

Megiddo Message

Teach us how short
our lives really are—
so we may be wise.

Psalm 90:12, EB



“LOVE IS NOT PROVOKED”

—The Apostle Paul, 1 Corinthians 13:5

The word “provoke” means to exasperate, stir up, arouse. Though it may be used properly in a good sense, it generally refers to the act of disturbing another person by an affront, whether real or supposed.

How quickly we can produce an explanation for our outburst of temper or ill feeling—by letting it be known that someone provoked us. Someone said or did something that was totally uncalled for; so we have good reason to lay our wrongdoing on another. What we overlook in this simple act of self-justification is that no provocation, however severe, can stir up what is not there. Someone misjudged our intentions, or accused us falsely, or criticized unnecessarily? What they said cannot put anything inside our heart; it can only bring out what is already there.

A circumstance does not *change* the character; it only *reveals* it.

What you and I do when someone (or something) provokes us only shows what we really are. The mud must be at the bottom of the pool or it cannot be stirred up. You cannot roil pure water. Provoking circumstances do not create the moral muck; they only bring it to the surface.

To use another simile, a cup brimful of sweet water cannot spill anything but sweet water, no matter how hard it is jolted. A pure-hearted person may be fiercely assailed by outside stimuli, but his response will always be pure because his heart is pure—there is no evil inside to incite.

The King James Version of 1 Corinthians 13:5 reads, “*Love is not easily provoked.*” The word “easily” is apparently a translator’s addition. “*Love is not provoked,*” read the majority of translations. Some substitute the thought of “irritation” for the provoking, making it read, “*Love is not irritable,*” but the thought is the same, for one who cannot be provoked is not irritable. Being provoked or being irritable are both incompatible with love, because perfect love cannot be stirred to any unloving word or act. Pure love can never disclose anything but pure love. Christ was tempted, but He could not be stirred to evil because there was no evil in Him to stir. The tempter’s efforts were wasted. Jesus’ was pure love.

Do I find some cheap consolation when I have let myself go in a display of bad disposition to believe that I was provoked to it by someone else? Simple honesty should compel me to face the fact the problem is mine, and no one else’s. I have the bad disposition, and what I like to call a provocation was really a God-sent opportunity for me to practice self-control. If I failed, the fault is all mine, not that of the person or circumstance that stirred me.

Before the pool can be muddied, the muck must be at the bottom.

Do you want pure water? Then get rid of the muck! ♦

*The mud must be at the
bottom of the pool or it cannot
be stirred up.*

COME BEFORE WINTER

*"DO YOUR BEST TO
COME BEFORE WINTER."*

— The Apostle Paul to Timothy

There is a sadness and poignancy in these words. Through the little window of this sentence from Paul's last letter to Timothy we can see a truth vividly portrayed. At the time it was a loving request, a heartfelt desire, along with a serious facing of reality. The words come down to us as a warning against procrastination, that deadly enemy of all accomplishment. It is a warning that time is not an endlessly gushing torrent of energy.

Time is limited. Circumstances change constantly. Opportunities may come only once, and they must be grasped promptly, or slip into the irretrievable past.

The Apostle Paul is writing this letter from his prison cell in Rome. The letter is filled with expressions of personal regard and affection for Timothy. Listen to its opening words:

"This letter is from Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by God's will,...It is written to Timothy, my dear son. May God our Father and Christ Jesus our Lord give you grace, mercy, and peace. Timothy, I thank God for you. He is the God I serve with a clear conscience, just as my ancestors did. Night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers. I long to see you again, for I remember your tears as we parted. And I will be filled with joy when we are together again" (2 Tim. 1:1-4 NLT).

Tenderness and affection then change to a kindly reminding of the obligation of duty. *"This is why I remind you to fan into flames the spiritual gift God gave you when I laid my hands on you....So you must never be ashamed to tell others about our Lord. And don't be ashamed of me, either, even though I'm in prison for Christ. With the strength God gives you, be ready to suffer with me for the proclamation of the Good News."* Timothy must carefully guard *"what has been entrusted to [him]"* (vs. 6, 8, 14 NLT). *"You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 2:1 NIV).* Paul appeals to him to face the stern conflicts manfully.

The letter is one of counsel and encouragement until—

Suddenly it changes. An autumn tang sweeps through the remaining pas-

There comes a time in every life when the winter of passing years freezes shut the golden doors of opportunity.

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MEGIDDO MEANS...

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

WE BELIEVE...

- ◆ in God, the Creator and sustainer of the earth, the world, the universes, and all life, in whom we "live, and move, and have our being."
- ◆ in the Bible as our only source of true knowledge about God and His purposes and plans for His creation and for the salvation of humankind.
- ◆ in Jesus Christ, the Son of God and our Perfect Example, who was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin; who ministered among His brethren, was crucified, resurrected, and taken to

heaven and seated at the right hand of the Father, crowned with immortal glory, and who shall shortly return to be King of the whole earth.

- ◆ in the Holy Spirit, the openly manifest power of God, which God bestowed at various times and in various ways to reveal His knowledge to humankind, to support His spokesmen, to confirm His utterances, and to demonstrate His supreme power and authority.
- ◆ in life as the gift of God, and in our sacred responsibility to use it for God and His coming Kingdom.
- ◆ in humankind as providing the raw material from which shall be selected and developed a superior, God-honoring people upon whom God will bestow the blessings of immortal life in His soon-coming Kingdom.
- ◆ in ourselves as capable, with the help of God, of applying to our own lives the precepts and principles taught in the Word of God, in this way perfecting that high quality of moral character which God has promised to recompense with life eternal in His heavenly Kingdom on earth.

- ◆ in the promise of God, that Jesus Christ will soon return to rid the earth of all sin and suffering and inaugurate an eternal and 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.

sages. In the midst of his writing, news comes which quenches the Apostle's last lingering hope of release. He has been condemned to die, and the sentence is final. He can never return to his beloved Ephesus. So he charges Timothy to leave Ephesus and come to Rome. "Do your best to come to me quickly" (2 Tim. 4:9 NIV).

He continues to write bravely: "The last drops of my own sacrifice are falling; my time to go has come. I have fought in the good fight; I have run my course; I have kept the faith" (2 Tim. 4:6-7 Moffatt).

It was as if Paul said, I was ever a fighter, Timothy dear lad, so one fight more—the last and the best.

As Paul approaches what he knows will be the end, his feeling is not fear and frustration but the joy of triumph. A fight well fought, a race course finished, a battle won—he has only a few more moments of consciousness before the next thing he will know—the day of coronation! "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (v. 8).

But a certain disquietude intrudes. He longs all the more for Timothy's company because he has been deserted by many of his friends. Of all who set out with him from Asia, only Luke remains.

The knowledge of his impending death brings him not fear but a feeling of unfinished business. He must leave the work he loves in worthy hands.

So Paul instructs Timothy to come.

And when he comes, he asks that Timothy bring with him his belongings: as the days grew shorter and chillier he was feeling a need for his mantle, his manuscripts and "especially the parchments," the Old Testament Scriptures.

When should Timothy come? It was already autumn, and two or three weeks would elapse before his summons could reach Ephesus and Timothy. Since navigation was dangerous after the autumn solstice and was entirely suspended after the first week in November, there was no time to lose. So Paul amends his injunction to "join me soon." He says now, "Do your best to come before winter." It is an autumn warning. "Timothy, you must come very soon—before winter—or it may be too late."

If Timothy responded and started for Rome immediately, perhaps he was able to share in Paul's last hours. But suppose he had waited? What if he had missed that last boat to Rome and arrived the following spring, after Paul had been executed? Would he ever have been able to forgive himself for disregarding Paul's urgent plea to "do your best to come before winter"?

These words have current significance. Summer is the time of golden opportunity. But there comes a time in every life when the icy weather of winter—whether it be the winter of passing years, the winter of changing attitudes, or the winter of unbreakable habit—freezes shut the golden doors of opportunity. By the time the spring-time comes again—if it ever does—it is too late.

You CAN Win Against Procrastination

We can all relate to the temptation to put things off, whether simple tasks or complex. Procrastination is something that threatens every part of life, physical, material, and especially spiritual.

We all do fine with things we enjoy doing.

But when we perceive something as difficult, inconvenient, or scary, it is easy to shift into procrastination mode.

Did you ever tell yourself any of these excuses?

- I'm not in the mood right now.
- There's plenty of time yet.
- It's too hard for me.
- I don't know where to begin.
- I work better under pressure.
- I've got too many other things to do first.

Don't be fooled by these innocent-sounding excuses. All they do is help us to put second things first—and the really important things get postponed.

At best, it's self-defeating.

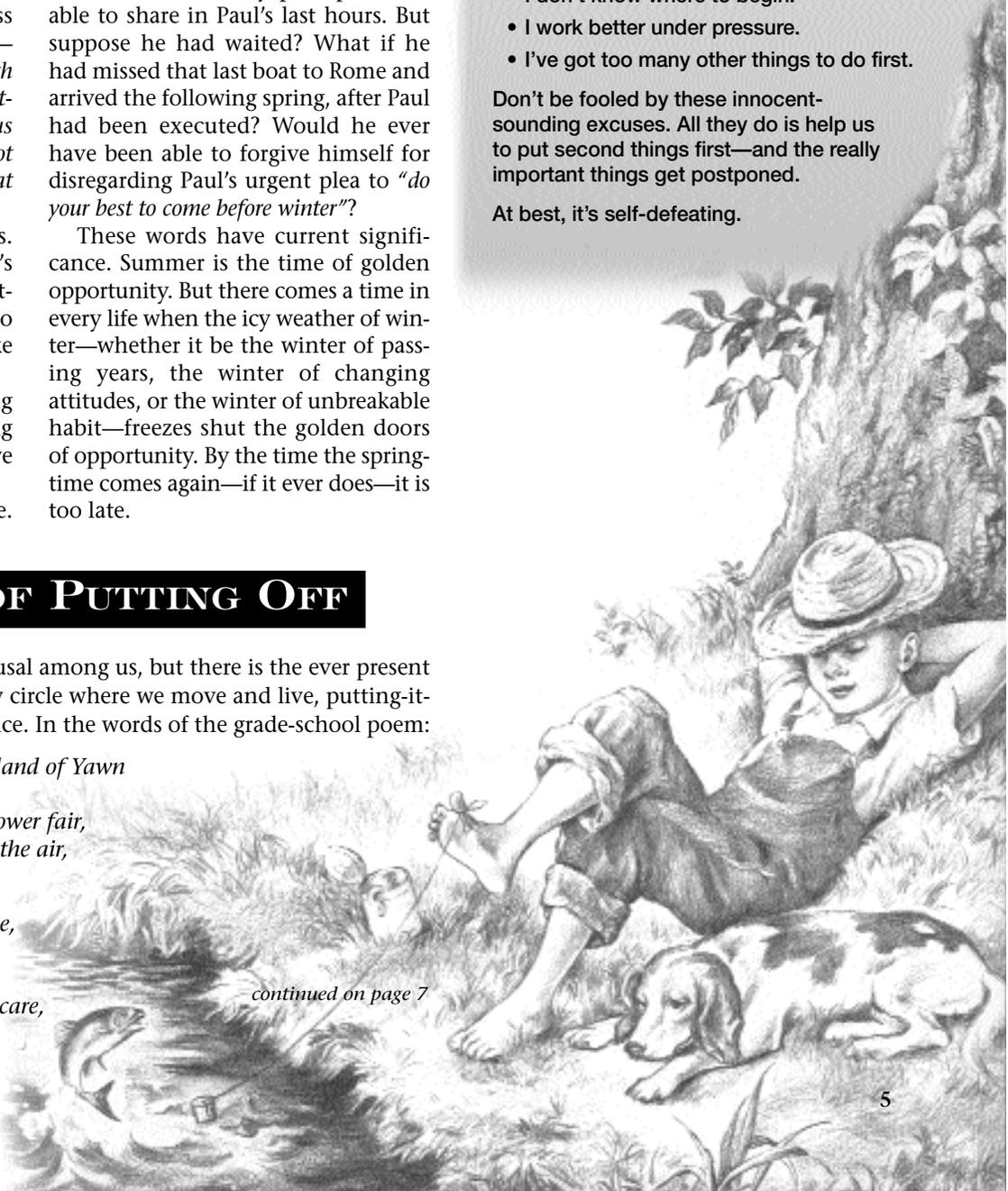
THE HABIT OF PUTTING OFF

There may be little out-and-out refusal among us, but there is the ever present temptation to procrastinate. In every circle where we move and live, putting-it-off is the popular method of avoidance. In the words of the grade-school poem:

