



Megiddo Message

*Grass withers,
and flowers fade:
but the word of our Lord
stands for evermore.*

—Isaiah 40:18

Vol. 75, No. 9
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Opinion or Principle?

BRIEFLY stated from a Christian viewpoint, an *opinion* is what “I” happen to think about a matter, or what “you” think. A *principle* is what God has stated to be *His* mind on the matter.

As seekers after what God has to offer, we recognize that God has stated certain principles by which He wishes us to govern our conduct, and by which He will evaluate us. Alongside these basic principles we have many opinions of our own, some of which are an outgrowth of principle and some entirely independent. Both principles and opinions have a place in our lives; the trouble is that sometimes we confuse the two.

Opinions and principles differ widely. Opinions are products of our own minds; principles are derived from the laws of God. Opinions have to do with personal tastes, preferences, past experiences, human judgments, and scores of other factors that shape us into what we are; principles are God-given guidelines by which we can recast our thoughts, words and feelings until we become morally “like God.”

Opinions are subject to whim, notion and change; principles are enduring. Opinions have only local or personal value; principles are universal. Opinions have to do with the passing interests and standards of this world; principles concern the eternal, even “the word of the Lord” which “liveth and abideth forever.”

Such wide differences between the two, and yet how easily—and disastrously—we may confuse them!

It is impossible—and unnecessary—that we divorce ourselves from our experiences and preferences. To like or dislike certain colors, foods, mannerisms, and methods is human and legitimate. And while all these must be governed by our principles, it is important to realize that they are not principles themselves and should not be set forth as such. Opinions were never meant to serve as the standard by which we live; nor are they to be the standard by which we judge others. Strong opinions are easily voiced, and may require much governing to keep them in their proper place.

As professing Christians, we must be careful that we do not take opinions too seriously ourselves, or allow them to absorb too large a portion of our conscious thought. They may seem all-important, but in the divine balance they do not carry a feather’s weight. Our first concern must always be God and principle. “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.”

When we fall into conversation with a Christian brother or sister, we would do better to discuss our opinions less and our principles more. Lengthy discussion of “pet” ideas make what Jesus called “idle” words, words that gender strifes and discord and do not edify. We are not examples of true believers when our chief purpose in conversation is to market our own opinion.

The Bible records the thoughts and words of many of God’s great men and women, but among them all is not a word about their own opinions—they simply didn’t matter! Yet how easily and freely we dispense ours!—if not watchful.

It might help us if we would think of gathering all our opinions together sometime and placing a large sign upon them: “Handle With Care.” However strongly held and valuable to us, they are not divine and should never be handed out as such. Even if our opinion is the very best, from a human point of view, still there is a vast distance between its level and the level of God’s thoughts—even the distance between heaven and earth! (Isa. 55:8-9).

God gives us the opportunity of exchanging our thoughts for His, but too often we do not look upon the giving up of our own opinions as such an opportunity. We hang on to them—as if they were so much better than those of the Ruler of the Universe!

Let’s try handling our opinions with greater care. And when we must dispense them, let us give them out as having the value *God* places upon them—no more. We are not here to promote *our opinions*, but *God’s principles*—which are sure to be worth thinking about, and worth listening to—and obeying. MM

Megiddo means...

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

We believe

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

We believe

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

We believe

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

We believe

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

We believe

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

We believe

—in ourselves as capable of applying the precepts and principles of the Word of God in our own lives, in this way perfecting that high quality of character which God has promised to reward with life everlasting in His heavenly Kingdom on earth.

We believe

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

Bible Quotations

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

NEB—*New English Bible*

NIV—*New International Version*

NASB—*New American Standard Bible*

RSV—*Revised Standard Version*

TLB—*The Living Bible*

TEV—*Today's English Version*

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

Phillips—*The New Testament in Modern English*

Berkeley—*The Modern Language New Testament*

Weymouth—*The New Testament in Modern Speech*

Goodspeed—*The New Testament translated by Edgar J. Goodspeed*

Moffatt—*The Bible, A New Translation*

AAT—*The Bible: An American Translation*

About Our Cover

Our cover photo is a small area of the gardens of Leamington Spa, in Warwickshire, England, taken by Margaret Tremblay.

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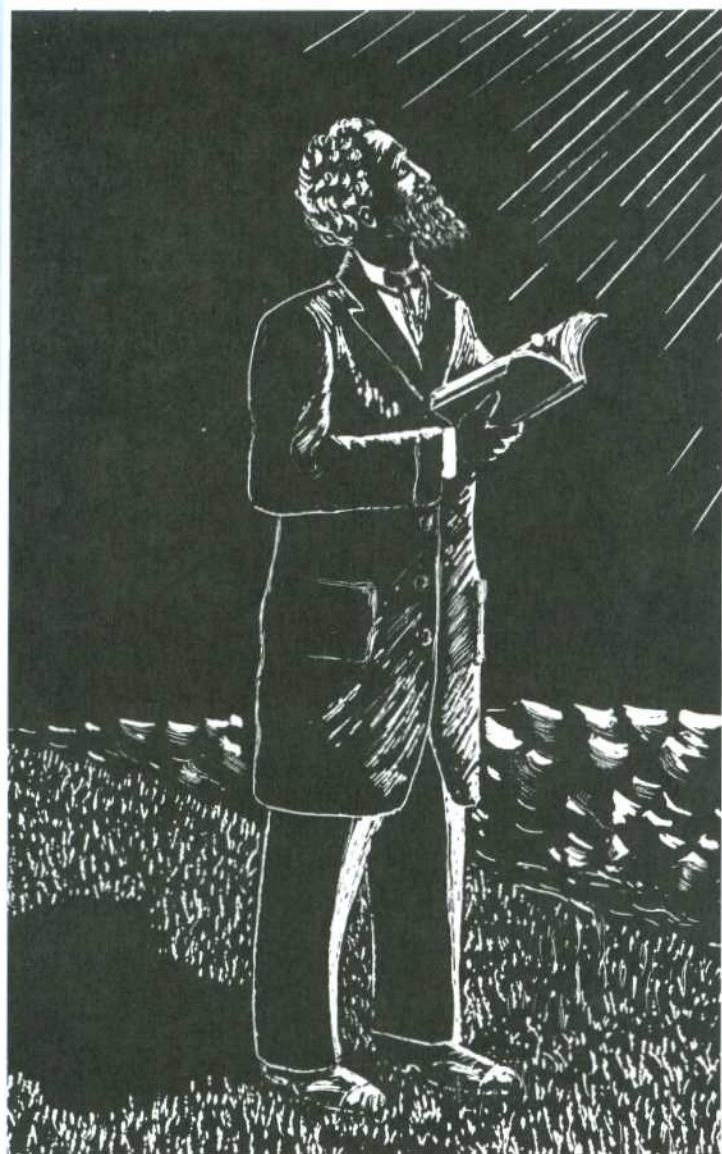
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MEGIDDO is a way of believing and living, grounded solidly in the Bible as the reliable Word of our Creator. A total view of life, the world and the universe, it sees all events, men and nations moving together toward one God-ordained climax: the Kingdom 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.

Told By Himself

Excerpts from the sermons, talks and writings of our founder, Rev. L. T. Nichols (1844-1912), as he drew from his own experiences and convictions for purposes of illustration.



Early Education

I well remember when I was a boy the first Sunday-school lesson my mother taught me; and what do you suppose it was? It is one of the greatest falsehoods that was ever told, and it will give you a sample of what the world believes. I was proud to have a teacher, and I was happy to think I was old enough to go to Sunday-school. So Mother said, "You must learn this little lesson to say to your teacher." The first question was, "Who was the first man?" The answer was, "Adam." When Mother asked me the question, in my innocence I said, "Papa." She said, "No, no, my son; the teacher will laugh at you. You must say Adam." So Mother said it was Adam and I believed it. But when I came to read the Bible for myself I found out differently.



Aspiring . . .

Life for me began with earnest toil. In my northern Wisconsin home there were no luxuries, and few even of the necessities of life; but love lightened the toil, and contentment made happy its hours. A boy of fourteen, with only what I could earn by daily toil; an invalid father, a devoted mother, a loving sister, dependent to a great extent on my exertions, I faced the battle of life with few hours to spend in the schoolroom, and none within a college hall. While other boys were at play, I was poring over my books. Truth was the gem for which I sought—and my soul's longing cry was: "Oh, tell me, *where* can it be found?" I started out in life determined to reject error, it mattered not in what deceptive form it might appear, or however honored by long acceptance.



A Youthful Vow

When I was a boy I loved my father and mother, but some things they did I could not agree with. They wanted me not to speak of these things so much. Mother knew I had made a vow—and it pleased her, too. I vowed to my God when only eleven years old that I would never drink one drop of liquor, nor smoke a cigar or take any tobacco in my mouth, that I would never commit an immoral act, nor take the name of God in vain; I did it of my own accord, no one told me to, and I have kept that vow inviolate.

I made up my mind away back then that I would not spend a cent for things of no value. I resolved I would never use tobacco, but save my money; I said I would never spend it for liquor, for foolish toys, or the frivolities of the world, but would use it for some good purpose. I would save till I owned the shingles over my head, and if I had any left I would spend it for others. I came to this Book and saw we must work for God alone. I found things that caused me to turn my desires from the world. I did not want this world's fame and glory; and when quite young, only thirteen years of age, I said I must proclaim these things. I had no Bible, and I persuaded Mother to get me one. And how I prized my little Bible: I always carried it with me.



