



Megiddo Message

Vol. 72, No. 8

—Plus Faith Unlimited!

September, 1985

When God Doesn't Deliver

EXPERIENCE has taught us that we are not self-sufficient. We are not on our own. Human hands fail; human hopes flounder. We need God.

We believe in God because we see all around us the evidence of His creative Hand. We trust Him because we know that He has consistently done what He has promised. We look to Him in our time of need because we know He is able—abundantly able—to supply our need, to help, to deliver. Has He not promised His faithful servant, “I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him” (Ps. 91:15)? Again, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Heb. 13:5)? And has He not promised to “uphold” with “the right hand” of His righteousness (Isa. 41:10)?

But what about the times God does *not* deliver? What about the times we pray and God does *not* intervene?

What about the time we do well, and have to suffer for it?

What about the times when trouble strikes—and strikes hard. In our desperation we pray for deliverance. But God does not seem to answer. No deliverance is forthcoming.

What then?

Something in us wants to make faith in God an automatic release from problems. When everything goes well, we tell ourselves it is because God is pleased with us, that we are in His favor. When trouble strikes, we expect Him to be there to rescue us immediately, or at least to supply some form of divine anesthetic which will save us from pain or harm.

But when our expectation is not fulfilled . . . when there is no release . . . when God is silent . . . what then?

The problem lies not with God but with ourselves and our own misreading of the divine contract. We are asking the wrong questions, we have set up the wrong expectations.

When we establish a working relationship with God, when we agree to serve Him, trust Him, obey Him, we

tend to think the other half of the agreement is: “I will bless you—NOW,” “I will prosper you—NOW,” “I will save you from pain, from grief, from disappointment, from hardship, from suffering—NOW.” And when these benefits are not immediately forthcoming; when we find ourselves facing the same problems as those who have no interest in the divine scheme, we tend to question, doubt, deny. Even blame.

What we need most is a clearer view of God's long-range purposes. God's people in all ages have been far-sighted men and women, with inexhaustible patience and unfailing faith. They have been men and women with the will to work, the faith to endure, the patience to wait.

It is good to set our expectations high; but let us not try to edit God's plans to include our ideas, or anticipate what God has not promised. Timing is also a factor to remember. We may be like the child who has been promised a reward—but who is not willing to wait for it. We want it NOW.

We tend to forget that suffering, sorrow, strain and stress are within the mortal experience of all, even the most dedicated, most serious believers, and that God has not promised to spare us from these.

God's promises of deliverance and salvation are not for the NOW.

*“God has not promised skies always blue,
Flower strewn pathways all our life through . . .*

*God has not promised sun without rain,
Joy without sorrow, peace without pain. . . .”*

What *has* God promised? One revealing of His promise is found in these words of the apostle Paul: “Bodily exercise profiteth little; but godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come” (1 Tim. 4:8). Here is the comprehensive insurance policy we have been looking for.

(Continued on page 10)

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 (II Cor. 10:4-5).

We believe

—in God the Creator of all things, all men, and all life.

We believe

—in the Bible as containing the genuine revelation of God and His purposes for men, and as being our only source of divine knowledge today.

We believe

—in Christ the Son of God and our Perfect Example, who was born of a Virgin, ministered among men, was crucified, resurrected, and taken to heaven, and who shall shortly return to be king of the whole earth.

We believe

—in life as the gift of God, and in our sacred responsibility to use it for God and His coming Kingdom.

We believe

—in all mankind as providing the nucleus from which a superior, God-honoring people shall be chosen to receive the blessings of immortal life.

We believe

—in ourselves as capable of fulfilling the demands and disciplines given us in the law of God, thus perfecting that high quality of character which God has promised to reward with life everlasting in His heavenly Kingdom on earth.

We believe

—in the promise of God, that a new age is coming—is near—when the earth will be filled with His glory, His people, and His will be done here as it is now done in heaven.

Bible quotations

Unidentified quotations are from the King James Version. Other versions are identified as follows:

NEB—New English Bible

NIV—New International Version

NAS—New American Standard

RSV—Revised Standard Version

TLB—The Living Bible

TEV—Today's English Version

JB—The Jerusalem Bible, Reader's Edition

Phillips—The New Testament in Modern English

Berkeley—The Modern Language New Testament

Weymouth—The New Testament in Modern Speech

Moffatt—The Bible, A New Translation

Williams—The New Testament, A Translation in the Language of the People

About Our Cover. . .

Our cover photograph is taken at Moose River, McKeever, New York.

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The **MEGIDDO MESSAGE** is a religious magazine devoted to the cause of Christ, and published for the dissemination of Bible truth alone. Official organ of the Megiddo Church. L. T. Nichols, Founder; Kenneth E. Flowerday, President and Editor.

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MEGIDDO is a way of believing and living, grounded solidly in the Bible as the reliable Word of our Creator. A total view of life, the world and the universe, it sees all events, men and nations moving together toward one God-ordained climax: the Kingdom of God on earth. This has been the plan of God since the beginning. Christ will return visibly, bodily, as King, and the governments of this world will be joined to form a totally new worldwide government. When the task is complete, our earth shall be numbered among the heavenly, glorified worlds and filled with immortal inhabitants. This is the purpose and goal of all creation.

—Plus Faith Unlimited!

Scripture Reading: Hebrews 11

A CERTAIN large industrial corporation has taken for its motto these three words: “—Plus Faith Unlimited.” By this they suggest that they have a faith in themselves which cannot be overpowered by negative circumstances; that whatever comes, their faith will sustain them. All other factors being equal, this special quality of faith will be for them the formula for success.

Is not this a suitable motto for every aspiring Christian? For who has greater need for faith! Our founder said it another way, in these words: “You can’t keep out of the kingdom the man who really believes.” And again, “Every true believer will be saved.”

We all know this is true, but how much are we doing, you and I, to support and build our faith?

Perhaps we need to give more conscious thought and time to the building of our faith reserves, we who live in these closing moments of the great day of salvation.

The Nature of Faith

A supreme and unique quality is this faith unlimited. Actually, the attaining of success requires many supreme qualities. It requires a supreme amount of effort, patient endurance, optimism, self-control. It requires a willingness to sacrifice, a graciousness in submission, a love and devotion for God through any trial, an eagerness in obedience, a deep thoughtfulness for others, and a willingness to share and give and take in proper Christian measure. But all of this needs one more quality added. It needs that special plus—faith unlimited. As soon as we limit our faith—either to the things that are seen, or to the things that can be readily

believed, or to those of which we have full understanding—we limit our ability to succeed.

This does not mean that God wants us to have a blind faith, a faith that is willing to believe anything with or without evidence. Nor is it an unreasoning, unthinking confidence that whatever is, is right. No; but neither is it a faith that must wait until all the evidence is in before it will take a step. True Christian faith is faith in motion, faith that is moving toward the great goal of whole-souled confidence in God; faith that trusts God in the unseen because the evidence it has seen is irrefutable.

This special quality of faith was the success formula of all of the worthies of old, as the writer of Hebrews attests in his eleventh chapter. All found a place on God’s honor roll because of their supreme and unshakable quality of faith. They had faith in their God, faith in their faith, and faith in themselves. This was not to deny that things might be difficult at times and faith be out of sight. But when all else failed, they still clung to faith, faith *unlimited* in the power and promises of God. With such a faith, they could not be defeated.

And, praise God!—they were not defeated.

What does this say to you and me today? It says that we, too, can be faithful. Faithful—full of faith. We, too, can someday be numbered among God’s men and women of faith. What an honor!

But faith is not an automatic condition. It does not grow like a weed in the kitchen garden, nor is it an all-weather plant that thrives without special tendering. It must be planted, cultivated, protected, staked, and supported. This is not to suggest that it must have ideal conditions to survive, but it must be nurtured. And when it is properly nurtured and grown, it will stand against anything.

The germ and root of every good is faith. It is also the key that unlocks the door into every treasure

Note: —*Plus Faith Unlimited!* is available as a complete church service on cassette. Price: \$3.00

house of truth. Everywhere and constantly men must of necessity walk by faith and not by sight. If this is true in things temporal, how much more is it true in things eternal, in the things which as yet are visible only by the eye of faith!

Faith is the basic element in all Christian experience. From the very beginning of the day of salvation, faith has been the great propelling power in the life of each man and woman of God. Let us examine briefly this quality as it appeared in the lives of a few of these holy heroes, as they were catalogued in Hebrews 11. (We will cite our quotations of this chapter from the *Jerusalem Bible*.) Let us see for ourselves what were the great why's and wherefore's of their faith, what was it and what it did for them.

"By Faith . . .

By faith "Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain . . ." What about Abel's sacrifice was evidence of his faith? Because by it he sought God's approval. This made Abel's sacrifice acceptable, and "acceptability" made all the difference. His faith assured that acceptability.

By faith "Enoch was taken up and did not have to experience death: he was not to be found because God had taken him. This was because . . . he had pleased God." What was the evidence of his faith? That he "pleased God."

Could this be written of us, that *we* pleased God?

How did Enoch please God? By walking with God, by complying with God's every demand, by humbly, holily conducting himself every moment as in God's presence. Enoch was a man who lived very close to God.

Then follows this brief accounting of Noah. By faith "Noah, when he had been warned by God of something that had never been seen before, felt a holy fear and built an ark to save his family. . . ." Here again was faith, faith unlimited. Multitudes could scoff and jeer, but Noah went right on obeying. Why? Because he believed God. And he demonstrated that belief by his actions: He built the ark.

By faith "Abraham obeyed the call to set out for a country that was the inheritance given to him and his descendants, . . . he set out without knowing where he was going. . . . He looked forward to a city founded, designed and built by God. . . ." Here is the father of the faithful, the man of God who attained the highest heights of faith, and left a pattern for us. What is the pattern? Faith and obedience, followed by more faith and more obedience. Abraham believed, and he obeyed.