*My friend, have you heard of the land of Yawn
On the banks of the river Slow,
Where blooms the Wait-a-while flower fair,
And the Sometime-or-Other scents the air,
And the Soft-go-easy's grow?*

*It lies in the Valley of Wait-a-while,
In the land of Let-'er-slide.
The Tired-feeling is native there,
It's the home of the listless I-don't-care,
Where the Put-it-offs abide.*

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Time Enough Yet

“There’s time enough yet! there’s time enough yet!”
Is the song of youth today,
“For I want my life, which is scarce begun,
To be free and full of play.
Let me taste awhile of the joys of earth,
Of its pleasures first partake;
When I’ve older grown, I will seek the Lord,
And the paths of sin forsake.”

“There’s time enough yet! there’s time enough yet!”
And the cares of life press hard,
While the brow is furrowed with anxious lines
And the hands with toil are scarred.
“I must fill my place in this busy world,
I must meet life’s stern demands;
When my work is done, I will then find time
To obey my Lord’s commands.”

“There’s time enough yet! there’s time enough yet!”
And the years glide swiftly by,
While the sun sinks low in the crimson west,
And the night is drawing nigh,
“I am weary now and must rest awhile
There’ll be time enough to pray”;
But the rest he takes is the sleep of death,
And his soul is lost for aye.

“There’s time enough yet! there’s time enough yet!”
’Tis the tempter’s subtle snare;
’Tis the rock on which many lives are wrecked,
Going down in dark despair.
There is time for pleasure and time for work
And for wealth to seek and hoard,
But alas! alas! for the foolish soul
With no time to seek the Lord.

Then turn to the Lord while ’tis called today,
Lest this be thy vain regret,
That thy soul is lost, and thy life is wrecked
On the rock of Time Enough Yet.

—Selected.

In the practical details of everyday living, the “Put-it-offs” abide. We do not decide not to write a letter to a friend; we simply postpone answering it. We take it up, dally with it, lay it down, but never get around to finishing it.

We never decide *not* to make the friendly visit we know we should make. But, like King Agrippa, we just don't find a convenient time.

In weightier matters of Christian duty and discipline, we also pursue our habit of putting it off. We never decide *not* to confine our reading to things constructive, edifying and purposeful. But when the day has been busy and we are tired, we forget the warning of Brother Paul, “*Make the very most of your time*” (Eph. 5:15–16 Moffatt), and relax in front of the TV, or pick up the nearest magazine or newspaper and read with interest whatever our eye catches. Only a few moments, we tell ourselves. But moments grow into minutes, and the habit unchecked wastes precious hours. Sometime, we say, we will do better. *But when?*

We never decide *not* to give serious attention to the training of our children, but forgetting the admonition to “*bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*” (Eph. 6:4), we refer it to a nebulous tomorrow. Is it so trivial a thing?

A mother went to her pastor to get advice on teaching her young son about God. Would it be too soon to start him at 2, or should she wait until he was 3? “When do you plan to start feeding him?” asked the pastor. “That’s the time to start teaching him.” Whether or not we are aware of it, children are learning constantly. By observing our lives are they learning respect for their elders and reverence for God? Are they cultivating those virtues and

habits that will make them law-abiding citizens and loving children of God? Someday, we say, we will teach them—but then it may be too late.

We never decide *not* to spend our time to the best advantage. We comfort ourselves by saying, “Tomorrow I will do better.” But will we?

If Timothy had not taken seriously his elder brother’s situation, he would have been tortured the rest of his life with the thought that he had failed his beloved chief.

The strongest chain in the world is made useless by a single broken link. That broken link is the habit of putting off.

We look forward to something future—to the time when we can own our own home, or be free from some responsibility, or retire in a small country dwelling where we can have everything just the way we always wanted it. But what are we doing with the *present*? All of us need something to live by in this perplexing, inescapable present.

“*Do your best to come before winter.*” Of course you intend to come, but come before the ice and snow make it difficult, dangerous, impossible.

Do Your Best...

“*Do your best to come before winter,*” and strengthen noble friendships. You are well aware that one who would have friends must be friendly (Prov. 18:24), and one of these days you intend to do more of it, but right now other issues must come first. However, friendship will not be any richer when winter comes.

Someone is more talented than you. He has so many more advantages, and seems not to recognize or appreciate your meager—but *wholehearted*—effort. You feel forgotten, neglected—jealous. Do your best to come before

How to Win

How many times have you told yourself that you couldn't do it? Or that you weren't “in the mood”?

Although procrastination may be an ongoing battle, there are several good remedies.

REMEDY 1:

Find out why you procrastinate.

Is it laziness? Or lack of self-discipline? Or lack of motivation? Or lack of a sense of purpose?

Understanding why you procrastinate is the first step toward breaking the habit.

REMEDY 2:

Talk to yourself

Procrastinators tend to say about unpleasant tasks, “I really should do this.” But underneath is a combination of resentment, a bit of natural rebellion, and little or no enthusiasm.

Why not present the project to yourself more positively? For instance, instead of saying, “I have to do this,” think this way: “If I get this done, I am going to feel so relieved!” Or “If I finish this, I will be able to move on to other things I enjoy—with a clear conscience.”

REMEDY 3:

Challenge your excuses

You've made excuses why something couldn't be done when it should have been. Start writing down these excuses, then challenge them. For example:

EXCUSE: “I'm not in the mood right now.”

CHALLENGE: If you wait for the right mood, you may never do anything.

EXCUSE: I might not do a good job.

CHALLENGE: How can you say that when you haven't even tried?

EXCUSE: It may be easier later.

CHALLENGE: Putting off starting only makes it harder.

EXCUSE: I feel inadequate.

CHALLENGE: Have you asked help from God? Have you asked help from a friend? Have you even tried?

EXCUSE: I'm afraid the job's too big for me.

CHALLENGE: If you can't do all of it, can't you at least do some of it?



Procrastination: relaxing when you should be working, doing something that you like when you should be doing something that needs to be done.

REMEDY 4:

Distinguish between fact and fear

If we let them, our fears will stop us cold.

We need to recognize that negative predictions are not facts but only feelings, or at best, unfounded conclusions.

Are we afraid of having our work criticized? Better work that is criticized than nothing done!

Are we afraid some unpleasantness or humiliation may come to us if we try? Jesus, our perfect example, did not let that fear stop Him.

REMEDY 5:

Set realistic goals

Be specific. What can I get done in the amount of time I am allotting? Figure out a realistic timetable. Having goals that are too big can be self-defeating from the start.

REMEDY 6:

Prioritize

Ask yourself what is the most important thing to be done, and list things in that order. Put small, unimportant things in their proper place—last.

REMEDY 7:

Divide and conquer

Big projects seem overwhelming. It's only natural to put off a task that seems unmanageable.

The solution? Break the project into small, manageable, "bite-size" pieces and get started. Set milestones for each part of the task, and you'll find that you can eventually complete the large job.

Do you expect to perfectly imitate the character of Christ in a day, a week or a month? You can't do it. But what you can do is improve today. Think in every situation you confront today, "What would Jesus do?" Think of your life—and your opportunities—in increments of one day, one hour, one minute.

It is the strategy of divide and conquer!

T*he strongest chain in the world is made useless by a single broken link. That broken link is the habit of putting off.*



winter, and conquer that feeling.

You gave a suggestion, and no one accepted it. You feel your judgment is as good as anyone else's. Why should they discriminate against you? Do your best and avert that feeling of hurt. Winter is coming.

You went out of your way to do someone a favor, and he did not appreciate it. Did you feel injured? *Do your best to come before winter* with forgiveness to that person who has wronged you. Be reconciled with those you have wronged. *I intend* to, you say, but I am not quite prepared to walk that road of humiliation and embarrassment. Some day...

But it will not be any easier to enter into that liberating experience when winter descends.

Do your best to come before winter and follow Christ. Live at His height; look out upon life with His outlook,

and into it with His insight.

"Now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2). However our day of probation may end, we should feel the urgency of this moment.

Are you letting miserable misunderstandings run on from year to year, meaning to clear them up—some day? Are you keeping wretched quarrels alive because you cannot quite make up your mind that *now* is the time to sacrifice your pride? Are you letting your friend's heart ache for a word of appreciation or sympathy or encouragement which you mean to give him—someday? If you could only know and see and feel, all of a sudden, that *"the time is short,"* how it would break the spell! How you would go instantly and do the thing that you might never have another chance to do.

TIME IS LIMITED

There is an element of mystery about time, and the more we think about it, the more mysterious it appears to be.

Time has an elusive quality. How easily it slips away from us, and we hardly notice it is gone. With each tick of the clock another second passes into eternity. The action is irreversible. That moment is *gone forever*; it can never be recalled. Seconds pass into minutes, minutes into hours, hours into days, days into months, and years, and lifetimes.

But with each of us, time has a personal touch. Time in relation to our lives is circumscribed. We have only so much of it. Summer is speeding away. Winter is coming.

Aware of this fact in the life of every God-fearing man and woman, the prophet Jeremiah wrote stern words of warning. *"Listen! Do not be proud, for the Lord has spoken. Give glory to the Lord your God before it is too late. Acknowledge him before he brings darkness upon you, causing you to stumble and fall on the dark mountains. For then, when you look for light, you will find only terrible darkness"* (Jer. 13:15–16 NLT).

Dark mountains are ahead; your feet will stumble, and you will seek in vain for the light of life in which you may continue to walk—unless—unless you listen *now*, kill your pride and *"give glory to the Lord your God."*

The form of winter may vary in each of our lives. The descent of darkness

suggests the termination of opportunity, the closing of one's probation time. It may be the end of natural life—none of us are exempt from the possibility of disease or accident. God's only promise is to guarantee sufficient time and opportunity if we are making the very most of what we have.

Or God may end our day of probation with the arrival of the prophet Elijah if we have had sufficient time. Here again is the justice of God: He does not ask what we cannot give, but only—and all of—what we have.

Remember Lot's Wife

Jesus was saying *"come before winter"* when He spoke the shortest, most pointed sermon: *"Remember Lot's wife."*

Two angels had come to Lot and his family to deliver them from the doomed city. The hour of escape arrived, but Lot's wife was not prepared to accept it. For the Sodomites the end was at hand. To Lot, his wife and two daughters, the angels offered deliverance. They all left the city together, but so attached was Lot's wife to what she was leaving behind in the city that she could not keep her face set toward the hill country. Even with the angel of God holding her hand, she looked back, and lost her life. For her there was no second chance, no time to reconsider and turn, no extended opportunity. The end came. And so will it come to every covenant-maker who refuses to heed the angel's message: *"Flee for your lives! Don't look back..."* Destruction is behind; darkness is behind; soon opportunity will also be behind.

