

The background of the entire page is a photograph of a rugged, rocky landscape. The rocks are dark and jagged, with patches of bright green moss and ferns growing in the crevices and along a narrow, light-colored path that winds through the scene. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights on the moss and deep shadows in the rock crevices.

Megiddo Message

Show me Your ways,
O Lord,
Teach me Your paths.

"IF...THEN"!

God has offered "exceeding great and precious promises" to His human family, promises great beyond our comprehending. But it is always noticeable in Scripture that each of these promises is two-sided, the human side and the Divine side. God does not extend His promises indiscriminately to all. They are all, in a sense, "IF...THEN" statements; IF you, THEN I. God says, "IF you (do such-and-such)...THEN I (will do such-and-such). *"If thou shalt hearken diligently,..."* and *"If ye be willing and obedient..."* and *"If ye continue in the faith..."* (Deut. 28:1; Isa. 1:18-19; Col. 1:23).

We have no fear that God will fail on His side. God's promise (the "THEN" part of the statement) is always sure. Any questionmark (the "IF") is on our side.

Here are some of these great promises. As you read them, notice the "IF...THEN" in each one.

Of Forgiveness:

"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; **then** will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land" (II Chron. 7:14).

Of Divine Knowledge:

"If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; **then** shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God" (Prov. 2:3-5).

Of Divine Acceptance:

"If thou prepare thine heart, and stretch out thine hands toward him; if iniquity be in thine hand, put it far away, and let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacles...**then** shalt thou lift up thy face without spot; yea, thou shalt be steadfast, and shalt not fear" (Job 11:13-15).

Of Deliverance:

"Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name...I will be with him in trouble: I will deliver him, and honour him" (Ps. 91:14-15).

Of Answered Prayer:

"Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the Most High: and call upon me in the

day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me" (Ps. 50:14-15).

Of Protection:

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee" (Isa. 26:3).

"Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Heb. 13:5).

Of Recognition:

"For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word" (Isa. 66:2).

Of Rest:

"Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28).

Of Authority:

"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" (Rev. 3:21).

Of Salvation:

"Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God" (Ps. 50:23).

Of Life:

"[God will] render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life" (Rom. 2:6-7).

"I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely" (Rev. 21:6).

"Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" (Rev. 22:14).

Of Endless Pleasures:

"If they obey and serve him, they shall spend their days in prosperity, and their years in pleasures" (Job. 36:11).

How grateful we of the human family should be for an "IF" we can fulfill, "THEN" we can enjoy God's matchless blessings world without end! MM

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 life, all men, and all things.

We believe

—in the Bible as our only source of knowledge about God and His purposes and plans for the salvation of humankind.

We believe

—in Jesus Christ the Son of God and our Perfect Example, who was born of a Virgin, ministered among men, was crucified, resurrected, taken to heaven, and seated at the right hand of the Father, crowned with immortal glory, and who shall shortly return to be king of the whole earth.

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 humankind 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 applying the precepts and principles of the Word of God in our own lives, in this way 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
- NASB—New American Standard Bible
- 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
- Goodspeed—The New Testament translated by Edgar J. Goodspeed
- Moffatt—The Bible, A New Translation
- AAT—The Bible: An American Translation

About Our Cover

Our cover photo was taken by Mr. & Mrs. David Sutton at Rock City Park, Rock City, New York.

Megiddo Message

Vol. 76, No. 8

September, 1989

Editorial	
"IF...THEN"!	2
Sermon	
BEING ASHAMED AT JESUS' COMING	4
A calamity we can avoid	
Articles	
GOD'S SALVATION IS EVERLASTING	11
How much is it worth to us?	
WHOM WOULD YOU CHOOSE?	12
God wants—and will have—the best.	
Feature	
CAN'T YOU DISCERN...	14
What is really important	
Article	
EXPECT A BATTLE	16
There is no carefree Christian life.	
Story	
TWILIGHT: A TALE OF THE APOSTASY	18
Chapter 6: <i>Awaiting the Hemlock</i>	
Questions and Answers	
Concerning	
Should We Say "Amen"?	23
Proper Use of a Talent	24
Will Jesus Christ Be Visible When He Returns?	
Words for the Living	25
Letters	26
Lines to Live By	27
Poem	
GOD'S DOINGS	28

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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.

Being ASHAMED at Jesus' Coming

We shall be
ashamed when
we stand before the
Lord Jesus at His
coming if our sins are
still unpurged and
unforgiven.

To be ashamed is one of life's most dreaded experiences.

Shame is quite different from embarrassment. The latter term implies that we did the wrong thing or spoke the wrong word, and therefore were humiliated, in our own eyes at least. But we did it ignorantly. Quite possibly we did our very best; but not knowing just what to do, we blundered.

Shame, however, implies that despite knowing what to do we were neglectful; we did not do the things we knew we should do. Our instructions were clear, and our intentions may have been good; but we failed to complete the task assigned to us. As a result, we are put to shame when we are called to account. We have no excuse. We stand convicted by our own negligence and are ashamed, disgraced.

The Scriptures warn very definitely that there is the possibility of our being ashamed before our Lord at His coming. John in his Epistle says specifically: "Little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming" (I John 2:28).

The Bible is plain-spoken on the teaching that Christ is to come to earth the second time. The Old Testament has much to say regarding the Second Coming. Jesus Himself repeated the promise again and again during His earthly ministry, and also in His post-ascension message to John on the Isle of Patmos, the book

of Revelation. The promise is repeated approximately thirty-five times in the New Testament Epistles. The silver lining to the world's dark cloud today is the hope of the personal return of Christ. And that hope is no idle fancy of the mind, no unfounded daydream; it is real; it is just as true, just as certain as that tomorrow morning will dawn.

Christ Is Coming

In John 14:2-3, Jesus told His disciples that He was going away, and He assured them that He would come back. In His parable of the Ten Pounds He compared Himself to a nobleman going "into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return" (Luke 19:12). On another occasion He warned: "Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping" (Mark 13:35-36). And speaking condemningly of the evil servant's disposition to doubt, the servant who says in his heart, "My Lord delayeth his coming," He says, "the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 24:48, 50-51).

At the time of Jesus' ascension, the angels reassured the anxious disciples that they should see their Lord upon earth again: "Ye men of Gali-

lee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11).

Paul, the great Apostle to the Gentiles, spoke repeatedly of his hope of Christ's return to earth. In I Corinthians 11:26, for example, he was speaking of the Lord's Supper: "For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come." And in I Timothy 6:14 he wrote: "That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ." And again in II Tim. 4:8 Paul stated his personal hope: "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." Hebrews 9:28 gives the warm assurance to all who look for Christ's appearing that they will not be disappointed: "...unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation."

The apostle Peter could not remain silent as to his conviction that he would see his Lord again, mentioning it a number of times in both of his Epistles: "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ...Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (I Pet. 1:7, 13).

James, in his Epistle, is explicit regarding the outstanding Christian hope, the return of Christ. "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.

Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh" (5:7-8).

Revelation, the last book of the Bible, is a message sent back by Jesus after He had spent a number of years at the Father's right hand; and what He says confirms His former teaching. He said, "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be...Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (22:12, 20).

Some Ashamed

When John, in his First Epistle, speaks of being ashamed before Christ at His coming, he is stressing two important truths: Christ most surely is coming the second time, and some will experience the unhappy situation of being ashamed before Him when He comes.

That the Second Coming was John's main thought as he wrote the concluding paragraphs of I John 2, is revealed in the opening verses of chapter 3: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." And to this John adds a very practical note: "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (vs. 1-3).

At Judgment

Some who claim to believe in the Second Coming are tempted to overlook the reality of the Judgment seat of Christ before which every believer is to stand. All covenant-makers must stand before the "great white throne" and be "judged every man according to their works" (Rev. 20:11, 13).

Paul the Apostle made this clear in his Second Epistle to the Corinthians, when he said: "For we

Confidence that we will not be ashamed before Christ at His coming stems from the knowledge that we are doing the things that please Him.

Any broken law standing between us and God in that Day, any sin not repented of and forsaken, will be a cause for deep shame.

Ashamed of Jesus?

"If anyone in this adulterous and sinful generation is ashamed of me and of my words, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels"
—Mark 8:38, JB

*Jesus, and shall it ever be,
A mortal man ashamed of Thee?
Ashamed of Thee, whom angels praise,
Whose glories shine thro' endless days?*

*Ashamed of Jesus? Sooner far
Let evening blush to own a star
Than I disown the Light that shines
In this benighted soul of mine.*

*Ashamed of Him, my closest Friend
On whom my hopes of Zion depend?
No! When I blush, be this my shame,
That I no more revere His name!*

*Ashamed of Jesus Christ my light,
My hope of life and glory bright?
O shame on me! This cannot be,
I who have such a need of Thee!*

*Till I can know His joy unfeigned,
Till I in Him share greater gain,
O may this yet my glory be,
That Christ is not ashamed of me!*

must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (5:10).

We shall be ashamed when we stand before the Lord Jesus at His coming if our sins are still unpurged and unforgiven. Previous to Judgment, there is provision for the forgiveness of sin. The apostle John wrote: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." But we ourselves must turn from them if we would obtain forgiveness (I John 1:9). "If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged," says the Apostle to the Gentiles (I Cor. 11:31). If you and I judge the sin in ourselves, and turn completely from it, ceasing to do evil and learning to do well (Prov. 28:13; Isa. 1:16-17), asking God for forgiveness in the name of our great High Priest, Jesus His Son (Heb. 4:14-16), He will forgive, and we shall not be condemned in the Day of Judgment.

Contrariwise, if we refuse to judge ourselves and confess our sin and turn from it, then that sin remains as a charge against us, and because of it we shall be ashamed at His coming.

Enlightened Confidence

What, then, can it mean to have confidence and *not* be ashamed before Him at His coming?

Let us quote I John 2:28 once again: "And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming."

