

Megiddo Message

We thank Thee then, O Father,
For all things true and good,
The seed-time and the harvest,
Our life, our health, our food;
To Thee our lives we offer
For all Thy love imparts,
And that which Thou desirest,
Our humble, thankful hearts.



Megiddo Message

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The MEGIDDO MESSAGE will

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

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Hymn of the Harvest



Lord of the harvest, Thee we hail,
Thy daily blessings do not fail;
The varying seasons have their round;
With goodness all our years are crown'd;
Our thanks we pay this holy day.
O let our hearts with praise resound.

When spring doth wake the song of mirth,
When summer warms the fruitful earth,
When autumn yields its ripen'd grain,
When winter sweeps the naked plain,
We ever sing to Thee our King;
Through all their changes Thou dost reign.

But chiefly when Thy bounteous hand
New plenty scatters o'er the land,
When sounds of music fill the air,
As homeward men earth's treasures bear,
We, too, will raise our hymn of praise,
For we Thy common bounties share.

Lord of the harvest, all is Thine.
The rains that fall, the suns that shine,
The seed once hidden in the ground,
The skill that makes our fruits abound,
New ev'ry year Thy gifts appear;
New praises from our lips shall sound.



Forefathers and Forth-Farers

PRAYER

Almighty God we come before Thee to acknowledge our gratitude for the heritage that is ours in this fair land. To it our forefathers were led. In it our fathers have striven to bring forth a nation where justice and right could prevail to a greater extent than in other parts of the globe. Their efforts have proved a great boon to us.

Out of the forest they made land fit to till; from the mountains they wrought treasure; upon the prairies they garnered grain, and we in our turn bless Thee for the fruitfulness that sustains our bodies. In this good season as we delight in the natural glories of the land, may we recognize in mountain and plain, by the lakes and in the great deserts, the handiwork of a good and mighty God. And as we share in the harvest may we recall those men who, by dedication and skill in working with the things of Thine earth, have built a civilization.

Protect us, O Lord, in the midst of these blessings, that we do not place too much confidence in man's accomplishments, thus overlooking Thee. Keep us from falling into an attitude of self-satisfaction and smugness, or from thinking the people of our nation are more worthy of all Thy great goodness than other peoples of the world.

And we praise Thee that our fathers sought to fashion a government witnessing to the world that every man has dignity, and the power of self-discipline, which makes him worthy to share in government.

Help us to be honest in the appraisal of ourselves. May Thy great goodness to us Thy people make us humble; may the insight that we have into Thy plan for the earth and mankind alert us to our great responsibility. We are the inheritors of the ages. We have been made the stewards of Thy saving knowledge, hence shall be held responsible for our stewardship.

May we who confess Thy holy Name always hear Thy Word, obey Thy truth, remembering that Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory for ever. Amen.

DISCOURSE

WITH THE return of the Thanksgiving season our minds unconsciously turn to the hardy Pilgrims who instituted the day of Thanksgiving as an expression of gratitude to God for their first harvest in the New World. They had left comfortable homes and civilized surroundings, braving the perils of a voyage across an uncharted ocean in a small sailing ship, finally landing on the bleak shores of New England. The men and women who were our forefathers possessed a venturesome spirit; otherwise they could not have done what they did.

It took courage and the true pioneer spirit to launch such a hazardous undertaking. Those who embarked on the Mayflower were people of purpose, of strong convictions; and they were convinced that in taking such a step, they would be improving their opportunity for liberty and spiritual advancement.

No doubt the plan for immigration to the New World was—with the more adventurous at least—the favorite brain-child for months, and perhaps years. Gathered around their firesides in the evening, they planned and counterplanned, first deciding to make the venture, then concluding the risk was too great. Again and again they counted the cost, weighing the perils they would encounter against the gain they hoped to acquire, till at last their enthusiasm had risen to such a pitch that nothing could stop them.

Some years ago the pastor of a city church chose for the subject of his Thanksgiving sermon, "Forefathers and Forth-farers." He begged the pardon of his congregation for the seeming pun or play of words, for the sake of the thought that he was trying to embody in his subject. His question: Do we possess in any real degree the spirit of daring which animated those who set sail over treacherous seas, to unknown lands?

