



Megiddo Message

The Grace of Contentment

Vol. 86, No. 8
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Have You Been Robbed?

The master thief of the ages is at large. Thousands of men and women are having their pockets picked, their homes broken into, and their most valuable spiritual treasure—their heritage of faith—is being rifled. Spiritual seed is being plucked from their hearts and minds, and in its place the seeds of doubt and error are being planted.

Who is the thief? Nothing other than the secular spirit of the age, the pervasive spirit of get-all, have-all, spend-all.

Many of us are unaware of the robbery. Like a very small child who is fascinated by the glitter of the diamond or some cheap tinsel, so we settle for human speculations and treasures of this world, when we should settle for nothing less than the real values from God.

Like the victim of an adept pickpocket, we are robbed without knowing it. While we sleep, priceless treasures are removed from our homes, and we are all unaware. Like the naive prey of a flim-flam artist, we permit trivialities to replace things of eternal value.

Search your home and see whether you are a victim. See whether certain important things of real value are missing and things of no value have been put in their place.

◆ Faith in the Bible

Certainly our Bible is still around. But is our confidence in it strong and growing stronger with every day? Are our minds preoccupied with its treasures, its wonders, its truths?

We have to face the fact that the competition for a place in our minds today is tremendous. In this information-rich age, we could easily fill our entire time without once giving thought to God or His Word. But what would we have then? On what would we build our character? How would we know what God required of us? How would we love what He has in store for us?

Where faith in the Bible is absent, there will be uncertainty in place of certainty, confusion in place of peace, weakness in place of strength—and most serious of all—confidence in ourselves where we should have confidence in God.

◆ The Altar of Daily Devotion

The Psalmist longed for the house of God because he longed to be in God's presence and receive God's blessing. He wrote: *"The one thing I ask of the Lord—the thing I seek most—is to live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, delighting in the Lord's perfections and meditating in his Temple"* (Ps. 27:4 NLT).

The victim of the modern secular "thief" will find

that there is no longer any place in his life where he goes frequently to pray and communicate with God, no source of reference higher than himself and other humans, no strong force binding him to his Creator.

We need to guard closely the heavenly association in our lives, to keep lifting our minds above the level of life around us to the nobler levels we aspire to.

◆ Heavenly Communications

What did Jesus do when the multitude had pressed Him all day? He went alone, to communicate with His Father.

What did Moses do when the rebellious, hard-hearted people threatened to stone the two spies who had brought the minority report of a good land flowing with milk and honey, which, *"If God delight in us, he will give us"*? Moses petitioned God's help (Num 14:13-19).

What did David do when the jealous Saul was pursuing him, or his enemies were seeking him, or he was uncertain of the right course to take? Again and again it is written, *"David inquired of the Lord"* (1 Sam. 23:2, 4; 2 Sam. 2:1; 5:19, 23).

In the house that has been robbed, there will be no interactions above the earth level. There will be no two-way contact with the One who inhabits eternity, or any communications with the faithful and obedient hearts who are attuned to God. There will be no direct communication with the Word which says at every turn, *"This is the way, walk in it"* (Isa. 30:21).

The robbed house is devoid of this most precious gift: association with the Divine.

◆ Robbed Values

When spiritual treasures are taken away, what remains will be of low value, utterly confused, *"of the earth, earthy."* Nothing will be able to get above the level of the material, because the things of eternity will be missing. Empty laughter will be substituted for joy. The praise of men will displace the *"Well done"* from the God of the universe. The gratifying of physical impulses and desires will be the chief interest, and anything that calls for self-denial will be rejected. Self will be paramount as Christ is crowded away from the heart.

◆ The Value of Self-Discipline

Highly important in every life is the mastery of self, self-discipline and self-control. The robbed life will fail to see the value in these. Gone also will be the character-forming disciplines we need so desperately to become like Christ.

(Continued on page 27)

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 worldwide 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.

IN THIS ISSUE ...

Editorial

HAVE YOU BEEN ROBBED? 2

Memorial

CHRIST IS COMING 4

by L. T. Nichols, Founder of the Megiddo Church

Article

YOUR WRINKLES ARE SHOWING 7

Special Section

THE GRACE OF CONTENTMENT 8

CONTENTMENT 101 by Gerald R. Payne 9

KEEP YOUR FORK! 11

CONTENT...LOOKING AHEAD! 13

A Bible Paraphrase by Eugene H. Peterson

WHERE IS CONTENTMENT? 14

Drama

THE END OF THE AGE (Part Three) 16

In the Days of Jerusalem

Know Your Bible? 18

Jerusalem ♦ Men & Mountains ♦ Standing ♦ Spirit

Article

A RIGHT SPIRIT 21

by Margaret A. Tremblay

Bible Study

THEY DID IT—THEIR WAY by Ruth E. Sisson 22

The Rise and Fall of a False King (Part Seven)

Back Cover

I AM PAINTING NOW A PICTURE 28

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Megiddo Message

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In Memory of Our Founder
Born October 1, 1844

Christ Is Coming

by REV. L. T. NICHOLS

Mr. Nichols addressed the following discourse to the members of the Christian Advent Church in Rochester, New York, January 7, 1905. Its warm appeal is as needful and as timely today as it was a century ago.

Beloved brethren and friends: I take pleasure in standing before you this morning to present to you this wonderful subject of the coming of our Lord. As we realize that He has been away over eighteen hundred years, I deem it a privilege to stand here today and place before you this more than wonderful subject.

I have studied this Book a great deal; it has been my night thought and meditation for a good many years. I have studied to find out what God has told us. I am a man like yourselves. I have never seen an angel or heard God say a word. All I know I have learned through this blessed Book.

Our Lord, looking down through the vista of ages, saw fit to tell us to "search the scriptures" and to "study," that we may be "approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (John 5:39; 2 Tim. 2:15).

The Apostle Peter declares (chapter 3:1-4): "This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance; that ye may be mindful"—here is something for every mind to contemplate—

"of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour: knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days"—it was not for those in Jesus' day, but for us in these latter days. "Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation."

We are in the age when many scoff. They say, "I do not see any signs." The other day I was accosted by a man (no less than a minister) who, when I spoke to him of the coming of the Lord, said, "I do not see any more signs of His coming than there were a thousand years ago." But Peter wanted to stir up our pure minds to make us "mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets." He wanted you and me to know that there would be scoffers who would say, "Where is the promise of his coming?"

Can we believe what the angel said about it as recorded in Acts 1:10-11? His beloved disciples were with Him, and as they conversed together He was taken up out of their midst. As they stood gazing heavenward and wondering where their Lord had been taken, suddenly two men in white broke the spell, saying to the disciples, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."

It is the only way He could go away—bodily. And He will return in bodily form as He went away. We find conditional immortality all through the Scriptures.

To our noble founder we are indebted
for the visions that capture our imagination;
for calls to service that enlist our talents and resources;
for strength and enthusiasm that enable us to rise
above our limitations to fellowship with God.

—K. E. Flowerday (Pastor, 1958–1985)



We are on the verge of the most wonderful event that ever happened to mankind. We are convinced beyond all doubt that we are living in the age when it will occur. Why are not all the churches of one mind about this? We see 1086 different faiths extant in the world, all claiming to be right. The Divine Testimony tells us that we must become all of one mind, and that mind the mind of Christ. The great trouble is, so many put their interpretation on the Scriptures, and consequently it produces different faiths.

There is too little reading of the Bible. People have time for everything but religion. They are more anxious in regard to temporal affairs than Divine things. But we are told in Revelation 1:3, "*Blessed is he that readeth*"—blessed! There is a blessing for those who read—"and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein." The blessing is to those who read and hear and do the things that are written. If that is true, we had better begin to read.

The apostle Paul declares in Hebrews 9:28, "*And unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.*" We had better begin to look for Him. But we can make up our mind that there will be scoffers. "*Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation*" (2 Pet. 3:3–4). Do all things remain as they were? Oh, no! The prophetic statements of Joel 3:9–10 are being fulfilled. It declares: "*Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles; Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up: beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruninghooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong.*"

And Isaiah says, "*O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God! Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him*" (Isa. 40:9–10).

This mighty work will be carried out by the Lord from Heaven, and we need not look for these things to be accomplished until He comes. Then shall be fulfilled the

prayer of our Lord, "*Thy Kingdom come.*" That will be fulfilled when He appears. Jesus tells us in Luke 21:25–26 that before His coming there shall be "*upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity... men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth.*" And then He continues in the 31st verse, "*When ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.*" Hence we know it is very near.

Take a retrospective view of the ages past and gone. Go back to the time of Nimrod, the founder of the Assyrian kingdom, then on to the Babylonian kingdom. All nations were not then preparing for war. Later, when the kingdom of Babylon was forced to give up her dominion and the city was conquered without the loss of a man under the command of Cyrus, and it became the Medo-Persian kingdom, all nations were not preparing for war.

Come down to the time of Alexander the Great, who succeeded to the command of the army at the death of his father, Philip of Macedon, in 336 B. C. He conquered the world in the short space of twelve years, but all nations were not preparing for war; they did not beat their plowshares into swords and their pruninghooks into spears. The prophecy was not for Alexander's time.

We read in Acts 3:20–23, "*And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began. For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.*" He is coming just as surely as I am standing before you. But, oh! what did he say? "*And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet*"—in all things—"shall be destroyed from among the people."

It declares that in like manner as He went away, so shall He come again. To those who look for Him shall "*he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.*" Every soul who does not hear this Prophet in all things shall be destroyed from among the people.

I am laboring for you, that you may receive the blessing

Christ Is Coming

when our Master comes, and this depends on our reading and keeping the sayings of this Book.

You remember what Daniel says in chapter 9:21-24: "Yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation. And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding. At

the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to show thee; for thou art greatly beloved; therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision. Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy."

The vision was sealed, finished, and ended when John attached Amen to Revelation, and we have never heard from God since; and if we are going to add to His prophecy, He will add to us the plagues that are written

therein. And if we take from these words He will take our part out of the book of life, as we read in Revelation 22:18-19, "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these


things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book."

Men may claim to have visions from God, but they are deceived. We are told in Romans 15:4, "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." If we ever have any hope it will be by learning what the Apostles, Prophets, and Jesus have said. And after we have learned them, we must grow up in them until we reach the full stature in Christ. Yes, we must grow.

We have to be more than a conqueror (Rom. 8:37) in order to be saved. This means we have to take the fort, and then hold it. The Bible is full of meaning. Do you suppose we would be able to prove more than a conqueror if we did not have our armor on? Paul tells us we must have on the "breastplate of righteousness" and the "shield of faith," that we may be able to "quench all the fiery darts of the wicked" (Eph. 6:14-17).

We can never put on the shield of faith by reading novels or fiction. Novel-reading is a great evil—if this hits anyone, I cannot help it; I did not come here to please anyone. I came here to declare just what God has said, and we are commanded to "redeem the time, because the days are evil." Reading novels only unfits the memory to retain serious knowledge. I am thankful I never read fiction. But give me a history and let me read it through, and I will remember it.

I want you to read your Bibles more. You need more meditation, more sweet communion with God. You are not half awake. Take these blessed tidings to every one you meet; tell them the glorious news. We have to be energetic workers. We must write these things upon the tables of our hearts, that they may be with us when we lie down, when we rise up, and when we walk by the way. They will be with us all the



There is coming
a city from heaven...

