

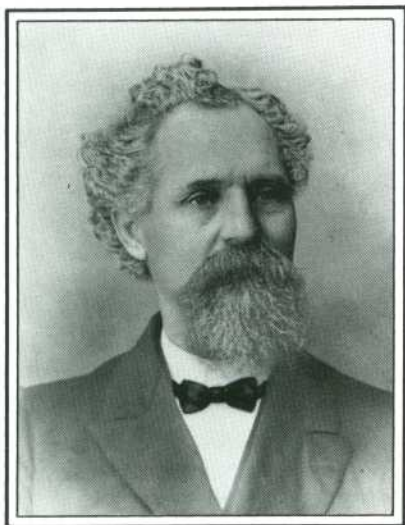


# Megiddo Message

*"I have called you Friends . . .  
I chose you to go and  
bear fruit — fruit that will last."*

*— Jesus (John 15:16, NIV)*





**A Tribute to Our Founder**  
**Rev. L. T. Nichols**  
**Born October 1, 1844**

## Thy Kingdom Come

"Thy kingdom come!" on bended knee  
The passing ages pray;  
And faithful workers yearn to see  
On earth that kingdom's day.

Though long, the watches of the night  
No less to God belong;  
And for the everlasting right  
The silent stars are strong.

And lo, already on the hills  
The flags of dawn appear;  
Gird up your loins, ye faithful ones,  
Proclaim the day is near!

The day in whose clear-shining light  
All wrong shall stand revealed,  
When justice shall be throned in might,  
And every hurt be healed;

When sickness, sorrow, pain and sin  
Shall banished be for aye;  
When all shall know the God of heav'n  
And own His sovereign sway;

When knowledge, hand in hand with peace,  
Shall walk the earth abroad;  
The day of perfect righteousness,  
The promised Day of God.

Awake! The night is waxing late,  
The east is all aglow!  
The dawn of universal good,  
When all our God shall know.

Great God above, we follow on;  
Go with us through this hour  
Till we are blest with strength from Thee,  
And endless life and power.

---

## Megiddo means . . .

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

### We believe

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

### We believe

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

### We believe

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

### We believe

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

### We believe

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

### We believe

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

### We believe

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

## Bible Quotations

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

**NEB**—*New English Bible*

**NIV**—*New International Version*

**NAS**—*New American Standard*

**RSV**—*Revised Standard Version*

**TLB**—*The Living Bible*

**TEV**—*Today's English Version*

**JB**—*The Jerusalem Bible, Reader's Edition*

**Phillips**—*The New Testament in Modern English*

**Berkeley**—*The Modern Language New Testament*

**Weymouth**—*The New Testament in Modern Speech*

**Moffatt**—*The Bible, A New Translation*

**RV**—*Revised Version*

## About Our Cover

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# Megiddo Message

Vol. 73, No. 9

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

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

# A Purpose, a Plan, a Place, and a Time to Grow

**O**ur great Creator has made us with a great creative purpose in view. The earth and all mankind are not here by chance. All belong to His eternal purpose and are part of His eternal design. As the prophet Isaiah said long ago when speaking of the physical earth, "He created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited" (Isa. 45:18).

This, too, is His promise, which He guaranteed by the certainty of His own existence: "As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord" (Num. 14:21).

God has planned that this Earth shall someday become a perfect, finished creation, an all-new world whose immortal inhabitants never know sorrow, suffering, sickness or death; an all-new world never

marred by evil or sin, war or strife; an all-new world composed of the men and women who have chosen to participate in His plan and who have demonstrated that desire by attaining the moral likeness of their Creator—through growth.

Our part in the eternal purpose of God depends on growth—*our* growth as individuals. God cannot and will not use us as we are. We must change; we must become "holy" as God is holy (I Pet 1:15). We must achieve His character likeness, we must grow.

## **Growing and Growing**

We might compare the process to the growth which we see in the operation of the laws of nature all around us. When we plant a seed,

we know that we cannot expect to harvest fruit in a couple of days. The seed must germinate, the young plant must be nourished and grow. And growth takes time. If we plant a seed of a fruitbearing tree, we know that given even the best of conditions, we will have to wait many years before we can expect fruit.

But we know also that in due time the plant must produce fruit. If our tree, for whatever reason, shows no signs of producing fruit when the time is right, we make plans for its removal.

The Bible compares the life of a Christian with that of a growing, fruitbearing tree. His people are to be "trees of righteousness," of the Lord's own planting (Isa. 61:3). And like all other living things, they

***God does not create trees laden with rich fruit.  
He makes a seed, provides soil, sunshine, rain,  
and tells it to "GROW!"***



must grow. And like all other trees, they must bear fruit.

The life tree of a Christian must produce a full harvest of full-flavored, full-sized, luscious fruit, perfect both in quantity and in quality.

The whole process of Christian development is one of growth. This is the purpose of life. Every oak was first an acorn. Every tree, whether in the wilds of the mighty forest or the cultivated fruit orchard, was first a seed, then a shoot, then a sapling, then a full-grown, mature tree.

We are made to grow. The creative God made us for creative growth. Growth is the law of being. It is the law of life. Violate that law and you cease to live. Break that law and you break yourself. There must be physical growth, and there must be mental growth. Then, if there is to be a new creature, if there is to be a likeness to Christ, there must be moral growth.

This last type of growth—in character—is of the greatest concern to us. The growth process is long; everyone who would attain the standard of Christ can reach it only by growing and continuing to grow, day by day, week by week, month by month, year by year. But there is no other way to become a fruit-bearing tree, except to *grow*.

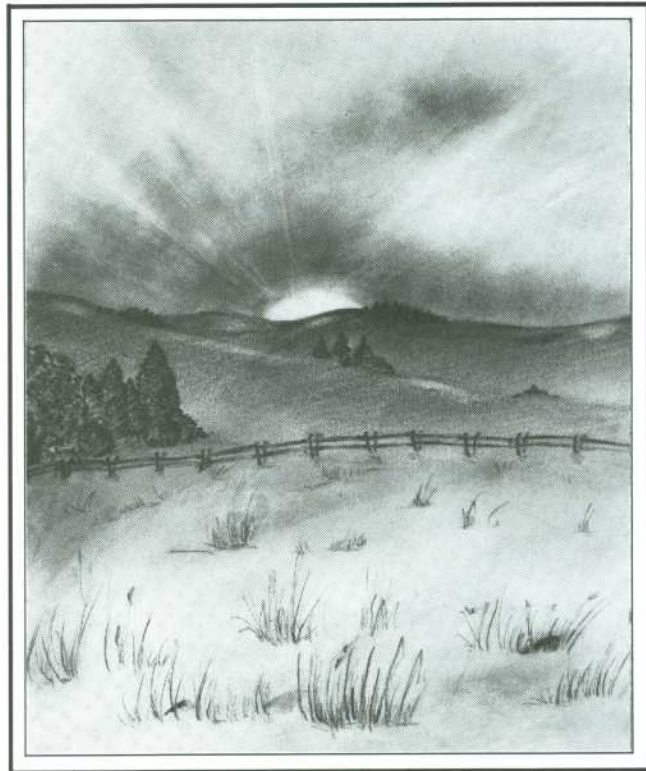
God provides everything we need to grow. He gives us a place, a time and all the nourishment we need to develop into full-grown trees of righteousness, but He cannot *make* us grow; we ourselves must do the growing.

First, God has given us the *desire* to grow. He has put within us something that yearns for a better life. He hath set "eternity" in our hearts (Eccl. 3:11, ASV). Along with this, He has given us His great and precious promises as an incentive to grow.

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## *In the Beginning, A Purpose, . . .*

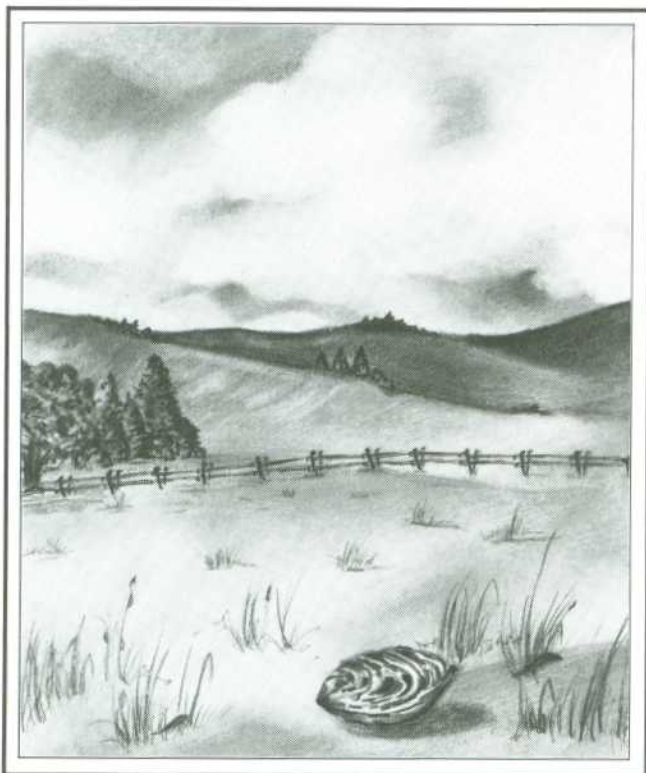
The whole purpose and intent of creation is to provide the raw materials from which can be developed the inhabitants of God's new world, the eternal Kingdom of Christ.



