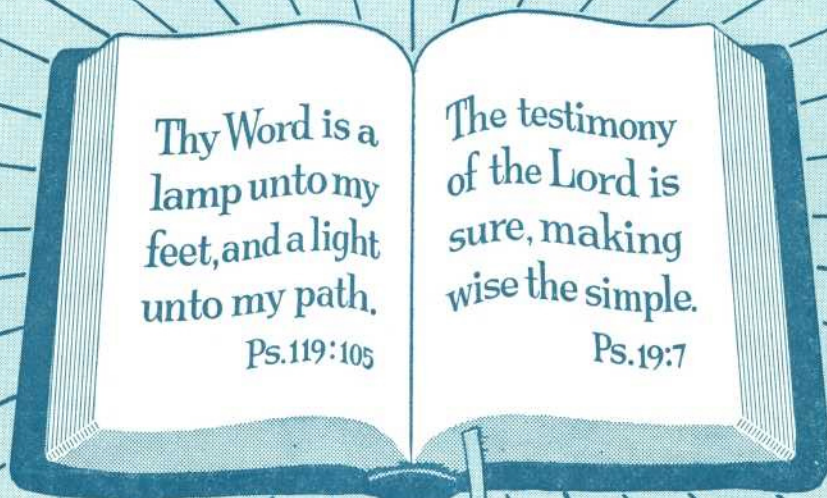


Megiddo Message

DEVOTED TO THE CAUSE OF CHRIST



*In Memory Of Our Founder
From His Pen*

Megiddo Message

Vol. 58, No. 10

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OFFICIAL ORGAN OF
THE MEGIDDO CHURCH
L. T. NICHOLS, *Founder*
KENNETH E. FLOWERDAY, *Editor*

A religious magazine, devoted to the cause of Christ and published for the dissemination of Bible truth alone.

The MEGIDDO MESSAGE will

- Strengthen your faith in the Bible
- Answer perplexing religious questions
- Give you courage for these uncertain times
- Help you live above the world's moral corruption
- Reveal to you how to develop a character acceptable to God
- Bring peace and stability to your life

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Editorially Speaking...

What Is Your Breakwater?

HAVE YOU ever stood by the seashore and watched the continual lapping of the waves upon the sands; or their ceaseless, tireless pounding against the strong wall of the breakwater, as if pitting their strength against its staunchness?

Have you noticed small crafts riding smoothly upon the untroubled waters inside the breakwater, as if no surging sea lay beyond?

And did you ever ask yourself if you are as securely breakwatered from the storms of life which wreck so many frail crafts, as are these little boats?

The world is a great ocean upon which our barks are cast, and we all need—and many people do have—some sort of breakwater. What is yours? Are you building your hopes for happiness and security upon your business success, or your prestige among your fellowmen, or your good intentions, or the ties of love and friendship? Are you sailing along taking life as it comes, feeling secure in doing whatsoever is right in your own eyes, expecting in the end to be carried safely into the harbor of the eternal Kingdom?

Or perhaps you are among the great fleet who have “a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge,” who hold fast to a religion founded upon tradition, who believe that “Jesus paid it all” and think they need only confess Him and trust in His atoning blood. If so, beware: You have only a wall daubed with “untempered mortar” as your breakwater.

But perchance you have secured the only substantial breakwater, the one built by the God of heaven: the Rock of Ages, the eternal Word of the Living God. If so, then indeed you can rejoice in the peace of the “still waters.” You may be tempted to grow weary of the ceaseless watching, the eternal vigilance, which is the price of safety, and allow yourself to rest upon your oars and drift out of the protected waters. But do not yield—never!

Take heed to the little ripples: the doubts that creep in unawares, the word spoken heedlessly, the headiness of the natural “old man.” Perhaps you feel you have been misjudged, that you do not receive due credit for what you have done; or that your intentions are good and you will go on in your own way.

If any of these conditions are true, and you are not taking heed to the reproofs and warnings from the Lord, then, as surely as there is a God in heaven, you are drifting outside the breakwater.

Bend to the oar while yet there is time, and do not rest until you are safely sheltered in the Kingdom of God. And remember—*look well to your breakwater.* ● ●

Our Founder

Among the archives of Megiddo Church history has been found a small pamphlet from the Mississippi River boat days which we would like to share with our readers. Its author, and our founder, Rev. L. T. Nichols, combines a youthful ardor and genuine zeal for the unique missionary enterprise—Mission Ship Megiddo—with an earnest and sincere appeal to every heart, to sound the deepest depths of dedicated Christian living.



1844 — 1912

From His Pen

OVER FORTY years ago, when only a boy of fourteen, I started out to proclaim what I honestly believed to be the truth of God, and from that day to the present I have labored without hope of fee or reward in this life. Like Paul of old, I determined to be free from all men; for this reason, I have never received one dollar's salary during more than forty years of ministry; and I never shall.

Blessed with a strong constitution, for years I labored hard by day, and by night studied this blessed Bible, in Hebrew, Greek, and English, that I might attain to a knowledge of its more than wonderful pages. Truth was the gem for which I sought, and my soul's longing cry was: "O tell me where it can be found!"

After years of careful, earnest study, I rejoice with joy unspeakable to know that I have found the gem for which I sought, and hold in my hands the blessed Bible, knowing that between its pages there are no impossibilities, no contradictions, and no absurdities.

I started out with the determination to add cour-
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age to my faith, and, no matter what the opposition, to fearlessly proclaim whatever I believed to be the truth. My life's history will bear witness to the fact that, following Paul's example, I have not at any time used flattering words or a cloak of covetousness, and that I have not at any time shunned to declare the whole counsel of God.

We do not come to you in our own name. God has not spoken to us or to any other man or woman since He spoke to John on the Isle of Patmos. No angelic being, commissioned by the God of heaven, has come to us with a new revelation. We come to you speaking the words of Jesus, the apostles and prophets. In obedience to the command found in Jer. 9:23, 24, we do not come to you glorying in our own wisdom, glorying in our own strength, glorying in our own riches; but we do come, glorying that we know and understand the Mighty and Eternal One, as revealed in His Word.

A Wholly Inspired Bible.

We stand ready to defend a wholly inspired Bible against the world. Its words are unlike all other words ever written. They have meaning, yes, worlds

of meaning—one above or within another, while human words have all their meaning on the surface.

They have a message, whose truth is dependent upon no single time or circumstance.

They have an authority, a power that survives the passing of earthly monuments and powers. In short, they are words that no man could have written from the intelligence belonging to his time, or from the experience of any human soul. So we can rest in the assurance that it is indeed the Word of God that abideth forever.

Come and Investigate its wonderful pages with us, and you can have the same blessed assurance.

People have been educated to believe that there is a conflict between science and religion. But not so, and we invite you to come and hear us on this point. We look upon the broad and lovely face of nature, with its countless beauties of land and sea; we raise our eyes to the measureless immensity of the splendid universe around us, and know that the All-glorious Being, whose power and wisdom and love have created and sustained them all, is not only the God of nature, but the God of the Bible; and its true teachings are bound to be in harmony with both nature and science. As the Apostle tells us, we know that our life is but a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanisheth away, its joys and pleasures are so fleeting. Why should we not acquire this knowledge that will gain for us pleasures that will never end, and joys that will continue to increase through an endless eternity, even joys that are "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think"?

What pleasures we now long to partake of! What scenes of rarest beauty we long to behold! Yet in that wonderland of glory will be greater joy than we would be able to ask for now. There is much to enjoy now, if earth's pleasures would only endure; but gray hairs, now silvering for the tomb, speak to us in no uncertain tones that soon present, temporal things for us will end forever. The azure vault of heaven, with its resplendent sun by day and the shining host at night is magnificent! But not long for us, for they fill the ages, while we flutter like the morning insect for a few moments, and are gone forever. The broad and smiling face of earth, with its countless beauties of land and water, is "a thing of beauty and a joy forever"; but soon our eyes, closed by death's slumber, will no longer behold them. You may say that you have no time to search for these wonderful truths, but Death will rap at the door one of these days, and he will not ask you if you have time to attend to him.

What would you think of a man in the cabin of a

sinking ship, who would say that affairs in the cabin left him no time to get into the lifeboat that stood ready to bear him to a place of safety? You would think him of all men the most foolish; and so are we, if we allow the cares and fleeting pleasures of this life to consume our time to the exclusion of the one thing needful.

The Words of Our Blessed Master, uttered over eighteen hundred years ago, are true; and Jesus said that we must seek *first* the Kingdom of God and His righteousness ever to have the glories of the future for our portion; that only those who *do* His commandments will have a right to the tree of life and be permitted to enter the beautiful city of God.

Having studied the Scriptures for over forty years we are fully convinced that life eternal and all its attendant blessings will be given only to those who fear God and keep His commandments, serving Him with all their mind, might and strength. We know that outside the blessed promises of the Word of God there is no hope of a hereafter. Science may make the world to wonder and applaud, but science with all its power cannot raise one man from death's slumber; with all its knowledge, it can give no hope beyond the tomb. Nothing but the mighty hand of God can perpetuate our existence beyond the grave. And yet we see the world rapidly drifting into infidelity, with less and less earnest religious zeal, less searching after light, less reading of the Scriptures.

In love of humanity, we have felt constrained to start out upon this our mission work. Everything is calling loudly for a radical change of attitude on the part of Christian men. The religion of the day has not withstood the storm and stress of modern thought; the doubt and skepticism of a critical eye has played sad havoc with time-honored creeds.

Over one thousand faiths, all teaching differently and all claiming to speak the words of an infallible God—no wonder the inquirer after truth is perplexed! Bewildered by the confusion of tongues arising from jarring sects, he is tossed helplessly to and fro as he pursues his anxious inquiry after truth. No wonder he begins to doubt the infallibility of this blessed Word of truth upon which our life depends.

Therefore, we have concluded that there is need of mission work at home. We extend a loving invitation to all lovers of truth everywhere to join heart and hand with us to lift the glorious banner of truth, upon whose folds shall appear no conflicting creeds, no impossibilities, no contradictions or absurdities; and then we shall be able to face bravely the hosts of sin, perfectly joined together in one mind and one judgment.

There is a God-given command in Joel 2:1, "Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand."

In obedience to this command we have started out on our mission to prepare the minds of people, that they may believe and be ready to accept the Lord at His coming, which we know to be nigh at hand.

We do not claim to know the day or hour of His coming; but we do know the times and seasons, and can know that we are living in the era of our Lord's appearing to destroy all human rule, authority and power, and bring this world into subjection to divine law. Enlightened by the prophetic statement, we see ourselves on the verge of the great change; "as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man" (Luke 17:26).

At the dawn of the new age, a mighty tempest will roar with unabating fury until the whole world bows in submission to the King of kings and Lord of lords. "When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness" (Isa. 26:9).

The storm will abate; a new government will arise out of the universal chaos; peace will overspread the scene; armies will disband; the art of war will be suppressed; mankind will be set free to worship God under Heaven-sent guides and governors and to live in joyful harmony everywhere, surrounded with plenty and delivered from sorrow, disease, and premature death; the Lord's prayer will be fulfilled—"Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." And, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men," will be reality. Then "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Hab. 2:14).