The beautiful City of God,
Where sin has no power to enter;
Where all shall submit to the Lord;

The City — its equal has never
Been seen in the ages now past;
Whose grandeur and beauty shall ever
Throughout an eternity last.

That city shall one day be planted
Securely on Zion's fair shore;
There Jesus shall reign in His splendor
And Him shall all nations adore.

We look for this city from heaven,
Whose Builder and Maker is God;
And long for its joys to be given
To those who the narrow way trod.

And lo! it will soon be descending —
Not long have His children to wait
Till Christ, with His angels attending
Is seen, as He stands at the gate.

— Liot L. Snyder

day long. Our sweet communion with God must last all the day long; these things must be as frontlets between our eyes, we must give ourselves wholly to them (Deut. 11:18; 1 Tim. 4:15).

If I had spent my time reading novels, I would not know the Bible as I do. I have studied for all I know. I never went to college, or to any theological seminary. I never received a diploma, and am glad I did not. Most of the great men of this world were self-taught.

We read in 2 Tim. 3:1-2, *"This know also"*—something he wanted you and me to know—*"that in the last days perilous times shall come."* Of what do these perilous times consist? *"Men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud"*—look at the pride of the world! When I was a boy, all the hats we had we made ourselves. We went out into the field and cut straws and put them in water, then braided and sewed them together; and that was the best hat we had. If the children nowadays had to wear those hats, they would not go to Sunday school at all!

"Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall" (Prov. 16:18). We must get rid of all our pride. These two gentlemen sitting before me, when they and I were boys, would we have thought of playing baseball on Sunday? We would not have dreamed of such a thing! But now, as the paper stated the other day, one church introduced such games and said their congregation increased wonderfully. Look at the theaters, they are always crowded. People pay their money to see an old clown kick up his heels or do some other foolishness; but when it comes to hearing the glad tidings of great joy, they are as dry as a contribution box. I might say right here that I have never taken one cent for my preaching. Rather, I have spent thousands of dollars in proclaiming what I believe, and will continue to spend and be spent for it.

Let me ask you in all candor to go home and study these things for yourself, see if we have not given you the chapter and verse for everything we have said.

I want to stand by what God has said, and that alone. If He did not know enough to tell me what He meant, pray tell, who does? ♦

A Prayer

*In this hour of worship
Grant Thy presence, Lord!
Here, the world forgotten,
Feed us from Thy Word.
From our sins and sorrows
Here we seek release
Of Thy love persuaded,
Find the path of peace.*

—Selected



Your Wrinkles Are Showing

I was the oldest of Mother's two children. Since my sister was three years younger, I was taught to do the household chores first. Mother always worked away from home, so by the time I was nine years old I could cook, iron clothes, do the washing, and keep the house spic-and-span. (Would you believe *fairly* clean?)

For the most part I didn't mind doing any of those things. However, nearly every time Mom came through the bedroom I could depend on her complaining, "Hubert, come in here and get the wrinkles out of the undersheets." After several years of watching Mom reach up under the quilt at the foot of the bed and giving the undersheets a professional tug, I got so I didn't hate doing that job quite so bad.

I thought of my bedmaking days not so long ago when I overheard someone saying, "I'm not going to help him. He's getting what he deserves, and I'm not going to help him." I don't know what the subject was, but all I could think of was, "My, my, your wrinkles are showing." Where is the Christ-like spirit that is willing to help, to support, to forgive and encourage? Then I thought of what Jesus said, *"This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you"* (John 15:12). *"Whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected"* (1 John 2:5).

When you harbor feelings of hatred in your heart, when you want to complain instead of praise, when you want to hurt instead of bless, remember that "your wrinkles are showing." ♦

—Selected

The Grace of Contentment

Contentment is not having lots of money and comforts, it is making more out of less.
"Be content with your wages" (Luke 3:14 NASB).

Contentment is not wanting more (externals) but becoming better (in heart qualities).
"Godliness actually is a means of great gain, when accompanied by contentment....And if we have food and covering, with these we shall be content" (1 Tim. 6:6, 8 NASB).

Contentment is not having everything you wish for, it is being grateful for what you have.
"I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want" (Phil. 4:12 NIV).

Contentment is not freedom from trouble, it is making trouble work for you.
"I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and constraints, for the sake of Christ; for when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Cor. 12:10 NAB).

Contentment is not freedom from desire, it is desiring the best.
"Let your life be free from love of money but be content with what you have, for he has said, 'I will never forsake you or abandon you'" (Hebrews 13:5 NAB).

Contentment is letting go the lesser (and earthly) to lay hold on the greater (and heavenly).
"Be it little or much, be content with what you have" (Sirach 29:23 NAB).

Who at the dawn of the 21st century wants to be contented? Isn't it the wrong product even to try to market? We are a forward-looking, progressive race! We are a people on the move! Our motto is more, bigger, better, faster! As Henry Ward Beecher said a century ago, "If a man has come to that point where he is so content that he says, 'I do not want to know any more, or do any more, or be any more,' he ought to be changed into a mummy!"

Some instinct in us shuns the idea of contentment. As long as we are alive we want to live, and living means going forward. Contentment belongs to people with low ambition, non-achievers, the unmotivated and the lazy. What success-minded, goal-oriented person wants to be content? Aren't most Americans proud that they are on the way up? Contentment is something to be enjoyed between birth and kindergarten, or after one retires. But in between, who wants it? We look down on a youth who is content to settle for a trade out of high school, or on the man or woman who turns down a promotion. By nature we are discontented. And isn't this as it should be? Discontent has long been the seed of progress.

Yet listen to the men of God. Hear John the Baptist preaching with vehemence: "Be content with your wages"

THE CHRISTIAN BASICS
by GERALD R. PAYNE

CONTENTMENT 101

(Luke 3:14).

Hear the great apostle Paul exulting in his great achievement: "I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want" (Phil. 4:12 NIV). Again, "I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and constraints, for the sake of Christ; for when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Cor. 12:10 NAB). Again, "Godliness actually is a means of great gain, when accompanied by contentment. And if we have food and covering, with these we shall be content" (1 Tim. 6:6, 8 NASB). Hear the author of the book of Hebrews: "Let your way of life be free from love of money. Be content with what you have, for he has said, 'I will

never fail you and I will never forsake you'" (Hebrews 13:5 Barclay). Even the Apocrypha has a good word for contentment, as it advises, "Be it little or much, be content with what you have" (Sirach 29:23 NAB).

Is there something here that we in this success-minded generation are missing?

The Side Effects of Success

Though discontent has its healthy side, it underlies much of the grief and perplexity of our age. Discontent is the root cause of much mental illness, family strife and suicides. It is devastating to our modern society.



Contentment is being able to enjoy the scenery when you are taking a detour.

Why should this be, when prosperity and standards of living are at an all-time high? A recent issue of the *U.S. News & World Report* says that discontent is one of the most puzzling phenomena of our affluence. We have more money, more leisure, more resources, more goods of every kind than any nation has ever had. Yet in the midst of this abundance is a growing dissatisfaction, frustration and bitterness.

Something has gone wrong. For more than a generation now, this nation has been working toward a goal of material prosperity. And we have arrived. We have a better economy, providing us better wages and income, more goods, a higher standard

Christian contentment is not the absence of desire; it is letting go the lesser (and temporary) to lay hold on the greater (and eternal).

of living and working conditions. A side benefit is more leisure time, which has given rise to the entertainment industry and a near addiction to entertainment. From the standpoint of this world, we have succeeded. We have the things we have been striving for. But as anyone can see, "things" do not make happiness.

Now this great success is fertilizing the roots of discontent. At the very core of our life today is fear, uncertainty and dissatisfaction. Something has gone wrong. As someone has suggested, it is time to take a second look at our goals.

When we take that second look, we would do well to look into the Book our Creator and Father has left us. Here we get a different perspective on our world, and our purpose and place in it. Here—and here alone—can be found the secret of contentment.

Like every other lesson from its pages, the concept of contentment is taught both by example and by precept. Let's take the great Apostle of

our Faith and see what he can teach us. Here is a man who lived nobly, who achieved the highest success possible, and was supremely happy.

Paul the Contented

Example being the most forceful means of learning, let us look first at his example. In the closing section of his letter to the church at Philippi, we have a sketch of this contented man. What does he say about himself? *"I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation"* (Phil. 4:12 NIV).

Before we think much about it, let us pick up a few important details. First, what is the standard of living to which this man has been accustomed? Much of the time he has been short even of necessities.

And where is this exemplary contented man? He is writing from prison, during the first century, the time of the Roman Empire. We can be sure that Rome wasted nothing on its prisoners' comfort.

What entertainments has he enjoyed? The answer is simple: none.

Yet the major purpose of this little letter to the church at Philippi is to express gratitude. He is writing to thank his Christian friends because they have remembered him in his need. Help was a long time coming. For weeks, perhaps months, Paul had had no word from the churches in the East, which he had established on his first missionary journey. Then at last Epaphroditus arrived with warm greetings, expressions of loving concern, and a substantial gift for the apostle Paul. He is deeply grateful.

The letter to the Philippians is Paul's response to this visit of a dear brother, this gift of love, this expression of friendship. First he is sincerely grateful they have not forgotten him, that they have been faithful to the bond of Christian responsibility. Having said all that, he wants them to know that he is not complaining. He was content before Brother Epaphroditus arrived, and he is content after. He puts it like this: *"Not that I*

was ever in need, for I have learned how to get along happily whether I have much or little. I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little. For I can do everything with the help of Christ who gives me the strength I need" (Phil. 4:11-13 NLT).

Contentment was the model of Paul's life, and it did not depend on circumstances. This did not mean that life was easy. Read his autobiographical sketch in his second letter to the Corinthians, and see how he compares with others who call themselves servants of Christ. Are they *"Abraham's descendants? So am I. Are they servants of Christ? I am mad to speak like this, but I can outdo them. More overworked than they, scourged more severely, more often imprisoned, many a time face to face with death. Five times the Jews have given me the thirty-nine strokes; three times I have been beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I have been shipwrecked, and for twenty-four hours I was adrift on the open sea. I have been constantly on the road; I have met dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my fellow-countrymen, dangers from foreigners, dangers in towns, dangers in the country, dangers at sea, dangers from false friends. I have toiled and drudged, I have often gone without sleep; hungry and thirsty, I have often gone fasting; and I have suffered from cold and exposure"* (2 Cor. 11:23-27 NEB).

And this man was content? Hear what he said: *"I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, . . . to be content."* Suffering hardship and privation, facing hazard and difficulty every day, this man enjoyed a measure of peace and contentment unknown to his contemporaries.

How did Paul compare with others of the ancient world? Was he imitating a virtue common at the time? Cicero, a philosopher and statesman who lived only a century before Paul, fell out of favor with the government and was exiled to Rome. How did he take it? Surviving to this day are bitter and complaining letters he wrote about his adversity. Seneca, a contemporary of Paul, was a brilliant essayist who could write eloquently

Keep Your Fork!

A serious-minded woman who had been diagnosed with a terminal illness was given three months to live. As she began getting her things in order, she called her pastor and asked him to come to her house to discuss certain aspects of her final wishes.

Among other things, she told him which songs she wanted sung at the service, and what scriptures she wanted read. She also requested to be buried with her favorite Bible in her left hand.