*When God begins to work, He always has some great purpose in view—greater than we, with our limited vision, can comprehend.*

# ... A Plan, A Place ...

God has no patent on a seed, and none is pending—He doesn't need one, because only God can make that marvelous, indescribable property we call "life."



*God looks not at what we are  
but at what we can become—  
given time, nourishment, and a  
place to grow. And there will  
never be a better place or time  
than right here and now.*

Then He has given us an environment which is appropriate for our growth. Environment is both spiritual and mental, as well as physical; and the spiritual and mental often present the greater problem. Why? Because people make up so much of it; and people can be as lovely as rare flowers, or as miserable and cantankerous as weeds.

Sometimes we grow because of favor; sometimes because of resistance.

If we are determined to be flourishing trees of righteousness, God in His mercy and loving-kindness will not allow any circumstance beyond our control that would make it impossible for us to grow. All we have to do is to use what He has provided us.

God has set the stage for our growth. If we do not grow, the fault is our own. We have stifled the urge within us and muffled the opportunities around us. It is as simple and straightforward as that. If, spiritually speaking, you are a stunted and runted individual, it is because you have decided to be just that. The solution? Begin at once to change your attitude of mind and make every situation you encounter an opportunity—to grow.

## **Growth, in Practical Terms**

When we speak of Christian "growing," what do we mean in simple everyday terms? That depends on many things. To grow may be to compel ourselves to something we have not yet accomplished—a new attitude of mind, a better control on our words, a deeper sense of reverence for God. It may mean cultivating new friendships, nourishing new desires, and restraining old passions to sin.

Growing may mean being more patient, more self-controlled, more Kingdom-minded; it may mean

*(Continued on page 21)*

# God's Evolution

by Rev. L. T. Nichols

Part One

*Our founder, Rev. L. T. Nichols, discoursed often upon the plan of God and how we as individuals can become a part of it. In fact, he saw this as the primary purpose of all Scripture: to reveal how we, as persons of God's creating, can become part of His eternal plan.*

*The following is an edited distillation of these discourses which Mr. Nichols chose to call "God's Evolution." In it he outlines the steps in the plan, describing the "evolution" or development process for a member of the human family to become a glorified, immortal member of His eternal realm. Then, in Part Two (next issue), we will follow him as he digresses into the wealth of Bible evidence supporting that plan.*

*And through it all let us not miss his own personal enthusiasm as a candidate for membership in that plan, and his warm appeal for us to follow.—Editor*

OF ALL desires, to dwell with Jesus "some day, some happy day" should be supreme. But oh, how prone we are to forget, and we go reaching out for things that have no real value or worth. The present seems, in the eyes of the majority, of more real worth than the grand, eternal future. The present life, filled with sorrow, trouble, anxiety, worry, sickness and death, seems to be of more account than all the wondrous blessings of the grand eternity to come.

Our life is too short for us to consider its fleeting pleasures of any real benefit to us. If our life were going to roll on for even a thousand years, there would be some little reason for grasping for the things of the present; but inasmuch as we see

it verified everyday that life is but a span, a vapor that is but for a moment of time and then vanisheth away, how foolish to be content with it. It appears as a bubble—the use of it breaks it. It is like the bubbles we used to blow when we were children. We made them out of soapsuds. We slushed the soapsuds to and fro, until we had a stiff suds, then blew them out into the air. They were beautiful, but, oh, of such short duration! They floated for a few feet and then they were gone—perished with the using. And so with our life; it is beautiful, in and of itself, but, oh, it will burst sooner or later, with the using! But humanity seems to be passing along as though it would never burst but that the longer you used it the

tougher it would be. But our everyday experience demonstrates that this is not so, that life is not a continuous thing; and it demonstrates beyond all dispute and doubt the truthfulness of the blessed Bible, although it be found in opposition to the teachings of the whole world.

Away back, as long as 5,000 years ago, the Egyptians believed that man's life continues on through the endless ages of eternity. But the blessed Bible declares unto us, "Our life is but a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." The conditions in which we live, move, and have our being last but a little while, and after that we go to the silent tomb where we are locked up in eternal slumber, unless we have made God our only choice;

***Good Seed + Good Soil + Sun and Rain***

(The Word of God)

(The "good and honest heart")

(Real life situations and events)

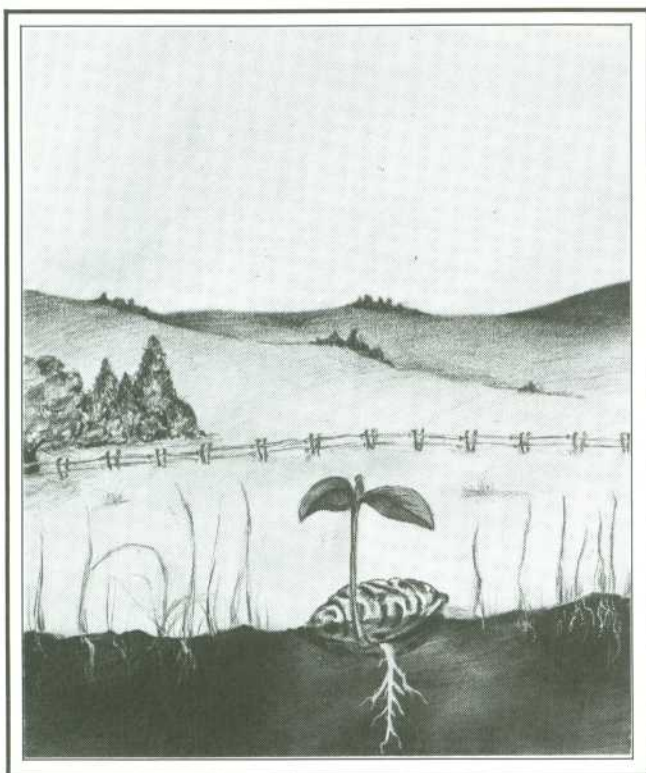
***= Growth + Fruit***

(Good works, righteous character)



## ... And A Time To GROW

Given the right conditions, the planted seed germinates—it sends roots down and a living shoot up. The Christian life germinates when the growing faith begins to produce visible signs of life.



*Growth takes time. Those who look for growth too quickly may see their sprouts wither and die, while those who allow time for strong roots to form will see their plants grow into flourishing trees.*

unless we have formed a character that will be worthy of being brought forth and given life that will never end.

To be sure, we have never seen much in this life. Therefore we need knowledge; we need knowledge greater than we have in this age. But do you know this age is only preparatory? This life is only a preparation for the great step which we call Progression. The scientists call it Evolution. We will call it Progression, or God's Evolution; and in this evolution we have steps moving forward and upward, progressing to a higher level of existence. But we have not a multiplicity of steps to take, as in man's concept of Evolution, but only one, and that is from the lower to the higher plane. Once on that higher plane, we shall begin an eternal evolution, an eternal progression. We shall continue to learn; the mighty folds of the Almighty's plan will be unfolded gradually, as our minds expand. We will then understand the mysteries of life. And when we begin to see those wondrous things, we will wonder, as we look back over our life, that we were ever as content in this present world as we are. We will wonder then that we could be content in the little shell in which we were placed for a time, weighed down with trouble and disappointments, sorrow and disease.

IT SEEMS as though there would be within us an innate longing, a gnawing at our very vitals, for something better, for more knowledge than we can obtain in this present life. It seems as though we would want to cut loose and wing our flight to the higher plane, where these environments will never be, and where our minds can expand abroad.

We see the little child; when it is born into the world it does not



know how to articulate. It looks around, and has not yet learned its mother. There has to be a progression, brought about by experience, by certain laws; there has to be a development to greater and yet greater things.

The child progresses because it remembers. Instead of leaving the ideas it has been taught, it carries them along and advances to take in greater ones, and still greater, until it develops into perhaps a gigantic mind, unless it be so unfortunate as to learn a thing today, and forget it tomorrow.

It seems as though all our desire in this short span of life would be to live in that grand time when we will retain; and by retaining, progress to greater, more glorious and momentous things.

Beloved brethren and sisters, I long for something better; I long for a higher life; I long for greater joys and comforts than this poor, fleeting life can afford us. And how are we to obtain it? If left to the resources of man, if left to the reasonings of the world, we would turn away in disgust; we would turn and say, "There is no need of trying." We find the world knows too little in reference to any of the great wonders of eternity. They live too short a time!

They have not made a start up the grand and wondrous scale of the Almighty. That is why we read this advice in the 8th verse of Colossians 2: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit."

Now, in this present time, we must pay attention to this advice. We have no time to lose; no time to allow the vain traditions of men to influence us; no time for the traditions of philosophers, which are after the rudiments of this world and not after Christ. They philosophize and philosophize, but their philosophy has a tendency to spoil

the human mind. True philosophy and true science are all right; but when we come to consider that the world have more philosophy and science than are true, we have to be careful and be wise and let it all stand in the background for the time, and pay attention to the things our minds can comprehend; for we have not passed through enough stages of evolution to grasp the philosophy which the great and mighty Creator has designed for our consideration. We are like the little child, we have yet to pass the first stages of this progression.

**W**E are now in the initial steps of our development, in the embryo state, and we need to simply pay attention to the things necessary for the present. What are we to do in reference to the present? Is there anything that will demonstrate, beyond all dispute and doubt, that there is a First Great Cause, an All-powerful, All-wise, Overruling Just One, who is propelling, guiding and directing all things, so that we can rest assured that, by and by, we shall stand on a higher plane than at the present?