Faith trusts God in the unseen because the evidence it has seen is irrefutable.

And still he believed, and still he obeyed. And God was pleased.

How does faith please God? By the obedience that it impels.

"It was by faith that Abraham, when put to the test, offered up Isaac. . . . He was confident that God had the power even to raise the dead; and so, figuratively speaking, he was given back Isaac from the dead. . . ." What was the limit of Abraham's faith? Here was no ordinary trial or testing. His son Isaac was Abraham's only visible link with the promise of God—the only link outside his strong, unwavering faith. But Abraham proved that he was able to sever that one and only visible link—and still maintain his faith unwavering. It was the supreme test. And faith triumphed.

Oh, how the unlimited dimension of Abraham's faith shines through all the intervening centuries to give us courage. Even in the darkest hour of personal sacrifice, his faith sustained him. Truly it was faith unlimited.

Look closely at the meaning of that faith; its real, practical underlying substance. What were the great "Why's" beneath Abraham's faith? Abraham did not wait until he understood God's reason in issuing such a command, or until he would know the meaning of what God was doing. He did not say, "Lord if you could only let me know *WHY* you are doing this, *WHY* you are asking this of me, I would go ahead. You never asked this of any who went before me. Why should you be so demanding of *MY* faith and *MY* treasures?"

No, Abraham did not wait to understand. Even though he did not know the meaning, or the future, even though he had never seen the power of God in restoring life from death, he took the step of obedience by faith. Whatever God's hidden purpose, he could still trust—and imagine not the worst but the very best! He did not say, "God is taking my son, the only visible evidence He ever gave me of the certainty of His promise to me. And now He's going back on His word. What a fool I was to ever believe Him." Does this sound like Abraham? Never! Never! Never! Such thoughts never even entered Abraham's mind, so far as we are told. If they did, this great man of faith immediately stanchied

them with the overpowering demands of his unfaltering allegiance. He knew absolutely and unquestioningly whom he had believed, and even in the most difficult hour of trial was able to account that God was able to give back that which He was taking. Even though Abraham had never seen or heard of a resurrection, He believed. He had faith, faith unlimited.

And I wonder: How well would we have stood Abraham's test? Life in twentieth century B.C. had perhaps less demands than life in this twentieth century A.D., but God required the same high quality of character then as now, now as then.

Moses was another man of faith. "It was by faith that, when he grew to manhood, Moses refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter and chose to be ill-treated in company with God's people rather than to enjoy for a time the pleasures of sin. He considered that the insults offered to the Anointed were something more precious than all the treasures of Egypt, because he had his eyes fixed on the reward."

Let Us Pray . . .

O Lord, whose glory fills the heavens, and the earth is full of Thy goodness, we worship Thee. Only Thou canst show us the path of life; only in Thy presence is fullness of joy; only at Thy right hand are pleasures for evermore.

Lord, we are grateful for all the blessings, great and small, that crown our days: for the reliable ebb and flow of the seasons; for our solid-rock relationships with Christian friends; for the dignity of honest work and the refreshment of peaceful sleep; for the stabilizing power of the Scriptures; and for the intangible but undergirding strength of faith. For all that has been proven, tried, and true, in values, relationships, knowledge, and beauty, we express thanksgiving to Thee.

May the evidence Thou hast given us cause us to have in Thee the same unlimited faith that sustained Thy saints in ages past: a faith for the shadows as well as for the sunshine, a faith sufficient for any trial or testing that Thou dost allow to come into our lives, knowing full well that Thou art over all and in Thine own good time will bring to pass what Thou hast promised.

Faith for Today

Isn't this the quality of faith that we need today? All the power we can muster, all the determination, all the far-sighted perseverance, all the love and devotion—all, plus faith unlimited. It is not only faith when we can understand why certain circumstances should be; it is not only faith when we can see the end of the road and know how all will turn out. It is not only faith when everything is comfortable and seems to be going our way. It is not, in the words of our song, "Faith for the sunshine, to be true when skies are fair." It is also "faith for the shadows, trusting well our Father's care." It is faith for today, and tomorrow, and the tomorrow after tomorrow, whatever those tomorrows may bring, knowing fully that God is true and righteous altogether. It is faith unlimited.

If this special plus is ours, this faith unlimited, there is nothing, absolutely nothing that can hinder us, nothing that can daunt us, nothing that can even slow our progress toward the bright future before us. With utter and utmost confidence in God, His plan, His Word,

We pray, Lord, that to the degree we experience suffering we may know Thy sustenance. To the degree that we feel temptation, may we know Thy courage.

Thou dost know each one's intent and need. Thou dost know that some among us are suffering from wounds of unkind words and thoughtless attitudes. Some have been overtaken by sorrow, by accident, by pain, by temporal fears and responsibilities beyond their strength to sustain. Comfort, renew, and strengthen them as Thou seest best. And wilt Thou so weave into the tapestry of our lives those golden strands of confidence and faith that when the dark threads cross our days, the steady colors of Thy abiding love and care will weave around the trial a meaning of such magnitude as to bring good from the struggle, strength from the pain, and endurance from the battle; and over and beyond all, Thy eternal peace and blessing.

Lord, we need Thee. Be near to all, we beseech Thee, wherever they may be, who are striving to learn and live by Thy holy precepts. And may we be truly separated unto Thee, that we may belong both to Thee and to the ages.

Hear us, we pray, as we stand before Thee. Keep us humble in mind and pliable in soul, that we may be receptive to any answer Thou dost give, that it may someday be Thy good pleasure to favor us with life forever in Thy Bright New World. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

and His work, what have we to fear?

With such faith we are ready for anything. Anything! Come what may, it will not shake us. We will know that God is in control, that He will not allow anything beyond our ability to endure, and that He is indeed working *all* things for our spiritual and eternal good, even though at the moment we do not understand. Whatever our losses, or crosses, or testings in this world, we will have faith unlimited that these are our means to triumph, that they are allowed us by the mercy of God to form us into something worthy of the ages, something worthy of His perpetuating, something eternal. After all, what consequence is *anything* here—good or ill—except to prepare us for the world to come? That is the only permanent gain; that is the only permanent good.

More Heroes of Faith

This was the attitude of each of God's heroes of faith in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. But the dynasty of faith's heroes did not end when the canon of Scripture was closed. Even greater faith would be needed by those who should live in the centuries to come, for to them no visible sign of God's presence or power would be given, no visitations, no miracles.

Among these later heroes of faith stands one whom the prophet Daniel, through divine vision, termed a "wonder." By faith this great man, unnamed to us, unknown and unacclaimed by men, stood steadfast for God and truth against the all but overpowering bulwark of pagan and papal error. He was the last man to defend and live by the ancient gospel in its purity before the long night of darkness fell; he was the last in an uninterrupted line of the witnesses of faith.

By faith this great wonder defied the powers of church and state, resolved that whatever men might do to him was nothing compared with what his God would do for him, if he proved faithful. By faith he clung tenaciously to truth and righteousness, though brethren forsook him and all things seemed against him. By faith he scribed his name eternally in God's book of remembrance, like the saints of old obtaining a "good report through faith."

The next hero of faith foreseen by the prophet Daniel was another "wonder." Twelve hundred sixty years of total darkness and superstition separated this "wonder" from his nearest faithful comrade, but he was undaunted. To him was assigned not only the task of defending the ancient faith but of rediscovering its long-hidden precepts. Added to this was the task of applying to his own life every principle of that faith, and then ministering that faith to others. What greater need

Faith, properly nurtured and grown, will stand against anything.

could one have for that special plus—plus faith unlimited!

By faith this latter-day Moses refused to be called the son of religious error, choosing rather to stand alone with the people of God than to enjoy the plaudits of men for a season, esteeming a life of self-denial and discipline immeasurably richer and more rewarding than the greatest of this world's treasures: for he cherished the recompense of God—even eternal life.

And all by faith. He was not born with this faith, but by careful study and application, by carefully focused thinking and mental discipline, he nurtured and grew his faith. Faith in God came first. As our founder commented, one of his strongest, sustaining qualities was "a simple, childlike faith in God." Then followed faith in every aspect of the plan of God which he struggled to reclaim; faith in truth; faith in the whole divine scheme of things; and last but not least, faith in himself. His entire life effort was "by faith."

But even he is not the end of the heroes of faith. We ourselves are called to stand among these heroes, to be part of the "us" at the end of Hebrews 11, without whom "they" who went before shall not be made perfect. The door of opportunity is still open, if we will but enter. We read: "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off . . . God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect"—completed, receiving the final change from mortality to immortality. There is room for us!—if we will match their measure of faith.

Faith in God's Plan

Faith in God is fundamental. Our abilities may not enable us to accomplish everything we would like to in the service of God; but all of us *can* abound in faith. Indeed, we *must*, or we will never progress very far toward the Kingdom of God. For "without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb. 11:6).

We of all people who ever lived need faith unlimited, we who see no visible signs to confirm God's presence

Abraham did not wait to understand. Even though he did not know the meaning, or the future, he obeyed.

among us. Especially today, when indifference is eating the very heart out of the little confidence that remains, we need faith that will endure to the end, faith that can see all things working together for the good of those who shall be heirs of salvation. We need to see the whole creation moving forward to the great day of culmination, when the Son of Man shall come with blessing and glory for all who have proven themselves true heroes of faith.

We need unlimited faith in the plan of God and the ultimate triumph of right over wrong, truth over error, justice over injustice. Man will not always fight against man. Millions of earthborns will not always languish in poverty and hunger and ignorance. Men will not be burdened forever by sorrow and suffering and woe. Life is not an incredible and profitless episode on one of the minor planets. All creation has purpose, direction, destiny. God has a plan, and our earth is part of that plan. God has designed both the earth and its creatures as part of a long-term project of development. He has a plan for us in the eternal scheme of things, if we will fit ourselves into it. This is why God caused His Word to be written, to inform us of all this. This is why He inspired holy men of old to record that Word, and hundreds of unknown guardians and translators to protect it through the ages.

