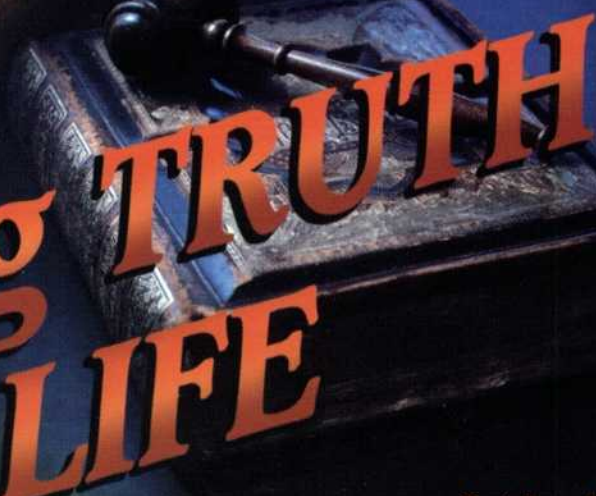


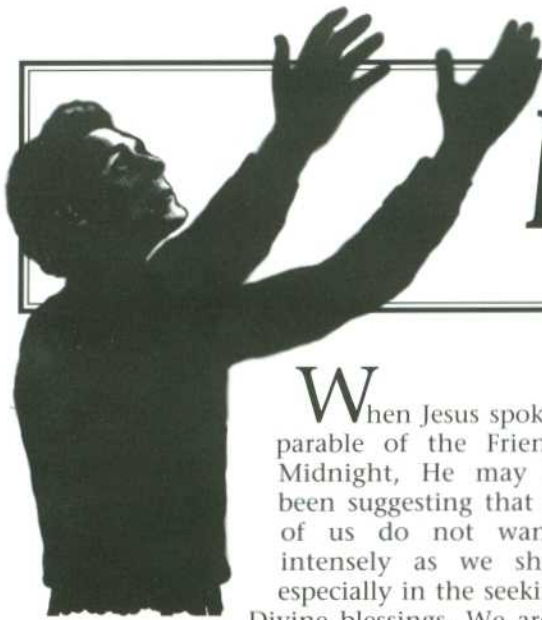
An aerial photograph of a town during autumn. The trees are in various shades of orange, yellow, and green. A prominent white church steeple is visible in the upper left. The town is densely packed with houses and buildings.

Megiddo Message

A close-up of a wooden gavel resting on a dark, textured book. The gavel has a dark handle and a light-colored head.

**Bringing TRUTH
to LIFE**

October, 1995
Vol. 82, No. 9



Keep on Asking

When Jesus spoke the parable of the Friend at Midnight, He may have been suggesting that most of us do not want as intensely as we should, especially in the seeking of Divine blessings. We are too casual, too passive, too take-it-as-it-comes in spirit.

People of God in all ages have been intense-spirited. They knew what they wanted, they knew how to get it, and they determined even very early in life that they *would* get it, whatever the price.

A serious limitation on our achieving is often not a lack of opportunity or a lack of ability but a lack of desire. We "have" not because we "want" not—at least, we do not want sufficiently to make the effort necessary to obtain.

In temporal matters we have no difficulty "wanting" enough of what others have, or can do; in fact, this type of "want" must be curbed lest it lead to jealousy. But in things pertaining to God, how strong is our desire?

God wants us to desire what He is offering, and to desire it intensely, or He does not count us worthy of it. Jesus' message was definite: "Keep on asking, keep on seeking, keep on knocking" (Luke 11:9, TLB). The persistent asker receives the answer, the tireless seeker finds, the insistent knocker gets the door opened.

Does this sound aggressive? Better an aggressive persistence than a bland and cool indifference. We are far more surefooted when we are taking one forward step after another than when we are standing with one foot in the air while we decide whether or not to take the next step.

Sacrifice that is accompanied by

show, service that is more or less perfunctory, conversation that is light and superficial—all are relatively easy and undemanding—and worthless. Real desire means intensity: intensity in listening, in thinking, and in responding. Real desire means hungering and thirsting after righteousness (Matt. 5:6). Real desire is what the Psalmist described as the soul of man seeking after God as "the hart panteth after the water brooks" (Ps. 42:1). He wrote in another place: "My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is" (Ps. 63:1); again, "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God" (Ps. 84:2).

Real desire is so living that we "may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ," being "filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God" (Phil. 1:9–11, NCV).

Real desire is, in the words of Paul, that deep, earnest expectation "and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death" (Phil. 1:20, NIV).

Real desire is that strong, inner conviction that "neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:38–39, NRSV).

Real desire is to "covet earnestly the best gifts" (1 Cor. 12:31). Real desire is a deep inner longing for the immortal state, "earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven...that mortality might be swallowed up of life" (2 Cor. 5:2–4). Real
(Continued on page 27)

"So it is with prayer—keep on asking and you will keep on getting; keep on looking and you will keep on finding; knock and the door will be opened."—Luke 11:9

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 and sustainer of the earth, the world, the universes, and all life, in whom we "live, and move, and have our being."
- in the Bible as our only source of true knowledge about God and His purposes and plans for His creation and for the salvation of humankind.
- in Jesus Christ, the Son of God and our Perfect Example, who was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin; who ministered among His brethren, 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.
- in the Holy Spirit, the openly manifest power of God, which God bestowed at various times and in various ways to reveal His knowledge to humankind, to support His spokesmen, to confirm His utterances, and to demonstrate His supreme power and authority.
- in life as the gift of God, and in our sacred responsibility to use it for God and His coming Kingdom.
- in humankind as providing the raw material from which shall be selected and developed a superior, God-honoring people upon whom God will bestow the blessings of immortal life in His soon-coming Kingdom.
- in ourselves as capable of applying in our own lives the precepts and principles taught in the Word of God, in this way perfecting that high quality of moral character which God has promised to recompense with life eternal in His heavenly Kingdom on earth.
- in the promise of God, that a new age is coming—is near—when the earth shall be filled with His glory, His people, and God's will be done here as it is now done in heaven.

SOON-COMING EVENTS ...

The Herald and the KING

OUR PLANET will soon witness the greatest events in its history. For centuries God has been silent. But that silence will soon be broken by the arrival of Elijah the prophet, who comes to herald the Second Advent of Jesus Christ. "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: ...lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (Mal. 4:5-6).

Then shall follow the King of kings and Lord of lords, to begin His momentous work of transforming our world into the glorious and eternal Kingdom of God.

The Bible pictures all events, all men and all nations moving together toward this one God-ordained climax, when "the kingdoms of this world" will become "the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ" (Rev. 11:15), a kingdom in which all who live will enjoy the blessings of peace, equity and prosperity. When the task is complete, our earth shall be numbered among the heavenly, glorified worlds and filled with immortal inhabitants, bringing to reality the promise of our Lord in His prayer: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."

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Megiddo Message

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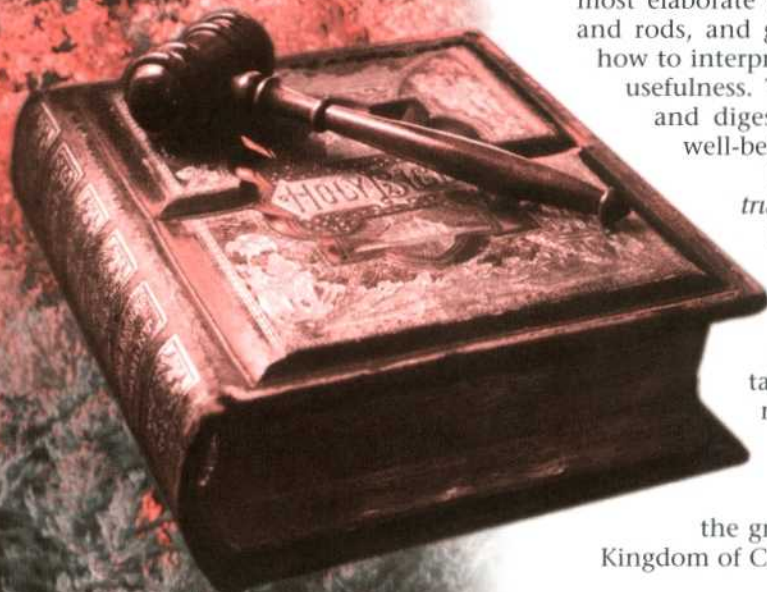


Bringing TRUTH to LIFE

Truth, that priceless gem of eternal worth, that pearl of great price, that wisdom from heaven expounded by the prophets and apostles and Jesus Himself, has been left on record for us, and has come down to us through the pages of Scripture. A priceless treasure it is, with power not known anywhere else in the universe: power that can transform rough, erring human creatures into characters so noble as to attract the attention of the Great God. True religion has power to turn self-seeking into brotherliness; pride into humility; jealousy into genuine kindness; impatience into perfect peace. But this power is not magical, nor is it automatic. It is power that comes from an overmastering conviction, a power that grips the will, re-trains the conscience, and redirects one's entire life, bringing truth to life. It is the power of *truth in life*.

Words alone are powerless. The most perfect knowledge can yield no benefit unless applied. The most healing medication must actually be used by the patient before the patient can be restored to health. The ideal government must be set up and operative before it can benefit its citizens. The blueprint of the most elaborate structure must be changed into steel, and rods, and glass, and wood by those who know how to interpret it, before it can provide shelter and usefulness. The most perfect food must be eaten and digested before it can give strength and well-being.

Even so, true religion must become *truth in life* before its full value can be known. True religion can benefit and bless only as it is used to refine and refashion human life. Stark words, cold commands, and lifeless statements must be made to walk, and talk, and live, and work in the loveliness of an upright life. Only so can it become hands that serve, feet that carry, hearts that love, and lips that pray and praise, and all toward the great goal of life eternal in the glorious Kingdom of Christ.



Such was the religion of the Master. Jesus came teaching a gospel of *truth in life*. In His parable of the House Built on the Rock or on the Sand, He made the staggering claim that truth is valid only as it is applied. It is an imperious demand. There is no coming to terms with Jesus; in Christianity there is no halfway house. The only agreement that one can make with Jesus is the pledge of complete obedience. Emotion is no substitute for action. Nor is hearing a substitute for action. One must hear and begin at once to act upon what has been heard. For example, we might hear that we ought to be less selfish, or that we ought to rid ourselves of some evil, or that we ought to be watchful of what we are talking about, or thinking about, or reading. But we must go straight to it and translate our resolve into action. If we do not do it at once, the chances are that we will not do it at all. And our house will be in danger of ruin, for it will be built on the sand, along with all others who through the ages have heard and not obeyed.

Such was the teaching which the founder of the Megiddo Church, the Rev. L. T. Nichols, found in the Word of God. Its teaching is more than a law to be read, more than a gospel to be heard; it is a life to be lived, and principles to be applied. Truth must be brought to life before its real benefits can be obtained. And so, once Mr. Nichols had determined that the Bible did indeed both command and commend obedience; once he determined that obedience must be wholehearted and complete; then that life of obedience became everyday, serious business: bringing truth to life.

How could it be done to the satisfaction of the great God of heaven? What was God seeking from His human children? What qualities of heart and life and character was He looking for?