Enlightened confidence is not something that just happens to exist; it is the outgrowth of experience and accomplishment. Confidence in the practice of the arts, in the sciences, in merchandising, in mechanics, in any of the intellectual fields, comes by one's knowing his line so thoroughly that he can be sure of himself at all times.

In I John 3:21-22, the beloved Apostle gives a definition of confidence that agrees perfectly with our experience in secular matters: "Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments and do those things that are pleasing in his sight." Confidence that we will not be ashamed before Christ at His coming stems from the knowledge that we are doing the things that please Him.

The statement about not being ashamed before Him is thought-provoking and should engender in us the most reverential seriousness. There is a possibility of our standing there *without* confidence, and of being ashamed when the record of our life's work is read by the Judge at that great Assize. If such be our unhappy portion, we shall feel a shame such as we never before experienced.

The Great Tribunal

That will be no ordinary tribunal, no ordinary judge, nor will He be assisted by any ordinary entourage. This Tribunal will be none less than the Judgment seat of Christ, and He Himself, the Judge. Associated with Him will be an "innumerable company of angels" (Heb. 12:22-23). Every individual appearing before Him will be on trial for his or her life, and the sentence will be final; there can be no appeal to a higher court.

Any broken law standing between us and God in that Day, any sin not repented of and forsaken, will be a cause for deep shame. In Mark 8:38 we find recorded these words of Jesus: "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." If we are ashamed of Him now, ashamed to carry out any principle that His Word demands merely to escape the censure of the unbelieving, ashamed to have others see we are being crucified with Christ, He will be ashamed of us then.

What remorse and shame will fill our own *being* if, in the presence of the great Judge, the innumerable company of angels, and His faithful sheep standing at His right hand, we stand face to face with a picture of ourselves in our true light, not clothed with the robe of righteousness, covered with evidences of unwholesomeness and fleshly filth!

The time to be ashamed of our shortcomings is now, while the opportunity to effect a change is still open to us. That Day will be too late to make amends. The fiat of the Judge will go forth, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still" (Rev. 22:11).

The Bondage of Sin

From Africa comes a story that points up the plight of the unfaithful servant who will be ashamed before Jesus at His coming. It is the story of a missionary pioneer. His household consisted of two servants: an older man who served as cook, and a young lad who was houseboy. The cook was capable and well qualified for his place, but he had a very bad disposition. However, the missionary tried to be helpful, and put up with his bad temper. The young houseboy was responsible for his master's room and the garden, but not for the remainder of the mission station. He was responsible to the missionary only, and not to the cook, whom he feared and disliked.

To help provide good nourishment, the missionary had imported some chickens and ducks, and for these the cook was responsible. One day the missionary noted the little fellow shooting stones with a slingshot. He warned the boy of the danger that stones might be to people passing by in the lane, or even to the chickens and ducks. Dutifully the lad put away the slingshot, understanding clearly that he was not to use it until he went home.

After some time the missionary departed on a long trek to distant villages. He left the mission station in the charge of the cook and the houseboy, and each understood his respective responsibilities.

It was the rainy season and the weeds in the garden demanded

the daily attention of the houseboy; as a result he kept altogether out of the cook's way. One morning as he was hoeing in the garden he turned up a small pebble and threw it out of his way. That happened several times; then he remembered the slingshot. He rationalized that he could throw the stones much farther out of the garden with the slingshot than by hand. Furthermore, no one would see him, so what would be the difference?

After securing the slingshot from his room he proceeded with the work in the garden. Before long he was giving more attention to finding and shooting pebbles than he was to hoeing weeds. He found he had become quite out of practice, and therefore set a small target on a tree nearby.

Engaged in target practice, he became quite oblivious to his surroundings. Just as he took careful aim and shot a pebble with all his might, a duck came into the path of fire! It received the blow right on the head and after a couple of dizzy turns fell over dead.

Now what should the lad do? Hastily he surveyed the garden and the house. Good! No one had seen him. Quickly he dug a hole, pushed the duck into it, and covered the evidence of his wrong with earth. Then he proceeded with his hoeing. The slingshot, of course, was put in his pocket to stay.

After a few moments he became thirsty and went into the kitchen

How to Be Free From Sin:

1: Recognize that it is sin

2: Confess it

3: Turn from it —

"cease to do evil, learn to do well" (Isa. 1:16)

4: Ask God's forgiveness

5: Receive God's full pardon (Isa. 55:6-9)

Nothing brings one into bondage as does sin. Sin is a taskmaster, terrible and exacting.

for a drink of water. Upon entering he received stern greetings from the ugly-tempered cook: "Boy, fill that woodbox with kindling!"

"I don't work for you; I work for the master!"

"No? What about that duck?"

The cook had seen it all! What could he do? Of course he chopped wood and filled the woodbox to overflowing. Then came the command: "Sweep the floor!" He did so. Next came the order: "Run to town and buy some supplies for me!"

It was vain to protest; and all that was needed to secure obedience was for the cook to say, "What about that duck?"

Thus the houseboy became the bondsman of the cook. He had to carry the water, chop the wood, sweep the kitchen floor and run the errands. In fact, he had to do anything the cook desired, and at any time. And all of it in addition to his work in the garden.

Is not that what the Lord Jesus meant when He said, "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant [literally, the *bondsman*] of sin"? (John 8:34).

Nothing brings one into bondage as does sin. Sin puts a gag in our mouths so that we cannot speak for God to our fellowmen. Sin hinders our feet from hurrying to the service that is urgent upon us. Sin blinds our eyes to spiritual and material need all about us, and to our own shortcomings. Sin is a taskmaster, terrible and exacting.

Confess or Cover?

Most of all, sin makes us ashamed to face those to whom we are responsible. Furthermore, any unpurged sin will make us ashamed before Jesus at His coming.

The little houseboy had no joy in the prospect of his master's return, and gave him no warm welcome upon his arrival. The missionary noted that the garden was in good condition, that the kitchen was swept and orderly, that the little fellow seemed to spend much time in the kitchen, which was not his custom; but especially he noticed that the lad was not happy.

That condition continued several days until the lad could stand it no longer. Quietly and ashamedly he went to his master in the study; and after several efforts to get under way, he told the whole story.

"Master, I disobeyed you. I took the slingshot with me to the garden and was shooting stones at a target on a tree. Just as I threw a stone with all my might a duck walked in front of the tree, and was killed. I dug a hole in the garden and buried the duck, but I cannot forget my sin. I have asked God to forgive me, but my heart has no rest; so I want to tell you all about it."

Of course the missionary was sad to hear of the boy's disobedience and the resultant disaster—ducks were not plentiful. But most of all there was the matter of sinful disobedience. He forgave the little fellow and, kneeling together, they committed the whole matter to the Lord.

Upon arising from prayer the little lad wiped the tears from his cheeks and thanked his master profusely. Then with a light heart and a gospel song upon his lips he left the study. Never again did he have to chop wood, carry water or run errands for the cook. Confession to the master had freed him from all that bondage.

Thus it is with your heart and mine. The evil which we have sought to hide, to overlook, to rationalize, to forget, persists in coming up before us. Sin keeps us

in bondage. We are reminded of the dual proposition presented in Proverbs 28:13 regarding covering or confessing sin: "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy."

Judge by Actions

Rev. Maud Hembree, pastor of the Megiddo Church for 24 years, once made a very striking point on the possibility of our being ashamed before Christ at His coming. A man had written asking what Jesus meant when He said "Judge not, that ye be not judged." In answering she referred to I Corinthians 4:5, where Paul said, "Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God." She pointed out how Jesus said in Matthew 7 that we are to judge by fruits. If by word or act there are no fruits shown of what a person has done, we have no right to judge. We cannot attempt to judge and condemn anyone by surmising what he or she had in mind, unless it is manifested in one way or another.

Let us quote again Paul's words: "Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts." She made the following comment:

"If ever there was a verse of Scripture that ought to cause men and women to get down and get rid of the hidden counsels of the heart, and come out and manifest it, it is this one."

She then quoted I Corinthians 4:5 from the Moffatt Bible, which she felt was still more forceful: "So do not criticize at all; the hour of reckoning has still to come, when the Lord will come to bring dark secrets to the light and to reveal life's inner aims and motives"—what moves people to act.

Many times people—we all have done it more or less—deny what moves them to act. But here a time is coming when the Lord will make known the secrets of the heart and reveal life's inner aims and motives.

She commented: "If your fruits show what your aim and object is, do not try to cover it up, because the Lord is coming just as surely as you live. Let the evil come out now, so you will not have to be ashamed then. If you banish it now, then you will not be ashamed at His coming. That will be one of the most shameful things, if through life we have denied the facts about the evil in our hearts as the evidence of its presence was brought to us, and then to have it brought out into the open at Judgment Day.

"Oh, this truth ought to reach into every heart: 'The hour of reckoning has still to come, when the Lord will come to bring dark secrets to the light and to reveal life's inner aims and motives'—life's *inner* aims, what is deep in the mind, moving us to action. The unfaithful will then look back and see how they have covered up, denied what was moving them to act, and they will be ashamed when they stand before the Lord at His coming.

"The Lord will come to 'reveal life's inner aims and motives'—that is, those who refuse to do it now, who do not get rid of all dark secrets, the dark motives that often move men and women to act, will be made known. Oh, it should cause such a feeling of seriousness to come over us—'when the Lord will come to bring dark secrets to

the light and to reveal life's inner aims and motives. Then each of us will get his meed of praise from God.' Then we shall get what our works have merited, and God grant that we may not be ashamed before Him at His coming."

Rev. M. Hembree said further:

Sincerity is not enough. You may be sincerely mistaken.

"If we just allow the Word of God to have free course, doing all to His glory, it will do away with all self-justification, the attempt to hide life's inner aims and objects. Something moves people; we may not be able to detect it now, but that is why the Lord said He will bring our motives to light in that Day. If we allow this Word to make deep impressions upon our hearts, practice deep searchings, we shall develop the spirituality to feel worse for God to know of our shortcomings than for any mortal man or woman to know.