Today we sail uncharted seas. We walk wholly by faith, but we have no cause to doubt the God who is leading. We need more faith in Him. We

need more courage to fare forth in the cause of truth and righteousness. We need to remind ourselves often that God still lives and that His purpose cannot fail. He has set apart him that is godly for Himself (Ps. 4:3). He is not unrighteous to forget our work and labor of love (Heb. 6:10). His promises are as sure as the return of the growing season, for "As the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations" (Isa. 61:11).

Again and again we hear God's spokesmen saying: "Let your hearts be strong." It is the cowards who say, "The work cannot be done," "God's plan may fail in the end." No! God's plan and purpose to save and eternally bless the righteous cannot fail. His plan to fill the earth with His glory and transform it into a heavenly paradise will surely be fulfilled.

The Christian forth-farer has the courage to take a step by faith, to continue on in a prescribed course when all odds seem to be against him. It took faith for the Pilgrims to undertake the crossing of the Atlantic in the Mayflower, being uncertain where they would land, or what peoples—friendly or unfriendly—they would meet. And it will take faith and daring on our part to fight against sin and the promptings of the flesh. When the strongest instincts in our very nature seem to demand indulgence, it will take courage and strength to say a resolute *no* to self, and make it stick. But no other course can bring us the ultimate in peace of mind, or assure us an abundant entrance into Christ's Kingdom.

The Danger of Indifference

In the first part of his sermon the minister enumerated some of what he considered structural weaknesses in our nation. Outstanding among these were carelessness, indifference to law, and religious indifference. We cannot honestly disagree with him on this score, for the indictment is too true. Indifference to our State and Federal laws, to the rules of the highway; indifference to the Golden Rule and to the rules of the Law of God is the order of the day.

The human weakness of indifference is part and parcel of the makeup of each one who strives for perfection of character. The desire to slacken the tension now and again and take it easy is as natural to us as to breathe. But the Christian must walk carefully. He must never walk carelessly, for danger is near. Moses transgressed in not paying sufficient attention when the Lord commanded him to speak to the rock to provide water for the people.

He smote it with his rod as he had been accustomed to doing. Uzzah became careless when in disobedience to the long-standing command not to touch any holy thing he put up his hand to stay the ark of God, fearing that harm would come to it as it jostled over the rough ground, when the oxen were pulling it on the new cart.

And how many times we have grown indifferent in our relation with our brethren in the faith. We have failed to do to others as we would have them do to us. We have wished our ugly unchristian moods upon others. We have spoken words that cut like knives in place of weighing our words and pleasing our neighbor or brother for his good to edification.

Commenting on indifference to religion, the speaker had this to say: "From Washington down to our present day in the history of the nation, morals without religion do not endure. They may abide in the hearts and minds of a few, . . . but for the average man they do not endure. Men and women must have the training, the development, the spiritual vision which religion alone can give to be able to see the things which are unseeable, to be able to realize and know life's brightest hopes." And to this we would add that a religion strong enough to regenerate and fit us for salvation must be reasonable, definite and clearly definable; based entirely upon the plainest commandments and promises in an inspired, infallible Word. We thank God that we have such a religion.

As a whole the people of today are indifferent to religion. But what of us? Are we indifferent to the great and precious promises that God has made to us? We must believe with all our hearts if we would fare forth with the strength and vigor of our forefathers in the faith. A world-renowned orchestra conductor once said: "I freeze, or I burn, but I cannot be indifferent about my music." And a Christian should never be indifferent about his religion. In Heb. 2:1—3, we read: "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"

No! Morals without religion do not endure, and they cannot save. The carnal mind is enmity against God. It "is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be." "The gospel is the power of God to salvation to every one that believes," and with its bright promise of life eternal, we should be able to generate the necessary courage and endurance to carry the work to its successful finish.