During the 1880's, when Mr. Nichols' ministries had taken him to the state of Oregon, he held each spring a series of camp meetings, during which his followers assembled for a few weeks to learn more of the principles of their faith. Using homey illustrations, Mr. Nichols sought to touch their hearts and consciences with the real worth and power of *truth in life*, with benefits reaching all the way into the eternal Kingdom of Christ.

Everyday Issues

The following are excerpts from Mr. Nichols' camp meeting addresses in the year 1882. The illustrations may be out of date, but the lessons are timeless. For though some aspects of life have changed with the times, the deadly inner struggle with human nature remains the same.

On Enthusiasm

Whatever a man's practical convictions are, his enthusiasm will run in that channel. We see this almost daily. Let a chance to obtain a fortune come up, or an avenue to worldly honor or wealth, and see how the average man of the world is wide awake and filled with enthusiasm.

A good illustration of this happened when I was at Brother Craft's. Some of the brothers wanted to go out to kill some venison, and invited me to walk with them for recreation. I consented, and we started out. We were all walking leisurely along, until all at once the hounds began to bay but a little way from us. Away went Brother Craft and Brother Morris on a dead run, all filled with enthusiasm and excitement. All conversation instantly ceased, and these brothers' enthusiasm was so stirred that they exerted all their energy to get onto the run where they thought the deer would pass. They seemed to forget everything else and became all absorbed in one object.

If we could only forget all else but the Kingdom for which we are striving, if we could become as absorbed in the work of the Lord as our brethren were to procure that venison, I feel certain that everyone of us would obtain it.

Faith Produces Enthusiasm

Our actions will be just according to our faith. If we have real faith, our lives will show it. If our faith is real, our enthusiasm will be strong.

Our faith is but a conviction produced by our acquaintance with the facts. The reason that so few have this faith is that they will not read and become acquainted with the facts. They turn aside after the pleasures and business of this world, which more or less monopolizes the mind and leaves the facts of God's truth little opportunity to obtain power with them.

Before we can please God in all things, we must have a thorough conviction of what we profess. To be sure there must be some vim and enthusiasm to start with, or we can never glorify God as we should. But enthusiasm alone will not produce the result, for however strongly it may exist in our breast, it requires something to stir it up.

If we can find the real facts that existed in the minds of Jesus and Paul, then we can learn what led them to abjure the ordinary satisfactions of life, to leave refined society, leave all worldly prospects and pleasures and throw themselves wholly and solely into a matter which the wise of the world look upon as folly. If we can do as they did, and think as they thought, the same results should follow.



Finding Christ

How can Christ become "all in all" with us? Where can we find His knowledge, His wisdom, in order to obtain His friendship? There is nothing to tell us of Him in any of our surroundings. The crowded thoroughfares all speak to us that the friendship of Christ is vain. The busy shops, the exchange, the market, the wharves, the warehouses, the workshops all seem to join to say that all such hope is but a myth.

Nor can we find Him portrayed in the offices, the homes, the families, the laboratories, even the churches—the whole superstructure of this present evil world speaks out to us that the hope of Christ is unreal and but a myth.

Nor can we learn of Christ and His friendship from nature. All nature is silent as death as to Christ, His friendship or what must be done to procure and retain it. Nature, in her majestic wisdom and solitude, only speaks of a Master; of a great Creator somewhere, and a purpose superior to her greatness. If she alone were our teacher with her thousands of worlds, the blue sky, the mighty mountains, the towering crags, the deep ravines, the dense forests and both scorching and fruitful plains with all of their wonderful landscapes coupled with mighty seas, the hum of insect life, the sweet song of the birds, all combined can give us no knowledge of future hope. They can only fill our minds with wonderment and cause us to yearn for a knowledge of the All-wise Creator, to know God, to find Christ, and be assured of this blessed, future good time for which we hope.

We must seek the knowledge of God where it can be found. And no where can it be found except in the Word which He caused to be written for our learning, the Word of truth proclaimed by Jesus and the apostles. The naturalist has no access to this "faith in which we stand," no way to "rejoice in hope of the glory of God." He is only a beholder and admirer of the grand features of nature, without access to the God behind it, and to His magnificent purposes.

As we study the Word of God our hope will brighten, encouraging every true believer to continue steadfast unto the end. And the bright day of eternal glory will grow brighter and brighter before us, as we look forward to standing with Jesus and enjoying the comfort, bliss and happiness of that endless day.

Beware of Pride

The Divine Record plainly teaches that among other things, the very last vestige of pride must be laid aside. Let us not deceive ourselves, for pride is in almost all things done, said, or worn.

Pride is of the Diabolis, not of God. We are told not even to respect the proud. "Blessed is that man that maketh the Lord his trust, and respecteth not the proud" (Ps. 40:4). "Pride goeth before destruction" (Prov. 16:18). "The lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof:" (1 John 2:16-17).



Silver mounted harnesses—
for pride

What are our hacks, buggies, and wagons all striped up for? Is it for anything but for pride? What are our harnesses all silver mounted for? Only to satisfy our pride.

What are ribbons, feathers, tucks, frills, ruffles, and a host of other gewgaws worn for? Is it not to satisfy pride? It is nothing else.

Why do we rein up our team when we meet anyone? Simply because we want to show them off. It is only pride. I can speak from experience. All who know me know I have always liked a team that could show off, and many a time have I, just as I was

Are we not commanded to "be kindly affectioned one to the other with brotherly love"? Also we are to prove ourselves genuine servants of God "by longsuffering; by kindness" (2 Cor. 6:6). Paul to his Colossian brethren tells us to "put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels [or feelings] of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;...and above all...things put on charity [or love], which is the bond of perfectness" (Col. 3:12, 14). What lovely principles to be governed by! We must not only say they are lovely principles to govern us; but must also in reality let them govern us in our every day life. These commandments were not written simply for us to be governed by them when our old flesh man feels like it, but we must let them govern us at all times when we feel like it and when we do not feel so much like it.

We MUST be kind at ALL times to become like Jesus our pattern. Because we have a headache, or are not feeling well in some way, this will not excuse us from being kind; but under all circumstances, we must be kind and let not one cross word escape our lips. And seeing all have been more or less at times pettish and peevish, and some are still so, there is great need to have this point agitated until we become clear of such miserable feelings and actions. It is a subject that cannot be agitated and kept before the mind too much.

Many act as though God had said to us, when you are sick and do not feel well, or when things do not go just to suit you, then you can be cross, snarling and unkind; at least you can be a little cross. But when you are well and all things go just to suit you, then

you must be clothed with kindness and humility.

Let us consider for a moment. Would there be any virtue in such? No, not any. Therefore, it is under trying circumstances that God calls upon us to put on feelings of mercy and kindness, longsuffering and meekness, or as Peter has told us (1 Pet. 2:19-20), "if [any one] for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully."

Not only are we called upon to be patient and kind when we do not feel well physically, but also to be patient and kind when misused and buffeted because we do right. Here is a trial that all have not as yet overcome, when they know they have done exactly right, then someone comes upon them pell-mell (so to speak,) and blames them for it. First thing they know, they become impatient, and instead of kind words being used which turn away wrath, grievous words are used, and anger is stirred up (Prov. 15:1). This must be stopped, and under all circumstances, let them be what they may, we must exercise patience and be kind. Kindness is one of the Christian graces that Peter tells us that we must add to our faith. And not only are we to add to our faith, but we are told that it must be in us and flow out. "He that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off" (2 Pet. 1:9).

Peter then exhorted, "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall" (v. 10). And among the virtues that we must not only possess, but abound in is brotherly kindness (vs. 7-8).

Beloved brethren, we must let this religion teach us to be kind

Everyday Issues

meeting someone, chirped to my horses, cracked the whip slightly, and had my team all prancing when we were passing. All this is of the flesh, not of the Father.

Would anyone think of wearing bracelets, earrings, or finger rings if no eye was ever to see them? Why have we decorated our houses? We must answer that it is all for pride. See the fancy moldings I put upon my own house years ago. I can tell you just what every honest-hearted one must say, that I put them there solely for pride, just to be seen of men. And now, how many times I have regretted that I ever put them there.

Do we realize that if we are not willing to root out every branch of the old, deep-rooted tree of pride, we are but branches of the old Upas tree of infidelity? We may try to get around it, but the Divine record is plain, too plain to be disputed. We must be clothed with humility, abound in meekness, be adorned with a broken and contrite spirit if we would be owned and richly blessed by our Master when He returns.



"The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life" 1 John 2:16

Watch Out for Poison

A table might be well spread with delicious food, but if a few grains of poison were mixed in, poison such as will produce certain death, we would not want to touch any. So with spiritual food; if we mix in even a few grains of spiritual poison with that which is Divine truth, eternal death may be the result. Little grains of poison are the most dangerous.

Not only must we analyze all our spiritual food but we must label that which is poison so that we will not partake of it accidentally or give it to others.

Anything done to satisfy a lust of the flesh is poison. Anything worn or said merely to attract attention is spiritual poison.

Let us act as wisely in our spiritual fare as we do in our temporal, and eradicate every evil from our minds. We do not want to eat any poison in any form.

Although poison may be sweet to the taste, once we have learned its harmful effects it will become distasteful, repugnant, and obnoxious to us. So it is in reference to the spiritual poison. Satisfying the desires of the flesh may be very sweet and delicious to the old nature. But when we realize that it leads to eternal death, how repugnant it will become.

Get All, Spend All

In this age of caprice, self-aggrandizement and folly, this age of pride, fashion and arrogance, the philosophy of multitudes has become sordid and self-loving. Their principles are get-all, save-all, keep-all, spend-all, and all for the desires of their ungodly lusts. The time is not far distant when get-all and spend-all for the flesh will be buried forever in one huge pit of eternal oblivion.

On Paying Debts

You have seen the anger heaped upon me because I would not countenance dishonesty in any form. The storm broke when I would no longer fellowship several because they were not honest in



Everyday Issues

paying their store bills, and violated their word. They became angry because I testified that their works were evil. One owed two store bills, and both of their creditors told me that for three or four years one of the brothers had lived within five miles of the store where he owed the money yet had never been near to say aye, yes, or no about paying up—I cannot countenance such and at the same time maintain an uncompromising stand for truth. It is dishonest.

How to Overcome

Did you ever know a habitual drunkard, or swearer to cease their bad habits entirely? I have, and no doubt you all have. Do you not see that if one habit can be broken off, all can? It is but folly to think that we cannot leave off every bad habit and overcome so that we will not sin. It is perfectly reasonable that it can be done. I know by experience that it can be done.

About Jestng and Joking

Take the habit of jesting and joking. Who was ever more given to it than I? All who know me know that I am of a lively turn and naturally love glee. And those who know me most know that I have overcome it, so that I no longer have any desire to jest or joke. Truly if I can overcome this, I can overcome any other sin.