"We thought God was away off—we were thinking more of what this human being or that one knew than of what God knows. But we must reverse that attitude, so we will feel worse about what God knows. Just work yourself into that condition that you feel sin more keenly because *God* knows it; then you can know you are

growing. To be saved you have to do it, and not refuse to let your evil come out before the members of the church or your associates in your spiritual life. Christ will come and bring to light dark secrets, and reveal life's inner aims and motives, and if any evil still remains we will be ashamed when we stand before Him."

Steadfast Abiding

Another facet in John's timely advice when writing to his children in the faith (I John 2:28) is *steadfastness*. "And now, little children, abide in him..." That is, continue steadfast in the faith of the Lord Jesus. The earnest seeker after life must be wholly absorbed with his duty as a Christian in order actually to abide in Him. It is obvious that one must get into the condition of being *in* Jesus before he can *abide* in Him. This step is accomplished by our hearing and learning of the Father, as we read in John 6:44-45. Knowledge is indispensable in coming to Jesus.

We learn from Ephesians 4:5 that there is but "one Lord, one faith." To be in Jesus, in fellowship with the true church of God, we must subscribe to this one faith. And this one faith comes by hearing the Word of God (Rom. 10:17). A faith derived from the sayings of men would be nothing more than vain speculation.

Many religious people subscribe to the viewpoint that any belief held honestly and conscientiously becomes authentic by this process. But even a superficial assessment of the merits of this plan reveals its weakness. Sincerity is *not*

The hour of reckoning has still to come, when the Lord will come to bring dark secrets to the light and to reveal life's inner aims and motives—life's inner aims, what is deep in the mind, moving us to action.

I *f we allow the Word of God to make deep impressions upon our hearts, practice deep heart-searchings, we shall develop the spirituality to feel worse for God to know of our shortcomings than for any mortal man or woman to know.*

enough. You may be sincerely mistaken. Carbon dioxide instead of oxygen was administered to a patient in a hospital, and death resulted almost instantly. The tank of carbon dioxide had been mislabeled before it reached the hospital. The manufacturer was sincere, the hospital authorities were sincere, the doctor was sincere, but the patient died. Sincerity is not enough.

So our religious beliefs to be potent must be supported by the Word of God. Sincerity of belief is not enough. "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good," said the great Apostle (I Thess. 5:21). To abide in Christ is to abide in His teachings, and to abide in His teachings we must first be acquainted with them.

But to keep our faith wrapped in a napkin, as it were, to hold it as a lifeless and inanimate thing that is not worth defending, or has no effect upon our lives, is not to abide in Him. "Faith without works is dead," says James 2:20. In Jude 1:3 we are charged to "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."

If we would avoid the distressing experience of being ashamed before Christ at His coming we must *abide* in Him. It takes much more than a good start for the runner to win the laurel in a foot race, and Jesus prescribed stead-

fastness of purpose as the key to a place in His kingdom: "But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Matt. 24:13).

Let us be diligent to confess our sins, both to the Lord Jesus and to

whomever we have wronged, and have a heartfelt repentance to accompany it, that in the Day of His coming we may "have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming." MM

Let Us Pray

Our Father in heaven, may Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth as now it is done in heaven, until every knee will bow to Thee, and every tongue sing Thy praise. Help us to realize what we must do, what we must think, what characters we must form to be worthy of inheriting Thy Kingdom that will one day fill the earth with peace, plenty and righteousness as the waters cover the sea.

Thy prophets have shown us the grand consummation of Thy plan for the earth and mankind. Help us to be more diligent in serving Thee, to awake from our sleepy condition, become more zealous in every good work. May we be zealous in examining ourselves in the light of Thy Word that we may cast down vain imaginations, and everything that exalts itself against Thy knowledge.

Help us, Father, to seek for Thy wisdom, realizing it is the principal thing, and the only medium that can act as a saving rule of action and prepare us to live eternally.

Help us to exalt this wisdom in our everyday living by showing a pattern of good works to all who observe us. Alert us that if ever we are brought to honor in the Day of Final Account we must now embrace this wisdom—hold onto it for dear life, for only

so shall she give to our heads an ornament of grace, and provide a crown of glory in the world to come.

Help us to ponder the path of our feet, controlling our eyes so that at all times they look straight on, not allowing ourselves the freedom to look upon any objects Thou dost forbid us to look upon, or to harbor in our lives any interests that run counter to the doing of all to Thy glory.

Help us to come out from the world going so rapidly in the broad way to destruction. Help us not to love it or any of the things that are in it, but to love Thee and Thy purposes above all else.

Be with us in this service, and may it be productive of much good. Be with those absent from us today. Be with and bless all who are striving to learn and live Thy saving truth, with those in sickness or trouble, or those not enjoying our privilege of constant assembly. Sustain and bless them as Thou seest fit through all the vicissitudes of life.

Provide us strength never to grow weary in well-doing, but to continue faithful to the end, that it may be our happy lot to share with the good and faithful of all ages the blessings of Thy eternal Kingdom.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

GOD'S SALVATION IS EVERLASTING

by L. T. Nichols, Founder (1844-1912)

Are we ready for salvation?

With sorrow I must say that all are not ready, but through God's long-suffering, time and opportunity still remain to work out our salvation and obtain everlasting life.

One time when I was lecturing in Illinois, a minister said to me, "There is no such word as 'everlasting' in the Hebrew language, and you cannot find it in the Bible." I asked him if Isaiah 45:17 did not come pretty close to it. "But Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation: ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end."

Such a life is worth working for! This life would be good enough if it had no sorrow, pain, or sickness, and would never end, and we should serve God anyway, considering all that He has done for us, even apart from the great future. But how much greater the life God has offered us! How we should love and serve our Maker, who is offering us *everlasting salvation*! When asked which is the greatest commandment of the law, Jesus answered, "The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment" (Mark 12:29-30).

We who share a knowledge of God's law have real joy and comfort because we are joined in love, with the glorious hope of everlasting salvation. When my little brother died, the minister said he had gone to heaven. I asked, "What has gone to

heaven? There is my little brother in the coffin." The minister said his soul had gone to heaven. "What is the soul?" I asked. "The immortal part of man." "What is that?" I asked again. He said, "You must not ask so many questions." I asked him if he had either seen or felt this immortal soul. He said, "These are things we must not pry into."

It was too vague to satisfy me. I wanted something tangible. I found the Bible taught we shall see as we are seen and know as we are known. I would not like to reach the final end and not know my family from a set of strangers, I would not want that kind of salvation. But the Bible teaches a reasonable and tangible salvation.

We cannot reach everlasting salvation if we do not know what it is. It is the goodness of God that leads us to repentance, there is no other way. Knowing that we shall see and know as we are seen and known and shall enjoy more blessings than we could even ask or think of, we have an incentive to work.

You must obey now, or you will never get this everlasting salvation. We may lose heavily in this world, but I would rather lose all than to lose everlasting salvation. What is any temporal loss compared to *everlasting salvation*? You can go to work and earn more money, but if you miss everlasting salvation you lose it forever. No chance to make it again, so how we should work now!

I would like to see all of you receive that everlasting salvation. Many of us have passed the best part of our life, and what is it now? Would we not

rather get a life that will go on and on, with a vigor of constitution that will never wane?

This everlasting salvation which will last world without end, is it not worth our all? Lay aside all this anger, this fretfulness, this peevishness. Be pitiful, be courteous, be kind, be true—so many B's the Apostle has given us. Can we not afford to be kind to each other? It will pay us now, and then it will give us everlasting salvation, world without end.

There is only one way we can gain this everlasting salvation. Christ has laid down the conditions, and if we follow them, He will come in and "sup with us." But we must open the door, and clean up, for He will never come where iniquity is. He will come only to those who will purify themselves. "Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he [Christ] is pure" (1 John 3:3). Then He will fulfill to us all these wonderful promises and give us immortal vigor.

