes by.

### Today, Not Tomorrow

If we do not plan to include God in our activities, it will not happen. If we do not build our lives around our spiritual devotions and our duties to others; if we resist the high impulses when they speak to our hearts, they will not come back with the same force again. They will not come back because we said "tomorrow" when God said "today."

Luke tells us that Felix heard Paul on several occasions after this first dramatic meeting. He sent for him often and "*communed with him,*" but Felix had closed out the message. Never again did Paul make him tremble. This was his opportunity and Felix let it go by.

Do we feel like waiting until tomorrow to teach our children the principles of integrity and love? Do we feel like waiting until tomorrow to show them how to be kind, patient, courteous, and

## Don't say "Tomorrow" When God Says "Today"

**N**one of us can  
be sure of tomorrow.  
We have only today.

upright? Or, are we showing them today by our conduct that it is all right to be a little less than totally honest when it is to our benefit, or to cover the facts when we are at fault, instead of standing openly and squarely and admitting when we have done wrong? Do we show by our lives that we have a clear, genuine trust in God when we are in trouble, and so point others to the real source of our hope? Or do we say by our actions that compromise is just as good?

Do we say by our conduct that seeking God is the most important thing in our lives, or do we give the impression that today we will do as we please and seek God tomorrow?

Oh that we could recognize the truth that *today* is the day that counts, that what we are doing today is determining what we will be tomorrow!

### No Hurry?

A man once dreamed that he was standing in the midst of a great conclave, where Satan was sitting upon the throne. The arch-enemy was seeking some new way in which he might beguile and ruin the souls of men. "Who," he cried from his throne, "will go to earth and persuade men to accomplish the ruin of their souls?"

"I will go," answered one of the dark spirits as he came forward.

"And what will you say to them?"

"I will tell them that there is no God."

"No," said the king of the demons, "that will not do. You could never persuade men there is no God. They may say that, but in their heart they will not really believe it."

Then a second dark spirit glided forward and said, "I will go."

"And what will you do?" asked the king again.

"I will tell them there is no heaven."

"No," said the king of darkness, "they will not believe you, for everyone knows that there is a heaven, and that right and good must have the victory. You may not go, for you will not succeed."

Then came forth a third demon and said, "I will go."

"What will you say?" asked the king of the demons.

"I will tell them that there is no hell."

"Oh, no," said Satan, "that will not do. You cannot persuade them that there is no hell. They have experienced too much of suffering, they won't believe you. We must have something else, something that will appeal to all men in all conditions, of all ages and all beliefs."

Then a fourth dark spirit glided forth and whispered to Satan, "I will go."

"And what will you tell them?" said Satan.

"I will tell them there is no hurry."

"Go!" said Satan, "you will beguile them."

No hurry—there lies our greatest danger. It is the danger of saying "tomorrow" when God says, "today."

### Today, today, today!

The spirit of no hurry is still abroad on the face of the earth. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. And so we put it off. Tomorrow, we say; and tomorrow when it comes is today and very like yesterday.

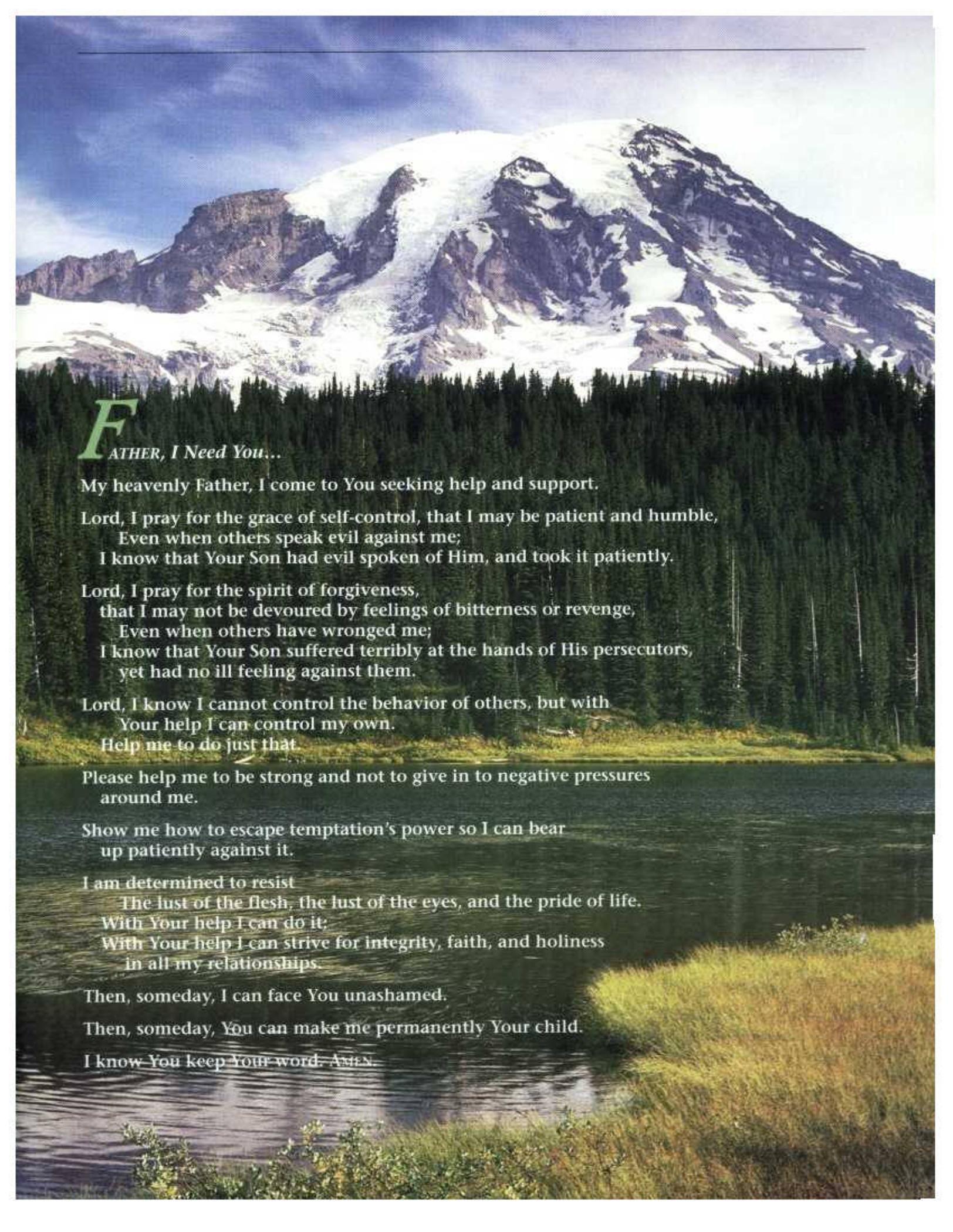
No wonder the Bible writers said so emphatically, Today, today, today! "*Today if ye will hear his voice harden not your hearts.*" They knew if we did not respond immediately, we would get distracted, and our opportunity to secure those things of greatest worth would be lost.

Let us take this message with us to heart and home: Today, today, today!

Today grow in your love. Today grow in patience. Today grow in hope. Today grow in gratitude. Today grow in your life of service to others. Today, today, today! Don't say "tomorrow" when God says "today."

Our great King is coming soon, and where we stand then will depend on what we have done today. □

**One today is worth  
two tomorrows.**



**F**ATHER, *I Need You...*

My heavenly Father, I come to You seeking help and support.

Lord, I pray for the grace of self-control, that I may be patient and humble,  
Even when others speak evil against me;  
I know that Your Son had evil spoken of Him, and took it patiently.

Lord, I pray for the spirit of forgiveness,  
that I may not be devoured by feelings of bitterness or revenge,  
Even when others have wronged me;  
I know that Your Son suffered terribly at the hands of His persecutors,  
yet had no ill feeling against them.

Lord, I know I cannot control the behavior of others, but with  
Your help I can control my own.  
Help me to do just that.

Please help me to be strong and not to give in to negative pressures  
around me.

Show me how to escape temptation's power so I can bear  
up patiently against it.

I am determined to resist  
The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.  
With Your help I can do it;  
With Your help I can strive for integrity, faith, and holiness  
in all my relationships.

Then, someday, I can face You unashamed.

Then, someday, You can make me permanently Your child.

I know You keep Your word. AMEN.



# Melanie Makes It Right

**E**very year Melanie looked forward to visiting her grandmother who lived in the country. One of the delights of staying with Grandma was going with her to visit the big fruit market which was only a little way down the road.

This particular afternoon Grandma was going in search of just the right apples to make one of her delicious pies. The whole trip was very special because the pie was a surprise for Uncle Tom.

When they arrived at the market, Mr. Talsman greeted them with a cheery "Good afternoon, and what can I find for you today, Mrs. Townsen? and how your little granddaughter has grown!" Grandma smilingly replied, "Melanie and I came for some apples. We are going to make an apple pie."

"I know it will be delicious," said Mr. Talsman smiling at Melanie. "Your grandma is a mighty good cook." Mr. Talsman was the owner of the fruit farm, and he always made a point to speak to his customers. Melanie liked him very much.