We want to tell you of this glad news of the Kingdom of God, of this coming King of kings and Lord of lords. What is the glory of an Edward VII, or the Czar of Russia, compared to the honor, renown and glory that will surround this glorified King when every knee will bend to Him, every tongue will join in singing His praise; and worlds on high—bright, shining worlds in all their glory—will join in ascribing: "Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever" (Rev. 7:12). Before Him the glory of all earthly monarchs pales like the light of a candle before the blazing sun. A King who, in possession of universal power and universal dominion, will save the children of the needy, and break in pieces the oppressor; a

King who will look after the poor and attend to the cry of the needy. Such a king the world has never known. His name shall endure forever. The earth shall at last and forever be filled with His glory, when the institutions and pomp and pride and theories of man have disappeared forever from below the sun.

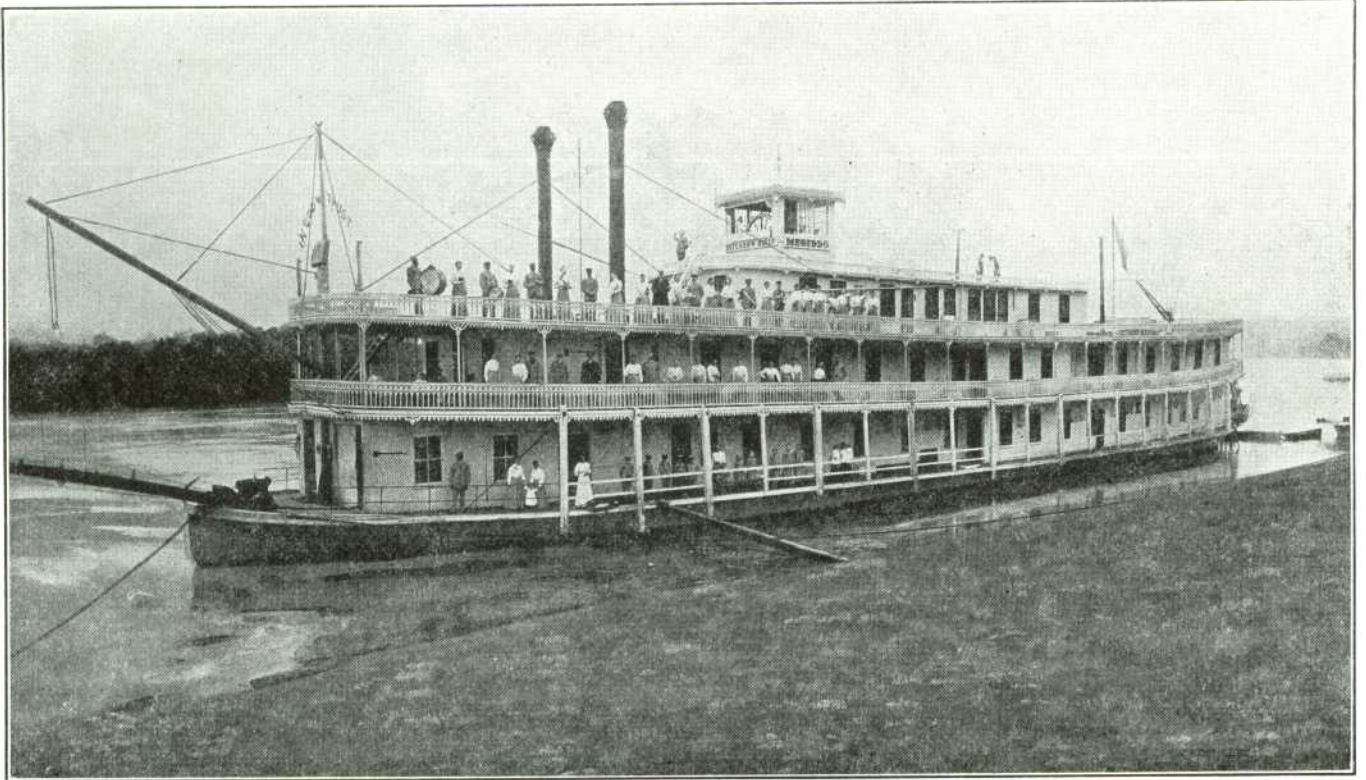
Investigate with us, and you will find that this is no fiction or fancy, no product of the imagination; but a sure and certain hope, built upon past and contemporary events as deep and solid and irrefutable as the everlasting foundations of the earth. "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound" (Ps. 89:15). And to help others, we have left our homes and braved the uncertainties of river life. The beloved author of Hebrews testified: "Unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Heb. 9:28). We must be found looking for him with clean hands and a pure heart (Ps. 24:3, 4). We will have no acceptance at His coming apart from being arrayed in the fine linen, clean and white, which the divine record plainly tells us is the righteousness of saints (Rev. 19:7, 8). The only way to have this righteousness that alone will save is to observe to do *all His commandments* (Deut. 6:25).

Our Mission Boat

As we looked at the world around us and saw how few are anxious for His coming, how few are ready to receive Him, we felt constrained to start out upon this our mission work at any cost. After considering many possibilities, we concluded that the work could best be advanced by a mission boat, which could traverse the waters of the Mississippi River and its many tributaries.

During the summer of 1901 we began constructing the boat at Lyons, Iowa. On November 16 we sailed to Memphis, Tennessee, where we completed our steamer and built a barge. After spending the winter in Memphis, we proceeded north to St. Paul, holding meetings at different points along the river, sometimes in our large and commodious tent and at other times in churches kindly offered us for the purpose.

In October, 1902, we left St. Paul, again stopping at different cities on our way down the river, holding meetings in the Methodist, Baptist, Christian, Presbyterian, Full Bible, and People's churches. From Cairo, Illinois, we proceeded up the Ohio River to Paducah, Kentucky, where we held many meetings in the Presbyterian Church. Leaving Paducah, we sailed up the Cumberland River to Nashville, Tennessee, where we have been most kindly received and welcomed to their lovely, hos-



MISSION SHIP, "MEGIDDO,"
which traversed the Mississippi, Ohio, and tributaries

pitable city, and offered the use of their fine tabernacle.

And now, at the beginning of the new year (1903), we look back upon the year of our mission work, knowing from many kind assurances given and many letters received, that we have accomplished a measure of good; that some have become more deeply interested in truths divine; that some have been caused to search for the knowledge of God.

So we extend to you our invitation, to help us by your presence and interest in our meetings, to make the coming year a year in which much good will be done in the glorious cause of our Master, and that we each may be caused to speak more kindly, to be more considerate, to love each other better and make our homes more happy now, while preparing for that future home in glory.

Our mission boat is a three-deck steamer, 205 feet long and 40 feet wide. Driven by two 250 H. P. engines, it has proved itself to be one of the best steamers on the river. It has over fifty commodious staterooms; all but two are 9 feet by 12 feet, and these are larger. On the second deck is a large chapel with seats to accommodate all eighty-five persons on board.

The steamer has two dining rooms, one 16 feet by 36 feet; the other, smaller. Each family has separate

cupboards in the dining room and kitchen, and some families have private dining rooms.

One of the wonders of the twentieth century is the kitchen, 16 feet by 30 feet, where thirty women do their own cooking on a single oversize wood-burning stove, and peace and harmony prevail—all are taught that all wrath, anger, evil speaking and evil feelings must be put away; that they must be kind, tenderhearted, loving and forgiving.

Our Band. We have on board a band of twenty-two pieces, two organs, a piano, and a base viol, which are used in our services, to praise the mighty and eternal God in harmony with the divine testimony (II Chron. 5:12, 13; Psalm 150).

Our People. Living on board our mission ship are thirty families—eighty-five volunteers. All have devoted their lives to the cause of truth and are ready and willing to work at any honorable employment. To help with the problem of livelihood, our women do plain and fancy needlework, which they sell at cities along the river. The men, honest and energetic, find employment at different points where we stop to hold meetings. Among our workers are a tailor, clerks, paper hangers, painters, sign painters, machinists, carpenters, teamsters, masons, plasterers, bricklayers, a landscape gardener, and men

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who can do all general work. All are thankful for any work they can obtain at points where we stop.

We are now in the process of equipping a machine shop on board, where we expect to manufacture articles, the sale of which will assist in the great work.

Our public meetings are free to all, and any wishing to ask Bible questions are welcome to come to the boat at any time.

In conclusion, we would again invite you to come and hear the Word of God. Compare carefully what we say with the Divine Record. Lay aside all prejudice, all theories, all sayings of men, and deeply realize the sentiment expressed in the following verses:

Truth is the gem for which we seek;
Oh, tell us, where can it be found?
For this we search and pray and weep,
That truth may in our hearts abound.

We want the truth on every point;
We want it, too, to practice by.
Divine in nature, 'tis the best;
For truth will ever stand the test.

Seize, friends, the truth, where'er 'tis found—
On heathen or on Christian ground.
Among your friends, among your foes,
The plant's divine, where'er it grows.

L. T. Nichols

For Openness of Heart

Keep me, O God, from pettiness.
Let us be large in thought, word and deed.
Let us be done with fault-finding and leave
off self-seeking.

May we put away all pretense and meet
each other face to face without self-pity and
without prejudice.

May we never be hasty in judgment and
always be generous.

Let us take time for all uplifting things.

Make us grow calm, serene, gentle.

Teach us to put into action our better im-
pulses, and make us straightforward and
unafraid.

Grant that we may realize that it is the little
things in life that create differences; that in
the big things we are all as one.

And, O Lord, God . . .

Let us not forget to be kind.

From A Reader—

Are You His Sheep?

The Bible often compares men to sheep, and speaks of the Lord as the Shepherd (Ps. 23:1; I Pet. 2:25).

Sheep are notoriously nearsighted, and easily go astray. The only way they can successfully find food, shelter and protection is to remain with the all-wise shepherd, who leads the way through the green pasture to the still waters.

So too, we cannot depend on our own sight, but must stay close to the Lord so that we can constantly hear His voice.

One day a man in Australia was arrested for stealing a sheep. However, he claimed that it was his own sheep which had been missing from his flock for many days.

The judge was puzzled, not knowing how to decide the matter fairly. At last he asked that the sheep be brought before him. Then he took one of the men into the courtyard and told him to call the animal. The sheep made no response except to raise its head and look frightened as if it dreaded being in the unfamiliar place with strangers.

Bidding the officer to take the man back to the courtroom, the judge instructed them to bring down the defendant. The accused man did not wait until he entered the yard, but as he drew near the gate, before the sheep could see him, he began to make a peculiar call. Overjoyed, the sheep bounded toward the gate and by his actions showed that he recognized the familiar voice of his master.

"His sheep knows him," said the judge, and so the case was quickly decided.

Are we drawn to Jesus and gladdened by His admonitions in the Word? If we are, that's because the Lord is our shepherd. His sheep hear His voice and they follow.

*Mrs. E. S.
Wausau, Wisconsin*

Know the Success Family

The Father of Success is Work; the Mother of Success is Ambition. The oldest son is Common Sense. Some of the other boys are Perseverance, Honesty, Thoroughness, Foresight, Enthusiasm and Cooperation.

The oldest daughter is Character. Some of the sisters are Cheerfulness, Loyalty, Courtesy, Care, Economy, Sincerity and Harmony.

Get well acquainted with the Father and you will get along well with the rest of the family.

Inward Braces

“HOW DID he ever do it!” we exclaim in admiration as we read again the account of the youthful Joseph.

Snatched from his protective home and sold to a wealthy master in Egypt, he withstood temptations to which many a strong man has succumbed.