The present plan would be very good, provided we could always continue in vigor and strength. I do not believe anyone would trade it for something worse. We would not exchange it for death. We would say, "Go away, old grim monster; I do not want you near me!" But the difficulty is, this life is too short. There is not enough of it.

By and by, when we stand on the higher plane, we shall learn how to sustain ourselves in life, learn how to say to the old grim monster, "Begone forever!" and he will flee away and obey us because we will have become acquainted with laws by which nothing detrimental can enter into our system. And the result will be that death will never

pluck one from the fair stage of life.

That grand, good time is surely coming, and the question is, What is necessary to procure it? First, faith in God. And has He left us any record? Has He left us any evidence, anywhere? Yes, most assuredly He has. He has not only left us a Record, but He has left us, in view and in working operation, the laws of nature, which demonstrate beyond all dispute and doubt that the Record is true. That which has been declared is confirmed by what we see.

By the great laws of nature we are born into the world. Consider, for example, the birth of the child. When born, it is without knowledge; then it begins to gain little by little; it begins to progress, until it finally begins to reason, to compare this with that; it begins to expand the functions of the brain. Thus we see progression, as the child rises in the scale of life; we see progression until it reaches the summit.

But then, after awhile, we go over the summit, and life begins to fade and decline. The eyes are getting dim, the hair is growing white; instead of evolution there is a backward movement—a downward move—we are being lost. Instead of our minds growing better and taking higher steps, we are going backward, backward, backward, backward, until finally, some day, we are gone.

**N**OW, I want to know if this is not in harmony with that which we see in our every day life. We see the flower as it springs up in its beautiful form. It grows up, and in one month has reached maturity; it passes the meridian and declines, until it sheds its foliage, decays, and in six weeks is gone; so quickly does it come and pass away! We see, not only the flower and grass of the field, but the mighty oak, which

*(Continued on page 22)*

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# Character . . .

## Through Tribulation

**“AND** not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts” (Rom. 5:3-5).

Tribulation, or “trouble,” as the word is often translated, is as much a part of the true Christian’s life as breath is of the natural life. Without tribulation there can be no perfection of character; and without perfection, no hope of eternal life.

In our examination of the lives of earlier Christians, we see that many stood up better under severe trials than we have. They showed no sign of wavering under conditions which we recognize as most difficult. Compared with our own lives, they really stand out. And still, God has called us in this day to prove true under conditions which must be best suited for us or He would have arranged otherwise.

In Jesus we have the perfect example of One who withstood perfectly each difficulty and test, when He knew what was required. “. . . Yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered . . .” (Heb. 5:8).

In the world of chemistry, some-

times repeated testing brings about a stabilization of a chemical process so that additional testing is necessary only at widely separated intervals. This is also a principle of Christian living. No one can gain immediately all the requisites of a Christian character, for the Christian life is a growth, and a slow one. Our Heavenly Father, knowing that we are dust, of the low and earthy, has graciously given us both the opportunity for growth under the tribulations of this life and also the time to cultivate the growth.

No chain is stronger than its weakest link, and James applies this principle to the spiritual life when he says, “For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all” (James 2:10). The tribulations of life are at once both a means and a measurement of our growth. The circumstances of life and our own human nature readily combine to try, in every necessary way, anyone who is seeking to live on a higher plane than the natural.

The true Christian’s attitude toward the testings of life is different. This is the word from James the servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ: “Dear brothers, is your life full of difficulties and tempta-

tions? Then be happy, for when the way is rough, your patience has a chance to grow. So let it grow, and don’t try to squirm out of your problems. For when your patience is finally in full bloom, then you will be ready for anything, strong in character, full and complete” (Jas. 1:2-4, TLB). Only fools would welcome trouble for trouble’s sake, but the true Christian welcomes the trials and tribulations of life as an opportunity to prove the progress he has made and to make more progress. In each trial he adds strength to strength.

The Christian knows he will be tried severely, “for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons” (Heb. 12:6-8). Job understood this when he said, “But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold” (23:10).

The tribulations we encounter, if we use them as stepping-stones, will prove a double benefit to us. Paul tells us that tribulation produces



patience, or "endurance." And endurance develops experience, or character. Growth in one Christian virtue tempers us, and fosters the growth of still other virtues, for "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way" (Ps. 37:23).

Trials or tribulations, accepted in the right spirit and borne triumphantly, add to our experience, or character. Monumental as a fine Christian character is, it is made up of the seemingly small things of life, even as small bricks build the great towering edifice.

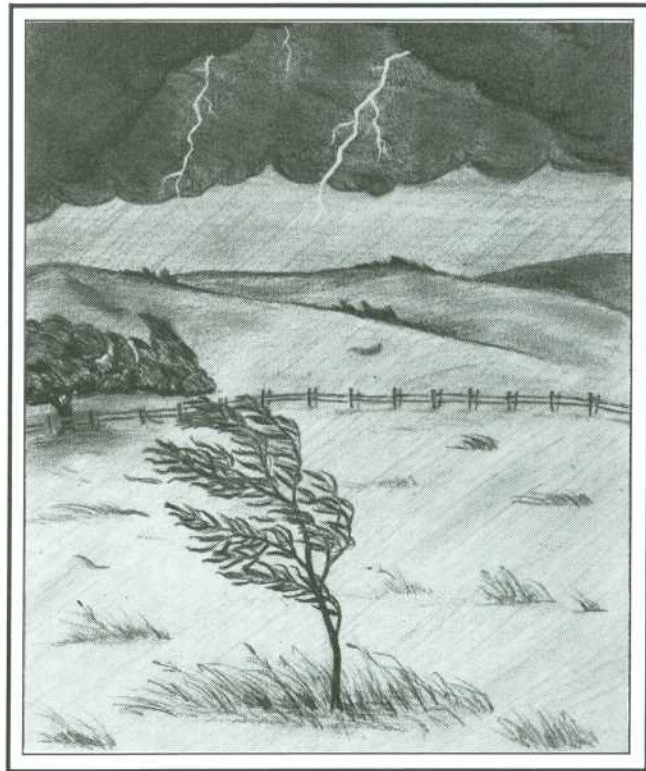
To help us in this task, the Bible makes available to us not only the failures but also the triumphs of many who have gone before us. It is equally available to all who would measure up to the full stature of Christ. Some of us have had also before us the example of godly lives in this age, who have encountered the same tribulations we have from day to day. We may learn from their experience and be strengthened to withstand when the tribulations of life would overwhelm us.

The experienced Christian character, tested and tried by life's trials and years of Christian living, has still another virtue. It is hope. Hope is both an achievement and a reward, for it draws us on and encourages us to greater effort. For what can encourage the working Christian more than the knowledge that he really is doing God's will and keeping His law? The more progress we make, the more hope we can have, and the more hope we have, the faster we will progress.

"And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts." The Moffatt Bible translates this, "A hope which never disappoints us, since God's love floods our hearts." When we know we are keeping God's every  
(Continued on page 21)

## Growing . . . through Sunshine and Storm . . .

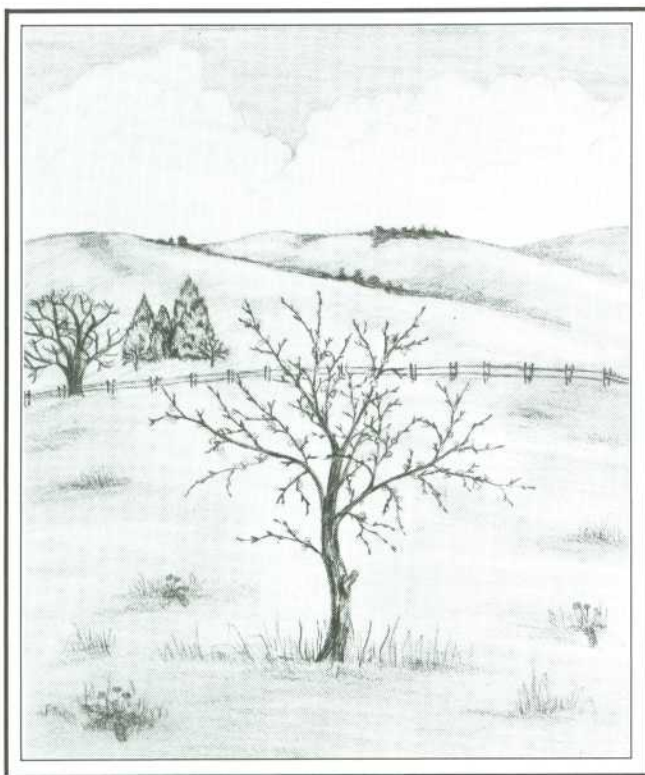
To grow and produce fruit, the sapling needs sunshine and also rain. However hard they beat, the storm and rain are friends of the young sapling—without them it could not grow. No rain, no growth; and no growth, no fruit.



*Every sapling of God experiences periods of sunshine and also of storm. But it does not have to worry. All it has to do is simply trust God—and keep growing.*

## *... And When the Time Is Right, to Blossom ...*

For all of God's trees, fruitbearing is a *must*. God loves fruit. "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit" (John 15:8).



*At the proper time, the growing tree must begin to blossom and bud. This means even more nourishment, more sun, more rain—and more growth.*

A WRITER, having observed the stunting in moral development among many adults, comments: "One of the oddities of human nature is how small big people can be. By big we mean having reached their growth. By small we mean, having yet to grow up.