Life is *ahead*. Escape for your life!

No Winter Ahead?

How contrasting to the urgency of Jesus' words is the attitude of much of the religious world, that "while the

lamp holds out to burn/ The vilest sinner may return."

Such teaching stifles initiative. It implies a never-ending summer of opportunity without bounds or obligation. As an example, I would like to quote the following from a lecture delivered by the once popular evangelist Dwight L. Moody:

"Men make out pardons for good character or good behavior. But God makes out pardons for men who have not got any character, who have been very, very bad. He offers a pardon to every sinner on earth if he will take it. I do not care who he is or what he is like. He may be the greatest libertine that ever walked the streets, or the greatest blackguard who ever lived, or the greatest drunkard, or thief, or vagabond...."

How would this ring in Paul's ears, the pressing Apostle who was running with all his might to *win*? Does this have the urgency of Paul's message: *"Make the very most of your time"*? Not at all. Such is definitely NOT the teaching of the God of heaven. Again and again He warns that there is a limit to opportunity. Again and again we see that it is possible to delay too long; it is possible to wait until it is too late. It is possible to miss the crown of life through negligence and continual postponement. This was Ezekiel's message when he wrote of the urgent need to repent: *"Therefore, O house of Israel, I will judge you, each one according to his ways, declares the Sovereign LORD. Repent! Turn away from all your offenses; then sin will not be your downfall. Rid yourselves of all the offenses you have committed, and get a new heart and a new spirit. Why will you die, O house of Israel? For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign LORD. Repent and live!"* (Ezek. 18:30–32 NIV). Turn—and do it NOW! *Come—come before winter!* ➔



*Better try to do something And fail in the deed
Than try to do nothing And always succeed.*

REMEDY 8:

Don't wait for the mood – make it!

It's dangerous to depend on feelings, but procrastinators do. They're focused on the immediate pleasure of avoiding an unpleasant task.

Their only gain is later pain.

Someone has said that "procrastination is all about short-term pleasure up against long-term gain." Putting it off feels good now, hard work will pay benefits later.

We have to accept the fact that we will never be "in the mood" to do some things. Part of maturity is the strength of will to rise above ambivalent feelings and take responsibility for our situation, regardless how tempting it might be to postpone it.

Challenge yourself. Say, "I won't ever feel like beginning this, so I might as well start right now!"

REMEDY 9:

Think (plan) ahead

Disorganization is the breeding ground for procrastination. Take simple steps to plan your time—time for all the essentials. A realistic plan of how you can make your time useful. It will help you to overcome the instinct to put things off.

REMEDY 10:

Sell yourself on the benefits

Think of the benefits of procrastinating. What are they?—beyond a little more comfortable leisure, there is the high risk of failing.

What are the benefits of *not* procrastinating? They are the satisfaction of accomplishment, peace of mind, joy in achievement.

What benefits are accruing to the serious Christian? These benefits surpass anything we can imagine. They are benefits of membership in the family of God, the angels for our own brothers and sisters, the whole earth for our eternal inheritance, plus riches and happiness and peace, and friendship and joy, and everlasting life (see Rom. 2:7; Prov. 22:4; Rev. 22:12,14; 2:7; 21:6-7).

Yes, sell yourself on the benefit—it's your best weapon against procrastination!

Procrastination Bits & Pieces

Procrastination is a choice. We have complete control over how we let it affect and disrupt our lives.



The price of procrastination is always too high.



Procrastination is letting low-priority tasks get in the way of high-priority ones.



Procrastination is talking about superficial things when you should be addressing the serious issues of your life.



Procrastination is the thief of life.



By the streets of "by-and-by" one arrives at the house of "never."



Abraham Lincoln said, "Good things may come to those who wait, but only the things left by those who hustle."



People who sit around waiting for their ship to come in may discover when it arrives that it is a hardship.



We complain that our days are few, then act as though there would be no end of them.

SEIZE THE DAY!

"*Carpe diem*," cried the old Latins. "Seize the day!" for neutrality is impossible. Neutrality is a figment of the imagination on any basic issue of life. Right is right, and wrong is never right. And if you hesitate to take positive action in behalf of the right, winter will come and all your regrets and protests will be unavailing. Life's processes do not call a halt because we have not made up our minds.

To put off a decision indefinitely is to make, actually, an irreversible decision.

Our foremost concern is the forming of a Christ-like character that God will perpetuate through winter and spring and on into eternity. But such a life is not the result of idleness or delayed action. To make flowers grow (not weeds) you have to plant them, nurture them, cultivate them. And this requires *action*. Likewise, there is no easy way to grow a character. You cannot become a Christian in your sleep.

If we think that deferring the action necessary to make ourselves over into a new creature will make the process less painful and less demanding, we will be disappointed; there is no easy way.

"*Do your best to come before winter.*" For the conclusion of the matter is this: that *it is possible to be too late*. A tree in April which insisted that it would not put out leaves until May, and then June, and so on and on postponing, would find October too late. This runs all through life. Doors *do* shut. Winter does follow autumn. Habit accentuates this fact.

If you should think it possible to remain neutral and open-minded on this subject, you are deceiving only yourself. While you rest in neutral, you are coasting downhill. For meanwhile, your life is passing through its springtime. Summer, autumn, and winter will come, slowly or suddenly but inevitably. And when winter comes, how will you warm your hands? How great will be the store of good deeds you have laid up in heaven?

If you have any gracious words to speak, say them *now*. If you have any wounds to heal, any wrongs to right, any injuries to forgive, attend to them *now*. If you have children to raise in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, be at it *now!*

And those sins that you have yet to conquer, those besetments that keep dogging your steps; those evils that you promised long ago to put behind you; that will that you have yet to bend, that wandering mind that you have yet to train; that pettiness, or pride, or selfishness, or dishonesty, or fleshly lust, or love of the world that you have yet to break—*do it now*. Because winter is coming, though it may seem afar off—and it will be too late.

If you have any desire for the riches of eternity, act positively now. Begin *now* to mold your life according to the Pattern God has provided until your every motive and imagination is fitted into His sublime purpose.

As for me, "*now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation*" (2 Cor. 6:2 NIV). So "*do your best to come before winter.*"

You will—won't you? ♦



Keep a good repertoire of self-motivating statements, like

- ★ "*There's no time like the present.*"
- ★ "*The sooner I get started the sooner I'll be done.*"
- ★ "*There's no better time than doing it right now.*"
- ★ "*It's less painful to do it now than to wait until it gets worse.*"



Mr. Tomorrow

*He was going to be all that a mortal should be—
Tomorrow.*

*No one should be kinder or braver than he—
Tomorrow.*

*A friend who was troubled and weary he knew,
Who'd be glad of a lift and who needed it, too;
On him he would call and see what he could do
Tomorrow.*

*Each morning he stacked up the letters he'd write—
Tomorrow.*

*And thought of the folks he would fill with delight—
Tomorrow.*

*It was too bad, indeed, he was busy today,
And hadn't a minute to stop on his way;
More time he would have to give others, he'd say—
Tomorrow.*

*The greatest of workers this man would have been
Tomorrow.*

*The world would have known him, had he ever seen—
Tomorrow.*

*But the fact is he died and he faded from view,
And all that he left here when living was through
Was a mountain of things he intended to do
Tomorrow.*

Share the EVIDENCE with Your Friends!

Please send me the following leaflets in the quantities indicated:

of Dozens

_____ **Christ the Savior Is Born**
 _____ **Is This (Foolishness) for Christians?**

_____ Dozen ordered @ \$1 per dozen \$ _____
 _____ Postage and Handling \$ 3.00
 _____ Total Enclosed \$ _____

Name _____
PLEASE PRINT

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

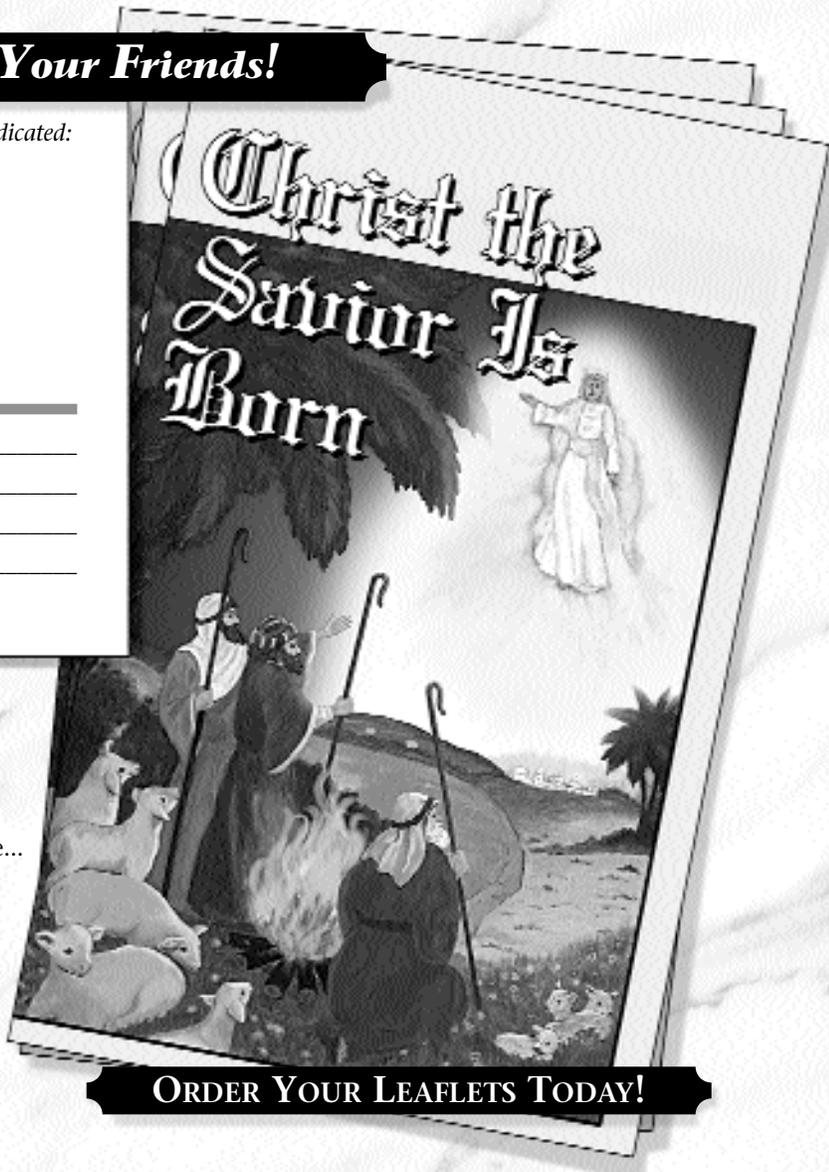
(This offer available in the US and Canada only.)

Place this form in envelope with payment and mail to:
**Megiddo Press, 481 Thurston Road,
 Rochester, New York 14619-1697**

When was Jesus born?

Share these leaflets with your friends... share the evidence...

- ✓ that Jesus was *not* born December 25
- ✓ that Jesus was born in the spring of the year, when shepherds were tending their flocks on the Judean hillsides
- ✓ that December 25 was a pagan feast day centuries before Christ was born
- ✓ that the December holiday was first celebrated as "Christmas" in the 4th century



ORDER YOUR LEAFLETS TODAY!