Could he speak to us today, without doubt he would say, “Sojourners, strengthen your *inward braces*. It was those strong inward braces nurtured daily by my godly father which gave me the strength to say ‘no’ to every temptation. I was young, only seventeen. I had been reared as a shepherd’s son and was not accustomed to the beguiling pleasures which dazzled and beckoned in the urban centers. As I had known life, riches and honor came only to those who had the ambition to work for them.

“But suddenly I was thrown into a most unmoral environment. Do you think it was easy to be different from those about me? How easy it would have been to relax just a little and enjoy for a brief moment the pleasures of Egypt. I will not deny it, I was severely tested, but my inward braces held—the promises of the Almighty outweighed the present allurements. My long training in moral integrity produced in me a nature that was incompatible with sensuality. If I compromised with evil, how could I meet my God when He sits as Judge of the whole earth?”

In this age of promiscuity, when sexual vice displays itself unrestrained on the printed page, in the movies, on the TV, and even on the streets, Joseph’s temptation does not seem so remote. Potiphar’s wife appealed to the passions of the body. But Joseph rebuffed her with, “How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?”

The tempter, however, was not so easily dissuaded. Failing to lure Joseph the first time, she pursued him day after day. Temptations thus renewed become harder to resist. A decent person can be shocked by the bold suddenness of evil, and his conscience may recoil. But the shock wears off and presently the suggestion seems not so strange. Then comes a new time of danger. As a steel bridge which can resist a heavy blow may be endangered by successive shocks that come from the tread of march-

ing men, so man’s moral resistance may disintegrate beneath the impact of temptation that comes relentlessly on and on.

Joseph had sense enough to know that he must not be where the feet of temptation continually walked. He fled.

Are we as wise as Joseph? Do we avoid situations which would weaken our will to do right? When confronted with evil, is our first thought, “How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?”

When a friend feels we are on dangerous ground and has the courage to tell us, do we hasten from the place of temptation to build high heaps about the place where we are apt to stumble?

No one can ask honestly or hope fully to be delivered from temptation unless he has himself honestly and firmly determined to do the best he can to keep out of it. Said a wise man, “Most people who fly from temptation usually leave a forwarding address.”

We need not be helpless creatures tossed before temptation. It is within our power to build strong inward braces to withstand the outward pressures.

Temptation is likened to a tempter looking through the keyhole into the room where we live; sin is our drawing back the bolt and making it possible for him to enter.

Says James, “A man must not say when he is tempted, ‘God is tempting me.’ No, a man’s temptation is due to the pull of his own inward desires, which can be enormously attractive. His own desires take hold of him, and that produces sin” (James 1:13—15, Phillips). Indeed, temptations from without have no power unless there be corresponding desire within.

It is easy to find excuses for defeat, not so easy to find strength to withstand the temptation. “A virile old priest whose ministry was mostly among sailors, met one day a man in public life who had got himself involved in a corrupt entanglement. ‘But, Father,’ the man said to his rebuke, ‘You don’t know what the *outside pressure* was.’ ‘*Outside pressure*,’ came the indignant answer. ‘*Outside pressure*! Where were your *inside braces*?’ ”

The time to build those strong inward braces is

before we have approached near enough to the forbidden fruit to look at it and admire.

The Christian life is no short snapshot procedure; it requires a long exposure. Every day puts at risk all that has been gained. And there is a price to pay, a price consisting of sustained training, and self-discipline, and self-control. All this requires time. The demands of Christ are high and exacting; His standards are a challenge and a reproach to the world, and they can never be sustained by desultory or spasmodic effort.

Pleasures that make one soft or less sensitive to spiritual things must be foregone. Our inward braces are strengthened as we give ourselves to study, to meditation, to prayer, to fellowship, and to Christian service, give ourselves so completely that every aspect of life is governed and permeated by the spirit of Jesus Christ. The Christian life and the Christian cause, not only in the world of Paul's day but in our own, call for moderation and discipline in all things. All our energies, spiritual, and mental and physical, must be concentrated on the one great and all-inclusive purpose—to gain for ourselves life without end.

No one will ever accomplish the work without the sternest self-discipline. We have to discipline our minds; it is one of the tragedies of life to let the mind run at random until it gets beyond control. We must discipline our souls—we can do so by facing life's temptations with all the strength that we can bring to them in the strength of God. There is not a day when life does not bring us opportunities to discipline our soul. In life we need to know the worth of that goal we are working for. We need to continually build up our inward braces by keeping our hope alive and real.

Strength comes from within. The momentary meditation to determine the right course, the daily resisting of petty temptations which pluck at our sleeve strengthen our inward resistance. The daily saying "no" to ourselves when small temptations assail us gives us strength to say "no" when great trials confront us.

A small act, either of indolence or initiative seems to be a very unimportant thing; but such acts repeated, in time form exceedingly powerful habits which either subjugate us or give us the power to resist. All that we do today to overcome the evil will help us in the future.

It is not sufficient to have good qualities; one must use them in the right way.

If we know how to keep under control the hosts of impressions coming from external life and how to draw rein on our galloping ideas and feelings, our inward braces have been strengthened through daily use. Every day at any moment, occasions for

small spiritual combats will arise. There is not a day nor hour when we may not have a chance to win a victory.

Nothing can resist a resolute will. Gradually the man of will succeeds in forming strong inward braces if he allows God's Word to crowd out every other desire.

It is a most fearful fact that in every heart there is some secret spring that would be weak at the touch of temptation, and that is liable to be assailed. Fearful and yet salutary, though, for the thought may serve to keep our moral nature braced. It warns us that we can never stand at ease, or lie down in the field of life without sentinels of watchfulness and campfires of prayer—inward braces. ●●

As You Really Are

Do you see yourself as you really are
As the day's events pass by?
Do you realize what you do to mar
Your record that's kept on high?

*Do you see yourself as you really are
When you fret at the least delay?
When you pout and sulk as you find a bar
Obstructing your right of way?*

Do you see yourself when in anger stirred;
When the baser emotions rise?
Do you check your life by the written Word?
Do you know where your failure lies?

*Do you see yourself when your praise is sung
By your friends, and your chest swells out?
Do you then recall that the contrite ones
Will the praises of Jesus shout?*

Do you see yourself as you are in fact?
Does your mirror the truth reflect?
It's easy to see how the others act—
But do you your own faults detect?

*Does your glass reflect a repulsive sore
That you would desire to mend?
If you see yourself as you really are,
There is hope for you, my friend!*

It takes years to become perfect; less than a day to become corrupt.

Good will cannot flow toward you unless it flows from you.

The Upward Call



PAUL, the great missionary apostle, is a prisoner "in his own hired house" in Rome, awaiting trial before Nero. At his coming to the capital, he found a congregation of Christians awaiting his leadership, and though in chains and under guard, he is still the counselor and governor, not only of this church, but of a far-flung chain of ecclesias. Daily, members of his flock come to him with their problems.

In the previous scene, the problem was Ambition and Personal Sacrifice. LUCIUS, a young Roman patrician, is torn between the things which are seen and those which are not seen. With his background and ability, there are a great many things which could be his, but which he must give up in order to gain the things of real value. The Apostle, with the tenderness and understanding of a father, reasons with him on the uncertainty of this life and all it can give, and the wisdom of seeking for enduring rewards.

In Scene III of the drama, which was once pres-

ented in the Megiddo Church, the problem is Hopelessness. We are brought face to face with one of the ugliest and most vicious features of Roman society, human slavery. Christianity had a special appeal for the depressed classes, for it offered them something better; it gave them manhood, dignity, equality, hope, even in such a world as this.

It was not to be expected, however, that these things should be acquired and maintained easily. The present is so much more obvious than the future, be that future ever so bright, and every mortal has his low moments.

As in the preceding scene, the guard sits in his corner, half asleep. PAUL is seated with a short, middle-aged Greek, TELEMACHUS, in the coarse garb of a slave, whose face is stamped with the bitterness of despair.

PROBLEM: HOPELESSNESS

TEL. Hope! You talk of hope. Is there anything more hopeless than the life of a slave? A slave—yes! And no hope of ever being anything else. Is this the way God treats His children—some of them? It seems to me that a faith like Christianity is for free men, for those who can choose their own course of action. What chance has a slave?

PAUL. No, my son, it is for all. It is a message of hope to all men. None of us can escape trouble and chastening. We all have our problems, and this is yours, a part of your discipline.

TEL. [*desperately*] It is more than a problem, it is a burden that I simply can't endure!

PAUL. You are nearsighted, Brother Telemachus. Look ahead to the end of the matter, to the glory to be revealed.

TEL. Look ahead! To what? A life of brutal labor and cruel treatment, and the death of a beast. I try to look ahead, sir, but it is small relief. To think of food to come next week or next month is only a torment to a hungry man. I want something now!

PAUL. You can have something now. You already

have it, if you could but recognize it. The hundredfold is waiting for you, as soon as you lay hold upon it.

TEL. What does this hundredfold look like? Is it beatings and starvation? Is it heat and cold and thirst and endless toil? Is it the constant threat of being sold into the arena, to make a Roman holiday? I try to dream of a glorious time to come, when all men will be brothers and Christ the King over all, but always I am awakened by the coarse voice of my master and roughly brought back to reality—to slavery. Why should this be?

PAUL. I do not know. I cannot account for many things in this life. But I have learned one lesson which has been priceless to me. Have you ever been shipwrecked, Telemachus?

TEL. No, I have never even seen the sea.

PAUL. I have been, several times. The first time—that was off Paphos—I was panic stricken. I struggled and something said to me, “Relax. The water is ready to bear you up. Let it help you.” That is what I did. I turned on my back and floated quietly until strength returned and my mind cleared, and I was saved. So I say to you, and to all who have problems, or burdens as you call them: do not struggle against circumstances which can’t be changed; use them. Accept them and build around them and with them.

TEL. [*resentfully*] You have never known the life of a slave—to have no rights, not a moment you can call your own, to be completely—

PAUL. Look, my son, look; what is this?

TEL. A chain.

PAUL. Are you in chains?

TEL. No, not at this moment. . . . I’m sorry, Father. I can begin to see—

PAUL. I am not free to come and go, not as free as you are. Yet I do not complain; I try to let the water of adversity hold me up. What do I gain? I have leisure to write letters to the churches. I have time to get the physical rest I never had when I was free. And I have great opportunity to develop those jewels of patience and contentment. Yes, I even have some good talks with my guards. I think I may have converted a couple of them—at least they took them away.

TEL. But you are a free citizen, and at least you have hope of a trial and release.

PAUL. Perhaps; perhaps not. Would you like to change places with me? Would you like to be at the mercy of the Emperor Nero on one of his bad days?

TEL. [*looking uneasily at soldier*] Be careful, sir.

PAUL. Oh, that’s all right. This fellow doesn’t understand Greek. He’s a Dacian; very kind to me, but we have to use sign language. . . . But to come back to your condition. Let’s be realistic. You are a

slave. What can you do about it, if you do not accept it?

TEL. [*sullenly*] Run away.

PAUL. You be careful. You know the penalty, don’t you? It isn’t worth it. Even if you escaped, you would still be a miserable fugitive, living in fear, unable to meet with the church of Christ—the only place where you can find equality and fellowship now. Just as important is the fact that the truth of Christ must not suffer. Christians should be trustworthy.

TEL. [*rising*] Even so, it is the only way I can see that I can find myself. Here I have no self. I am not a human being, not a person, neither man nor woman, but a *thing*. Service is the name the Romans give us; not servants, but only service.