The pastor took appropriate notes so that her wishes could be carried out. As he was preparing to leave, the woman stopped him. She had one final, very important request. "Please, Pastor, just one more thing," she said earnestly.

"Certainly. What is it?"

"This one is very important to me," the woman continued. "I want to be buried holding a fork in my right hand." The

pastor looked at the woman, at a loss for words. Could he possibly have understood her correctly?

"That surprises you, doesn't it?" said the woman. "But you see,

Pastor, in all my years of attending church socials and dinners, I remember that when the dishes were being cleared after the main course, someone would inevitably lean over me and say, 'Keep your fork.' It was my favorite part because I knew that something better was coming, something better than anything that had been before, like velvety chocolate cake or deep-dish apple pie."

The pastor listened intently and a smile came over his face as the woman continued.

"So, I want the people who see me there in the casket with a fork in my hand, I want them to wonder, 'What's with the fork?' Then I want you to tell them: 'Keep your fork... the best is yet to come.'"

Isn't this true of God's people in all ages? The best, the very best is coming. We are not getting ready to die. We are preparing to live, and live and live! Said Jesus, "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son" (Rev. 21:6-7). "Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore" (Ps. 16:11).

The "water of life," the "path of life," "fulness of joy" and "pleasures for evermore"—yes, keep your fork... The best is yet to be! ♦

Contentment was the model of Paul's life, and it did not depend on circumstances.



about contentment. But when he was exiled from Rome, though he suffered no physical hardship at all, he complained about what had befallen him and fawned on his friends in Rome to use their influence to have him restored to the city—the only place, he said, where he could live. These men were brilliant writers about contentment, but they could not practice it in the face of reverses.

Paul was different. He was an all-seasons man. When everything was in his favor, he was wholehearted and full of faith, forging straight ahead. And when all things were against him, he was still wholehearted and full of faith, forging straight ahead.

What does all this say to us?

That we never have any reason to be discontented.

And it says something else too. Was Paul content simply because his needs were met, because he had enough food, clothing

(Continued on page 12)

and the physical comforts of life? Obviously not, because much of the time he did not have these. Paul was content because his desires were above the physical. There was a purpose underlying this dynamo of a man, something powerful and propelling. His definition of contentment does not for a moment fit the lazy, low-ambition kind—not for a minute! He was a man fighting, pressing, working, pushing against all odds—for what? He was content because he had a chosen direction for his life. He had set his heart on the prize offered him by Christ, and nothing here had any effect on that. Was he suffering? It did not matter. Was he deprived of the necessities of life? Again, it did not matter—

In the still of the night, while David lay awake, he poured out this song of grateful contentment, because his confidence was in God:

"I will praise you as long as I live.
I will lift up my hands in prayer to your name.
I will be content as if I had eaten the best foods.
My lips will sing, and my mouth will praise you.
I remember you while I'm lying in bed;
I think about you through the night.
You are my help.
Because of your protection, I sing.
I stay close to you;
You support me with your right hand."
—Psalms 63:4-8 NCV

his contentment was untouched because his whole desire was to please Christ, and that was something he could do **WHATEVER** his circumstances.

Do we wonder that he was contented?

Paul's Instructions

What instructions did he leave? He writes: *"I have learned, in whatever state I am, to be content."*

What can we learn from these inspired words? That true contentment is independent of circumstances.

Examples abound of those who show discontent and dissatisfaction, yet who from a material point of view have everything. Others are content, even though they are crippled, bedridden for years, suffering from arthritis, or dying with cancer. What makes the difference?

The difference is in the desire one is seeking to satisfy.

I can be content with or without good health.

I can be content with or without comfort.

I can be content with or without friends.

I can be content with or without money.

I can be content with or without success.

I can be content with or without position.

I can be content with or without the prestige that often accompanies achievement.

Why? Because the goals of my life are not more money,

more prestige, more success, a better job—and I do not live and think in terms of these. I am content because the desire I want most to satisfy is to make my life pleasing to God. And I can do this with much or little, as God allows.

Not that I do not appreciate the good things of life—I take these as blessings from God. But I am content with or without them—because my first desire is to please God.

For the follower of Jesus, contentment comes from the prospect of future joy, that there is something immeasurably better—greater, more worthwhile, even lasting and eternal—*ahead!*

This is why all of God's people in all ages could be content, even in situations that were perilous. David is one example. As a shepherd boy, he had to guard the flocks from wild beasts, lions, bears and the like. After he was anointed king, he was pursued by king Saul, who wanted to take his life. As king his life was in danger from enemies, not only from other nations but also within his own kingdom. It is thought that he was fleeing from Absalom his son when he penned these words: *"Some people are trying to kill me, but they will go down to the grave"* (Ps. 63:9 NCV).

Yet David could praise, not complain, whatever the circumstances. He furnished a pattern to the Church in all ages.

Limiting Our "Wants"

Contentment is something we want to have even apart from our hope in Christ. And even here, it is not the absence of desire but the control of it. In practical, everyday terms, it means budgeting our expenses to fit our income.

There is a story of a cowboy who came into Dallas for the first time from one of the great ranches in Texas. They took him to the largest department store in the city. For an hour or so they showed him the store, moving from floor to floor and through all the aisles. He looked in wide-eyed amazement at the splendid assortment of goods. When at last they came down to the main floor, the man who had conducted the tour asked this unsophisticated cowboy what he thought of it all. He said it was all very pretty, but he never in his life saw so many things that he didn't need.

Here is a fundamental part of being content: not wanting everything you see. Wants, to be satisfied, need money. And obtaining money means work. And work means an obligation of one's time and energy. These are limited resources. Doesn't it make sense to put a reasonable limit on our "wants" and save ourselves from the miseries of discontent?

Contentment a Christian Grace

True contentment cannot be separated from true faith. Philosophers write about it, and psychologists and psychiatrists work toward it, but there is no genuine contentment without God. Why is this? Because everyone faces the problems of life, and they are fundamental problems—of physical limitation, mortality, grief, sickness, pain, loss. There is no real solution to any of these problems without God.

CONTENT... Looking Ahead!

A Personal Testimony

"It's what we trust in but don't yet see that keeps us going."

Compared to what's coming, living conditions around here seem like a stopover in an unfurnished shack, and we're tired of it! We've been given a glimpse of the real thing, our true home, our resurrection bodies! The Spirit of God whets our appetite by giving us a taste of what's ahead. He puts a little of heaven in our hearts so that we'll never settle for less.

"That's why we live with such good cheer. You

won't see us drooping our heads or dragging our feet! Cramped conditions here don't get us down. They only remind us of the spacious living conditions ahead. It's what we trust in but don't yet see that keeps us going. Do you suppose a few ruts in the road or rocks in the path are going to stop us? When the time comes, we'll be plenty ready to exchange exile for homecoming.

"But neither exile nor homecoming is the main thing. Cheerfully pleasing God is the main thing, and that's what we aim to do, regardless of our conditions. Sooner or later we'll all have to face God, regardless of our conditions. We will appear before Christ and take what's coming to us as a result of our actions, either good or bad. That keeps us vigilant, you can be sure. It's no light thing to know that we'll all one day stand in that place of judgment. That's why we work urgently with everyone we meet to get them ready to face God."

—The Apostle Paul (2 Cor. 5:1-5)
from *The Message*, a Bible Paraphrase
by Eugene H. Peterson

Learning Contentment

Paul says, "I have learned...to be content." He was not born knowing it, and he did not acquire it automatically. He is teaching the Philippians—and us—that we must set our minds and hearts to acquiring this virtue if we would have it.

How can we learn it? Here are a few suggestions to try:

1) Never complain about anything, not even the weather.

There are two reasons to practice never complaining. First, because complaining so easily becomes a habit. There are people who are chronic grumblers. They complain about everything. This in itself develops into a negative attitude toward life. Take the weather, for instance. What does complaining about it accomplish, except to make you unhappy?

But a second—and more important—reason for not complaining is that by complaining we question the goodness and providence of God. A classic example is that of the Israelites in the desert. Again and again they murmured, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the desert? There is no bread! There is no water! And we detest this miserable food!" (Num. 21:5 NIV). This stands as a solemn reminder to us that complaining can be deadly!

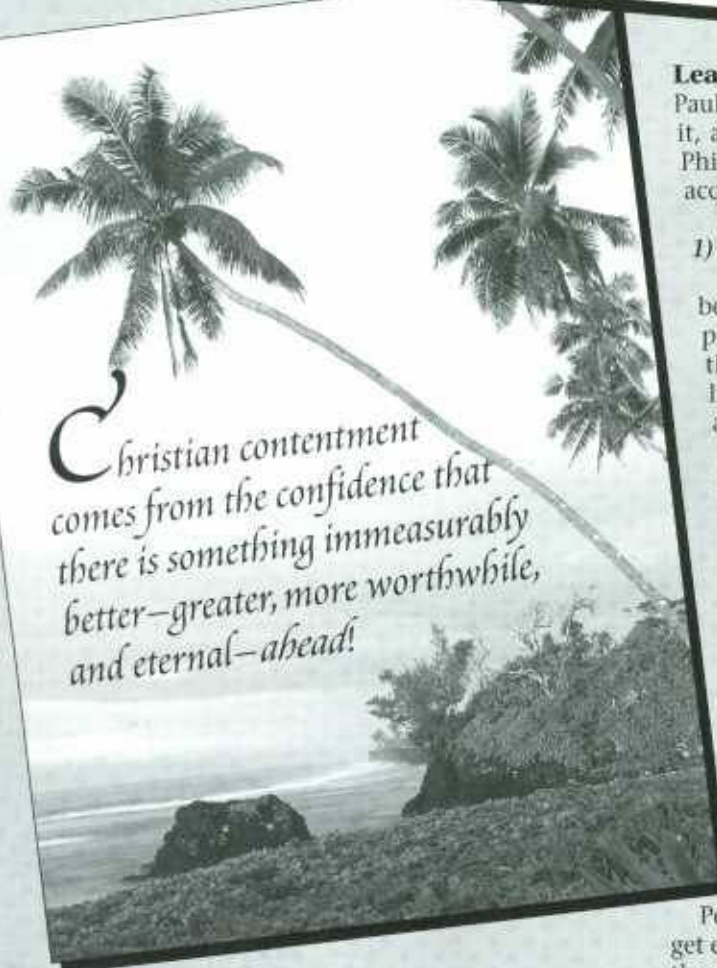
2) Never revel in unreality.

Don't live in a dream world. It is an illusion to think that the grass is always greener on the other side of the fence. Such dreaming only causes envy, which leads to strife and discontent. Someone has suggested that the best way to find greener pastures is to water the meadow where you are.

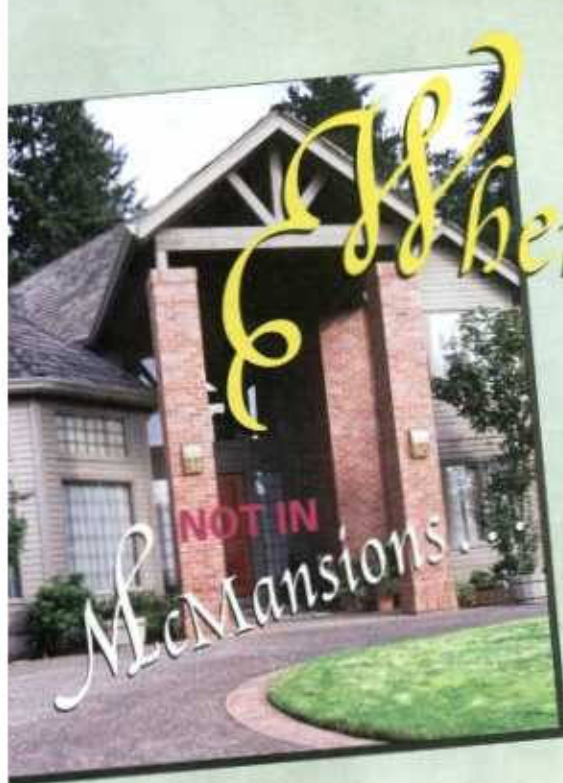
3) Never compare your situation with that of another.