"In some instances it is to be wondered if to the end of their days they ever will grow up. You look to them for adult behavior but all you get are childish reactions. Like trees at timberline, they seem to signal: 'No growth beyond this point!' They are afflicted with *grown-uplessness*."

He advises that the corrective for this must come from within, or it does not come. The most anybody else can do is to show them how much they are losing in life through being bypassed in a busy world of full-grown men and women.

Perhaps there is not a surplus of full-grown men and women even in secular affairs, and certainly not in the Christian life. One may grow up in one or many characteristics; but we are commanded to grow up in *all* things, to the stature of Christ. Otherwise we shall be bypassed by those who are going on to perfection.

The spiritual life, like the physical, must have its starting point, of which we read, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." The very wording of this text indicates



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# Maturity in Christ

there is a great growth to make. From this frail and lowly beginning, divine strength is gradually but constantly added until the true follower of Christ reaches maturity.

How unseemly for one who professes Christianity and has had time to grow up, to be found doing childish things; that is, childish in the spiritual life. Every time we are not easily entreated, is it not childish? Every time we yield to just a little foolishness, we are acting childish. The Lord does not expect us to be spiritually mature when we begin but He does expect us to grow according to our time and opportunity and the many privileges we have enjoyed in Christ.

Every time we demonstrate a feeling of jealousy, or strife, we are in our babyhood. What physical dwarfing can compare to spiritual dwarfing when one has had time and opportunity to have made advanced growth?

When we speak harshly instead of with the quiet modesty of wisdom, we lack that much of Christian maturity. When our conversation is over-balanced by the trivial happenings around us instead of centered on heavenly virtues and the wonders of eternity, our minds are not yet mature. The keynote of our conversation should be a sense of all that we owe to God. Maturity, then, excludes thinking too highly

of self. That belongs in the childish period of life. When by word and example we fail to help another to a higher plane of life, we are yet in childhood.

The Bible is filled with illustrations of growing up. The Wise Man refers to a class who should have grown to a kingly position but were still children. And his comment on this dwarfed condition is, "Childhood and youth are vanity" (Eccl. 11:10).

Paul told the Corinthians: "Watch you! Stand firm in the Faith! Be manly! Be strong!" (1 Cor. 16:13, Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott).

Further Paul speaks of those who should have been teachers but needed to be taught instead. They had not learned their lessons as they had had opportunity. He gave a rule by which spiritual development and Christian maturity can be measured when he said, "Solid food is for adults—that is, for those who through constant practice have their spiritual faculties carefully trained to distinguish good from evil" (Heb. 5:14, Weymouth). It is by exercise that we develop either mentally or physically—likewise spiritually. As we wrestle with our problems day after day, we develop strength and, by practice, by studying the example of those who have reached Christian maturity, and by their guidance, we can train ourselves to discern the

right attitude and action. One who does not progress is "obviously immature," Paul tells us, "he simply has not grown up" (Heb. 5:14, Phillips).

Let us test our maturity. Can we meet difficult and provoking situations without being provoked? It has been said that children and childish adults indulge in temper tantrums when crossed. The mature maintain their composure. Maturity means keeping our self-control. Such was the command given by the apostle Paul for our very day, for us who are living in this age just before the coming of the Lord: Make known your power of self-control to all men (Phil. 4:5, Moffatt). We do not need to go as far as a tantrum to lose control, but for even an uncontrolled thought or feeling we are responsible. To have self-control in the rush of this age means we must work steadily and thoroughly to obey this divine command at all times.

Another test of our maturity is our ability to take criticism. And who can say that does not take growth? Emerson said, "The wise man throws himself on the side of his assailants; it is much more to his interests than theirs to find his weak points." If we remember this when that excellent oil of reproof is being applied, we will demonstrate our

*(Continued on page 20)*

# Fruit, More Fruit

*Scripture Reading: Psalm 96*

**H**ARVESTING the fruit of the land has always been an occasion of great joy. To the ancient people, an abundant harvest meant a more abundant life. The greater the harvest, the greater the nation's security against famine, the greater their wealth, the greater their strength in siege or disaster. The fortune or misfortune of the people was directly related to the abundance of the harvest.

It was so in ancient Israel. Because of its great significance to the nation, the harvest season was a time of great rejoicing. After the final harvest each year came the happy Feast of Tabernacles, when with hearts full of praises and praises full of heart, weary laborers assembled for the eight-day occasion and rejoiced together before the Lord. It was a time when everyone interrupted the routine of life to remember the gracious, eternal Giver of all good.

The joy of the harvest season in Israel focussed on gratitude for the gracious goodness of God, and also for the fruitfulness of forest and field. We read of the occasion in Leviticus 23: "In the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto the Lord seven days: on the first day shall be a sabbath, and on the eighth day shall be a sabbath. And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days. . . . It shall be a statute for ever in your generations: ye shall celebrate it in the seventh month. Ye shall dwell in booths seven days; all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths: that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God" (vs. 39-43).

The Feast of Tabernacles was a festival of thanksgiving with a purpose much the same as our Thanksgiving

today. And it was more: It was a remembrancer to the younger generation of their great God and all He had done for them as a nation. It was designed to link past and present in a bond of deep appreciation and reverence for the God of their fathers. Year by year as the Israelites planted and harvested, they were to be mindful of the God who sustained them. Year by year as they celebrated they refreshed themselves in the memory of the Giver of all their abundance.

The importance of fruitfulness cannot be overemphasized. If there had been no fruit in Israel, no harvest, no crop, there would have been no festival. Had there been no fruit, there would have been no nation—so dependent were they (even as we) on the yield of the land.

The farmer who plants an orchard has but one objective: fruit. What would ever induce him to plant if he could expect no harvest! He may admire the healthy young trees, their vigorous growth, their abundant blossoms. He may spend many hours watering, cultivating, pruning, spraying. But over all is one objective: fruit. When the summer is spent and the work is done, there must come a harvest. The healthiest branches, the most abundant leaves, the sturdiest trunks cannot make up for the lack of fruit. And the farmer, to be satisfied, must have this fruitfulness not for just one year or two but on and on, year after year after year if he is to receive due recompense for his labor.

How perfect is the parallel with ourselves as plants in the garden of the Lord, trees of God's own planting. Why are we here? What is the purpose of our lives? It is all told in these words of Jesus: "that ye bear much fruit."

## **God Wants Fruit**

Just as the produce of the tree is its fruit, so the yield of our lives is our "fruit." God wants fruit. More emphati-



cally, God must have fruit. Being a living tree is not enough. The bearing of this spiritual fruit must be the central concern of our lives. We may go on year after year after year, living and—apparently—growing in the garden of the Lord. But if we are not bearing fruit, we cannot expect any eternal place in God's garden. As plants we may appear alive and healthy, but if not bearing fruit we are of no use to God.

What does it mean to bear good fruit? It is a positive course of action or thought in our lives. It is not merely refraining from doing wrong, it is actively doing right. If we would bear good fruit in word, in action, in thought, in feeling, we must speak right, do right, think right, feel right. This is fruitfulness.

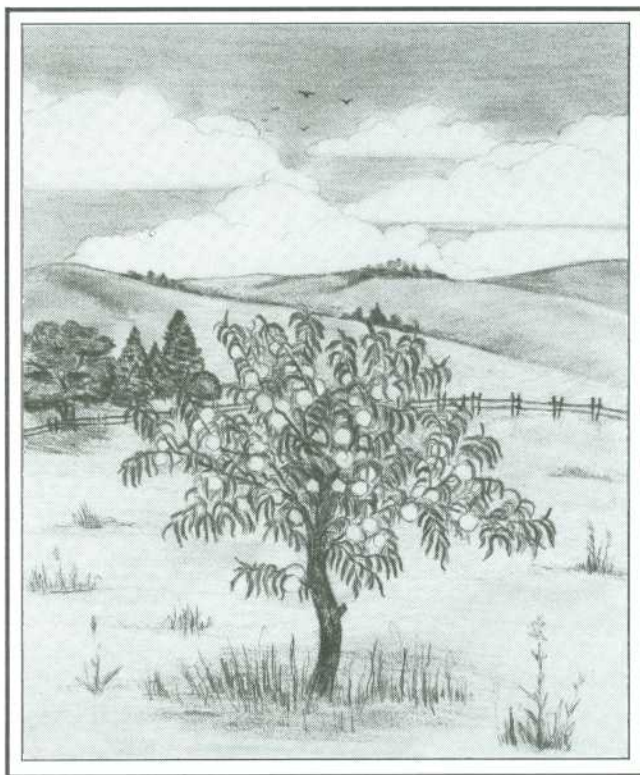
The Sacred Record speaks often of this special fruitbearing. The Psalmist compares the godly man to a tree, "planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season" (Ps. 1:3). The prophet Jeremiah makes a similar comparison, but lets us know also that this fruitbearing is not a short-term project. This special tree shall never "cease from yielding fruit" (Jer. 17:8). Day in and day out, whatever the season, whatever the circumstances, this tree will bear fruit.

John the Baptist was keenly aware of the need for fruitbearing. "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance" was the central note of his gospel (Matt. 3:8). And this was not a gentle request but a command upon which was suspended the entire weight of the law. For "Every tree which bringing not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire" (vs. 10).

What was the fruit which John demanded? John saw life as God-given for a God-ordained task. And he disciplined his life to this holy end. He was a stern realist concerning right and wrong. As he saw it,

## *... and Bear an Abundance of Good Fruit*

When the time is right, the steadily growing tree reaches full maturity—and full fruit. The strength and stability of the mature tree are the natural result of all the growth that has come before.