PAUL. [*thoughtfully*] Have you ever thought, my son, how like the Christian life that is? Slavery is the complete extinction of all personal rights, the loss of individuality. So in Christ we must surrender our individuality, we must lose our freedom to do as we please. No matter what we are by accident of birth, in Christ Jesus there is neither Paul nor Telemachus, neither slave nor free, rich nor poor, Jew nor Greek, male nor female: all is lost in one grand ideal—service. Service to God and to our fellow man. It is a noble service which opens the door to a new life, a wider freedom than we could ever have imagined when we were trying to have a self. I am Christ’s slave, and we are both Christ’s free-men by virtue of our wholehearted service. And this service includes your relations with your master.

TEL. You mean I owe *him* something?

PAUL. Yes, you do. Part of Christ’s service is to render honest service to your master according to the flesh, if you are called being a slave. You must glorify your service with the spirit of a Christian, not stealing, nor working only when the overseer is around. We must show that the Christians are different. You have a great opportunity to witness for Christ right where you are, by the quality and honesty of your service.

TEL. [*with disgust*] That may be all right for a decent master. Mine is a beast.

PAUL. All the more test of your manhood in Christ. We cannot meet or cure evil with evil. And the higher freedom you enjoy enables you to choose. If you are commanded to do something which would make you deny the faith, you can choose to witness by your suffering, or, if it comes to that, your martyrdom, just as I am prepared to witness at this moment.

TEL. [*slowly*] This is not easy advice to take.

PAUL. When did the good things ever come easy? But, after all, as I said, let’s be realistic. It’s the sensible thing to do, as well as the right thing. Who

gets sold into the arena? Is it the diligent, honest worker, or the one who is rebellious and intractable and dangerous? It is possible that your condition is not as hopeless as you think. Slaves gain their freedom; they are being manumitted every day. Freedom is far preferable, if you can get it lawfully. Why not work to this end?

TEL. Not a chance.

PAUL. How do you know? Try it.

TEL. The truth is, I hate to oblige the old beast.

PAUL. Telemachus, you are lowering yourself to the level of personal hatred, which is far below the level of the Christian. You are fighting the battle on his field instead of your own, and you can never win by hating. Most men have something good in them, if we look for it. Try to find something in your master that you can approve, and serve that portion of him. Who knows? You might convert him by your example. Stranger things have happened.

TEL. I doubt it.

PAUL. Now here's a test. Would you, a Christian, change places with your heathen master? Be truthful, now.

TEL. [*thoughtfully*] No, I can't say that I would.

PAUL. He is not free—not as free as you are. He is a slave to his riches, a slave to his social caste and custom, a slave to his evil habits, his lusts and desires, a slave to a thousand gross superstitions, a slave to mortality. From all these things you are free, or can be. He is the one who is really hopeless. What is more hopeless than the life of a slave? It is the life and death of a slave to sin. Can't you begin to see your hundredfold?

TEL. Yes, I can. Things look different.

PAUL. Freedom begins and ends in the mind. No one can enslave *that* without your consent. If your mind is above external things, then nothing from without can take command of you. Other men may own your body, but your soul is yours to give to whomsoever you choose. You belong to a body where all men are brothers and Christ is supreme, even now. Your master cannot trust his own household, and his life and happiness are at the mercy of the Emperor. What would he give to enjoy such fellowship as we have.

TEL. [*standing erect, his head up*] I see. I am a slave only if I choose to be. I'm glad I came tonight. I can face it once more—and win.

PAUL. Remember, my son, that all present conditions are transient. This is but a phase, a minor phase, of your training. Never forget that you are a king in training, and your discipline is valuable, for no man is fit to rule until he learns to obey. Remember that when Rome, with all her glitter and show, her corruption and cruelty, is a forgotten

ruin, you can be associating on equal terms with immortals and building a new world. Remember that time is very short and eternity is very long. What matter what our present condition is, if it does not control us? if we are not overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good? . . . Good night, my son.

[*They clasp hands as the curtain falls.*]

NEXT ISSUE: *Old Age and Death.*

Christian Astronauts

A NEW word has been added to our language in recent years: astronaut. The men who are tested for this unusual physical strain of being shot into space at incredible speeds must undergo many tests to see if they possess the strength to make the adjustments demanded.

There are three qualities required of every astronaut. The first is: live in reality. Astronauts have little time to daydream. Nor can they waste their moments regretting past mistakes and failures.

The second: prepare for trouble before it happens. A great part of the secret of handling a crisis lies in anticipating trouble and being ready to make the necessary adjustment when it comes. Space science is an endless round of precautionary measures; and Christianity should be no less—mistakes uncorrected may be fatal.

The third secret the astronauts must learn: get along with and without people. As they work together for a common goal, they cannot allow petty differences to hinder their progress. They must get along with each other, yet never become too dependent upon any person. For sometimes they must live alone. This is the Christian ideal, as Paul expressed it: "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content" (Phil. 4:11).

Herein lies our need today—more Christian astronauts—reaching for the skies of attainment by making building blocks out of our daily problems. ●●

*When you cannot remove an object, plow around it.
But keep plowing.*

*In the forest, tree leans on tree; in a nation, man
on man.*

*Butterflies cover more ground, but bees gather more
honey. Imitate the bees.*

UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God."

The Devil of the Bible

IN OUR first lesson on the subject of the devil, we learned that the devil is not an immortal spirit which tempts men and women to rebel against God, leading them into sin. We studied the use of the words **devil** and **Satan** in the Scriptures and the original words from which they are translated—the Hebrew **stn** and the Greek **daimon** and its derivatives—and found that nowhere is there any evidence of a superhuman power or being which causes men to sin. The devil of theology was inherited from pagan mythology and cannot be found in the Bible.

In this lesson we will investigate the subject further, following our outline:

- II. What Is the Devil?
 - A. The Devil of the Bible Defined
 - B. The Source of Sin and Evil
 - C. The Process of Sin
- III. Where Is the Devil?
 - A. The Devil at Work Throughout the Scriptures

If the devil is not an immortal spirit or a superhuman being pulling individuals downward, what is he? Where is he to be found? Does he still exist today? Again, we shall go to the Bible for our answers.

II. WHAT IS THE DEVIL?

Belief in a literal devil has come about because of the problem of evil that has existed down through the ages. Belief in false doctrines has also played a part. Believing that God created man perfect has led to the conclusion that someone or something must have caused him to sin, hence the belief in the devil. Contrary to popular belief, God did not create man perfect, but all whom He calls to work for Him are called to the difficult task of discerning good from evil. Good and evil have always existed in the world, and it is for the man to choose for himself.

Various theories have been advanced as to the

source of the evil, but in all of them man prefers to place the responsibility on someone or something other than himself. The tendency to blame someone else, to shift the responsibility to another, is as old as our records of the human race. Rather than face up to his own iniquity and admit it to God, Adam found it easier to say, "The woman you gave me for a companion, she gave me fruit from the tree and I ate it," and for Eve to say, "The serpent tricked me, and I ate" (Gen. 3:12—14, NEB). This serpent is believed by many to have been the devil, but it was the evil conceived in the heart or mind that caused Adam and Eve to sin. The serpent symbolizes the naturally evil thoughts, the lower nature, the same tendency that still exists in men's hearts and that causes them to sin today. That is the only devil or Satan of the Bible, and it is the only devil in existence today.

A. Definition of the Devil

As stated above, **the only devil or Satan of the Bible is sin and all sinners**, those who oppose God and His plans and purposes, as signified by the meaning of the original words in the Greek and Hebrew texts of the Bible. The devil or Satan is sin personified by the person performing the evil act.

As we learned in our first lesson, originally **stn** in Hebrew, or "Satan," as it is most commonly translated, meant mainly an adversary, an opposer. In some texts it is so rendered. A case in point is Psalm 38:20: "They also that render evil for good are mine adversaries [**diabolos**]," or as translated in the New English Bible: "Those who repay good with evil oppose [**diabolos**] me because my purpose is good." Here the original Hebrew **stn** was rendered "diabolos" in the Septuagint and "adversary," or an "opposer" in the English text, which is in keeping with the meaning of the Greek **diabolos**.

The devil or Satan is personal only as men and women are personal; when individuals fulfill the meaning of the word by yielding to sin, they become a devil, not, **the devil**. **The devil is not one individual, but any individual who sins. The term is applied to sin as an abstraction, but never to a supernatural or immortal being.**

According to the Scriptures, it is the devil that has the power of death. As expressed by the writer

to the Hebrews, Christ came that "he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Heb. 2:14). We learn from the apostle Paul that "the sting of death is sin" (I Cor. 15:56); likewise, "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). **Sin is the only devil that has the power of death, eternal death. Natural death is not the result of sin, but of mortality.** (See **The Nature of Man** series of these lessons, January, 1971.)

Therefore, sin is the devil that Christ came to destroy.

B. The Source of Sin and Evil

The source of sin and evil is stated unequivocally by Jesus, the apostles and prophets: **It is the heart or mind of man.** Sin results from the fleshly lusts and evil desires of man and these are conceived in the heart or mind of man, then transmitted into an act of sin. A man may be influenced to sin by another man, but **there is absolutely no evidence that anyone was ever influenced by a superhuman being or immortal spirit, such as the devil is supposed to be.** The heart, or mind of man is the source of the evil. The Bible is explicit on the subject; man's own thoughts are not naturally good, but evil, and an evil act is preceded by an evil thought. We will go to the Bible for proof.

1. **Jesus taught it.** There is no statement on the subject more convincing than the words of the Master Himself: "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man" (Mark 7:21—23). **It is from within, out of the heart of man that the evil proceeds. "There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him,"** said Jesus in Mark 7:15. This testimony renders null and void the theory that the devil or Satan enters the heart and puts the evil in it. As told in Matthew's Gospel, "those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man" (Matt. 15:18).

2. **Jeremiah taught it.** Jeremiah was commanded to speak whatsoever God commanded him (Jer. 1:7), and in his writings we find it stated plainly: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (17:9). The heart, or mind of man, tends naturally to evil. Again the prophet cries: "O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved. How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee? ... Thy way and thy doings have procured these things unto thee; this is thy wickedness, because it

is bitter, because it reacheth unto thine heart" (Jer. 4:14, 18). It was their own wickedness, their own vain thoughts, their own doings that had brought them low. The Prophet made no mention of someone besides themselves having put the evil in their hearts. No supernatural spirit or devil is involved, they devised the evil in their own "vain thoughts."

3. **The Wise Man taught it.** Although Solomon was not wise in his own conduct, he received his wisdom from God Almighty (II Chron. 1:7—12). and since the things written aforetime were written for our learning, we will quote from his writings. "His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins" (Prov. 5:22). It is his **own iniquities** and his **own sin** that bind him.

The Wise Man also listed "an heart that deviseth wicked imaginations" among the seven things that are an abomination unto the Lord (Prov. 6:18), and in Eccl. 9:3, he states that "the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live." **Man's thoughts are not naturally good, but the devil is not to be blamed. Men themselves "devise" the evil thought.**

4. **The Psalmist taught it.** Speaking of the wicked, David, the servant of the Lord, said, "He deviseth mischief upon his bed; he setteth himself in a way that is not good; he abhorreth not evil" (Ps. 36:4). He gave no indication that anyone other than the wicked man himself was responsible for his evil imaginations. His evil thoughts—not the devil—led him to sin.