People who have no real hope in God are—naturally—trying to get everything possible from this life, since in their view that is all there is. The Christian, on the other hand, views life as a preparation. For this reason, there is just no fair way to compare the

(Continued on page 25)



Christian contentment comes from the confidence that there is something immeasurably better—greater, more worthwhile, and eternal—ahead!



There's a new kind of building venture called "McMansions"—homes costing as much as \$1 million!

"And these 'near-custom' homes, constructed on a mass-market scale, have helped establish a whole new set of standards in upscale living." — *U.S. News & World Report*, May 24, 1999

Referring to a whirlpool bath, a mother of two comments, "It's something you totally don't need." Yet she and her husband opted to have one in the master bathroom of their new home." — *U.S. News & World Report*, May 24, 1999

"Psychotherapists see modest signs of rebellion. Many affluent Americans, they say, are beginning to recognize that, in the words of Richard Ryan, a psychologist at the University of Rochester, 'there's a very short half-life to the pleasure that comes from spending.' Between 1990 and 96, according to a survey by EDK Associates, nearly a fifth of the population made a voluntary effort to achieve a simpler lifestyle. About 85 percent of these 'downshifters' reported that they were happier as a result.

"To the marketing world, however, downshifters are just another subgroup of consumers with needs. Feeling stressed out? How about a cruise or, for that matter, a whirlpool bath? Disconnected from family and friends? How about an in-home theater?"

— *U.S. News & World Report*, May 24, 1999

"Americans, says Cornell's Robert Frank (Cornell University economist), are 'trying to be as rational as they can.' But they're caught in an arms-race-like cycle in which a series of decisions, logical in themselves, add up to collective madness.

"If so, Joe Fernandez, a former Citicorp executive living in San Francisco, can testify to the syndrome. Fernandez decided to trade in his 1997 BMW 328 for the 1999 edition of the same car. He nearly changed his mind, he says, when he discovered that an administrative assistant in his office owned one. Fernandez told his wife: 'You know, Maria has the same car I have. Shouldn't I have a larger car? Why don't we get a 500... we can afford it.'" — *U.S. News & World Report*, May 24, 1999



America is turning into a land of big spenders. But at what price?

"With the economy booming and incomes finally beginning to climb for those on the middle and lower rungs of the ladder, a 'national culture of upscale spending' has emerged, economist Juliet Schor writes in the *Overspent American*. People are running up record levels of debt, she argues, in order to acquire bigger cars, bigger TVs, and bigger houses." — *U.S. News & World Report*, May 24, 1999



Success and Money Do Not Make Happiness

Crossing the Atlantic in mid-winter is like my life in a very marked way. I have had my ups and downs. I have had my successes and failures. I have had sore trials and beautiful friendships on both sides of the sea....I have known what it means to be hooted and hissed by audiences, and also to receive their applause and praise.

I have learned that success and money do not make for happiness. What makes for happiness is a chance to do something for others...I want to give of myself, of my music and my possessions, to others. That is supreme happiness. —Fritz Kreisler

*My crown is in my heart, not on my head;
Not decked with diamonds and Indian stones,
Nor to be seen. My crown is called content.
A crown it is that seldom kings enjoy.*

—William Shakespeare

Avoid Discontent and Fret

There is a time to weep and a time to rejoice, but there is a place between the two called discontent.

To the malcontent no house is comfortable, no clothes satisfactory, no job rewarding, no day happy.

The discontented person should ask: "With whom would I swap places?"

Contentment will conserve your strength and turn your mind loose to think constructively. But discontent—what a waste!

Why waste your energy, time and health to no avail?

Peace comes from enjoying what you have and by losing the desire for what you can't have.

*When Fuss and Fret was all my fare
It got no grounds, as I could see,
So when away my caring went
I counted cost and was content.*

—John Bryon

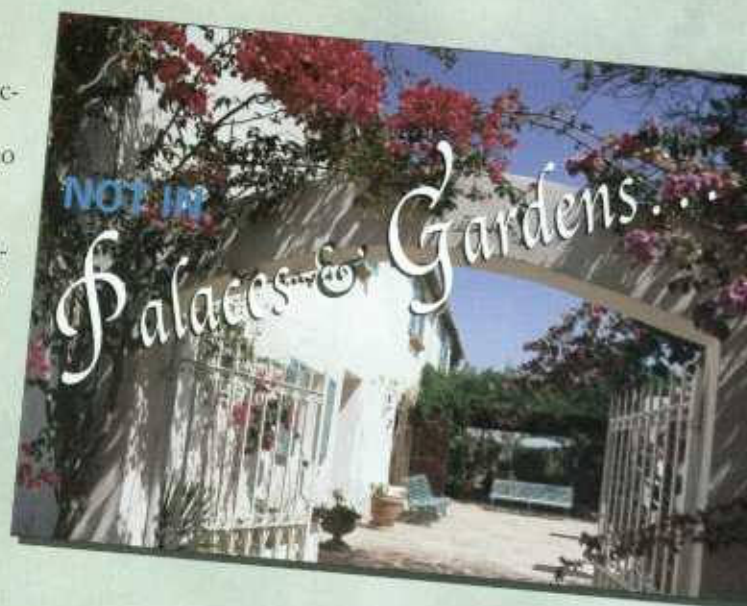
The Riches of Contentment

Contentment is the richest riches this poor, troubled world has ever known, richer than any king's golden, bejeweled crown.

The best things are the nearest:

- ◆ pulse in your veins,
- ◆ sight in your eyes,
- ◆ hearing in your ears,
- ◆ food in your stomach,
- ◆ flowers in your yard,
- ◆ water in your well,
- ◆ employment for your mind and hands,
- ◆ friends in your heart,
- ◆ the path of God for your feet.

Life's plain, common things provide peace, joy and sleep; and if they do not, neither would the state, position or riches one wishes for.

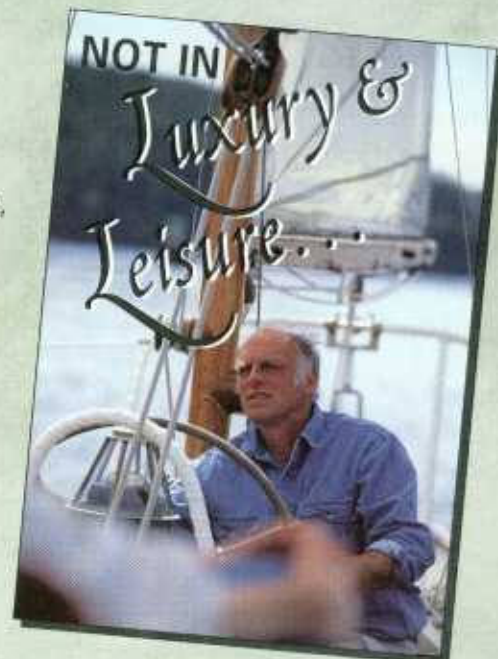


Back To Rationing

When she got fed up about the frequent complaints of her 14-year-old daughter at the dining table, a wise mother decided to do something about it.

She went down to the library for a check on what she as a girl had eaten during the London blitz during the Second World War. Then she put herself and her daughter Janet on the same diet—a week's ration of 14 ounces of meat, 3 eggs, 3 lbs. of potatoes, and 2 ounces of cheese. Sunday dinner was bread and butter and a hard-boiled egg.

"It was a good lesson," Janet decided. "I'll never complain again."





The End of the Age

IN THE DAYS OF JERUSALEM

PART THREE

CHARACTERS:

Nathan Christian believer during the First Century
Baruch Christian believer and friend of Nathan

TIME:

During the First Century AD

NARRATOR:

What was it like to walk the streets of a great city like Jerusalem during the early part of the first century, and suddenly hear a new preacher—like Jesus?

Two youths, Nathan and Baruch in our story, had this experience. They chanced to hear and were drawn to this distinctive man from Nazareth. Many preachers passed through Jerusalem in those days, but Jesus was different. He had a way of doing the unorthodox—even the impossible—which attracted the boys. Something about His words and message gripped their hearts.

There was something in Baruch that loved action and adventure—even wild excitement, if it came to that. He might have been a rebel, given the right companionship. Nathan, too, saw something compelling in Jesus. Both seemed ready, even eager, to follow.

The boys followed Jesus around Galilee, and when Jesus departed for Jerusalem, the boys still followed. One day they heard Jesus speaking near the temple. His words were almost more than they could take in, but they listened intently.

(Curtain opens, sound of thunder and lightning)

VOICE:

"See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down..."

"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come."

"And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them which are

in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter therein.

"For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled."

"But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land

"And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (Matt. 24:2, 14; Luke 21:20-24).

NARRATOR:

Baruch and Nathan heard, and in the days that followed they spoke many times of what those words might mean. But soon their boyish hopes were dashed as they saw Jesus arrested—condemned—crucified. In terror they fled to their homes in Galilee.

When news arrived weeks later that Jesus was alive again, the two eagerly returned to Jerusalem—and what did they find? Not a few timid, bewildered believers but zealous disciples speaking boldly by the power of the Holy Spirit in the synagogues.

Wholeheartedly Nathan and Baruch joined the new—and surprisingly popular—movement. Any service, however humble, they gladly performed. The Gospel, the young men soon learned, had to be preached to all the Roman world without delay; the end of the age was near.

But the movement was not to go forward without opposition. And when persecution became too much, the group had to disperse.

Nathan and Baruch went different directions. Nathan made his way to a small Christian church in Egypt, where he served as deacon for the next fourteen years and learned many valuable lessons of the Christian life. When opportunity permitted, he visited Jerusalem, drawing strength from the teachings and example of the surviving apostles.

During these years Nathan thought many times of his youthful friend Baruch, but never did he encounter him.

It was now the year 63 AD, when events were driving hard toward the fated insurrection which was to bring the Roman general Titus and his armies to the walls of Jerusalem. Nathan, single and unencumbered, strong and active in spite of a few gray hairs, had been compelled because of business to reside in Jerusalem for an indefinite period, reluctantly enough. To one who had known Jerusalem in happier days, it was a depressing place to live. Robbers terrorized the residents. Unemployment added to the general misery, and the Jews kept a small army of men guarding the Temple. Prominent and wealthy citizens were daily leaving the city for other—and safer—parts of the Empire.

Jerusalem had only one attraction: association with the parent Church, where a few dedicated hearts were knit together in faithful service to God. Quickly Nathan searched them out, and became one of them.

Then one day Nathan chanced to meet his old friend Baruch. Face to face upon the street they met, after all the years of separation. Of course there were natural expressions and outpourings of joy and affection. Then they fell to discussing the real issues of life.