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON PAGE 13

FROM THE BOOKS OF MOSES

1. The command to Noah to build the ark (Genesis 6:3)
2. Moses (Num. 10:35)
3. Israelites (Lev. 26:8, 46)
4. Moses (Num. 12:3)
5. Cain (Gen. 4:13)
6. Moses (Deut. 34:7)
7. Cain (Gen. 4:9)
8. Moses (Ex. 14:13-14)

QUESTIONS, QUESTIONS

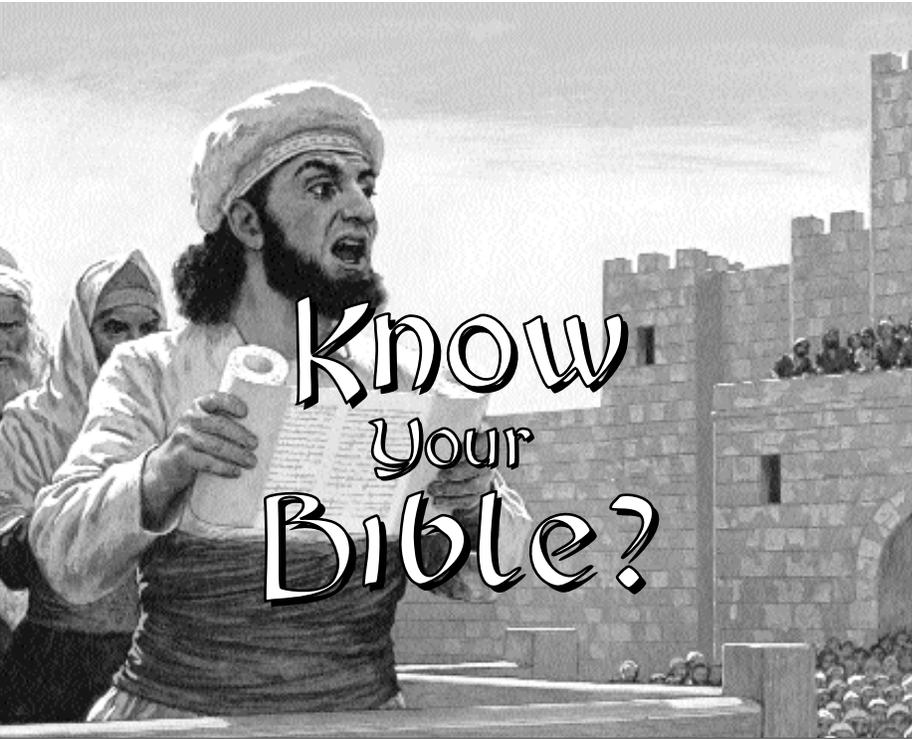
1. "To them that fear thee that it may be displayed because of the truth." (Ps. 60:4)
2. Enoch (Jude 1:14-15)
3. Claudius (Acts 18:2)
4. Jeremiah (Jer. 8:20)
5. David (Ps. 56:8)
6. Jeremiah (Jer. 8:22)
7. Ezekiel (Ezek. 18:4, 20)
8. Joshua (Josh. 1:1, 7)

9. Elisha (2 Kings 4:26)
10. Hosea 4:17
11. Nehemiah (Neh. 6:11)
12. Joshua (Josh. 1:8)
13. Nehemiah, Ezra and Levites (Neh. 8:8-9)
14. Gideon and his army (Judg. 8:4)
15. Hosea (Hos. 8:7)
16. David (2 Sam. 5:24-25; 1 Chron. 14:15)
17. Saul (1 Sam. 10:26-27)
18. About the city of Jerusalem (Ezek. 21:27)
19. A broken spirit and a contrite heart (Ps. 51:17)
20. David (Ps. 72:3)
21. Jeremiah (Jer. 10:23)
22. Elisha (2 Kings 4:38, 40)

THANKSGIVING AND PRAISE

1. "his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name." (Psalms 100:4)

2. "thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms." (Psalms 95:2)
3. "all, making mention of you in our prayers." (1 Thess. 1:2)
4. "all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Eph. 5:20)
5. "for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever." (Ps. 136:1)
6. "thanksgiving, and the voice of melody." (Isa. 51:3)
7. "thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." (Phil. 4:6)
8. "abounding therein with thanksgiving." (Col. 2:7)
9. "with thanksgiving" (Col. 4:2)
10. "thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High." (Ps. 50:14)
11. "thanksgiving, and tell of all thy wondrous works." (Ps. 26:7)
12. "sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare his works with rejoicing." (Ps. 107: 21-22)



Know Your Bible?

FROM THE BOOKS OF MOSES

1. Along with what command do we read, *"My spirit shall not always strive with man"*?
2. Who said, *"Rise up Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered"*?
3. To whom did the Lord give the promise *"Five of you shall chase an hundred"*?
4. Of whom was it said that he was *"very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth"*?
5. Who said *"My punishment is greater than I can bear"*?
6. Of whom was it said when he died at the age of one hundred and twenty, *"His eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated"*?
7. Who asked *"Am I my brother's keeper"*?
8. Who promised his people, *"The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace"*?

QUESTIONS, QUESTIONS

1. To whom has a banner been given (Psalm 60:4)?
2. Who spoke the prophecy, *"Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all"*?
3. What emperor banished all Jews from Rome?
4. Who wrote, *"The harvest is past, the summer is ended"*?
5. Who asked God to put his tears into His bottle?
6. Who asked, *"Is there no balm in Gilead?"*
7. Who wrote, *"The soul that sinneth it shall die"*?
8. Who was commanded, *"Turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest"*?
9. Who asked the question, *"Is it well with the child?"*
10. What is the verse about being *"joined to idols"*?

11. Who asked, *"Should such a man as I flee?"*
12. Who received the promise that, if he meditates on God's law, *"then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success"*?
13. Where and by whom does it say, *"So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading"*?
14. Of whose pursuit of the enemy is the phrase used, *"Faint, yet pursuing"*?
15. Where does it say and by whom. *"They have sown the wind"*?
16. Who was told to fight when he heard *"the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees"*?
17. Of whom did the children of Belial say, *"How shall this man save us"*?
18. Where and about what is it said, *"I will overturn, overturn, overturn it: and it shall be no more until he comes who right it is"*?

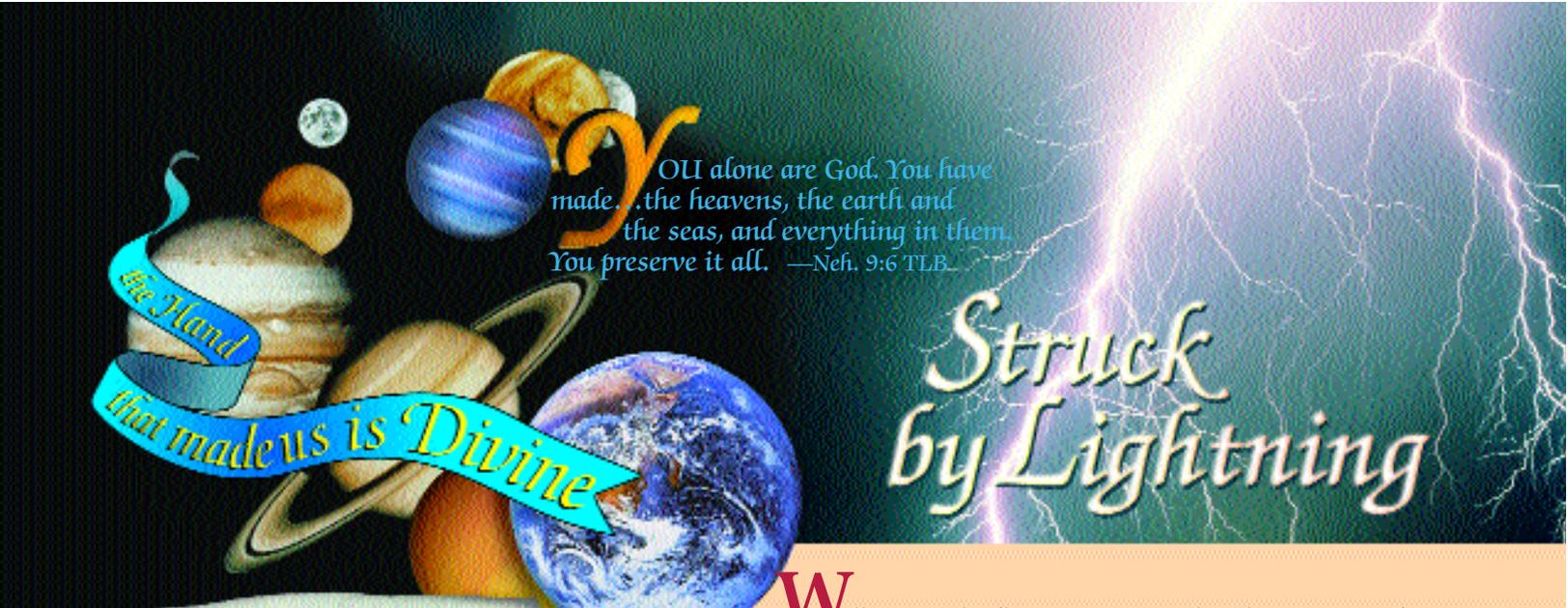
19. What are the sacrifices of God?
20. Who said, *"The mountains shall bring peace to the people"*?
21. Who said, *"It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps"*?
22. To what Prophet was it said, *"O thou man of God, there is death in the pot"*?

THANKSGIVING AND PRAISE

Finish the verse, and give the text.

1. *"Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into _____"*
2. *"Let us come before his presence with _____"*
3. *"We give thanks to God always for you _____"*
4. *"Giving thanks always for _____"*
5. *"O give thanks unto the Lord, _____"*
6. *"For the Lord shall comfort Zion; he will comfort all her waste places, and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein, _____"*
7. *"Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with _____"*
8. *"Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, _____"*
9. *"Continue in prayer, and watch in the same _____"*
10. *"Offer unto God _____"*
11. *"That I may publish with the voice of _____"*
12. *"Oh, that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! And let them sacrifice the _____"*

answers on page 12



YOU alone are God. You have made...the heavens, the earth and the seas, and everything in them. You preserve it all. —Neh. 9:6 TLB

Struck by Lightning

Did You Know...?

- ✓ ...that a streak of lightning (a lightning channel) is only 1/2 to 1 inch thick when it short-circuits to the ground?
- ✓ ...that the length of a cloud-to-ground lightning channel may be as much as 10 miles long?
- ✓ ...that the Empire State building, a favorite attraction for lightning, is struck on average 8 times per year?
- ✓ ...that the Kennedy space center in Florida is in the hottest State in the US for lightning?
- ✓ ...that lightning travels at 100,000 miles per second?
- ✓ ...that dust and gases from erupting volcanoes can cause lightning?
- ✓ ...that one lightning stroke can have enough energy to lift 2000 pounds 62 miles high?
- ✓ ...that lightning can strike as many as 40 times in the same channel?
- ✓ ...that the temperature of a lightning channel is about 50,000° F.?
- ✓ ...that a commercial jet plane is hit with lightning on average of once per year?
- ✓ ...that an electrical spark, such as lightning, across a non-conductive material will likely cause it to be conductive?
- ✓ ...that the deadliest known lightning strike killed 81 people when a Boeing 707 was struck, resulting in a crash near Elkton, Maryland, on December 8, 1963?

by GERALD R. PAYNE

Walk across the floor on a wintry day, dragging your feet on the carpet as you go. Now reach out and touch a doorknob. You have just experienced lightning in miniature.