In view of this great knowledge and insight that has been entrusted to us, it is our sacred responsibility to "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith (we) are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:1-3).

Faith to Know

What about your faith? What about mine? Have we placed limits upon it, limits of our own devising? Do we say, Yes, I believe . . . and then go on to make excuses for ourselves and our weaknesses when things get difficult? Do we profess to believe, and then question God's workings in the world, in the church, in our own lives? Have we the faith to accept with solid conviction

the fact that the "God who lived in Moses' time is just the same today"? Have we the faith to know, in the words of the sacred writer, that not some things, or most things, or pleasant things, but *all* things work together for good in His long-range divine plan?

Perhaps we say, Yes, I believe, then complain at some small loss that we must sustain. What if we should lose everything of this world that we cherish? God has not guaranteed that we shall always have arms filled with plenty. What if our losses should surpass our gains? The prophet Habakkuk had an answer for this. Remember all the possible losses he projected—no flower, no fruit; no crop from earnest labor; no meat, no oil; no flocks, no herds—just about everything he could think of, surely almost more than he had to lose; yet what was his reaction? "Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation" (Hab. 3:17-18). Far more than mere enduring, he was ready to rejoice in his losses, if only he still had God and hope.

Job also had an answer for earthly losses, an answer that grew out of his own unforgettable experience. Hear him say in his hour of triumph, with all the philosophy of the divine, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21). If the Lord sees fit to take away, should He not be thanked for what He has given? If He had not first given, He could not have taken away. Hence, "blessed be the name of the Lord" for what He gave! There is nothing we can lose, but which we should be sincerely grateful for having had.

Perhaps we say when we are healthy and strong, Yes, I believe. But what about a time of sickness, disability, or prolonged illness? Are we prepared? Have we the faith unlimited to carry on—whatever? Job also had an answer for this, drawn again from his own book of experience. "Though he slay me," he said—and what could one lose that is more precious than life!—"yet will I trust in him." Not that he expected God to take his natural life, for if God should take his life what would remain with which to trust God? He was expressing his faith unlimited. "Anything!" he said, with a capital A; "whatever it be, I will still trust God."

Or perhaps we say, I can believe, as long as I can see the way clear ahead of me. The apostle Paul did not ask this. He said, "We are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it" (Rom. 8:24-25).

If we can see, we don't need faith.

Perhaps we have been guilty of putting other condi-

tions on our faith. We may have said, by actions if not by words, "I can believe, so long as life works out according to my plan and I don't confront any serious personal disappointment."

Were personal disappointments—even present sufferings—enough to daunt the apostle Paul? Hear his great reckoning: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18). Again he wrote, "For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (II Tim. 1:12). Again, "We both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God" (I Tim. 4:10). He suffered "because" of his faith, and still his faith stood. Shall ours do less for us?

Or perhaps our problem is the responsibilities we must shoulder. Yes, we believe, as long as life is relatively smooth. But what if . . . ?

The apostle Paul must have felt a tinge of this also, but hear his triumphant message: "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; . . . we having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak; . . . for which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day" (II Cor. 4:8-9, 13, 16). Every experience in Paul's life was a cause for deeper joy, greater inward growth, higher faith and abounding zeal. Every circumstance, whatever its nature, was immediately put to use in advancing him toward his greater triumph. Shall ours do less for us?

In Conclusion

And now, let each of us ask ourselves: What are the great why's and wherefore's of my faith? Have I an unwavering, unshakable confidence in the Word of God, the work of God, the church of God? Why do I believe?

What is the foundation of my faith? Has my faith the strong underpinning that will hold through any storm? How secure is it, how grounded, settled, unmoved?

How yielded am I to the will of God, the way of God, the work of God? Is my faith sufficient for me to resign "Anything, Lord, for Thee"? Am I ready to say with Isaiah, "Now, O Lord, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand"? (Isa. 64:8).

Am I ready to say with all sincerity, "I know"—not

God is in control, and He will not allow anything beyond our ability to endure.

surmise, or think generally true, but *know*—"that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23).

Why do we believe?

First, because of the mountains of evidence God has provided.

Second, because of some of the people I have known who believed God and whose faith—and joy—was inextinguishable. If they could be convinced to make the wholehearted commitment, why not I?

Then, there are the examples provided in the Bible. What can be more inspiring, encouraging, uplifting, faith-strengthening, than to follow them, ordinary persons like ourselves, through the experiences life brought to them, and see how victoriously they lived?

And we should never forget that what was so far-off to them is now to us so nigh. Sometimes the prophets of Israel withdrew their eyes from the immediate events of their own day to look by the eye of faith into the distant future. Isaiah envisioned a world cleared of strife and filled with peace. There was to come One who would have such great insight and endued with such power that He would someday change the world. He sums up that vision in a few words, saying "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Isa. 11:9).

In every trial, in every temptation, He who knows the secrets of every heart speaks to us across the ages, saying, "Be of good cheer. I have overcome the world." With such words to strengthen and arm us, we should lack no measure of faith. A man who stands firmly on God's side cannot be defeated, no matter how many foes are seemingly set against him. A man of faith—faith unlimited—is ready to pay the price, whatever the price may be.

Paul the Apostle, as he moved in and out among men, said "I know whom I have believed." How many of us are willing to commit to that today? How many of us are ready to say, "I know . . ."? If such is our faith, it will not weaken at the sight of the first giant of sin. It

will not weaken at circumstances that seem to be ever so set against us. It will not weaken under trials of sickness, age, infirmity, pain, or testing. Nor will it weaken in the monotony of ordinary days. Whatever the circumstances it will grow stronger, stronger and yet stronger, until the glorious day when faith unlimited becomes rewards unlimited, even riches and honor and life without limit! What a fruition to our faith!

The glory, the joy, the happiness, the peace, the life that we shall experience *then* will be in the same measure as our faith now.

God grant that we may work so earnestly that both our faith now and our life then may be UNLIMITED! MM

Faith in God's promises ennobles and dignifies life, restrains sin and vice, and is an overflowing fountain of charity and the anchor of hope.

When God Doesn't Deliver

(Continued from page 2)

What does it tell us? The more we ponder this text, the more we appreciate the meaning with which it is laden. Translated into everyday terms, it is a promise of sufficiency. Sufficient of all things physical and spiritual to allow us to fulfill our God-assigned purpose; sufficient life, sufficient health, sufficient strength, along with all that is good and needful to prepare us for the future, glorious, abundant life God has offered us. That is His guarantee. "My God shall supply all your need. . . ."

That summarizes God's promises for the NOW. That is all.

And yet it is not, for has He not promised to go with us, a divine companion through all our days? Did He not assure Jacob long ago, "My presence will go with thee"? Is it not the assurance renewed to every sincere, true believer, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee"? (Heb. 13:5).

Then, too, we have the further assurance that He will not allow us to be overpowered by adversity; that our efforts for the eternal crown will not be thwarted by circumstances beyond our control.

What about the times when our needs seem beyond

what is available to us? Perhaps we need to reevaluate our needs, to see them through God's eyes. Perhaps the seeming insufficiency, the denial, the testing is a greater need, as God sees it, something He is using to train us for greater service.

When God looks at us, He sees the real needs of our lives. And the real potential. He looks for heart qualities which can be developed—through discipline. He sees the latent spiritual energies which can be converted into mighty spiritual strengths—through trial. More than what we *are*, He sees *what we can become*.

When the things of this world disappoint us, perhaps our real need is for a lesson in His scale of values, to teach us to remove our confidence from the things that are "seen" and transfer it to the things that can be seen only by the eye of faith.

When we suffer pain, perhaps our real need is for a vital lesson in humility, patience or endurance.

When someone or something in this world fails us; when stressful situations try us; when circumstances seem destined to defeat us, perhaps our real need is to learn to thank God for supplying what we need to sustain us, to recognize our total dependence upon God and set our affections on things above.

How unkind God would be, how unjust and unmerciful, were He to deprive us of the very experiences that His divine wisdom is using to bring us into His favor, to fit us for membership in His royal family, to mature us to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ!

Our mortal experience is not for naught. If we have committed our life to Him, we know that the whole disposing of our lives is in His hand and that though the schooling be difficult, the rewards will be infinitely more than we can think or imagine. And—glorious promise—He will allow nothing that will prevent our final success. What more could we ask!

What, then, are we to do when God does not deliver?

Only this: to accept what He is allowing, assured that He who sees at once the beginning and the end is working all things together for eternal good, both in this world and in the world to come.

Even though, at the moment, we do not understand.

Even though, at the moment, He does not deliver. MM

Faith is like a great spoon that can take the sorrows, disappointments, and joys of life and blend them into a perfect whole.

Every Day, Every Day

THE power of God's law can snap the chains of evil habits that enslave us, silence our harsh language, cool our hot tempers, and melt our hard hearts.

Finding the Remedy

THE initial step in finding the remedy for sin is to confess the wrongness of our natural ways, and to acknowledge the rightness of God's way. There is no chance to get rid of our sin until we recognize that our attitudes, our actions, and our affections have been contradictory to the Lord's rules for living.

We usually try to dodge point-

ing this accusing finger at ourselves. Instead, we seek to rationalize the situation by saying that we are not as bad as the worst nor—of course—as good as the best.

This evaluation holds together fairly well until we compare ourselves with Christ, He who is the embodiment of all that is good, perfect, and genuine. When we take Him as our Ideal and our Example, we must turn

away from what He cannot sanction.

This means retracing our steps and making right the things we have done that He cannot approve. The dishonest deeds must be faced and corrected, the sinful practices must be branded as sin and utterly repudiated. Nothing less will move us to change our nature until everything we do is fair and right.

Empowered

BEFORE the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit, they stayed away from the public because they were afraid of people; they kept isolated because they did not feel adequate to face threatening enemies.