Early Temptation

When I was a young man I was working for a Chicago firm. They offered me a position where I could get a salary. It was to be a graduated salary. I saw that if I took it up I would not have time enough to spend in the service of the Lord. I might have been a rich man now, but I did not want to be a rich man; for Jesus said that a rich man shall hardly enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. I have plenty, and my wife has plenty. I do not have any desire to pile up riches like a Harriman did, but I am doing good with my money. I am sure not to be one of these rich men, for I am spending my money in the wondrous work of the Lord. I do not want to pile up, but want the state the Prophet speaks of: "Give me neither poverty nor riches." I am not poor, neither am I a millionaire.



Longing . . .

While I longed for greater advantages and more time to devote to study, yet I was determined not to be discouraged by any obstacle. Such sentiments as expressed by Horace Greeley helped nerve me for the struggle: "When those who have enjoyed rare opportunities and swayed vast numbers and have been borne through life on the shoulders of shouting multitudes shall have been laid at rest in golden coffins, to moulder forgotten—the stately marble their only monument—it will be found that some humble youth, *who neither inherited nor found but hewed out his opportunities*, has uttered the thought which shall render the age memorable—by extending the means of enlightenment and blessing to our race."



A Loftier Ideal . . .

Personal honor, worldly glory, earth's millions, were not the prize for which I labored. "We need a loftier ideal to nerve us for heroic lives, to deem fame, riches, personal happiness but shadows, of which human good is the substance; to welcome pain, privation, that the sphere of human knowledge, the empire of human thought, be thereby extended." While earth's monarchs, and conquerors, and great ones repose under stately monuments, towering heavenward, soon to crumble to dust, my great ambition was then and is now—to be worthy of having written over me the simple epitaph: "One who was faithful to his God, and loved his fellow men."

I looked over the field of human thought to see by what means I could accomplish the greatest good, and I decided that of all the literature of earth the Bible contained the most

(Continued on page 16)

Making the Right Choices

Scripture Reading: Phil. 1:1-11

Our most crucial choices are not always between good and evil but between good and better, and better and best.

LIFE is a series of choices. Each day, each hour, each moment, we are choosing. We choose colors, foods, friends, words. We choose routes, methods, actions, thoughts. From the unconscious question, "Which bite of meat shall I take next from the helping on my plate?" to the tremendous problem with which the mind may wrestle in exhausting and repeated conflict through months or years, we are constantly judging, sorting, selecting. Many inconsequential decisions are left to the unconscious mind which chooses as the conscious mind has taught it. But conscious or unconscious, important or trivial, your personality, your character is the sum total of your choices.

Someone has said that a godly character is the habit of making the right choices. How does making the right choices become a habit? Only by doing it again and again and again in every situation of life.

The ability to choose wisely, to subordinate the lesser to the greater is probably the most crucial of all problems of life, for on it hangs our success or failure, our improvement or our degeneration, and in a larger sense, our eternal life or our eternal death.

We all agree that seeking God and His Kingdom should be first in our lives. But how do we translate this into everyday life? It all comes down to simple decisions—of what we talk about,

what we think about, what we feel and intend and do and allow, even what we eat and drink. By all these petty decisions we show whether the cultivating of the heart and mind is of greater importance than entertainment. We show that we regard character above self-image, that usefulness is better than idleness, and that to be right is infinitely more important than to be popular. When confronted bluntly with any one of these simple alternatives, we know instantly what we *should* approve. The problem is actually to give first place to these higher values. This is how we build character.

Select—select—select! This is the law of life. We cannot *have* everything. We cannot *give* everything. We cannot *be* everything. We cannot *do* everything. We cannot go everywhere we would like to. We cannot read everything. We must choose, choose, choose.

The president of a large religious university saw a young student sitting in the lounge reading the newspaper. "Young man," he said, "you need to decide whether you are going to be a specialist in the newspaper or in the New Testament. Whichever way you decide, you must say good-bye to the other forever." Whatever our goal may be, it can be achieved only by sacrificing that which is lesser. This requires discipline.

Our stature as men and women of

Note: *Making the Right Choices* is available as a complete church service on cassette. Price: \$3.00

The ability to choose wisely, to subordinate the lesser to the greater, is the most crucial of all life's problems.

Christ is determined exactly and entirely by our skill in selecting. If we "major in minors," if we show a "first-rate dedication to second-rate causes," if we allow impulse and convenience to dictate our choices while we weakly drift with the tide of circumstances, how can we expect to be anything but shabby, mediocre, and ineffective?

If we affirm certain qualities but fail to give them first place in our lives; if we allow them to remain in the "never-never-land" of good intentions without any rigid adherence *right now*, their character benefit to us will be absolutely zero. Right now we must say "Yes" to everything God commands, and this means saying "No" to everything He forbids. *Right now* we must develop a deep and sincere love for God and the things which He has offered. We cannot expect to have it later if we do not set to work at it now. And we must do it no matter how much easier or more pleasant or more appealing other things may seem at the moment.

It is reported that when a professional author said to Sir Winston Churchill that he couldn't write unless a certain "mood" came on him, the statesman replied: "Don't be fooled! Shut yourself in your study from nine to one and *make* yourself write. Prod yourself! Kick yourself! It's the only way."

This was the spirit of the apostle Paul. He did not take his personal life casually. He said, "I run the race with determination. I am no shadow-boxer, I really fight! I am my body's sternest master, for fear that when I have preached to others I should

myself be disqualified" (I Cor. 9:27, Phillips).

Once we have achieved that level of discipline, we will not be captive to anything lesser. Whatever duty calls, we will be able to leave what is at hand to do it. It will give us the strength to rise above ourselves both in the small and great issues of life. We will not be governed by what we *feel* like doing, or what we would naturally *want* to do, but rather by what is our duty at that moment. We will be masters of ourselves.

The Need for Discipline

Why do we practice discipline? It is to exercise our powers of choice, to be sure that we have our natural appetites under control. In every area of our lives we must subordinate "want" to "need"; we must demonstrate that we are not living to satisfy our instinctive cravings but to promote the higher life of the spirit. Self-discipline is a valuable tool in achieving the total self-mastery to which we are committed.

Being able to take discipline of any nature with grace and profit by it has many side benefits. It is not easy to subordinate natural initiative to authority; it is not easy to bend our will to circumstances beyond our control; but it is something every one of us must accomplish before we can hope to share in Christ's eternal Kingdom. Rebellion is instinctive, and the more authority is imposed, the more rebellion grows. But in most of life's situations, even outside the realm of religious faith, rebellion is stupid and destructive. Being a constitutional rebel is no ground for

pride. It requires neither intelligence nor character to assert loudly, "No one can tell me what to do." But it requires both to be a mature, cheerful, humble follower of Jesus Christ.

The unbroken colt is of little value. Whatever value he has is based on the assumption that he will not remain unbroken. The same is true of ourselves. Our worth in life is in direct proportion to our ability to wear the yoke. Wisely did Jeremiah write, "It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth" (Lam. 3:27). The sooner we learn this, the better. Whatever we accomplish in life, it is a matter of submission. If we are constantly kicking and chafing, we are sure to be both defeated and unhappy.

On the other hand, discipline does not require that we be echoes only. The wise Christian will learn to submit to some yokes, and to throw off others. And it takes careful thinking to know how to discriminate.

When we stand face to face with the glories that could be ours had we sacrificed for them, it will be easier to explain why we made an all-out effort and won, than to explain why we clung to self and lost!

spiritual tension, if ever so slightly?

There are many activities which are not a definite transgression of a law of God, and which may prove beneficial; but the question is always, Is it the best for me in my situation? Some people enjoy fishing, some enjoy hunting, some enjoy traveling, gardening, reading, singing or music. Any one of these in its place may be good, if properly governed. But each must be allowed only a predetermined amount of our interest and attachment. And should the activity at any time become too absorbing or too demanding of our interest, we must be ready to drop it. Never must the good crowd out the best.

How foolish to allow *any* interest in this world, however good or wholesome, to become so absorbing as to partly eclipse the glory of eternal life and thereby jeopardize our chances of securing it!

Careless reading or carelessness in what we allow our eyes to dwell upon is an ever-present danger. Anyone who loves to read must be on a constant guard lest he find himself reading that which is not spiritually uplifting. It might be something light, humorous, a little shady, or simply of human interest. Some reading material might be interesting and informative; but while not especially harmful, it might not be the best for our spiritual growth, hence could not be read to God's glory. We must always be ready to exchange the good for the better, and the better for the best. With so much at stake, how tragic if for some petty satisfaction in this life we forfeit our right to the eternal crown!

The words of the apostle Paul in II Timothy 2 come to warn us: "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier" (II Tim. 2:4). Or as translated in the New English Bible: "A soldier on active service

Let Us Pray:

OLORD our strength and our fortress and our refuge in the day of affliction, our hope and the support of our life in a world of turbulence and distrust, we come to Thee in full confidence that Thou art, and that Thou art guarding and guiding each one who will do Thy will. Thou alone art able to save. Thou alone art able to deliver us from the bondage of mortality. In Thee alone can we place our confidence and know that it shall not be disappointed.

Thou God of all things great and small, who knowest our goings out and our comings in and art acquainted with all our ways; Thou to whom the future is as clear as the past to us, help us to approach Thee in perfect faith, knowing that Thy Word is true and Thy promises sure. May we be wholehearted in our effort to please Thee, reserving nothing with which to gratify the cravings of the flesh.

Help us to take ever more seriously our responsibility to Thee, to be so watchful of our every thought and attitude that we may make our lives pleasing to Thee and someday merit the high honor of becoming Thine eternal sons and daughters.

Grant to each of us the courage to crucify in our own lives the vanities, the immaturities, the conceits that separate from Thee. Give us a sense of holy purpose that no petty annoyances, disappointments, sorrows, or crosses can obscure. In Thee may we discover the power to be master in every situation we confront. In Thee may we live each day triumphantly.