The speaker continued: Our forefathers became

"forth-farers in and for the life of our nation. They dared greatly—so greatly that in those earlier days they left home and comforts" and took up their abode in the American wilderness surrounded by hostile Indians. They dared greatly in later years in setting up a government which "Washington frankly called an experiment, such a one as nations and peoples of the Old World did not believe could succeed. But they dared, they built, believing they had ventured a new thing which would succeed." They were indeed forth-farers, and through their efforts we now enjoy freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom to worship God according to the dictates of our own conscience—conditions indispensable to the rebirth of true religion upon earth.

Dare to Be Different

Our forefathers dared greatly; in like manner we, the representatives of the true and living God on earth today, must dare greatly. We must dare to be different. Living in the midst of a careless, heedless, pleasure-loving world, we as true Christians must be able to live above the waywardness to which the masses are inclined, being examples of the "believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Tim. 4:12). In an age of loose morals and carelessness of dress and of deportment, we must be strictly careful of the life that we lead. We must refuse to follow popular fashions, when to do so we should disobey the divine injunction to dress "in modest apparel" (1 Tim. 2:9).

In a day when vulgarity and loose talk have become the rule rather than the exception, do we dare to be different to the extent that we can resist following this trend, and employ only "sound speech, that cannot be condemned" (Titus 2:8)? Is our speech always with grace, seasoned with the salt of righteousness (Col. 4:6)?

God wants men of action, not cowards. He has no use for the sluggards who are always ready with the defeatist attitude, "It cannot be done." Their only strength resides in sitting still (Isa. 30:7). God's forth-farers must be pioneers. They must be pilgrims with such an insatiable desire for eternal life and salvation that nothing can daunt them. The great apostle Paul showed himself to be one of these forth-farers when he said to the Ephesian elders: "And now, behold, I go bound in the Spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: save that the Holy Spirit witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus..." (Acts 20:22—24).

November, 1971

Adventure—for Life!

We need the spirit of the forth-farer to arm us with the daring to invest our all, our very best, in a proposition that can be seen only by the eye of faith. It takes supreme venturesomeness to engage in an undertaking which takes our all, which demands that we take up our cross daily and give up the doing of the things that we most ardently desire to do; to give up pleasurable experiences and congenial associations; to surrender our own private opinions, to give up catering to the natural mind in any way, to submit to the complete removal of our head—figuratively speaking—for Christ's sake; and all for rewards that we have never seen, that no living man has ever seen. This is a mighty undertaking, but the most fruitful proposition with which we could possibly concern ourselves.

When the lawyer, tempting Jesus, asked which was the great commandment in the law, Jesus answered him: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matt. 22:37—40). If we take our life in our hands and go forth serving God, hanging all that we do on these two great commandments, we will demonstrate we are true forth-farers, and it will be well with us when we stand before the great Judge.

"Go West"—Expand

A century or so ago the popular call was, "Go West, young man." To do that meant hardship, privation, possible loss of life. But packing their few earthly possessions in a covered wagon, many fam-

DECEMBER 25

the Birth of Christ?

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ilies undertook the hazardous journey across the American wilderness. They climbed mountains; they forded dangerous streams, crossed long stretches of burning deserts where their livestock sometimes perished for the want of water. But some safely reached the Pacific Coast regions and took up homesteads on the virgin lands.

True, our land frontiers have been fixed, making it out of the question for us to "Go West" and take up land claims in undeveloped areas as did our forefathers. But our opportunities to fare forth into broader fields in mental and spiritual development are unlimited. Ever beckoning to us is the opportunity to search deeper into the storehouse of God's wisdom, the Bible, exploring the height, depth and breadth of the wonderful knowledge of God. Then there is the chance for expansion in the field of showing a more godly example to others. There is no greater spiritual service that we can render to our family, our circle of friends or our community, than the example of an honest, upright, godly life, showing a pattern of good works to all who observe us. It was Jesus Himself who said, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16).