However, when they received power from on high, this situation suddenly took a change for the better. They spilled out of the Upper Room ready to proclaim the good tidings to any they met.

They were able to out-sing, out-march, out-live, and out-die anything that the world had to offer. Their dauntless determination and irrepressible enthusiasm made them disregard impossibilities. They took civilization around its biggest corner. These cringing and unpromising disciples, empowered by the Holy Spirit, wrote the brightest page in the history of mankind.

"Everyday with Paul," by Mendell Taylor. Copyright 1978 by Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City; used by permission.

Invest in Yourself

A sensible person looks ahead. He wants his life to count for something worthwhile. He wants to use his God-given abilities—energy, desire, interest, time, talent, dexterity, powers of memory, reason and reflection—in such a way as to secure the greatest possible returns. What does he do?

What would you do?

There is but one answer: Invest in Yourself.

What does this mean? Some see it as acquiring a good education, preparing themselves for a place in the world of science, art, music or business. Others invest in themselves by learning a trade which should provide them financial security and a good living. Still others invest in making many friends. Some see their family as their best and richest investment in the future. They educate, guide and discipline—even spoil—their children in an effort to make them what they consider a “success.”

Another type of people invest themselves in social work. By helping others, they enrich their own lives with goodwill and brotherly kindness. Still others fulfill their desire for self-investment by what they can obtain in exchange for their money—a beautiful painting, an unusual sculpture, a near-perfect work of art.

All of these forms of self-investment have their merits. Each has present benefits and a possibility of future benefit.

But how about those who require the very highest returns on their investment? What is there to satisfy them? How about those who want a hundredfold of value now and in the world to come life eternal?

The far-sighted person looks beyond today to the vastly better investment in God's tomorrow. But how do we obtain that investment?

There is only one truly safe, eternal investment and that is the Kingdom of God. But the price is high. How do we begin?

This investment has one point in common with all other goals: we are investing in ourselves. And unlike all others, it is sure and certain. If we invest, we will benefit. It is absolutely safe.

Once we learn what this investment involves, how do we begin actually making the investment?

We might begin by putting into practice what we preach. It is so easy to talk higher than we live in spiritual matters. There is great danger that, after we have preached to others, we ourselves be castaways. There is great danger that, having fixed our aim on the promises of God, we may be overcome by the things of this life and come short of the great prize (I Cor. 9:27; Heb. 4:1).

We can invest in ourselves by filling our minds with what is spiritually beneficial, all that is “holy and right and pure and beautiful and good” (Phil. 4:8, Phillips). Our mind is a treasury, but it will yield divi-

dends only in proportion to the value of the goods we store in it. “A good man produces good from the store of good within himself; and an evil man from evil within produces evil. . . . For the words that the mouth utters come from the overflowing of the heart” (Matt. 12:35, Luke 6:45, NEB).

We can invest in ourselves by being selective of what we allow ourselves to read. What we read enters our minds and feeds our souls. How essential, then that we invest in what will help us grow as Christians. We have no mind to waste on things that are light and frivolous and perishing with this present world. We must keep our mind filled with thoughts that will inspire a holy attitude toward life and living. Pure thoughts are the basis of a good life. Remember that the evil that befell Israel long ago was nothing more or less than “the fruit of their thoughts” (Jer. 6:19).

We invest in ourselves when we make the very most of our time (Eph. 5:15-16). Time is life itself. It is a trust from God, to be redeemed and not squandered. When we squander time, we are in reality squandering eternity.

We can invest in ourselves by all those exercises of the soul that put in motion the virtue of love. When we take time to help another in our Christian life, we are not only improving his well-being but our own also. Kindness, patience, thoughtfulness in times of need; encour-

agement, reproof; sincere, brotherly love; a warm, glowing spiritual affection: these are outgoing investments which bring rich returns in this world, and in the world to come. For God will not forget our work or labor of love (Heb. 6:10). Practicing Christian virtue in our own lives will stretch the boundaries of our own soul to new dimensions and at the same time strengthen our brother or sister in the faith. Faith, hope, love, let these abound, says Paul (I Cor. 13:13). These are great investments, because they pay such high dividends.

Also, we have talents in which we may invest. God has entrusted these to us for us to use. If we let them lie dormant when there is something we can do for God and for our brother, we become like the one-talent man who buried his one talent in the earth. Whatever we have we must be willing to invest—God will be looking for some return on what He has put into our care.

Every effort we make to improve ourselves in a spiritual way is an investment bearing rich promise of dividends for the future. Who would choose to miss out on so great an opportunity?

The returns are too great to risk any chance of failure. So invest. Invest every day. Keep pouring into the treasury of your soul those practices and attitudes that will make you more like the Master Himself.

Perhaps this is what Paul meant when he advised us to "lay up treasure . . . as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that [you] may take hold of the life that is truly life" (I Tim. 6:19, New International). Or Jesus, when He said, "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven." That's investment worth thinking about, investment worth all our mind and might and strength. Why? Because its benefits are eternal! MM

To God Be The Glory

*To God be the glory, His wonderful Word
Is made known to me; the glad message I've heard.
I once walked in darkness, but plainly now see
All sin must be banished if I would be free.*

*I sat in the prison of doubt and despair,
With nothing to comfort, and no one to care;
Till Jesus brought peace to my sin-burdened heart,
And bade me from error and evil depart.*

*To God be the glory, in causing to shine
The Light that is flooding this pathway of mine.
The pitfalls before me are clearly revealed,
As beams from His Lighthouse illumine the field.*

*No more am I sad; now I work with a will,
As daily I labor, God's law to fulfill;
For Jesus commands, "Be ye perfect, indeed,
And to every word of My Father give heed."*

*To God be the glory for aid He provides
In seasons when trouble or sorrow betides.
His "I will be with thee; oh, be not dismayed,"
Suffices to keep me from being afraid.*

*I hear, "As your need, be your strength for the day."
And when I would fret at some minor delay,
The warning, "Let patience perfect you, My child,"
Spurs me with resolve to be still undefiled.*

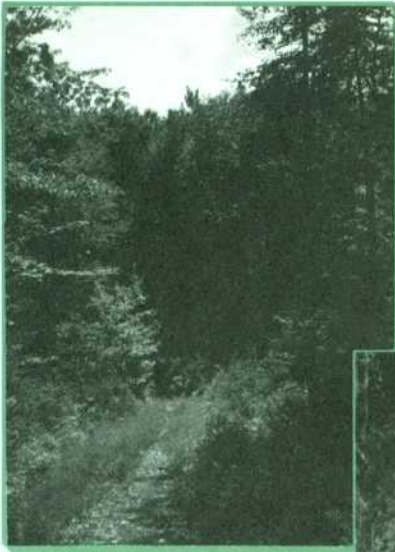
*To God be the glory for worthies of old,
Whose fearless endurance is oftentimes told:
For Christ and the life of denial He led;
For hope that He gave when He rose from the dead.*

*And now, at the close of Salvation's great day,
We still have the Bible to show us the way
To glories celestial, no equal is found.
"To God be the glory," re-echoes the sound.*

*To God be the glory, He urges me on,
By warnings and promise, to meet the new dawn—
The glorious morning, its dawning is sure—
With hands that are clean, and a heart that is pure.*

*To God be the glory, whose mercy and love,
Unequalled on earth, or in regions above,
Provided all these for such mortals as I,
Oh how can I thank Him, my Father on High!*

—L. L. S.



Lines to Live By

Hail! The Glorious Golden City

*Hail the glorious Golden City pictured by the seers of old!
Everlasting light shines o'er it, wondrous tales of it are told:
Only righteous men and women dwell within its gleaming wall;
Wrong is banished from its borders, justice reigns supreme o'er all.*

*We are builders of that city; all our joys and all our groans
Help to rear its shining ramparts; all our lives are building stones:
Whether humble or exalted, all are called to task divine;
All must aid alike to carry forward one sublime design.*

*And the work that we have builded, oft with bleeding hands and tears,
Both in sorrow and in anguish, will not perish with our years:
It will last and shine transfigured, in the final reign of Right;
It will merge into the splendors of the city of the light.*

—Selected

OH! THAT mine eyes might closed be
 To what concerns me not to see;
 That deafness might possess my ear
 To what concerns me not to hear:
 That truth my tongue might ever tie
 From speaking words of vanity:
 That no vain thought might ever rest
 Or be conceived within my breast;
 So that in deed and word and thought,
 Glory may unto God be wrought.
 But what are wishes? Lord, mine eye
 Is fixed on Thee, to Thee I cry!
 Cleanse, Lord, and purify my heart
 And make it clean in every part;
 Oh help me then to keep it pure,
 From sin's defilements be secure!

—Sel. and alt.

*PREPARE for the future; do not brood
 over it.*

FAITH reels not in the storm of warring words,
 She brightens at the clash of "Yes" and "No,"
 She sees the best that glimmers through the worst,
 She feels the sun is hid but for a night,
 She spies the summer through the winter bud,
 She tastes the fruit before the blossom falls,
 She hears the lark within the songless egg,
 She finds the fountain where they wailed "Mirage!"

*WHEN we choose the beginning of a road, let
 us remember that we choose its end also.*

COMMIT thy way to God,
 The weight which makes thee faint;
 Worlds are to Him no load,
 To Him breathe thy complaint.
 He who for winds and clouds
 Maketh a pathway free,
 Through wastes or hostile crowds,
 Can make a way for thee.

Thou must in Him be blest
 Ere bliss can be secure;
 On His words must thou rest
 If thy work shall endure.
 To anxious, prying thought,
 And weary, fretting care,
 The highest yieldeth naught;
 He giveth all to prayer.

Father, thy faithful love,
 Thy mercy, wise and mild
 Sees what will blessing prove,
 Or what will hurt Thy child;
 And what Thy wise foreseeing
 Doth for Thy children choose
 Thou bringest into being,
 Nor sufferest them to lose.