We pray Thee to watch over Thy children wherever they may be. Still us within, surround us without, guide us from above, and keep us all moving steadily toward the goal which Thou hast set before us, that we may share together a place of honor in Thy eternal, soon-coming Kingdom, for which we pray. Amen.

will not let himself be involved in civilian affairs; he must be wholly at his commanding officer's disposal." We, too, must be *wholly* at our commanding officer's disposal. *Every* other interest, however innocent, must be second to our one supreme interest.

The apostle Paul gave another admonition on wise choosing in his letter to the church at Philippi. "My prayer for you," he writes, "is that you may have still more love—a love that is full of knowledge and wise insight. I want you to be able always to recognize the highest and the best, and to live sincere and blameless lives until the day of Jesus Christ. I want to see your lives full of true goodness" (Phil. 1:9-10, Phillips).

All things are not equal; even all *good* things are not equal. Paul was

recommending that his brethren develop a kind of "sixth sense," a penetrating intuition that is practiced, cultivated, disciplined to recognize "the highest and the best." It is not a matter of being able to differentiate only between good and evil, but between good and better, and between better and the best. "Excellence" denotes that of the very *highest* quality: "that ye may approve things that are excellent." Why be satisfied with less?

We can often sense quickly when someone makes a temporal misjudgment. But how quickly do we sense our own poor judgment when we confuse spiritual values, when we put second things first, when we settle for that which is "better" when we could have had *the best*?

What is the result of this special

~~Good~~, ~~Better~~, **Best**

THE Christian, above all people, has perplexing choices to make. The business of perfecting a character is not a simple matter; it is complex. Once a person has made the big decision between good and evil, he is at once confronted with a wide selection of things labeled good, better and best. Distinctions are not clear or obvious. What may appear to be a good and perfectly harmless course in itself may in time lead imperceptibly to a bypath. Every choice leads inevitably to a destination, and it is that destination that we want to consider. Thus we ask ourselves, Is this the best course I could possibly find, or is it only a good course?

The carnal mind is rightly described as “deceitful above all things” (Jer. 17:9) and “more subtle” than any beast of the field. Knowing this, we need not expect that it will openly suggest that we leave God and go in the broad way. It is too subtle for that. Instead, it lures us to deviate from the straight course only a fraction, a hairsbreadth at a time, by reasoning like this: “Surely this little thing cannot be a sin, therefore it must be all right for me to do.” Many a well-intentioned Christian has unintentionally followed such logic—to his destruction.

Paul felt this insidious persuasion in his own mind and he conquered it with this reasoning: “All things are lawful, but all things are not beneficial; all things are lawful, but not all things build up” (I Cor. 10:23, Wilson’s *Emphatic Diaglott*). Of all the things he could have done, he chose only those things which were constructive. The test he applied was: Given my time and my situation, is this the *very best* thing for me to do?

There are many activities in this world which are not evil, but their danger lies in the fact that neither are they wholly constructive. They

We cannot *HAVE* everything. We cannot *GIVE* everything. We cannot *BE* everything. We cannot *DO* everything. We cannot *GO* everywhere we would like to. We cannot *READ* everything. We must choose, choose, choose.

will not bring us closer our goal. This is reason enough for a wise man to avoid them. He has no time for good things, nor even better things; he is afraid of everything but the *best*.

Our daily actions must be guided by deeper considerations than the mere question, “Is this a sin, or is it not a sin?” Was it a sin for Martha to prepare a meal for Jesus? She simply did not see what her sister understood, that all our choices are not between good and evil; that many times we must choose between good and best. Mary chose that which was best.

Many times we fret and chafe at restrictions which seem to us unnecessary. This only reveals our shortsightedness. Considered alone, a small divergence from the narrow way may appear innocent enough; but we cannot set any act in a place by itself and judge whether it be a wise act or an unwise act. For everything we do is closely interwoven with a long string of reactions and results. Had the astronomers launching a rocket to the moon erred by so much as a few thousandths of a degree in the angle of their missile, they would have missed the moon by many hundreds of miles.

How to Evaluate...

To determine the value of a thing we must look at the whole scheme and consider the possible end of the matter.

When making daily choices, we might help ourselves by asking a few questions, such as:

- Will this strengthen my will-power or weaken it?
- Will it draw me closer to God?
- Am I putting the things that matter most at the mercy of the things that matter least?

• Will this course place me in the best possible advantage for spiritual growth, or will it be loosening my

When making a choice, ask yourself:

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- Will this course place me in the best possible advantage for spiritual growth, or will it be loosening my spiritual tension, if ever so slightly?

choosing, according to Paul? "That you may be sincere and without offense." Weymouth renders this: "that ye may be men of transparent character." Moffatt also uses the word "transparent" for what the KJV translates "sincere." Transparent character—what better description could we have of that which results from choosing the very best!

The Greek word translated "sincere" or "transparent" may have come from a combination of two words meaning "the sunlight" and "to judge." The word would thus literally mean "sun-tested," or "sun-

judged." This seems to be a word with special meaning. It is said that in the ancient world, slipshod sculptors would take blemished, defective stones, fill up the cracks with wax, paint over the blemishes, and produce a statue that looked respectable. But in time the sun would melt the wax, peel the paint, and reveal the glaring imperfections. Thus "sun-tested" meant to be free from pretense and sham.

It is also said that "sun-testing" came out of the dark shops that lined the Jerusalem streets. A customer wishing to purchase a piece of pottery or glass was wise to take it out into the sunlight to see its faults and flaws before making a decision to buy. If the article passed this "sun-test," it was all right to buy.

Anything that is truly "the best" will stand the sun-test. It will be "sun-judged," able to stand in the clear sun of God's judgment, with nothing to conceal or hide. This is what the apostle Paul urged his brethren in Ephesus: "Live like men who are at home in the daylight" (5:8, NEB). In other words, be transparent, sincere, without blame.

Changing Our Tastes

This choosing, this deciding what is good, better and best, all comes down to a question of tastes: What do I really like?

It has been rightly said that a man's true nature is best known by what he does in his leisure time. In other words, what does he like? It might be profitable for us to ask ourselves, "If I could do just as I like for the rest of my life, what would I do?" An honest answer to the question might be a bit difficult, so accustomed have we become to the dictatorship of circumstances and conventions; but for our own good we really should appraise our tastes from time to time as a yardstick of our spiritual growth.

It is a long way from the bottom to the top of the scale of human tastes. Both these extremes are noted in the Word of God. At one end we have those who "sleep not except they have done mischief, and their sleep is taken away unless they cause some to fall." At the other we find, "I *delight* to do thy will, O my God." Between these two extremes lie every shade and grade of human liking. Let it be said in justice to our race that it is only a relatively small number of exceptionally vicious persons who find pleasure in the debauchery of others. The great bulk of humanity are found at a somewhat higher level, meaning well, but opposed to change or strenuous effort, their dreams being of such things as food and drink, sleep and recreation and bodily ease, and of the acquisition of money to provide more and more of these gratifications. From this broad and teeming level many roads of ambition lead upward, none of them crowded; but all, with one exception, prove to be "blind alleys." Success in the gratification of these higher tastes in art, science, statesmanship or benevolence, must be its own reward; for at the end of each short road, death throws over all human projects the mantle of futility.

The only exception, the one and only path with an ending worth our consideration, is the narrow, difficult way leading to everlasting life. If we have no love of life, that road is certainly not for us. God will never save a man against his will; and for the man or woman of low tastes, eternal life in His Kingdom would be eternal torment. The law of God is only for those who would "love life and see good days" (I Pet. 3:10); the others are permitted to live their own lives, to follow their own likes and dislikes, low or high, to make their social order in their own image, then perish forever like the beasts of the field (Psalm 49:12, 14).

Fortunately, it has been so arranged by the Creator that most normal human beings have a strong attachment to life, and even a desire for the survival of their own personality, worthy or unworthy. It is to this inborn desire for personal immortality that we owe our escape from the miry level of the commonplace. But we do not attain immortality simply by wishing for it; the matter is not so simple as that. At the entrance to this narrow way, once we have found it, we pause to read the signs and to count the cost; and we see between us and the goal of our desires many things that we do not naturally like.

Occasionally we read or hear of or even meet an individual whose natural bent seems to be entirely for good, who thinks noble thoughts and does noble actions by nature. Wrestling with our own pettiness and carnality, we envy these superior personalities, not realizing that their nobility comes not by accident of birth but by the superior job they have done in controlling and educating their tastes, which basically are much like our own. For therein lies our only hope—in the fact that low or mediocre tastes *can be elevated*.

Whatever our heredity or natural endowments as individuals, Nature's nobleman does not exist. We all, *without exception*, have dispositions, wills, desires, ambitions, appetites and cravings that are *far* from godly; and only by a strong, steady, unrelenting hand of self-discipline upon us, motivated by a consuming passion to please God, can break them. Obedience must be learned, godliness must be learned, holiness must be learned,

integrity must be learned. In every sense of the word, true nobility is *made*, not born.

We might better say that man is a being with animal nature and instincts but having spiritual possibilities, and only as these possibilities are developed does he become something above the beasts of the field.

"My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord." Very well, then; since the Divine thoughts are contrary to nature in every way, we may fully expect, as we have said before, that we shall not like them. God's demands invade every conscious moment of our life; human nature cries, "Let me alone!" God's law says at every crossroad, "This way." Nature says, "The other way—my own way." The warfare is intense, even desperate at times—sometimes for a long time. The apostle Paul experienced this same mental conflict; his experiences and complete victory are recorded for our learning:

"I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do...I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see

another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members" (Rom. 7:15, 18-23, NIV).

This was Paul's experience, and every one of us can expect to have to fight it out on the same line. But it is not without purpose, or it would not be possible. Our desire for life and immortality, our faith in the promises of God, compels us to go on with the battle and conform ourselves to the law, if grudgingly.