5. **The apostles taught it.** The words of the Prophet are confirmed by the great apostle Paul: "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom. 8:7). The **carnal mind** is explained in the margin as "the minding of the flesh," or as rendered by the New English Bible, "the lower nature." The carnal mind, the lower nature, the natural man rebels against the law of God. There is no evidence of any influence from the outside, only the individual is responsible. Again, the evil comes from the mind, not from the devil.

6. **Other Scriptures that teach it.** In the days of Noah, before the flood, we read that God "saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen. 6:5). A marginal reference in the King James Version explains that the "Hebrew word [for imagination] signifieth not only the imagination, but also the purposes and desires." After the flood, it was recorded that "the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth" (Gen. 8:21). It was for this reason that God saw fit

to destroy that ungodly generation. Their evil thoughts and imaginations brought forth the evil deeds. Again, no devil or influence from outside the man is mentioned.

C. The Process of Sin

The process of sin is best illustrated in the confession of Achan, the man who troubled Israel in the days of Joshua.

After the successful battle at Jericho, the children of Israel were sent reeling before the men of Ai. The Lord said it was because Israel had sinned, and in due process the sin was narrowed down to one man: Achan.

Achan's words to Joshua when he was confronted with the indictment reveal the process of sin: "Indeed I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, . . . When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent" (Josh. 7: 20, 21).

Achan said: "I have sinned . . . I saw . . . I coveted . . . and [I] took them . . ." The process is clear: He saw something he wanted, he coveted it, and knowingly he took it. The evil desire was conceived in his own mind; there is no suggestion of any influence from the outside, nor did he attempt to implicate anyone else. No devil or Satan was involved.

The process of sin is also well-stated by the apostle James. "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" (Jas. 1: 14, 15). As with Achan, the evil desire is formed in the mind and nurtured there before the act of sin is committed. **It is a man's own lust, the desires of the flesh, that entices him.** This lust is human nature untamed, and when it is not restrained, sin results. The verse gives no suggestion of any influence by a superhuman being or spirit creature.

Paul's teaching is also in conformity with that of James. He described a conflict WITHIN—not a conflict with forces WITHOUT. He said: "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (Gal. 5:17). And in Romans 7 he confessed that this same conflict was a part of his own life. In vs. 21—24 (NEB) he said: "I discover this principle, then: that when I want to do the right, only the wrong is within my reach. In my inmost self I delight in the law of God, but I perceive that there is in my bodily members a different law, fighting

against the law that my reason approves and making me a prisoner under the law that is in my members, the law of sin." Using the conflict within himself as an example, Paul is here describing the continual warfare between the spiritual and natural impulses in all men. As stated previously, the warfare is **WITHIN**; there is no evidence of any influence by a superhuman being. The "law of sin" is the Apostle's term for human nature, the devil of the Bible.

III. WHERE IS THE DEVIL?

If the devil, as believed by the majority, is responsible for all the evil in the world today he must be everywhere at the same time! Could it be possible that one devil cast out of heaven could have caused so much sin and evil? Our reason tells us that such a conclusion is ridiculous; furthermore, such a statement is **NOT SCRIPTURAL**. Although the belief is adhered to by the many, it cannot be supported by the Bible.

Where, then, is the devil? According to the apostle Peter, he is "everywhere," walking about, seeking whom he may devour. But this presents a seeming paradox, for one individual devil could not be everywhere—and we must admit that **evil is everywhere!**

Where has the devil been throughout the ages? Was he not in the garden of Eden, tempting Eve? Was he not near Jerusalem, tempting Jesus some four thousand years later? Now, nearly two thousand years later, is he in our midst, inciting human passions that cause murders, riots and wars? As usual, we will go to the Bible for our answers.

A. The Devil in Action

From the Bible we learn that the devil has indeed been very active throughout these many centuries, **but it is the devil of the Bible and not the devil of theology.** One superhuman spirit-being has not been responsible for all the wickedness in the world throughout the six thousand years of man's rule, but the devil that has caused all the trouble is sin; **man's own evil connivings have been the cause. There is absolutely no evidence of an immortal spirit creature that puts the evil in men's hearts.**

The devil of the Bible is the personification of sin. Human nature, otherwise called "flesh," the "lower nature," or "the law of sin," is the devil. This devil does not put the evil in the heart, for it is already there, ready to manifest itself if given opportunity. Through the ages the devil of the Bible has reared its ugly head. We will study some of these actions and the cause behind them.

1. **The serpent in Eden.** We read in the third

chapter of Genesis that Eve was beguiled by the serpent and ate of the forbidden fruit (Gen. 3:13). From Revelation 20, we learn that the devil and Satan and the serpent are one and the same (v. 2); but that does not prove the devil to be literal. **Just as the devil is the personification of sin, so the serpent likewise is the personification of sin.** That this serpent, (Gen. 3:1), is "more subtil" than any beast of the field, that is, crafty or deceitful, harmonizes with the Bible characterization of the devil. **The serpent that tempted Eve was her own natural mind which rebels against the higher law of God.**

Paul's reference to the incident in II Corinthians proves this to be the meaning: "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" (11:3). Paul was not fearful that his brethren would be tricked by a literal serpent, but he feared **their minds might be corrupted**, that they would allow their own natural desires to lead them away from the simplicity of the truth which they had learned.

Man is seduced by his own mental attitude. Just as Eve reasoned within her mind that a little of the fruit from the tree wouldn't harm her, the Christian may reason within himself that it is not necessary to walk the strait and narrow way so carefully, and as a result fall away from the faith.

2. Cain and Abel. The account of Cain and Abel in Genesis makes no mention of the devil having a part in it, but when John refers to the incident in his epistle he refers to Cain as one of "the children of the devil" (I John 3:9, 10, 12). Because of this reference many people today claim it was the devil that caused Cain to slay his brother. But **Cain was the only devil that was involved.** In verse 12, the Apostle gives the **why** of the matter: "And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous." Jealousy, not the devil, was the cause of the murder. Jesus said to the wicked Jews, "Whosoever committeth sin is a servant of sin" (John 8:34), and because of this He said to them: "Ye are of your father the devil" (v. 44). To be a servant of sin and a servant of the devil is one and the same thing.

Cain killed his brother Abel because of jealousy. He became angered when the Lord did not accept his offering. **Murder is listed as one of the thirteen evils that come from "within, out of the heart of men"** (Mark 7:21). Cain devised the evil in his own heart and he became the devil in the case.

3. David numbering Israel. According to I Chronicles 21:1, "Satan [stn, Hebrew] stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel." Who was the satan who provoked David to number Israel? Verse 17 gives the answer: "And

David said unto God, Is it not I that commanded the people to be numbered?" It was David himself who desired the census. David was glorying in his recent victories, and his pride in the greatness of his kingdom led him to ask for the numbering. He was himself the Satan, the devil. Afterward, as recorded in II Samuel 24:10, David blamed no one but himself: In the King James Version it reads his "heart smote him," but Berkeley translates it "David's conscience accused him." A demon had nothing to do with it.

4. The devil that tempted Jesus. Three of the four Gospels record a parallel account of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness. Matthew devotes eleven verses to it; Luke, thirteen; and Mark covers it in two. Who was this Satan or devil? We are not told, but certainly it must have been someone of authority in the country, perhaps Herod, for only someone with such power could have offered Jesus "all the kingdoms of the world [all they could see]" in return for His allegiance. Certainly it was no immortal spirit or superhuman monster who tempted the Master.

5. Peter becomes a devil. When Peter contradicted Jesus' statement concerning His approaching death, he was opposing the will of God and Jesus addressed him accordingly, saying: "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men" (Matt. 16:23). The devil [*diabolos*] is an adversary, an opposer, and when a man fits this description he may be properly called a devil or Satan. Thus Peter was, for the time being, a devil. The verse is too plain to be misunderstood.

To be a messenger you must know the message.

TEST YOURSELF

1. What is the original source of the belief in a literal devil?
2. What was the serpent that tempted Eve?
3. What is the Hebrew word for Satan? for devil? What is it translated in our Common Version?
4. What did Jesus say is the source of all evil?
5. Give three references that show that the Old Testament teaches the same as Jesus taught.
6. What is the process of sin, as Achan confessed?
7. Who provoked David to number Israel?

Reprints of these studies are available upon request.

The Two Witnesses

and Revelation 11 (Part II)

PRAYER

Our heavenly Father, who by the might of Thy spirit hath created us, and who in tender concern for our spiritual welfare hath sent Thy word to redeem us, we look to Thee for strength, for hope, for health, for guidance. Help us always to remember that it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps, that if we try to guide ourselves in the way that leads to life we shall fail miserably in the attempt.

Give us more humility that we may not think too highly of ourselves, or judge ourselves better than our achievements warrant. Thou art a God of knowledge; by Thee actions, and actions alone, will be weighed. Thine eyes are too pure to behold iniquity with any degree of allowance, Thy standard of righteousness too exalted to permit us to live even for one brief moment with an attitude of carelessness or indifference, or in doing the things we would have done had not Thy saving knowledge touched our lives.

Renew our faith in Thee that we may become channels of Thy grace, bearers of Thy saving truth, examples of the believers in word, in conduct, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

Help us to give as we have received, to love as we have been loved, to forgive as we have been forgiven, to bless others as we have been abundantly blessed ourselves.

In Thy will is our peace. In Thee is eternal life, and in Thy gospel the enduring hope of the world. May that hope be a compelling force in our lives, the gospel an irresistible power that against all odds can carry us over every obstacle we may encounter, that we may become more than conquerors over all sin and wrong, and at last gain a place in the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, in whose name we pray. Amen.

October, 1971

DISCOURSE

Even for us, Revelation, chapter 11, has a living message—two living witnesses whose significance neither Moses and Elijah nor Enoch and Elijah can exhaust. They are the whole system of divine truth, preserved by God and made available to the world through living witnesses.

The Death of the Witnesses

THE REVELATOR then uses another picture to describe the silenced state of the witnesses: they are killed. We read: "And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them" (v. 7).

We should notice here that as long as God needed living witnesses, He had them; so long as anyone would listen to His Word and respond to it, God made sure that that Word was proclaimed. Only when their mission was, for the time being, accomplished, when "they shall have finished their testimony," did God permit them to be silenced.

Religious thinkers who believe the two witnesses to be literally two men find in the death of the witnesses a seeming proof of another theory: that all men must suffer physical death. This belief is deduced from the reading of Heb. 9:27, "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment."

However, three times in New Testament Scripture we are clearly assured that not all will have to die:

1) Jesus said to Martha, "Thy brother shall rise again." Martha said to Jesus, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the

life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die" (John 11:23—26). Those living at Christ's return from heaven, if worthy of immortal life, will never have to taste physical death.

2) Paul also is definite in I Cor. 15:51: "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed." All would not have to sleep in death, though all who are faithful will have to experience the change from mortality to immortality, because "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God" (I Cor. 15:50).

3) Paul testified again in I Thess. 4:16, 17: "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven. . . and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

Physical death is not required of worthy Christians still living at Judgment Day.