Slowly Melanie and her grandmother walked down the aisles, looking at all the luscious looking fruits and vegetables. Melanie wondered how so many good things

could all be harvested at once. At the end of one aisle was a boy not a whole lot older than Melanie, giving out samples of some fudge which his mother had made. Oh, but it looked good!

Along the side wall were tables and tables of all sorts of apples. "While I get the apples I need," suggested Grandma, "you may look around the store. But keep your hands behind your back, so you won't be tempted to touch anything!" Melanie obeyed happily and disappeared around the next aisle.

Yes, there were so many, many different things, some that Melanie had never seen before. She wondered what they tasted like. Up and down the aisle she went. On one side were the most tempting muffins and pastries. On another side were boxes and boxes of all kinds of treats. Just looking at them made Melanie very, very hungry. But she obediently kept her hands behind her back and walked on.

At the end of an aisle, piled high like a mini pyramid, were some bright colored boxes. In them were peaches, and pears, and a lot of other fruits—Melanie had never seen so many different kinds. At the very end of the display, right near the floor, was a very big carton of fresh blueberries. Melanie stopped in her tracks. She loved blueberries, and here were more blueberries than she had ever seen in her whole life.

Now maybe you know how it feels to take a long walk and then go into a place where there is lots and lots of tasty food. Melanie felt just like that, and since she was only six years old, perhaps you shouldn't blame her too much for what she did next.

As she stood looking at the blueberries, she saw some very, very large berries she was sure were extra sweet. If she didn't taste one how could she tell Grandma how delicious they were? And so she took just one very large blueberry. "Just one," she told herself. But ummmmm... it was oh so good! She must try another. "Just one more," she thought. "That's all." This one was even better than the first. And so she took another, and another, and another—always looking for the biggest and the ripest for she found them the sweetest.

And after all, there were so many, many berries in the box, no one would ever notice if a few were missing. Something inside her seemed to say, "Melanie, you agreed not to touch anything. So stop it!" But the the berries were so delicious, she just couldn't stop.

Suddenly she heard, "Melanie! Melanie dear! Where are you?" It was Grandmother's voice.

Melanie dropped the berries she had in her hands, quickly wiped her hands on her dress and running around the pyramid called, "Here I am, Grandma."

"Come along, dearie," said Grandmother. "I think we're all ready to go now. Mr. Talsman has lots of good things in his store, doesn't he?"

Melanie mumbled a "Yes."  
"Would you like to carry this bag for me? You have been so good while Grandma has been shopping!"

Melanie felt just a little guilty as she took the bag from her grandmother's hand.

They were only just out of the store when Grandma stopped suddenly. "Melanie! What's on your hands?"

Melanie looked down and didn't

answer. She felt dirty all over. Then looking squarely at Melanie Grandma said firmly, "Melanie Ann, look at me!"

Melanie looked up, trying to look as normal as possible.

"Why, whatever it is, it's on your face and teeth.

What is it, Melanie?" questioned Grandma.

"I don't know," said Melanie softly.

"Child, what can be so black...well, maybe it's not black but blue," said Grandma as she put her hand kindly under Melanie's chin, to observe more closely.

"I don't know," mumbled Melanie again, looking down to avoid her grandmother's eyes, though if she could have seen her own teeth and lips, she would not have said this.

"Melanie, *what* have you been eating?" Grandma asked sternly. "Was it blueberries?" Melanie nodded. "Just one or two," she said.

"Where did you find them?" asked Grandma.

"In the fruit market."

"Did someone give them to you?"

"No."

"You mean you took them without asking?"

"Yes."

"Melanie, you know better than that. You have been a very naughty girl," said Grandmother, "and I am ashamed of you. But come along, let's go home, and there we shall talk about what we should do."

Melanie began to cry. It was a long, long walk home, so different from the walk they had had only a little while before.

After they had spread out the beautiful apples on the shelf, Grandmother took Melanie to her big chair in the living room and explained how very wrong it is to take things that belong to other people. "You know the Bible says, 'Thou shalt not steal.'" She also told her that by taking the berries she was hurting Mr. Talsman. "He works hard to have these fruits and vegetables to sell, and when we take something without paying for it, we are hurting his wife and his little children."

Melanie felt badly as she thought of hurting the little boy who had been dishing up samples of his mother's fudge.

"Our problem now," said Grandma, "is to make it right. What do you think we should do?" she asked looking squarely at Melanie.

Melanie again began to cry.

"I have a plan," said Grandma. "There are just two right things to do. One, you must ask God to forgive you, and then, you must go to Mr. Talsman, pay him for the berries you ate, and tell him how very sorry you are that you took his blueberries without asking him."

"I don't mind asking God to forgive me," cried Melanie. "But I don't want to go to Mr. Talsman."

"I know it's hard," said Grandma, "but it's the only right thing to do. Now go and get the money Uncle Tom gave you."

"You...you...you mean I have to pay for the berries *myself*?" Melanie gasped between sobs.

"Yes," said Grandma. "This was your very own purchase, and you must pay for it. It's the only right thing to do."

"But it will take all my money!" cried Melanie.

"Never mind if it does," said Grandma. "We have to make things right. You can always earn more money."

"Oh, Grandma!" cried Melanie, "I...I was going to buy a..."

"We'll figure out what you can buy after the blueberries are paid for. Let's see...I think a couple of quarters will be about right to pay for the berries," said Grandma.

Melanie slowly picked out one shiny quarter from her little purse, then a second.

"Now you just run down to the fruit market and give them to Mr. Talsman and tell him what they are for."

Melanie did not move. "And when you get back, you can help me bake a big apple pie. So wipe your eyes and run along." Grandma pulled Melanie to her and planted a big kiss firmly on her cheek. "Run along...."

Melanie couldn't imagine anything harder to do, but she also knew that Grandma meant what she said. Slowly she wiped her eyes with the back of her hand and started for the door, clutching her two quarters tightly.

How far it seemed, that little distance to the market, as she put one heavy foot ahead of the other. Slowly she pulled open the big front door, and right there was Mr. Talsman, unloading a big crate of apples. Her heart was beating rapidly as she went up to him.

"Back again so soon!" exclaimed Mr. Talsman. "Did your Grandmother forget something?"

"No," said Melanie slowly. "I did."

"You did! Well, what could my little girl forget?" said Mr. Talsman.

"I forgot to pay you for the blueberries I ate. Uh...uh...Grandma said they're worth two quarters. So here it is...out of my very own money...I'm very sorry, Mr. Talsman."

Melanie put the two quarters on the table, and dashed out the door. But almost immediately she heard Mr. Talsman calling her.

"Melanie!" he said. "Please come back, I want to see you a minute."

Melanie stopped and headed back toward the door, expecting to be scolded.

"You forgot something," said Mr. Talsman, smiling. "Come with me," and taking a small paper bag he went over to the table where the delicious baked goods were on display. "Here's a little something for your supper," he said, as he put one very large cookie into the bag and handed it to Melanie.

"Oh...oh, thank you, Mr. Talsman," said Melanie.

"Thank you!" And she started to run down the road as fast as her legs could carry her.

"Look what Mr. Talsman gave me!" she exclaimed as she dashed into the house waving the bag. "Grandma, come and look!"

Melanie happily opened the bag. She was sure it was the biggest, most delicious looking cookie she had ever seen.

"Aren't you glad you went back and made things right?" asked Grandmother.

"Ohh, yes!" exclaimed Melanie.

"It's always the best thing to do what is right. Isn't it?" smiled Grandma. "Always." □

## ESCAPE

1. How did Paul escape from the Jews in Damascus?
2. How did Joseph escape death at the hands of his brothers?
3. At the close of what speech did Jesus say, "How can ye escape the damnation of hell"?
4. How did Daniel escape death in the lions' den?
5. How did Joshua's spies escape from their hiding place in Jericho?
6. Who received this admonition: "Escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed"?
7. Who said, "I am escaped with the skin of my teeth"?
8. Of whom was it said: "They sought again to take him; but he escaped out of their hand"?
9. Who was so afraid of Saul that he decided to "speedily escape into the land of the Philistines"?
10. What queen was warned, "Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house"?