Still this is not enough. This is not "glorying in the cross," this is not delighting to do His will. How shall we ever learn to *love* those things which at one stage of development seem a burden? Just as we learn to like anything else which is unpleasant—by keeping at it until we do, until our tastes are so completely changed that we enjoy what was previously a distress. And what makes this possible is not the distress itself but an overwhelming realization of the reward, the transcendent joy and glory and everlasting life that it will bring!

In business and industry, the young man who flits from job to job in the hope of finding entirely congenial work is far less likely to succeed than the one who selects his work, then buckles down to the task of learning to like it. "If there be first a willing mind," the battle is half won. And through all the dust and din, the sweat and blood of the conflict, the thing which keeps us in line until our tastes are changed from flesh to spirit is the hope of the reward.

All things are not equal; even all good things are not equal.
That is why we must choose, choose, choose.

"No man having drunk old wine," said Jesus, "straightway desireth new; for, saith he, the old is better." But when our eyes are opened to what the poisonous old wine is doing for us, it should convince us that the new is better, far better, and our taste for the old will rapidly diminish and disappear. Certain cures for alcoholism are said to be so effective that the former drunkard is now nauseated by the very thought of intoxicants.

This is the goal which we must reach in our fight against the old habits of thought and action. When our tastes are fully changed, we will no longer find anything attractive in the things God has forbidden. The reluctance and rebellion and sense of compulsion will be gone. We will loathe ourselves in our own sight for all the iniquities and our abominations of the past, for the sins to which we clung so tightly as though we could not live without them; we will loathe ourselves for what we have been, for our miserable jealousies and our deceit; our stubbornness and self-will, our pride and vain conceit, and will turn with relief to the freedoms of the new life in Christ, to the broader fields and greener pastures and glorious liberties which can only belong to the children of God.

We are living very, very close to the end of the six-thousand year period. The incomparable things which God has planned for the earth and mankind, events to which proph-

ets and sages and holy men and women of old looked forward with eager anticipation—but from which they were separated by millenniums of time—are now at our very doorstep. We are the most favored people of the ages. As Jesus said to His immediate followers, "Blessed are the eyes which see what ye see, and the ears which hear what ye hear." We are living in the most momentous era of the history of our earth. Why should we not be anxious to forgo the lesser for benefits that are infinitely greater?

Former President Theodore Roosevelt had been an Army man, and had a strong leaning toward military adventures. At the outbreak of World War I, he made an effort to enlist young men for an expeditionary force to go overseas and fight the aggressor Germany. In an address before a group of young men whom he hoped to enflame with the same passion that he had, he made the following statement: "Once this war has ended it will be much easier to explain why you enlisted and helped on with the war than to explain why you didn't."

Likewise, when we stand face to face with the glories that could be ours had we sacrificed for them, it will be easier to explain why we made an all-out effort and won, than it will be to explain why we clung to self and lost!

Fellow Christians, let us forgo the good for the better, and the better for the *very best!* MM

*God did not promise only roses would grow,
That there'd be no sorrow on the path we must go.
But God has promised to be with us each day,
To keep us and guide us each step of the way,
Making a way of escape from temptation,
Making us strong for each hard situation;
His grace is sufficient to see us clear through,
If we keep the faith and His holy law do.*

Sound Faith

FAITH is the prime requisite of a Christian's life. To a certain degree God's people always had to walk by faith, but now in these last days they walk by faith entirely. God commands that above all things we take the shield of faith if we would meet the battles of life triumphantly. The very fact that we are commanded to have faith suggests that it will be extremely needful before our victory is won.

Without faith it is impossible to please God; the work appears burdensome, minute obstacles grow to immense proportions; molehills become mountains; we tremble and flee before our enemy and fall into numerous pitfalls and temptations. But if we possess a sound faith our spiritual resources will be strengthened. Where once we were weak, now we will be strong. Troubles and obstacles will be met bravely and confidently.

Being full of faith, we proceed to make the necessary additions of courage, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity. When we possess these virtues, we have the assurance of an abundant entrance into the everlasting Kingdom of God.

We often speak of faith as a rock on which to stand or build. Our faith must be more than this. It must be the soil from which we live and grow. As a plant sends its roots, large and small, down deep and draws from the soil those elements vital for growth and maturity, so we must be rooted and grounded in the law of God, and draw from its precepts the needful elements to hasten our growth into holiness.

He whose faith is sound will be as a tree planted by the river of water. He will not wither and faint in the day of adversity. He will not be blown about with every wind of doctrine, but will be established and settled, rooted deep, bearing the lovely fruit of righteousness. MM

“This Thing Is From Me”

IN the days of the early kings, the Lord sent forth a command and concluded it by saying, “This thing is from me.” The people immediately obeyed, fully realizing that it was from the Lord Most High.

And today the Lord still speaks, though not audibly. He speaks through His written Word. He has promised that “all things” will work for the good of those who are His; *all* things that concern them *are* in His care and keeping.

Too often we have failed to realize that all things come from the disciplining and directing hand of the Almighty. We have despised, rejected and avoided the very things which would strengthen, develop and mold a character worthy of perpetuation.

The Almighty in His great mercy provides both the means of development and the strength we need to

perform His will, all wrapped in His great and precious promises. It is our duty to humbly accept and use what He has provided.

Those difficult circumstances, those ceaseless interruptions, those petty trials and irritations that crowd into our lives are for our spiritual development. It is by these petty trials of everyday that we are tested, proven and developed.

Those difficult circumstances are wonderful strength builders, ordinary though they may seem. Often we think they are more than we can bear, but by trying us to our limit the Lord increases our strength and endurance.

A little girl learning the piano was told by her teacher to exercise her fingers daily. The little girl said, “But it hurts my fingers.” The teacher kindly answered, “Yes, it hurts; but it strengthens them, too.” Thinking seriously for a moment, the little girl replied,

“Teacher, it seems like everything that strengthens, hurts.”

How does the gold obtain its luster except through the fire? Or how does the musician produce those beautiful tones, but through strenuous and ardent practice? How does the orator perfect his eloquent speech but through much training and vocal exertion? All that is high and noble calls for self-discipline, and what is nobler than the character disciplined under the hand of God?

As we go from day to day, let us see God in everything. When hardships and trials come our way, we should recognize them as opportunities to enrich our spiritual career. We are preparing for a high and noble position. The choicest things must cost. But God has promised strength to make the hardest spot our sweetest lot.

*See God in all things, great and small,
And give Him praise whate'er befall;
In life or death, in pain or woe,
See God, and overcome thy foe.*

*Then as each day unfolds its light,
Walk on by faith and not by sight.
Life will, indeed, rich blessing bring,
As you see God in everything.*

Be Encouraging

EVERYONE needs encouragement. Who does not want his efforts appreciated? Is anyone so dead to this desire that he can see his work ignored or rejected without feeling any hurt? Conversely does not anyone work harder and perform better when encouraged?

Many years ago there was an English poet-priest who, we are told, struggled against bitterness when some of his work, wrung from his soul at great cost, was poorly received. Years later, the author of his biography included this comment: “Despite his belief that any fruits of talent were God’s gift and should be dedicated solely back to Him in a spirit of sacrifice, his earthly rejection introduced an insidious corrosion into his supply of creative energy.”

As striving Christians we must always do our best, however it be received, knowing that God is the One to whom we must give account and from whom we will receive the ultimate recompense. “And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ” (Col. 3:23-24). But in the meantime let us give all possible encouragement to those who are struggling to harness their life energies to honor God and help others.

God forbid that any heart should fail or hand fall slack because *we* failed to be encouraging. MM

Two Pictures

Mary A. Lee

An open Book before me lies;
I sit alone in dimming light,
While ev'ning shades fall o'er me.
Day's brightness changing into night
Shuts out the world before me.

The stars are shining in the sky,
Each in its orbit, glorious, grand;
The firmament doth show me
The work of mighty Ail's hand
In those bright worlds above me.

While thoughts like these engross my mind,
I glance upon the open Book
Where Wisdom speaketh to me;
And in my mind's eye, as I look,
Two pictures pass before me.

The one great pleasure to me gives;
It fills my heart with joy and peace,
Those happy forms before me;
No sadness but a constant feast
Of blessings looking toward me.

But at the other one I pale—
At it the stoutest heart must quail,
So fearful, dark the picture.
I long to draw o'er it a veil,
To hide its frightful horror.

I see earth's rulers in dismay,
No peace, no safety and no rest;
Each, jealous of the other,
With hatred rankling in his breast,
Is crying, "Peace, my brother."

And while their lips are crying "Peace!"
Their minds with ghastly, fearsome skill,
Are planning great inventions;
And dexterous hands untiring build
Fierce weapons of destruction.

Crafts that rush swiftly o'er the land,
Or fly like meteors through the air,
Or streak above the clouds and breeze,
Or skim the turbid waters o'er
Then sink from sight beneath the seas.

Their prayers for peace avail them naught;
However wisely they may plan,
They'll not bring peace tomorrow.
Six thousand years of rule by man
Has brought but sin and sorrow.

The hour arrives; the final hour—
God's mercy will not longer wait,
Nor can His will be broken;
To seek the Lord 'tis now too late:
The God of heav'n has spoken.

Look up! the heavens burst in twain,
The King appears in splendor grand
With all His holy angels;
The hour of Judgment is at hand—
O hour of consternation.

Think you earth's tribes will own their King?
Will they allegiance to Him bring?
With open arms receive Him?
Lay off their robes of state and bring
Their costly treasures to Him?

Nay! nay! the nations of the earth
His proffered mercy will not take.
His awesome blessings scorning,
Together they a compact make,
Uniting to oppose Him—

When, lo, a sound falls on their ear;
What means this tramping that they hear?
A foe is right upon them!
An army rushing through the air,
Naught, naught can stand before them!