*God wants fruit—the best and the most that the tree can produce. Every tree is known—and valued—by the fruit it bears.*

all fruits of life were either good or bad. There was no such thing as mediocre, half-good/half-bad fruit.

In an effort to appear as good as possible, we might be inclined to judge our conduct as "partly" or largely justifiable, but to John it was either good fruit or bad. We are either bearing fruit that befits repentance and a new way of life, or only the worthless fruit of the old life. John saw the separation between good and evil, between right and wrong, as the "great divide," and insisted that we should live on the right side of that stern ridge. Do we ever look for something to justify our conduct? John would advise us to err on the side of scruple rather than on the side of liberty. It is the safer course. This is bearing fruit "meet for repentance."

### **Judge by Fruit**

Jesus' message was the same, requiring the sternest and most straightforward integrity in the bearing of good fruit in everyday life. Well He knew how we try to evade the real facts about ourselves. Well He knew how easy it is to condemn others and justify ourselves. And so He set the criteria for judgment in plain black and white—as plain as fruit on a tree. "Even so every good tree bringing forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good

fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them." And then, in case there should be any doubt as to the meaning of "fruitbearing," He states even more clearly His standard of judgment: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 7:17-21).

The fruit reveals the tree. As our founder Brother Nichols so aptly illustrated, if you wonder what kind of tree you have, you do not try to scrape the root, or peel off the bark, or eat the leaves—you simply look at the fruit. In the same way we can judge ourselves: by our fruit.

What was the lesson in the parable of the Sower? Was the ground judged by the number of plants that germinated, or by the abundance of leaves that grew, or by the number of the blossoms, or even the depth of the root? All these may have been factors, but the final judgment of its worth was on this only: its fruitfulness. "That on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience" (Luke 8:15). The seed that fell on "good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundredfold" (v. 8). Other seed fell by the wayside,

## *Let Us Pray . . .*

Almighty God and Father of us all, who hath given to us life and breath and all good things to enjoy, we come into Thy presence this morning with grateful hearts and consecrated wills. We feel privileged to be Thy people, and the sheep of Thy pastures, to share together the high honor of entering into Thy gates with thanksgiving and into Thy courts with praise.

Our Father, help us not to be too driven by pressures of everyday, too absorbed with trifles, too involved in the present that we overlook the real values of life. Help us never to be sidelined by selfishness, imbalanced by temptation, unnerved by worry, cornered by depression or controlled by habit; but may we be always masters of ourselves, masters of our thoughts, masters of our feelings whatever the circumstances. May we be flexible enough to change our mind when it needs changing, always willing to give up our thoughts for

Thine, realizing how vastly they surpass our own.

Father, we rejoice that Thou art so long-suffering, that Thou art not a God far away but that Thou art a God near at hand, always ready to hear and help Thy striving children. Thou hast planted us as trees in Thine own garden. But Thou wilt not allow us always to abide if we do not bear fruit. So help us to busy ourselves in this all-important task, conscious of our great responsibility and the limited time in which we have to work. So may we be glad and thankful for every experience that reveals to us the weaknesses of our nature, that we may correct them before it is too late.

O righteous Father, help us to catch an ever clearer glimpse of what Thou art trying to do for us, a clearer picture of the character Thou art seeking to develop in us, and now be more submissive to Thee.

We pray Thee to be with Thy people wherever they may be, who are calling on thee in sincerity and in truth. And help us all to bear an abundance of fruit unto holiness, that we may abide in Thy garden forever, for Thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

or upon the rock, or among thorns, and was condemned. The seed was not at fault; it germinated, and would have grown. But it was condemned because it did not bear fruit.

And if the fruit be lacking, the entire effort is lost.

### **Fruit Unto Life**

Jesus gave yet another lesson on fruitbearing when He was teaching the people. "Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together" (John 4:35-36). Much more than the literal harvest is meant, for what literal harvest was ever "unto life eternal"? He was speaking of the spiritual fruit that must be grown, and ripened for the eternal harvest.

The apostle Paul also exhorted his brethren to fruitbearing. There are two kinds: fruit unto death, and fruit unto life. Every life yields one fruit or the other. These are Paul's words: "What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life" (Rom. 6:21-22).

Should we not be glad and anxious to bear fruit unto "everlasting life"!

### **The Vine and the Branches**

Jesus illustrated the importance of fruitbearing graphically in His last sermon on the night before He was crucified. His illustration was simple, yet how appropriate: a vine, branches, and fruit. Years earlier God's prophets had compared Israel to a vine, but the vine had proved unfaithful, "an empty vine" (Hos. 10:1), non-fruitbearing, fit only to be cut off. Perhaps to make a point of contrast, Jesus identified Himself as the "true vine." "I am the true vine," He said, "and my Father is the husbandman" (John 15:1). Again He said, "I am the vine, ye are the branches."

What is the duty of the vine? The vine is the support, the strength, the source of nourishment for the plant. The vine also provides the identity for the branches and their fruit. As with the graft on the tree, the branch must adopt the identity of the vine.

And what is the duty of the branch? Grape vines do not make suitable shade trees. And the branches are of no worth for lumber. They would not even make good kindling. The leaves likewise are worthless except as they give nourishment to the vine. The one task of the branches is to *bear fruit*.

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***Being a living tree is not enough. We must bear fruit.***

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Jesus portrays the earnest Christian as a branch. Christ is the Vine; the Christian is the branch. And the branches—you and I—bear the fruit. This means that we show the love; we demonstrate the peace; we be the long-suffering ones; we be meek and humble; we be gentle, good, full of faith; we show by our lives what it means to be temperate, disciplined, self-controlled. The branch bears the fruit.

What is the alternative to fruitbearing? What if a branch does not bear fruit? "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away"—it is forcefully removed—"and every branch in me that beareth fruit, he purgeth it that it may bring forth more fruit" (John 15:2). When a branch bears fruit, there will be purging, pruning, tearing away of useless leaves and wild growths. But always there is but one objective: more fruit.

What if a branch should decide that it does not need the vine, that it can live more successfully on its own strength? Again there is no acceptable alternative. These are the words of Jesus: "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me." The whole purpose of the branch is bearing fruit. Unless we abide in the vine we cannot bear fruit; and unless we bear fruit we cannot abide in the vine. God will not have His vine eternally cluttered with worthless, non-fruitful branches. If we would abide we must bear fruit.

"I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing"—because unable to bear fruit.

### **What God Requires**

Fruitfulness qualifies us for discipleship and all the blessings and benefits of belonging to Christ. "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples" (John 15:8).

Since fruitbearing is so all important, let us think more about it. Exactly what does God require of us? What type of fruit is He seeking? What can we learn about the fruit which our lives should produce?

First, we need to realize that God will not ask what we cannot give. Yet we know at the same time that He



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***If you wonder what kind of tree you have, you do not try to scrape the root, or peel off the bark, or eat the leaves—you simply look at the fruit.***

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asks our all—else how will He, or we, ever prove our worth? God wants our all, our best. If we will not give it, He will find others who will.

Second, we should observe that God does not place any age limit on fruitbearing. We are each one responsible for bearing good fruit to the limit of our capacity as long as we live. Natural trees may decrease in fruitfulness; not so in God's garden.

Fruitbearing is a very serious and individual matter. We are each one personally responsible for the fruit of our lives. Others can help us to plant and water, others can nourish and encourage us and tell us how to grow. But the task of using all of this assistance in producing perfect, fully ripe fruit is a task we ourselves must do. We must bear fruit. It is our personal responsibility before God.

We each need to review carefully our own fruitfulness. How much fruit am I bearing unto life eternal? And what is the quality of that fruit? Is it the very best I am able to produce? These are difficult questions to answer, and how careful we should be to review our lives carefully, frequently, earnestly, in the fear of God. For someday we shall have to answer for what we have done, or failed to do. His command is unchanging: "that ye bear much fruit."

It is not how much we read, or meditate, or talk about the glories of the coming Kingdom that will make us acceptable to God, though all of these are essential. It is not even how much we resolve or intend to do, but how much actual fruit unto holiness we bear.

#### **Fruitbearing Is . . .**

How shall we identify this fruit? Let us consider a few points.

The apostle Paul mentions a number of outstanding fruits which grow on every Christian tree. First, there is the fruit of love, love toward God and toward our brother in the faith. This is not a sentimental feeling but a genuine commitment to obey God and to have true brotherly kindness and concern for our brother.

Rare indeed is the fruit of love that is always patient,

always kind; that knows no jealousy, makes no parade, gives itself no airs, is never selfish, never irritated, never resentful; never glad when others go wrong; love that is always gladdened by goodness; always slow to expose; always eager to believe the best, always hopeful, always patient.

How much true love do we show our brother? Have we the love to tell our brother of a fault in a true and kindly spirit of love, not critical and faultfinding but mutually helpful and upbuilding? Is our first concern always his best spiritual interests? Are we long-suffering with his weakness? This is another fruit we must bear. Do we try to help him overcome his weaknesses? Or do we assume an attitude of, "If he's any good at all, he'll come along by himself. Why should I waste my concern on someone who won't do any better than that?"

Let us be careful. Our own record of fruitbearing is what should concern us most. What have we to show for all *our* years in the garden of the Lord? How much fruit have *we* borne?