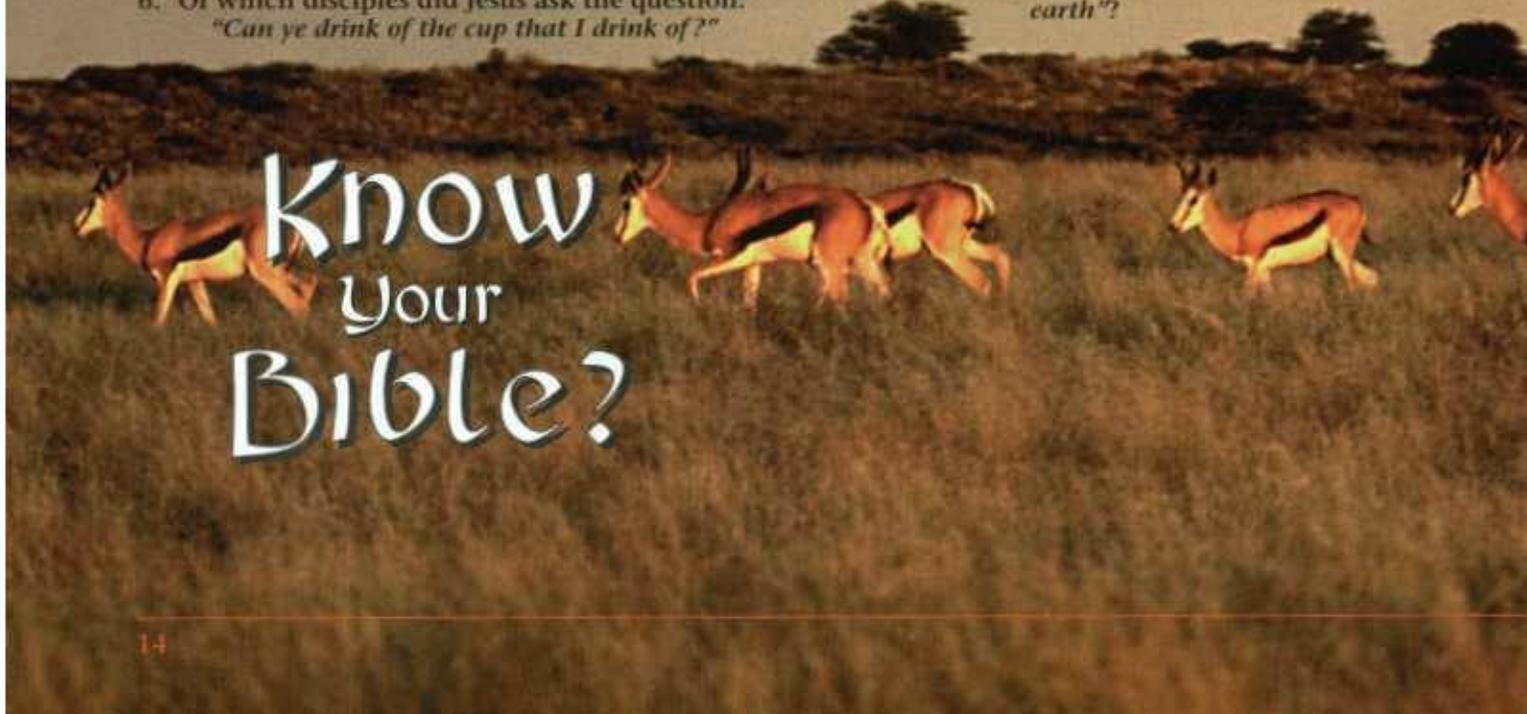
## CUPS

1. Who ordered a cup to be put into the mouth of a sack of corn?
2. Where do these words come from: "My cup runneth over"?
3. Who said, "Whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name...he shall not lose his reward"?
4. What outstanding Old Testament character was once a king's cupbearer and turned out to be an engineer?
5. To whom did Christ address these words: "Woe unto you, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup"?
6. Of which disciples did Jesus ask the question: "Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of?"

7. On what occasion is this portion of Scripture read: "And he took the cup, and gave thanks,... saying, Drink ye all of it"?
8. In what book of the Bible are these words: "I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord"?
9. Who said: "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me" in a dark hour?

## CAVES

1. Who is first mentioned in the Bible as going to live in a cave? It happened after the destruction of Sodom.
2. What field and cave did Abraham buy for a burying ground?
3. Where is the cave of Machpelah supposed to be today?
4. Who concealed one hundred priests, by fifties, in caves to save them from his master and mistress?
5. Who had to flee and dwell in a cave in Mt. Horeb for forty days to escape the wrath of Ahab and Jezebel?
6. Why were there so many caves in Palestine, and to what use were they put?
7. Who took refuge in the cave of Adullam?
8. When David found Saul in the cave of Engedi, why did he cut off his skirt?
9. Name two important characters in the New Testament who were buried in rock sepulchers (caves).
10. Where in the New Testament is a long dissertation on the tribulations of the patriarchs, saying: "They wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth"?



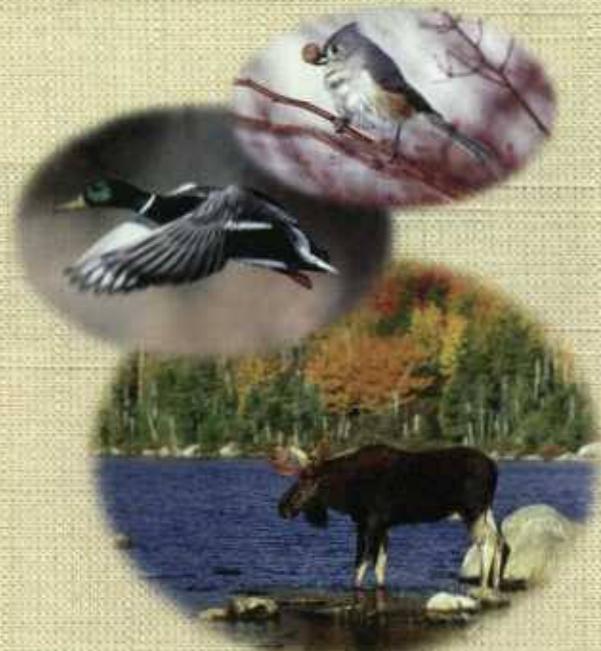
Know  
Your  
Bible?

## BREAD

1. Who had five barley loaves and two fishes at a very special moment?
2. Who said: "Cast thy bread upon the waters"?
3. What kind of bread is eaten at the feast of the Passover?
4. Who said: "I am the bread of life"?
5. What name is given to the occasion when Jesus "took bread, and blessed, and brake it"?
6. What name was given to the bread sent from heaven to the Israelites in the wilderness?
7. Who first said that man does not live by bread alone but by every word of God?
8. What bread did Jesus say one may eat and live forever?
9. Whom did David say he had never seen begging for bread?
10. What kind of sweet-tasting bread had a very distasteful ending?
11. Who took bread and gave thanks "in the presence of them all" at a time of great stress and danger?

## FEASTS

1. What feast was instituted by Esther to celebrate the Jews' escape from Haman?
2. What event did the feast of the Passover bring to remembrance?
3. What queen refused to present herself before the king during a feast?
4. Whom did Levi (Matthew) honor with "a great feast in his own house"?
5. Which feast were Mary and Joseph attending when Jesus stayed in Jerusalem to talk with the doctors?
6. Who once made a feast for "a thousand nobles"?
7. Who offered burnt offerings for his sons and daughters at the time of their feasts?
8. About whom was Jesus talking when He said that they loved the uppermost rooms at feasts?



*This is my Father's world,  
And to my list'ning ears  
All nature sings, and round me rings  
The music of the spheres.*

*This is my Father's world;  
I rest me in the thought  
Of rocks and trees, of skies and seas—  
His hand the wonders wrought.*

*This is my Father's world.  
The birds their carols raise;  
The morning light, the lily white  
Declare their Maker's praise.*

*This is my Father's world,  
Oh, let us ne'er forget  
That though the wrong seems oft so strong,  
God is the Ruler yet!*

*This is my Father's world;  
Soon Jesus shall return,  
Coming in His might to rule by right;  
For this our hearts now yearn.*



ANSWERS ON PAGE 26



## None But King James?

*"Please will someone comment on the doctrine the apostles taught, the very doctrine of Christ, the gospel of Christ, the gospel Paul speaks of in 2 Cor. 4:3-4....I cannot abide using any Bible but King James.... It frightens me for people to do so. It's close to Rev. 22:18-19. I see no need for any other interpretation of God's Word."*

Your question brings up several words which need careful definition before we can understand each other correctly.

A *doctrine* is a set of religious beliefs; it may be true or not true, depending on its foundation.

An *interpretation* is someone's explanation of a portion of the Bible. Like a doctrine, this may be true or false depending on the interpreter's understanding.

The *Gospel*, as used in the Bible, is the teaching of Jesus and His apostles, their message of salvation. The apostle Paul wrote, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth" (Rom. 1:16).

A *translation* is an equivalent word-by-word rendering of the Bible text in a language other than its original. The accuracy of the translation depends on the translator's knowledge of the languages he is using, and his skill and fairness in choosing equivalent terms according to the context of a particular passage. (The King James Version is a translation of the Bible made in seventeenth century England by a group of scholars chosen for the task by King James.)

One other term we should consider is *paraphrase*. A paraphrase is much nearer an interpretation than a translation, not being an exact word-for-word equivalent of the original. Though it may sometimes contain a more understandable wording, it cannot be relied upon as a translation.

What you call "the doctrine the apostles taught, the very doctrine of Christ, the gospel of Christ, the gospel Paul speaks of in 2 Cor. 4:3-4" are all one and the same.

We read in Mark 1:14-15 that after John the Baptist was put in prison, "Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye, and believe the gospel." In Luke 8:1 we read that Jesus "went

throughout every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God."