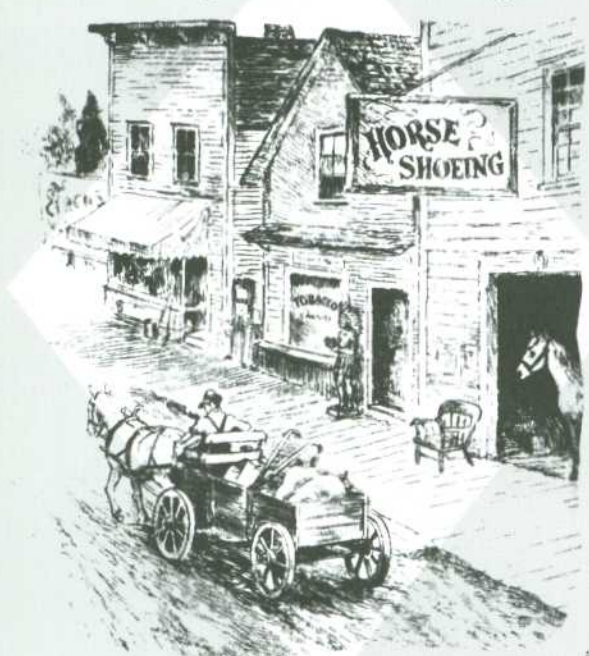
If we could only realize the value of the great prize which will be given the overcomers in that soon-coming age of glory, we could overcome all our evil tendencies.

How to Keep From Getting Mad

Are we not commanded to let patience have her perfect work, that we may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing? (Jas. 1:4).

One day last winter I was talking to a blacksmith at Quincy, Illinois, by the name of Mr. Goodapple, upon the subject of patience. Mr. Goodapple said that if an ugly horse was brought to his shop to be shod, and the horse began to lay down upon him, or kicked him, he did not think that he could keep from getting mad. I said to the blacksmith, Suppose I should bring in the worst horse you ever shod. Suppose I should deposit \$1,000 in the bank at Quincy subject to your order, upon the condition that you would not become mad or show the least sign of anger while shoeing that horse. Did he think he could do it? Oh! he thought for \$1,000—of course he could keep from getting mad!

I asked him, and so I ask you: what is \$1,000 compared to living in that age of eternal glory? It is a mere speck, a mere nothing by comparison. If you could keep from getting mad for \$1,000, how much easier it ought to be for that inestimable reward!



Be

and tenderhearted. Begin at home with our nearest relations; put it on and wear it every day. It is not a difficult task for us to be kind here at meeting, when our minds are being enriched by the teachings of the Spirit. But let each one commence this kindness at home with their families: commence today, and from this time on, never speak one cross or unkind word to wife, husband, or any one else; but always talk in a pleasant and kindly way. And always be courteous to each other: for we are commanded (1 Pet. 3:8) to all *“be ye all of one mind...love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing; but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him [avoid] evil and do good; let him seek peace and ensue it”* (vs. 10-11).

If we desire to live eternally, we MUST become kind and courteous. Hence, let us commence in earnest now. Confess to God and forsake your sins, and thus get rid of them.

Let us go back in mind to our homes, when we have been all alone, just our family with us, and see if we have not many times been guilty of speaking cross and unkind words to some of the household. Let us see if we cannot think of some time that we said something we would have been deeply ashamed to have had any of the brethren hear. I am certain that we will not all prove to be innocent. (One brother is frank to own that he is not innocent.)

I have stopped at places where I would hear an uproar within, but as soon as the knock at the door

was heard, all was as still as night. Why did they not keep right on with what I call jawing, cross, unkind words? Simply because they were ashamed to have another hear them. So it is with us. If we could only get so ashamed of such conduct that we would never indulge in it, would not that please the Lord?

Brother Lee, Brother Bryant, and all: Would you use cross and unkind words to your wives if you knew that your servant was just outside the door and could hear all you said? Brother Lee says No.

If we are ashamed to have others know that we are at any time cross, how much more ashamed we should be to have our nearest, dearest, Best Friends witness it.

Now Jehovah, the great and beneficent One and His Son Jesus the meek and lowly One are our Best Friends, and They are always just outside the door. "[For] the eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good" (Prov. 15:3). Although we cannot see Them, They are always listening. So whenever we speak cross or unkind words to any of the brethren of Christ, we are speaking cross to Jesus. We are commanded to "Cease from anger, and forsake wrath" (Ps. 37:8). We are commanded to "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another" (Eph. 4:31-32).

Let this be our motto: Never speak cross or unkind to Jesus. Let us be kind to our wives, husbands, children, and brothers and sisters and everyone else, at home or abroad. Let us act toward our brothers and sisters in Christ as we would act toward Jesus, for if we are the least unkind to anyone of the least of them, we are unkind to Christ Jesus. Write upon cards,

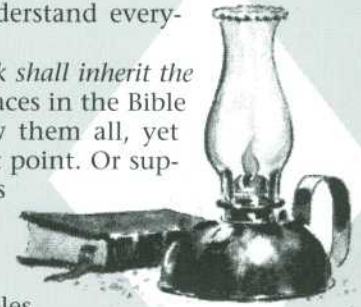
The great difficulty is a lack of true, genuine faith in the Word of God. If you really believed that by overcoming all evil you would receive the prize; if you had unbounded faith in it, there would be no difficulty getting rid of your sins.

Understand All?

A minister said to me, "You say we must understand everything in the Bible, believe it, and obey it, before we can be saved. I would like to have chapter and verse for that." I replied that we must believe *all the teachings* of Jesus, and His apostles, and believe and obey them in order to be saved. "I do not believe, that we have to understand everything in the Bible in order to be saved."

For example, the Bible tells us that the "meek shall inherit the earth" (Ps. 37:11). Now there are many other places in the Bible that teach the same point; we may not know them all, yet believe the true teaching of the Bible upon that point. Or suppose that there are one hundred and one texts of Scripture upon the nature of man; we may arrive at a knowledge that man when dead is wholly unconscious from five of these texts.

The Bible abounds with types, visions, parables, hyperboles, symbols, allegories. We may be ignorant of these and still understand the plain teachings of the Bible. Hence, it is not necessary to understand every word, verse, or chapter in the Bible to be saved.



On Hospitality

I hope no one here will ever be guilty of looking after the wants of the rich and well-to-do while neglecting the poor. We are commanded to "Use hospitality one to another without grudging." We may use hospitality without grudging toward *some* members of Christ's body, but we must show hospitality to *all* of the body of Christ, be hospitable to all of the loved ones in Christ. We are commanded (Heb. 13:1-2), "Let brotherly love continue. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."

Who would like to be guilty of turning an angel away? No one would want to do this, so let us use hospitality without grudging.

I know some who fear that we will be imposed upon by pretenders if we are hospitable, but do not fear. I had rather feed forty who professed and were only practicing deception than to turn away one true believer in Christ.

Of course, we are not commanded to entertain impostors or stragglers. An angel will not come to us with breath scented with liquor, or with a quid of tobacco or a cigar in his mouth. If we turn such away, we need feel no uneasiness whatever. Indeed, it would be decidedly wrong for us to share our hospitality with any such, without remuneration. What obligation have we to clothe, feed, or aid any who indulge in such things? They must first dispense with their filthy tobacco and demoralizing liquor before we show hospitality to them. There is one exception: if one has manifest a sincere desire to know the truth, we must share our hospitality with them without remuneration.

Charity Is...

Bible charity is very important for us to understand. The apostle Paul wrote, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And



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though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." (1 Cor. 13:1-3).

Charity is the center string upon which all else is hung, upon which all else depends. But we will find this Bible charity is no simple virtue. We may feed and clothe the poor in Christ, yet this alone does not constitute charity. Neither does having a knowledge of all the principles of the Bible constitute charity, though this is necessary. What, then, is Bible charity?

The fourth verse of First Corinthians 13 says, "*Charity suffereth long, and is kind.*" Here is the very virtue we have been talking about—kindness. "*Charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up.*" How meek, humble, and lowly all will have to become to possess this charity that is above all else. "*[Charity] doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked*"—be careful, for how easily some are provoked! "*Thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth*" (vs. 5-6).

Bible charity is, in short, keeping all (not a part) of the commandments of God, doing the entire will of our Father in heaven. Can we be unkind in the least and have this Bible charity without which we are as nothing before God? We cannot. Though I know of one who is saying that God takes all the circumstances into account and makes allowance for our unfortunate tempers, bad organisms and trying circumstances, we cannot find any such allowance in the Scriptures of truth. The above cited brother also thinks that the members of a certain fraternity in England are "somewhat cross," but he thinks God will make allowance because, he says, "of the foggy atmosphere in which the English brethren are living."

Let us beware that we do not deceive ourselves. God is no respecter of persons. Only those who *do* the will of the Father in heaven shall enter the Kingdom (Matt. 7:21).

Loving the Present World

Let us be careful that our affections are not set upon the foolish things of this present arrangement. The apostle John, the beloved disciple of Jesus, declares (1 John 2:15-17), "*Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.*" Brethren, we must get rid of all the lust of the eyes, lusts of the flesh, and pride of life. If not, we are still part of the present arrangement and will pass away with it.

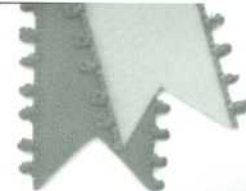


It is no small matter to get rid of all evil, all lusts of the flesh, all pride of life, all lust. "*Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall*" (1 Cor. 10:12). If our affections are not upon these things of the present, we

will not be doing them. Love and affection go hand in hand together, and if we have no relish, no love for the things of the flesh, we certainly will abstain from them.

Abundant Pay

Suppose a stranger should come along and tell us that he would give us a million dollars if we would go with him into the wilds—where there was much danger, where there were no comforts of life, where we would have to go on foot over the rough and rugged mountains, climbing and descending, fording wild streams. Suppose he said that it would take about three months to make the journey, and at the end he would give us a million dollars. Would we not



Be

upon the walls, upon the tables of your heart, "Never Speak Cross Or Act Unkind To Jesus."

No Harsh Words

Let me illustrate what I mean by cross and unkind words. One brother says to another, "I have something against you, and I want it straightened up. We are commanded not to lie to one another. I told you something yesterday and you promised not to tell anyone of it, and you have done just what you agreed not to do." The second brother replies in somewhat of an excited tone, "I have done no such thing. I never told you that I would not tell." The other replies back, "I say you DID," and the other says, "Well, I know I DID NOT," and so it goes on and on.

Is this the way for Christians to talk to each other? It is not. How much better if, when the first brother accused the second, the second brother had replied in a cool, deliberate, kind and meek way, "I think there must be some mistake somewhere, for I have no recollection of saying that I would not tell. I remember your saying that you did not wish certain ones to know about it, and I had respect for you and have been careful not to say anything about it to any who I thought would carry it to the individuals you mentioned. What was my reason for saying anything about it? The same reason that you had for telling me: I thought others ought to know of it so that they could be watching. I want to keep the golden rule, and do to others as they would do to me." Would not such a reply have changed the whole course of the conversation?

But, says one, speaking of the second brother's sharp reply, "That is only his way. He did not mean anything by it." Ah! There is just the trouble, it is our way, but

we must get rid of *our* way and accept the way of the Lord.

Furthermore, we are commanded to shun all appearance of evil. If we do not mean any harm by speaking short and crossly, why do we do it? Does it not have the appearance of being cross because it *is* cross? Hence, all such should be abandoned forever.

Let us try from this time on to never give Him who has done and will continue to do so much for us another cross word. No one was ever peevish and cross without feeling miserable themselves, unless they have become thoroughly hardened and have no heart at all, so to speak. One who is cross and crabbed is always more or less unhappy.

Kindness Close Home...