We should call to mind Jesus' parable of the tree upon whose branches the owner did not find the expected crop of fruit. The parable is recorded in Luke 13:6-10. The owner's immediate response was, "Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?" But the caretaker interceded: "Let it alone another year yet. I will dig around it, fertilize it, water it, and maybe next year it will do better" (paraphrased). Haven't we more than once been this fig tree, in need of another chance to do what we should have done long ago? How grateful each one of us should be to the merciful God who still gives us another, and another, and yet another opportunity to bear fruit. But let us not deceive ourselves—opportunity is not forever.

#### **Our Fruitfulness**

How is our fruitfulness, yours and mine, right here and now? As the Master Gardener surveys the fruit of our lives, what does He see?

How is our crop of peace? How abundant is this fruit on our vine? When someone challenges our opinion, or our judgment, or our intentions, is our perfect peace undisturbed, save for the fact that our anxiety to see ourselves as we are is aroused? And do we still maintain a true feeling of brotherliness toward that person? How about our fruit of temperance? Have we the inner stability, the self-control to keep ourselves always firmly "in hand," so that we are ready for any emergency with all our senses intact? How much does it take to upset us? It has been said that one sure measure of our inner stature is the size of the issue that it takes to disturb us.

It is possible that by such a scale we sometimes find ourselves frightfully small!

The fruit of patience has several varieties, all of which we need to bear in abundance. First, we need patience with ourselves, to keep trying when we have failed. And we need to extend this same patience to our brother—in supermeasure—when he has transgressed against us.

Then we need patience with circumstances. Why should we waste our energy fighting against that which is beyond our control—when we could be investing that same energy in our own character building and gain the added benefit of submission?

We need to inspect our fruit both for quality and quantity. Have we ever seen a progressive fruit grower advertise his crop in a manner like this: "Small fruit, generally inferior in quality. Mostly diseased or damaged. No charge." Who would offer it? Only a man who had no interest in his reputation as a fruit grower.

Yet, have we checked as closely as we should the quality of the fruit we are offering to our God, He who has given us life and existence and every temporal and spiritual blessing we enjoy? What kind of fruit are we, you and I, offering for His Kingdom? Our fruit may be willingly and freely given, and it may be fruit of above average quality. But is it the best and the most of which we are capable?

Loyal and devoted Israelites did more than voice their gratitude to God in celebration and song. They demonstrated it in sacrifice and freewill offerings. The law required certain sacrifices, but above and beyond the requirements of the law were the completely voluntary sacrifices and offerings which the truly grateful could bring and offer to the God they loved. Then, as now, God valued the deed above the word.

But what about the quality of the voluntary offering? Might we assume that since the offerings were not required, the grateful person could offer just about anything and it would be accepted and appreciated? Since the offering was a "bonus" gift to God, might not anything look like gracious generosity and genuine love?

The answer is no. Anything offered to God, whether by law or voluntarily, had to be perfect. Just anything at all was not better than nothing. Poor animals were no more acceptable as thank offerings than as any other type of offering. God demanded the best—first, last and always. The law was explicit: "When any one of the house of Israel or of the sojourners in Israel presents his offering, whether in payment of a vow or as a freewill offering, which is offered to the Lord as a burnt offering, to be accepted you shall offer a male without blemish, of the bulls or the sheep, or the goats. You shall not

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***Fruitfulness qualifies us for discipleship and all the blessings and benefits of belonging to Christ.***

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offer anything that has a blemish, for it will not be acceptable for you" (Lev. 22:17-21, 29, RSV). Why was this the rule? Because anything less than the best dishonored God. Anything less than the best was an expression of insult and the basest ingratitude.

Many times the Psalmist and other Scripture writers used thank offerings and peace offerings to illustrate the true, heart-felt sacrifice God requires from every one who would inhabit His eternal Kingdom. "Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High." "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God." "I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord." "I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed" (Ps. 50:14, 23; 116:17; Jonah 2:9).

Are we ready to offer our lives as a sacrifice of thanksgiving? Are we ready to let our thanks be so wholehearted? Are we ready to offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, which is "the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name" (Heb. 13:15)? Are we ready to give, and give, and give, whatever the cost to us in time or energy or means, the firstfruit of our lives, the best of our strength, the whole devotion of our soul and the deepest affection of our heart? There will be cost, cost in that which means the most to us, but did not David set the example when he declined from offering to God that which had cost him nothing? (II Sam. 24:24). If it is worth nothing to us, is it any worth at all to God as a sacrifice or any credit to us?

When on the day of Judgment we are called to present to God the fruit of our lives, what shall we bring? Shall we come laden with basket upon basket overflowing with perfect, fully ripened, delicious fruit? or will our offering be a mere handful—dried, withered and worthless—the leftovers from a life spent serving ourselves?

Oh, let the motto of our lives be, *Fruit, More Fruit*—more quality and more quantity, that the coming of the Judge may find our crop abundant and we may be rewarded with eternal fruitfulness in the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord.

MM

## Maturity in Christ

(Continued from page 13)

growth. Let us measure our own maturity when these tests come—others are measuring; and do not stop at measuring but let no day pass without gaining new ground in self-control, in self-examination and in self-sacrifice.

Or, to paraphrase the apostle Paul, Now that you are a man, put childish things further and further away!

Perhaps one of the greatest indications of Christian maturity is expressed in his appeal to the Ephesian brethren. He urged them to grow into that union with Christ the head which would identify them as members of His body. What is a greater sign of maturity than to be of one mind on all principles with the body of Christ?

When Jesus spoke to Peter that morning by the shore, He gave a principle by which we can judge our spiritual age, whether young or mature. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdest thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not" (John 21:18). When young, we do as we like; but as we advance in the spiritual life, we learn to set aside our own ideas and humbly seek guidance, even though it carry us in the opposite direction of our natural desires. That is spiritual maturity.

Are we able to work with others without trying to dominate their thinking and regulate their ways? and, further, are we able to live with others on the same principle of give-and-take? What is more childish than to strive at length to have our way about immaterial, temporal matters?

We might think high, but not until thought is merged with the determination and ability to control our disposition have we attained Christian maturity.

In our daily associations with each other and as we meet difficulties, let us show to all about us that we are growing up.

There are so many signs of maturity which the maturing Christian unconsciously manifests day after day, however peaceful or turbulent the environment! He has acquired a calm, even, "excellent spirit," which he is able to maintain despite all odds.

Can those around us see that we are growing? No one has difficulty seeing the change as a child grows to maturity. He not only grows in stature but gradually takes on mature habits. And often as one approaches maturity, family traits become evident. Just so our maturing characters should bear evidence of the traits of Christ, the Head of our family. Then at His return, if we have attained "to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ," He will recognize us as "members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones," and will invite us to share with Him all the rights and privileges of immortal Sons of God.

MM

## LETTERS

### On the Practical Side

How true it is, that people may read the Bible and know the letter of it, even remember chapters and testimonies, but fail to observe the spiritual, practical side. However, knowledge is indeed useless unless put into action. Jesus said, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine" and Brother Nichols could say: "I know I have the Word of Truth to back up what I believe"—and "The time is so short, it should all be used in searching self and comparing self with the plain demands of the Word."

So with determination may we work

for the Lord—which really is working for ourselves. We must work hard to "put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." As our founder, Rev. L. T. Nichols, said, "Believing right is the most important thing, then acting in harmony with that belief. Have a living faith and you will be a converted man. There is no other way."

South Wales

R. B.

### More and More

I have received tapes of hymns, etc. from the Sound Records Library and I

appreciate very much your having them sent on to me.

I am enjoying the "Message" more and more as time goes on. It seems that the articles are getting more and more interesting and better. I think perhaps maybe that I am the one getting more and more learning from them and understanding of the Bible. In any event, the articles are really teaching a wonderful way of life for the future. I especially enjoyed in the January issue the articles, "Mercy for the Merciful" and "Sin Unto Death." What eye openers!—very enlightening, indeed!

Maine

R. D.



## Character . . . Through Tribulation

(Continued from page 11)

commandment, triumphant in all the tribulations life can bring to us, the love of God truly will flood our hearts. No disappointment can ever truly disappoint us; no trouble can dim our bright hope of the Kingdom. No tribulation can depress, no circumstances can annoy, and no trouble can discourage the one who has his eye solidly fixed on the Kingdom of God. He wants to be tested and tried—because he wants the eternal crown of life.

## Lose All, or Win All

What does it matter if we are pressed from time to time by crosses and sore temptations? We have no reason to be daunted in spirit. Obstacles or no obstacles, the glory of the world to come is just ahead, just beyond the present turmoil, just beyond the present difficulties.

These temporary light afflictions are but for a little moment, designed to make something of us. Adversities or conditions may hurt, but God allows them for the purpose of fruit production in us.

What does the apostle Peter say? "Don't be bewildered or surprised when you go through the fiery trials ahead, for this is no strange, unusual thing that is going to happen to you. Instead, be really glad—because these trials will make you partners with Christ in his suffering, and afterwards you will have the wonderful joy of sharing his glory in that coming day when it will be displayed" (1 Pet. 4:12-13, TLB).

Whether we win or lose in this battle for life will depend entirely upon ourselves. Our circumstances or whatever else may enter into our present lives, will be only what we need to learn the valuable character

lessons of patient endurance God wants us to learn.

Murmuring and complaining never solved any problems, they only tend to more peevishness and discontent. Away with them.