No greater display of moral strength, nor a surer sign of a forth-farer in the quest of life eternal could be manifest than the ability to accept constructive criticism with good grace and profit by it. Every way of our own seems right to us, and we lack the vision to see ourselves in our true light, hence reproof and correction (Prov. 6:23; 3:11,12) are indispensable factors in spiritual advancement. We read, "Happy is the man whom God correcteth" (Job 5:17). These words focus our point even more sharply: Not only must we be able to accept reproof gracefully and profitably but must actually be happy under God's correction in view of the great good it ultimately will bring to us.

The Eastward Ho

While the Westward Ho is no longer possible, in our spiritual life we hear an even more ringing call to action. It is the Eastward Ho. There is a remarkable difference between the two. The former is traveling toward sunset, the latter toward *sunrise* (Mal. 4:2). A much greater spirit of adventure must prevail to take the latter rather than the former course, and the endings are vastly different.

It is common these days to speak of the afternoon of life. It is the years from retirement age on. If one has good health and economic security, these years may be pleasant. They give the opportunity for travel, cultural pursuits, for doing some of the helpful things one always wished to do but could

not for the lack of time. But these days, however beautifully tinted with the rosy glow of sunset, are numbered. The sun *will* go down; life *will* end.

The Eastward Ho is traveling toward sunrise. Everything is ahead, nothing behind. But conditions of travel are not always such as we would choose. It is still dark; it may be very dark. There is always darkness just before dawn. Coldness, dampness prevail everywhere; but day will soon be breaking. Light is ahead; glory is ahead! God's new day for the earth and mankind is ahead. When a young man went west, years of hard work were ahead; a meager existence was ahead, and an ultimate termination of life the only prospect. Traveling east toward God's sunrise also is an adventure. There certainly will be hard work, sacrifice, loads to carry, mountains to climb; but there is also approaching brightness. Life is ahead. "The path of the just is as a shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

Let us take the Eastward Ho!

More Pilgrim Courage

It took courage on the part of the Pilgrim Fathers to brave the uncertainties of life in a new country. To build themselves homes and hew a livelihood from an undeveloped wilderness required initiative and determination, and plenty of hard work; but the true pioneer is not daunted by obstacles such as these. Likewise, to submit to a program of character-building that calls upon us to give up everything we naturally crave, if it conflicts with the Law of God, to take up our cross daily and deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, is a gigantic undertaking; but what adventurous soul could wish it otherwise? If even so great a boon as eternal life in glory were dropped into our lap gratis and without effort on our part, we should not appreciate it.

The adventurer faring forth into the frontier country found not only hostile tribes to make his life uncertain, but also dangerous beasts, venomous reptiles, poisonous insects. Neither is the spiritual life of the potential seeker of the "better country" always safe. First and foremost, the "old man" that dwells right in his own heart is always determined to take the life of the new man. Then there are the beastly characteristics of wrath, anger, malice, envy, pride, jealousy, selfishness, impure thoughts and motives always watching for their chance to enter the sacred abode of the new man to injure or destroy him completely. The serpent is always waiting to inject into the lifeblood his deadly venom of, "Ye shall not surely die," even though you do break a few of the commandments of the Almighty;

(Continued on page 20)

Where Are the Nine?

"In the course of his journey to Jerusalem he was traveling through the borderlands of Samaria and Galilee. As he was entering a village he was met by ten men with leprosy. They stood some way off and called out to him, 'Jesus, Master, take pity on us.'

"When he saw them he said, 'Go and show yourselves to the priests'; and while they were on their way, they were made clean. One of them, finding himself cured, turned back praising God aloud. He threw himself down at Jesus's feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan. At this Jesus said:

"Were not all ten cleansed? The other nine, where are they?"

(Luke 17:11—17, NEB).

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I meant to go back, but you may guess
I was filled with amazement I cannot express,
To think that after those horrible years,
That passion of loathing and passion of fears,
By sores unendurable—eaten, defiled—
My flesh was as smooth as the flesh of a child!
I was drunken with joy; I was crazy with glee;
I scarcely could walk and I scarcely could see,
For the dazzle of sunshine where all had been black—
And I meant to go back—oh, I meant to go back!