Hope, then, though woes be doubled;
 Hope and be undismayed;
 Let not Thy heart be troubled,
 Nor let it be afraid.
 This prison where thou art—
 Thy God will break it soon,
 And flood with light thy heart
 In His own blessed noon.

Up! Up! the day is breaking;
 Say to thy cares, Good night!
 Thy troubles from thee shaking
 Like dreams in day's fresh light.
 Thou wearest not the crown,
 Nor the best course can tell;
 God sitteth on the throne
 And guideth all things well.

Points for the Month:

- Week 1:** If you want to get a clean heart, first learn to *think* right.
- Week 2:** A chip on the shoulder is the heaviest load one can carry.
- Week 3:** True faith makes us tougher toward ourselves and tenderer toward others.
- Week 4:** When looking for faults, use a mirror not a telescope.
- Week 5:** Nothing can make a man truly great but being truly good.

STAYING ON TOP

DO YOU remember the old fable about the two frogs that had the misfortune of falling into a bucket of cream? One frog promptly panicked, gave up struggling and drowned. The other "never say die" little frog kept on struggling and kicking. And what happened? Its vigorous efforts changed the cream into butter, and the little frog found safety on the freshly churned curds.

The lesson of the fable is universal. Staying on top is not automatic. Attaining and maintaining a favorable position in the difficult and often stress-filled situations of life requires effort, determined, unrelenting effort.

And even more important is the lesson to the aspiring Christian. Staying on top becomes an ever new challenge as we confront the many, many besetting sins inherent in our nature. At times when, upon sober reflection, there appears very little good we can say of ourselves, we feel like the frog in the bucket of cream. Defeated. We are like the people in Ezekiel's day who moaned, "If our transgressions and our sins be upon us and we pine away in them, how shall we then live?" Our confidence in our ability to overcome wanes and our spiritual vitality sinks to low ebb. If allowed to remain, this attitude will prove disastrous! True, we cannot go blustering through life with a "cocksure" attitude, but it is equally devastating to think we can't do it—when we know well enough that if

we would only put our heart, mind and soul into the effort, *we could!*

On the other hand, we have all experienced those special occasions when zeal has been all but unbounded, when nothing seemed too difficult to accomplish, nothing too closely cherished to relinquish. We were more than just on top, we were riding the crest. Then, for no obvious reason, suddenly everything changed. A feeling of lethargy, almost an "I don't care attitude" descended upon us and our spiritual progress ground to a sudden standstill.

What can we do about it? What course of action is open to us by which we can thwart this debilitating condition? First, of all, don't give up to it. Keep struggling to stay on top. And second, take it to the Lord in prayer. Plead for a discerning heart to see the lessons in every situation and for strength to carry through. Perhaps an honest evaluation will even reveal that we have become forgetful of God in the everyday settings of our lives, and have allowed mundane duties to absorb time we should have spent in the faith-building exercises of prayer, meditation and study. Consequently, faith has grown weak.

Whatever the cause, whenever these feelings grip us (and they will come), we can—we must—renew the struggle to stay on top. A little more effort, a sterner self-discipline, and the spirits will lift. Once more

the heights of faith will beckon us, and greater victories over self and sin will again become glorious reality.

There is still another area where vigilance must be our constant watchword if we are to stay on top spiritually, and that concerns our dealings with the world about us. Perhaps nowhere is there greater temptation to "tread water," so to speak, than when we are in the company of those not interested in the high calling to which we aspire. And yet, don't forget, they are watching us and judging us by what they see and hear. We may be the only Bible they ever read. Can we afford to compromise our high standard to win their approval, or to be classed as a "good fellow" in their eyes? Didn't our Perfect Example commission us long ago with a responsibility to shine as lights in this present world? Isn't this another way of saying, "You must stay on top"?

How do we react under the pressure of difficult and trying circumstances? Sometimes, through no fault of our own, we find ourselves in a situation which does not lend itself to a happy life. Perhaps it is a conflict of personalities within the home, where one individual is a constant source of aggravation and frustration, and our efforts to please are seldom if ever appreciated. And . . . and . . . and . . . we could go on and on with our list of grievances.

The point, however, is not the number or the severity of the grievances, but rather our position when dealing with them. Are we on top of the situation, in command, so to speak, or are we drowning in a mud puddle of self-pity? Only we ourselves can answer that question. But it lies within the power of each of us, by vigorous, full-time effort and concentration, to rise above this human pettiness. We can grow so spiritually mature as to be unaffected and undisturbed by these slights and aggravations.

There is yet another aspect of the desirability of staying on top we would do well to consider. It may be possible for us to conceal some of the embarrassing "downs" from those around us—sometimes we even succeed in deceiving ourselves! But what about the angels who watch over us and keep an impartial record of our failures and our

victories? Can't we just see them shake their heads in dismay as they see us playing with the same old temptations and falling again and again into the same old mud puddles?—instead of staying on top? What must they think when they see our half-hearted efforts, and our weak, vacillating faith? Remember, they know our possibilities, they know we have the ability to conquer, they know we have what it takes to rise successfully to any challenge and stand at last on the crest.

So just what are we waiting for? Surely there is no better time to start than right now and right where we are.

And remember, we will reap all the benefits. And what are the benefits? If we maintain our position on top, if we stay in command of ourselves in every situation, we will

soon discover negative attitudes giving way to decisive action. The old mud puddle of doubt and the resultant despair will give way to a vibrant working faith. And—happy thought—those miserable old stumbling blocks which were so often our undoing will become stepping-stones to the top, even to the very crest of real, genuine dedicated Christian living!

And the greatest blessing will be the recognition we shall receive from our heavenly Father and all His sons and daughters, when we become a permanent part of His eternal family. Yes, we shall be welcomed "abundantly" into the "everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." What a welcome! What a reward!

And all for staying on top.

Let's make the effort, meet the challenge, stay on top. We can, if we will. MM

Hold the Fort

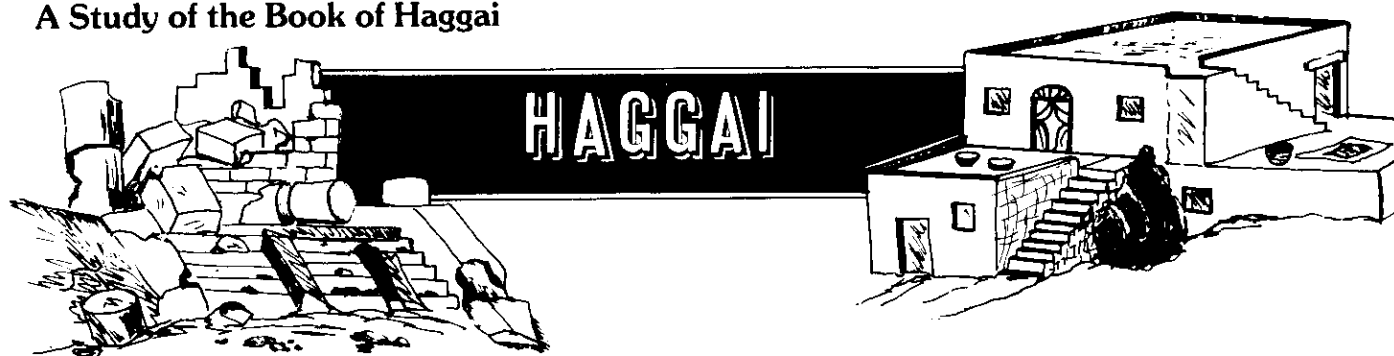
IN MANY a military campaign, lone divisions or small groups of soldiers often have had to hold a strategic position or fort against heavy odds. Usually help has been promised or anticipated, and the anxiety among the men is to be able to hold on until help comes. Fresh troops, more ammunition and food supplies, as well as medical aid are promised, but no one knows when they will arrive.

Soldiers in the Christian warfare during the closing hours of salvation's day are, figuratively speaking, holding the fort against the enemy. In His absence our Commander has entrusted us with a charge to keep. We fight against sins and temptations, from without and within. We fight against doubts and fears, indifference and the uncertainty about us. All these, and more, keep pressing the battle strongly against us.

We have gained some ground in this battle; we have won some victories. This should encourage us to hold on. We should ever be mindful of the fact that, no matter what our accomplishments, if we do not hold the good we have gained it will profit us nothing. Equally important to taking the fort is the work of holding it. Jesus' encouraging words in His last message are timely: "But that which ye have already hold fast till I come" (Rev. 2:25). Yes, hold fast! Hold the fort! Jesus is coming again, and soon. It is His own promise, and His words are true.

Soon we shall have help. God's people will be reinforced with a mighty recruit, who shall impart power to these fighting forces. Christ is coming, faith will turn to sight and all our present difficulties will appear in a transcendent light, and we shall at last know and understand their meaning.

"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." The promises of God stand true, and some day they will be fulfilled. Let us not weaken in the battle against sin, but hold the fort. All the way to the end. MM



What Really Matters?

Part I

Hosea, Joel, Amos; Obadiah, Jonah, Micah; Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah; Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. What do they have in common? Who were they?

The books of the Bible which we identify as "the minor prophets" were authored by "holy men of old" just as were the better known books we call "major prophets." The former are "minor" only in one respect: their books are short and their words few. But those few words are among the mightiest in Scripture, when we consider their power-packed message.

WHAT matters most to you? That all depends. It depends on many things—including your situation in life, the goals you have set for yourself, your obligations to other people, and so on and on.

Suppose—

Suppose that you have just learned that you have only six months to live. What really matters? Wouldn't you find yourself suddenly rethinking and redefining your priorities, your values, your goals? Wouldn't you say to yourself again and again, about the things that usually absorb your time and interest, "... but that doesn't matter"?

And your conclusion is more than likely right—not only for you but for everyone else also, if they only realized it, if they had eyes to perceive the real values and the real priorities in life.

We may be several thousand years removed from the Returned Captives in Israel, but we still have much in common with their situation. And we still need Haggai to show us what is really important in life.