We can rejoice—not for the troubles but because God is teaching us obedience, submission and stamina to accomplish His perfect work in our lives for our eternal good and His ultimate glory.

Without exception we are all in need of daily encouragement and moral support. And God has amply provided for this in His Book. To our spiritual relief, when strength is almost waning, we have God's readily available Word to uplift and cheer. We can turn to the pages of the Scriptures any time of the day or night and replenish our fainting souls from this never failing source of divine comfort. We are also blessed with Christian friends and Christian literature. With so much done for us, how can we lose!

Great souls like Paul and others in the midst of rugged difficulties were filled with the peace of God because the Word working effectually within enabled them to remain calm and trustful in the One Supreme Being, who was forming their lives according to His will. Their faith in God could not and would not permit them to become faint-hearted, stalwart souls that they were. The word "defeat" was not in their vocabulary. They might be exhausted, tired and weary-worn, but defeated? *Never!*

What of us? Shall we grow weary in well doing and *lose all*? Or shall we continue steadfast unto the end and *win all*? MM

## A Purpose, A Place, and A Time to Grow

(Continued from page 6)

changing our major concerns and values in life.

To grow is to recognize our besetting sins and attack them with new energy to overcome them. It is to devise new strategies in dealing with our old, stubborn nature, to remake it into the likeness of Christ.

To grow means learning to hold on when it seems there is no more power in us to do it.

To grow is to refuse to let our minds be distracted from the future, even when everything around us is clamoring for our attention.

To grow is to break into the conversation that is engrossed in trivialities with some choice thought about God's new, coming world.

To grow is to change our accustomed pattern of thinking of ourselves in our own selfish world and become more interested in others, showing genuine brotherly concern for their problems, their sorrows, their joys.

To grow is to hold our tongue, to keep it from saying anything thoughtless, cutting or unkind.

To grow is to be so concerned about getting ourselves right in the sight of God that the contrary opinions of other people will not bother us.

To grow is to be so busy criticizing and improving ourselves that we will not have time to look for faults in others.

Are we wanting opportunities to grow? They are everywhere—and right within us. Just start growing and you will see them! MM

**Keep your face toward the sunshine  
and the shadows will fall behind you.**

## God's Evolution

(Continued from page 9)

from the little acorn grows. It grows to maturity until finally, after awhile, it, too, takes the road to decay. In the course of all animal kind, vegetation and man, we see, at a certain point, a turn, a backward move, as if someone had said, "So far thou canst go, and no farther." We find these things are true.

Hence we find this in the mighty declaration: "Beware, lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." Now we are to rely upon God; and He tells us that, by the laws we see in our every day life, there is an evolution; but it can only go so far, then it takes the backward step toward that from whence it came. It carries us right back, until we reach what is a childhood condition—we have no mind at all. It carries us back, until we finally close our eyes and cease to be; and we are no more forever—unless the same power that started us in the beginning is brought to bear again.

**I**S THERE anything better than this? Ah! there is hope. And there is only one foundation for that hope, and that is to acquire a knowledge of the blessed Bible, which tells us that "man that is born of a woman, is of few days and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down; he fleeth also as a shadow and continueth not" (Job 14:1-2). That is the lot of all humanity in all the nations of the world; I care not whether one be a millionaire, or a billionaire; I care not whether he be a king, or a potentate, or an emperor high in authority, it will carry them all down to the same condition. They shall continue not. The conditions that produce life will cease to exist.

Man is "of few days and full of trouble." Yes, "full of trouble." We see it from one end of the earth unto the other, and it demonstrates the truthfulness of the Bible. Man's life is but a vapor. And now we can join with another writer who steps upon the scene and declares (James 4:14), our life is even "a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." Man appears as a vapor, and then vanisheth away. The Divine testimony proves this beyond all dispute and doubt.

**I**S THERE a future life? We have never seen anyone raised from the dead; therefore we cannot know

Steps in Natural Evolution/Progression of Human Life		Steps in Natural Evolution/Progression of Plant Life
According to Theology	According to the Bible	According to Our Observation
<b>Physical Birth</b> — two forms of life existing, mortal and immortal (body and soul)  <b>Mental and Physical Growth</b> <b>Maturity</b> <b>Decline</b> <b>Death</b> — assumes cessation of bodily existence only <b>"Afterlife"</b> — continued (assumed) existence of the "soul" in an eternal state	<b>Physical Birth</b> — beginning of mortal life and consciousness  <b>Mental and Physical Growth</b> <b>Maturity</b> <b>Decline</b> <b>Death</b> — total cessation of life and consciousness; no "afterlife" without resurrection and judgment to determine one's qualification for future life	<b>Germination</b> — beginning of life  <b>Physical Growth</b> <b>Maturity</b> — blossom, bear fruit or seed <b>Decline</b> <b>Death</b> — total cessation of life and growth

because we cannot know any further than our own experience. We have not seen even so much as a tree-toad raised from the dead. We have not seen the resurrection of even a flower, or a plant, or any vegetation, or a tree. We have never seen one who had become dead made alive again. That goes beyond our experience.

But if we find that there is a story told us in reference to our life, and we find that it is all true, and the same Author tells us that He created all in the mighty universe, the sun, moon and stars, can we not afford to trust Him? Can we not afford to believe Him when He tells us there will be a resurrection?

The same Author proves that the Bible is true beyond all dispute and doubt. And when I consider that the blessed Record He has given us, written away back there, hundreds and thousands of years ago, declares things that we see fulfilled to the very letter—then I can trust Him and have a living faith in Him.

### Steps in Evolution/Progression of Person Accepted by God

#### According to the Bible

##### Physical Birth

- beginning of life and consciousness

##### Mental and Physical Growth

##### Maturity

##### Moral/Spiritual Enlightenment

##### Moral/Spiritual Growth and Development

##### Moral/Spiritual Maturity

##### Physical Decline

##### Death

- total cessation of life and consciousness

##### Resurrection

- restoration of physical body, consciousness and all life processes

##### Judgment and Physical Change

- to determine fitness for future life (II Cor. 5:10)

##### Physical Change to Immortal State

- bestowment of immortal life in Christ's Kingdom (Phil. 3:20-21).

When I listen to an individual and he begins to unfold something to me, and I have the bona fide evidence that it was written thousands of years ago, and then I see it fulfilled before my very eyes, I cannot help believing.

I know that this Author had more knowledge than all the combined world. What can all the greatest minds in the world predict of the future? They cannot predict for a hundred, or even ten years ahead; not even for one day can they predict ahead, much less foretell something thousands of years future. But our God unfolded certain things away back there, and they have come true to the very letter. *(Continued Next Issue)*

## Avoiding "Loose Ends"

**A**N article that I read the other day said: "For your health's sake avoid loose ends." "Loose ends" are those unfinished items that clutter our mind, plague our tranquility, darken good intentions. They vary in degree of importance. Some left undone, have little or no impact on us. Others jeopardize life itself! Some loose ends—left undone—can be hazardous to health. Samples of harmful loose ends could be to stop smoking, or to control negative stresses. The most popular excuse for not handling loose ends is "I just don't have the time." This may be all right regarding trivial loose ends, but when harmful loose ends are left dangling, sooner or later the "bell of redemption will toll." Often folks equate their body to a piece of machinery. They ignore it when it works well and only give it attention when it begins to malfunction. The problem here is that machinery is replaceable, but the body comes only one to a customer.

But now in the spiritual, James gives us some other counsel on how to avoid loose ends. What about our speech? "Let everyone be quick to listen, slow to talk, slow to be angry: That the man who controls his tongue has approached perfection." He is just about a finished product. That is what the Lord demands—holiness and completeness, finished material.

Attaining the completeness of a finished product is not an easy process. It requires time and effort, chastisement, training and pruning, willpower and endurance. If we are not using our present opportunities to the fullest advantage; if we are not growing while the summer sun shines upon us, the day of harvest will arrive and there will not be time to produce the fruit of perfection. Our work will be incomplete and will be forever left undone.

We cannot imagine how wonderful the joys of eternity will be, if only we pick up the "loose ends" now and go on to perfection. *—Contributed*



## Created, Formed, Made

**"Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him" (Isa. 43:7).**

**T**HE PLAN of God centers around the glorifying of individuals, worthy men and women who are fit to be part of His finished handiwork. These select persons go through a special process of development. In the text of Isaiah, they are "called," then "created, . . . formed, . . . made."

God's whole plan centers around the developing and perfecting of these people. In Isaiah 43, the Prophet makes a remarkable declaration of God's ongoing eternal purpose. Whom is God selecting? It is even "every-one that is called by my name." God may have been speaking to a nation, but at this point His divine spotlight focuses on the individual, "even every one that is called by my name." Here is the first step in bringing the human creation into the Divine plan: being *called*.

Then the next step follows quickly, a special aspect of development: "I have created him." These select persons do not come about by chance, nor are they left to the blind forces of nature. They are designed, developed, "created."

What is the purpose in this special creation process? "I have created him for my glory." God plans that His finished creation will glorify Him, will enhance and increase His new world.

It is not a creation that comes from nowhere and goes nowhere. If we would obtain His supreme good, we must see ourselves as God sees us and fit ourselves into His purposes. We must understand the purpose of His work and the standard by which God measures our lives.

A minister was once asked by one of his parishioners who was wishing to entangle him in questionable debate, "Tell us, doctor, what do you really think of God?" His answer was quick: "Madam," he said, "it matters not at all what I think of God; it mat-

ters *everything* what God thinks of me."