Perhaps the greatest test of our kindness is with our wives and husbands right at home. Why is it that men and women will be cross to their spouses when they will not be to anyone else? I have often noticed this.

Let us be sure that we are always kind at home.

Cultivate at all times kindness to man and beast. When anything is wanted of wife, child, husband, or anyone else, do not feel too big and important to say "please." And as your requests are complied with, do not forget to say "thank you." In that way, the child, the mother, or father, will soon learn that he or she is loved and respected, and it will become a pleasure to fulfill each other's requests cheerfully, and how much better all will feel.

I know of men who look down upon their wives as though they were of very little account. This is not the Christ-like spirit. For such men I have but little or no respect. Ninety-nine cases out of a hundred it is the man that is the

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want evidence, yes, bona fide evidence *before we started* that he would give us the million dollars?—lest we find out that he is but a poor vagabond, with not even a thousand dollars to give anyone! No, we would have to have the best of evidence before we would give up all to go with him.

So with us. Why should we be giving up the pleasures of this life and following the mandates of Christ if we did not have some good assurance that we are going to get paid abundantly for our trials and trouble? If I could not see plain evidence, I certainly would not act thus. We do not want circumstantial evidence either, but positive and sure evidence.

Never in any age has God called upon anyone to believe without evidence. Evidence has always been furnished, and no one is ever condemned for asking for evidence. Evidence produces faith.

The Bible is filled with positive, sure evidence, but we must study to find it.

What Shall We Read?

How often I have heard it remarked by some of you, "How I wish I had the knowledge of the Bible that Brother Nichols has." Remember that this knowledge does not come of itself. It takes hard, earnest study. Neither does it come by hunting over the newspapers of the day, to see how many earthquakes there were, or how many big fires, or great murders, or how many marriages, or anything else of the kind. Neither does it come from paying attention to the fashions of the day, and using precious time to fix ourselves up. If we would have a knowledge of the Scriptures, all useless things must be dispensed with and we in candor and real earnestness must go to work and study the truth which is in Jesus, study to be a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15). How much more advanced we might be in the knowledge of God if we had spent the time searching the Scriptures that we spent reading the newspaper.

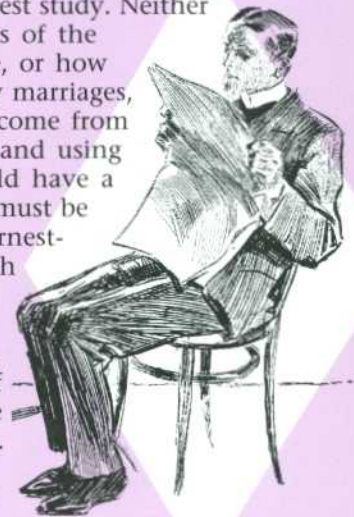
We can speak now of the realms of the blest, but what will it be to be there! How it fills my heart with love to God to think of it! O I feel like doing more for the Lord. O that I could do the work of ten. If it were not for the many cautions I receive from my dear wife and my loved brethren, I do not know but what I would soon work my life away. Seeing the truth in such beauty and glory, and knowing that nearly everyone in the world is destitute of it makes me feel as though I cannot rest. O that more of this spirit might seize you all and cause a reviving of the work of the Lord in these days. For the harvest is great, and the laborers are few.

The Right Use of Money

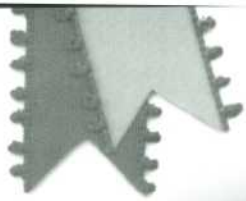
Some two or three years ago I was corresponding with a believer in Oakland, California, who seemed very anxious to help the lambs of Jesus. He told me that he had received a call to go to Sydney but he did not have the means.

Although he did not have the means to go and feed the sheep of Jesus, yet he was able to buy plenty of outward adornments, and tobacco, and jewelry, and knickknacks. Oh, consistency thou art a jewel!

Brethren, let us save all that we would be spending for useless things (which is worse than wasted) and keep every commandment, then we will be of that class whose joy and happiness will increase and who will end in the happy and eternal home in the Kingdom of God.



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Be

Self-Importance

In performing this work of the Lord it is very necessary to pay attention to these words of the apostle Paul: "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly [in a sound mind], according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith" (Rom. 12:3). Perhaps there is no commandment in Scripture more often violated than this one.

God does not look upon us as we are apt to look upon ourselves. He does not hold us in the high esteem we naturally give ourselves. The ones He esteems are those who are ceasing to do things just to be seen of men, those who are crucifying the lusts of their nature and bringing every thought into subjection to Christ, living in obedience to His royal law without sin. I say, he who thinks God will save him without doing these things is only deceived and is thinking more highly of himself than he ought to think.

It is written, "All nations before him are as nothing" (Isa. 40:17). Unless we make a full surrender of our entire being to Him, we too will pass away like the grass of the field, of no account before God.

When we get into this way of thinking, we will not place such a high estimate upon ourselves, and will not expect to be saved unless in reality we go to work and crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts (Gal. 5:24-26), and become an overcomer so that under trial we no longer transgress God's holy law.



Styles at the turn of the last century were not short on pride—which God abhors.

The Old Thief "Pride"

When we see the fruits of pride, no amount of fair speeches can make us believe that pride did not produce the fruit, for Jesus said, "By their fruits ye shall know them." Every tree will bear its own fruit. What would we think if we should go and find peaches growing

upon an apple tree? But no, we find peaches upon a peach tree, and we have bona fide evidence that it is indeed a peach tree. And no amount of sophistry could make us believe that it is a grapevine or a thorn bush.

Let us be wise and thus shun all appearance of evil. We have too much at stake to run any risks whatever.

Showing Partiality

There is great danger that we will show partiality to one brother above another. Let us take two brothers, one who is passably well off, the other who is quite poor; both are equally earnest in the faith. Which one will we take the most pains for? We certainly should treat and love both alike, not respecting their possessions.

Again take two brothers, both of whom are engaged in the work of the Lord, both equally diligent, both equally well off. One is naturally a good cook, and can, given the simplest articles of food, make a relishing meal. The other has no knack to fix things up, no dexterity with tools, etc. Now suppose we pay attention to the one who can cook the best meal and neglect the one who has no dexterity. We would be showing ourselves a respecter of persons, also making a god of our appetite, hence a double transgressor.

These are simple, everyday matters that we need to ponder. Let us love and

short, cross, crabbed—what shall I say? Wretch, yes, miserable wretch. If a woman is good enough for us to love and respect before we marry her, she (as a general rule) is after. But many become cross and hardhearted just because of the cross, crabbed, brutal treatment of the husband.

I am aware that some think that my wife and I make too much of each other, that we are too kind and tender. But I would that all were as kind, as tender, as loving and courteous to each other. Are we not commanded to love our wives as ourselves? See the danger of our losing the glorious reward just because we were cross and unkind at home, to our families. In this matter it is absolutely necessary for each one to take heed, yes, *earnest heed*, and let every word, look, and act be a token of kindness, love and good will.

Let us show by our words and actions that we intend to obey God and be kind and courteous to all, at home and abroad. If we only set to this work in real earnestness, it will not be long before it will become second nature to us to be always kind, amiable, and courteous.

To Feel or to Speak?

A voice says, "We do not sin, then, if we only *feel* cross and angry, so long as we do not *speak* cross or angry?"

We answer most emphatically, *you sin by being angry even if not a word is said.*

Someone says, What do you do with Paul's statement, "Be ye angry and sin not"? Paul seemed to think that a person could get angry and still not sin.

No, that is only our thoughts about what Paul thought. It will be far better to let Paul himself tell us what he thought. The text is in Eph. 4:26. "*Be ye angry, and sin*

not?" By his very words, Paul was implying a negative question. What! "Be ye angry and sin not?" which is equivalent to saying you cannot be angry without sinning. He rivets it further by saying, "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath." And he plainly states further in the 31st verse, "Let all wrath and anger...be put away from you."

We are not only called upon to put away all anger but also to let patience have its perfect work (Jas. 1:4), to be patient under all circumstances. When we deviate in the least iota from the plain, straightforward word and any one calls our attention to it, instead of becoming impatient or angry, we should in all meekness be thankful to have them point it out to us so that we can forever put it away from us. In whatever tone a reproof is given, we should not be in any way impatient or angry, even if the reproof be given in anger, hatred or spite. But let us be careful that we strictly follow the word in Gal. 6:1, "Brethren if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."

If we all become meek and lowly of heart like our Pattern. We will then be meek, humble, and submissive to the pure and holy law of Christ. We will put away from us ALL wrath, anger, malice, hatred, envy and evil speaking and become kind, tenderhearted, loving and forgiving. How can any lift their voice against such noble principles of truth? But though we may in words uphold such principles, actions speak louder than words. Let us ask ourselves not simply what our words are, but also, what are our actions? Do they correspond? They certainly do not if we speak a single cross or unkind word.



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respect each one for his character and virtue. Let it not matter whether one is rich or poor, a good cook or a poor cook, a good handyman or poor handyman. Let us remember that God judges by character and character alone.

No Alcoholic Beverages

I heard someone justifying his desire for the intoxicating cup, saying that he only intended to drink moderately, that only occasionally would he fill the glass too full.

See what a grave tendency is thereby encouraged. See the thousands who are ruined by intoxicating drink every year. Thousands of families go hungry and half clad because of it.

Listen to the apostolic advice: "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18). This passage will be rigidly adhered to by every true believer, and all drink will be left behind, liquor of any kind will never once be tasted, only upon one license, and that is the license Paul gave to his son Timothy: for medicinal purposes. There is no truly safe course except in a total abstinence from the intoxicating drink. See the shame brought upon our nation because of alcohol. It can do no good and only weakens one's health and well being, leading rapidly into the ditch.



Alcohol consumption in the United States in 1992 exceeded \$50,000,000,000.

A Glimpse of Glory

Oh, the glory that awaits us! only a little while in the future. What rapturous joy will fill each heart! What songs of praise mingled with unbounded love and eternal gladness will burst from every heart. Who would not like to be of that number, all adorned in pure and white raiment far more brilliant and glorious than mortal eyes ever beheld! Yes, far beyond all we can even ask, think, or imagine. And as the one hundred forty-four thousand thus clothed march forth with the Lion of the Tribe of Judah in His majestic splendor, what thrills, yea, what swells of glory, love and gladness will flow from heart to heart! Such bliss each heart will fill that no tongue on earth can tell. We may well cry out, O the glory! O the glory that surrounds that mighty throng. Truly the spirit of glory and of God will rest upon each one. And this glory and joy will not only flow in mighty swells and tides enveloping the one hundred forty-four thousand but it will roll on like a mighty avalanche driving all sin, corruption and iniquity before it, until the whole world will be bathed in the sweet flowing stream of unbounded love and everlasting gladness and unspeakable happiness. This flood of glory will continue until all sin and corruption of every stripe has been buried forever in one huge pit of eternal oblivion, no more to mar the beauty, joy and comfort of the redeemed.

My heart cries out, Come, Lord Jesus and bring this sweet, endless ocean of glory!

But alas! are we ready? I trust all of you are here to get ready. I am willing and anxious to help you. I feel like the apostle Paul, "Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all" (Phil. 2:17). My many, yes, my very many earnest, heartfelt prayers to God are and shall continue to be that we shall all be permitted to bathe together in that great ocean of bliss. To this end I constantly and energetically work.