The Prophet

Haggai was the author of the book bearing his name. We know little about him personally, except that he was God's Prophet. But by learning what we can about the times in which he lived and the work he accomplished for God, we can know him better. And then, someday, when the faithful are gathered and Haggai that Minor Prophet lives again, we will be ready to give him a warm handshake and let him know that he was indeed among our friends.

The Book

Haggai's message is short—only 38 verses from beginning to end. But as someone has commented, "Let it be remembered that steam is no less powerful when it is compressed."

Let us think of the book of Haggai as just this: compressed steam; power-packed words capable of mighty transformations; words as fully God-inspired as those of any other Prophet. For they are words of revelation, part of the Scripture "given by God" and "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness"; part of the

"things written aforetime" which were "written for our learning" (II Tim. 3:16; Rom. 15:4).

The book of Haggai opens abruptly, with the Prophet already on the stage of action, receiving a message from God. There is no time for any introduction or historical background, only a brief noting of the time of the message and the briefest possible identifying of the man.

From the Book of Ezra we learn more. Haggai was indeed among the company who returned to Jerusalem in response to the decree of Cyrus (Ezra 5:1-2; 6:14). The very fact that he returned speaks of his faith in God; and the fact that God chose him as an instrument through whom to deliver His messages to Israel is evidence of his loyalty and love.

Though perhaps little known, the time of Haggai was an important period in Israel's history, a period with far-reaching significance. It was a time that saw the prophet Jeremiah vindicated by the fulfillment of his message: "And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years" (Jer. 25:11). It was a time that proved conclusively that God was true to His Word, and mightier than any who dared to raise a voice against Him. Yes, there was no doubt about it. Jeremiah had spoken boldly—and truly. Now *anyone* could see that *he was right!*

The Israelite people had now served their time; the seventy years of the Captivity were ended. A few among the returning captives may have remembered Jeremiah, but everyone had *heard* of him. And everyone knew that those who had disbelieved and disobeyed had paid dearly for their folly. Those returning were for the most part the children and the children's children of those who had gone into captivity.

Looking Back

What about the years in Babylon? What about the faith and spirit of the captives in Babylon? What about those who chose to remain in Babylon?

It is generally agreed that the first captives, which included Daniel and his three friends, had been carried to Babylon in the year 606 B.C. The area in which they were held captive is in present day Iran, at that time a six month's journey from

such as they had left; homes ready and waiting for them to occupy. They dreamed of a temple for worship, of fields and vineyards such as their fathers had possessed, of a peaceful and prosperous land needing only to be occupied.

These were the people who answered when Cyrus gave them opportunity to leave. And Haggai was among them.

But once in the homeland, a very different state of things actually

Being content with things as they are is not always a virtue. There are times when we need to be discontented—when the opportunity arises for change.

Israel. Some quickly settled down and as the years passed they became more and more content with the new surroundings; Babylon was home to them; and when the opportunity came for them to leave, it was like leaving "home"—they had no desire to go.

Not all in Babylon were content. Some were continually stirred against the pagan land and all its pagan settings. They were displaced Israelites, and they didn't forget it. They dreamed of their homeland; they talked of their homeland; they sang of their homeland throughout those seventy years of their captivity: "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" (Ps. 137:1, 4). Happiness eluded them; all they could think about was their homeland. They remembered their beautiful temple and the land of their forefathers. They dreamed of homes

awaited them. Their once-beautiful temple was in ruins; the wall of the city was broken down and the houses were uninhabitable. The fallow ground grew nothing but weeds. The neglected vineyards had been choked with weeds, thorns and thistles; fruit was not to be found. It would take years of pruning and cultivating for the vineyards to bear fruit.

The end of the captivity and their chance to return to their beloved land came with little warning. Belshazzar held a great feast; the handwriting on the wall spelled Babylon's doom: "Thou art weighed in the balances and found wanting." That same night the city fell to Cyrus, king of Persia, and the stage was set for the return of the captives to their homeland.

CYRUS the Benevolent

Cyrus the Persian king who took charge in Babylon, was not another Pharaoh fighting to the bitter end to

hold the Israelites slaves for his own selfish interest; he was a king with a heart. Compared to other oriental rulers, he is said to have been extraordinarily benevolent. While he did not worship the true God, he suited God's purpose and was used of God to bring about that purpose.

The part in the drama played by Cyrus had been prophesied some 200 years before his birth by the prophet Isaiah: "That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid" (Isa. 44:28). God moved Cyrus to make the proclamation that the Israelites return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple and the wall of the city.

From the book of Ezra we learn of Cyrus' proclamation: "Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up . . . and build the house of the Lord God of Israel, (he is the God,) which is in Jerusalem" (Ezra 1:1-3). Those who were unable to go were to contribute money for the project and help pay the expenses of those who went.

Cyrus did not send them back empty-handed. We learn from the book of Ezra that those who returned carried with them all the fixtures from the temple that had been removed and carried to Babylon: "Also Cyrus the king brought

forth the vessels of the house of the Lord, which Nebuchadnezzar had brought forth out of Jerusalem, and had put them in the house of his gods; even those did Cyrus king of Persia bring forth . . . all the vessels of gold and of silver were five thousand and four hundred. All these did Sheshbazzar (or Zerubbabel) bring up with them of the captivity that were brought up from Babylon unto Jerusalem" (Ezra 1:7-11).

From Ezra it appears that the journey took about six months. It was the beginning of the year when the proclamation was issued, and in the seventh month "the children of Israel were in the cities" (Ezra 3:1). When they took the census, they counted nearly 50,000, including maids and servants, and among them "two hundred singing men and singing women." Fifty thousand is a great company to make such a long journey bringing with them all their worldly possessions—including thousands of animals!

TO THE WORK!

TO THE WORK!

First Tasks

With 50,000 in the congregation, there should have been no shortage of workmen. At this point their enthusiasm was still high; they were eager and ready to set to the work. First things must come first, so "the people gathered themselves together as one man to Jerusalem . . . and builded the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings thereon, as it is written in the law of Moses the man of God . . . and they offered burnt offerings thereon unto the Lord, even burnt offerings morning and evening. They kept also the feast of tabernacles, as it is written, . . . and afterward offered the continual burnt offering, both of the new moons, and of all the set feasts of the Lord that were consecrated . . . From the first day of the

seventh month began they to offer burnt offerings unto the Lord" (Ezra 3:1-6). They turned to the Lord because they were fearful of the people of the land. They wanted God's protection, and to be worthy of it they knew they must worship Him. Lacking a temple, they built an altar to use as their center of worship.

The first essential to any building is a foundation. In spite of the large number of workmen available, it was now into the second year and, "the foundation of the temple of the Lord was not yet laid." After the initial good start in building an altar to the Lord, putting up housing for themselves and their families took priority and kept them busy. The temple could wait.

Within the second year, the foundation was laid. The work was supervised and carried forward by the Levites: "In the second year after their return to the house of God in Jerusalem, and in the second month, Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and Jeshua son of Jozadak started work, aided by all their fellow-Israelites, the priests and the Levites and all who had returned from captivity to Jerusalem. They appointed Levites from the age of twenty years and upwards to supervise the work of the house of the Lord" (Ezra 3:8, NEB). All joyfully joined in the work; many hands make light work, and it was soon finished.

Completion of the foundation was a cause for great rejoicing in Jerusalem; they gathered together and celebrated with music and singing: "The priests in their robes took their places with their trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with their cymbals, to praise the Lord in the manner prescribed by David king of Israel; and they chanted praises and thanksgiving to the Lord, singing, 'It is good to give thanks to the Lord, for his love

towards Israel endures for ever.” We would like to have heard that chorus of two hundred singing men and women, all praising God!

But not all the shouting was for joy; the completion of the foundation gave rise to mixed emotions: “All the people raised a great shout of praise to the Lord because the foundation of the house of the Lord had been laid. But many of the priests and Levites and heads of families, who were old enough to have seen the former house, wept and wailed aloud when they saw the foundation of this house laid, while many others shouted for joy at the top of their voice. The people could not distinguish the sound of the shout of joy from that of the weeping and wailing, so great was the shout which the people were raising, and the sound could be heard a long way off” (Ezra 3:10-13, NEB).

There must have been a great commotion with some shouting for joy and others shouting for grief. Those who “wept and wailed aloud” when they saw the foundation, remembered the former temple. Some of these may have been elderly brethren who concluded from seeing the new foundation that the new temple could never equal the old. Why? Perhaps it was because these people knew that the ark of God would never again be there and the “glory of the Lord” would never again grace the temple. Nor could its splendor ever equal that of Solomon’s temple.

Others who remembered may have been among the last deported, and these could well remember the former temple. Even some early deportees may have been able to remember, though they would have been very young when deported and quite elderly at this time. All would have been able-bodied, however—a six-month journey on foot was not for the feeble.

The Good Work Stops

The sound of Israel’s rejoicing “could be heard a long way off,” and who should hear but their enemies, the people of the land! When the Israelites had been taken captive and carried to Babylon seventy years before, the Assyrian king brought in people from other places to inhabit the land. These people had been there so long that they looked upon the Israelites as intruders and not as the rightful owners of the land, hence they tried to prevent them from returning to their homes.

“When the enemies of Judah and Benjamin heard that the returned exiles were building a temple to the Lord the God of Israel, they approached Zerubbabel and Jeshua and the heads of families and said to them, Let us join you in building, for like you we seek your God.” The offer was only a ploy; Zerubbabel was not fooled, and he “and the rest of the heads of families in Israel said to them, ‘The house which we are building for our God is no concern of yours. We alone will build it for the Lord the God of Israel, as his majesty Cyrus king of Persia commanded us’” (Ezra 4:1-3, NEB).