When we examine ourselves in the light of God's word, it always compels us to that judgment. We come to the standard of eternity, to the balances of the sanctuary, to the measurements of God.

"I have created . . . I have formed . . . I have made." The Hebrew words behind these three terms show a distinct emphasis and significance. First, "I have created." This term refers to an entirely new beginning. We may apply it to God's action in beginning a great work in behalf of His human family, when He starts acting on their behalf. It is, as far as each one is concerned, a new departure.

The second step is that of being "formed." This word indicates a *process*. It is a word which is used of the potter at his work at the wheel. He is using what already exists to make something better of it, something new.

The third word, "made," is a word which indicates the final result. It is *accomplished*. I have made; I have finished, and it is done. The Prophet looked far into the future when the plan of God would be complete. He looked also to the end of the forming process which God was even then performing on him, to the time when he would be "created . . . formed . . . made." He was looking to the time when he would eventually stand upon the earth, the finished work of God.

There is a sense in which we do the forming ourselves. We are responsible for our own work. There is another sense in which God is due the credit for forming us. We are His special creation made by His pre-designed plan. He has created us "for his glory." And though we must do all in our power to cooperate with that plan of creation, submit to it, and change our thinking to be in line with it, all the parts of that plan—

the purpose, the life, and the ongoing success—are God's.

What is the purpose of being made? I have created him, says the Prophet speaking for God, "for my glory." We are all familiar with this creating process. Why, then, was the Prophet mentioning it?

There was something here which should startle and awaken us to our obligation; something that should catch our attention and change the direction of our lives. It is the realization of the purpose for which we are made. There is the day of birth, and somewhere out there is the day of death, and between these two is our period of obligation, and our opportunity. The real meaning of the interim, all that lies between, is what? Is it the amassing of wealth, the acquisition of knowledge, the pursuit of pleasure? No, it is to live for the glory of God, to do that which glorifies God, to do everything in our power to assure that we will be part of His finished, final creation.

And in this way we shall be created, formed and finally made, the finished product.

This whole process of forming is a work in cooperation with God. Jesus expressed it in these words, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." It is illustrated in the allegory in Genesis using the figure of a literal garden and a man called to work in the garden. The garden represents our "field" of service, Adam represents those who are called to serve God in every age. "Go," says God to Adam, "dig this garden and keep it." Adam was to *do* something; he was to work, yet not alone, and not *his* way but *with God*. The garden was God's; Adam himself was God's creation; all the tools he used were God's. All the sun and rain to produce the growth were from God. Still Adam had a distinct part to perform; the effort was to be his.

God was not overlooking this fact. He was more than fair, for all the fruits of Adam's labor were to be his to enjoy. Still, Adam had to remember that the garden was not Adam's property, but God's. And

Adam himself was not free to do as he pleased; he belonged to God.

Our work of forming a character is much the same, and must be done in cooperation with God. This special forming work will go on right through the Millennium until the earth is filled with the glory of the Lord.

And so we ask ourselves today, What am I doing to work with God? What am I doing with the human life He has entrusted to me? Do I take this time, these days, these powers, this mind, this thought, this spirit, and use them for any other purpose than to glorify God? If I do, am I not stealing from God? Am I not taking what is rightly His?

The apostle Paul speaks of this creating process as a renewing, a recreating. He says in his letter to the Ephesians (4:22-24): "That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." Here is a creating process being done in "righteousness and true holiness" to produce a "new man."

The Apostle spoke of the same process in his letter to the Colossians, where he calls it putting off "the old man with his deeds" and putting on "the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him" (Col. 3:9-10). It is a total transformation, a remaking of our lives from the inside out. He says it again in his letter to the Romans: "Adapt yourselves no longer to the pattern of this present world, but let your minds be remade and your whole nature thus transformed" (Rom. 12:2, NEB). There must be a death of one life and a creation of a new. Paul says it yet again: it is the "inward man" that is "renewed day by day" (II Cor. 4:16).

Or, to use another metaphor, it is God's law of growth. We are made to grow, and grow we must, until we are fully "created, . . . formed, . . . made." MM

**The place to grow is HERE, and the time is NOW.**

## ● Is Jesus "Jehovah"?

*"It seems to me that the 'way of Jehovah' of Isaiah 40:3 is applied to Christ in Matthew 3:3; Mark 1:3; and Luke 3:4. Does not this indicate that Christ is God?"*

Isaiah 40:3 is a prophecy concerning the mission which John the Baptist fulfilled as the forerunner of Christ's first advent. "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God." It seems only proper that the "way of the Lord" in this text should be applied to the way of Christ and "a highway for our God."

According to the prophecy of the angel before Christ's birth, it was revealed that "they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us" (Matthew 1:23). Thus it is not inconsistent that a text in the Old Testament which speaks of "Lord" or "God" in a prophecy relating to Christ should be rightly applied to Christ in fulfillment, Father and Son bearing the same name. But this does not in any way suggest that they are the same individual, nor does such a conclusion seem necessary from the wording of the passages in the Bible. The two individuals were of one family, and shared a common purpose. Jesus gave His entire life to the performance of His Father's will—He was doing the work of God.

## ● On Worshiping Jesus

*"How can you worship Jesus if you don't believe He is God?"*

Jesus spoke repeatedly of His Father and of His own role as Son, hence, we cannot believe He was His own Father. Nor can we accept the idea that He was equal in power and authority to His Father, for He said, "My Father is greater than I" (John 14:28). He was sent of His Father (a separate being) (John 6:38; 11:42), and He ascended to His Father (obviously not to Himself) (John 14:12).

How then can we worship Jesus?

Near the close of Jesus' earthly ministry, the Father apparently delegated to Jesus a certain degree of au-

thority by which He could and would act as intercessor and mediator (I Tim. 2:5) and receive prayer and petition. These are Jesus' words:

"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you" (John 15:16).

Jesus spoke again of the authority given Him by His Father, in these words: "For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth: and he will show him greater works than these, that ye may marvel. For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. . . . For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man" (John 5:20-23, 26-27).

Again, in His last recorded sermon delivered the same night in which He was betrayed, He said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full. . . . At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: for the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God. I came forth from the Father, [Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit] and am come into the world" (John 16:23-28).

The New Testament confirms this, giving frequent mention of Christ in His role of mediator and as worthy of worship and honor (See Heb. 8:6; 9:15; Rev. 15:4).

MM

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*Publicity is not a measure of worth. Summer showers are more effective than hurricanes, but they get no publicity.*



## On the Attitude-Watch

**T**HE greatest discovery of my generation is that human beings can alter their lives by altering their attitudes of mind." This observation by a modern day philosopher confirms a fact taught long ago in the Bible.

In almost every parable Jesus stresses an attitude toward things, toward people, or toward the experiences of life.

A recent university research study concluded that it is not aptitudes but attitudes that make us successful. The study showed that ninety-three percent of our success is attitude, seven percent is skill and knowledge.

All of us should examine our attitudes frequently to see if they are in line with our goal as Christians. It is so easy, with the variety of activities that crowd into our lives, to let our attitudes get off course.

What are some areas where we must especially be on the attitude-watch?

### **Our attitudes toward people.**

One is in the area of our actions and reactions to people. I must not let what another does determine what I do.

Yet how often we do just this. If someone reacts in a bad way to what we do, our tendency is to react in kind. We let them determine our actions and attitudes. Freedom in Christ allows us to act as His child.

### **Our attitudes toward our work and the quality of effort we put into it.**

An area where attitudes can quickly and easily deteriorate is in the area of work. To be effective and consistent, we need to be self-disciplined, and see our task as God-given and God-assigned.

Someone has said that work is a form of worship. As we work, so we worship. Are we glad to offer to God our daily work as our worship? Are others around us indifferent? Let not their attitude change ours or diminish our work disciplines. We must take precautions lest we become a lazy and mediocre person.

### **Our attitude toward ourselves, toward the effects of what we do.**

Another area where attitudes need attention is in the area of responsibility. We all face two possibilities: one, of feeling superior when things go well, thinking that it is our own doing; two, of feeling defeated when things do not go well, or when something we recommended is turned down. Both are off center and breed deadening attitudes.

We can curb the first by expressing genuine appreciation for what they do. Another way is by realizing how much we obtain from others, and making the most of it; by seeing success not as our own but as the success of the "team," the "group," the "family," the cooperative effort of all. It is bound to be true, for none of us live to ourselves alone.

We can curb the second possibility—that of feeling defeated when things do not go well, when our ideas are rejected—by keeping our feelings out of the matter. If we are doing our God-assigned duty, can we not leave the results with Him when we have done our best?

We should frequently step aside and allow ourselves a long look at the big picture. Where is it all tending? What is happening? What will be the outcome for all concerned?

### **Our attitude toward those who have wronged us.**

Perhaps our greatest area to show our stature is when we have been wronged, and this is an area that needs constant attitude-watching. Someone has observed that those who have received mercy from God sometimes find it hard to bestow mercy upon others.

If we are not careful, our words can become exercises in criticism, and carping barbs stick through.

**Attitudes are important.** It doesn't really matter whether what we do is profitable or popular, whether it wins a salute from a nation, or from no one. What matters only and always is whether it is what God calls right. And whether our attitude toward it is right.

That is all that counts.

MM

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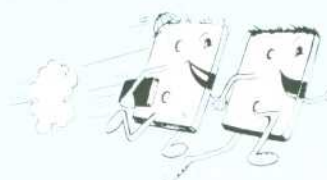
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