After Jesus was taken to heaven, the Apostles went everywhere preaching Jesus—His life, death, resurrection and coming Kingdom and the life we must live to have a part of that Kingdom. Paul, commissioned by Jesus Himself to be a minister to the Gentiles, preached the same Gospel, and declared that he had received it directly from Jesus, "I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal. 1:9,11-12).

Maintaining the purity of the Gospel message was a very serious issue to Paul, as it has been to every other loyal Christian teacher. Paul himself spoke of the danger of holding the truth in unrighteousness (Rom. 1:18-19), and pledged his own personal loyalty to Christ.

In the closing verses of the Acts of the Apostles, we read that "Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house [in Rome], and received all that came in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence; no man forbidding him" (Acts 28:30-31). The Gospel was the message about "the kingdom of God" and "those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ."

We cannot, however, equate "the Gospel" with the King James Version or any other translation. A translation is simply that: a word-by-word rendering of the original text in another language. But translation does not impart inspiration. The King James Version is no more or less inspired than the New English Bible, or the New Revised Standard Version or the New Jerusalem Bible. The original text is what God inspired, not the translation.

The process of translating the Bible—ideally—has nothing to do with the content of "the Gospel" or any Biblical doctrine if the translator properly understands the passage and gives the proper equivalent renderings.

We today are very grateful for reliable translations, we who do not read easily the original Greek and Hebrew. And not having a copy of the Bible in its very original form as the inspired author wrote it down, we must rely on a translation of a copy of the original.

But actually this situation is very good. It shows us

that God was guarding His Word because so many copies of the original exist and there are so few differences between them. And though the translations have been done by scholars and some passages are unclear, by comparing one translation with another and looking at the original text, one is usually able to arrive at an understanding in harmony with the general teaching of the Bible.

Actually, scholars have shown that when the manuscript copies are compared, no significant text is affected by copyists' errors, and we are able to get a complete understanding of the Gospel message from almost any translation that has been made.

### **King James or Modern English?**

Shall we say that we prefer the King James over the modern English Bibles, or the reverse?

As far as the accuracy of translations is concerned, the newer translations have been shown to be more accurate than King James for two reasons: They are translated from manuscripts which are older (and therefore nearer to the original writing) than the text (the Latin Vulgate) which was used as the basis for the King James Version. Also, they are worded in modern English, to which we are accustomed, not the Old English, and so some of the unfamiliar wordings are clarified.

But it is very important to distinguish between a translation and an interpretation. The King James Version is a translation, not an interpretation. The translators who chose the English equivalents for the original words of the text were not (or should not have been) trying to interpret the text, though at times any translator does just this—he chooses a word in keeping with his understanding of the passage. This is a good feature if his understanding of the text is good; a bad feature if his understanding of the text is limited, or misled.

The King James Version in use today was translated from the Greek into English by a group of 47 scholars during the reign of King James of Great Britain (not by the King himself), in about the year 1611. The English used was that in common use in England at that time—which is very different from English as we speak it today. For this reason the KJV is sometimes regarded as "sacred" because the English is out of date. But this fact alone does nothing to make the King James Version superior. Just as the King James Version was more understandable to a large number of people in seventeenth century England because it put the Bible text into their common language, so the newer translations today make certain portions more understandable to us by being written in our everyday speech. □

# The Living Word

*Translations, Copies, and The Original*

Some people believe that to have an inerrant Bible we need perfect copies, that Divine preservation must extend to every word of our Bible, whether it be the King James Version or any other translation. They feel that if there is an error in translation, the Scriptures cease to be trustworthy. We have a flawed text, which would seem to indicate flawed authority behind it.

If He had chosen, God no doubt could have delivered His written Word to our race in a sealed package, with His Divine stamp upon it, and ordered that the original be preserved for all ages to come. But such was not His plan. Rather, He spoke through human authors, whom He inspired, and these human authors, using their own human tools, wrote what was revealed to them. How did this result in our present day Bible? The Bible itself tells us: "*Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit*" (2 Pet. 1:21). And, "*God, who at various times and in various ways spake in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by his Son*" (Heb. 1:1).

What does this tell us about the process? God committed His words to multiple pens, so that we have the same facts said many different ways. The same revelation, or different parts of it, were given to many different authors, resulting in a multifaceted revelation of inspired Scripture, rich in variety, rich in perspectives, compelling in its details. And so we have allegories, parables, history, poetry, and direct discourse—all proclaiming the same plan of salvation, the same God, and the same Gospel. Isn't this a tremendous advantage?

Another advantage lies in the fact that the original writing was copied—so early and by so many different people. So, rather than having just one original writing, we have thousands of copies, because those who originally wrote the Bible dispersed it, and those receiving it copied it so as to preserve it for themselves. How accurate are these copies? Scholars who have studied and compared them assure us that only a very small percentage (i.e., 3 percent) of the original is in question, and nothing that jeopardizes a major teaching.

Important also is the work of the translators. The Bible we read today is not the original writing but a translation, which uninspired scholars have made. Does this diminish the accuracy of the text? It can, but we today are especially favored. Having multiple translations, we can compare and often discern more easily the intent of the original author.

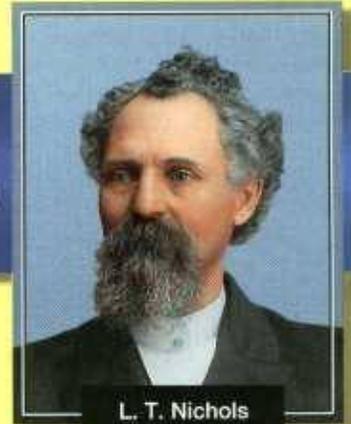
Is one translation "right" and all others "wrong"? By no means. As any linguist can assure us, there are multiple word choices in the process of translation, and different scholars choose differently. Underneath the teaching is the same. We have the same gospel, proclaimed in many different ways, so that we have the variety of illustrations to keep fresh and active in our minds. We have the same gospel, so that we can have the same opportunity to obtain the life God is offering His human family.

Shouldn't we be thankful? □

# Mercy

"from everlasting to everlasting"

The following comments made by our founder in the year 1900 point up his deep insights into the work and purposes of our Creator years before the vastness of the heavens was perceived or documented by scientists:



L. T. Nichols  
1844-1912

## DISTANT HEAVYWEIGHT GALAXY CLUSTER CLOBBERS DENSE-UNIVERSE THEORY

"A Space Telescope Science Institute astronomer has found the equivalent of the proverbial 900-pound gorilla in deep space. The 'gorilla' is an extremely massive cluster of galaxies—the weight of several thousand of our Milky Ways:

"Using X-ray satellites and ground-based telescopes to probe the remote regions of space, Institute astronomer Megan Donahue discovered MS1054-0321, a hefty galaxy cluster containing thousands of galaxies and many trillions of stars. The cluster is 8 billion light-years from Earth....The width of this massive cluster is a few million light-years."

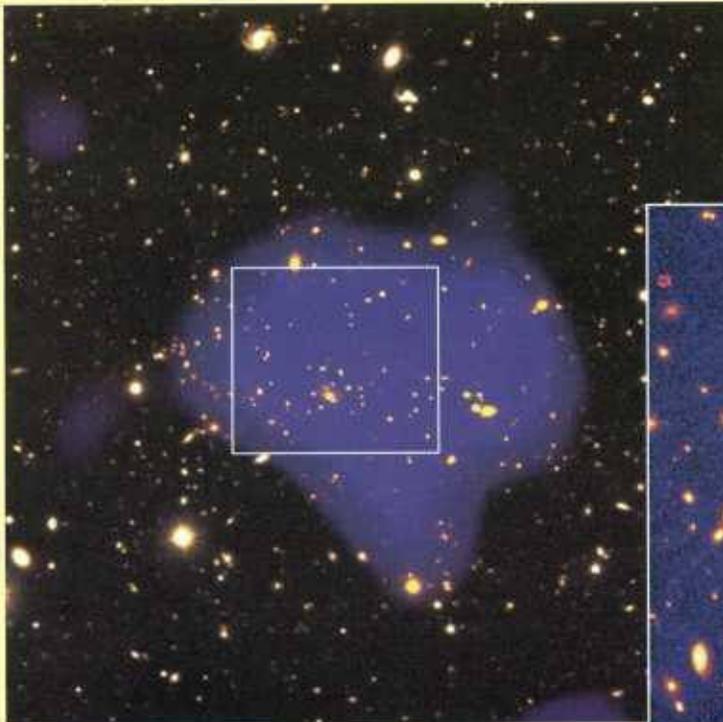
—Press Release STScI-PR98-26

As I was looking into the heavens last night, I thought, how grand to be able to visit those lovely worlds! They seemed so bright and beautiful; it made me think of a little rhyme:

*Twinkle, twinkle little star,  
How I wonder what you are,  
Up above the world so high,  
Like a diamond in the sky.*

How I wonder! If we were to take a trip to even the few stars we see, it would take us a good long time; but then, if we spent a thousand years on each one, we would have just as much time left. My! to think of taking such a trip as that! But it is just as certain that the faithful will enjoy these things, as that there is a great Creator who is the Ruler of them all.