Did you know that God is responsible for the laws that caused that miniature lightning strike? God alone is responsible for the laws which govern our lives, and the whole universe of which we are a part. It is by these laws of nature that He demonstrates His power. The Psalmist said, "The clouds poured down their rain. The sky thundered. Your lightning flashed back and forth like arrows" (Ps. 77:17 NCV). Lightning and words of like meaning occur more than 30 times in the Bible.

Lightning is only one small way in which we see the power of God at work through His laws. And that power is as many times beyond ours as the awesome lightning strike is beyond that little miniature strike you just experienced. And far more. He is all-powerful. "Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power,...and in thine hand is power and might" (1 Chron. 29:11-12). Understanding a little about the power of lightning may deepen our appreciation for the handiwork of our Great Creator.

Sounds in the sky

When there is either cloud-to-cloud lightning or cloud-to-ground lightning at a great distance, you hear a soft rumble. But when lightning strikes just outside, the sound is deafening.

Why are there different types of sound, some like an explosion, others like crackling or hissing? A bolt of lightning has spikes and streamers coming off the main channel in different directions, something like the branches of a tree. When a strike occurs only a hundred yards or so away, you first hear a crackling sound. These are the branches off the channel nearest you. Next you hear a loud explosion as the channel bursts through the air at 100,000 miles per second! Then you hear another crash as it rebounds so quickly it seems the two strokes are only one. This is called a return stroke. The lightning, with its many branches, may extend up and away for several miles. Since sound travels at about 1/5 mile per second, you may hear rumbling from these distant branches for several seconds after the strike has occurred. Hear how the author of Job describes it: "He unleashes his lightning beneath the whole heaven and sends it to the ends of the earth. After that comes the sound of his roar; he thunders with his majestic voice. When his voice resounds, he holds nothing back. God's voice thunders in marvelous ways; he does great things beyond our understanding" (Job 37:3-5 NIV).

Of course, thunder is not literally the voice of God but a demonstration of power for which He is responsible. Nor does He order every strike or direct it through the sky. He set laws in motion, and everything happens according to these laws. At the same time He can use these laws to carry out His will. The Bible has several examples where He used the

laws governing weather to bring about His purpose.¹

You can learn about strikes by understanding a little about the sounds of lightning. The above example is what you hear if the strike is near. What does a strike sound like if it is five miles away, for example, and if the cloud from which it originated is perhaps one mile up and directly overhead? After about five seconds you hear a rumble overhead, then after another 25 seconds you hear a loud boom when the return stroke meets the channel from the cloud. If the cloud was closer to the ground you might even hear some crackling noise, then a rumble, and finally the loud strike. It seems that Job had this last example in mind when he described it in Job 37.

The anatomy of a lightning strike

Every object, from the earth itself to the smallest particle, even the air we breathe, contains positive and negative charges. The smallest of these particles we call atoms. Each atom consists of a positively charged nucleus with negatively charged electrons revolving around the center. For every positive charge in the nucleus there is an equal number of negative electrons. When an electron is removed the atom becomes positively charged because it has less electrons. (Did this intricate, finely balanced system come about by chance?)

Generally, the top of a cloud becomes positively charged as the electrons are stripped away from ice crystals or water droplets by wind currents, falling hail, or a rapid change in rising air temperature (no one knows for sure). As the top becomes positively charged, the electrons move into the lower clouds, which then become negatively charged. How this occurs so rapidly is not understood. But when the potential difference² between cloud-to-cloud, or

cloud-to-ground, or even cloud to clear-blue-sky, becomes great enough, sparks fly which we call lightning, as the negative and positive charges seek to equalize again.

The almost soothing rumble you hear and perhaps think is lightning miles away may, in fact, be cloud-to-cloud lightning directly overhead. Chances are, you will not see it but will see the clouds glow with each flash.

Six types of strikes have been identified: cloud-to-cloud, negative cloud-to-air, negative cloud-to-ground, positive cloud-to-ground, negative ground-to-cloud, and positive ground-to-cloud.

Some scientists believe that areas receiving a large amount of rain are

tiny cloud, hardly big enough to cast a shadow. No one would have given it a second thought. Yet, only minutes later, there was a bright flash and a loud blast as that tiny cloud unleashed its awesome power. Within minutes, our neighbor's house was a blazing inferno. The barn also was hit.

There is a saying that lightning never strikes twice in the same place. Don't believe it. It usually strikes at least two times in the same channel.

A cloud-to-ground strike begins when a pulsating channel called a stepped leader starts its journey to earth. The positive charges of the earth are pulled upward (a return stroke) by magnetic attraction (unlike charges attract each



As the lightning that flashes out of one part under heaven shines to the other part under heaven, so also will [the coming of] the Son of Man will be in His day" —Luke 17:24

greater producers of lightning. But this is not necessarily true. As a matter of fact, lightning sometimes can seem to come from nowhere, and yet be very destructive. (Isn't this also characteristic of God's power?)

Thunderclouds are not the only source of lightning. It can come from other types of clouds, as well as snowstorms, dust storms, and, on occasion, from the dust and gases of erupting volcanoes—even from a doorknob.

When lightning strikes

Lightning can do strange things. While plowing one dry, hot, near cloudless afternoon, I looked up and saw a very

other). A flash (lightning) occurs where two opposite charges meet, usually between 165 and 330 feet up. At that point the stroke is short circuited to the ground with about 20,000 amps and as much as 1 billion volts. It has been calculated that one stroke has about 250 kilowatt-hours—enough energy to lift 2000 pounds 62 miles high. A few strokes, very common in what appears as one strike, have enough power to launch your car into outer space!

The entire process of a lightning strike is very fast. It takes only about 20 thousandths of a second for the leader from the cloud to reach the ground (or junction point), and only about 70 mil-

¹For examples of times when God used the laws of weather for His purposes, see Mark 4:37–40; 2 Sam. 5:23–25; 1 Sam. 12:16–18; Judges 4:14–15; 1 Kings 18:41–46; 1 Kings 19:11–12.

²"Potential difference" is an electrical term that describes the difference in charge between two bodies, in this case the earth and cloud. One will be positively charged while the other is negatively charged in relation to each other. When the difference between these two charges is significant, arcing (lightning) occurs.

lionths of a second for the return stroke to reach the cloud.

What makes thunder? It is thought that the channel, about 1/2 to 1 inch in diameter when it reaches earth, has a temperature of about 50,000° F. As the surrounding air is heated it expands at supersonic speed, creating a shockwave

surrounding air. Also, hot air can contain more moisture than the cold air surrounding, making it a better conductor of electricity.

There can also be more than one return stroke from a single lightning strike. For example, a strike may hit a tree hundreds of feet away from a power

tics are particularly vulnerable. Lightning can burn holes through the outer surface and damage other components which could result in a crash.

How dangerous is lightning to people on the ground? It is estimated that for every 600,000 strikes, one person is struck. Ground-strikes hit from 500 to 1,000 people in the U.S. each year. Can one survive a lightning strike which can have as much as 1 billion volts at a temperature of 50,000° F? Make no mistake about it; lightning can kill and cause serious injury. But actually, about 70% survive. How is this possible? Because 1) a lightning strike lasts only a fraction of a second and 2) it often travels around the body. It seems that lightning is a flow of energy pulsating at a very high frequency—which could explain why it often travels around the body (high frequency currents, over a million volts, like those from a Tesla coil, will do this without harm).

Some of the most dangerous places one can be during a lightning storm are in an open grassy area like a golf course, in a lake, in a swimming pool, or under a tree. Lightning will strike any object that provides the shortest path to ground such as a tall tree, or a person standing in a large open area. Other areas to avoid are near metal pipes, appliances, electrical wiring, or a phone. It is also said that lightning can travel through a room. If you happen to be

Whatever the Lord pleases He does, . . . He makes lightning for the rain, He brings the wind out of His treasuries. —Psalm 135:6-7

which rapidly decays into a sound wave within about 3 to 6 feet.

Have you ever seen lightning appear to flicker? The flicker is actually a series of power filled strikes—as many as 40 in a couple of seconds. (Who but God can display such power!) It seems incredible that strikes can occur so rapidly (each strike requires a recharge, and scientists cannot understand how a recharge can happen so quickly)—it is only one more reason to bow in awe before our great Creator!

Why does lightning traverse the same path, turn after turn? The heat from the lightning channel ionizes (gives an electric charge to) the air through which it travels, and the ionized air is a better conductor than the

line or antenna. Return strokes may spark into the air from each of these objects, or even from the ground. Says Dan Lanken, writing for the *Canadian Geographic*, "In all, it's the wildest *son et lumiere* (sound and light) show on earth."

The dangers of lightning

Cloud-to-cloud lightning is a constant danger to aircraft. On an average, one commercial jet plane is hit every year. Special design protects the delicate electrical circuitry, fuel lines and tanks. Shielding diverts the lightning around them, and, as a result, only minor damage is sustained at the points where the lightning strike enters and exits the aircraft. Other planes constructed of plas-

Anger: LIGHTNING

If a tree is hit with lightning, it may be completely unharmed. Or it may suffer anything from minor damage to being exploded. If a rain-drenched tree, for example, is hit, chances are it will not be injured because the moisture on the outside will conduct the lightning along the outside to the ground. On the other hand, if the tree is dry and has a wet dead area inside the trunk, which some older trees have, the tree may literally explode, slinging branches and propelling pieces of wood as much as one hundred feet. This happens because the lightning travels rapidly down the moist interior of the tree, heating it to a very high temperature in thousandths of a second.

Isn't this a good illustration of the explosiveness of a fiery temper? Like a tree with a rotten heart struck by lightning, when you begin to boil inside harm is bound to come. That is why the Psalmist said, "Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; Do not fret—it only causes harm" (Ps. 37:8). And Paul warned, "Let all... anger... be put away from you" (Eph. 4:31). Again he said, "But now you yourselves are to put off all

these," and first on the list is "anger" (Col. 3:8). Like the tree blazing inside, "wrath kills a foolish man" (Job 5:2).

As lightning strikes in the same place more than once, so "A man of great wrath will suffer punishment; For if you rescue him, you will have to do it again" (Prov. 19:19). His anger will continue to get him in trouble, and he will have to be rescued over and over.

It is interesting to note that the Greek root for the word wrath means "to sacrifice, kill, slaughter" (*Enhanced Strong's Lexicon*). Like lightning traversing the inside of a tree, wrath can boil up inside a person in an instant and even bring about death. Like the tree in which the lightning travels, the person filled with wrath or anger is apt to "explode." The Bible puts it this way: "Anger rests in the bosom of fools" (Eccl. 7:9).

Do you have differences with anyone? Do all in your power to make those differences right, before the charges build and the situation explodes, and what took years to build is destroyed in a moment.