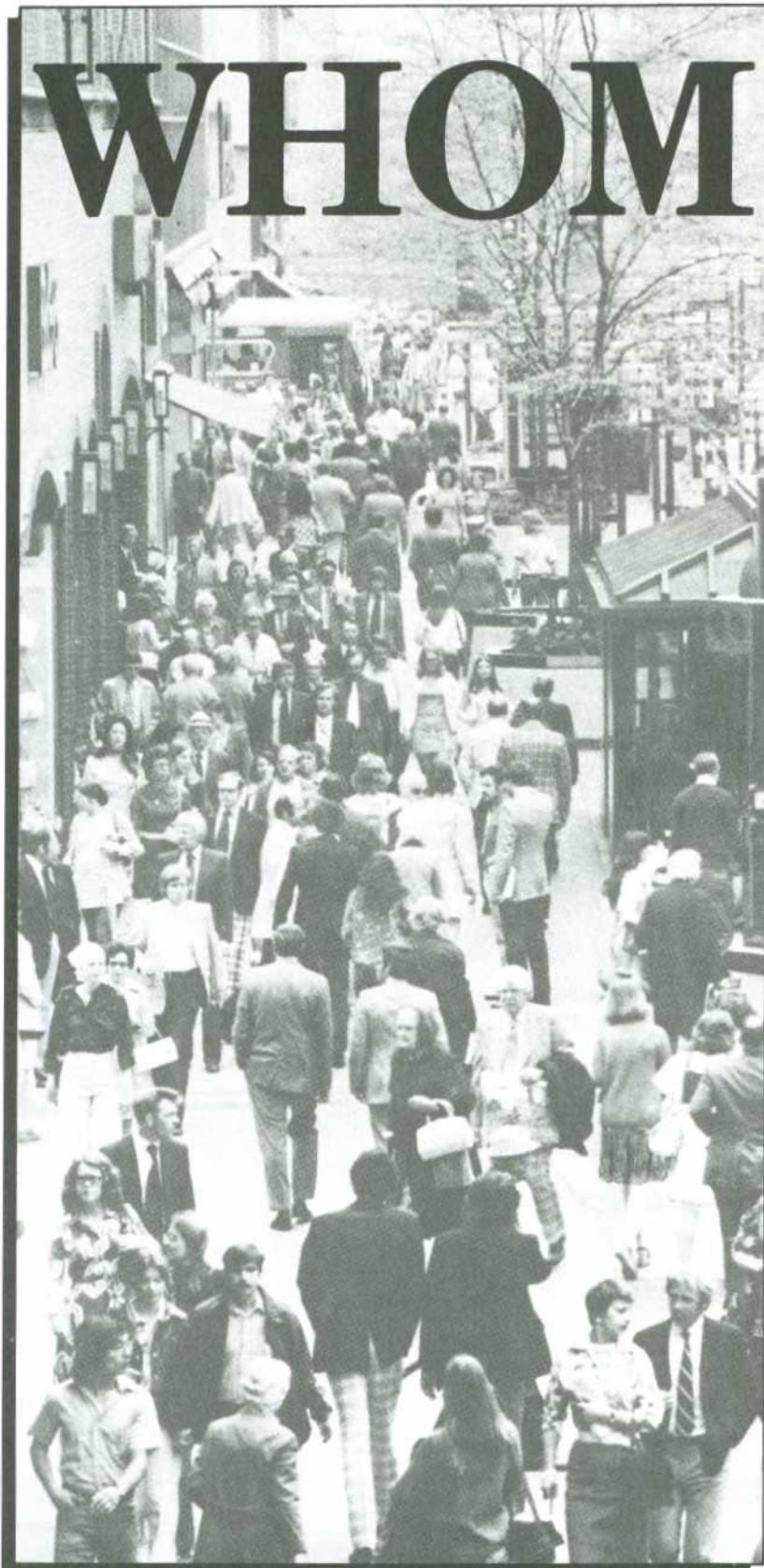
Time is not with God as with man. He is going to populate this earth and no one knows how many more planets. We are going to be His instruments in the continuing of His great, eternal plan. But there are preliminaries—we must go through an apprenticeship first. We must learn to work for Him now so we can work for Him then. We must understand His law and obey it now. Then, the Prophet tells us, we will be able to mount up with wings as eagles, we will run and not be weary, walk and not faint (Isa. 40:31).

Oh! by and by we will not feel languid or tired, and we will have such ecstatic joy! "Everlasting joy shall be upon their head" (Isa. 51:11). We can all have this joy if we will.

God is a most wonderful paymaster! If a man offered you a thousand dollars for a days' work, you would jump at it. But our Father offers us untold wealth to all eternity. Can we not gladly do the little He requires of us?

MM

WHOM



Would You Choose?

Imagine yourself in the position of the heavenly Creator. You want a perfect world, a planet filled with people who are part of your eternal family, beings whom you can glorify and perpetuate and enjoy forever.

You have created a planet, and populated it. Yes, there are billions of people on your planet.

Now, of all these billions, whom would you choose for your long-range project?

Since you are looking for the "just-right" type of person, your first step would be to write up a code of rules. In this code you would describe your purpose and your ideal of the person you want, the kind you enjoy being with, the kind you want to have associating with the members of your family.

Obviously, you would not want anyone who was constantly causing problems and upsets. And who would choose a lazy person, one who had little motivation or desire to accomplish anything? Worse yet, who would want to live with a liar, a thief, a gossip, a cheat? The obvious answer is, No one. I'm afraid, too, that the crepe-hanger would lose out, along with the undisciplined, the stubborn and the unruly. You surely do not want to *invite* trouble into your perfect world!

What about one who was prone to finding fault and complaining? Or what about one who was given to moods, who at any moment could turn sullen and

glum? Of course not! Surely you could do better than that!

What about someone who was very satisfied with himself, the "pretty good as I am" kind? Or what about one who would insist on looking "down" on you, the "know-it-all" kind? Would he or she have a chance? Or what about one who was given to light, silly comments? The answer is obvious—you would keep looking.

If you were choosing, you would look until you found the best—those of highest character, the most reverent, sincere, honest and upright, those most disciplined and motivated. You would look also for commonalities, for those who have most in common with your family, who share your interests and delight in your delights. These are the type you would seek. And of course, you would want them to be truthful, kind, humble and forgiving.

By the time you finished writing your book of rules, you would find you had a good-sized volume.

Now, how would you find the persons you want?

Let's think back to your code of rules. You would give your book of rules to prospective candidates and watch their reaction. If they scoffed and sneered at your project, you would surely not press them—you know there are plenty of others who will be *glad* for the opportunity you are offering. If they glanced briefly at the rules, then immediately declared themselves qualified just

as they were, without any effort on their part, without giving your rules any serious thought or consideration—again you would decide to look for others. You *know* that no one qualifies just as they are!

What about the ones who look at the rules, and what you are offering, and say that they will take what they want and leave the rest? Again, you can find better.

After all, this was your whole purpose in writing up the rules: to choose and develop the people you are seeking. If anyone doesn't have enough interest to study your rules and apply themselves to living by them—well, you would just forget about them.

But when you finally found someone who was attracted by your proposition, who wanted to learn more about what you offer and who applied themselves night and day to living by your rules—you would keep your eye on this one. Here is the one you are looking for!

Isn't this what the heavenly Father is doing? Can't we see why He is displeased when He looks down from heaven and sees the multitudes given to selfishness, greed, pleasure-seeking? Worse than this, can we imagine how displeased He is with us when we who have agreed to live by His rules fall short through our own willful disobedience, our self-seeking, our undisciplined moods, our unbroken

(Continued on page 26)



“Can’t You Discern...?”

(Or, What Is Really Important?)

“The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would show them a sign from heaven. He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather to day: for the sky is red and lowering. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?” —Matt. 16:1-3

The Pharisees and the Sadducees, always eager to discredit Jesus, one day asked Him to show them a sign from heaven. Jesus replied by giving a lesson far-reaching in its significance. “You can discern the aspects of the weather,” He said. “Why can you not discern the signs of the times?” (Matt. 16:1-4).

In other words He might have said, “You hypocrites, you look at the sky and predict the weather—yet you are utterly oblivious to the meaning of the times. *Don’t you know what is important?*”

Yes, Lord, we hear you. We, too, have mixed our values. We think so much upon the insignificant. We let little interests, petty goals—mere trivia—come before that which should be weighty in our minds and lives: the coming of our Lord and our accountability before Him. Who is not guilty? Who of us has not talked freely upon something of little or no consequence when the signs of the times are fairly screaming at us, telling us that the climax of the ages, the consummation of God’s plan, the coming of our Lord in all His majesty and heavenly glory *is right upon us!*

Why can we allow it? How can we let things of such minute consequence displace that which is *enormous* in its importance?

It is a besetting sin with effects we shall not be able to escape.

Let us apply Jesus’ lesson in an everyday setting. A word quickly—not fitly—spoken disturbs us. Or perhaps it is a small misunderstanding—small until we magnify it out of all proportion to its importance. Something no more than a human limitation becomes an occasion for sin. Or perhaps another’s pettiness rubs and irritates us. We create a problem from what should be no problem at all. Let the words of Jesus speak to us: “Can you not discern...?” *What* is really important?

Some people actually lose their lives, whether in suicide or in futility, by allowing them to be dominated by the insignificant.



They magnify the irrelevant, worry about the unimportant, build their entire existence around trivia. Things of no real significance take over, and soon the proper proportions of life are lost.

Let Jesus' words come to warn us: "Can you not discern..." what is important—what is *really* important? Remember, *I am coming*, and where will you stand then?

Are we surprised if we feel ourselves losing our grip on the great issues of life, when we allow trivia to tower in our mind in such menacing and threatening forms? Let the lifesaving words of the apostle Paul come with fresh meaning: "May your love be rich in all manner of insight. Have a sense of what is vital, and the God of peace shall be with you" (Phil. 1:9; 4:9).

We who find ourselves right at the culmination of all that the prophets of God have spoken, we upon whom the end of the ages are come, we have no time to fritter away playing little games of self-deception, being preoccupied with pettiness, or cultivating our small, self-centered interests. We have no time for fretting, fault-finding, or complaining about our lot. We have no time for any secondary issues—however lawful—that may distract us from our high and heavenly purpose in Christ Jesus. We have eyes to see the signs God is posting along our route, we can read them and know what is ahead. These greatest issues of life deserve *all* our mind and *all* our attention. Let Jesus' words come to us with power: "Can you not discern...?"

We need continually to strengthen our appreciation for the important issues at hand, the things that are really weighty, big, vital, and concentrate on completing the work God has given us to do, the purifying of ourselves from everything that defiles. Life without God is meaningless and nothing. Life *with* God is filled with nobility, promise and everlasting hope!

God forbid that we ever allow the trivial, the insignificant to displace what should be always uppermost in our minds—the soon coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

MM

Expect A Battle

To listen to some popular preachers of our day, one would think that serving Christ is like being on a never-ending excursion. Everything is easy, effortless, and fantastic.

While we do not want to overlook the joy and happiness that come from serving God, we must realize, too, that the Christian life is a struggle, a battleground. It was for Jesus, it was for Paul, and it is for every sincere follower of theirs. The early Christians could worship, preach, and practice their faith only in the face of severest opposition. There were foes without, and worse foes within. This is why the apostle Paul said of himself, "So fight I..." (I Cor. 9:26), and to his brethren: "Fight the good fight of faith" (I Tim. 6:12). And at the close of his glorious career he could say triumphantly, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (II Tim. 4:7).

Jesus promised peace. Jesus promised blessedness. Jesus said those who would follow Him would experience a hundredfold of blessing in this life, to be followed by eternal life in the future.