God's battle-sword, He sends it forth
'Gainst those who will not Him obey
To fight His battles for Him,
As hungry wolves rush on the prey,
Devouring all before them.

Earth's final, FINAL war is this,
The bloody scene that 'fore me lies;
And standing high toward heaven,
Great fiery letters greet my eyes
That spell out "ARMAGEDDON."



Oh, fearful scene where armies meet,
And missiles shriek and cannons roar!
Oh, fierce the battle rages!
Thinned ranks are filled by millions more
With angry, blackened faces.

Earth's fleeing hosts are followed fast
By the all-powerful, conquering Foe,
For Christ is now the victor;
Then, every enemy laid low,
Some turn to serve the Master.

Oh, woeful scene! Mine eyes to screen,
I clasp my hands before my face
And hide the vision from me
Where wickedness did run its course;
For Christ has won the vict'ry!

I gladly turn me to the right,
And there I catch a gleam of light
As other picture greets me.
It drives away the fearful sight,
And, oh, it soothes and cheers me!

This picture greatest pleasure gives,
With heav'nly thoughts of joy and peace,
Such happy forms before me!
No sadness but a constant feast
Of blessings looking toward me.

A scene in Kingdom fair I see,
Oh, sight of joy and gladness
Beyond earth's pain and anguish;
A scene within the pearly gate
When Christ His foes hath vanquished.

I see the work of Jesus Christ
Whose coming was so long foretold
By prophets through the ages.
He reigns in majesty and might;
All people sing His praises.

At last the age of peace has come
The age when righteousness shall stand
To rule earth's conquered nations;
I see them humbly bow before
The God of all creation.

No sight of battle horror there,
No deadly feud, no jealous hate,
Is seen the wide world over;
No need of wall or bar or gate,
Each trustful of the other.

I hear the happy shepherd's song,
And see the fields spread wide and long
Where flocks and herds are feeding.
No serpent bite, no beast by night,
No fear of thieves molesting.



At peace are all the tribes of earth,
Such peace as never was before;
The Lord of Hosts hath spoken,
And men shall study war no more,
His oath cannot be broken.

With pleasure in full measure
My heart wells up unmixed with fears,
At wreath of golden letters;
My happy eyes o'erflow with tears
As there I read, "A THOUSAND YEARS."

I forward gaze through earth's dark maze
And see beyond this dreary night,
Beyond the sowing, reaping,
Beyond where age shall dim our sight,
Beyond the sorrow, weeping,

Beyond the watching, waiting,
Beyond the time when wars shall cease,
Beyond death, chill and icy,
Beyond the thousand years of peace—
Beyond it all—Eternity.

I see it dimly; mortal eyes
May not behold the radiant light
Of that fair golden City;
Its brilliancy dispels all night
And fills the earth with glory.

O joyous Day when Christ shall come
And take His Kingdom and His throne
And reign in power and glory!
A thousand years from sorrow free,
And—after all—ETERNITY!

Told By Himself

(Continued on page 5)

knowledge that would benefit humanity for both this life and the one to come. On the very threshold of my investigations I was met with much to appall and bewilder even an older head. Over one thousand faiths in the land, all teaching different things, and all claiming to speak the words of an infallible God, the words of Holy Writ, yet that very Bible teaching that all its sayings are Yea and Amen, not Yea and Nay (II Cor. 1:19-20) and that its followers must be perfectly joined together in the same mind, all speaking the same things (I Cor. 1:10).

With such a state of affairs, I did not wonder that the world was turning infidel. I did not wonder that the inquirer after truth, bewildered by the confusion arising from jarring sects, began to doubt the infallibility of this blessed Word, and infidelity was adding thousands to its ranks. Either the Bible was divine, the work of an infallible God, or it was the work of fallible man; there was no halfway ground upon which to stand. I met prominent infidels and could not answer the charges brought against it. I saw that the wise of the world, the great teachers of the day, those trained in the theological schools of the land, could not meet them. I saw that the time honored creeds of the day would not stand the test before the bar of reason and evidence. If all others had failed, what could I do? I trembled at the magnitude of the undertaking. Thus passed days and weeks of anxious study, when often upon bended knees and with falling tears I prayed to God for light.



Searching...

One day while carefully reading, my eye caught a striking testimony in Prov. 2:3-5, "Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God." How the reading of these testimonies impressed my mind! I must search as for hid treasures to ever find the knowledge of God. If that were so, what had covered it up?

I sought for the answer, and found it in the sayings of Paul, the great Apostle to us Gentiles. "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (II Tim. 4:1-4). It was the fables to which mankind had been turned aside that had covered the true teachings, the sound doctrine; and the apostle Paul told us of it over eighteen hundred years ago, that we might be able to dig beneath the rubbish and find the hidden truth. How mighty seemed the undertaking, to dig beneath the rubbish of centuries and find the gold!



Reaction...

I knew that the world would only sneer at the thought of such a thing being possible; but others had been sneered at, and had succeeded for a far less prize. Where would we have been today had it not been for the spirit that animated a Columbus and led him on in the face of untold difficulties? He had to face the doubts of the skeptical, the sneers of the learned, the cavils of the cautious, and the opposition of nearly all; and then before him lay the dangers of an unexplored ocean. In the prosecution of his discoveries, difficulties did not discourage, nor did dangers appall him; and after the lapse of four hundred years, volumes could not express the wonderful results that have followed the discovery of this fair land of freedom.



No Impossibility

It has been truly said: "Every great cause for which heroes have bled and brave souls have suffered, has once been on coward tongues an impossibility." Fox of England once said, "No man ever went successfully through any great enterprise whose earnestness did not amount to enthusiasm. There are so many obstacles in the way of any great achievement, that none but the earnest and enthusiastic will persevere and hold on to its final accomplishment. The irresolute, the timid, after a few efforts will give up in despair."

Sir Isaac Newton ascribed his success, "not to superior genius, but to superior industry; to the habit and power he had acquired of holding his mind steadily and for a long time to an involved and difficult subject. The wisdom he gained, the knowledge he acquired, did not fall into his idle lap, a windfall from the clouds, but he reached it by self-denying toil, by midnight study, by bending all his powers in one direction, and keeping them thus bent." The great reason of success in any undertaking in life is expressed by the one term: "Earnest devotion to a cause held dear."



Courage to Stand Alone...

I need not be discouraged because I stood alone. I remembered the words of the celebrated Edward Everett: "... Of the great benefactors of our race, the men who by wonderful inventions, remarkable discoveries, and extraordinary improvements, have conferred the greatest benefit on the human race, the most eminent service to their fellow men—by far the greater part have been men of humble origin, narrow fortunes, small advantages, and self-taught. Whoever has learned to read, possesses the key of knowledge, and can, wherever he pleases, not only unlock the portals of her temples but penetrate to the inmost halls and most sacred cabinets." If I could but learn to read aright I could find the key of knowledge that would open the door to the storehouse of truth and enable me to grasp her treasures—more precious than the rubies of earth, more to be desired than the gold of the Transvaal.

The apostle Paul testified to this fact in Ephesians 3:4, "Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ." This was plain, that understanding would come through reading, but what must I read? Would this knowledge come from catechisms, prayer books, commentaries, "The Fathers," or could I obtain it by reading the decree of councils, or the formulated creeds of men? The 5th verse tells to whom this knowledge was revealed. "Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit." It was revealed to his holy apostles and prophets, and I, by reading could understand. This called to mind a saying of Jesus, recorded in Luke 11:52, "Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered."

The false teachers of the day had taken away the key of knowledge, that which would unlock and open up and gain access to its most sacred recesses. I must find the key of knowledge. This I did, as I studied the blessed Bible in Hebrew, Greek and English, that I might attain to a knowledge of its more than wonderful pages. I grasped the key with a firm, unyielding grasp and the fables were discarded as truth was disclosed to view. Seeming impossibilities and contradictions vanished. Instead of quailing before the infidel, it was the infidel's turn to quail before the mighty power of truth. Now, after years of earnest, careful 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 upon its pages there are no impossibilities, contradictions or absurdities in the language in which God caused it to be written to man. As I stand upon the shore in the full blessed light of freedom, and see for me the ending of the weary centuries of darkness, I lift up my heart in thankfulness to God that I have His blessed Word, and by it have been made free from superstition, free to walk in the wonderful light of truth (John 8:32).



God's Plan of Salvation...

In the first of Genesis, God is not telling us about the creation of the literal heavens and earth. He is simply enlightening us regarding His Plan of Salvation upon this earth.

People in general have such a meager idea of God's Plan of Salvation. I was talking a few days ago with a man, and during the course of the conversation the point came up that only few would work out their salvation during the six thousand years from Adam. He thought it a dreadful thing that so few should be saved; thought that God had made a failure of His Plan. I asked him, "When do you think the first man was made?" He replied, "About six thousand years ago." I said to him, "Do you not think it would be a greater failure if in all the thousands and millions of ages in the past not one man had been created, not once had God moved the wheels of salvation?"

Ah, my friends, that family of God is expanding continually; the heaven of heavens cannot contain them; they extend on and on to other planets. God has plenty of time. Because time is so precious and so limited to us is no sign that it is limited to God. His purpose is to fill this earth with righteous people glorifying Him. Go back to Moses in Numbers 14:21, and there we read His purpose: "But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord." Ah! light comes in and shines upon our pathway, and we see that He has not made a failure. He would not make a failure if it took Him millions of years to accomplish His purpose. But He would if those from Adam on were the only ones in the universe to be saved.