Students of prophecy who assume that Elijah will be one of these prophets or "witnesses," and accept the Biblical statement that "Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven" without tasting death, believe that he will still have to experience death before immortality can be his. Therefore the two prophets being "killed" for three days and a half seems to harmonize with the prescribed plan. However, the death of Heb. 9:27, as we have seen, cannot be physical death; it is a death to sin (Rom. 6:11). It ill-befits the wisdom of an All-wise God to have to interrupt the progress of His great plan for the physical death of one of His leading characters. After all the tribulations the cause of right has suffered over the ages, how unthinkable that such an apparent setback, as the death of Christ's forerunner, the prophet Elijah, should occur at the very onset of God's mighty and triumphant work on earth!

But if we apply verse 7 as another representation of the prophecy of verse 3, we have a picture in harmony with all of Sacred Scripture. The two witnesses were seemingly dead, perished, inactive with the death or desertion of the last true Christian in the centuries immediately following the Apostolic Age. The Bible was left without a single defender or advocate.

Paganism Triumphant

Revelation 11:8—10 continues with the description of the work accomplished by the powers of evil during the long night of the Apostasy. "And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. And they of the people

and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves. And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth."

We must remember that we are dealing with symbols and imagery in a passage such as this, and that the death of the witnesses is described as it seemed to those who accomplished it. Therefore, in one sense, the dead bodies lying in the streets is only a vivid picture of the conviction their enemies had—a mistaken one, as the event proved—for in reality, the witnesses were not dead, as their enemies had imagined.

The word translated "dead bodies" is in the singular in the original Greek, and means "fallen", or "wrecked." According to the *Speaker's Commentary*, "the singular is used collectively. . . They [the witnesses] are two and yet one"—a further evidence that the witnesses represent God's written Word and those who proclaim it.

The use of the figure "Sodom and Egypt" suggests at once moral degradation and utter ruin. Egypt is "the house of bondage," and an obvious symbol of oppression and slavery, paralleled in condition with the apostate holy city, "where also our Lord was crucified."

"And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half" (v. 9). We have already discussed the significance of the time element here, showing that it is more properly translated "three years and a half," and therefore equivalent to the same period of time mentioned earlier in the chapter (vs. 2, 3).

Why are the bodies of the witnesses said to be left without burial? The Bible was preserved under the watchful care of God, though in the hands of its worst enemies. It was not entombed. The triumph of evil seemed complete, but God would not allow His Word to perish.

Joy and Torment

"And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth" (v. 10).

The delight of the spectators is represented as at once fiendish and childish. They are said even to celebrate their victory by keeping holiday and exchanging gifts. The words depict the hatred which the pagan majority entertained for the Christians during the dark Medieval Age.

The cause of the joy, we should note, was not so much the death of the Witnesses as the relief which

accompanied the cessation of their testimony: "These two prophets tormented" or "tortured" their hearers. As long as the truth of God's Word was being proclaimed, as long as there was a living soul to testify to its unyielding demands for moral purity and perfection, that Bible was a torment to mankind's lower nature. Therefore, the death of the last loyal Christian, which brought to an end the testimony of the Two Witnesses (equivalent to their death, v. 7), was an occasion for great rejoicing. Light had come into the world, but men had rejected it and reverted to the darkness. With the silencing of the Witnesses the people were no longer harassed with the plain truth which they had neither desire to know nor inclination to follow.

God intended that His Word should stir and torment, as well as comfort. It should leave a sting in careless, worldly, sinful hearts; it should awaken there an echo, another living witness to go and testify.

Each of us should feel deeply the tormenting power of God's holy Word. It reveals us to ourselves. It speaks to us as one that has eyes and hands. It is no blind, darkling message groping about for light. It is no feeble, irresolute, uncertain message. No, it is quick and powerful, sharper than any twoedged sword; it strikes straight to the heart, making many a Felix tremble and many an Agrippa resolve almost to be a Christian.

But let us remember that the Word may do all this for us and still not awaken in us the needed response. If the Word torments, it is to arouse us to action, that we may take it with us as a Guide, a Light, and a Comforter.

Trifle not, brethren, with that Word which one day must judge you! Every word spoken in the name of Christ will have to be accounted for. May God give it entrance while it is still light and not fire; a light to cheer and to enlighten, not a fire to scorch and to consume!

The Two Witnesses may prophesy in sackcloth. They may be assailed by their enemies. Their warnings may be despised; their commands may be broken; they may seem as dead; their carcasses may be trodden underfoot in the streets of Sodom and Egypt, figures of a rebel world. They that dwell on the earth may rejoice over them, because the two witnesses tormented them.

The kingdoms of this world may imagine that the Word of God slumbers; that all its precepts are obsolete; that all its thunders are spent. Nations may enact laws and treat the Word as dead. Men may busy themselves proving that the Two Witnesses are not inspired and may scoff and sneer with skeptical sophistry. They may withhold the

Word of God or adulterate its testimony by human traditions and legendary fables; but the Scriptures cannot be broken.

They may appear to be dead, but they still live, and they will rise again. The Spirit of God will animate them, and they shall stand again on their feet. "The grass withereth; the flower fadeth; but the Word of our God shall stand forever."

Revival

"And after three days and an half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them" (Rev. 11:11). After the interval of enforced silence, there is a revival, an awakening. Truth crushed to earth was destined to rise again.

Unspoken and unexecuted, the Word is lifeless. The Word was revived when amid the jargon of conflicting creeds someone gave voice to its clear and reasonable doctrine. And full life and vigor were renewed when that Word was actually translated into flesh and dwelt among men, when a mortal being converted rules into conduct, creed into character, theory into practice.

And they stand today—tall, strong, erect—given life and vitality by loyal men and women who will not suffer true religion to perish in the street. The Two Witnesses stand and shall continue to stand until the Lord returns from heaven and the next prophecy of the Revelator is fulfilled:

Come Up Hither

The witnesses ascend into "heaven," the political heaven, their enemies beholding with trembling awe and astonishment: "And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them" (v. 12).

We must remember that this is symbolism; that these two witnesses are rather a personification than actual persons; that in them we are to recognize the Word of God and the whole body of Christian witnesses during a long period of persecution, silencing and reviving; that under the imagery of their death we may read the silencing of testimony, while in their resurrection we see the restoration of spiritual power, boldness and effectiveness to the silenced message; and in their ascension to heaven, a claim to universal political dominion which astonishes all beholders.

A Time of Judgment

Verse 13 identifies the period when these events will meet their fulfillment. The time pictured is the time of the great Battle of Armageddon, the time of God's cleansing judgments. "And the same hour

was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were afrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven."

Throughout the Bible, earthquake is a symbol of great upheavals in the social and spiritual order. The fall of the "tenth part of the city" is a symbol of a major catastrophe, sufficient to break the backbone of the established world. The number seven thousand is also a figure, not intended for literal interpretation. The fear that falls upon the remnant is described also by the prophet Micah: "The nations shall see and be confounded at all their might: they shall lay their hand upon their mouth, their ears shall be deaf. They shall lick the dust like a serpent, they shall move out of their holes like worms of the earth: they shall be afraid of the Lord our God, and shall fear because of thee" (Micah 7:16, 17).

The Two Witnesses and the power that sponsors them ascend into power; that is, the laws of God become laws of worldwide authority, which all will hear and fear (Isa. 2:2—4). And as a result of the Judgments of God that will follow the establishment of the new government, a large number represented by the seven thousand, which the prophet Zechariah classifies as two thirds (Zech. 13:8), earth's rebellious inhabitants, will perish, and the remnant that remain will give "glory to the God of heaven" (v. 13).

Dominion . . . Forever!

Then follows the grand climax of the drama:

"And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever" (v. 15). The words suggest the vision of a world empire, once dominated by usurping powers, which has now at long last been given into the hands of its true Owner and Ruler.

"The kingdoms of this world" as political powers shall unite into one worldwide kingdom which shall become our Lord's possession. As this text is phrased in the Knox Bible, "The dominion of the world has passed to the Lord of us all, and to Christ his anointed"; or "the sovereignty of the world has passed to our Lord and his Christ" (NEB); or "the kingship of the world" (Berkeley and Phillips Bibles). At last the triumphant epoch has arrived; the picture itself implies the overthrow and passing away of all that opposes the new government. There shall be but one kingdom and one King.

The final end has come, and now the Church no

longer looks forward to the event which has so long been its hope and expectation. Listen to the chorus of praise:

"We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned" (v. 17).

The disclosure of the ark of his testament is the final symbol of this prophetic picture (v. 19): "And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament."

As seen in the ancient temple, the ark was the symbol of divine provision, promise and pledge, a perpetual memorial of the covenant of God with His people, the earthly symbol of "better things to come." Its disclosure in this prophecy signals the final, full and complete fulfillment of all of God's covenant. His living witnesses, the written Word of God made available to the world through living messengers, have suffered and perished, been resurrected, and exalted to power where they shall reign forever and ever (Isa. 40:8). Of all the good things which the Lord hath spoken, all shall have come to pass. • •

I know as my life grows older
And mine eyes have clearer sight
That under each rank wrong somewhere
There lies the root of Right;
That each sorrow has a purpose,
By the sorrowing oft unguessed,
But as sure as the sun brings morning,
Whatever is, is best.

I know that each sinful action,
As sure as the night brings shade,
Is somewhere, sometime punished,
Tho' the hour be long delayed.
I know that the soul is aided
Sometimes by the heart's unrest,
And to grow means often to suffer,
But whatever is, is best.

I know that there are no errors
In the great eternal plan,
And all things work together
For the final good of man;
And I know as my life speeds onward
In my great eternal quest,
I shall say as I look backward,
Whatever was, was best.

MEGIDDO MESSAGE.



her head to pray.

This seemed very strange to Beverly. Imagine stopping to say grace or to give thanks just for a drink of water!

Great-aunt Grace seemed to read Beverly's thoughts. "I cannot ever drink water without stopping to thank my Heavenly Father," she said. "Let me tell you why. You may have heard the saying, 'you never miss the water till the well goes dry!' That is just what happened to us in East Germany during the war.

"Even before our well was dry we had to flee from our home. For several days each of us had less than half a cup of water apiece since we were able to fill only one jug before we fled. We had very little food, too, and now I feel I want to stop and thank my Heavenly Father for every drop of water and every crumb He gives me."

Beverly was even more surprised that evening at bedtime when Great-aunt Grace was

taken to her room. When she saw the lovely bedroom with its soft thick rug, fluffy curtains and—best of all—the soft roomy bed, she stopped to kneel right then and there to offer thanks to God for His goodness.

It had been many years since she had slept in a soft comfortable bed and in a beautiful room like that. "I cannot help but thank my Father for all these good things!" explained Great-aunt Grace again.

Beverly did a lot of thinking while Great-aunt Grace was with them. She had never before given it a thought that all the good things she had to eat and drink, the lovely home she lived in, her kind parents and friends—all these were gifts of blessings from her Heavenly Father!