And now may God bless each one with a full knowledge of His will and duty, and give to each one strength to perform it unto the end, so that all that soon-coming glory, bliss, joy and happiness may be ours. May the Lord of infinite mercy grant it unto one and all. Amen. □



The FINISHED PRODUCT

Each of us is the creator of a miniature universe for which we are responsible.

From the atom and its electrons, too minute to conceive, to the incomprehensibly vast systems of stars, galaxies and universes so far distant that their light requires billions of years to reach our planet, life is being worked out according to a definite plan. At the present time, we may know very little of the pattern of this plan. It is so stupendous that only the infinite mind can ever comprehend it in its fullness. But we may be sure that it is majestic and beautiful.

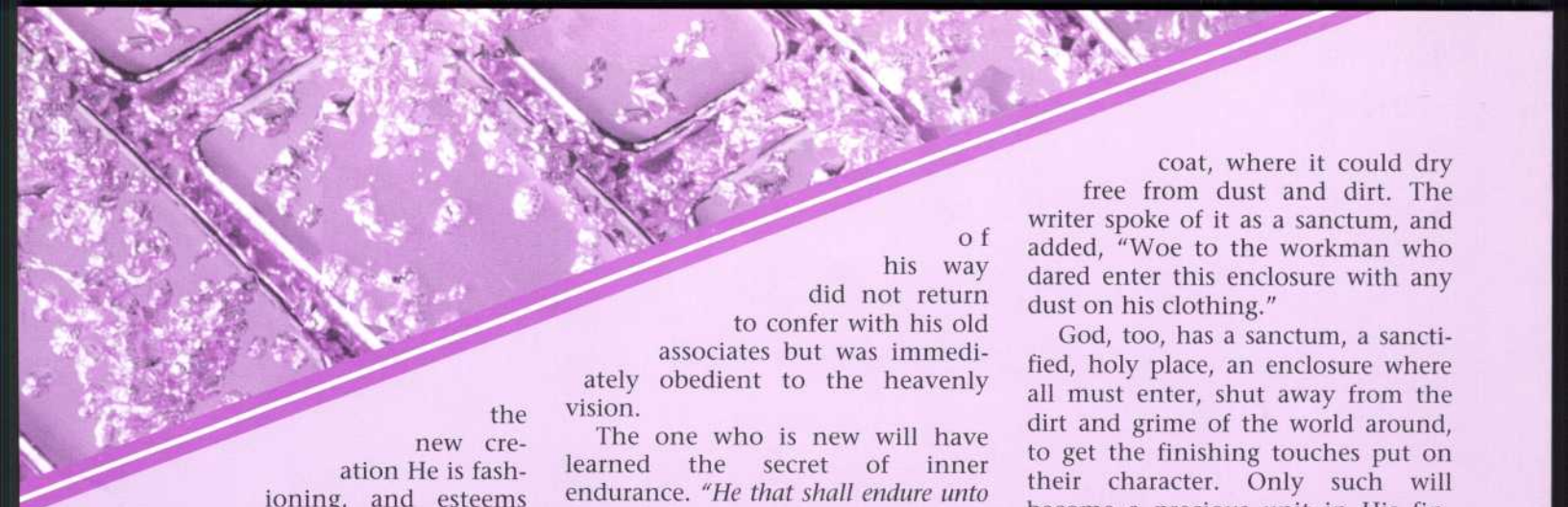
That there is a well-defined pattern to life and its completeness is evident from the fact that life is based upon law, and law works toward some definite objective. Since Divine law, which is the highest law of life is based on the wisdom of God, and since that wisdom is the fruition of all completeness, it must be that the finished pattern will be the fulfillment of all majesty, all grace, and all wisdom; it must be perfect beyond which nothing is possible.

Believing this we do not have to give much thought to the ultimate of this life. It is so far beyond our comprehension that we could do no more than guess, and our best guessing would not even approximate the reality.

Furthermore, we have more urgent matters close at hand. It is not our province to speculate upon the workings of Divinity, but it is very much our task to attend to what the human race is doing. Particularly is it incumbent upon us to consider with greatest care what we are doing as individuals. While the all-comprehensive universe is beyond our understanding, each one is the creator of a miniature universe for which he is responsible.

The high and holy One who inhabits eternity, the great God of heaven who is no respecter of persons recognizes character and character only. In every nation those, and those only, who fear Him and work righteousness will be accepted. He has but one standard, to which all must come, and that standard is moral perfection. God "is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed" (1 Sam. 2:3). He will never tell an untruth, He will never say "well done" to one who has not actually done well. He demands the finished product and nothing less will meet with His approval. Only those who form characters to His standard, free from flaws and blemishes, shall ever be permitted to shine in His eternal Kingdom.

Ambitious and progressive individuals delight in accomplishment. They derive their greatest satisfaction from constructive work well done. Likewise, the Eternal looks with tender eye upon the individual units of



the new creation He is fashioning, and esteems them very highly. They are His "treasured possession"; the "precious fruit of the earth" whom He loves with "an everlasting love" and defends as the apple of His eye. (Ex. 19:5, NIV; Jas 5:1-8; Jer 31:3; Zech. 2:8). Of such we read, "They shall be mine...when I make up my jewels"; they shall be His own "sons and daughters" (Mal. 3:16-17; 2 Cor. 6:17-18).

How ungrateful is he who, knowing the boundless blessings in store for the pure in heart, will deliberately pass by the opportunity of becoming a son or daughter of Almighty God! Such a one could justly be described as criminally indifferent to his own best interests.

Let us for a moment analyze the qualities that constitute the "new creature" God so highly esteems.

First, the one who is new has implicit faith in God's promises. "Without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb. 11:6). Also, one must be able to count the cost and judge between real value and worthlessness. "I have set before you this day life and death,...therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live" (Deut. 30:19).

Then the one who is new must possess a realistic ability to appreciate value. In the words of the apostle Paul, "Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:13-14).

The one who is new must be ready for immediate action. The apostle Paul exemplified this, who when he was convinced of the error

of his way did not return to confer with his old associates but was immediately obedient to the heavenly vision.

The one who is new will have learned the secret of inner endurance. "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of" (Matt. 24:13; 2 Tim. 3:14).

The one who is new will be patient under chastisement. "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth" (Heb. 12:5-6).

Combine all these qualities, and

coat, where it could dry free from dust and dirt. The writer spoke of it as a sanctum, and added, "Woe to the workman who dared enter this enclosure with any dust on his clothing."

God, too, has a sanctum, a sanctified, holy place, an enclosure where all must enter, shut away from the dirt and grime of the world around, to get the finishing touches put on their character. Only such will become a precious unit in His finished product. And woe to him who dares to step across the threshold into the Kingdom of God bearing any dust of the flesh. Such will surely end in failure. The order will go forth, "Bind him hand and foot, and cast him out." Into God's eternal kingdom shall enter nothing that defiles, nor he who loves or makes a lie (Rev. 21:27).

But to all who have met the requirements, who have developed

Into God's eternal kingdom shall enter nothing that defiles, nor he who loves or makes a lie.

the sum makes up the new creature, the finished product God is seeking. What a supreme effort we should exert to acquire these virtues before it is too late.

The Finishing Room

Recently I was reading a description of the painting of fine carriages as it was done before the days of motor cars. In describing the finishing room, the author told of a place set apart for the application of the finish

in themselves the moral nature of Christ, the Judge will say, "You have completed the work laid out for you to do; you have proved your worth, now you may share the delights God has reserved for those who finish well. Now I will endue you with immortal vigor and life. I will change your mortal, dying body and fashion it like unto My glorious body. You shall now become a son of God with power, your life coequal and coexistent with the Creator of the majestic universe. Well done!" □

Elijah



God's Man of the Hour



When Elijah stood in the presence of King Ahab and pronounced the curse of unbroken drought on all the land, no one knew exactly what it meant. Doubtless some scoffed, others feared. But as month after month went by and no rain fell, fear grew into grave concern. Still, famine did not bring immediate repentance.

Perplexed But Impenitent

ACT I, SCENE 4

Characters:

HOPHNI—Rural Villager
MAHLON—Rural Villager

Setting: A well outside a rural village. Two villagers enter from opposite directions.

HOPHNI: Greetings, neighbor Mahlon. And what could possibly bring you here at this hour of the day?

MAHLON: The same thing that brings you, I venture to say.

HOPHNI: Wondering how the well is holding out, and whether you can still bring your sheep here to water?

MAHLON: You've guessed it. (looks down into the well)

HOPHNI: What does it look like?

MAHLON: Still some water down there. This is a good well. Has to be, to hold out this season. I never heard of this well going dry.

HOPHNI: They say this is one of the wells Abraham dug. What a job!

MAHLON: And think about the tools he had to work with! But say, did you ever

see anything like this weather? No rain for a whole year!

HOPHNI: Never saw the like. And hope to never see it again. Imagine, a whole year, not a drop of rain or even a heavy dew. Makes the work light enough—no crops to harvest. No use to plow, just to blow away some more soil. And no grass for the cattle. Never heard of anything like it.

MAHLON: I have. My grandfather used to tell about a year when the rains failed entirely. Pretty hard times they had, too. Never thought we'd see it, though.

HOPHNI: Why, it should be raining every day this season—but look at that sky, bright as brass.

MAHLON: Not a cloud.

HOPHNI: What have you done about your stock?

MAHLON: Well, I sold off all my sheep but a few of the best ewes, and I'm down to one cow for the family. And it's still hard going, when you have to buy every bit of feed, and with such prices. I don't know what is going to become of us.

HOPHNI: If worst comes to worst, we'll probably do what the Israelites did long ago—sell out and go down to Egypt, where they have irrigation. At least we could keep from starving there.

MAHLON: Maybe yes, maybe no. I've heard they have their troubles down there, too. But, Hophni, what do you make of all this anyway?

HOPHNI: I wish I knew. They say there's magic involved—a quarrel between the gods. But I don't know. I've heard how Elijah and the king met and had it out one day, about a year ago, and Elijah put a curse on the land because the people had turned to worshipping Baal. That's the gossip, anyway.

MAHLON: (*looking around cautiously*) Well, for my part, I can't see why the king would take such a risk, just to please his new wife. We were getting along pretty well worshipping the calves at Dan and Bethel. Why bring foreign gods in? That might have done it!

HOPHNI: I blame Elijah for the trouble. Why should he be so narrow, so exclusive? I've been down to the new temple of Baal, and there's nothing so bad about it that I can see. In fact, I rather like it—it's interesting. And it's easy—you get what you want, you don't have to give anything if you don't want to. Why put us all under a curse, just for a little thing like that?

MAHLON: I don't know. I still think that if the king had let Baal and Ashtoreth alone we'd be better off. They say Jehovah always plays fair, but I've also heard there are some things He won't stand for, and it looks like this might be one.

HOPHNI: Well, regardless whose fault it is, something has to be done! Seems to me that the government will have to step in and take care of us when our food is gone. I can't see why we should have to move out of the land just because the gods have a falling out!

MAHLON: I blame the king. He got us into it.

HOPHNI: But what do you do about that? Stop paying taxes? Better be careful, friend...if you think much of your life.