But we cannot expect the blessedness or the peace or the hundredfold without realizing the other side of the matter. We must die with Him (to self). "For in that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon

ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof" (Rom. 6:10-12). Again we read: "If we be dead with him, we shall also live with him" (II Tim. 2:11). Paul said of himself that he was "crucified with Christ" (Gal. 2:20). Where there is death, there must be suffering; and where there is death (of the old natural self) by crucifixion, the suffering must be intense.

Jesus said it another way when He called His followers to lose their lives for His sake (Matt. 10:39). There is a loss to be sustained, and loss means sacrifice.

If we are in Christ, we will have a battle to fight, a moral battle against our own lower nature.

Jesus fought this moral battle when He was severely tempted in the wilderness. We, too, experience it. We are called to deny ourselves, to give up all that God calls wrong, along with everything that is not to our spiritual upbuilding; however attractive, desirable, or seemingly essential it be, if it hinders us in our effort to be like Christ we must fight against it.

As children of the free part of the world in the twentieth century, this is not to our natural liking. We are accustomed to doing as we please. We are happy enough to fight *outer* battles,

but ever ready to defend the real enemy within.

External restrictions and regulations attack only the *effects* of the evil within, not the evil itself. The real moral victory comes only as we change from the inside out, not when we no longer sin but when we no longer *want* to sin.

Victory over ourselves means reshaping our whole life according to the pattern God has given.

Jesus prayed not that His disciples should be taken "out of the world" but that they should be "kept from the evil that is in the world." Jesus taught again, "deliver us from evil." To do this He may keep us from things that we would naturally consider good and essential to life. But the question is, What do we want most—the satisfaction of doing as we please, or deliverance from ourselves, even when it means being kept from something we thought essential; even when it means giving up something we had long desired; even when it means that God must disrupt our lives; even when it means humiliation before our peers and acquaintances?

The real battle begins and ends with self. Each of us must realize that we have been rescued "from the present evil world" to be a servant of God, to uphold His standards and to be willing to lay down our life for His cause rather than to surrender to those evils to which we are prone.

It is a battle for truth and righteousness. There is constant danger of compromising with sin in our own minds. In the Genesis allegory, the serpent was pictured saying: "Thou shalt not surely die", as though God did not really mean what He said. Jesus said to the Pharisees, "You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will

do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not" (John 8:44-45).

There is a direct connection between *truth and life* and between *falsehood and death*. God is a God of truth, and obedience to truth means life. Anything not according to the truth of God is falsehood, and falsehood spells death. Death is the end result of sin. In the words of James, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (James 1:13-15).

When we become acquainted with the God of truth, we come to see ourselves as He sees us, how naturally worthless we are by nature. Before He can use us and give us His eternal salvation, we must submit to His law, allowing it to totally remake us.

This is not easy. It is devastating to our natural self-love. It means giving up the comfort-

able image we enjoy of ourselves. It humbles us and makes us dependent upon God. It removes our freedom to think as we please, to feel as we please, to direct our actions according to our own whims, moods, and appetites. Little wonder that the world "hated" Jesus and the truth He taught. And little wonder that multitudes still have no love for those who have disowned them and who are making a serious effort to live on a higher moral plane than their surroundings.

We are in a battle, and the apostle Paul describes the weapons of our warfare as "mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (II Cor. 10:4-5).

Which thoughts did the apostle Paul say we should bring into captivity? Was it the thoughts we think as we read from the Scriptures of truth? or was it the thoughts we think as we pray? Or maybe it was those thoughts that relate to those outside the faith? No, Paul places no such limits on these "thoughts" that are to be brought captive. He says plainly that

The real battle
begins and ends
with self.

"every thought" must be captured and made to obey Christ, and this means "every" thought—during our daily conversations, during our business judgments, our daily problems, while we are at home with our families, while we are relaxing, when we awake in the night—every thought everywhere and all the time must be brought into captivity. Every thought must be measured by the standard of Christ, not by popular opinion or our own standard of judgment.

Where is the battle we must fight? Much of it is right in our own minds. Wherever anything in our lives is contrary to Christ, this is where we must pitch battle and bring every thought into obedience to Him.

The mark of a Christian is his love for truth and his earnest desire to be like Christ. If this is what you intend to do, you can expect a battle. MM

**Life is no fool's paradise
into which we have wandered by chance,
but a battlefield, where there are no spectators,
but where the youngest must take his side,
and the stakes are life and death.**

TWILIGHT:

A Tale of the Apostasy

Chapter 6: Awaiting the Hemlock

Arrived in Damascus, Simon, Arsacius and Palladius were at once thrown into prison. Two weeks later they were haled before the council. Upon his gilded throne, clad in his richest robes, sat Valentine, a man of tremendous fatness, his face a cruel, leering mask. By his side sat a stranger, also in episcopal vestments. Around them were grouped a score of lesser clergy, men who combined the privileges of angels with the temper of executioners, and who carried into the sanctuaries of the church the most hateful of the vices of the world. To the surprise of the prisoners neither Lykas nor Alexander was present. The charge of heresy was impressively read by a clerk, followed by incriminating affidavits signed by Lykas.

"What have you to say for yourself?" thundered Valentine.

"Only this," answered Simon with calm dignity; "I say as did Paul, 'After this way which you call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers.'"

"Oh, you think you can quote Scripture, do you? We also can do that. 'A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject.'"

"Very well; it is your privilege to reject me, but to reject is not to persecute or imprison."

Valentine arose ponderously from his chair, his face purple with rage, his voice choked.

"What!" he roared. "You old upstart! Do you dare argue religion with me? *Me*, Valentine, consecrated by his Beatitude the Patriarch of Constantinople himself? Whom do you think you are? Who made you so wise?"

"I claim for myself no wisdom, sir," replied Simon courteously. "My forefathers for four centuries have worshiped God according to this way, which we find revealed in the Scriptures."

"Four centuries of heresy! It is high time action was taken. And as for the Scriptures"—contemptuously—"do you not know that the authority of the church far transcends that of the Scriptures?"

"For some, perhaps, but not for us. We cannot conceive of a stream rising above its fountain-head, and we are told that if we dare add to or take from the words of this prophecy, the Bible, God's curse will rest on us. With all due respect, we say that we fear God's curse more than Valentine's."

"Then do you not acknowledge the authority of his Beatitude the Patriarch?"

"We do not. To us the Bible is the supreme and sole authority."

"Enough! What need have we of further witness? Now, Simon, with death before you, do you recant?"

Simon smiled at the absurd question.

"I cannot, sir," he replied, simply but firmly.

"Oh, you cannot, eh? Executioner, show him some of those pretty playthings. Perhaps the sight will cause him to change his mind."

The executioner drew aside a curtain and revealed a collection of the most hellish instruments of torture ever devised by the wicked

and depraved minds of demons in human shape. It was such a collection as a debased church and more than one of her more "liberal" daughters used with such frightful success throughout the centuries to coerce the free consciences of men and women who would not sell their souls at the bidding of false teachers.

Simon's glance took in the various instruments of torture, but indifferently he turned away.

"You may destroy my body as slowly and painfully as you like," he said, "but my conscience is my own; my citizenship, my allegiance is in heaven; you cannot touch it."

Valentine suddenly adopted a wheedling tone.

"It is too bad, Simon, that you persist in your delusions, when the church needs such able men as you. Why not communicate with me, and we can gradually adjust our differences of opinion. I can assure you a high position, wealth and honor in your declining years. Come, be sensible!"

"As I said of the curse," replied Simon, "so I say of the reward: I choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. To me the reproach of Christ is greater riches than all the treasures of Rome. Valentine's rewards endure but for a day; the gift of God is eternal life."

"Such contumacious egotism!" exclaimed Valentine, angrily. "Executioner, try the scourge; that sometimes works wonders."

Simon was stripped and cruelly scourged; then, as he showed no signs of relenting, the rack was prepared to receive him.

"You are aware," said Simon, "that the law does not permit you to inflict extraordinary torture upon a free citizen. Beware; the Emperor may hear of this."

"The Emperor!" sneered the Bishop. "He has troubles of his own, without concerning himself about a Damascene heretic, a nobody. Besides, there are exceptions to that law—blasphemy and sacrilege,

for instance. Your statement that the Eucharist was not the real body and blood of Christ constitutes both. Do you stand by that statement?"

"I do."

"Very well, then. And, when all is said and done, I am the law in Damascus. Go on, executioner."

The visiting bishop, a political envoy from Constantinople, raised his hand.

"Nay, Valentine," he said, "not at this time. I have found it more profitable in cases of this kind to put the offenders in prison and examine them from time to time. A week or two in the darkness of the dungeon is often more effective than an hour of violent torture. Besides, two nights ago I had a terrifying dream, and ever since then I have been unable to shake off a feeling of depression. It may be if we spare these men for a time, the Lord will be merciful and take away from me this melancholy condition."

"But you do not understand," Valentine argued. "These men are dangerous characters; they deserve no mercy."

"It may be so," replied the guest, "but I doubt it. What following have they?"

"None to speak of, but heresy is heresy, and—"

"That is not the point; I asked you what following they had secured."

"Only a few of their friends and relatives, perhaps a dozen in all. I have their names. But one heretic—."

"Then they cannot be very dangerous. Come, Valentine, be reasonable; these men are harmless, and while they should be punished, we cannot take them as seriously as we would a congregation of Arians. Scourge the other two, and put the lot of them into prison—not necessarily in the most comfortable cells—and in the course of time you may save them in spite of themselves. I am sure that this would be the will of his Beatitude in the matter. At least I insist that

To me the
reproach of
Christ is greater
riches than all the
treasures of Rome."

—Simon

you do nothing more to them during my stay. I have witnessed many persecutions in my lifetime, and my stomach is not what it once was; I have had enough of such things."

Valentine was plainly unwilling, but courtesy to his guest forced him to stay his hand. Presently a fiendish smile crossed his features.