In the first of Genesis God is simply enlightening us regarding His plan of salvation upon this earth. But people in general have such a vague idea of God's plan of salvation. I was talking a few days ago with an individual, and during the conversation the point came up that only few



The boxed area in the center of the image pinpoints the Hubble telescope's field of view. The image on the right, taken by the Wide Field and Planetary Camera 2, shows a clearer view of the galaxies in the heart of the cluster. The width of this massive cluster is a few million light-years.



would work out their salvation during the six thousand years from Adam to the Millennium. He thought it a dreadful thing that so few should be saved from a six thousand year time span; thought that God had made a failure of His plan of salvation. I asked him, "When do you think the first man was made?"

He replied: "About six thousand years ago."

I said to him: "Do you not think it would be a much greater failure if in all the thousands and millions of ages in the past not one man had been created, not once had God moved the wheels of salvation?"

Ah! my friends, that family of God has been from eternity past and still is expanding continually. They extend on and on to other planets and universes. God has plenty of space, and plenty of time. Because time is so precious and so limited to us is no sign that it is limited to God. His purpose is to fill this earth with righteous people, glorifying Him. Go to Numbers 14:21, and there we read His purpose: "But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord." Ah! God has not made a failure. He would not make a failure if it took Him millions of years to accomplish His purpose. But He would make a failure if the inhabitants of the earth were the only ones in all the universe to be saved.

We read in Ps. 103:17-18 how long this day is in which God has been showing mercy. "The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them." His mercy is "from everlasting to everlasting." It has been from eternity past and will be to eternity future.

How could God's mercy be from everlasting to everlasting unless there were men and women living who needed that mercy? I cannot be kind to the poor if there are no poor. The Divine Record declares that His mercy is from everlasting to everlasting upon those that remember His commandments to do them—this shows that from an eternity in the past, and not simply for six thousand years, there have been those who have remembered God's commandments to do them.

Adam and Eve were merely the first of our race to be called into the service of the Lord; they were not the first beings to be given life. God has unnumbered worlds in His mighty universes filled with happy immortal beings who have worked out their salvation; and there are unnumbered others which are passing through the probationary stage the same as we are. Salvation on this earth is only according to His eternal purpose. This operation on our earth is only one fold of many in the more than wonderful plan of the Almighty. Paul tells us of it in Eph. 3:10-11: "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." His plan on this earth is not His eternal purpose, but only according to His eternal purpose; a sample of the glorious plan of salvation which He has been working out through untold ages in the past on other planets, God's happy family in glorified worlds above.

With his mind expanded to grasp the magnitude of this plan, I cannot wonder that Paul exclaimed (Eph. 3:14-15): "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." The "whole family in heaven and earth" are all named of God—a family that includes the inhabitants of glorified worlds on high, those saved through an eternity past.

Dear friends, the Bible does not teach the false theory that God commenced His work only about six thousand years ago. Great light is thrown upon this subject by Eccl. 1:9-10: "The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun. Is there anything whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us." God's plan on earth is only according to that which has been going on through eternity. There is no new thing under the sun. No wonder Paul could exclaim (Rom. 11:33), "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" □

One of these days I must go shopping.

I am completely out of **self-respect**.

I want to exchange some self-righteousness that I picked up the other day for some **humility** which, they say, is less expensive and wears better.

I also want to look at some **tolerance** which is being used for wraps this year.

Someone showed me some pretty samples of **peace**. We are short on that, and one can never have too much on hand.

And, by the way, I must try to match some **patience** that my neighbor wears. It is very becoming to her, and I think it might look well on me.

I also want to try on that serviceable garment of **long-suffering** that some places are displaying now. I never thought that I wanted to wear it, but I feel myself coming to it.

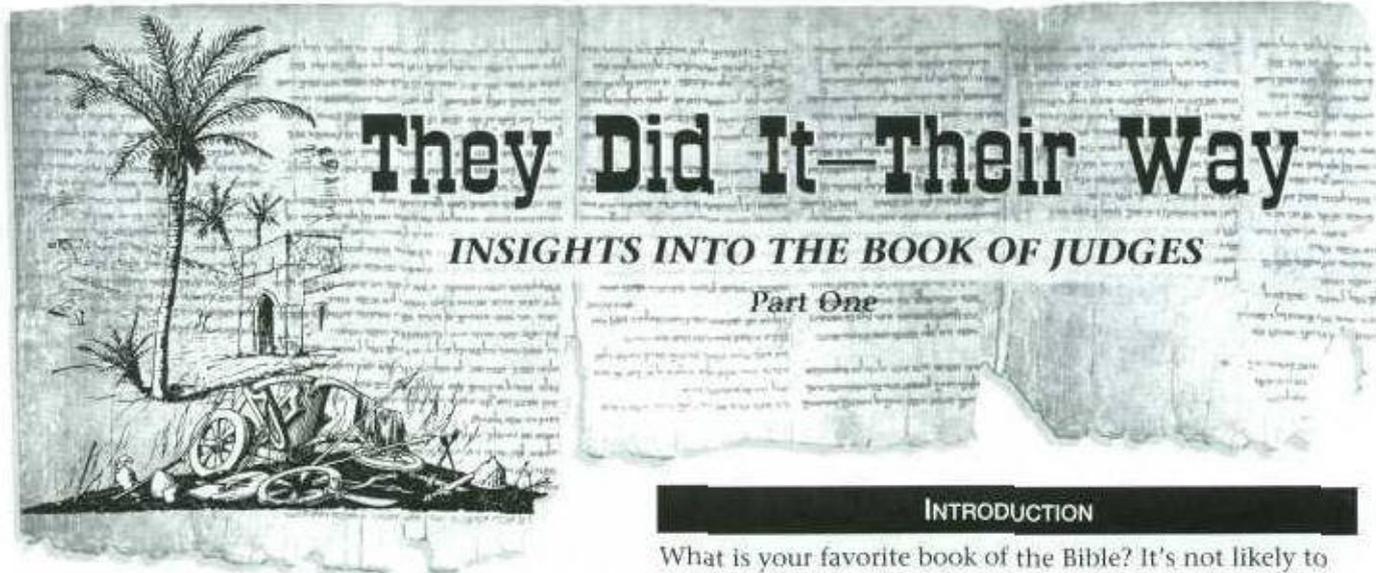
Also, I must remember to have my sense of **appreciation** mended, and

I must look around for some inexpensive, every day **goodness**. It is surprising how quickly my supply of that gives out.

Yes, I **MUST** go shopping.

—Contributed by B. Crum

## Going Shopping...



## STATISTICS:

### Primary Message of the Book:

Sin has consequences; disobedience and apostasy end in death.

### Key Verse:

*"In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes."*—Judges 21:25

### Setting:

Palestine (Canaan), later called Israel.

### Time Period:

About three centuries, ending near the 10<sup>th</sup> millennium BC.

### Author and Date:

An unnamed prophet, about 1000 BC. Probably Samuel. If not Samuel, a contemporary of Samuel or someone else living during the reign of the Kings, because the book says in four places, "in those days there was no king in Israel" (Judges 17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25)—there was a king in Israel at the time of writing.

### Place in history:

"Now after the death of Joshua it came to pass ..." (Judges 1:1). Immediately following the Exodus and the conquest of Canaan by Joshua, and before the establishing of Israel as an independent monarchy.

### Meaning of Title:

"Judges," Hebrew *shopetim*. Not judges as we know them today; these leaders were Divinely appointed rescuers who delivered the nation from its enemies, then governed the people during the era of peace that followed.

## INTRODUCTION

What is your favorite book of the Bible? It's not likely to be the book of Judges. If you were judging it, you would likely classify it as *dismal*.

You are right. It is dismal, because it is the record of a nation that turned away from God.

The Book of Judges might be called "After Joshua." It is the story of the Israelites after the strong leadership of Moses and Joshua, after the vivid demonstrations of Divine power in the wilderness, after the triumphant crossing into Canaan.

And it is all downhill. Judges is a downhill book. It shows the nation of Israel at one of its lowest points. Yet Judges is among the books which were "written for our learning." If we sidestep it, we will miss some valuable lessons God wants us to learn.

Altogether, the book is an account of spiritual, moral and national decline. It has been called a Treatise on Failure, or Pageant of Decay. All through it, progress and blessing are invariably associated with obedience and righteousness. But sin has the upper hand, and sin brings the disfavor of God. It is the old principle brought out in Genesis 4:7 (NIV), "If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door." Such was the case in Israel.

Judges would be out of favor today because all discussions of right and wrong, good and ill are supposed to have a positive approach. But there must be value in the negative as well, because in this case God chose to preserve a negative record to instruct us. Overall, Judges has a negative value. Judges tells us that sin, the violation of God's law, inevitably brings dire consequences. Here are living examples of what happens to the nation, the tribe, the clan, the people that forget God. Yet how mercifully the Lord hears the cries of His people and raises up a deliverer. So while apostasy is vigorously condemned, there is always mercy and forgiveness when people repent and turn to God and are ready to begin anew.