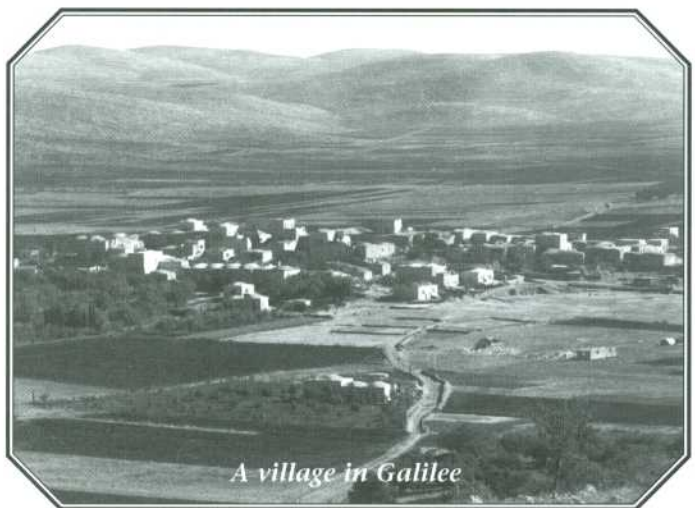
MAHLON: I still say, I blame the king. Yes, and his government is part of it.

HOPHNI: We feed the government year round, now let it feed us for awhile.

MAHLON: But suppose that doesn't happen?

HOPHNI: Let's cross that bridge when we get to it. They'd better, that's all I can say. After all, this may be just a dry year, a freak of nature, like the one your grandfather told about.

MAHLON: Maybe so, but maybe not. All we can do is wait, and hope.



A village in Galilee

God Provides for His Own

ACT I, SCENE 5

After pronouncing the curse of God upon the land and making his hasty exit, Elijah, at the direction of God, took refuge by the brook Cherith, near Jordan. In this scene we see him visited by some of his faithful friends.

Even in the deepest wilderness God provided for His faithful Prophet!

CHARACTERS:

ELIJAH—Prophet of the Lord

OBADIAH—The King's Prefect

JEHU—The Captain of the Guard

Setting: By the brook Cherith. Elijah sits, near the entrance to a cave, reading a scroll. Enter Obadiah and Jehu, Jehu carrying a basket.

ELIJAH: (*rising*) Welcome, my friends. I was wondering when I would see you again.

OBADIAH: How have you been, Prophet Elijah? You look well.

ELIJAH: I am very well. The Lord has cared for me faithfully in the past, and He continues to do so in the present.

JEHU: We have brought you more supplies, which we are sure you can use.

ELIJAH: Yes, Jehu, and how I do appreciate them.

JEHU: (*looking over toward the brook*) How is the brook holding out?

ELIJAH: That's the weak point of this place. It's getting lower every day—but what else can we expect? At this rate, I expect it will be gone in two weeks or less.

OBADIAH: What will you do then?

ELIJAH: I don't know, I will have to wait for directions from the Lord. But I have no fear.

OBADIAH: Do you have any idea how long this famine will last?

ELIJAH: That rests with the Eternal. I cannot give word until He bids me. But it will not be until the people have learned their bitter lesson. I say the people; I have no hope that the king will ever learn. What is the news from the court?

OBADIAH: No change, only everything getting gradually worse. So far, I see little or no awakening. Some of the people blame the king, but more feel it is your fault, and of course the king encourages this idea. But with all the blame being passed around, no one can solve the problem—so—

JEHU: And it always feels good to blame the other fellow. Just like in the army.

OBADIAH: There is truly much hardship, Elijah, and the king is distributing relief in the worst areas. And of course, prices are hitting the sky—it's good business for the government, if it could continue. The trouble is, we know it can't. And meanwhile, you're a good scapegoat for Ahab's sins. So far, it has worked well.

JEHU: My big worry is that somebody will stumble into your hideout and betray you. I wish you had a safer spot.

ELIJAH: Where is your faith, Jehu? Don't you know that "the angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them"? No one in the whole world can touch me except my God allow it. I have no fear of the king. I only do what the Eternal bids me. When the right time comes, I shall face Ahab, and live. My work in Israel is not yet finished, and until it is, my God shall take care of me. He will also look after men like you, Obadiah, if you are doing His work. That doesn't mean, of course, that you should get careless; or that you will not have to suffer.

OBADIAH: Why, oh, why will Israel not learn? Why will they persist in their foolishness? They, the descendants of the chosen people, I grieve at their gross blindness of heart. Why do they not read of the wanderings of their fathers in the wilderness, how sin always brought punishment? Why do they not

remember the days of the Judges, when again and again they sold themselves to idolatry, just as they are doing now, and suffered for it? Why do they not study the example of King Saul, yes, and of the great Solomon, who lost his kingdom and his own soul—for nothing. To be like the nations, to bow to their gods and learn their ways, and pay the price in hunger and slavery and death—why will they be so unreasoning?...(*turning toward Elijah*) Forgive me, my lord, my feelings have overcome me in this matter.

Elijah: Night and day, Obadiah, I likewise pray that Israel may return and be saved. But one thing I know: that the Almighty can wait. Good kings and bad will have their little hour, the tides of fortune will rise and fall, but behind it all the Eternal works out His purpose with infinite patience. He waits, and by waiting He always wins. Man has his little day; God has eternity.

So, my friends, when we see justice bound and evil exalted, remember that this is but a passing phase. We need not despair, for God is in control. Better times are coming.

JEHU: (*skeptically*) When!

Elijah: Not in your day, Jehu, not even in the near future. But one day the kingdoms of men shall pass away, when the Messiah takes His throne and all the earth shall become the Kingdom of the Lord.

I shall fight for the cause of the true God with all that is in me. But I do not expect my work here to last, at least not for long. But the Lord has given me a task, and I must complete it. The results are with Him.

(To be Continued)

God's purpose in training us is not service but character. His interest is not so much what we do as what we become. God is looking for inner heart qualities of faith, courage, trust, honesty, insight and upreach.

We are in training for glory, honor, immortality, and need that quality of character which can only be perfected through discipline.

Does GOD PUNISH CHILDREN for the SINS of the PARENTS?

"In Numbers 14:18 it states: '...he punishes the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation' (NIV).

"Was this punishment just for the Israelites for their time period or was it continued on? If so, was this still the law or rule in Jesus' time? Did Jesus' new laws overrule this Old Testament law? I always believed that a son or daughter was not held accountable for the actions of the parents, that each of us was born free of guilt and sinned as we had minds of our own to know right from wrong, and chose the wrong, hence we are accountable and responsible for our own actions. Your thoughts will be greatly appreciated. Thank you."

You are surely right in your understanding that each is responsible for his own action. Under the law of God, children are not responsible for the sins of their parents or parents for the sins of the children. Ezekiel 18 makes this point very plain (v. 20): *"The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him."* So does Proverbs 5:22, *"His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins."* God does not hold us responsible for anyone's sins but our own.

Was this still the law or rule in Jesus' time? The answer is yes. Jesus Himself said in His last message that He would be returning, *"to give every man according as his work shall be"* (Rev. 22:12). And the apostle Paul,

who was instructed by Jesus, said that God *"will render to every man according to his deeds,"* (Rom. 2:6), and in 2 Cor. 5:10 he is very specific that the judgment of Christ will result in each receiving for *"the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."* Each receives for his own deeds, good or bad.

Now what about the instance you cite from the time of the Israelites?

In Numbers 13 and 14 we have the account of Moses sending out the twelve spies to search the land of Canaan. Ten return with an evil report, two with a good report. The people, true to human nature, believe the worst, and rebel against Moses and Aaron. We are told, *"the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night. And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron: and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness! And wherefore hath the Lord brought us into this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? were it not better for us to return into Egypt? And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt"* (Num. 14:1-4). Were they not most rebellious?

Moses took the matter to the Lord, and in conversation with the Lord Moses quoted words that the Lord had spoken to him on a previous occasion: *"He punishes the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation"* (Num. 14:18, NIV).

Moses was quoting from the message he had from God when on the Mount Sinai, and in that message the exact words are used, along with an important qualifying term. The

Lord said, *"I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me"* (Ex. 20:5). Notice that He is *"visiting the iniquity...upon the third and fourth generation of them that hate me."* The 6th verse qualifies the statement even further: *"And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments."* Here is the pattern of God's justice, giving to each according to his just dues: mercy to those who love Him and keep His commandments, and judgment upon those who hate Him.

Why were the children punished? If we look at different incidents in the Bible, sometimes the children were punished, sometimes they were not. In the case of the rebellion of Dathan and Abiram and Korah (Num. 16) the children of Dathan and Abiram died with their parents, while the children of Korah *"died not"* (Num. 26:11).

There are two reasons:

1) God, knowing the end from the beginning (Isa. 46:9-10), can know what individuals will do before they actually do it, hence can be fair and just (where we would not be able to know). He knows who will repent and who will persist in sin, and can act accordingly. He can know as easily with people as we might be able to know with animals. Very often, but not always, children follow the pattern of *"like father, like son."* If, for example, we saw a nest of baby rattlesnakes, we would know that they would grow up to be just like their parents and that we did not want them living in our backyard. Just so, God can judge people, and can know in advance whether or not they deserve to live.

2) Children may be punished not

for the sins of their parents but because they sin like their parents or take part in the sin of their parents. This is the situation in Exodus 20, where God says He is inflicting the iniquity of one generation upon another "of them that hate me" (Ex. 20:5). Both generations hate God.

A parallel description is found in Hosea 6:7 (NASB), where we read of those who "like Adam...have transgressed the covenant; there they have dealt treacherously against Me." These people are condemned not because Adam sinned but because they transgressed like Adam.

A passage in the book of Psalms points up the same situation (78:56-57). Speaking of the Israelite nation we read: "Yet they tempted and provoked the most high God, and kept not his testimonies: but turned back and dealt unfaithfully like their fathers." They, the children, would be punished only because "they dealt unfaithfully like their fathers." We even read of an instance in the time of Jeremiah when the children "did worse than their fathers" (Jer. 7:23-26).

Consider the children of Achan who died with their transgressing father (Joshua 7:24-25). Though we are not told directly, it is very likely that Achan's family knew well enough what Achan had done, and having this knowledge they shared his guilt by covering for him and not speaking out at the command of Moses, hence were justly punished. Family ties often keep people from doing what they know is right. Here is a warning to all of us to stand for right no matter who we stand against. In the sight of God each is responsible for his own conduct.

◆ "Hereafter ye shall see..." what?

"Here is a Scripture I would like you to explain: 'And he saith unto him, verily, verily, I say unto you, hereafter ye shall see heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.'"

These words were spoken by Jesus very early in His career, when He had first gone out to preach and was

calling His disciples. Jesus had already called James, John, Andrew, and Philip, when Philip spread the news to Nathaniel saying, "We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." Nathaniel, upon seeing Jesus, said to Him, "Rabbi, thou art the son of God; thou art the King of Israel." Jesus replied that Nathaniel believed because he had seen Him and that he would see far greater things in the future; then follows the passage cited: "Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man" (John 1:35-51).

Scripture does not give any specific explanation of these words, but they seem to allude to Jacob's experience at Bethel, where he had a miraculous vision. In the vision Jacob saw heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon a ladder which reached from heaven to earth (Gen. 28:10-22). If Jesus had a like experience, we are not told. But we know angels did visit Jesus, and it is entirely possible He saw something similar, which He shared with His immediate followers.