Baruch told his experiences in brief. He had gone to a Galilean farm when things seemed to lag in Jerusalem; and providing for his wife and five children left him little time for any outside interest—church or otherwise. No, his mate was not a believer, although at first she had seemed to go along. Now she had become bitter, and the mere mention of Christianity brought a storm. That accounted, Nathan thought, for Baruch's harassed, fearful expression, so unlike the fiery, impetuous youth he had known. He had attended the parent church on rare occasions; more frequently he had assembled with a small group in Kedesh, his nearest village. Lately he had become slack, he admitted, even in that; but now that he, too, had relocated to Jerusalem, he intended to renew his vows and his zeal in the time-honored faith.

Nathan's heart sank as he became conscious of the change in his former companion. Suddenly he felt old and weary. All these years he had hoped against hope that Baruch might outlive his youthful folly and settle down to a life of Christian usefulness in one of the churches. Baruch had evidently settled down, but to something entirely different.

Let's listen in on a little of their conversation.

(Curtain opens, street scene, Nathan and Baruch talking)

NATHAN: Did you forget, Baruch, our promise to each other to remain unencumbered, ready for instant action?

BARUCH: *(slowly, reluctantly, his eyes on the ground)* No, Nathan, I did not forget, but action was a long time coming. I waited for many years in Jerusalem, and at last I began to wonder what I was waiting for.

NATHAN: What you were waiting for! Why, man, can't you see it coming?

BARUCH: *(blankly)* See what coming?

NATHAN: The time of trouble Jesus told us about, when the city and temple will be destroyed. It has already started, if you will only open your eyes and look around you!

BARUCH: *(shrugs shoulders)* I don't know. For a long time I

interpreted every little riot as the beginning of the end, but things always seemed to right themselves, and time goes along as before—ups and downs, you know. So now I'm waiting to see what happens.

NATHAN: You'll see, all right, and very soon. All these past troubles were preparing the way for the final crash. Everything is moving toward that end without a backward step.

BARUCH: It's been a lon-n-n-n-n-n-n delay.

NATHAN: Not a bit of it! We had no right to expect the end till the Gospel had been preached to all the Empire, and in our younger days that work was just beginning. Things are entirely different now. You'd better get ready to escape!

BARUCH: *(smiles bitterly)* I talked that way once, too, Nathan, but I've seen so many seditions come and go that—well, I'm all at sea. I don't know what Jesus meant by those sayings, and probably no one living knows. It may come, but what assurance have we that it will be in our lifetime?

NATHAN: The assurance to me, apart from the words of Jesus and the prophets, is the condition of the whole nation, and of this city in particular.

BARUCH: It has been bad before.

NATHAN: Yes, and it has been destroyed before, according to

Men have grown old and died without hope, and most of them have found life an empty thing.

the Word of God. Some—many—would not believe then, but that did not change things. Read the prophets, from Moses down, and see how they foretold the very things we see today, and the punishments which would follow. Baruch, since you are waiting now, why couldn't you wait as you were? and while you waited—work. Wouldn't it have been the better way?

BARUCH: The way it has turned out so far *(glances cautiously over his shoulder)* you are undoubtedly right. But I couldn't foresee the future, and I was growing older all the time. I didn't want to miss everything in life, so I took the course I did. Now I have to make the best of it. You know, men have grown old and died waiting for something that never came.

NATHAN: True, and men have grown old and died in their sins with no hope nor assurance of life beyond the grave; and most of them have found life without faith an empty thing. Also, as I told you years ago, men have grown impatient and died before their time. *(looks searchingly at Baruch).*

BARUCH: *(argumentative)* But if you are so sure this is the end, why are you in Jerusalem?

NATHAN: I'm here of necessity; I wish I were elsewhere. I'm
(Continued on page 19)

Know Your Bible?

JERUSALEM

1. Jerusalem had three names throughout the centuries. What were they?
2. How many times was the temple in Jerusalem built or rebuilt? When will it be rebuilt to stand forever?
3. What mountains are near Jerusalem?
4. On which of the mountains was the temple built?
5. Which of these was outside the city and to the east?
6. Who was the early king and priest to whom Abram gave tithes when he returned from the battle at Dan?
7. Was Jesus born in Jerusalem?
8. What brook flowed by Jerusalem?
9. Was the Garden of Gethsemane in Jerusalem?
10. Who saw the "New Jerusalem" in vision?

MEN AND MOUNTAINS

Match the man with the mountain with which his name is associated.

- | | |
|------------|---------------|
| 1. Noah | a. Hor |
| 2. Abraham | b. Carmel |
| 3. Moses | c. Olivet |
| 4. Aaron | d. Ararat |
| 5. Jesus | e. Moriah |
| 6. Elijah | f. Sinal |
| 7. Paul | g. Mars' hill |

STANDING

1. Who wrote, *"Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall"*?
2. Where were the Israelites when Moses said to them, *"Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord"*?
3. Who saw an angel of the Lord stand between earth and heaven with a drawn sword in his hand?
4. Who stood head and shoulders above the rest of the people?
5. Who *"standing afar off"* smote upon his breast?
6. Who said, *"Every city or house divided against itself shall not stand"*?
7. Who said, concerning Elisha, *"I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God"*?
8. To whom did Peter say, *"Stand up; I myself also am a man"*?
9. Who said to Abraham's servant, *"Come in, thou blessed of the Lord; wherefore standest thou without?"*

SPIRIT

1. What queen asked her husband, *"Why is thy spirit so sad?"*
2. Who said he was *"in the Spirit on the Lord's Day"*?
3. Of whom were the disciples speaking when they said to each other, *"It is a spirit"*?
4. Of whom was it said that he had *"another spirit"*?
5. *"Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?"* Who said this?
6. Who wrote: *"Quench not the Spirit"*?
7. Of whom was Jesus speaking when He said, *"The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak"*?
8. To whom did Jesus say, *"Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God"*?
9. To whom did the Spirit say, *"Go near, and join thyself to this chariot"*?
10. Who said he saw *"The Spirit descending from heaven like a dove"*?

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON PAGE 25

IN THE DAYS OF JERUSALEM

(Continued from page 17)

leaving as soon as my business is done—maybe sooner. As for you, with your large family, I would advise you to start just as soon as you can and get as far away from here as possible.

BARUCH: Well... I'll have to consult Mariamme about it. We'll probably get out in time, anyway. I've always been lucky. Things like this don't come all at once.

NATHAN: No, Baruch, that's what I've been telling you. It has been coming for a long time, and now it is right upon us!

BARUCH: (softening) I know I'm weak. I know I'm foolish. Oh, that I could rise to my former heights of faith! Nathan, I need your help. I beg you, help me. I promise I will attend all the Christian assemblies faithfully. I will, I promise!

NATHAN: I hope you speak the truth, Baruch, I will help you all I can. But you are aware that you are starting pretty late—?

NARRATOR:

Several months later, a small religious riot filled Jerusalem with tumult and massacre. Members of the Church were persuaded that the end of the age was definitely at hand, and preparations for departure began. Naturally there was much unfinished business, and much delay. Then one chill autumn morning Jerusalem awoke to find the army of the Roman general Cestius camped outside the walls. Things looked black, very black. Escape had been delayed too long. Still, at the Christians' daily gatherings, preachers exhorted them to be of good courage; God would provide. "When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed about with armies, flee to the mountains." But how? and when?

The outer city was taken on the fourth day, but the populace retreated within the strong walls of the inner fortifications. For five days the assault was pressed, the residents of Jerusalem fighting bravely. But as the assault continued, the people began to run about wildly, panic-stricken. They were being defeated, and they knew it.

Then happened one of those strange tricks of fate. No, not a trick of fate but a work of Omnipotence for the salvation of His people who still remained in the doomed city. For the Jewish nation, hopelessly depraved and rebellious, God had no care; but for His own He acted.

In another hour the Romans would have been masters of the upper city. But just then the Roman general became fearful. The towers of the city were a bit too strong to take just now, he concluded from his safe observation post. Better to forfeit the whole than risk a loss. He ordered his soldiers to retreat.

In silence the Roman legions marched out of the city amid the jeers of the defenders.

The result was mass disorder; Jerusalem became a vast, ungoverned madhouse, wild with the joy of release.

But for the Christian congregation, this was opportunity to escape. Haste was vital. With the Romans gone, robber gangs would soon infest the whole surrounding area and travel would be impossible. The Egyptian border was already reported closed and southern roads unsafe.

In the midst of it all, Nathan made his way to the home of Baruch. The latter stepped into the street and around the corner (Nathan was not welcome in the house of Mariamme). The two men looked into each other's eyes. Baruch knew well enough the errand, but he affected ignorance. Nathan spoke first.

(Curtain opens; street scene again)

NATHAN: Well?

BARUCH: Well, what?

NATHAN: Come, Man, don't be stupid! You know what I mean. What are you going to do?

BARUCH: (hesitates) I don't know. What do you think?

NATHAN: I don't think; I know! I know it's time to get out of here. We almost got caught this time, and one such lesson is enough for me. I'm going. So are you, I hope.

BARUCH: (weakly) Well, I...I suppose you're right. It isn't really safe to stay any longer. But, Nathan, this picking up and moving isn't as simple as it sounds...Business...

NATHAN: Business! Never mind the business. Get out with your life! You can live happily without much money, but it's frightfully uninteresting to be dead, even if you're rich. Come! When shall we start?

BARUCH: Well—let me see—this is going to take time, of course. I can't leave on a minute's notice.

NATHAN: Time? How much time did we lose when we ran

*You can live happily
without much money, but it's
frightfully uninteresting to be
dead, even if you're rich.*

away from Calvary? That was an unworthy thing, but in this case we have orders from Jesus Himself: "When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies"—have you forgotten that?

BARUCH: No; I remember, but—the armies are gone!

NATHAN: Be thankful for that! How could we get away if they were here? This looks like an act of God for our sake, so let's take advantage of it. Your luck may fail you the next time. Shall we start tomorrow?

BARUCH: There's no such hurry as that, is there? There's time enough yet. It will take the Romans months to get organized for another siege, and no telling what turn things may take in the meantime.

NATHAN: Do you know what you remind me of? You are one of those people Ezekiel describes, who say, "The days are prolonged and every vision faileth."

BARUCH: Oh, surely, I'm not as bad as that. I haven't denied the faith. I still believe as firmly as ever.

(Continued on page 26)

Help Me To Keep A Right Spirit

1. Help me to keep a right spir - it, Lord, As a true child of Thine;
2. Help me to keep a right spir - it, Lord, Thru eve'ry try-ing hour;
3. Help me to keep a right spir - it, Lord, Tho I may in-jured be;
4. Help me to keep a right spir - it, Lord, When cares are pressing sore;

In all my ways and in all I do, Lord, may Thy glo - ry shine.
Help me to stand, nor im - pa - tient be, Kept by Thy might-y pow'r.
Help me to bless in re - turn for wrong, Rest-ing my soul in Thee.
Save me from fret-ting when ways are hard, Help me to trust Thee more.

Chorus Prayerfully

Help me to keep a right spir - it, Lord, Tempered by truth a - lone;
Help me to be al-ways pleas-ing to Thee, Soften this heart of stone.



A Right Spirit

by MARGARET A. TREMBLAY

How am I doing? Am I taking my high calling in Christ Jesus seriously? Am I using my time and opportunities to God's glory? Do I have a right spirit all the time?