## BACKGROUND

The end of Joshua (chapter 24) sets the stage for Judges as it records a dramatic moment at the end of Joshua's life.

The great general, now aged, had not much longer to serve his people. Perhaps this would be his final appearance, and so he presented one final challenge.

Joshua himself had not had a smooth and placid career. Born in Egypt, he spent his youthful years as a slave among his fellow-Israelites. But his plight soon turned to privilege. He was witness to all the miracles and wonders of the exodus. Moses chose him to be his personal helper. Joshua shared with Caleb and ten other men the exciting adventure of spying out the Land of Promise.

When Moses smote the rock instead of speaking to it, Joshua was there. When the tabernacle was first set up and the first sacrifice was offered to God, Joshua was there. Through forty years of wandering in the wilderness Joshua saw the pillar of fire by night and the cloud every day. Day after day he was witness to the hard heartedness and rebellion of the people, and the dire consequences of sin. Living through the entire wilderness wandering, he was witness to all the deaths and plagues caused by the stubbornness of the people. Always he saw the hand of God guiding Moses, strengthening him, giving him courage.

And when it came time to turn over the leadership to a successor, God chose Joshua.

It was Joshua's privilege to lead the people across the Jordan into Canaan. And it was his responsibility to lead them in conquering the land. Yes, Joshua's was a full life of service to God.

What was his view of the people and their loyalty? Joshua entertained no grand illusions. As a young man serving Moses, he had seen time and again the heartache and frustration of the great leader as he wrung his hands in desperation and poured out his heart to God.

Joshua had heard firsthand their cruel criticisms. He had seen their bitter opposition, and their meanness to a man who dealt with them so fairly, so justly, so humbly.

When Joshua assumed the leadership, it became his lot to face the same obstinate people, the same harsh criticisms, and to feel the same opposition and the same meanness.

As Joshua approached his people for the last time (chapter 24), he had all this in mind. And so he gathered the heads of the tribes together, their judges, and their officers, and rehearsed all that God had done for them. Then he said, *"Here is what the Lord, the God of Israel says to you: 'A long time ago your ancestors lived on the other side of the Euphrates River. Terah, the father of*

*Abraham and Nahor, worshiped other gods. But I, the Lord, took your ancestor Abraham from the other side of the river and led him through the land of Canaan. And I gave him many children, including his son Isaac. I gave Isaac two sons named Jacob and Esau...Jacob and his sons went down to Egypt. Then I sent Moses and Aaron to Egypt...afterwards I brought you out.*

*"When I brought your ancestors out of Egypt, they came to the Red Sea, and the Egyptians chased them with chariots and men on horses....You yourselves saw what I did to the army of Egypt. After that you lived in the desert for a long time....*

*"Then I brought you to the land of Amorites, east of the Jordan...I destroyed them before you, and you took control of that land....Then you crossed the Jordan River and came to Jericho, where the people of Jericho fought against you. Also, the Amorites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hittites, Girgashites, Hivites, and Jebusites fought against you but I handed them over to you....You took the land without using swords and bows.*

*"I gave you that land where you did not have to work. I gave you cities that you did not have to build. And now you live in that land and in those cities, and you eat from vineyards and olive trees that you did not plant."*

Joshua was reminding them of their vast heritage in God. So far his message was all from God.

Then he changed his approach, and the remainder of his message is an appeal to the people to turn to God. At this point a new word comes into his vocabulary: "serve." Joshua repeats it thirteen times as he presses home his point:

*"So honor the Lord and serve him wholeheartedly. Put away forever the idols your ancestors worshiped when they lived beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt. Serve the Lord alone. But if you are unwilling to serve the Lord, then choose today whom you will serve. Would you prefer the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates? Or will it be the gods of the Amorites in whose land you now live? But as for me and my family, we will serve the Lord."*

He laid before them three alternatives. They could go back to the old life, to the gods they served on the other side of Jordan (he infers that they already had done this). Or they could worship the gods of the Amorites, i.e., they could copy the people around them, base their standards of living on the ungodly culture of the Canaanites.

Then there was a third choice: They could join Joshua and his house in serving the Lord. Notice the courageous stand of this noble warrior of God. He was not going to have his name linked to any false tradi-

#### TIME OF JOSHUA

- ◆ Strong leadership
- ◆ Noble, God-fearing examples
- ◆ Upward trend, spiritually
- ◆ Prosperity, happiness
- ◆ Fidelity to God

#### TIME OF JUDGES

- ◆ Weak leadership
- ◆ Wicked, selfish, disobedient examples
- ◆ Downward trend, spiritually
- ◆ Defeat, loss, unhappiness
- ◆ Apostasy

## I DID IT—MY WAY!

According to some modern day thinkers, this is the ultimate. Complete freedom is the sure route to happiness and bliss. What child—or adult—does not want his own way? Who would turn down the opportunity to do anything he wanted to, without any rules to hinder? Who would not like the opportunity to say, "I did it—my way?"

But the book of Judges tells us that "my way" is a way of defeat and disaster, for Judges is not a happy story of triumph and victory. This book has been written to tell us what happens when people go their own way. Name any sin you can think of...idolatry, lust, envy, immorality, pride, hatred, deceit, even murder—you can find them all in the book of Judges. Why? because these people forgot God and *did "every man...that which was right in his own eyes"* (Judges. 17:6). There are bright moments when in their misery and suffering the people remember God and cry to Him. At such times He raises up a judge, i.e., a deliverer, one who will follow God's directions and free the people from their oppressors. As a result, they enjoy years of peace,...until God is once again forgotten, and they lapse back into their old ways, forget God, and are again oppressed by their enemies.

The brutal, ugly, wretched accounts of the book of Judges are the natural result of a people doing what is right in their own eyes. Yes, not what looked *wrong* but what looked right to them.

What does the Bible tell us about the end of the one who does what is right in his own eyes? "*There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death*" (Prov. 16:25, NIV). The problem lies in defining that little word "right." Any definition of "right" by human standards only shows how wrong they can be. Yes, these ancient people were not so different from us. They could justify what they did, to them it was right.

But in the sight of God it was wrong.

These people were not disadvantaged. They were in the right place, at the right time, and under the right conditions. A great spiritual heritage was theirs. God had delivered them from Egypt, supported them totally for forty years, and now they were settled safely in a new and fruitful land that was to be their very own. Yet with all these blessings, they made the wrong choices because there was no authority in their lives, no law, no direction, no king—no God.

Is there not a lesson here for us? Don't we see our modern civilization slipping to this same level? And what of ourselves on a lesser scale? How easily our lives can slip to lower levels—if we reject God and go our own way. We see it happening all around us, and the dire consequences that result. Why is our society slipping more and more into immorality and lawlessness? Because they are going their own way—without God.

Shall we think that God does not notice?

tions or foul choice. "*As for me and my family, we will serve the Lord.*"

How did the people respond? They began almost as if shocked by the curt words of their leader: "*Far be it from us to forsake the Lord to serve other gods!*" It was as if they said, Joshua, why would you ever suggest such a thing? What do we want of the gods of the Amorites, or the gods that we served in Egypt? Can you imagine that we would ever forsake the Lord, that we would ever be guilty of such disgraceful conduct?"

After repeating in substance what Joshua had said, they ended their reply with these smooth, oily words: "*We too will serve the Lord, because he is our God.*"

But Joshua could not be deceived by this mass of meaningless words. Joshua knew his people. He had no illusions as to their true character. He could see beyond the fine words, beneath the glowing enthusiasm. And so he pressed home his challenge with almost brutal persistence. "*You are not able to serve the Lord. He is a holy God; he is a jealous God. He will not forgive your rebellion and your sins. If you forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods, he will turn and bring disaster on you and make an end of you, after he has been good to you*" (Josh. 24:19-20, NIV).

What is Joshua saying? That choosing to serve the Lord is much more than a matter of emotion, or a string of high-sounding words. They needed to think the matter through. Mere words were meaningless.

The scathing reply of Joshua had immediate effect upon their emotions. Without any flourish or flourish, they said simply: "*No, we are determined to serve the Lord!*" (Josh. 24:21, NLT). According to their words, they had thought about the consequences and made their choice, and they meant it.

Such an answer might have impressed other people, but not old Joshua. He knew them too well. He knew their changeableness, their waywardness, their double-mindedness. So what did he do?

Wisely he insisted that they should take the steps to make their decision legal: it should be documented and firmly established, so that it could not be set aside or disobeyed with impunity. "*Then Joshua said, 'You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen to serve the Lord.' 'Yes, we are witnesses,' they replied.*" They were willing to be witnesses *against* themselves. Joshua wanted them to know that they were making an important decision before a holy God, and that this decision would have consequences.

Then he said that their decision, if genuine, had to be backed by immediate action. "*Now then,' said Joshua, 'throw away the foreign gods that are among you and yield your hearts to the Lord, the God of Israel.'*" Joshua knew that the best way to make a decision stick is to act on it.