Adam and Eve were not the first man and woman God ever created. They were simply the first of our race, the first to be called into the spiritual vineyard or garden of the Lord. They were not the beginning of God's wonderful Plan. God has unnumbered worlds in His mighty universe filled with happy immortal beings who have worked out their salvation; and there are numberless others which are passing through the same process we are. The salvation of this earth is only *according to His eternal purpose*. There are many folds in this wonderful Plan, and this fold on our earth is only one fold of His glorious Plan. Paul tells about it in Eph. 3:10-11, "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."

God's plan on this earth is not His eternal purpose, but only *according to His eternal purpose*; simply a sample of the glorious Plan of Salvation which He has been working out through untold ages in the past on other planets—God's happy family in glorified worlds above. With his mind expanded to grasp the magnitude of this plan, it is no wonder that Paul exclaimed in verses 14-15, "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." The whole family in heaven as well as on earth are all named of God, a family saved throughout the eternity in the past.

The Book is true. God tells you His mercy is from eternity past to eternity future. "The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children" (Ps. 103:17). Could He have had mercy if there had been no one to whom He could show mercy? There have always been people to whom God could show mercy, and there always will be. There never will be a time the wheel will stop; it will always roll on and on and on. There will be millions and billions and trillions of people created yet. Would you not like to live in that time? It will be exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think.

MM



Stand Still and Consider

"Stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God" (Job 37:14).

Everyone should take time to consider the greatness of the Almighty as revealed in the world around us. The whole creation testifies to His tremendous power. Whether we live in a bustling city or a remote country village, we can see around us the evidence of His creative hand. "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands," said the Psalmist. "When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?" (Ps. 19:1; 8:3-4, NIV).

Thank God for the life that He gave you, for the privilege of enjoying His handiwork.

Always Abounding

Paul called on his brethren to be "always abounding in the work of the Lord." To "always abound" is to go beyond the minimum requirement, to excel in whatever you do, to work with complete dedication, whether for the Lord or at your job.

Are you "always abounding" in the work of the Lord?

*Always abounding, dear Lord, I would be
Zealous and steadfast in service for Thee;
Never to tire when duty doth call,
Giving Thee, Lord, my best and my all!*

Opportunities Unlimited

The Glory of God's Second Chance

Part 2

From unpromising and seemingly hopeless beginnings, men have risen and may yet rise to the heights of character and achievement, by the power of faith and the help of the Eternal. "Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof" (Eccl. 7:8).

Introduction

In Part 1, Joshua, though born a crown slave in Egypt, suffered through the nadir of his career as tallyman in the brickyards along the Nile. Then, after forty years in the wilderness, he emerged as successor to Israel's great Lawgiver and the one who victoriously led the Israelites into the long-looked-for Promised Land. He was ready when his opportunity came.

In Part 2 we look at another man God used: Solomon.

The Story of Solomon

Scene 1: The Ascent

Narrator:

Men may climb from small beginnings to great success, but they may also decline from a good start to a humiliating failure. It all depends on the quality of the man.

Probably no career ever had a more promising beginning than that of Solomon, son of David. Everything was going his way; everything seemed to be propitious for greatness. Even his name—"the peaceful one"—was a reminder of his father's desire that the son should be spared the bitter failures which had blackened his own life.

The realm was at peace, its borders secure far out in the deserts. Israel was a prosperous, respected member of the family of Near East nations.

Better still, Solomon had his work clearly pre-assigned; and as said Carlyle, "Blessed is he who has found his work."

In addition to the governing of the nation, upon him rested the honor of building the magnificent temple of Jehovah, planned with long and loving care by his father.

Yet even in his early days nothing was sure. Even in the life of Solomon was something to make a young man lie awake nights.

The circumstances of his coronation were disquieting. He was young and unprepared for the position. David, his father, was at death's door, his once great mind weakened by age and illness. Solomon's brother, Adonijah, was attempting to take the throne. Only to Nathan, David's counselor and conscience, could the young king turn for guidance.

Small wonder that he felt overwhelmed, crushed by the weight of responsibility.

The problems of responsibility can often be greater than we think, especially when we meet them face to face. The young monarch discovers this fact and in asking for help makes a wise choice.

Characters:

Solomon Young, recently appointed King of Israel
Angel

Setting:

Solomon's bedchamber, dimly lighted. The young king, richly robed, is pacing the floor, a worried look on his face.

Solomon: How can I do it? How will I ever do it? Why should this happen to me? Me—a child in knowledge and in experience, made king over this great people... A king? I never dreamed it would be like this... Who would wish to be a king? The responsibility!... A king must have knowledge—I am so ignorant... A king must lead—and I need some one to lead and guide me... A king dare not make mistakes... A king must be an example to his people; I have not *proved* myself... I am *afraid*... What will I do?

(Sits on couch and holds his head, then rises)

I *must* have help. I *cannot* do it alone. (Kneels and prays) Lord God, thou knowest that I did not ask to be king. Now that it is thrust upon me, I need Thy help. Help me, Lord, to live up to my people's expectations; help me not to fail them, nor Thee; give me strength, Lord, for my task.

(Rises, paces a little, puts out light, and lies down. Slowly the room fills with light as an Angel appears. Solomon rises and kneels humbly before the angel.)

Angel: Thus saith Jehovah, Ask what I shall give thee.

Solomon: Thou hast shown great and steadfast love to David my father, and hast made me king in his stead. Give me now wisdom and knowledge to go out and come in before this people, for who can rule this thy people, that is so great?

Angel: Because this was in your heart, and because you have not asked possessions, wealth, honor, or the life of those who hate you, and have not even asked long life but have asked wisdom and knowledge for yourself that you may rule my people over whom I have made you king: Wisdom and knowledge are granted to you. I will also give you riches, possessions, and honor, such as none of the kings had who were before you, and none *after* you shall have the like.

(Angel places his hand upon Solomon's head, then is gone.)

Scene 2: The Decline**Narrator:**

Unfortunately, Solomon could not stand prosperity. Few men can. A few choice souls, such as Abraham, Moses, Joseph and Daniel, have been able to use wealth and power without abusing it, but Solomon was not of their caliber.

Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely, except in extremely rare cases.

The Hebrew monarchy had been foreseen by Moses, six centuries in the past, and provided for in the moral law. The conduct of the ruler was strictly prescribed.

"He shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses...."

"Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away: neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold.

"And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book.... and it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law, and these statutes, to do them: That his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left:... or that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel" (Deut. 17:16-20).

Every one of these divine injunctions were systematically violated and set aside by Solomon. With increased glory came an inordinate increase in self-confidence and selfish desire. Power went to his head; he began to live for the present, with its tinsel rewards.

"And all king Solomon's drinking vessels were of gold, and all the vessels of the house of the forest of Lebanon were of pure gold; none were of silver: it was nothing accounted of in the days of Solomon.

"And the king made silver to be in Jerusalem as stones ...for abundance.

"And Solomon had horses brought out of Egypt...." (I Kings 10:21, 27, 28).

"But king Solomon loved many strange women,... of the nations concerning which the Lord said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods.... And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart.... Then did Solomon build a high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech.... And likewise did he for all his strange wives, which burnt incense

and sacrificed unto their gods" (I Kings 11:1-8).

It is a sad, sordid story, this record of one of the world's most miserable failures.

"Now these things were our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted" (I Cor. 10:6).

Characters:

Solomon Aged King of Israel
Nadab Solomon's scribe
Two Courtiers

Setting:

(Solomon, old and bearing the marks of dissipation in his melancholy features, is seated in his study. On a low stool before him sits Nadab, with his pen, inkhorn and scroll.)

Solomon: I have no heart for the book today, Nadab. I wonder sometimes why I ever started it... Perhaps it was my secret desire that others may know my errors and avoid them... It is a sad condition, Nadab, to have only one life, and that nearly past. And I have wasted mine—I have failed, miserably. The Lord God of my father David entrusted me with the kingdom, and gave me great prosperity. He gave to me wisdom and knowledge, and the help of His angels... The people of Israel trusted me with their lives and property. And *I have failed!* ... *Why* did I fail? Well, Nadab, it is a long story, it was a combination of circumstances... I don't see how it could have been otherwise—how a man in public office *can* retain his integrity... Oh, what am I saying? It was *my* fault, my own fault. I had too much—too much glory, too much honor and wealth. I couldn't stand it, Nadab; it went to my head. Flatterers! That visit of the Queen of Sheba—those foreign alliances and marriages... Oh, well (sighs) perhaps this will help someone else, and make up a little for my folly... Read me back a few passages, Nadab; I may want to make some changes.

Nadab: (reads) Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity.
What does a man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun?

A generation comes, and a generation goes, but the earth remains for ever.

I, the Preacher, have been king over Israel in Jerusalem. And I applied my mind to seek and to search out by wisdom all that is done under heaven; it is an unhappy business.

I have seen everything that is done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and a striving after wind. And I applied my mind to know wisdom and to know madness and folly. I perceived that this also is but a striving after wind.

For in much wisdom is much vexation, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.

I said to myself, Come now, I will make a test of pleasure; enjoy yourself. But, behold, this also was vanity. I said of laughter it is mad, and of pleasure, What use is it? I searched my mind how to cheer my body with wine—my mind still guiding me with wisdom—and how to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was good for the sons of men to do under heaven during the few days of their life. I made great works; I built houses and planted vineyards for myself; I made myself gardens and parks, planted in them all kinds of fruit trees. I bought male and female slaves, and had slaves who were born in my house. I had also great possessions of herds and flocks, more than any who had been before me in Jerusalem. I also gathered for myself silver and gold, and the treasure of kings and provinces. I got singers, both men and women, and many concubines, man's delight.

So I became great and surpassed all who were before me in Jerusalem... And whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them; I kept my heart from no pleasure. Then I considered all that my hands had done, and the toil I had spent doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun.