The words of a thoughtful prayer song I find especially helpful. It is *Help Me To Keep A Right Spirit*. This song is a real challenge to Christ-likeness.

In all my ways and in all I do, Lord, may Thy glory shine. Not easily done! But what an influence for good we will be when we reach that plane. Maybe there is a person in our family or an acquaintance who will desire to share our faith and hope because of our good example.

Through every trying hour help me to stand, nor impatient be. To some of us, this is a growth indeed! Impatience never makes us feel good inside, but how we let it well up anyway over and over again. There seem to be so many areas in our daily lives that are trying. Do we expect too much of others and ourselves, causing frustrations and pressure? Maybe we live with someone who is overly critical, picking at this or that.

Often we do not have control over them, but we can have control over how they affect us inside.

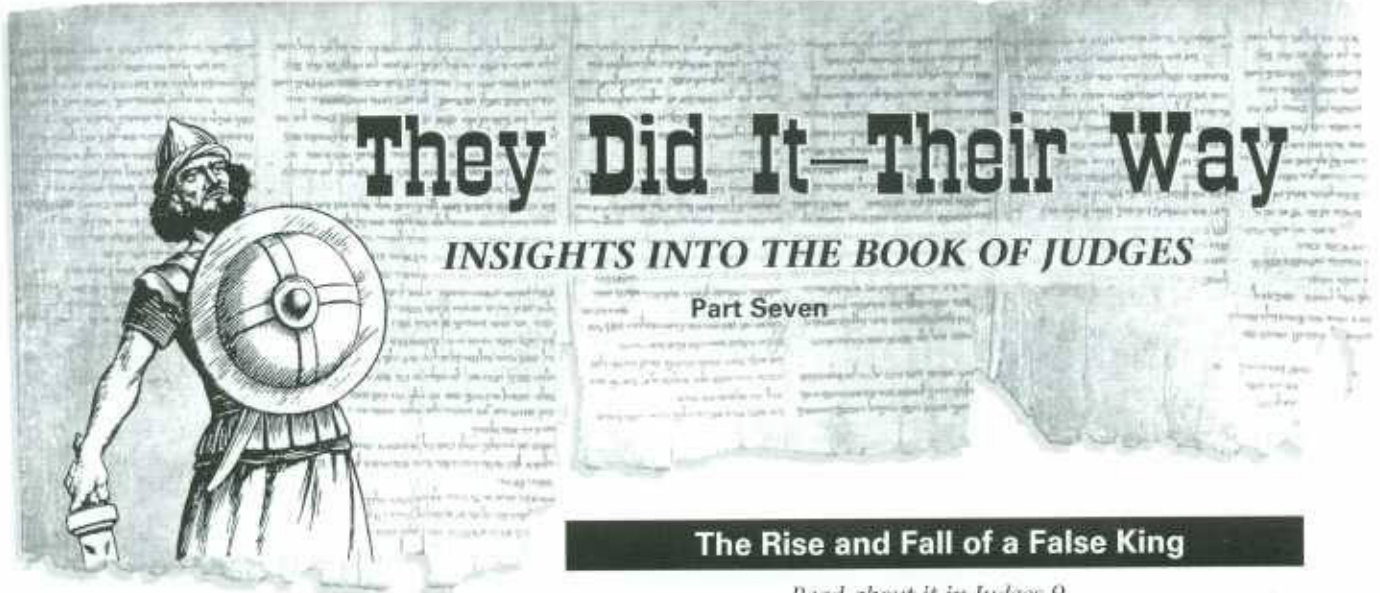
Help me to keep a right spirit though I may injured be; help me to bless in return for wrong. It takes a real Christian to do this! Naturally we nurse our injuries (real or imaginary) instead of forgetting them. To wish someone well who has injured us is an accomplishment. This forgiving spirit is a sign of real spiritual growth. We can't have a place in Christ's Kingdom without it.

Joseph, David, Jesus, Stephen and Paul are outstanding examples of holding no animosity toward those who hated them. How we admire them for their strength of character! We, too, can learn to have that right spirit with God's help.

When cares are pressing sore, save me from fretting, help me to trust Thee more. It isn't stealing, murder, drunkenness, etc. that we have to be concerned about but the daily cares, the things that don't get done or don't work out as we would like them to that cause us to fret. We should stop and put our priorities in order when we begin to worry and fret. We have to have God in every part of our life before we will have perfect peace. The higher we are spiritually, the less affected by earthly things we will be.

Help me to be always pleasing to Thee, soften this heart of stone. Are we trying to do God's will or our own? We want to be the pliable clay in the potter's hand. The God who made the heavens, the earth and all things in it (Neh. 9:6) can certainly make us into a very beautiful vessel if we but submit to His will and commandments. God's way may take us over lonely and rough ways, but it will lead to glory in the end. Not just for a few years, but forever and ever! That is a LONG time! Isn't this reward more than ample to work for a right spirit? We want to hear the "Well done, thou good and faithful servant...enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" (Matt. 25:21).

I want my prayer to be, "**Help me to keep a right spirit, Lord.**" May it be yours also. ♦



by RUTH E. SISSON

Read about it in Judges 9

After Gideon defeated the Midianites, the Israelite people enjoyed forty years of peace (Judges 8:28). As usual, in a time of prosperity they began to wander away from the true God. So much so that when Gideon made the golden ephod as a memorial to his God-given victory, the people quickly turned to worshiping the ephod as a pagan idol. This led naturally to their reverting totally to Baal worship.

And so we read the same pitiful story again: "And it came to pass, as soon as Gideon was dead, that the children of Israel turned again, and went a whoring after Baalim, and made Baal-berith their god" (8:33). Notice the phrase: "As soon as Gideon was dead." That's all the excuse they needed to link up with the pagan deity—and to bring an unscrupulous dictator named Abimelech into power. That is all it took.

And when Abimelech rose to power, things went from bad to worse.

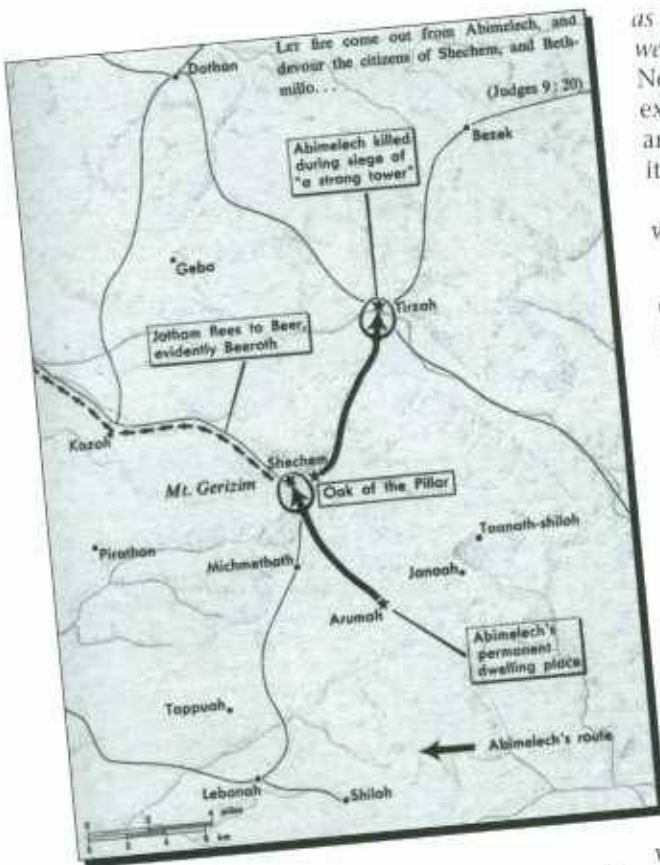
Who was Abimelech?

Gideon's many wives had given him seventy sons. Then a concubine who lived in Shechem gave him one more son. This last son, inferior in social status to the rest, was named Abimelech, which means, "The divine king is my father."

Whether Abimelech was motivated by his name, or the prospect of fame or worldly gain, he very soon approached his mother's relatives in Shechem with his idea: he wanted to be appointed their king.

The same people had offered this honor to Gideon, and he had the character to refuse it. But unlike his father Gideon, Abimelech was selfish and had no commitment to the true God. Nor was he above using such tools as lying and falsehood to bring about his ends. Slyly Abimelech aroused the people against his brothers and against those who with his father had destroyed the altar in Ophrah.

The people of Shechem, having no loyalty or gratitude to Gideon and no allegiance to God, and seeing the advantage of having a blood relative rule over them (especially one who would owe them the favor of his appointment), voted to support him. There were seventy-one possible candidates for the position, but the other seventy lived miles away. And so we read: "Their hearts



inclined to follow Abimelech; for they said, He is our brother" (9:3).

Do we get the picture? It is a dreadful picture of people doing what was right in their own eyes because there was no God-appointed king in Israel.

Almost immediately, upon being appointed, Abimelech needed money. The people of Shechem had a solution: they took money from the treasury of Baal and gave it to Abimelech. Using this money Abimelech hired thugs and murderers who went with him to Ophrah and murdered the rest of the sons of Gideon. Only one—the youngest—escaped.

Believing that the opposition was now gone, Abimelech returned to Shechem to proceed with his coronation. In the course of the celebration, his voice was heard calling to the men of Shechem: "Hearken unto me...that God may hearken unto you" (9:7). But it was only a scheme. Abimelech was not interested in hearkening unto God, and neither were the people.

In the course of the celebration, a lone opposing voice was heard. Jotham, youngest brother of Abimelech, had gone to the top of Mount Gerizim, and in the hearing of the people related a strange parable. Using the figure of a republic of trees electing a king, he pictured Israel's conduct. He spoke of Gideon and his sons as the olive tree, the fig tree, and the vine, who wisely refused to leave their God-appointed places of usefulness in order to go and reign over the trees. At the same time he compared Abimelech to a bramble, who not only eagerly accepted the invitation but warned that he would destroy the cedars of Lebanon if the trees did not elect him king.

Concluding his parable, Jotham reminded the people that his father had risked his life to deliver the nation, but they had returned evil for good by killing his sons and making the son of his maidservant king. If what they had done was right, they should, as he might have put it, find happiness in this bramble king. But if it was not right, he said, "Let fire come out of the throne of Abimelech (the bramble), and devour the men of Shechem and the house of Millo; and let fire come out from the house of Millo, and devour Abimelech" (9:20).

Was Jotham's voice prophetic? A short time proved that it was. Abimelech enjoyed only a brief three years of tumultuous success before the storm broke against him and the men of Shechem rebelled against his authority. Very soon Abimelech was dead, along with the evil men who had supported him. The Bible has the last word: "Thus God rendered the wickedness of Abimelech which he did unto his father, in slaying his seventy brethren: and all the evil of the men of Shechem did God render upon their heads: and upon

them came the curse of Jotham the son of Jerubbaal" (9:56-57).

Timeless Lessons

The story has two important lessons: 1) that the-end-justifies-the-means philosophy paves the way to disaster; and 2) that God always has the last word. We reap what we sow.

Abimelech was selfishly ambitious. He had his brothers assassinated because he saw them as impediments to his rise to power. To gain his ends, he not only pretended to be concerned for his mother's brethren but also made false accusations about his brothers. His lies paved the way for his acceptance.

If we want to please God, we not only must avoid the lust for power but also must let God plan our lives. Like the trees in Jotham's parable, we have been put here to bear fruit, not to assume power over one another.