It is possible, too, that Jesus spoke to "an Israelite indeed" as a representative of the true Church, saying that among the members of the true Church would be some who would have such visions. One example would be the apostle Paul (see 2 Cor. 12). Another would be the evangelist Stephen who, when he was about to expire, saw in vision the heaven opened and Jesus standing on the right hand of God (Acts 7:56). The apostle John was another true Israelite who had marvelous visions and revelations which he received from Jesus and recorded for us in the Book of Revelation.

Above all, Jesus may have been foretelling His second advent, when He would return, attended by myriads of angels (Heb. 12:22; Matt. 16:27; Dan. 7:10). "Hereafter" does not indicate how long after. Jesus' long-range thinking may have taken Him fifty years into the future, or more than two thousand. We have no way of knowing.

◆ "What does it mean, 'Some have entertained angels unawares'?"

The passage you cite is Hebrews 13:2: "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." The passage does not tell us enough to know what incident was in the author's mind, but there are several possibilities. Most likely is the time when Lot entertained the strangers who came to Sodom (Gen. 19:1-3). According to the account, Lot was sitting at the gate of the city one evening when two unidentified strangers came along. Without knowing who they were, he invited them to his home, for a night's rest, and later learned that they were angels.

The author of Hebrews is emphasizing the need for hospitality; however, the practice of entertaining total strangers without any knowledge of their background has never been an automatic obligation. The mention of hospitality assumed that the recipients were Christian brethren, though they might not be one's acquaintances. We today would not want to invite into our homes just any two strangers who might happen to come by.

Hospitality was commanded in other passages of Scripture. It was a plan set up because in the days of the early Church there were no readily available accommodations, and travelers had to rely on the helpfulness of friends. It was a service to which some people would naturally incline much more than others. Some who are of an outgoing, generous, affable personality might be very glad to help Christian travelers; others might be naturally suspicious. The apostle Peter advised—even commanded—the believers to "Use hospitality one to another without grudging" (1 Pet. 4:9). And Paul advised Titus that a good bishop would be a "lover of hospitality" (Titus 1:8), and he wrote to the Romans that they should be "given to hospitality" (Rom. 12:13).

Paul himself depended heavily on the hospitality of brethren as he traveled from place to place. He also taught the principle of being willing givers: "Freely ye have received, freely

give" (Matt. 10:8). Again, "He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work" (2 Cor. 9:6-8).

No one lives to himself, and none of us can provide entirely for our own needs. We are all to a greater or lesser extent dependent upon each other. At the same time, persons sharing a common interest (within the body of believers) will be glad to share common resources. The world will "love its own" (John 15:19), and so will the body of believers.

When God was working openly, it was possible to see angels and not know it. Today such would be impossible. No unidentified stranger today could be an angel, because angels are not visible to us now. However, we might, by entertaining a Christian brother or sister, be entertaining one who will one day become an angel.

◆ Is Christ invisible?

"Why does 1 Tim. 6:16 say no man has seen Christ, 'nor can see' him, yet other places in Scripture talk about the visible presence of the Lord, like Rev. 1:7?"

The Bible leaves no question but that Christ was visible when He was on earth the first time, and that He will be visible when He returns. The passage you cite states this very clearly: "Every eye shall see him" (Rev. 1:7). Jesus also compared His return to the lightning which "cometh out of the east and shineth even to the west" (Matt. 24:27), and lightning is very visible.

The problem in 1 Timothy 6:16 lies in distinguishing between the persons referred to. Paul speaks first of "Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession" (verse 13). Paul is charging Timothy with his responsibility to be faithful

"until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: which in his own times he shall show, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords" (6:13-15). The wording is much clearer in the original and its literal translation, as in Wilson's *Emphatic Diaglott*, which reads: "That thou keep the commandment, being spotless, blameless, till the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ; which in his own season that blessed and only potentate will exhibit—the King of kings, and Lord of lords—the only one possessing immortality, inhabiting light in accessible; whom no one of men has seen, nor is able to see; to whom be honor and might everlasting" (1 Tim. 6:13-16). Paul says that the "blessed and only potentate [God]" will in his own season exhibit Him who is "the King of kings, and Lord of lords," Jesus Christ.

This designation is confirmed by Jesus' own words in Revelation 3:21, that those who overcome will be privileged to sit with Him on His throne as associate rulers to share His power and glory. This same title is applied to Him again in Revelation 17:14: "For he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful."

At the present time Christ is the only one of our earthborn race who possesses immortality. He is the "firstfruits," the first to receive immortality, but "afterward" there will be many more: "Afterward they that are Christ's at his coming" (1 Cor. 15:23) when He brings the reward of immortality to all faithful men and women (Phil. 3:20-21).

Then the Apostle continues by describing Christ in His present exaltation—as the apostles delighted to do—glorified and at the right hand of God. At least three other times in his Epistles Paul spoke of Jesus seated at the right hand of God, in the position of highest honor; the Book of Hebrews alone mentions Jesus in His current heavenly position five

times. The apostle Peter also spoke of Jesus who is "gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him" (1 Pet. 3:22). Likewise, Paul in 1 Timothy 6 speaks of Christ who was then at the Father's right hand, "dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto."

Then follows the phrase: "whom no man hath seen, nor can see." The use of the pronoun "whom" might seem, at first reading, to refer back to Jesus, whom the apostle has been discussing. But the meaning of the passage is much clearer as phrased in the *Diaglott*. The passage reads: "The only one possessing immortality, inhab-

You don't destroy truth by refusing to believe it—any more than you get rid of apple trees by not picking the apples.

iting light inaccessible; whom no one of men has seen, nor is able to see." The confusion is the result of the translators who, not understanding the passage, used an inappropriate pronoun. Had they used "which" instead of "whom," the meaning would be clear. Greek pronouns all having gender, the English equivalent must be chosen by the context, rather than by a literal rendering of the original Greek. Substituting "which" for "whom," the passage would read "Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light unapproachable, which no man hath seen, nor can see"—the light in which God dwells is what is forbidden to mortal sight. The heavenly realm where Christ now dwells is invisible in that it is beyond the reach of human eyes. The extreme light of heavenly glory blinded Paul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9).

Moses experienced its dazzling brilliance when he met the angel of God in Mt. Sinai—and his face was

(Continued on page 26)



In disgust I tore the letter to shreds and tossed them into the wastebasket. It was my third attempt at writing Aunt Kate. I couldn't seem to concentrate. Neal's words kept crowding into my mind.

He had been quoting someone else, but the words still stung. "Little people are bothered by little things." And then his simple suggestion: "Just tune out those little irritations."

More easily said than done. It must be that Neal's days are not infested with so many irritable situations as mine, I mused.

The past two weeks had been hectic. Even with the family's help, it had been extremely busy—and trying. The canning, freezing, gardening, and the usual household chores—plus the task of trying to keep the household running smoothly now that all the children were home for summer holidays—all in all, I was getting irritable and fretful. Little incidents which one time I had not even noticed now began to rub me. The more I noticed them and thought on them, the more they rubbed.

Just little things. Janet had developed an annoying giggle which seemed to accompany everything she said. Brenda, who was now feeling quite grown up, did not hesitate to voice her opinion on just about every subject that came up; and she could see nothing wrong with continuously telling the younger ones what to do.

Kenneth had long had a habit of whistling through his front teeth when he was trying to work out a solution to some problem. Now that whistle began to annoy me. But it was Keith who really brought things

to a head. He never could enter a room without making you feel he was ready to challenge you to run a race with him; every muscle of his body was keyed for action. On top of it all, Keith had caught one of those hard-to-get-rid-of summer colds, which had left him with a hacking cough which seemed to hack continually at my nerves.

Last night after supper, Neal must have sensed the multiple problems. "Come, Kathy," he had said. "The girls will clear the table and wash the dishes. You and I are going for a little ride in the country."

I quickly removed my apron, thanked the girls, and we were on our way. We rode in peaceful silence a long while, the cool breezes fanning my hot cheeks. Finally Neal spoke. "Kathy," he guided the car around a deep pothole in the road—"don't you think you're letting the little things bother you too much?"

I knew he was right, but what could I do about it? The little things were there, and just about all the time.

"Why think about them so much? Instead, think of the marvelous opportunities they provide to grow spiritually. You know, we are only as big as the things that we let bother us."

"But Janet's giggle, Neal. It really bothers me. And Kenneth's constant whistle. And—"

"Tune them out."

"You said that before. But how can I?"

"Think about something else. Just concentrate on bigger, better things."

"Like—"

"Like the promises God has given us. Just think of them! Picture yourself as one of those glorious immortal beings. Imagine what it will feel like. God's promises are enough to lift us above any petty annoyance in this life. Just crowd out the annoyances."

"A splendid idea, Neal, but that's not so easy when you have to live with it all day long. You're gone a lot of the day; you don't get so much of it. That cough of Keith's really jars my nerves. And Brenda's know-it-all attitude. And Janet's incessant giggle. And Ken-

neith's—how are you going to tune all that out?"

Neal looked over at me. "Tune what out?" he asked.

I sighed but then I realized. His mind was surely in another world—where mine should be too. □

Though you cannot always do what you like, try liking what you must do.

God Says, "I Promise"

"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." —2 Peter 3:9

In the mind of every true believer there is no doubt that what God has promised He will fulfill. He has given His oath that this earth shall be filled with His glory, His people (Num. 14:21; Isa. 46:13). Continually through His Prophets He reminds us of what He has done in the past, and what He will do in the future. He illustrates the immutability of His word by the unchanging laws of nature that we see operating about us. Outstanding among these is His declaration through Isaiah (55: 10-11), "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." We are all familiar with the phenomenon of the rain and snow coming down to water the ground, the rhythm of the changing seasons, and the earth bringing forth abundantly for the needs of mankind. We expect these things to happen and are not disappointed, and the Prophet says the word of God is just as certain of fulfillment.

Today, as in the past, man makes promises but has no power to fulfill them. With God it is different. His promises can be relied upon. The record of the past proves it. Consider the prophecy through Daniel concerning the four world kingdoms (Dan.

2:28-45). History reveals that all Daniel foretold about these four kingdoms has been fulfilled. The next great event will be the beginning of the fifth Kingdom, represented by the stone which smote the image on the feet and became a great mountain which filled the whole earth. The reassuring part of this prophecy is the latter part of verse 45, "the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure." Just as surely as the four kingdoms of men came in their turn as foretold, so the fifth Kingdom with Christ as King, will follow.

It is well for us to bear in mind that when Peter was writing this epistle, he wrote particularly to those who were already well established in the faith. He wished to stir up their pure minds by putting them in remembrance mainly of what would come to pass in these last days. We now have reached this time he spoke of and see the world in the condition he predicted. During the past century many false prophets have arisen and fixed dates for the Lord to appear. They claimed Scriptural support for their belief, but time has revealed their positions to be incorrect.

Not knowing how to harmonize the Scriptures or growing weary of waiting for the fulfillment of the promise, many have turned to infidelity and scoffing. By their actions as well as their words they say, "Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" (2 Pet. 3:4). It is not for lack of evidence that these scoffers arise, but as Peter tells us (verse 3), this class represents those who are "walking after their own lusts." In spite of man's failures and mistakes the Apostle reminds us that, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise," and, "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night." No, the Lord is not slow in fulfilling His promises. His apparent slowness is but His longsuffering to us.