At first it had seemed silly to Beverly that anyone would stop and offer thanks for a glass of water or for a soft comfortable bed. But it is true that one never thinks of these things until they

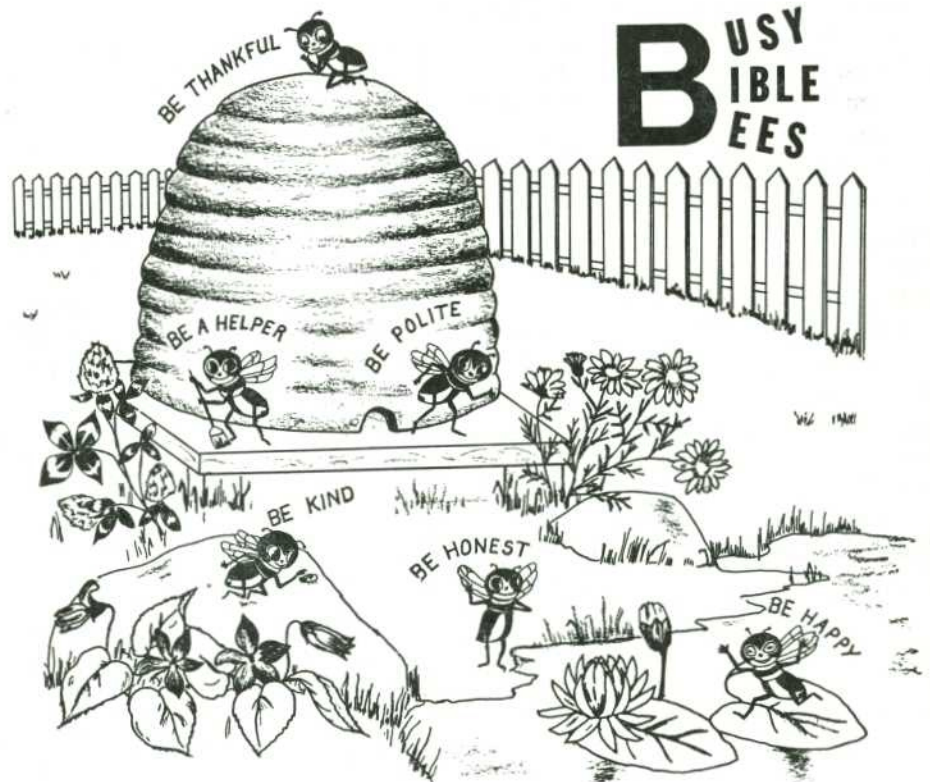
BEE THANKFUL

LITTLE BEVERLY Johnson hurried home from school one sunny afternoon because she knew her family was expecting her great-aunt to arrive from Europe. "I hope she brought some pretty souvenirs," wished Beverly to herself. "I should like so much to have some souvenirs from a foreign country."

Great-aunt Grace, a slim, grey-haired lady, was seated in the Johnson's living room when Beverly reached home. She came with only a small suitcase and it didn't appear as though she had any souvenirs at all. In fact, Beverly soon learned that Great-aunt Grace had barely escaped with her life.

"Perhaps you would like a cool drink?" asked Mrs. Johnson, Beverly's mother, of the visitor who seemed very warm and thirsty.

"Just a glass of water would be fine!" replied Great-aunt Grace. And then, when the water was handed to her, she bowed



are taken away. What if she sometime should be in need as Great-aunt Grace had been?

Beverly also had to admit to herself that she had been very disappointed not to receive any European souvenirs from Great-aunt Grace; but after several days of her aunt's visit, little Beverly heard BEE THANKFUL buzz about her ears. "Great-aunt Grace has brought you the greatest of souvenirs," the little bee seemed to buzz ever so softly. "She has brought you the precious keepsake of being thankful."

Never again after that visit from her aunt did Beverly forget to give thanks to the Father in heav-

en for all His good gifts and daily blessings.

Children, now is the time to learn to be thankful for the many blessings you have. Just look around you and see what you can find to be thankful for that you never thought of before. Maybe you will find that you are like Beverly in our story. Won't you start now and listen every day to the buzzing of BEE THANKFUL?

Take your Bible and (maybe with the help of someone older) see how many verses you can find on being thankful or giving thanks. Then pick out the one you like best and memorize it.

Buz-z-z-z-z-z." Listen! It is BEE THANKFUL ••

God Paints a True Portrait

WHEN OLIVER Cromwell sat for his portrait, the artist proposed he cover a disfiguring wart by resting his head on his hand. The blunt protector said gruffly, "No, paint me as I am, wart and all."

We can be grateful that the Biblical writers have reported failures and vices as honestly and objectively as virtues and successes. The men and women in the Bible are real characters; not plaster saints but real human beings, just as you and I. It is this realism that renders the Bible eternally living and suitable for all ages, for life's lessons are learned from failures as well as from successes.

God does not hide sin. Nor does He cover disobedience to make it appear inconsequential, however much the disobedient man might like to have it that way. God paints a true portrait. No falsifying. When found in transgression, the offender is swiftly brought to the front and reproved. An All-wise Creator could not gloss over sin, small or grievous, lest it appear to the transgressor—and to others—as something trivial. Open disobedience had to be dealt with in the open, that others might hear and fear, and learn the dire consequences of sin.

But neither does the Almighty fail to recognize and commend virtue. The righteous Lord above all else loves righteousness. When a man like Daniel showed his immense moral stature and integrity, he received God's commendation—even from the high courts of heaven, a message delivered by the angel Gabriel: "Thou art greatly beloved." We may

be certain the compliment was well deserved. The consistently high plane on which he conducted his personal and public life did not escape the eye of God, who recognizes every effort toward holy living and marks all our spiritual progress in His special book of remembrance.

The Bible, written expressly for the perfecting of the saints, for the re-making of ordinary men and women, is a book worthy of our deepest consideration. From its sacred pages we may become acquainted with men from all classes, men subject to passion as we are, ordinary men whose lives became extraordinary only by their more than ordinary everyday walk before the true God. In their experiences we can discern the reflection of our own. As they had to pass through different stages of development, so must we. As they were motivated by the highest principles, so must we be. Their individual difficulties and peculiar weaknesses have been carefully recorded to reveal God's educative dealings with mankind, how He chastens and disciplines the objects of His love until He can see the desired transformation accomplished.

While God never condones our sins, He does not consider our human imperfections and failings as faults to condemn but as infirmities to overcome. Though we are by nature the subject of sin, we need not be the victim of it. Triumph through a strong and unrelenting faith in God is a possibility.

The Scriptures clearly define the qualities of character and the type of conduct pleasing to God.

Among these, faith stands high. It was this priceless quality which caused the portraits of the worthies of Hebrews 11 to be hung in God's Hall of Fame. The writer discloses that their walk with God not only convinced them of His reality but demonstrated that God always rewards those who diligently seek Him. Because of their diligent faith, God was gracious and was pleased to be their daily companion. Without aiming at this highest friendship, they could not have attained it. Such an aim involved indomitable moral effort and a complete change-over of their minds and bodies.

And since God is unchanging, the same yesterday, today, and forever, what pleased Him then pleases Him now.

The intimate Father-and-son relationship with God which the worthies of old experienced is still available only by our practicing constant and unbroken communion with the divine Mind. God never scales down His standards to meet our human frailty; rather, He empowers us to rise above ourselves. And when we fail in our service to Him, He makes it known.

Though God's methods are infinite in variety, they are constant and eternal. He may not deal with human failings and shortcomings in the way we would recognize to be right, but He will be careful to present the whole story. To God a man never appears better than he really is. Plain, unvarnished facts are presented in a most straightforward manner every time. While the best is told, delinquencies are never omitted. Nothing that will benefit tempted men is withheld.

For example, take the sin of King David, a man in high position in the nation of Israel. While David possessed distinguishing qualities of character in which God saw potential for His perfect Kingdom, nevertheless David, being subject to passion and human lust, committed sin very grievous to the Almighty. Was his sin covered? By no means. God painted the man as he was. Sin is the transgression of the law, and David dishonored God by breaking His commandments. Stubbornly unwilling to confess his sin, David tried to put up a bold front. But as impenitence grew more and more trying, the Lord turned His face from the wayward king—and he felt it. Years later he wrote of the experience: "For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me." Not until the visit of his faithful mentor Nathan did his defenses crumble. The hypothetical case which the Prophet skillfully presented (II Sam. 12) stirred David's anger. "As the Lord liveth, the man who has done this thing shall surely die," said the wrathful king. "Thou art the man," rejoined the brave Nathan. "Now therefore the sword shall

never depart from thine house because thou hast despised me, saith the Lord."

As swift in his confession as in his condemnation, he cried out, "I have sinned against the Lord." Could he have foreseen the tragic consequences of his deed, he would gladly have done all in his power to avoid transgressing the law. But to his sorrow, he learned that sin is no small matter. Sin is always complicated. It left indelible marks on his home and family.

What a warning! that a godly man can in a moment of time sully the achievement of a lifetime. A moment's glance, matched by an inward acquiescence, can become a formidable shadow.

How contrasting were the reactions of Joseph and David to a similar temptation. Joseph triumphed where David failed. Straight down the line of duty Joseph kept walking in company with God. David succumbed because he was living for himself and was out of touch with God. For a moment's gratification he suffered lifelong remorse. Clinging to moral principle, Joseph kept asking himself, "How can I sin against God?" As far as possible in the course of his daily services he carefully avoided walking into the zone of temptation. By his habitual preparedness he was able to meet any sudden onslaught of temptation. Final victory came

(Continued on page 24)

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LETTERS

The Fallacy

I have enjoyed reading the series of sermons on "The Fallacy of the Scarlet Thread" in the *Megiddo Message*, and now I am so glad to have them on tape. It seems that nearly every church or religious group in Christendom finds some degree of efficacy in the blood of Christ to take away men's sins. Substitution, the vicarious atonement, propitiation—it all forms a core of nominal Christianity.

We know that this is not Scripture, nor is the atonement, as some call it, a Pauline doctrine. Paul never preached that the death of Christ on the cross atones for our sins. Some of his statements may seem to read as though this were so. But it is stated in II Peter 3:16 that Paul in his epistles wrote some things hard to be understood, which "they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction." Most ministers are learned men, learned in theology, of course. Webster describes theology as "the science that treats of the existence, nature, and attributes of God, especially of man's relations to God; divinity." Be that as it may, theology is still man's interpretation of Scripture and therefore many of the interpretations are false, as the fallacy of the scarlet thread.

Divine healing is another fallacy which is being practiced by many today. The Bible forewarns of false prophets who would show great signs and wonders—it is a sign of the nearness of His coming, and we are not to believe them. Holy Spirit power has been taken away, and no one living at present has that power. When Elijah the prophet appears, then "all things" will be restored—which will include the Holy Spirit power.

Wausau, Wisconsin

J. T.

Remember!

There are so few who care to hear the truth of God's Word. They seem to be satisfied with the husks, the pagan fables.

I must remember the verse you find in Psalm 119:165 and let nothing offend me. It is quite a task for us to control all our thoughts and feelings in these days of indifference.

North Augusta, Ontario, Canada

G. H.

Nearing the End

For some of us our probation time will soon end, and I am wondering what our Lord's verdict will be for me. Will it be "well done, good and faithful servant," which will be a full reward, or shall I receive only a few years of this mortal life and then pass into eternal nothingness? It is certainly a very serious thought for all of us.

The times are so serious in the world that it behooves us to watch our tongues. The world condition alongside Bible prophecy indicates the end of this system is fast drawing to a close, with events near at hand foreshadowed by those of Noah's day.

Crewe, Cheshire, England

M. H.

Christian Brethren

I have been thinking how the apostle Paul addressed his fellow Christians as "brethren." What a privilege it is to call ourselves "brethren," because of Christ, who is our "Elder Brother." It is really a wonderful thought, that we can be worthy to belong to His spiritual temple, of which He is the head! that despite divisions of space and time, though scattered throughout the earth, we can be one in spirit and in truth.