So I hated life, because what is done under the sun was grievous to me; for all is vanity. I hated all my toil in which I had toiled under the sun, seeing that I must leave it to the man who must come after me; and who knows whether he will be a

*Men may climb from small beginnings to great success,
but they may also decline from a good start to a humiliating failure.
It all depends on the quality of the man.*

wise man or a fool? This also is vanity.

(Pause)

I said in my heart with regard to the sons of men that God is testing them to show them that they are but beasts. For the fate of the sons of men and the fate of beasts is the same; as one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath, and man has no advantage over the beasts, for all is vanity. All go to one place; all are from the dust, and all turn to dust again.

And I thought the dead who were already dead more fortunate than the living who are still alive.

Better is a poor and wise youth than an old and foolish king who will no longer take advice.

(At this point Solomon shows great distress and agitation.)

Solomon: Enough, Nadab! It is all true—too true. Every word condemns me, but I dare not change it. Even though I do not obey the truth, I dare not tamper with it.

Nadab: If it please the king, may I remind him that it is written by his own hand, “To him that is joined to the living there is hope.” Is it not possible, under the mercies of God, to correct one’s faults while life lasts?

Solomon: No, Nadab, not mine.... It is too late. I am not a free man. I am trapped—a prisoner of the way of life I chose for myself. (With sudden indignation) And anyway, who are *you* to reprove the king? *I* may speak freely of these things, but not *you*. *Keep your place!* (With sudden remorse) What am I saying? “An old and foolish king, who will no longer take advice.” Oh, for the bright days of long ago, those glorious days when the Temple of the Lord was built and dedicated, when I pledged myself and my people to His service! Oh, for the happy days when I was *little* in my own sight! Now I am merely little—*little before God and before all honest men*. The glory and riches I obtained—so much of it was dishonest, wrung from the poor, those who trusted me.

Nadab: Might not the king rectify this by liberally helping the poor?

Solomon: (Haughtily) You are impertinent, Scribe. Mind your own business!... (Withdrawing suddenly) There I go again... will I *never* learn? Read me the last sentence you have, Nadab; perhaps we can get a few more lines today even though my heart is heavy.

Nadab: Light is sweet, and it is pleasant for the eyes to behold the sun.

But if a man live many years, let him rejoice in them all; but let him remember that the days of darkness will be many. All that comes is vanity.

Solomon: (dictating) Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come, and the years draw nigh, when you will say, I have no pleasure in them; before the sun, and the light, and the moon, and the clouds are darkened and the clouds return after the rain.... Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter; fear God, and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

(A gong is heard. Solomon is aroused as he remembers.)

Solomon: It is time that I must go to the temple.

Nadab: Of Jehovah?

Solomon: (Bitterly) No, unfortunately. It is some Egyptian god. This is for the daughter of Pharaoh. (Rebelliously) What an example I am to the people! This morning I bowed in the Temple of Jehovah, the only true God; and this afternoon I bow down to unclean beasts—to bulls, and crocodiles, and cats! *Why do I do it?*

(*He seems almost ready to take a stand, and Nadab follows it up*)

Nadab: *MUST* the king go? Is he not *the king*?

Solomon: (Imperiously) Silence, Slave! Who made you the king’s counselor? The king’s worship is the king’s own business.

(Two Courtiers appear)

Courtier 1: The queen is waiting, your majesty.

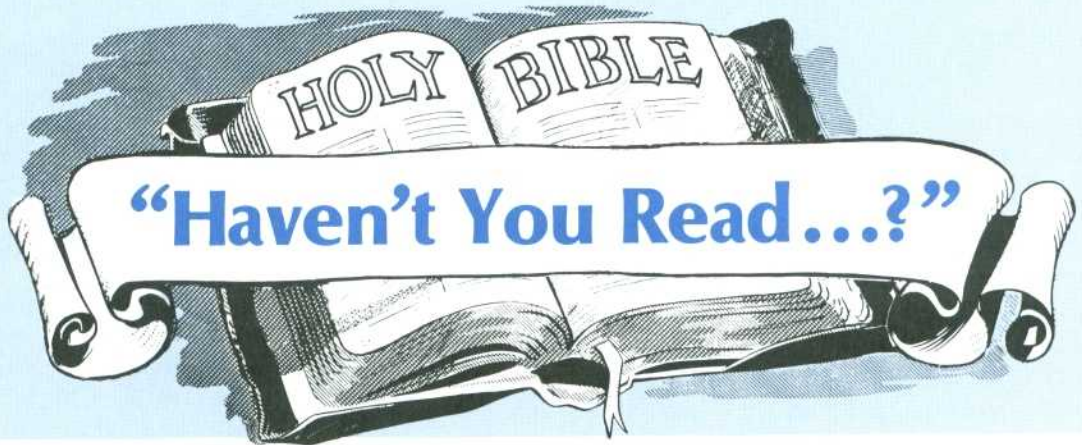
(Solomon hesitates, his face a picture of frustration and despair, then with a gesture of futility and disgust he moves to follow.)

Narrator:

Solomon used his opportunities, unfortunately, for evil unlimited.

The passing years bring home to our minds that life must be lived a day at a time. If we are not living those days to the full, if we are not using the privileges and responsibilities God gives us as they come, the time will inevitably arrive when we, too, will have to look back upon a wasted life—wasted one day at a time.

(*To Be Continued Next Issue*)



*"Take time and trouble to keep yourself spiritually fit."
In other words, read, meditate, grow!*

REGULAR, serious reading of the Bible should be a part of the daily diet of every believer. To skip it, or to substitute something lesser, is to go without food we need. God has provided His Word for us to live on. In the words of Jesus, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God" (Luke 4:4). Just as the physical life is sustained by eating literal bread, so the inner life of the spirit is sustained by feeding on the Word of God.

This means that we need it continually. We do not eat one good meal on Sunday and think that we have had enough nourishment for the week. Just so, one good spiritual meal on Sunday is not enough to sustain us through the week. We need to eat from His Word freely and frequently. We need to go over and over again the things that will prepare us for salvation, the things we need to know to be acceptable to Him. We need to keep them constantly in our minds. The apostle Paul told his brethren they would be saved if they kept in mind the things they had been taught (I Cor. 15:1-2). We, too, must keep them in mind. There is no better way than by reading.

Real insight into God's Word is

not an automatic thing. It is the product of repeated exposure, plus time, plus experience, plus more repeated exposure. The key to understanding Scripture is to approach it again and again and again, eager to learn, eager to know what God has written for our learning.

Many times in Scripture we are commanded to read. Many other times it is assumed that we will read. One of Jesus' most familiar phrases, when addressing the Pharisees—those who were supposedly learned in the law and Scriptures—was, "Haven't you read...?" It was a gentle rebuke, as much as to say, "Don't you know...?" In other words, "You *should* know!"

Suppose that Jesus said to us today, "Haven't you read...?" What does this say to us? It says two things: 1) that He expects us to know what is in the Scriptures He has made available to us, and 2) that He expects us to be able to recall the right passage and apply it at the appropriate time. To do this means that we must give more than casual attention to our reading. We must be serious in it. We must absorb a maximum of what we read. It must become a part of us, and we a part of it. We must live in it, and it in us.

What if we do not understand all that we read, or what if we find apparent conflicts? The problem is not with the text but with the reader. The Bible does not change. But we will find, upon continued study, repeated reflection and repeated exposure, that the text becomes more and more understandable to us as we assimilate it in our own learning process.

What does frequent reading of the Word do for us?

1. Reading the Word builds reverence.
2. Reading the Word builds faith.
3. Reading the Word builds a closer relationship with God.
4. Reading the Word prepares us to face life's crises.
5. Reading the Word prepares us to face everyday situations.
6. Reading the Word builds understanding.

Repeated exposure is the only answer to filling our minds with thoughts of God. We live in an age of "instant everything"—from oatmeal to religion. The Bible, however, does not come to us in any "instant" manner. There is no crash program to knowledge. What is the product of the human mind can be examined and interpreted in a fairly short time. Not

so with Holy Scripture. It is profound, it is deep, it is always above and beyond the commonplace. The Bible continually challenges us to dig deeper, to examine more closely, to compare more carefully. Do we wonder that the writer to the Hebrews said, "Ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God" (Heb. 5:12)?

Let's face it, our minds are naturally lazy. We want the easiest possible route. This is only normal.

But there is no easy route to Bible knowledge, just as there is no easy route to salvation. We must apply ourselves, we must spend time with it, we must think and ponder and meditate on what we read until it becomes part of our very lifeblood.

Read and reread is the only key to unlocking the Scriptures to ourselves. There is milk for the newborn, and strong meat for the spiritually mature. The milk is easy to take in, but to enjoy the meat, one must have developed the patience to chew and chew and chew. There is no other way.

Most of us have had the experience of coming upon a text we do not understand. We set it aside, time passed, experiences came and went, and we gained new insights from other passages. Then we returned to the passage, and a new insight jumped out at us, so to speak.

It is a common experience. Knowledge builds on knowledge. The more

we learn and understand, the more we are able to learn and understand.

But it all comes from one source; it is all the result of frequent, careful reading of the Word.

Our Lord's phrase keeps running in our mind, "Have you never read...?" He assumes that we *have* read—at least we *should have* read. If we haven't, it is our own deficiency, and one which we should begin to remedy immediately, if not sooner.

There is literally no end to what is available to read of a secular nature. But secular information does not build spiritual insight. There is simply no substitute for reading His Word.

Grow As You Read

The preschooler learns his "ABCs"—and we commend him heartily. Why? Because he has attained all the knowledge he will need in his life? No, he has simply learned the building blocks of the English language, which he will use continually throughout his life in the building of useful knowledge. The Christian believer must do the same. He must learn the basics of Scripture, which he can then apply in building a Christian character.

In ancient Israel, the people's life was structured around frequent reading of the law. We read in Ex. 24:7 that Moses "took the book...and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient."