"I am convinced that you are right, my dear Anthony," he said. "I shall let them meditate on the error of their ways in my deepest dungeons until my messengers return with their womenfolk. The sight of his wife and daughter at my mercy may cause Simon to see the light and accept baptism. Executioner, beat those other two, and then put the three in separate cells!"

The two bishops smiled unctuously at one another; they had tempered justice with mercy, and were swollen to the bursting-point with self-righteousness.

* * * * *

Death was more kind to Apollon; on his first night in prison, before he had faced the council, he passed from the cares of life into the keeping of his Heavenly Father.

Chapter 7: Battle

In the shimmering heat of mid-morning the devoted little band of fugitives, more dead than alive, rode slowly over the scorching sand, their mounts staggering and stumbling from sheer exhaustion. A bare twenty miles separated them from Bakra; ere night they hoped to rest under the hospitable palms beside its limpid fountains. On and on they pushed, straining their weary and bloodshot eyes for the patch of green which meant safety. Presently Severian glanced behind him.

"Look!" he cried, pointing.

Rearward, on the horizon, appeared a cloud of dust. They were pursued! Every heart turned to lead. Had the agony of flight and the nightmare hardships of the desert been in vain? For an instant panic threatened, then Wulf's great voice boomed out:

"Dismount, everybody!"

General-like, Wulf took instant command of the situation. Simon had entrusted his wife and daughter to his care, and now his mettle was to be tested.

"Get out whatever ropes you have. Severian, you and Perdix help me!"

Swiftly he tied the feet of the nearest horse and threw it to the ground, binding it more firmly so it could not struggle. In a few minutes the fugitives were surrounded by a low, living rampart of horses and camels. Calmly the Goth unslung his mighty bow, a weapon which only he could bend, and from his baggage he drew several quivers of arrows. Perdix was busy with his artillery; Wulf extended a bow to Severian. The latter shook his head.

"I do not shoot."

"Well, then, stand by with your sword."

"Will you really resist?" asked Severian, tremulously.

"Resist? Certainly we shall resist," answered Wulf. "The Scriptures give us the right to use force

in self-defense, and it seems to me that the time for self-defense has come. I know we are outnumbered, but there is no use dying like worms."

"Perhaps it is only a band of merchants, or at worst Arab marauders," said Perdix, with a faint ray of hope in his voice.

"Not likely. But even if they are Arabs, they would cheerfully kill and rob us."

With bated breath they watched the fateful dust-cloud approach. The minutes seemed eternities. Overhead the pitiless sun beat down in all his Syrian fervor; above the glittering sea of sand, waves of heat danced interminably before their tortured eyes. Mary sat with the half-delirious Rhea folded in her maternal embrace; Ione and Anna strove to comfort the two babes. At length Perdix broke the silence.

"Soldiers, right enough! See them come!"

From the choking dust streamed a band of horsemen, who spread themselves across a wide front and quickened their advance.

"Do you think there is a chance, Wulf?" asked Mary.

"That depends on what kind of troops they are. If they are Syrians or Jews or Romans, there is a faint hope; if they are Parthians or Huns, the odds are very much against us. At any rate we may as well do our part; we may be fortunate enough to even the number before they rush us. For my part, I can expect no mercy, for if I am not mistaken, Lykas rides at the head of the troop. Ione, you and Anna stand by to hand arrows to us."

"Fourteen against two! Pray for us, Mary." Perdix was grave, his jaw set and his face pale. A flight of arrows whistled toward them and fell just short of the "fortification."

"Parthians!" said Wulf. "No one else could get the range so well at the first shot. Look out for the next volley. Let them have it, Perdix!"

The bows twanged savagely. The attackers were circling the camp, Indian fashion, before the final rush. In answer to Wulf's third shot came a yell of pain and a horse galloped wildly across the desert, riderless.

"One down!" said the giant; "thirteen more to get."

Another flight of arrows rained in, and with a shriek Anna crumpled to the sand, transfixed by a steel-barbed shaft. Mary and Rhea bent over her. A hasty examination told them the wound was mortal; her life-blood was fast ebbing away. The stricken girl opened her eyes.

"I am dying, Mother," she said. "Tell Simon that I would never have forsaken the truth. Oh, Lord Jesus, be with me in the Resurrection! Thou merciful God—" Her voice trailed into nothingness as her eyes closed.

"She is dead!" exclaimed Rhea.

In a moment, however, she again opened her eyes and smiled sweetly up into the faces of the ministering women.

"Good-night!" Her voice was scarcely audible. Her eyes closed again, slowly, and she lay back lifeless. Rhea covered her face with a veil.

Meanwhile, the battle waxed hotter. Silent and desperate, crouched shoulder to shoulder behind their wall of horseflesh, Wulf and Perdix sent arrow after arrow at their circling foes. Two more archers were unhorsed, mortally wounded. The prostrate horses screamed as the Parthian shafts ripped into them.

"We may yet win," said Wulf through his clenched teeth. "Severian, get your sword ready; they are going to charge."

Closing their ranks, the archers spurred their jaded steeds to a gallop and with a blood-curdling war-cry swept down upon their prey.

"Well, here goes Lykas!" cried Wulf, as he drew his bow and leveled his arrow at the betrayer, who rode at the end of the line. Instead of the expected twang a

I need Your help today, Lord,

*Because I want to obey Your law all day.
Grant me Your strength,
Your guidance,
Your support in any difficulty or distress.*

*May my whole motive be to do things so well
that tonight I will want to take them and show them to You.*

Save me from the danger of doing as little as possible to get by.

*Save me from seeking to evade my responsibilities;
or leave to others that which I should do.*

*Grant that I may never avoid the decisions I ought to make,
or to shirk the load I ought to shoulder.*

*Grant me diligence and determination through every hour
that I may know at the close of this day
the contentment of duty done,
the joy of pleasing You.*

*And finally, Lord, grant me the delight
of an abundant entrance into Your eternal Kingdom. Amen.*

sharp snap was heard, and the Goth surveyed his broken bow-string with dismay. Casting the useless weapon from him, he snatched up another.

It was too late; the enemy was upon them. Triumphantly they leaped the barrier of dead and dying animals and disarmed the defenders, menacing them with their swords and maces. With a cry of terror Severian leaped out and fled at full speed across the desert. Laughing at his portly haste, a soldier leisurely set out in pursuit.

"Kill that man at once!" shouted Lykas, indicating Wulf. The soldiers, however, did not obey.

"Our orders," replied the decurion, "were to take prisoners." The soldiers looked at one another meaningly and nodded in approbation. Five of them dismounted

and prepared to bind the prisoners. Alexander plunged avidly into the captured baggage, searching. The eye of Lykas fell upon Ione, standing resignedly beside the body of Anna. With a triumphant smile he dismounted and approached her.

Unmindful of the two archers who were holding him, Wulf watched the Cretan, every nerve and muscle taut. As the hand of Lykas fell upon Ione, he sprang. Brushing aside his captors like flies, he was upon his man with one great bound. Hurling him face downward to the ground, he planted one knee between his enemy's shoulders and bent his head violently backward. There was a dull, crunching snap, and Lykas, the evil genius of the Damascene church, lay twitching on the trampled sand, his neck broken, his sightless eyes staring

upward at the sun, an expression of intense surprise lingering on his features. The whole transaction had taken less than five seconds.

Instantly the little group was thrown into confusion. Alexander, painfully conscious of his complicity, fancied himself the next candidate for retribution and fled incontinently in the direction taken by Severian, being scarcely visible amid the cloud of dust he raised. An archer, in desperate, time-wasting haste, was fumbling with an arrow, determined to save his squad from annihilation by slaying this barbarian tiger. Wulf's eye caught the action; snatching up the dead man's sword, he bore down upon him. The four remaining troopers hurled themselves into the breach, attacking with drawn swords. The Goth's furious rush

carried him full into their midst, and in a wild melee of flashing blades he battled for his own life as well as the lives of his charges.

But the unequal contest could not last long. The mounted soldier rode up behind him. Lifting his mace, he brought it down with crushing force, and poor, faithful Wulf fell heavily to the hot sand.

"Come on back, Alexander; he's dead!" called the decurion.

Congratulating themselves and one another on their narrow escape, the soldiers crowded around, gazing at the fallen giant. One of them kicked him.

"No, by Ahriman, he is not dead!" he exclaimed. "Look! even now he stirs."

"These Northerners have thick skulls," replied the man who had thought to shoot him, still pale in spite of returning bravado. "Let me take off his head."

The other held him back. "Not so. Our orders were to take prisoners. Besides, with such a man in our company, if he lives, we need have no fear of robbers on the return journey." He winked solemnly at a companion.

"Well, hurry up," was the decurion's crisp order; "chain him, or in another minute he will get up and kill the rest of us."

Securely locked in two sets of heavy chains, the vanquished Goth gradually revived. Blood flowed from a deep wound in his head.

"May I bind up his wounds?" Mary asked the decurion.

"Most assuredly. And most of

us are in need of your services, after our encounter with your friend,—if you will be so kind."

Aided by the priest, she dressed their injuries as best she could. The cleric then approached the prisoners, one by one, asking,

"Do you repent of your heresies? Will you receive baptism into the true church?"

One and all, including the half-conscious Wulf, answered vigorously and emphatically in the negative. The priest shook his head lugubriously.

"You may yet regret your stubbornness," he warned them. "Valentine uses rigorous methods to suppress heresy."

"Oh, keep still about Valentine, will you?" groaned Wulf. "We have heard his name too much in the past two weeks. Let this sink into your mind and stay there: Valentine and his master the Patriarch and all his crew of murderers mean nothing at all to us."

"He can do nothing more than to take our lives," added Perdix, "and we should die some day anyway."

Severian, ululating woe, was dragged in. Rhea's children wailed piteously.