I had thought to return; then my people came out,
There were tears of rejoicing and laughter and shout;
They embraced me—for years I had not known a kiss;
Their amazement, their gladness—what exquisite bliss!
They crowded around me, they filled the whole place;
They looked at my feet and my hands and my face;
My children were there, and my wonderful wife,
And all the forgotten allurements of life.
My cup was so full, I seemed nothing to lack!! . . .
But I meant to go back—oh, I meant to go back!

If Money Were The "ROOT OF ALL EVIL," then most of us could be free from danger, because we are able to hold on to so little of it. But the Bible says the *love of money* is the root of all evil.

If money was evil within itself, then we could destroy evil by destroying money, and only those who could hold on to money could be evil. The sad truth is that people without money can be just as evil as those with it because we don't have to have it to love it—in fact, many people who have money find out very quickly that it doesn't fulfill all the needs of life. Besides, good and evil are not just related to what we have, but what we are.

Money may fill garages with cars, it may fill docks with boats, it may fill houses with furniture, it may fill closets with clothes, it may fill coolers

with food and drink, it may fill vaults with wealth. But money can never fill the heart with the peace that comes from a right relationship with God through faith in Christ.

Really, the issue is not whether we have money or not, but whether or not we place too much importance upon the material things of life. It is wonderful to see people with money using it for the glory of God and the good of mankind, but it is heart-breaking to see people who have been "set on fire" by the "love of money" to the extent that they are willing to burn themselves out to gain money for selfish ends.

Paul said, "Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new." • •

Timely Topics

ONE GREAT evidence that the world has converted the church is to be found in the rock opera, "Jesus Christ Superstar," written by Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice. The two-record album of the opera has sold over two million copies in this country, and is enjoying phenomenal success in many countries. Were it not for its sublime subject, we could dismiss it as another example of an ingenious composition to appeal to the juke box set, and as such it would be of no concern to the Christian. But to drag down to the level of the gutter the noble life

Concerning "Jesus Christ Superstar"

of the greatest Man who ever lived is not only indefensible—it is blasphemous.

For hundreds of years composers have used the life of Christ as inspiration for their noblest utterances. Handel's oratorio, "The Messiah," or J. S. Bach's "Christmas Oratorio," or D. Buck's, "The Coming of the King" are inspired compositions, containing beautiful music and reverent lyrics. These men were creating a work of art and doing so in a respectful manner.

No such thing can be said for "Jesus Christ Superstar." The only part of the music which could be described as beautiful and inspiring is the very end. The music of soft strings and woodwinds accompanies the burial scene, after the crucifixion. But this is one of the great weaknesses of the opera—it ends with Christ's death. To the Christian the most important and significant aspect of Christ's life is His resurrection and ascension. To end any story, opera or oratorio with His death is to negate the whole purpose of His life.

The music as a whole is banal and repetitious, with a persistent jungle rhythm more suited to the wilds of Africa than to the Christian Church. The singing in places comes closer to the wailing of a banshee than to the utterance of a civilized vocalist. The writer must confess that he is prejudiced against much modern music, and that a person more acquainted with the modern idiom might differ in his assessment. But regardless of that, it does seem that the style of music used stimulates basic animal instincts and is most certainly not the style to use for religious drama.

So much for the music.

What about the lyrics? Even worse than the music. The writer of the opera is attempting to portray Jesus through the eyes of Judas, or so he says. But he actually underrates the intelligence of Judas, even though in an interview he describes Judas as the most intelligent of the apostles. Judas was fully aware of Christ's character and mission. That is why he became despondent enough to take his own life when he realized what he had done.

The language of the opera is vulgar, slangy, and irrereligious. These words are from Judas:

All your followers are blind,
Too much heaven on their mind.

This is from the apostles:

What's the buzz?
Tell me what's a-happening . . .

These words are from Herod to Jesus:

Prove to me that you're no fool.
Walk across my swimming pool . . .
Feed my household with this bread.
You can do it on your head.

Jesus is described as inconsistent and unsure of the future, the exact opposite of the Jesus of the Scriptures.