They had made an acknowledgment and a promise, now they would have to actually take steps to turn their promise into reality.

The people again responded as Joshua would have wished them to: "We will serve the Lord our God. We will obey him alone." Here is the answer Joshua had been searching for. Here was the wholehearted response he wanted from the people.

Joshua still went one step further. He wrote a report of the decision, and set up a remembrance of it. Well he knew they would need to be reminded often of this decision. "So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day at Shechem, committing them to a permanent and binding contract between themselves and the Lord. Joshua recorded these things in the Book of the Law of God. As a

reminder of their agreement, he took a huge stone and rolled it beneath the oak tree beside the Tabernacle of the Lord. Joshua said to all the people, "This stone has heard everything the Lord said to us. It will be a witness to testify against you if you go back on your word to God!" (verses 25-27, NLT).

### ON TO JUDGES...

Did the people remember their promise? Did they live by it? The book of Judges tells the answer: *They went their own way.* Without any regard to the promise made to Joshua, in spite of all Joshua's effort, only a short while—a generation—and it was forgotten, and they did "every man what was right in his own eyes."

(To Be Continued)



And Then...?



*A youth told proudly his hopes and plans,  
As with a strong hand his future he drew,  
To the calm old man, so kindly and fair,  
Who answered, from all that his great heart knew,  
Only these words, "And then?..."*

*"With a steady foot and a willing hand,  
I will climb to Earth's treasure-hold,  
And claim my share of the wealth she hoards  
For her favored, the brave and the bold."  
"And then?..."*

*"And then, with this wand in my happy hand,  
I'll gather her gems at will;  
I'll summon each draught of her pleasure-fount  
Till it fail, or my goblet I fill."  
"And then?..."*

*"Oh! then I'll try Fame; and I'll coax till I win  
From the noble old laurel a wreath;  
This I'll cherish and keep, 'tis Earth's choicest gift,  
And its life-dew her balmiest breath."  
"And then?..."*

*"I'll be kindly, and share of my wealth and my joy;  
So I'll bind many souls to my own:  
For I'd sooner be prince of a dozen warm hearts  
Than a monarch of many a throne."  
"And then?..."*

*"Why, then I'll be getting to staid middle age,  
And the world will be Eden no more;  
But I'll take of my wealth, and build me a house,  
And be found at my own open door."  
"And then?..."*

*"Then—then I'll grow old at a quaint old age,  
In the midst of my pleasure and peace;  
So muffled in treasure, and comfort, and love,  
That to my ear Earth's discord shall cease."  
"And then?..."*

*"I'll grow older and older; and then, I suppose,  
Life and I will grow weary—and—why—  
As my fathers have done, as my children must do,  
So I, in my ripeness, shall—DIE!"  
"And then?..."*

*"Oh, then? That's the question to think about.  
What now is your lesson for me?"  
"My boy, spend this short, fleeting hour of your time  
To prepare for Eternity.  
And then..."*

*"When the wealth and the fame and the glories  
and joys  
Of this world have all passed away,  
The joys of eternity will just have begun,  
You'll have all you can ask for  
And MORE!!"*

# Blessed Are They Who Wait... Patiently

**J**s it a beatitude? No, but perhaps it could be. At the very least, it is one of the finest virtues the Christian can acquire.

Whether we're 8 years old or 80, it is a hard fact of life: We want what we want *when* we want it. Waiting—at the checkout counter, on the telephone, at the airport, in the doctor's office, or for one another in our homes—is not to our natural liking. Our instinct is expressed by a sign sometimes seen on the wall in a busy office: "Grant me patience, Lord—please hurry!"

To many people the word "wait" means tapping one's foot until something happens. Having been mentally programmed to be perpetually busy, they think that standing still for a few moments is time lost.

Little do we realize the gems to be gleaned from moments of waiting. Are our lives often too busy to allow the time we would like to meditate? Perhaps the fault lies not in our circumstances but in the use we make of them. How many moments might we snatch for higher thinking during the day if we but practiced the fine art of waiting!

Waiting upon God is another uneasy task, but it is mentioned often in Scripture as though it were something to be expected. God does not work just when we think He always should, either. It never has bothered Him to keep people waiting. But is there not special value in waiting? This is the word from Isaiah: "For since the beginning of the world men have

*not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him" (Isa. 64:4).*

Habakkuk knew the fine art of waiting. "For the vision is yet for an appointed time," he wrote when things looked impossible, "but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry" (Hab. 2:3).

The Hebrew word he used for "wait" means literally to "entrench oneself, to stick to something, to stay put until the answer comes."

Waiting is never easy. David grew weary of waiting one time. He said, "I am weary of my crying: my throat is dried: mine eyes fail while I wait for my God" (Ps. 69:3).

The real test of spiritual waiting is the test of how far we are willing to trust God before going ahead on our own without Him. A large part of waiting is trusting.

If you would learn the fine art of waiting, learn first to be silent, to listen to God. David learned this: He said, "My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him" (Ps. 62:5).

The word "wait" here means to "hold one's peace," to "be quiet." This verse might read, "My soul, be quiet and hold your peace, for your expectation is from God."

We have difficulty being quiet. Sometimes we complain to God, asking Him why something had to happen. We forget that "It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord. It is good for a man that he

*bear the yoke in his youth" (Lam. 3:26-27).*

Another step in the perfecting of the fine art of waiting is to refuse to take matters into our own hands. Israel had to learn this lesson. "Therefore is judgment far from us, neither doth justice overtake us; we wait for light, but behold obscurity; for brightness, but we walk in darkness" (Isa. 59:9).

When we have learned to wait upon God, we will not interfere with God's working but will watch to see what He makes happen, the meanwhile watching ourselves to see what we shall answer when we are reproved (Hab. 2:1).

God's schedule is different from yours and mine. The Psalmist learned that lesson. "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass" (Ps. 37:7).

Notice the phrase "wait patiently for him."

We must learn to wait God's schedule. Waiting also means expecting the Lord to do great things. This is the meaning of "wait" in Ps. 145:15: "The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season."

We cannot hurry God's schedule, but He wants us to wait with expectancy. While we wait, He wants us to sing the song of hope.

While we wait, He wants us to rejoice in the midst of trial. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall

walk and not faint" (Isa. 40:31).

The Hebrew word "wait" here means to collect, or to bind together, for strength. If a man had a heavy load on his shoulders, he would find a pole and distribute the weight on each end. If that pole was not strong enough, he would tie another pole with it.

What has that to do with resting upon the Lord? The Psalmist said: "I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope" (Ps. 130:5).

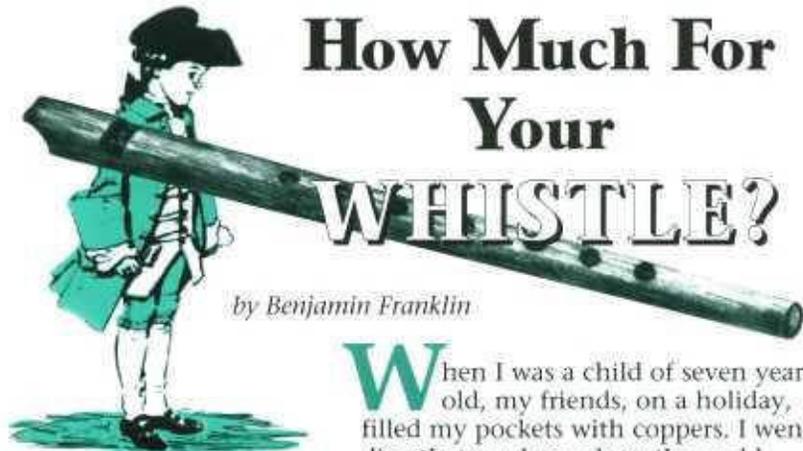
Are we hoping in our own ability or someone else's? Are we hoping in circumstances? We will find at last that we can hope only in God.

Do not give up. Wait on the Lord. And when you find one promise is not enough, tie another to this one and you have a stronger pole to bear the weight.

The art of waiting, properly learned, carries us through the difficult times when there seems to be no hope.

We need never be afraid to wait on God, for in due time He will fulfill all. There shall not fail "one word of all his good promise, which he promised" (1 Kings 8:56).

Just as Simeon waited for the consolation of Israel and lived to see it come, so we can wait and know that our waiting will not be disappointed. Thus we can say with Isaiah: "And therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the Lord is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for him" (Isa. 30:18). □



by Benjamin Franklin

**W**hen I was a child of seven years old, my friends, on a holiday, filled my pockets with coppers. I went directly to a shop where they sold toys for children; and being charmed with the sound of a whistle, that I met by the way in the hands of another boy, I voluntarily offered and gave all my money for one. I then came home, and went whistling all over the house, much pleased with my whistle but disturbing all the family.

My brothers and sisters and cousins, understanding the bargain I had made, told me I had given four times as much for it as it was worth, and put me in mind of what good things I might have bought with the rest of the money. They laughed at me so much for my folly that I cried with vexation; and the reflection gave me more chagrin than the whistle gave me pleasure.