The adversaries were persistent; they did not want to see the city rebuilt, so they sent a letter to Artaxerxes, then king of Persia, concerning the rebuilding of the city. The king searched the record and reported that Jerusalem had been a rebellious and hostile city, hence all building should stop. Artaxerxes was the king who had succeeded Cyrus, and he was a wicked king; his letter frightened the returned exiles and “caused the Jews to lose heart and made them afraid to continue building.” The Samaritans continued to plague the Jews until the work ground to a halt.

Artaxerxes, however, was not always to be king; in due time he was succeeded by another, Darius the Great. Again the people had opportunity to continue the building; a door was opened. But this time they failed to see it. The enthusiasm was gone; they had forgotten what they had come for, and instead of building God’s house, they became all absorbed in building their own. They needed someone to wake them up to the serious issues at hand, and tell them what really was important.

Haggai was the man God chose for the job. MM

(To Be Continued Next Issue)

Consecration

Consecrate me to Thy service—
Heart and soul and mind.
Let me seek alone Thy glory,
To Thy will resigned.
Give to me each day my duties,
Whether great or small,
Help me willingly to do them,
Give me strength for all.

Help me speak a word in
season
Choose the time and way;
Guide the thoughts that rise
within me,
Teach me what to say.
I would be alone without
Thee—
Who or what am I?
Only on Thy precious precepts
Can my soul rely.

Consecrate me every moment
To Thy blessed will.
Let me, like the dews of
Hermon,
Fragrance sweet distill;
Let in me Thy truth so precious,
Like the mighty sea,
Evermore be rolling onward,
Onward, Lord, to Thee.

—Contributed

None to Himself

"For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself" (Romans 14:7).

IT IS WELL for Christians to understand the weakness which is inherent in their very strength. While the narrow way to salvation may and does attract many who prove to be double-minded and unstable—"the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, which gathered of every kind"—those who survive the winnowing of the years and the stern discipline of the high calling are certain to be men and women of strong character.

Human nature has changed little over the centuries, and the letters of St. Paul reveal that some of our familiar problems existed in his day. Food restrictions have been a feature of nearly all religions from the earliest times, and there have always been those who would make the Kingdom of God a matter of meat and drink (v. 17). In Paul's day there was constant pressure from the Judaizers who wanted to enforce the dietary rules of the obsolete Mosaic law. But there were also the out-and-out diet faddists who insisted on prescribing for their neighbors. The vegetarian question, that hardy perennial, had reared its head, and in regard to this, together with other points of contention, the Apostle was writing.

This intolerance, this judging and despising over nonessentials, he tells them, is not brotherly, nor is it Christian. There are more important things to concern ourselves with. For this matter of eating and drinking, there is a broad but definite rule in I Corinthians 10:31, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." This leaves the responsibility with every man's individual conscience.

But this liberty, he warns, is not always to be used, there is something still higher which curbs and controls it. The weak brother's scruples are not to be ignored or ridiculed, but treated with understanding and consideration while he is struggling with his own problems. "All

things are lawful for me," said the same Apostle, "but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not" (I Cor. 10:23). That is the test—does it edify? To practice this form of self-denial for the sake of example and influence is the highest form of unselfishness; this is laying down our lives for the brethren (I John 3:16). "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

Upon this principle Paul admonished his Roman brethren: "Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock, or an occasion to fall, in his brother's way. . . . It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak. . . . Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another" (ch. 14:13, 21, 19).

This thought must govern every act of the Christian's life, every word he speaks, even the thoughts which underlie his speech and conduct. It goes far beyond the matter of food and drink and clothing, of taste and mannerisms; it is a serious business upon which depends our own salvation and that of our brother. We are One World, "one body in Christ, and every one members one of another" (Rom. 12:5).

Everything in life has its price. The benefits of civilization, the rule of law and order, all require some measure of sacrifice, of self-denial, of restriction of our individuality. The services and conveniences of community life cannot be had without the taxes which make them possible. So also the blessings of the Christian community, the highest form of civilization ever known on earth, have their price—a price which few are willing to pay.

The price of this Divine unity and fellowship is a constant self-denial; not only a denial of all ungodliness and

every worldly lust (Titus 2:12) but at times a giving up—for the sake of example—of things which in themselves might be lawful. Love “never insists upon her rights” (I Cor. 13:5, Goodspeed). The rugged individualist who insists upon his “rights,” regardless of the feelings or opinions or the effect upon others, is no part of the body of Christ. That unique organization is so exquisitely and sensitively fashioned that when one member suffers, all suffer with it, and the rejoicing of each is likewise shared by all (I Cor. 12:14-27). To one who has experienced the fullness of this fellowship, the price is small indeed. It is a way of life which every right-thinking man or woman should find satisfying; it is true civilization.

It is impossible to overestimate the power of our example or the extent of our influence, because we are usually unaware of its workings. In our own lives, consciously or unconsciously, we daily follow some pattern of conduct, and we are likewise setting a pattern for others. “None of us liveth to himself”—not one. Beyond question there are individuals in this world whose lives are utterly without significance, to themselves or anyone else; but they are not the people who have conformed their lives to the pattern Christ left as an example.

Each of us counts for something; may it be for good.

How many times a long-forgotten remark has come back to us when a friend says, “I never forgot what you said to me on such an occasion.” Do we hear these words with pleasure or with shame?

*“I shot an arrow into the air,
It fell to the earth, I knew not where.”*

Nor shall we ever know fully the good or evil our words and acts have done to others until the Day of Judgment. It behooves us, then, to be strictly careful about the lives we lead (Eph. 5:15, Moffatt), to watch ever more closely the words which will either justify or condemn us (Matt. 12:36-37).

We cannot live to ourselves, nor do we die to ourselves. We are One World. If we die the death of the righteous, slaying the “old man,” dying to sin, crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts (Num. 23:10; Rom. 6:6, 10; Gal. 5:24), our brethren are bound to be ennobled and inspired to holier living. And on the other hand, if we grow weary in well doing, if we become “twice dead” in trespasses and sins, our backsliding is certain to injure and discourage our weaker brother.

We cannot evade or escape our responsibility; let us then accept it joyfully as good stewards of the grace of God.

MM

Courage to Do Right

AS WE READ the account of Stephen (Acts 7), we marvel at his courage. Stephen must have known before he gave his defense what trouble this would cause him. Yet knowing this, he was calm enough to think of the only strategy that would let him fulfill his duty to God.

Courage to do right, no matter what people may think of you or do to you, is a precious quality in the sight of God.

When the members of the Sanhedrin went to the trial of Stephen, much as they hated him, they probably had little thought that they would be gnashing their teeth at him like infuriated beasts. He who has “a hasty temper” and has not learned to keep it under control never knows to what lengths it may betray him.

At first his hearers must have listened in spite of themselves, not even realizing the drift of his words as he rehearsed the ancient history of Israel. However, gradually it dawned upon them that he was skillfully showing that their fathers had always been rebellious. Stephen led them up to the climax and knew if he would apply his words to his hearers he must do so quickly. Accordingly, “he unmasks his batteries and pours in his fire,” as one writer puts it.

“Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears,” he cries, “ye do always resist the Holy Spirit. Of the Righteous One ye have now become betrayers and murderers; ye who received the law as it was ordained by angels, and kept it not.”

His hearers could stand it no more. They cried with a loud voice to drown him out, and stopping their ears they rushed upon him.

Those who heard Stephen were cut to the heart, yet they were not “pricked” to the point of being moved to sorrow and repentance as were those who listened to Peter’s sermon on the Day of Pentecost. They were but “cut to the heart” with rage and fury, so that they “gnashed on him with their teeth.” In the frenzy of rage they challenged him by a brutelike grinding of the teeth.

Stephen would not compromise the Word of God, or shade it one little bit to secure the favor of men. The consequences to Stephen mattered not at all. The consequences to God meant everything.

Here was the spirit of true courage.

—Contributed

• Concerning the Atonement

"Do you think the Christadelphian views of the atonement are enough to exclude them from salvation?"

To answer your question, from the basis of what we have read of their position, we would have to say Yes. Proverbs 4:7 reads, "Wisdom is the principle thing; therefore get wisdom; and with all thy getting get understanding."

The importance of correct doctrine is stressed again and again in Scripture. The words of the apostle Paul, for example: "If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words . . . and to the doctrine which is according to godliness . . ." etc. (I Tim. 6:3-5). Also "Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine" (I Tim. 4:13); also "The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but . . . shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (II Tim. 4:3-4). And Peter concurred: "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God" (I Pet. 4:11).

God has conditioned salvation on a requirement of complete obedience to His law. If we—or anyone else—teach otherwise, we are going against God and cannot expect His approval. And the Bible is clear that moral perfection in God's sight is the standard He has set for salvation. (See Gen. 17:1 and Matt. 5:48.)

We will be judged on the basis of our obedience or disobedience to His commandments. As Jesus said in Rev.22:14, "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life." This indicates that we must acquire a knowledge of God's commandments, and then properly apply that knowledge, before we can have the right to partake of the tree of life. And if we do not "do his commandments," if we do not meet the standard God has set, we shall not be granted a right to partake of "the tree of life" and gain eternal salvation. The Biblical demands for salvation leave no place for depending in any way on Christ's literal death on the

cross to atone for our sins. We must turn from our sins, or we shall surely be greatly disappointed in the day of Judgment.

There can be no "middle" position. Either Christ did the work for us (which is not reasonable, just or Biblical), or we must do the work ourselves (which is reasonable, just and Biblical).

But once we have reached the standard God requires of us, then God will do on His part. Christ will come and do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. "He will save us" (Isa. 25:9).

If we think seriously about this subject we realize that Christ's death on the cross could not possibly make you or me any more holy, or honest, or patient. There is only one way to become "clean" from any evil, and that is to stop committing that evil. And there is only one way to acquire a virtue, and that is to consciously make the effort to exercise that virtue in our daily lives. The virtues God requires cannot be bought or inherited or exchanged. There is no "easy way."