One of the greatest attributes of the Almighty is His longsuffering. The earth is His and all things upon it, yet consider how unappreciative mankind is! They are unthankful for His goodness in causing nature to provide for their need. They desecrate His property by destructive warfare, yet God silently waits. Through the ages man has rejected

God's word and scorned His Prophets, yet for all this His mercy is still extended. Truly, God is very patient in spite of the abuse and offense against Him.

It never has been the plan of the Almighty to save every individual, bad as well as good. His proposition has always been: Obey and live, disobey and die. God wills that all men should come to

True godly repentance consists of a complete reformation of the heart and character.

repentance but He knows full well they will not. From the very beginning the masses have chosen the broad road to destruction, the few the narrow way to life. God knows who will turn and truly repent, wherever they may be or whatever their present condition. He is not willing that any of these should perish until they have had time to come to repentance. It is these for whom Jesus prayed, those who would believe on Him through the Apostles' word (John 17:20).

The important thing for us to consider is our own need to repent. Repentance was the main theme of Jesus and the Apostles in their ministry. If men were already in the right way there would be no need of repentance, but all are sinful by nature and need to amend their ways. Godly repentance is the greatest step man can take, but one of man's commonest errors is to think he is all right when he is not.

Repentance, to be of any avail, must begin with a knowledge of right and wrong. No one can deliberately

go on in his wrong doing and hope to gain the favor of God on his deathbed. It is an error to believe that repentance is effectual even if it be right at the closing of one's life. Indeed, a righteous life is needful in the hour of death, but the man who has sown to the flesh during his years of health and vigor will be sadly disappointed if he thinks he can repent and reform when the shadow of death hovers over him. "Now is the accepted time, ... now is the day of salvation" says Paul (2 Cor. 6:2), and the Prophet Jeremiah cries out, "Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and, while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness.... Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil" (13:16, 23).

True godly repentance consists of amending our lives, a complete change of heart and character, and this takes time. True repentance is to believe only what God's Word

teaches on all points of doctrine and to bear the fruits of righteousness by keeping every commandment as given by the Prophets, Jesus and the Apostles. This is not a work accomplished in a moment—under emotion or otherwise—nor is it to condemn ourselves for one transgression and then commit another equally as bad, but it is a lifetime task that necessitates our serving the Lord with all our mind, might and strength. Truly penitent persons will see themselves as God sees them. They will restrain their irregular inclinations and subdue their rebellious passions. They will purify the motives of their conduct. They will form themselves to that temperance which no pleasure can seduce, to that meekness which no provocation can ruffle, to that patience which no affliction can overwhelm, and to that integrity which no self interest can bribe. In short, they will through a careful continuing in right doing achieve God's high and holy standard of moral perfection (Matt. 5:48). □

My Desire

*I dread to think of entering the tomb,
So dismal, with its scarcity of room.
There, locked in Death's embrace, its inmates lie,
In silence; neither can they sound a cry
For help. As each tree falls, so it remains,
And neither good nor evil gains.*

*When once the heart of man is stilled in death,
And from his nostrils vanishes all breath,
The mind refuses to perform its work;
The other organs then their duty shirk.
Then as a unit man has ceased to be.
I dread to think that this will come to me.*

*I'd rather spend my time upon the earth,
Accomplishing the things of greater worth;
And here, beneath the sun, or star-filled sky,
Give praise that God should notice such as I.
I'd like to live a million years, and then
Begin to live my life all o'er again!*

*I have no fault to find with this fair land,
Save for the misery on every hand;
Save for the sickness we so often see;
Save for the vice and immorality
In which so many lives have been misspent.
Remove all these, and here I'd dwell content.*

*I'd like to live on earth the ages through,
And here, from day to day, my strength renew,
With mind expanded till I understand
The working of the laws at God's command.
And this, the vict'ry over Death's domain,
Now lies within my power to obtain.*

*If I will but obey God's holy Word,
This wondrous boon on me will be conferred;
If I will only cast all self aside,
And in the narrow way steadfast abide,
I need not fear what death can do to me—
For from its grasp my Lord can set me free.*

—Liot L. Snyder



Nothing Hidden

A tall hedgerow of trees separates our property from the neighbors. It provides privacy and camouflages what lies behind.

But when the leaves turn yellow and gold and brown, and the fall winds come, suddenly, I can see through the foliage to what stretches beyond. Soon the area will look bare and naked; nothing will be hidden from view.

I think of my heart as it must look before God. I think of Jesus, who talked to the woman at the well, and told her about her past life—He could read what was written there. I think of Jesus, who looked into Peter's innermost heart, and told him his deepest thoughts, and said, "*When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren*" (Luke 22:32). I think of Jesus, as He looked—not at the Pharisees and the multitudes, but through them. He "*needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man*" (John 2:25).

In our hedgerow, I now see things that were well hidden—a bird's nest, some tin cans, a few sticks of old lumber, and scattered papers. I see dead branches, and squirrels as they scamper here and there. Looking through it I see a vacant field that stretches to the horizon.

I am reminded of the words of the Psalmist: "*Shall not God search this out? for he knoweth the secrets of the heart*" (Ps. 44:21). Is it really true? Can God really see inside me? Can He see the pretense, the "playing church" in me? Can He see the litter of selfish motives and compromises? Can He see my dead limbs of unconcern, my lack of vision, my laziness? Can He see the little foxes of jealousy, hurt feelings, and self-seeking? Can He see the emptiness which lies behind my covering up?

The answer is Yes!

O God, I don't want to be like the Pharisees of whom Jesus said, "*Ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess*" (Matt. 23:25). I want to be so clean that when You look inside me You will see only what is a reflection of Yourself—goodness, righteousness, and truth. □

Questions and Answers

(Continued from page 21)

still shining too much for mortal eyes to behold even after he had left the Divine Presence (Ex. 34:19–20). On another occasion, when Moses asked for a confirmation of the Lord's presence with him, the angel told Moses that he could not look upon his face because of its glory. He said, "Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me and live" (Ex. 33:20).

The brightness of Divine glory is beyond our present ability to experience, comprehend, or see. But when Christ returns to earth, He will be visible, as visible as He was when He went away (Acts 1:11); as visible as the lightning that comes out of the east and shines to the west (Matt. 24:27). Jesus speaking of the time of His return, said Himself, "Then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with power and great glory" (Luke 21:27).

When Christ returns, He will bestow upon all faithful ones the same glorious reward of immortality which He is now enjoying, and the now "invisible" (unseen) wonders of the far-off heavens will be opened to their view, even to the fulfilling of the promises: "They shall see God" (Matt. 5:8); and "the upright shall behold his face" (Ps. 11:7, ASV). □

Our words may hide our thoughts, but our actions will reveal them.

The most destructive acid in the world is found in a sour disposition.

The thing that makes men and rivers crooked is following the line of least resistance.

Garbage In Garbage Out

"What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us."—Ralph Waldo Emerson.

What does lie within us? Jesus told us that, "From within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man" (Mark 7:21–23).

This list might not have been what Emerson had in mind but this is the Divine estimate of "what lies within us."

Jesus has given us a test to determine just what is inside. He says, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." What comes out of our mouth determines what is inside. Again our Lord tells us, "Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man."

So let's apply the test: What do we enjoy talking about? Scandals, sports, and material goods are what interest people. Would someone listening to our conversations at work or home realize that we are godly-minded Bible students? What words do we use when we are angry?

The computer slogan of "garbage in, garbage out" applies to much more than just software. It applies to us. The reason that "from within, out of the heart of men, proceed such awful things is because that is the stuff that mankind tends to put inside.

Paul exhorted the Romans not to "let the world around us squeeze us down into its mold." Thanks to the radio, TV, newspapers and magazines, the world is constantly bom-

barding our minds with its filth and if we are not careful we will suddenly find our insides full of the wrong kinds of things: garbage.

We can change what is inside us but it can only be done with great effort. Our Lord said, "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth evil things...for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Matt. 12:34–35).

The big question we each need to ask ourselves is this: What are we putting in? Rethinking Emerson's quote, what lies before us will be determined by what lies within us.

If we have filled our minds with the things of God, then Emerson's statement is wrong because that which lies before us will not be a tiny matter at all. Our future reward will be to live and reign on the earth as immortals with the Lord Jesus Christ forever. The things that lie behind are not "worthy to be compared with the glory" which is before us. John says, "When he (Christ) shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." He will "wipe away tears from off all faces:" and "we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation."

Let us then be very careful of that which we allow and turn off the world's noises and distractions. Let us follow Paul's advice to "Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine...to meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (1 Tim. 4:13, 15–16). □

—from the *Christadelphian Tidings*,
July, 1995

We best glorify God when we grow most like Him, when we act most for His glory, when a true spirit of sanctity, justice and meekness runs through all our actions;

when we so live in the world as becomes those that converse with the great Mind that governs and supports all things, and from whom all good flows;

when we are so captivated and overcome by the sense of the Divine loveliness and goodness that we conform our entire being to be, as much as we may be, like Him.

The life behind the words gives the words their meaning.

Jesus will never cross the picket line of our unwillingness.

Evil-hearing is just as sinful as evil-speaking.

Genuine repentance is being sorry for the deed, not for being caught.

There is no danger of getting lost if we stay in the narrow way.



There are two kinds of people, those who do the work and those who take the credit. Try to be in the first group; there is less competition there.

Obstacles are things a person sees when he takes his eyes off his goal.

A lack of spiritual achievement is too often the result of a lack of spiritual appetite.

Keep on Asking

(Continued from page 2)

desire is all our heart's affection set "on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3:1-2).

The promises of God are far, far beyond human fathoming. The Almighty Provider "satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness" (Ps. 107:9). He has promised to "fulfill the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them" (Ps. 145:19). Those who truly seek Him truly find Him, always faithful and true (Prov. 8:17). "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light" (Ps. 36:8-9).

With such vast riches in store for those who truly love God, is it possible that we may settle for that which is quick, cheap and easy? Is it possible that we may seek those "instant" fulfillments which, to the

nearsighted, look more glamorous than the heavenly realities? God forbid!

The only question lies in completing the transaction. God's part is sure. The question lies with us: Given our level of desire and our willingness to sacrifice, how much are we willing to invest in God's coming Kingdom? How much risk can we take? Are we ready to go and sell all our interests and desires for this world which stand in the way of obtaining what God offers? Are we ready, like the disciples, to "forsake all" and "follow"? Are we willing, if need be, to leave "house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands" for His sake and the gospel's? (Mark 10:29-30). Is what He has to offer worth that much?

Is it possible we can be satisfied with what we can obtain from this world, when God has offered us "pleasures for evermore"? If so, that is all we will ever have. But if we ask and keep on asking; seek and keep on seeking; knock and keep on knocking, we are showing our desire by our relentless persistence, and God will open to us the wonders of Eternity. □



W

*hy were the saints, saints?
Because they were cheerful
when it was difficult to be cheerful;
patient when it was difficult to be patient;
and because they pushed on
when they wanted to stand still,
and kept silent when they wanted to talk,
and were agreeable when they
wanted to be disagreeable.
That was all.*