"What shall we do with these two cubs?" asked a soldier. "We cannot be bothered with them, and they are nearly dead now."

"Do as you like; they are nothing to me," was Alexander's heartless reply, as he continued to search for the gold. A cry of joy announced his success; the gold

had been found hidden in the goods of the fugitives. In high spirits he transferred it to his own saddlebags. The world was bright once more!

As the priest threaded his way among the scattered and rifled baggage, his foot struck against a large volume, its wooden covers broken, its vellum pages torn. He stooped and picked it up.

"Aha!" he cried, "here is the cause of all the trouble! What good can come of common people reading the Bible? How can they interpret its mysteries? It makes heretics. I tell you; it makes heretics! See what it has done in this case. Valentine is sensible; he has long ago forbidden it in his diocese, and I foresee the day when it will be prohibited the world over. A happier day it will be for us, too; for then men will be content to hear and obey the church. The Bible!" He placed the mutilated book in his own luggage. A Bible in those days represented weary weeks, often months, of hand copying, and was expensive. While it was not for common people, it would be a welcome gift to his favorite martyr.

The order was given to mount and depart. The few animals which had survived the attack were liberated and added to the train, while Mary prevailed upon the decurion to dispatch the wounded beasts. They rode away. The great, impersonal sun beat down upon the scene of carnage and cruelty.

(Next Issue: Reprieve)

The Bible constantly reminds us that what is inside counts. In this obstacle course called life, what happens TO us can make mighty demands upon our faith; but in the final analysis, it is only what happens IN us that determines whether we win or we fail.

Should We Say "Amen"?

"In reading an article, I came across something that interested me about a word we use everyday namely 'Amen' at the end of our prayers. I was wondering if Megiddo ever did any research into where this word came from and its root meanings, etc. Are we ending our prayers in the name of a pagan god?"

"There was an Egyptian city called Ne or No ('Residence') or No-Amon ('Residence of Amon') as in the Hebrew text of the book of the prophet Nahum 3:8 (see cross reference).

"Amon was an Egyptian pagan god, and not a few of the Pharaohs had this in their name. Amon (Amen) was the chief deity of Egypt. One Pharaoh, for example, had Amenhotep for a name as they thought of themselves as godkings.

"Nahum 3:8, 'Art thou better than populous (No) or No-Amon'.

"Did the children of Israel acquire this word while in Egypt? I know the dictionary gives as one of its meanings: 'Let it be finished or so be it.' But it seems peculiar, to say the least, and maybe an attempt has been made to Christianize a pagan word."

We can see no connection at all between the name of the pagan god Amon (sometimes spelled Amen) and the word "Amen" as used in the Bible. The person who wrote the article from which you quote was surely not knowledgeable of the Bible, nor did he have any reverence for its Author. The parallel between the spelling of the two words is surely coincidence.

A reliable dictionary gives the definition for Amon (Egyptian, Amun), meaning "the hidden," as an Egyptian god whose essential nature "is as unclear as his name indicates. Often associated with the wind, and in certain forms embodying the power of generation, he was prominent as a local god of thieves, whence came the powerful XIIth Dynasty pharaohs (1991-1786 B.C.). Through union with the cosmic and royal sun god Reas Amen-Re, Amen became chief god."

By contrast, the word "Amen" as used in the Bible

is the Hebrew word *amen*, meaning "surely," which comes from a root meaning "to be firm, steady, trustworthy." It is rendered "truth" in Isa. 65:16 (literally, "god of amen"), and "so be it" in Jer. 11:5. The Greek word is a transliteration of the Hebrew and is often rendered "verily, verily."

The word has several uses in Scripture. It was used

(1) as the listener's response to acknowledge the validity of an oath or curse, declaring himself willing to accept its consequences (Num. 5:22; Deut. 27:15; Neh. 5:13; Jer. 11:5);

(2) to welcome an announcement or a prophecy of good (I Kings 1:36; Jer. 28:6);

(3) as an expression of agreement, to underscore one's full support, often duplicated for emphasis (see I Chron. 16:36; Ps. 41:13). This last use of amen became an accepted part of synagogue worship and passed into the life of the early church (see I Cor. 14:16).

The use of amen in the New Testament is frequent. In Rev. 1:7 and 22:20 it expresses confirmation of the writer's hope in the personal return of Christ.

It has been suggested that when Christ used "amen" He was endowing His words with His own Messianic authority, a thing which no scribe or rabbi could do. That is why the promises of God *in Him* are authoritative and beyond question, why they are "all yea and amen" (II Cor. 1:20). This is also why He can be called "the Amen" (Rev. 3:14).

When Jesus taught His disciples to pray, He ended His prayer with "amen." Should we attempt to do better? The apostle Paul, who said, "Copy me as I copy Christ," also used the word *amen* in the letters he wrote. If they could use the word, we feel confident that we are justified in using it also.

More than this, we *must* use it if we would follow the pattern Christ left us.

Far from being a Christianized pagan word, amen, for us bears God's stamp of approval and is our word of consent, approval, and submission to His word, or will. By using *amen* we express our accord with God, hence the word is most serious and should never be used with any frivolous, secular, or disrespectful association.

• Proper Use of a Talent

"I would like to ask your advice, and your prayers for an area in my life which sorely needs all the prayers and advice (from reliable, Christian folks) possible. I recognize a talent which I possess in the area of creative writing. But I am so often writing words that show the devil in them, more than the Spirit of the Living God. I feel very frustrated in this, and know surely that God's design must be utilized much, much more than that of the world. Please! Any advice you might offer would be very, very much appreciated!"

"Thank you for your continuance of your wonderful journal coming to me. And—if you might offer me some words of wisdom in my aforementioned problem area—that of the world holding governance over my writing talent, rather than what should be, which is the convicted display and witness to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in every word which I form on paper."

You have a commendable ambition, not to allow "the world" to "hold governance" over your writing talent. With the world surrounding us on every side and godless interests everywhere, it is real work to keep our minds above our lower instincts, to think and speak and write on a plane which will show continually what you call "the Lordship of Jesus Christ."

The ways of the world and the ways of God are in such complete contrast that the Bible represents them as light and darkness. The prophet Isaiah makes the comparison at the ultimate level, saying that God's thoughts are as much higher than man's as "the heavens are higher than the earth" (Isa. 55:8-9).

You are correct in recognizing that a talent is a gift from God, which one who is serving Christ should not allow "the world to hold governance over." Since you do not say in what way the world is dominating your talent—whether you are using your creative writing talent in your work, as a means of earning your livelihood, or whether you use it only in matters of personal interest—it is difficult to offer specific suggestions. However, we might point out a few principles that should govern day-to-day Christian living.

First, as you recognize, everything we have—our talents, our time, our energy, our very life—all come from God, and all rightfully belong to Him. Any use of these which does not glorify God, any use of these which He cannot approve, is a misuse of His property, if we have committed our lives to serve Him. The command is clear and all-inclusive: "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (I Cor. 10:31).

God intends that we use our talents and abilities to help us earn a living, but we must be selective.

Whatever we do, it must be something God can approve.

There are certain occupations in which a committed Christian would not want to engage. For instance, you would not want to use your creative writing talent (or any other mental or physical ability or talent) to produce anything that is God-dishonoring, or that is untrue, or that downgrades or belittles Christian standards or virtues or that sets people against God or His truth, His world, or His work. However, this does not mean it would be wrong to use your talent in secular work, i.e., the writing of factual reports, instructional books, materials for marketing of useful products, etc.

As Christians we have an obligation to use every part of our life in a manner that is constructive and God-fearing. This includes the time, effort and talent we expend fulfilling our duties to ourselves, our families, and our community, as well as what we expend in direct service or witnessing for God. It includes what we expend in self-improvement, encouraging others, earning our living—literally *everything* we do. It is impossible to separate secular and sacred duties. What cannot be done as to the Lord *should not be done*.

Every part of our life must witness for God, not only what we may say in talking to others about our faith. The most powerful witnessing we can do is by our lives, by our daily conduct. This is how the apostle Paul did much of his preaching, and why he could say, "Wherever I go, thank God, he makes my life a constant pageant of triumph in Christ, diffusing the perfume of his knowledge everywhere by me. I live for God" (II Cor. 2:14, Moffatt). He was witnessing not only by his words but by his life.

• Will Jesus Christ Be Visible When He Returns?

"Why does I Tim. 6:16 say no man has seen Christ, 'nor can see' him, yet other passages of Scripture talk about the visible presence of the Lord, and that He will be seen when He returns, like Rev. 1:7 and Isa. 33:17?"

The text in question reads: "Which in his times he shall show, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen. Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy" (I Tim. 6:15-17).

Verse 13 reveals that Paul is here referring to Christ, "who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession." He is the only one who, up to the pres-

ent time, has been given immortality. He is the "firstfruits" of our race, "afterward they that are Christ's at his coming" (I Cor. 15:23). Thus Paul says of Him, "who is the blessed and only Potentate, King of kings and Lord of lords, who only hath immortality." Of all the kings and lords over whom Christ will be the supreme ruler, He will be *the* King and Lord.

The Bible leaves no question but that He will be visible when He returns. Rev. 1:7 reads: "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him"; Rev. 22:4: "And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads." Also the passage you mention, "Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty" (Isa. 33:17).

However there is no discrepancy between the two statements. In I Tim. 6:16, Paul describes Christ in His present situation, at the right hand of God. It is the heavenly realm where Christ is dwelling that is out of the reach of human beings and forbidden to mortal sight, not Christ Himself. Christ is dwelling in the "light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see." But when He reappears upon earth, He will be visible.

Though any description of the Divine presence is beyond our conception or experience at this time, we get some idea of its glory from a few notes in Scripture. Paul was blinded by the dazzling brightness of the glorified Christ appearing to him (Acts 9). Moses' countenance glowed as a result of his encounter with heavenly light after he met with the angel of God in Mount Sinai (Ex. 34:29-35). On another occasion, when Moses asked God to confirm that He was indeed with him, the Lord told Moses that he (Moses) could not look upon His face because of its extreme glory. "And he [the angel of the Lord] said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live" (Ex. 33:20).