Abimelech rose fast, and fell fast. Very soon, the fire that he had used to devour others devoured him.

Abimelech's story tells us that what we sow, we reap. Leadership which is evil carries with it the seeds of its own destruction. When leadership lacks character, it soon fails. The fundamental elements of leadership are integrity, sincerity and selflessness. Concentrate on these, and we will not become sidetracked.

Our character forms the basis of our leadership and the beliefs, values and goals we seek to impart to others. These include the dignity of each person, his need to achieve personal and corporate objectives, and the ability to motivate others. A good leader must have an interest in and real knowledge of the people. He must be able to motivate others toward constructive ends. When this is done, a godly leader can succeed where others succumb—like Abimelech—to personal ambition and exploitation.

A Dictator in Retrospect

The selfish ambition of Abimelech is a negative example of the importance of good character. Nothing noteworthy is recorded of him. Not in a single instance does he show strength of character. He stands as a blemish upon the pages of history, telling us what not to be.

Abimelech's brief reign demonstrates the effect of power-hungry dictators and their inability to use power wisely. As is often true, when such a one gets power, his thirst is not quenched—it only becomes more intense. Abimelech was consumed by his lust for power, so much so that he could not tolerate any threat to it. He did not have power—power had him. He ruthlessly wiped out not only his own brothers but also whole cities that refused to sub-



A woman crushed Abimelech's head with mill stone cast from a tower.

mit to him. Nothing short of death could stop his blood-thirsty drive to conquer.

The side effect of Abimelech's power was his suppression of the righteous. But all was not lost, for God was still working. There were still men and women in Israel who—in isolation—were faithfully serving God.

This has happened many times in history. Moses spent forty years in solitude tending the sheep of his father-in-law Jethro. Elijah, at the command of God, found shelter and safety beyond the borders of Ahab's domain in Zarephath. The apostle Paul spent some four years in the Arabian desert. All of these were times of silent preparation, after which these great leaders could emerge into the spotlight with renewed energy and new sincerity. Their years in the background helped them to master the situations that might otherwise have overwhelmed them.

The Next Deliverer: Tola

Often we admire an attainment without realizing the process by which it was attained.

This was true of Tola, who—silently, almost without notice—after Abimelech was dead arose to “deliver” Israel. Some modern writers do not give any credit to Tola. They call him a very minor judge, and note that his twenty-three years occupy only two verses (Judges 10:1-2).

But these two verses give us a few important facts: Tola was a God-appointed judge. And he came from a notable family within the tribe, the family of Issachar. Men from Issachar were noted for their wisdom. They “understood the times, with knowledge of what Israel should do” (1 Chron. 12:32 NASB). Isn't it fair to assume that Tola possessed this characteristic?

What do we know about Tola's accomplishments? Only

that he arose “to save” Israel. In place of spectacular deeds, it is very possible that Tola was a good and godly man, who ruled quietly and effectively. It is also likely that he kept Israel from idolatry for twenty-three years, for during this time no outside enemies oppressed Israel. Very possibly he had a quiet but positive influence for good on the people. We should not minimize the value of his quiet contribution to the nation of Israel.

Then Judge Jair

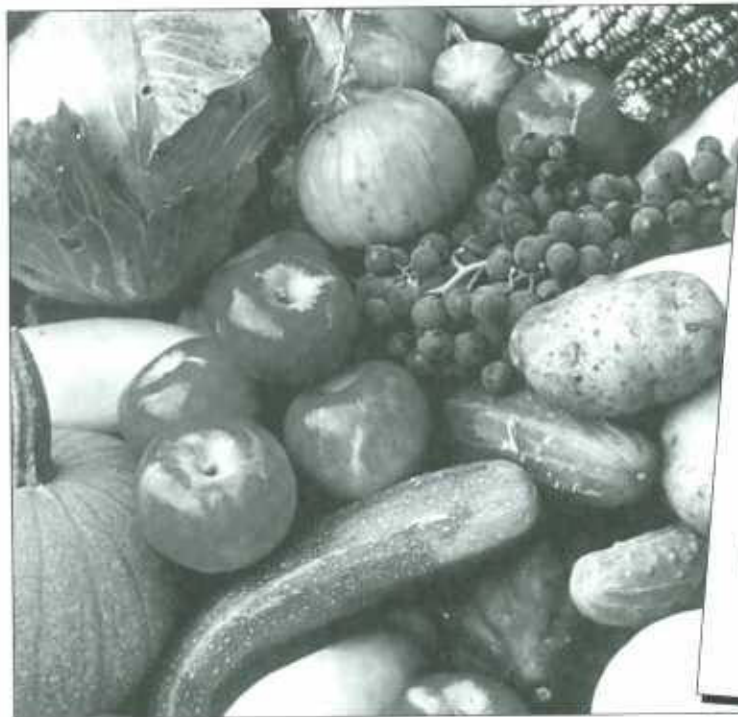
After Tola died, Jair from Gilead became the leader of the people. His home was east of the Jordan, in the area given to the half tribe of Manasseh (Num. 32:41; Deut. 3:14).

We know very little of Jair, but one detail suggests his stature among the people and his success in administering justice. We read that he had thirty sons (a mark of prestige), and that each son rode on a donkey (a sign of prosperity—Judges 10:4).

Jair apparently made each of his sons responsible for the governing of a city (1 Chron. 2:22-23). Although today we would call this nepotism, it was accepted policy at the time. Again our only basis for judging his action is the result: the people enjoyed twenty-two years of tranquility.

Tola and Jair were responsible for preserving the peace. In this way they maintained harmony among the tribes and made possible a form of stable government. Perhaps Jair's delegating of authority to his sons helped to carry out the law in local areas. Together they restrained evil.

If they incorporated the virtues of prudence, justice, temperance and fortitude into their administrations, this is an important reason why Israel enjoyed forty-five years of peace. ♦



You will never go wrong if you are always—
honest when proven wrong,
steadfast when facing evil,
fervent in prayer,
courteous with strangers,
patient in the presence of anger,
meek in confrontation,
pure in the midst of corruption,
gentle with the weak,
giving a kind answer for a harsh one,
temperate in all things,
sympathetic with the afflicted,
standing firm on godly principles,
courageous in the face of wrong,
doing everything you can to promote peace,
forgetting the past,
growing in godliness.

Won't it be bliss
if, having done all this,
you can hear the Master's
“WELL DONE!”

The Grace of Contentment

(Continued from page 13)

two. The one is looking for everything he can possibly extract from this world. The other is thinking, what will please God? What will give me a right to the world to come? The first is looking at what he can earn, acquire, enjoy. The second is looking at what he can build into his character which will assure God's favor.

The first finds it difficult to be content because his goal is to get as much as possible from this world. The second cannot be discontented because he is trusting God to give him everything he needs in this world, while his real goals are in the world to come.

Can't we see why comparing is pointless? Even in terms of this world, it only causes strife. It is the old story of the man who was delighted to win a thousand dollars—until he heard that his neighbor had won ten thousand.

4) Don't brood on the past wishing you could change it.

Wishful thinking of this kind is worse than useless. Far better is Paul's formula: "Forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:13-14). This should be our formula as well. We also need to remember that "All things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28 NRSV).

5) Don't worry about tomorrow. Remember, tomorrow is God's, not yours.

The heaviest part of any problem is anticipating it. This is why Jesus said: "Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?" (Matt. 6:25 NIV). If we are doing our part, God will provide for our needs, and we will have tomorrow what we need to meet it.

Why be content? Because however good or bad the present, it is only temporary. God is in control, and in His long-term scheme all things are working together for our eternal good.

Contented...Looking Beyond

How could the early Christians be content when they were facing a cruel mob? Because they were looking beyond. They had counted the cost, and were willing to pay it, if only they could receive the approval of Christ and have His commendation. They were looking beyond the suffering to the time when Christ would return and call them from the sleep of death and give them eternal life. They were looking forward to that new world where there would be no tears or sorrow but only bliss and happiness. Meanwhile they were content because—at best or at worst, it was only temporary. Their full faith was in God, who could be trusted to fulfill His promises. Faith was their stronghold, their solid rock, their strength and buttress. And in this commitment of faith they found a contentment that all the wealth and luxuries of the world could not tempt.

Can we be content as they were? Can we have a faith like theirs? a commitment like theirs?

Think about the men and women who gave their lives that the Bible might be preserved. Our forefathers fought and died to secure our religious freedom. Others have risked their lives in research, that our mortal bodies might be healed, that our mortal lives might be extended. God has provided for us in countless ways, so that we can concentrate on the things that really count, so that we can reach the standard He requires and receive His full salvation. He has given us luxuries that even monarchs a millennium ago could not have imagined—shouldn't we be content—and grateful?

Think about Paul's forward look: "It's what we trust in but don't yet see that keeps us going." Think about this, and you will find it much more difficult to complain.

Think about it, and you will have a change of attitude, a change from grumbling to contentment.

Think about the joy to come. That is the ultimate contentment I want, to hear Jesus say to me, "Well done, good and faithful servant," then have Him beckon me to the right where I shall join with all the other members of His family.

Will you be there? Will I? ♦

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON PAGE 18

JERUSALEM

1. Jebus (Judges 19:10); Salem (Psalm 76:2); Jerusalem (Matt. 2:1)
2. Three times (Ezek. 21:27)—by Solomon (c. 1005 BC); by Zerubbabel (c. 520 BC); by Herod the Great. Only when rebuilt by Christ will it stand forever.
3. Mount Moriah (2 Chron. 3:1); Mount Zion (Joel 3:17; Isa., 52:1; Heb 12:22); Mount of Olives (Zech. 14:4; Acts 1:11-12)
4. Mount Moriah (2 Chron. 3:1)
5. Mount of Olives (Zech. 14:4)
6. Melchizedek (Gen. 14:18-20)
7. No, in Bethlehem (Matt. 2:1)
8. The brook Kedron (2 Kings 23:6, 12)

9. No; about half a mile from the city walls, at the foot of Mount of Olives (John 18:1; Mark 14:22-32)
10. John on Patmos (Rev. 21)

MEN AND MOUNTAINS

1. d (Gen. 8:1-4)
2. e (Gen. 22:1-2)
3. f (Ex. 19:23)
4. a (Deut. 32:50)
5. c (Luke 22:39)
6. b (1 Kings 18:17-21)
7. g (Acts 17:22)

STANDING

1. Paul (1 Corinthians 1:1; 10:12)
2. At the Red Sea (Exodus 13:18; 14:13)
3. David (1 Chronicles 21:16)
4. Saul (1 Samuel 10:21-24)

5. The publican in the parable (Luke 18:13)
6. Jesus (Matthew 12:25)
7. Naaman (2 Kings 5:10-11)
8. Cornelius (Acts 10:25-26)
9. Laban (Genesis 24:29-31)

SPIRIT

1. Jezebel (1 Kings 21:4-5)
2. John (Rev. 1:9-10)
3. Jesus (Matt. 14:25-26)
4. Caleb (Num. 14:24)
5. David (Psalm 139:7)
6. Paul (1 Thess. 5:19)
7. Peter (Matt. 26:40-41)
8. Nicodemus (John 3:4-5)
9. Philip (Acts 8:29)
10. John the Baptist (John 1:32-33)

IN THE DAYS OF JERUSALEM

(Continued from page 19)

NATHAN: You think you do. But if you don't get moving, I can't see that you believe anything. Have sense, Baruch. Get ready to leave—tomorrow!