In the time of Josiah, the reading

of the book of the covenant alerted the people to impending judgment (II Kings 23, II Chron. 34:30).

After the captivity, when the people had congregated on the first day of the seventh month, Ezra the priest "brought the law before the assembly,...and read it aloud from day-break till noon...and all the people listened attentively to the book of the law" (Neh. 8:1-3). These people did not have the privilege of each owning their own "Book of the Law." They had to listen corporately. But they did listen, and with respect. We read that when "Ezra opened the book," "the people all stood up. Ezra praised the Lord, the great God; and all the people lifted their hands and responded, 'Amen! Amen!' Then they bowed down and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground" (Neh. 8:5-6, NIV). Later in the day they "read from the book of the law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read" (v. 8). Understanding was equally as important as reading.

In the time of Jesus and the apostles, the reading of the Scriptures was a part of every sabbath service. In this way the people were kept familiar with the Scriptures (Acts 13:27 and 15:21).

"Have you never read...?"—it is a gentle rebuke, as much as to say "You should have. If you haven't, why haven't you?"

"Human nature is weak and needs stimulating. It requires reading, daily reading of the word, careful meditation, prayerful self-criticism, humble confession of faults, chaste conversation coupled with fear, godly example in everyday life."

—The General Letter, L. T. Nichols.

"Have you never read...?"—it is a gentle rebuke, as much as to say "You should have. If you haven't, why haven't you?"

It is a personal duty which each of us owes to ourselves to take time to read, to feed on the Word of God, to meditate on it and discover what it is saying to us. Scripture must not be read as secular material. Scripture is "God-breathed," Spirit-charged, divinely ordained, causing inner growth.

This was Paul's advice to his son-in-the-faith Timothy: "Take time and trouble to keep yourself spiritually fit" (I Tim. 4:8, Phillips). This means daily reading, daily meditating, daily application of the Word to our own personal lives.

A computer needs time to process information put into it, to rearrange data, to integrate new information into existing files. We need to give our minds the same advantage.

Again and again we must return to the Scripture pastures to feed, to meditate, to discover. We must not only learn what the text says, but what it says *to us*. Truth cannot be stacked in the mind like gold in a vault. It must be treated like food, chewed and digested, until it becomes a living part of us. Every new insight enlarges our current understanding and helps us to grow.

Spiritual malnutrition is never a mystery; it's simply a case of neglect, of spiritual laziness, of failing to use the resources at hand. There is just no substitute for regular, systematic, faithful study of God's Word.

Our twentieth century lifestyle often

gives an illusion of having removed much of the need for the art of meditation; yet the Scriptures still tell us that the growing believer needs to meditate. The spiritually "blessed" man is he whose "delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night" (Ps. 1:1-2).

Reading builds, knowledge builds on knowledge, and experience. The deeper and richer our understanding and experience, the more we bring to a text, the more we will be able to take from it.

Hunger And Thirst— Spiritual Appetite

We may know what the Bible teaches on basic subjects, we may hold a core of truth and have opinions about many other points of Bible teaching. But if we do not examine them closely and compare them with the Scriptures, we may find very often our knowledge is incomplete, or simply wrong. Closer investigation may reveal that the Bible does not defend our opinions—neither does it change with them! Our opinions are what must change

as we read. In short, we must believe what we read in the Scriptures.

Again and again we should return to the Bible to be refreshed, restored and renewed in what we believe. If we cannot read what we believe, we should not believe it.

Keep the words of Jesus ringing in your ears, "Have you never read...?" Let them rebuke our lazy-mindedness, let them deepen our hunger for righteousness, faith, humility, peace, and we will find all the rest.

Come to the Bible eagerly, repeatedly, expectantly. Come, eager for a blessing, a promise, an assurance, a rebuke—whatever we need, the Bible has it.

When we cease to learn, we cease to grow. When we cease to return again and again to the living Word, we lose the penetrating freshness of its message; we lose the thrust it can give us, the thrill of joy or the prodding of love.

So renew your expectation. Come again and again seeking a new insight, a deeper impression, a revived spirit. You will not be disappointed.

The Word is alive—if we will only read, read, read. MM

*It matters not what comes to me
Of sweetest joy or keenest pain.
To work or wait were sweet to me,
To suffer loss or reap rich gain,
Just so He keeps me near His side,
And His dear Name be glorified.*

*It matters not if days be long,
Or if my trials be many or few;
If rugged steeps and thorny roads,
Or pleasant vales I journey through,
Just so He guides me with His hand,
And leads me to the Promised Land.*

*It matters not. Why should I care?
Upon His promises I rest;
He crowns me with His tender love,
Provides His robe of righteousness.
Come storm or sunshine, night or day,
I'll sing His praises all the way. —Selected*

Nearer, Nearer

Each day that passes draws us closer to the coming of our Lord and King. Surely the arrival of Elijah cannot be far off.

This world is such a beautiful place and contains so many wonders. But the evil and destruction that man is doing has reached terrible proportions. Evil is certainly being done with both hands earnestly. There is no way that man can straighten out the wrongs of the world. Only Christ and His army can wipe out the evil done in the world. How we long for that day!

No matter how many temporal activities we are involved in, our primary activity should be preparing ourselves to be a part of Christ's people. If we miss our opportunity, we will not get another. Being busy with temporal things is all right as long as we never forget that our every thought, word, and act must be according to the will of God.

We must reflect Jesus' life in our lives. To do this we must read and meditate on the words of God. The way to righteousness is straight and narrow, detours into sin only waste time and effort. We are promised enough time, but if we waste it on sin we may not make it before we are required to give account for ourselves.

Texas

P. F.

Appreciative

I read your magazine, *The Megiddo Message*, for the first time the other day. I found it very interesting. I would like to subscribe to your magazine and also if possible, I would like to order some back issues of your magazine, February and April.

South Carolina

B. B.

Cultivating Patience

This morning I was thinking of the virtue of patience, how we need to cultivate it in our daily lives. In this world of rush and turmoil, there is virtue in the person who can remain calm. The lines at the supermarket sometimes stretch forever, it seems, just when you are in a hurry to get home. The traffic is so congested at 5 P. M. in the evenings that it is hard to cross the street at a busy intersection. The rain continues for days on end until it seems one can never get the laundry out to dry. As Christians we can use these little inconveniences to cultivate the virtue of patience, which we surely need in our spiritual gardens.

Patient waiting during a busy day disciplines us, and we need discipline as much as we need patience. Each of us has a test of our patience each day. We must keep in mind the verse in James 1: 4, "But let patience have her perfect work that ye may be perfect and entire wanting nothing." We must remember to not grow impatient as we overcome each blemish in our character.

If we fall, it's no excuse to stay down. But with each slip backward, we can be more cautious and make our efforts more sincere, for "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."

Ohio

M. W.



**Glad To
Grow
Older!**

MANY of us resent the fact that we are growing older. Yet, wouldn't it be a lot worse if we were steadily getting younger?

Just suppose the process were reversed. You would start at old age and every day be a little younger. Every day you would know a little less. Every day you would *have* a little less—less resources, less knowledge, less experience. Eventually you would get to the age where you were in school, but you would start out as a senior and end up in the first grade.

Tottering old age has its drawbacks, but being a tiny baby is a lot worse—when you're getting younger. At this point you could only look forward to losing everything and ending up a helpless infant. Finally, you would just fade away into nothing!

No, I would rather grow older, gain by my experiences, keep up with progress and look forward to a world where I will continue to live. The Lord knew what He was doing when He arranged our lives as He did. Each day our life grows richer in insight and understanding. Each day we add a little more to our store of holiness, purity and righteousness. Each day we know a little more, our experience widens, and we come a little nearer to life in God's coming, bright new world.

I am glad I'm getting older, because it means that I can be growing toward a place in God's Kingdom. It means that my life can be like "the path of the righteous" which "shines brighter and brighter until it is full day" (Prov. 4:18, RSV).

Who would want it any other way! —Contributed





Alpine Climbers

CLIMBING the mountain of holiness is not an easy job. It requires effort, perseverance, determination. Keeping our minds on heavenly ideals will help us to reach the summit. The chief point of dwelling in the heavenly places is to dwell there in our hearts and minds, and there truly are hundreds of heavenly things to capture our hearts and minds. But we must be strong to set our affections there. We must be strong to get ourselves to the mountain. To be strong it is necessary for us to exercise our will and character daily, and to benefit from the spiritual food we consume.

We have seen many a time the Alpine mountain climbers training in Warsaw (Poland). Strange, isn't it? How is it possible for such people to practice in the middle of the big city that is located on a plain? And yet they can. We watch them at times from the bus. They climb up the high walls along some of the lines of communication. Those walls are faced with special unshapely stone-blocks resembling rocky-edges. The people look so strange, as if glued to the plumb wall, working their way up, while cars are rushing around them. Other people are hurrying somewhere, and the normal city life is going on. Those whose aim is to reach mountaintops are able to fix their attention on their purpose, to separate themselves from the comfortable life of other people and prepare themselves so that when the time is right they can go to the mountains and accomplish their desire.

Even while not in the mountains they prepare themselves to ascend the mountain peaks. So can we in the spiritual sense. In fact, how much more we should be able to prepare ourselves to realize our purpose, even eternal life. While in the lowliest places of our daily employment, while busy with the work of our hands, even if we must be with unbelievers, we can prepare ourselves by setting our minds on the things that are above. If we are able to fix our attention, our hearts and minds, on our aim, the world around us will not disturb us. Nor will the heavy traffic and nearby noise hinder us.

Nothing hinders the climbers from exercising their muscles in order to be in shape before they go to the mountains to stand the test. How much greater our aim! We can live that heavenly life now—it is the highest goal we can attain. There is nothing in all the world that can compare with what God can give!

—Contributed.