This thought is further confirmed

"By his faith he is speaking to us still"—Heb. 11:4, Moffatt.

Words for the Living

Excerpts from the sermons, talks and writings
of Rev. L. T. Nichols (1844-1912).

We want our houses all fixed up neat and nice, but what are they? Nothing compared to the future home in the summerland of love. To think of being there a trillion years! It is beyond our comprehension.



Better to deny ourselves now, and look forward to better things in the future, than to be using what does not belong to us. My wife and I started out with little. We had no carpet. Finally we sewed rags together for the first one we had. I helped to sew them. And we had a fine team, too. What do you think it was? A yoke of oxen. Would the young people of today think that a fine team? I think not. But we used to hitch them to our carriage, which was a stone-boat, and we did have some good rides. We were happier riding in our own stone-boat than in a carriage owned by someone else, with a mortgage on it.

Daniel lived godly and righteously. He mourned for the sins of his people, and prayed that they might see and turn from their evil. No wonder the angel spoke to him those wonderful words, "Thou art greatly beloved." How I would love to have such words spoken to me!

What a blessing to work for! To have Gabriel come and say, "You are greatly beloved!" Words cannot express the joy that would fill my heart. We can, everyone of us, have those words spoken to us, if we give ourselves wholly to these things.



Just look at the worthies of old, how many times they were found at the throne of grace. We should love to go to the throne of grace, and often be found in sweet communion with God, asking for help to overcome our besetting sins. We all know we have many sins to be forsaken.

by the fact that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God" (I Cor. 15:50). Mortal bodies and mortal faculties are not equipped to function in the brightness of divine glory. But when Christ returns to earth, He will come with power and blessing for all faithful men and women, and will change their mortal bodies into the likeness of His glorified body (Phil. 3:20-21), bestowing upon them the

same glorious immortality which He now enjoys. Then the now unseeable glories of the heavens will be opened to their view, and they shall even see God Himself (Matt. 5:8). Then they too will be radiant with divine glory, for "they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever" (Dan. 12:3).

MM

Whom Would You Choose?

(Continued from page 13)

wills? How we vex and displease Him by our disobedience, we who know what He has said in His code of rules (the Bible) and do the worse for it.

God will not always tolerate this willful disobedience. He is long-suffering, but He will not always wait. He will have whom He will have. He is looking for those who are most like Him—not physically, of course, for that is beyond our power to control; but those whose moral and spiritual values are His, who love and appreciate goodness, righteousness, holiness, and faith. *These He will find, and these He will have.*

If we do not qualify, He will find others. He is not short of patience, resources or time. If we will not come up to His standard, He will keep looking until He finds those who will.

Nothing will hinder His long-term project. In due time He will have His new world, filled with people who meet His code of rules, who are mentally and morally like Him. Then He will take them and change them into His own image physically, giving them a glorified immortal body, like the angels of God (Luke 20: 35-36; Phil. 3:20-21).

This is His plan, and He will execute it. If we do not respond when given the opportunity, He will not wait for us to assent. If we hesitate and go on disbelieving, He will find others more worthy than we. He *will have* His new and perfect world—with or without us.

Will you be one whom He can choose for His very own? MM

Earnest sowers become triumphant reapers; remember, God promises no loaves to the loafers.

Letters

On Being Thankful

It is easy to be thankful when we have sufficient of everything; but may we be more than thankful for the wonderful bread of life from heaven, which Jesus gives so freely. May we with grateful hearts, pray for a faith as strong as Habakkuk's, knowing that whatever happens, God will save His faithful and chosen ones. He will ever be our strength and in Him may we find our joy and rejoice in the God who saves us.

U. K.

R. B.

Signs and More Signs

"Maranatha," The Lord is coming! This is a time we are all waiting anxiously for. At the same time we are grateful that we are still being allowed time to work to make sure we shall be accepted when the Great Judge returns to judge all those who have covenanted to serve Him.

The signs of the nearness of the end of this era are to be seen all around us, given by Luke in chapter 21, verses 25-28 and 36: "And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken; and then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory."

What a wonderful, glorious event this will be for all the faithful: to see the return of the Son of man; but woe unto those who go their own way and bypass the strait and narrow way that leads unto life.

Physical health is a wonderful thing to have, but I am afraid that having good health we just take it for granted and do not appreciate it as we should until we lose it. It is our spiritual health, and that only, which will decide our eternal destiny; so let us pray for help to keep ourselves in perfect spiritual health.

U. K.

M. S.

Are We Ready?

We have a big work to do, but our reward will be great if we finish our task. We get the sense of urgency and fear as the time grows shorter. The big question is, will we be ready? We must pray for strength and guidance, and we must ever look forward, following the example Jesus left for us.

It is a good thing for us to keep our minds fixed on the future glories awaiting the faithful ones. By so doing, we can lift ourselves above the trials of this life. The future blessedness awaiting the overcomers should strengthen our determination to win the race. Jesus admonished His disciples to "Let not your hearts be troubled," and "Be of good cheer."

The trials of this life can be tools to prepare and shape us for the life to come, if we accept them in the proper spirit.

God has bestowed upon us so many blessings. We have a high calling, and our responsibility is great to make our calling and election sure. May we watch with longing eyes, our hearts afire with sincere faith and love as we see the signs of His coming growing ever brighter day by day. So "may we take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord," and offer unto Him the sacrifice of thanksgiving and praise to His Holy Name. He truly has done wonderful things for us!

Australia

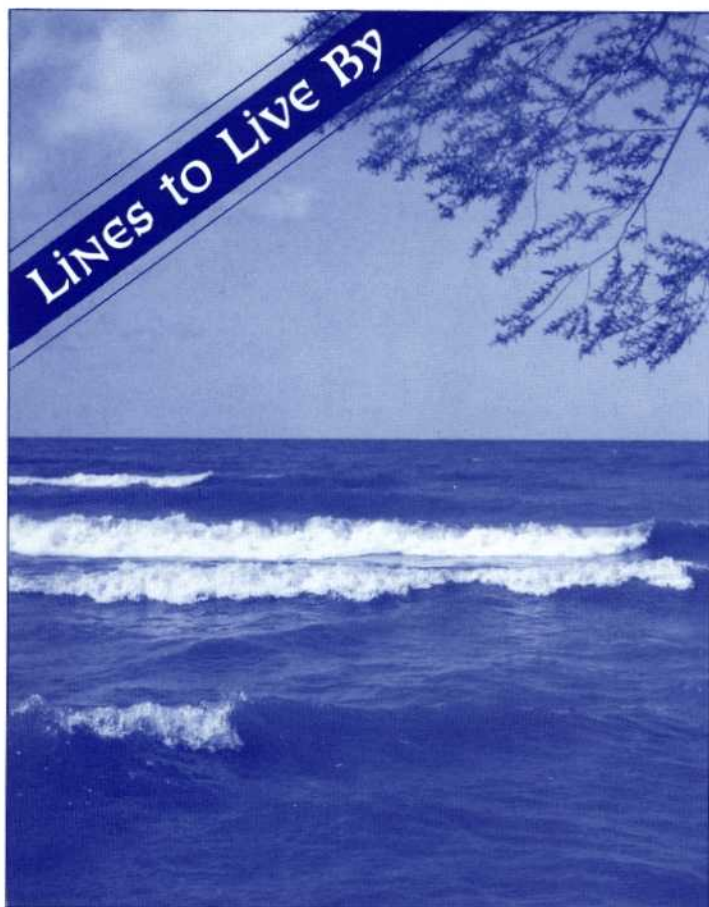
A. B.

To Make Us Stronger

The promise is to the overcomer; the trials and difficulties along the way are for our perfecting. The trials which come to one are tests of his faith and out of them his faith can emerge stronger than ever before. The rigors which the athlete has to undergo are not meant to make him collapse; but rather they are meant to make him develop more strength. In this world trials and afflictions are not meant to take strength out of us, but rather to put strength into us.

Texas

C. F.



Another Day

*Another day the Lord has sent,
Another day to pray,
Another day to labor on,
To serve Him and obey.*

*Another day to make amends
And set our records straight;
Another day to read God's Word
And on it meditate.*

*Another day! how thankful we
Should be for time to make
Our calling and election sure
Before it is too late.*

*Another day! we thank You, Lord,
For all Your tender care
And may we use it all for You—
This is our humble prayer.*

—Contributed

*If you are too big to do little
things, you are too little to be
trusted with big things.*

Let us be careful how we use the Bible. It was never meant to serve selfish motives. Remember, "All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (II Tim. 3:16-17, NIV).

*You may lay up vast riches of silver and gold,
And may hoard precious jewels and treasures untold,
But at last when you come to the end of life's road,
Your wealth will be what you have done for the Lord.*

Do It Now

Do you know someone who needs help? If you intend to help, don't put it off. It is easy to postpone an act of kindness until it's too late. Sending flowers to a funeral to salve a guilty conscience is a poor substitute for the good you might have done while the person was still alive. Perhaps you have an aged or ill friend who needs some help today. Whatever you should do, DO IT NOW!

God's Doings

When God wants to drill a man,
And thrill a man,
And skill a man,
When God wants to mold a man
To play the noblest part;
When He yearns with all His heart
To create so great and bold a man
That all the world shall be amazed,
Watch His methods, watch His ways!

How He ruthlessly perfects
Whom He royally elects!
How He hammers him and hurts him,
And with mighty blows converts him
Into trial shapes of clay which
Only God understands;
While his tortured heart is crying
And he lifts beseeching hands!

How He bends but never breaks
When His good He undertakes;
How He uses whom He chooses.
And with every purpose fuses him;
By every act induces him
To try His splendor out—
God knows what He's about.