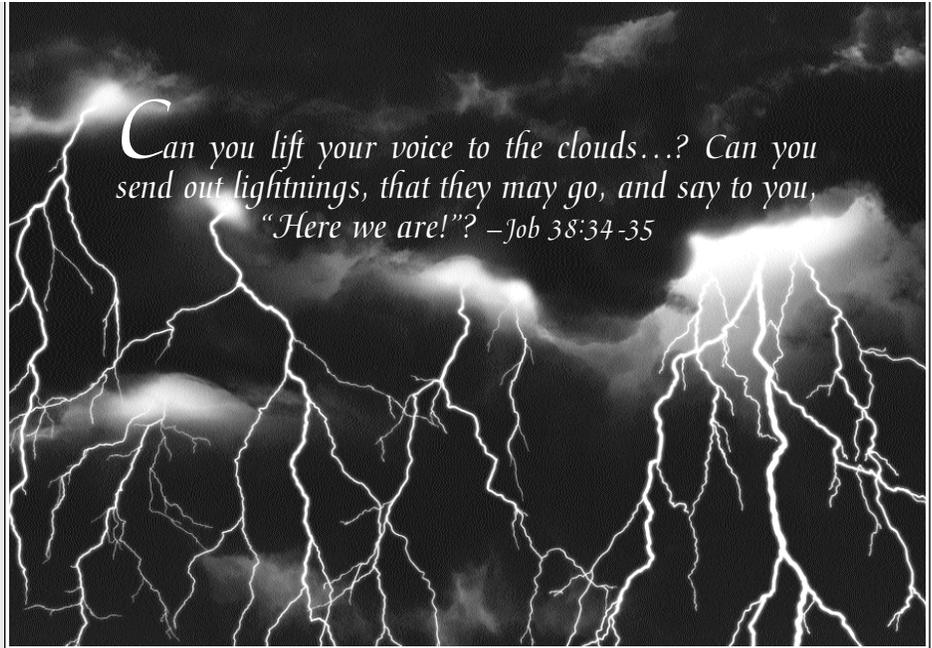
standing in its path, you will be struck.

First aid has saved many victims' lives, and it is believed that more could have been saved had first aid been immediately available.

Cardiac arrest is the main cause of death from a lightning strike, but injuries vary. Some of the most common complaints are memory loss, confusion, irregular heartbeat and, of course, tinnitus (ringing in the ears). Serious burns, despite the tremendous temperature, are uncommon. The most common after effect, for the more fortunate, is a healthy fear of severe storms.

Without some type of device to divert a lightning strike to ground, it can enter your home through the electrical wiring. In rural areas of our country, a number of homes often used to be connected to one transformer that was perhaps hundreds of yards away. It could get pretty exciting if you happened to be in one of those homes when lightning struck. On such a long stretch of wire a bolt of lightning often found a path on which to travel into the homes. The first indication of a lightning strike in your home might be a loud noise, like an explosion, a flash of blinding light, and a receptacle cover popping off the wall. (All these things happen at once.) Only one such experience and you never forget it. When a bolt of lightning traveling along a wire comes to a sharp bend, it will sometimes jump off the wire at that point—and, yes, pop off your receptacle cover!

Strange as it may seem, it is possible to be struck with lightning from a storm that is perhaps 5 or 10 miles away if the potential difference² is great enough between the thunderstorm and the ground where you stand. One day while in the basement of my home, I kept hearing an arcing sound like an electrical spark. After turning off the lights and looking in the direction of the noise, I saw an electrical arc between a metal shield over the top of the concrete blocks and a metal plate that was about 1/4 inch above it. After watching the spark and listening very carefully I discovered what was causing it. Several seconds after each spark I could barely hear thunder several miles away. Each time there was an electrical discharge in the sky, there was a return stroke from the termite shield to the plate that



Can you lift your voice to the clouds...? Can you send out lightnings, that they may go, and say to you, "Here we are!"? —Job 38:34-35

formed part of the structure of my house—only this return stroke extended up 1/4 inch instead of 165 to 330 feet.

Struck by lightning

It is said that as a young law student Martin Luther was walking outside on a steamy July evening in 1505, when a lightning bolt hit so close it knocked him over. At that moment, seized with terror, he vowed to become a monk. He quit his legal studies and checked into a monastery. He later became one of the most well known leaders of the Great Reformation.

In the New Testament we learn of another young man, perhaps a little older than Luther, who had a life-changing experience even more dramatic. Having finished his studies in law, this zealous Jew was leading a wave of persecution against the Church. Saul (later known as Paul), *"breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem."* Having obtained these letters, he was en route to Damascus to accomplish his ruthless mission when he was struck, as it were, with a bolt of lightning. This was no random strike but a personal meeting with Jesus Christ, the future King of all the earth. The splendor of this encounter was so bright, that Saul fell to the ground blinded (Acts 26:13-14).

Then Saul heard a voice, *"Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"*

"Who are you Lord?" Saul replied.

"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

His life was changed from that moment forward. No longer would he be Saul the persecutor of the Christian Church but Paul, chosen by Jesus Christ as His Apostle to the Gentiles.

Had it not been for this "bolt of lightning" from the portals of heaven, Paul would only have been another persecutor. But Christ knew Paul's heart. Paul believed he was doing God a great service by ridding the earth of the followers of this Jesus, but that most powerful bolt of lightning turned him 180 degrees, and he began almost immediately to promote the Cause he had formerly hated.

If you listen carefully, you can still hear the rumbling from that lightning bolt. And if you will let it, you can be struck, too. The power of it can set your heart ablaze with faith. Like Paul, you will fight a good fight against the carnal nature, routing every sin until you have put on the character likeness of Jesus Christ (Rom. 13: 13-14).

Have you been struck by this lightning? Are you, like the Apostle Paul, all out for Christ? It is the only way to eternal safety. ♦

Sources:

Encyclopaedia Britannica © 1994-1999; <http://www.wvlightning.com/> ©2000; <http://www.exploratorium.edu/ronh/weather/weather.html>; *National Geographic* (Lightning, Nature's high-voltage spectacle), July 1993; *Canadian Geographic* (Struck By Lightning), July/August 2000, page 20F.

Give Thanks to God!

You will never outgrow reasons to be thankful...

- for the earth that gives you a place to stand,
- for the sun that gives you warmth and light,
- for the tree that gives you shade,
- for the air that lets you breathe,
- for the sprouting seeds that give you food,
- for friends who walk by your side and hold your hand,
- for the God who gives you life,
- for the Bible that gives you direction and hope,
- for the fellowship of the Church that gives you strength,
- for the hope of future life that takes the tragedy out of death,
- for countless other blessings.

You will never outgrow the reasons to be thankful. For you are a dependent being, and that dependency will last a lifetime.

THANKFUL FOR THE ANGELS

Have you counted your blessings lately? If not, now is the time.

Start with broad categories—like family, close friends, and those who help take the sting out of life. Tell the Lord how thankful you are for each.

Next, think of significant places where you often find yourself: home, church, school, work, store—complete the list. Express your gratitude for each.

Next, think about the faculties you use every day. Don't forget your eyesight, hearing, taste, smell, touch. How easy to take each of these sensory gifts for granted!

Then add the things you really need to live—clothing to keep you warm, sufficient food to nourish your body, money to pay your bills. Add a few "luxuries" you wouldn't want to be without—good books that stimulate your mind and a few comforts not found in many other countries.

And don't forget that real necessity that gives you spiritual life—your Bible, and those who teach it; music and those who help you enjoy it; the privilege of worshiping with others of like faith. Add a word of thanks for the few moments of leisure that you are able to get each week to renew your perspective.

And that isn't all. There is one more blessing easily overlooked: the angels, those unseen heavenly guardians who constantly work overtime and never get tired, who never slumber or sleep. Think of all the accidents you might have been in. Think of all the times they may have protected you from enemy assaults. Think of all the times they helped you resist temptation. The Bible speaks very clearly of the angels. In the very first verses of the 13th chapter of Hebrews, we encounter a series of commands, among them: *"Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it"* (Heb. 13:2 NIV).

How can that be? Think of it this way: Someone you help may someday be an angel! And you yourself can become an angel. You may someday travel with one of Gabriel's teammates. Jesus said that those who are counted worthy to have a part in the resurrection will be *"equal to the angels, ...neither can they die any more, ...for they are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection"* (Luke 20:35-36).

Angels can look and sound like us, and they are frequently dispatched to earth to deliver encouragement and assistance. God's special messengers, what wonderful beings they are, often invisible but never impotent. The Psalmist wrote, *"He shall give his angels charge concerning you, to guard you in all your ways. They will bear you up in their hands lest you strike your foot against a stone"* (Ps. 91:11-12).

We may never know how much grief the angels spared us—until we are privileged to meet them. And then, what stories of Divine deliverance they will tell!

Oh, strengthen your faith. Think about these Divine beings. They are all around. Dream about them. Some day you may see them. Some day you may be able to find out all that transpired and how directly they were involved in your life.

And then maybe, if you are worthy, you can become involved in their life, too! ♦

HOW MUSICAL ARE YOU?

The Psalmist asks that praise and thanks be given to God on a 10-stringed instrument (Ps. 92:3). Could he be telling me that I am that "instrument"—I who have two ears, two eyes, two hands, two feet, a mouth, and a heart?

The Bible records a rich supply of verses pertaining to these various members. How "musical" are you today?

GROW IN GRATITUDE

How do you grow in the grace of gratitude?

First, see just who you are—a person to whom God has given life.

Second, see just how much you have—try counting just a few of the thousand benefits you receive from God's hand every day.

Third, see just what you are to do!

What are we to do with everything that God has given us? That is the question for somebody who is intent about growing in the grace of gratitude.

We have two ways to go. We can look at what is *wrong with life* and become depressed, or we can look at what is *right with life* and become more and more thankful.

St. Paul wrote just this to the Thessalonians: *"No matter what happens, always be thankful, for this is God's will for you..."* (1 Thess. 5:18 NLT).



Red Sea Deliverances

by RUSSELL HAMBY

can understand why the event of the Exodus is so important for us.

To begin with, it finds us in our human unbelief. Nothing could be more human than the reaction of those people when they found themselves caught between the Red Sea and the pursuing Egyptian army.

Think about it for a moment. Look at the scene as the Bible pictures it. After all, Moses did not bring a close-knit, well-disciplined group out into the wilderness. He brought what the Bible calls a "mixed multitude," a motley mob of slaves, some Hebrews

and some others. Nevertheless, they followed obediently enough until they came to a marshy area of lakes and swamps where Moses ordered them to camp.

Then suddenly in the distance, they looked back and saw the dust raised by Egyptian chariot wheels. Immediately panic set in. People started rushing about madly, clutching their children and possessions. Moses tried to make himself heard, but the wild, panicking mob could hear nothing.

In such a fear-filled time, it is no wonder that the people turned on him, crying out, "Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness?" Most likely, in that moment they would have gladly returned to Egypt. What matter if God by great

In Exodus 14 we read of a mighty miracle of God. Not only a great miracle but a miracle that leaves us with a strong confirmation of the power and promises of God that He will look after His children yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

The important event in this passage is the opening of the Red Sea so that the Israelites could escape the pursuing Egyptians. Let us study this great event and rediscover its message—a message that too many times gets lost in the account of a miracle.

These were our spiritual ancestors, whom God delivered from the Egyptians about three thousand years ago. To remember what God did for them at that time opens our minds to the possibility of what God is doing and will do on earth again. After reading the story, we

God looks after
His children
yesterday, today
and tomorrow.

signs and wonders had brought them out? That was yesterday. Where was God today—now?

To many this is ancient history, but we must also remember that it is part of our history, our personal history. How? you may ask. Well, at some time, we have all been between a rock and a hard place, so to speak, and have felt helpless, forsaken, alone. There seemed no escape whatever way we turned. Any decision we made was wrong. As Christian believers we know we ought to have faith in God who has helped us in the past, but where is He now? All we can see are hopeless alternatives, and all appear to be equally intolerable.

However, what is even more important, the Exodus reminds us of the providence of God. *"Have no fear,"* Moses cried to the distraught Israelites. *"Stand firm and see the deliverance that the Lord will bring you this day; for as sure as you see the Egyptians now, you will never see them again. The Lord will fight for you; so hold your peace."* But in their unbelief they could not see it, even though Moses reminded them that God would provide.