BARUCH: (hangs head) Well, as I said, I'll have to see Mariamme about it. You see—you see, I'm not so free to go

Beyond a certain point it's every man for himself.

and come as I was when we were boys together. I can see now why Jesus said.... But it's too late now to do anything about that. I'll go with you, but first I'll have to convert her to the idea. No telling how long that will take.

NATHAN: Baruch, son of Jonathan, what kind of man are you? Who is the head of your house, anyway?

BARUCH: (glances around and drops voice) That's what I'd like to know. Wait for me a day or two, will you, Nathan?

NATHAN: I'll wait, but not too long. Beyond a certain point it's every man for himself. I'll see you tomorrow. Now get busy!

NARRATOR:

Nathan waited a week. With all his experience and Christian foresight, he still was blind to the dangers involved in his affection for his boyhood friend. He might save him—or he might fail and be too late himself. Nathan debated the question, but from one side only. And he waited. But when the last party of Christians was ready to depart and still Baruch's spouse was unconverted to the idea, Nathan bade him farewell and departed for the hill country and a small village named Pella.

Pella was crowded with refugees, and the problem of subsistence was grave. The more adventuresome pushed on to other havens. Nathan tarried three months, hoping against hope that Baruch would arrive, but Baruch did not come. At last Nathan set out with a score of others for the Lebanon ranges.

In the Lebanon ranges it was possible to live by the sweat of one's brow, and the refugees found the peace of the great mountains and forests very sweet. Working together they built a tiny log chapel in a secluded glen, and the little congregation settled down for an indefinite sojourn. Worship, labor, growth were possible here; life was passing and there was no time to lose. Here was opportunity.

For two years none of them ventured anywhere, even into Galilee. Travel was dangerous; shadowy enemies lurked behind every bush and stone. Robbers even threatened the small, secluded community from time to time. But there was little to be had, outside a few worn garments, sandals or a bit of food.

Nathan was one of the small congregation, heart and soul, and he was ready for anything—anything except what happened one day as he chanced to be on the outskirts of the settlement. It was a voice, a strange voice.

(Curtain opens. Setting: bushes and wooded area. Nathan stands erect, hears voice, reaches for dagger to defend himself)

BARUCH: (weak, pleading, as in desperation) Nathan! Nathan! don't—don't you know me?

NATHAN: (stands silent a moment, gazing straightly at him) Baruch!

BARUCH: Oh, Nathan, I—I am—am weak. (coughs hard) I am—sick. Will you—will you take me in?

NATHAN: Where are your family?

BARUCH: Dead.

NATHAN: All dead?

BARUCH: Every one. They—they starved to death before my eyes. My children—my child...(voice breaks, coughs hard again)

NATHAN: What do you expect to do now?

BARUCH: (falls to his knees pleading) I want to go with you, Nathan. Take me with you!—Take me—

NATHAN: (almost in tears) Life is hard here, Baruch. I doubt if—if you could take it, in your condition.

BARUCH: I've—I've wasted my life. I've made every mistake a man could make. I've been blind and weak and rebellious. Now I want to change my life. I want to be a Christian again. (coughs hard) I—I want to forget all about this terrible thing I have been through and to serve my God the rest of my days, if...if...He lets...me live.

NATHAN: I'm afraid—(silence)

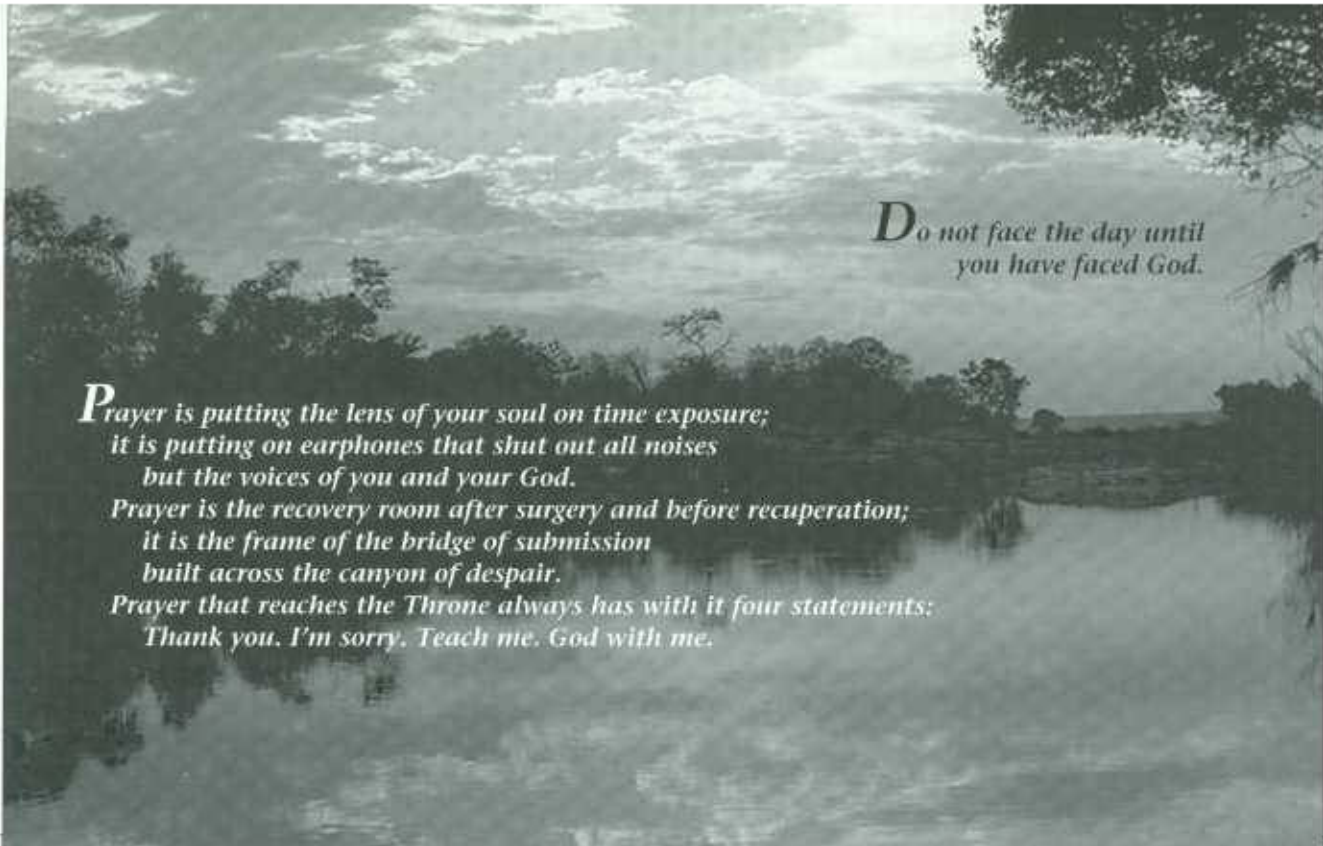
BARUCH: (halting speech) A month ago I escaped from the city by night. I hid by day, and crawled at night. When I slept, I dreamed of you and our boyhood days in Galilee. (coughs) When you came to me I was wondering if I would ever see you again. Don't leave me, Nathan! Take me...please, take me...take me with you! (whimpering, weakly) Take me! (slumps to the ground)

NARRATOR:

Tenderly, Nathan bent over his boyhood friend to give what comfort and assurance he could. By spells Baruch babbled, sometimes incoherently, about the new life which lay ahead of him. He had had his lesson—a terrible lesson. Now he was looking forward to something better. Now he was free, free to live wholly for God. Henceforth nothing should come between him and a life of faithful service.

Suddenly a fit of coughing seized Baruch, and he sank lifeless to the ground.

Nathan stood by, but he could see there was no more he could do for his old friend. A wave of helplessness swept over him, and a pleading cry escaped his lips: "O God, help!" And Nathan resolved never, never to let anything separate him from God and hope. And from the depths of his heart he lifted a prayer of thankfulness to the God who had spared him, guided him, and kept him safe to this hour. He, Nathan, would be faithful, all the way. With the help of God he would yet reach the summit of holiness—and life in the Kingdom of Christ! ♦



*Do not face the day until
you have faced God.*

*Prayer is putting the lens of your soul on time exposure;
it is putting on earphones that shut out all noises
but the voices of you and your God.
Prayer is the recovery room after surgery and before recuperation;
it is the frame of the bridge of submission
built across the canyon of despair.
Prayer that reaches the Throne always has with it four statements:
Thank you. I'm sorry. Teach me. God with me.*

*There is no danger of developing eyestrain from looking on
the bright side.*

*Prayer lifts the heart above the battle of life and gives it
a glimpse of God's resources which spell victory and
hope.*

One cannot waste time. He simply wastes life.

*The best angle from which to approach any problem is
the try-angle.*

If God is your Partner, make your plans large.

Today's success is yesterday's failure that wouldn't give up.

*Fear and Faith cannot keep house together.
When one enters, the other departs.*

*Doubt sees the obstacle; Faith sees the way.
Doubt sees the darkest night; Faith sees the day!
Doubt dreads to take a step, Faith asks, "Why?"
Doubt questions, "Who believes?" Faith answers, "I!"*

Have You Been Robbed?

(Continued from page 2)

We need to set aside time to worship and honor God. We need to fellowship with others of faith. We need to take time to ponder the Word of God and our personal growth into holiness. It is possible to live without these. But it is not possible to live as God's child without them. God wants our reverence, our heart, our consecrated will. If we cannot give these, He will not need to favor us with the salvation He is offering. If we cannot give these, we are indeed impoverished, concentrating on the secular and not on the Sacred.

But We Need Not Be Robbed.

There are ways to avoid being robbed. Many houses today are equipped with alarm devices, which may be

installed to warn when a burglar is at work. Doors and windows can be secured and locked.

In the same way we need not leave our minds open to every thief that wanders about. We can fortify our minds with the Word of God, and keep our windows always open to our heavenly Father.

In fact, God offers us complete protection through His "homeowner's policy." To take out such a policy we need only to make that complete commitment of ourselves to Him, so that He becomes the Guardian and Keeper of our lives.

Have you been robbed? Are you being robbed? Don't let it happen again. Guard with all that is in you those secret resources of faith and purpose.

They are the only treasures you can keep—eternally. ♦

***W** I Am Painting Now A Picture*

When my hair is thin and silvered, and my time of toil is through,
When the years behind are many and ahead of me are few,
I shall want to sit, I reckon, sort of dreaming in the sun,
And recall the roads I've traveled, and the many things I've done,
I hope there'll be no picture that I'll hate to look upon
When the time to paint it better, or to wipe it out, is gone.

I hope there'll be no vision of a hasty word I've said
That has left a trail of sorrow, like a whip-welt sore and red.
And I hope my old age dreaming will bring back no bitter scene
Of a time when I was selfish, or a time when I was mean.
When I'm getting old and feeble, and I'm far along life's way,
I don't want to be regretting any bygone yesterdays.

I am painting now a picture that I'll want some day to see;
I am filling in a canvas that will soon come back to me.
Though nothing great is on it, and though nothing there is fine,
I shall want to look it over when I'm old, and call it mine.
So I do not dare to leave it, while the paint is warm and wet,
With a single thing upon it that I later will regret.

—Selected