Just think—to that divine society belong the great personalities—like Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Elijah, King David, all the prophets, apostles, and all the true believers of Christ who through the last two millenniums were converted and gave their lives to Him. About that multitude of loyal followers of Christ, Peter speaks: "whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

For all these chosen ones, God has prepared marvelous things. I am endeavoring with earnestness to keep in my mind and life the blessed gospel of Christ, striving to live and walk according to His eternal gospel of love and truth.

Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

J. K. K.

God Paints a True Portrait

(Continued from page 23)

to him because he took to his heels and fled from the field of temptation. (How his conduct contrasts with the freedoms and permissiveness of the new morality of our time!) On the other hand, David unthinkingly walked right into it.

God's patience is almost limitless as He trains His people for their appointed tasks and destinies in the world to come. Patiently and graciously He deals with our imperfections. When one approach fails, He adopts another. If one generation fails to respond, He patiently begins again with another. Limited neither by heredity nor environment, God finds those who have the moral capacity for growth and spiritual endurance in the divine life.

Since our heavenly Father is most anxious to give His children a good education, He warns us that no unfinished work is acceptable. God requires a perfect likeness, with no visible or hidden traits upon their life-coats of moral character. The training is rigorous, the cost high, the discipline exacting, and He will not alter it for anyone, king or peasant; all must pledge themselves to the same rigid self-discipline and full surrender.

However, out of His long program of selection, God will have a few distinguished graduates, men and women who have maintained their spiritual integrity and survived life's long sustained test without losing stature. Their true portrait is a likeness without spot or wrinkle or any disfiguring blemish of sin. Never to be removed from their place of honor, these perfect portraits shall remain through all eternity. ● ●

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

"I have heard that all the holy days given to Moses during the time of the wandering of Israel in the wilderness should still be kept. What do you think?"

The apostle Paul answers this question in Colossians 2. Beginning at verse 14 we read, "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross. . . . Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days; which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ" (vs. 14, 16, 17).

Verses 20 through 23 read as follows in the Moffatt Bible: "As you died with Christ to the elemental spirits of the world, why live as if you still belonged to the world? Why submit to rules and regulations like 'hands off this!' 'Taste not that!' 'Touch not this!'—all referring to things that perish by being used? These rules are determined by human precepts and tenets; they get the name of 'wisdom' for their self-imposed devotions, their fasting, and their rigorous discipline of the body, but they are of no value, they simply pamper the flesh."

Those ordinances under the Mosaic Law "are of no value" so far as the obtaining of life eternal is concerned; "they simply pamper the flesh." The Mosaic law was given for a limited time only and for a special purpose—as a civil law to govern the nation of Israel. That system of worship was outmoded nearly 1900 years ago.

"Suppose that Paul between the time of his saying 'I have fought a good fight' and the time of his death, 'lusted.' Would this lust mean that he would not be saved?"

That is the Bible principle exactly. The reward of salvation is promised to him that shall endure all the way to the end (Matt. 24:13; 10:22). It is for "perfecting holiness in the fear of God," and lust could not be compatible with perfect holiness.

"Is a slight slip of the tongue a sin if we catch it right away and quit?"

The writer of the book of James answers this

October, 1971

question: "Whoever avoids slips of speech is a perfect man."

To be tempted to do wrong is not sin, but to yield to that temptation is sin. James gives the progression: "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" (Jas. 1:14—16).

"Just what does the Bible mean by saying we must be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect? Just how 'perfect' is this? Does it mean no anger or any sin whatsoever (against yourself or others) within your heart? Is it a matter of how quickly you suppress it?"

When Jesus said, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect," He was stating in few words the ultimate of human capability. He was laying out a moral requirement which had existed for centuries among those who dedicated themselves wholeheartedly to the task of qualifying for future rewards.

Perfection in God's sight is defined many times in Scripture. Peter stated it thus: "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy" (I Pet. 1:15, 16). The inspired author of the book of James wrote, "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (2:10), or as rendered by Dr. Phillips, "he is nonetheless a law-breaker." A broken law stands between him and the perfect keeping of every commandment.

Centuries before, Abraham was commanded to walk before God and become perfect (Gen. 17:1). Noah reached the same standard, being "a just man, and perfect in his generations" (Gen. 6:9). So also did Zacharias and Elisabeth attain, "walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless," both being "righteous before God" (Luke 1:6).

Perfect obedience to the commands of God consists in not yielding to any temptation that arises to sin. If an occasion arises that would provoke anger, and the person tempted resists the impulse to anger by controlling his emotions and feelings and does not allow his mind to harbor thoughts of retaliation or his tongue to spill out heated words, that person has gained a victory over anger.

"Was it actual wine with alcohol content that the Jews drank at the marriage feast and that Jesus provided at Cana?"

Certainly drinking to excess or to the point of drunkenness is undeniably forbidden the Christian.

And of one point we may be sure: Jesus would never produce a drink that would intoxicate those partaking of it.

The purpose of the miracle at Cana was to demonstrate the power of God and confirm the words He was preaching. There is some evidence to support the theory that not all wine spoken of in the Bible was fermented. Approximately thirteen different Greek and Hebrew words are translated "wine" in the King James Version. And several of these refer to grape juice. Some refer to wine diluted with water, popular with the Greeks.

The Bible Dictionary states that "new wine" was "preserved in the state of 'must' (unfermented) by placing it in jars or bottles and then burying it in the earth." This is most likely the kind of wine Jesus furnished in the miracle.

"Does Matthew 11:19 indicate that Jesus drank wine?"

The text reads: "The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners."

In this passage Jesus is answering the criticism

of the Jews by telling them that whatever course of life He should choose to follow, whether of abstaining from food or indulging (v. 18), they would still criticize. But the purpose of God would not be thwarted by their attacks: for "wisdom is justified of her children" (Matt. 11:19).

"Drunkenness is obviously forbidden in the Scriptures ('neither fornicators, nor idolaters, . . . nor covetous, nor drunkards . . . shall inherit the kingdom of God' I Cor. 6:9, 10). But what about one beer once in a great while, or just a little gin in something like cranberry juice. Is this wrong?"

Alcoholism and the imbibing of alcoholic beverages is repeatedly forbidden in Scripture (see Prov. 20:1; 23:20—32; 31:6). Furthermore, medical science has shown conclusively that alcoholic beverages are injurious to the physical system. While the harmful effects of a small amount may be near negligible, total abstinence is the better course, as a limited license inevitably leads to greater and greater license.

The Bible suggests only one use for alcohol—as a medicine (see I Tim. 5:23). ●●

Meditations on the Word

(Continued from page 27)

words are not beneficial in alerting the righteous man against overconfidence in himself. "Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear," said the apostle Paul (I Tim. 5:20).

And another statement from Paul adds weight. "Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness" (Rom. 11:22). To make the greatest gains in the spiritual life we must be equally aware of God's severity and His goodness. Thus alerted, we shall be *activated* to merit His goodness.

Complacency can be exceedingly dangerous.

Ezekiel, the priest of the Captivity, warned Israel against the sin of smugness: "When I shall say to the righteous, that he shall surely live; if he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteousnesses shall not be remembered; but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it" (33:13).

Again and again while Israel wandered in the Wilderness, Moses pictured to them the curses that would accompany disobedience, and the blessings that would attend obedience. Likewise *today* God's words do good to every one who will heed them. His

words demand sacrifice. They demand that we give up many things that naturally we hold dear. Our giving them up, however, is a blessing in disguise, for the joy of surrender far outweighs the joy of abandonment to sin. God's words demand that we control our tongues, our tempers, our appetites. Each of these controls confronts us with a major problem, yet no man in his right mind could deny that such controls are a blessing.

Self-denial more than repays its efforts, even as we go along. When Jesus chose the twelve apostles He told them plainly that they must give up all if they would follow Him. It is doubtful if during the short three years of their close association with Him they more than faintly comprehended the meaning of a full surrender, or the scope of the demand, "give up all and follow me." However, it must have seemed to them that they had given up much.

One day Peter accosted his Master with these words: "Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore? And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you . . . every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life" (Matt. 19:27—29).

Truly, God's words *do good* to all who will be influenced by them! ●●



Meditations

On the Word

IN THIS way the Eternal reproved the people of Israel for their contempt in not believing what He had been saying to them.

The prophet Micah was living at the close of the 260-year-existence of the Ten Tribe division of the Hebrew nation, known as the kingdom of Israel. Their seat of government was at Samaria, while the kingdom of Judah, under the Davidic dynasty, had their headquarters in Jerusalem. At the Lord's command Micah had pronounced a woe upon the house of Israel. The woe was directed at both divisions of the kingdom, Samaria and Jerusalem. The Samaritan branch of the kingdom being the more wicked and apostate of the two, the fulfillment of the woe—or the time of their dissolution—was imminent, while the kingdom of Judah at Jerusalem was destined to continue about another hundred years, until the Babylonian Captivity.

The people resented Micah's pronouncement. When speaking for God, he cried: "Therefore thus says the Lord: Behold, against this family I am devising evil, from which you cannot remove your necks; and you shall not walk haughtily, for it will be an evil time. In that day they shall take up a taunt song against you, and wail with bitter lamentation, and say, 'We are utterly ruined; he changes the portion of my people; how he removes it from me! Among our captors he divides our fields.' " To this the people answered: "Do not preach... one should not preach of such things; disgrace will not overtake us."

How characteristic of all ages! Men have always sought to silence God's prophets who have predicted impending judgments. Noah was the scorn of his generation; Jeremiah of his. "Do not preach!" has been the eternal cry. Men always prefer fiction to facts, slumber songs

rather than the trumpet of alarm. They "say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits" (Isaiah 30:10).

"Disgrace will not overtake us."

Here it is that the Lord replies, in our meditation text: "Should this be said, O house of Jacob? Is the Spirit of the Lord impatient? Are these his doings? Do not my words do good to him who walks uprightly?" The Lord as much as said, "You yourselves are at fault, I am not to blame that the curse is to come upon you. I am not impatient, harsh dealing is no part of my mode of conduct. If I pronounce evil against you, it is because of your sins. I have done on my part, I have risen early, sending my prophets to warn and instruct you, but you would not hearken."

When men voluntarily place themselves under contract to serve the Almighty, they render themselves subject to blessing or curse, good or evil, reward or punishment, as their conduct warrants. When they apostatize and the law overtakes them, judgments are decreed. *Are these God's doings?* asks the Prophet. By no means! Man invites punishment by his own persistent waywardness.

The Lord continues, speaking through the Prophet: "Do not my words do good to him who walks uprightly?" When the Lord speaks, it is for the avowed purpose of doing His people good. There is always the danger of smugness, of self-satisfaction. Oftentimes people need something to arouse them from their overcomplacency. If the pronouncement

of impending woe has that effect, then those words are good. The fact that judgments and reprisals are the only language that the hardened sinner can understand, is not to say that such

(Continued on page 26)

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In Tribute

His shall be an imperishable name on time's record. The influence he cast years ago generates still. He was one of those men whom you can neither bend nor break. Principle was the rock upon which he stood secure. Faith was the shield which his opposers could not shatter. Great convictions, tested and tempered in many a fire of affliction, kept his heart from bitterness and his spirit from repining. The fire of his zeal, his toleration and his humility flamed forth like a beacon light in the night of darkness. Such were the abiding principles of our divinely appointed leader who led us from gross spiritual darkness into the light of Truth.