There was a time that even Moses had to be reminded. It was when God had first called him from Midian to go to Pharaoh and demand the release of the Hebrew slaves in Egypt. Pharaoh treated him with contempt and to show his anger he imposed heavier burdens on the slaves. As for the Hebrews, they not only resented Moses but resisted him violently, so that he felt himself a victim of a big hoax. "O Lord," he cried, "why have You brought misfortune to this people? And why did You ever send me?" God answered him, in effect, "All right, Moses. You have done everything within your power. Now you must stand back and see what I can do...."

And Moses saw. He saw a display of Divine power unequalled. He saw the might of Egypt crumble like straw under the mightier hand of God.

So now he reminded his people as they shrank back from the pursuing Egyptian army, with nothing ahead of them but the treacherous waters of the Red Sea. *"Have no fear...the Lord will fight for you."* His words remind us that when all human alternatives have been exhausted, God is still God, still sover-

eign, still in control of His world. Ultimately all power and authority come from Him, and He alone decides the issues of victory and defeat.

"Have no fear...the Lord will fight for you." We need to hear those words today. We need to know that God is stronger than the forces of evil, and that His cause in the end will prevail.

In the midst of all the pain and confusion, God spoke to Moses: *"What is the meaning of this clamor?"* He cried.

"Tell the Israelites to strike camp and go forward." To go forward and step into the Red Sea must have seemed like stepping into their own graves. Suddenly, Moses, at God's command, stretched out his arm, and there was a wind, a violent wind like a hurricane, that drove back the waters, revealing the open sea as a clear, solid, dry path to freedom. Incredulously this monstrous mob shoved and pushed its way on foot to the other side, while the pursuing Egyptians and their chariots were mired in the mud, and engulfed by the returning waters.

What do you think actually happened? a tidal wave? an earthquake? It doesn't matter, because what it proves is that God one way or another kept His Word and fought for His ancient people. One way or another God intervened with an act of deliverance beyond all human calculations. They could never explain it, nor did they try. All that mattered was that, as they stood on the far shore in the first light of dawn, they were safe and free to continue life as a nation.

That is how God works—not only in our corporate but in our personal lives. The story of the Exodus is our story, the story of that unexpected factor which has so often intervened in our affairs and rescued us from the forces that might otherwise have destroyed us. Like

the Israelites on the safe side of the Red Sea, we cannot describe exactly what happened. We can only know that God brought us through the trouble, the crisis, the problems, and that we are safe, and can rejoice in His wonderful deliverance.

The Exodus event is important for us for one reason: it renews our faith. We read of the Israelites that when they saw what God had done for them, *"all the people feared the Lord, and they put their faith in Him and in Moses His servant."* You can be sure they did! After all, He would be forever the God who had parted the waters of the Red Sea.

Some fifteen centuries later, God took on a new identity. He became the God who raised Jesus Christ from the dead. There is great similarity between those two events in history. The panic, the despair, the hopelessness of the ancient Israelites could be matched by the mood of the disciples. What they didn't know was that while everyone rested God was working. While deathly defeat gripped the believers' world of earthly sense, God was working, all astir, and the body that lay in the grave would soon be moving forth in triumph. God is forever the God who raised Jesus Christ from the dead.

Actually it all comes down to that. If God raised Jesus from the dead, if He brought His people safely across the Red Sea, then He has shown Himself to be a God whom we can trust, to whom we can pray, and who will ultimately deliver His people from the bondage of corruption and mortality. No situation is hopeless so long as God is watching, working, mustering His forces to bring all things to a glorious, triumphant end. Even in the darkest hour we can renew our faith and sing with the Hebrew Psalmist, *"Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth."* ♦

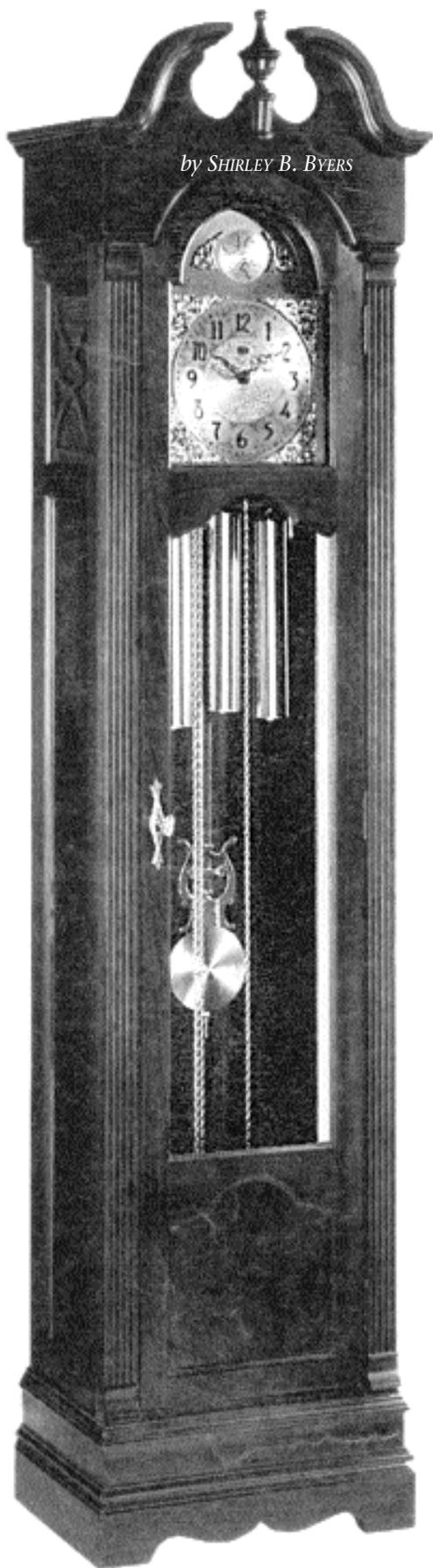
God is forever the GOD

-who brought the Israelites through the Red Sea.

-who raised Jesus Christ from the dead!

How Is Your Traction?

by SHIRLEY B. BYERS



There's a story about an old grandfather clock that had stood for three generations in the same corner of the room, faithfully ticking off the minutes and hours, day after day. In the clock was a heavy weight that was pulled to the top each night to keep it running.

Then one day the clock was sold, and the new owner noticed the heavy weight. 'Too bad,' he said, 'that such an old clock should have to bear so great a load.' So he took the weight off the chain. At once the clock stopped ticking.

"Why did you do that?" asked the clock.

"I wanted to lighten your burden," said the man.

"Please put it back," said the clock. "That's what keeps me going!"

Most of us are looking for an easy way through life. We think that if we had no burdens we could live pleasantly and triumphantly. We don't realize that God often keeps us going spiritually by the weights that seem to pull us down. Trials give our feet spiritual traction. Our burdens not only bring us blessing in this life, but they also are *"working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory"* (2 Cor. 4:17).

Weights not only keep a clock going, they also give us traction when we need it most.

The writer sums it up in the closing thought: "THE HEAVIER THE LOAD, THE BETTER THE TRACTION."

I am reminded of a time when I did a lot of long distance winter driving. As a safety measure, I carried a large bag of sand in the trunk of my car. It served two purposes: the weight of the sand gave the tires better traction in the snow, and the sand, if needed, could be spread to give my tires better traction on ice. It was work getting the bag of sand into the trunk, but once in, it stayed there and fulfilled its duty until winter was over.

How anxious we should be to secure sufficient spiritual traction for our feet on the road to the Kingdom, and be willing to take whatever meas-

ures we can to improve that traction.

Do we feel hemmed in or held down by circumstances? Remember, self-denial and self-restraint give wonderful spiritual traction to our feet on the steep and slippery places of life.

Those who traveled this same road before us left instructions and examples that will help us if only we are willing to follow.

Through all their tribulations, they had the Father's never-failing promise sure and steadfast, *"I will never leave thee nor forsake thee"* (Heb. 13:5). They knew—and we know—we will never be tried above or beyond what we are able to bear. The trials the Father allows to come into our lives are tailored to our specific needs. Isn't it comforting to know we are never out of His sight?

One way to increase our spiritual traction is by someone telling us what is right and what is wrong, since *"every way of a man is right in his own eyes"*! (Prov. 21:2). And *"reproofs of instruction are the way of life"* (Prov 6:23).

Sadly, Solomon did not apply to his own life the wise counsel he gave others. Wisdom not applied provides no spiritual traction!

The words of Paul, the great warrior for the Faith, come ringing through the ages to us. *"We glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience"* (Rom. 5:3).

Again, *"I run without swerving...I master my body, lest, after preaching to other people, I am disqualified myself"* (1 Cor. 9:26-27 Moffatt). What spiritual traction! No skidding from the narrow way into by-ways of sin. He did not lose traction, but stayed right in the narrow way, running at top speed lest he should be "disqualified." Listen to his words as he triumphantly crossed the finish line, *"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing"* (2 Tim. 4:7-8). ♦

The Kingdom of God

- Real
- Literal
- Worldwide
- Eternal

IS THE CHURCH THE KINGDOM OF GOD?

HAS THE KINGDOM COME?

DID THE KINGDOM COME AT PENTECOST?

IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD SPIRITUAL OR LITERAL?

DID GOD HAVE A LITERAL KINGDOM IN ISRAEL?

THE KINGDOM OF GOD: HISTORY OR PROPHECY?

THE KINGDOM OF GOD: HISTORY OR PROPHECY?

by RUTH E. SISSON

How can you publish as fact that Jesus Christ is a yet future king, when scripture plainly reveals that He is right now, and was in the first century, a king? I would appreciate your comments in light of the texts that follow.”

Psalm 2:6, “Yet I have [past tense] set My King on My holy hill of Zion.”

Also, **Zechariah 9:9**: “...Behold, your King is [present tense] coming to you..., lowly and riding on a donkey.”

And **Matthew 21:5, 7**:

“...Behold your King is coming to you... They brought the donkey and the colt, laid their clothes on them, and set Him on them.”

Christ's Kingship was verified by the fulfillment of the Zechariah prophecy even before Christ was crucified. —E. H.

You infer that the verb tense used in the prophecy indicates the time of its fulfillment.

If you survey Bible prophecies I believe you will discover that the Biblical writers frequently used past or present tense to describe future events prophetically.

An obvious example of this is in Isaiah 9:6, where the prophet says, speaking of Jesus, “for unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given.” To take this literally would mean that Jesus was born during the time of Isaiah. Another example of this is in Isa. 61, where the prophet says, “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me; because the Lord has anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the poor; He has sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God” (Isa. 61:1–2). This passage is written in the present tense, as though the Lord was in Israel’s time sending His servant to perform this very work. Yet, when Jesus read this passage from Isaiah in the synagogue several hundred years later, He commented afterwards, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing”

(Luke 4:17–21). He did not say that it was a current fact in Isaiah’s time, but that it was fulfilled then, in His own time.

It is also worth noting that when Jesus read this passage from Isaiah 61, He stopped short of reading the whole prophecy, because even then the prophecy of “the day of vengeance of our God” (the last phase of Isaiah’s prophecy) stood unfulfilled. The day of vengeance would not be until He returned the second time, when He would “ride forth conquering and to conquer” (Rev. 6:2).

From surveying prophecies made in Scripture, it seems impossible to determine the time of a fulfillment by the tense used in the prophecy. Prophecies may be stated in either past, present, or future tense—totally unrelated to the time of a fulfillment. Perhaps Paul’s evaluation is fitting here: that God “calls those things which do not exist as though they did” (Rom. 4:17).