This, however, was afterwards of use to me, the impression continuing in my mind, so that often, when I was tempted to buy some unnecessary thing, I said to myself, "Don't give too much for the whistle," and I saved my money.

As I grew up, came into the world, and observed the actions of men, I thought I met with many, very many who "gave too much for the whistle." When I saw one too ambitious of court favor, sacrificing his time, his repose, his liberty, his virtue, and perhaps his friends, to attain it, I have said to myself—"This man gives too much for his whistle."

If I knew a miser who gave up every kind of comfortable living, all the pleasure of doing good to others, all the esteem of his fellow-citizens, and the joys of benevolent friendship for the sake of accumulating wealth—"Poor man," said I, "you pay too dear for your whistle."

When I met a man of pleasure, sacrificing every laudable improvement of the mind, or of his fortune, to mere corporeal sensations, and ruining his health in their pursuit—"Mistaken man," said I, "you are providing pain for yourself, instead of pleasure; you are paying too dear for your whistle."

If I see one fond of appearance or fine clothes, fine houses, fine furniture, fine equipages, all above his fortune, for which he contracts debts, "Alas," say I, "he has paid dear, very dear, for his whistle."

In short, I conceive that a great part of the miseries of mankind are brought upon them by the false estimate they have made of the value of things, and by their giving "too much for their whistles." □

*Are we as professing Christians sacrificing the joys and rewards of full consecration for a few cheap—worthless—whistles of this world?*

**God's Promises Like a Dream**

God's promises sound like a dream, a dream too wonderful to ever possibly come true. However, God, and not man, is the maker of them, so we know they are true. His purpose and wonderful promises for this earth also will most certainly become a reality.

How wonderfully encouraging God's promises are! Who would not wish to live forever in circumstances beyond compare, beyond our comprehension, in a new heaven and earth, when the old order has passed away and when God will have His dwelling among men, and they shall be His people and God Himself will be with them? There will be no night in that beautiful City, and the gates will never be shut by day. Nothing unclean shall enter, nor anyone whose ways are false or foul.

All these precious promises of God (and there are many more) will be the victor's heritage, and to think

we are given the opportunity to win, if we, with gladness and joyfulness, serve God and diligently seek after Him and His Kingdom; if we love Him with all our heart, soul, mind and strength; keep His commandments and obey His voice. Is not this the reason why we are here? We are dissatisfied with the things of this short life, that we may store up for ourselves treasure in heaven, where there is no moth and no rust to spoil it and no thieves to break in and steal. As the song says, "The nearer I reach that shining shore the fairer the golden gate."

God's ways are past finding out. Nevertheless, in His great goodness and by His wonderful grace, He teaches us the way to salvation. It is by His grace also that we are disciplined to renounce godless ways and worldly desires, and to live a life of temperance, honesty, and goodness in this present age, that we may look forward to His great and precious promises and to "the happy fulfillment

of our hopes when the splendor of our great God and Saviour Christ Jesus will appear" (Titus 2:13).

Oh, may we do what is good and right in the sight of the Lord God, "not add thereto nor diminish from it" that we may be found worthy to receive the wonderful promise of a place in His everlasting Kingdom.

South Wales

R. B.

**Watch**

We often wonder what that New World will be like, but our main concern should be, "Am I doing right in God's eyes?" We can deceive ourselves into thinking we have gotten rid of that old man of sin. Our every thought, act and word have to be watched. "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8:36). Or, "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (Jas. 2:10). Yes, it is necessary for me to be on my watch at all times.

Canada

L. S.

## ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON PAGES 14 &amp; 15

**Escape**

1. He was let down from the wall in a basket (Acts 9:22-25)
2. Reuben advised putting him in a pit, then they sold him (Genesis 37:20-28)
3. The denunciation of the scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 23:33)
4. "God shut the lions' mouths" (Daniel 6:22)
5. Rahab hid them, then let them down from her window over the city wall (Joshua 2:1-5, 15)
6. Lot and his family (Genesis 19:17)
7. Job (Job 19:20)
8. Jesus (John 10:39)
9. David (1 Samuel 27:1)
10. Esther (Esther 4:13)

**Cups**

1. Joseph (Genesis 44:2)
2. Psalm 23:5
3. Jesus (Mark 9:41)
4. Nehemiah 1:11
5. Scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 23:25)
6. James and John (Mark 10:38)
7. The Lord's Supper (Matthew 26:27)
8. Psalm 116:13
9. Jesus (Matthew 26:39)

**Caves**

1. Lot (Genesis 19:30)
2. Machpelah (Genesis 23:19)
3. Beneath the mosque in Hebron
4. Obadiah, Ahab's chamberlain (1 Kings 18:4)
5. Elijah (1 Kings 19:8-9)

6. Because of the limestone formation. They were used for refuge and burying-places
7. David (1 Samuel 22:1)
8. To prove that he had him in his power, and could have killed him if he had wished (1 Samuel 24:4, 10-11)
9. Jesus in the sepulcher of Joseph of Arimathea (Matthew 27:59-60), and Lazarus (John 11:38)
10. The writer of Hebrews (Hebrews 11:38)

**Bread**

1. The little boy in the feeding of the five thousand (John 6:9)
2. Solomon (Ecclesiastes 11:1)
3. Unleavened bread (Leviticus 23:5-6)
4. Jesus (John 6:35)
5. The Last Supper (Mark 14:22)
6. Manna (Exodus 16:15)
7. Moses (Deut. 8:3)
8. The living bread (John 6:51)
9. The children of the righteous (Ps. 37:25)
10. Bread of deceit (Prov. 20:17).
11. Paul on board the ship that was about to be wrecked (Acts 27:35)

**Feasts**

1. Purim (Esther 9:17-28)
2. The departure from Egypt (Exodus 12:12-17)
3. Vashti (Esther 1:9-12)
4. Jesus (Luke 5:29)
5. The feast of the Passover (Luke 2:41-45)
6. Belshazzar (Daniel 5:1)
7. Job (Job 1:4-5)
8. Scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 23:1-6)

### Strength of Patience

Patience is a virtue. A modern-day writer says, "A handful of patience is worth more than a bucketful of brains." Patience also is power. A strong character with no patience has a dangerously weak spot.

To be patient is difficult at times, but it pays. Patience teaches a man to bear the small everyday trials and tribulations. Patience builds his character to solve big and real problems when they come.

Impatience proves that "haste makes waste." Patience proves "all things come to those who wait."

*No sword wounds so fiercely as an evil tongue.*

The Christian should be conscious that this life is transient and passing, a kind of preparatory school.

*If you are so busy you cannot stop and think, you had better stop and think.*

#### Through Peace to Light

*I do not ask, O Lord, that life should always be  
A pleasant road;  
I do not ask that You should take from me  
All of its load.*

*I do not ask that flowers should always spring  
Beneath my feet—  
Too well I know the poison and the sting  
Of things too sweet.*

*For this thing only, now, dear Lord, I plead,  
Lead me aright—  
Though strength should falter and though heart  
should bleed—  
Through peace to light.*

*I do not ask my cross to understand,  
My way to see;  
Better in darkness just to feel Your hand  
Is leading me.*

*I do not ask that You should always shed  
Full radiance here:  
Give but a ray of peace that I may walk  
Without a fear.*

*Joy may have restless days, but peace is like  
The quiet night.  
Lead me, O Lord, till perfect day shall shine  
Through peace to light.*



Personality can open doors, but only character can KEEP them open.

*One thing you can give and still keep is your word.*

Some people pass through a trial and come up smiling, while others allow gloom to envelop them. It's the attitude that counts. Trials and tribulations will draw us closer to God if we see His hand leading us above the lowland fog to the heights of promised grandeur.

*True Christians stay cool in a hot place, sweet in a sour place, and little in a big place.*

Anxiety does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow, but only empties today of its strength.

*The person who takes time for prayer usually finds ample time for all the other things needing his attention.*

You will never offend anyone by returning a smile.

**S**urveyor, set your stakes with care,  
And study well the path you take;  
For danger may be lurking where  
You least expect it: keep awake!  
Not for yourself alone the course  
You chart—for others also see  
Who may not check to find its source:  
You bear responsibility.

**S**urveyor, set your tripod on  
The solid Rock, the Word of God;  
And through the hours, till day is gone,  
Let Meditation be your rod.  
Let Faith alone your compass be,  
To guide you when the way is dim;  
And when no light from God you see,  
Wait patiently for light from Him.

**A**void the lowlands, filled with strife,  
But rather mark the higher plain  
Above the lower forms of life,  
Sedition, pride and unjust gain.  
By-pass the village called Despair,  
Its crooked streets but harbor woe  
For you will find nobody there—  
Who to the higher lands will go.

**R**esolve at dawn that, come what may,  
You will forsake the ways of sin,  
And if perchance you miss the way,  
Then read your instruments again.  
Surveyor, set your stakes with care,  
And study well the course you plot;  
So with the faithful you may share  
The joys and glory at the top!

— *Lot L. Snyder*

# Chart Well Your Course