• More on Baptism

"I agree with your ideas about the importance of understanding and knowing the significance of baptism, but I still think that baptism in water is essential as an act of obedience, not that it alone has any power to save us."

Here are a few additional thoughts on Baptism that you might want to consider. However, please remember that the point is one of emphasis and not of "right" versus "wrong." The command to baptize was a definite part of the law of God at the time it was instituted and was to be honored during the time for which it was intended. But we find no evidence that it was to have applied to all the servants of God in all ages. There is no record of its having been practiced in Old Testament times, nor do we find any continuing directive to us to practice it today. It was, as you recognize, a symbol with deeper, spiritual significance, symbolizing the "one"

baptism, the inner cleansing, which is essential to salvation.

But concerning literal water baptism as practiced by the apostles, note Paul's comments in I Corinthians 1:12-17, and the limited amount of emphasis he placed on its significance. He recalls that he himself was baptized, and that he baptized Crispus and Gaius and one family. "Besides, I know not whether I baptized any other. For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel." Does this seem a likely approach to a subject being mandated for our obedience?

Again, how can we be under the commission which Jesus gave to His disciples in Mark 16 when all aspects of that commission are considered? The commission reads: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; . . . And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they

drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." No ordinary, unempowered person could fulfill this commission. To fulfill it required special power from God, such as Paul had, who "through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God" could preach the gospel "by word and deed" (Rom. 15:18-19).

The commission was directed to a special group of persons, as a special assignment for a special time. And it was accomplished, as Paul testified. The "signs" that accompanied those under this commission were a significant part of it, as was baptism. If that commission is for us in this day then we are in serious trouble, for not one of the signs mentioned will follow any one endeavoring to carry it out today.

In the absence of the specified "signs" we feel that the command to baptize does not apply to us today and therefore is not a condition on which our salvation is predicated. MM

"Lord, Increase Our Faith"

WE NEED more and more faith to carry us to the dawn of that beautiful Morning. The disciples needed faith; and if they needed it, how much greater our need. When our Lord said on one occasion, "O ye of little faith," and on another, "How is it ye have no faith?" let us remember that He was not speaking to the crowd, but to the Twelve; not to unbelievers, but to His disciples; not enemies, but friends, comrades, co-workers.

In the raging storm, they awoke Him. The boat seemed to be filling and Jesus was asleep. They thought death was near. They seemed to think Jesus was indifferent to their safety. They shook Him, awoke Him, and said, "Don't you care whether we drown?" He opened His eyes and said to the sea, "Be still." Then, looking at His disciples, He exclaimed, "How is it that ye have no faith? It is the one thing you must have, and you do not have it yet."

We might say, How could they have doubted in the presence of the Master Himself?

But have we the faith to believe? Do we know absolutely that God will accomplish His purpose and fulfill His will?

If we spoke to Jesus today, would His answer be, "How is it ye have no faith?" Let us plead as did the Disciples of old, "Lord, increase our faith."

Closer to God

As we draw closer to God, He will draw closer to us. We cannot spend too much time with God. As we meditate on divine things and read of the future promises God has in store for those who love Him, it gives us greater faith. And the future will be glorious beyond anything we can imagine.

To keep our faith shining brightly, we must take action. We are told to meditate, pray, and also commanded to speak often to one another of the Lord. Should we not speak forth of the joy and hope we have? "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have it entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him" (I Cor. 2:9).

If we trust God and draw close to Him, whatever comes our way we will have a happy heart, knowing He cares for us.

Ohio

M. W.

To Pay the Price

What would I give to be placed on the right hand of the Lord and know that my race had been run successfully and to hear the words: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant"? The only answer to that question would be, "My all." A complete, total, absolute surrender of our will to God's will is the price.

Many men aspire to great wealth and power before they reach old age. Their dreams of prosperity control and govern their entire lives. However, fame and fortune for most is but an illusive dream, never materializing.

Monetary gain for the life seeker must take a "back seat" in the face of a lifelong career of making ourselves "poor." To many this statement would

sound foolish. But each day as we get control of the old nature, casting down pride, foolishness, unkindness, selfishness, anger, etc., we become poorer and poorer in our own ways. Soon, if we are diligent, there will be definite evidence that we are progressing toward our goal.

As we stand before the Judgment seat, we must stand as a pauper, destitute, completely stripped of our own means—our evil ways, our own will. Then, and only then will we be permitted to share in the glory, honor and riches reserved for the overcomers, those who make themselves poor that they might become eternally rich.

What wonderful prospects lie in the future, if we are willing to pay the price now.

Georgia

B. P.

Appreciative

I recently discovered your magazine, *Megiddo Message*, by accident in the Auburn Public Library. The July/August issue was very interesting but I cannot get back to finish it. I would like to subscribe to your magazine.

New York

M. M.

A Great Work

It is a great work we have set out to do, to keep the thoughts and desires uplifted and to keep the reward ever before us.

The tapes are a great help to me, and I want you all to know I am thankful for them.

Alabama

D. McD.

Thank God

It is wonderful to realize that if we are sincere God will listen to our prayers and our plea for help to gain a better life in the world to come. Are we giving Him the thanks that He is due for all He has done for us?

To live apart from the world with all its temptations and pleasures is a great task and one worthy of all our time and effort. This means a completely new creature.

So let us push towards the mark or prize that we may be worthy in that soon-coming Day.

Kansas

W. R.

Thankful

When we fall, there is no excuse to stay down; but with each slip we must be more resolved to be more cautious and make our efforts more sincere. For it is not in man to direct his steps (Jer. 10:23).

How thankful we should be to know God's plan and purpose; to be given opportunity to become a part of that plan, to live when the world is made over new.

We must never allow the thought that it can't be done to linger in our minds, but ever look ahead and keep pressing on. For we have everything to gain and nothing to lose, if we keep trying.

Indiana

E. M.

Only a Few

It is wonderful to know that in the midst of this corrupt world there are a few people that belong only to God. We must work to be part of that few.

Haiti

E. D.

Not Dawdling but Pressing

Too often our lips and lives do not agree. What a Day of Victory it will be when we reach that state, a never-ending day of worship, "every thought so holy, we'll forget we ever sinned." And it can and must be attained.

I ask myself, Why do I cling to the poor old stranded wreck of self? Why not pull for the shore with greater zeal? It's doomed to destruction, delay will mean defeat. We are in the final hour. Let us flee out of Babylon.

I am eager to become one of the few who merit the Well Done! It can be ours, if we keep pressing, striving, running.

England

N. T.

Obituary

Zygmunt Sorchinski

On July 15, 1985, death claimed a long-time friend and brother in Vernon, British Columbia, Canada, Zygmunt Sorchinski. Formerly of Ontario, Canada, Brother Sorchinski and his wife relocated to British Columbia in 1963, seeking a climate more favorable to problems of illness.

Brother and Sister Sorchinski had subscribed to the *Megiddo Message* for over fifty years, and made an effort to practice their religion. Brother Sorchinski maintained an uninterrupted correspondence with the Church until the final weeks of his life. While living in Ontario, the Sorchinski's made several visits to the Church in Rochester.

Brother Sorchinski is survived by his wife Anne, who did everything she could for her husband; one son Walter of Victoria; and two daughters, Olga Seech, of Leamington, Ontario, and Minnie Svats of Windsor, Ontario, with whom Sister Sorchinski plans to make her home.

Funeral services were conducted on July 19 in Vernon, British Columbia, Brother Elmer Hampton of Minnedosa, Manitoba officiating.

FINALLY, BRETHREN

One Last Look

THERE is something strangely satisfying about the "last" of anything, some fond feeling that "last" is "best." "One last look" suggests that we are seizing a singular, non-recurring opportunity.

Until we think about Lot's wife and the price she paid for *one last look* toward Sodom. Yes, one last, satisfying look. But oh! the price.

Why should a single backward look have been judged so severely? Because it showed open disregard for the command of the angel to "Look not behind thee." "Look not" meant exactly that—there was to be *NO looking back for any reason whatever*.

Three of the four realized the seriousness of the command and immediately set their minds to obey it. Absolutely. Completely. Even before Lot's wife was stricken, they knew that God meant what He said, that this was no time for any thoughtless moves—their *lives were at stake!* Every muscle, every nerve, every thought was put under constant, conscious control. No aspect of their behavior was left to reflex or chance. Eyes, face, shoulders, feet—all were pointing forward. And not even the deafening roar of the thunder from behind or the blinding flashes of the lightning that reflected across the leaden sky could distract them.

It seems possible that the forward-looking three never knew what happened to Lot's wife or why she was suddenly left behind—unless the angels told them. They certainly did not see her look back, nor did they look back when she was stricken to see what had happened to her. If they had, they, too, would have been numbered with her.

What does it say to us? That when God speaks, we had better listen. When He says No, He means just that. Didn't Jesus say as much when He told the backward-looking would-be disciple that "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God"? (Luke 9:62). There are no exceptions.

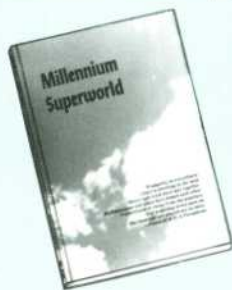
It is easy to look back and paint glowing pictures of the directions we might have gone and the "great things" we might have been or done had not the gospel of God touched our lives. But any and all such back-looking is strictly forbidden and will, if persisted in, cost us our life. It says to God that we don't really appreciate what He is offering us, that we would have been better off if He hadn't "interfered"!

If the things ahead do not mean more—immeasurably more—to us than the things we left behind; if they do not mean enough to us to totally absorb our attention, if our eyes are pulled in two directions, we surely are not "fit for the kingdom of God" and shall never be there.

No, we can't afford even a single backward look. The price is too high.

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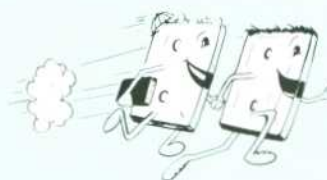
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