Another example of mixed tenses in a prophecy is in Hebrews 2, where the author quotes the Psalmist saying, “What is man that You are mindful of him or the son of man, that You take care of him? You made him a little lower than the angels; You crowned him with glory and honor, and set him over the works of Your hands; You have put all things in subjection under his feet” (Heb. 2:6–8). This passage, both here and in the book of Psalms, sounds as though this were an accomplished fact, because it is clearly past tense. The “man” has been “crowned...with glory and honor,” and “has been set over the works of [God’s] hands.” It states that “all things” have been put “in subjection under his feet.”

But if we read on, the continuation of verse 8 tells us that this is an event yet future. “Now we do not yet see all things put under him. But we see Jesus...” (Heb. 2:8–9).

You suggest that the prophecy in Zechariah 9:9 is fulfilled in Matthew 21:5, 7. If we were to take either of these pas-

sages literally, and judge by the tense used, we would have to say that Jesus is King as fully in Zechariah's time (about 400 BC) as He was in Matthew 21, because both passages are in the present tense.

But no, God works according to an orderly plan, which He reveals to His prophets, who describe future events using similes, word pictures, illustrations and dramas.

Could Jesus have been "the King" in authority in Matthew 21:5? In a matter of hours He was crucified. And He said just before His crucifixion, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). What did He mean? The "world" Jesus spoke of is translated from the Greek word *kosmos*, which has for one of its definitions, "an apt and harmonious arrangement or constitution, order, government" (*Enhanced Strong's Lexicon*, 1995).

His kingdom was not of that present arrangement, order or government. It is yet future, and when established will be universal, as stated in the verse following the prophecy you cite: "his [Christ's] dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth" (Zech. 9:10).

Matthew 2:1-2

"Behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem saying, 'Where is He who has been born King of the Jews?'" The wise men acknowledged the first-century kingship of Christ.

Were the wise men acknowledging Him as their king at that time? There is no evidence that they were. Truly, Herod felt threatened by the idea that the newborn child was called "king." But that does not mean that He was a king with authority to command and rule.

God foreknew that Jesus would be the King. This was according to God's plan, and in that sense He was immediately a King, or having Divine authority, though it was by promise and not by actual fact at that time. When the prophet Zechariah said, "The Lord shall be King over all the earth.

In that day it shall be—'the Lord is one,' and his name one" (Zech. 14:9). This tells us that when the Lord is King, there will only be one king "over all the earth." This prophecy was not fulfilled in Jesus' time, nor is it true today. Jesus was designated "king" even before His birth, but His career had many steps between, including crucifixion, resurrection, and a crowning at the Father's right hand, before He would return to take His kingly throne and reign.

Mark 1:15

"Jesus came to the hour...saying 'the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand'" (Mark 1:15; cf. Matt. 4:17). The Kingdom was at hand two thousand years ago. The King was also at hand at that time. No kingdom, no king. Where there is a kingdom, there is a king.

The word translated "kingdom" in this passage is *basileia* in the Greek, and is defined as, "kingship, royal power, royal ruler, kingdom" (*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* by Fowler, Arndt and Gingrich). The term can apparently be used both of the realm and of the royal ruler. Wilson's *Diaglott* favors placing the emphasis on the ruler, who was speaking: "The time has been accomplished, and God's royal majesty has approached; reform, and believe in the good message."

This seems a likely connection, since the passage immediately follows the announcement that John had been imprisoned and Jesus was coming into Galilee to begin His ministry (Mark 1:14). The beginning of an era, (His royal presence) would be among them for the first time, even though

nothing happened at that time that would make Him be recognized as a ruler. His role of kingship, though thoroughly designated and promised, was yet future.

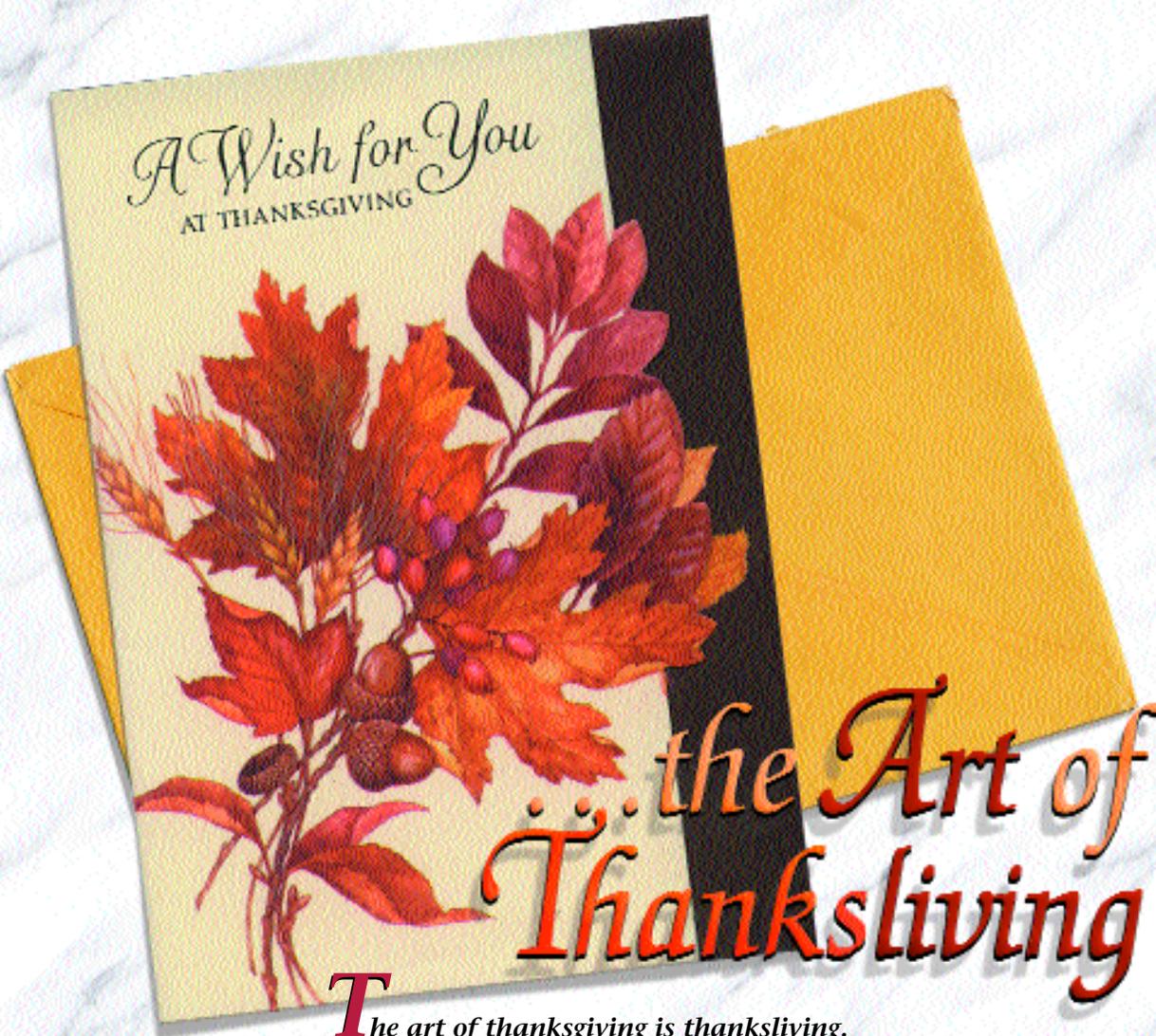
The words of the angel to His mother Mary when she was first told that she would have a child also included the prophecy of His future kingship. "He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of His kingdom there will be no end" (Luke 1:32-33). Does the Bible teach that He was ruling "over the house of Jacob" when He was first born, when the wise men were looking for the "King of the Jews"? Had He been given "the throne of his father David" when He first began His ministry, and was choosing His disciples, as in Mark 1:16-20? Only a short time later, the city of Jerusalem fell into the hands of the Romans under the leadership of Titus (AD 70). Jesus' kingdom was not affected, because He was not ruling "over the house of Jacob" or sitting on "the throne of His father David" at that time.

If we are to believe the words of the angel to Mary, we also have to accept that His kingdom once begun would be uninterrupted. The angel said clearly, "of His kingdom there will be no end...he shall reign...forever." Whatever authority He received at the first He still has and has had in all the years between. Yet the succeeding centuries have been filled with wars, conquests, and frightful atrocities of leaders as Napoleon, Lenin and Hitler. What good effect has the Kingdom of Jesus had?

No, we cannot be convinced that Jesus has already taken authority over the kingdoms of earth. When He does, everyone worldwide will know it. ♦

to be continued

When established, Christ's Kingdom will extend from "sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth." —Zech. 9:10



A Wish for You
AT THANKSGIVING

...the Art of Thanksgiving

The art of thanksgiving is thanksgiving.
It is gratitude in action. It is sacrifice and service.

It is thanking God for the gift of life by living it triumphantly.

It is thanking God for your talents and abilities by accepting them as obligations to be invested in the highest good for you by doing things for others.

It is thanking God for opportunities by accepting them as a challenge to achievement.

It is thanking God for happiness by striving to make others happy.

It is thanking God for inspiration by trying to be an inspiration to others.

It is thanking God for health and strength by the care and reverence you show your body.

It is thanking God for the creative ideas that enrich life by adding your own creative contributions to His cause.

It is thanking God for each new day by living it to the fullest.

It is thanking God by giving hands, arms, legs, heart and voice in a thankful spirit.

*It is adding to your prayers of thanksgiving the **acts of thanksgiving.***

The easiest way to get to sleep is to count your blessings instead of your problems.

Smile! It costs nothing but gives much. It enriches those who receive without making anybody poor.

Forgetting to thank God for undeserved blessings is a sign of spiritual weakness.

If you can't be thankful for what you receive, be thankful for what you escape.

My Prayer

*Oh, that my tongue could so possess
The secret of His tenderness
That every word I breath would bless!
For those who mourn, a word of cheer,
A word of love for those who fear,
And truth to all both far and near.
Oh, that it might be said of me,
"Surely thy speech betrayeth thee,
As friend of Christ of Galilee!"*

Keep your words sweet — you may have to eat them.

What a splendid thing it would be if those who lose their tempers could not find them again.

Success is not a destination...it is a road.

What a world this would be if we could forget our troubles as easily as we forget our blessings.

A smile is a curved line that sets things straight.

God will either lighten our load or strengthen our backs, but we have to ask for help.

If I cannot do great things, I can do small things in a great way.

In the orchard of opportunity, it is better to pick the fruit than to wait for it to fall.

We need some clouds in our life to make a beautiful sunset.

Have You Thought?

*Have you thought, when feeling weary
With the trials of the day,
Of the thousand wasted chances
Which the hours have borne away?*

*Have you thought about the blessings
That surround you all the time,
And that grumbling in their presence
Is a weakness—nay, a crime?*

*Have you thought of all you're missing
While you waste time and complain,
And what fortune may await you
If you only try again?*





*O God,
take control of me today...*

Control my tongue, so that I may speak
No angry words;
No cruel words;
No unkind words;
No idle words;
No ugly words.

Control my thoughts, so that I may think
No impure thoughts,
No bitter thoughts,
No jealous thoughts,
No selfish thoughts.

Control my actions so that all through today
My work may be my best,
And may I do nothing today
which I would regret if I should
breathe my last breath tonight. AMEN.

*“Whatever you eat or drink
or whatever you do, you must
do all for the glory of God.”*

1 Corinthians 10:31 NLT