When Jesus returns to this earth, He will condemn this sort of blasphemy in the strongest of terms—and action. This opera was admittedly written to make money, and it has certainly succeeded—which fact is a serious indictment of the state of religion and the sincerity of those who call themselves Christians today. The words of Paul come to mind: Teach and admonish "one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers" (Col. 3:16; Eph. 4:29).

Nor is there edification in the plot of the opera. Speaking about Christ's relationship with Mary Magdalene, Judas says, "It seems to me a strange thing, mystifying / That a man like you, can waste his time / On women of her kind. / Yes, I can understand that she amuses you. . . ." Does this sound like the Jesus who said, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God"?

To present this picture of Jesus to the young people of today is not only an evil—it is a crime. Such opera should not be purchased in its recorded version, or witnessed in live performance by anyone who respects the age-old tenets of the Christian faith. ● ●

Power In Prayer

LOOKING BACK through the centuries of time we are deeply impressed to discover how prayer played such an integral part in the lives of God's children. Heartfelt, earnest prayer was the mainspring of their lives. It provided the source of their spiritual energy, their perfect peace amid the storms of life and their dynamic personality.

How could communion with the Heavenly Father so completely supply the requisites for victorious living? The answer is simple—they knew how to pray!

First of all they rested in their Maker's promise that if they asked according to His will they would be heard. Consequently their prayer was no dreamy reverie or sweet sentimentality; rather it was definite and earnest. Remember how "Elijah prayed earnestly" and David "poured out his soul"; the persistency and vow of Hannah, and lastly the strong crying and tears of our Lord? Theirs was no listless attention to prayer, no flagging interest. Instead, their prayers glowed with the white heat of intensity.

Another indispensable aid to their oneness with God's will was their humility. Is it not always so—that the person who stands undefeated, straight and tall in the presence of sin bows lowest in the presence of God? And is it not true also, that those who live nearest to God are the most humble?

Then too, their prayers were made in absolute faith. Though frequently buffeted and torn by grievous trial, danger and hardship, their faith in the promise that their Heavenly Father would not allow a temptation or trial beyond their power of endurance, kept them strong and unwavering. Theirs was a faith that could laugh at seeming impossibilities, a boundless faith that could remove mountains and cast them into the sea.

And now, what of us? Have we learned the secret of meaningful prayer? Remember, prayer does not bend the will of God to us, but rather bends our will to His. Perhaps it could be said that prayer empties the one praying of self so that he may better assimilate what the will of God is.

Prayer possesses ample power to change our way of life, for truly it is impossible to approach the Almighty in sincerity and remain the same as we were before. In His divine presence we see our-

selves as we truly are; we sense deeply our own unrighteousness and His purity. We become increasingly aware of the fact that "we have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and we have done those things which we ought not to have done."

What is our reaction when the storm clouds of trial gather dark and lowering overhead? Do we attempt to flounder through the darkness, vainly thinking our own strength will win the day? Oh foolish one, flee to the shelter of the Everlasting Arms and there earnestly pray until the light breaks through. Has He not promised to be a "very present help in time of trouble?"

Perhaps one of the more difficult aspects in regard to communion with the Father could be termed "unanswered prayer." Undoubtedly we have all at some time or other earnestly pleaded for release from a particularly trying circumstance, only to have it remain our daily companion. What is the reason? It is not that God is deaf to our entreaty; far from it. Rather, He sees the existing difficulty as a necessary ingredient for purification of character. Remember, He can see far beyond the present moment and knows better than we what is needed to prepare us for a place in His eternal plan.

Probably we are all familiar with the timely admonition to "pray without ceasing" and to "in everything give thanks," but do we even partially comprehend the meaning? Are we quick to thank God when days are calm and peaceful, only to forget Him or mistrust His leading when the way becomes rugged and steep? Perhaps we may have prayed for patience, and then found ourselves besieged on every hand by irritating circumstances. That's the time to go back and thank God for the opportunity the trial presents to excel in patience. Remember, prayer to be effective must be constant and earnest, with a complete submission of will which will enable us to say, "Not my will, but Thine be done."

Have you tapped this unfailing source of power—have I? Are you pressed under sorrow, or near to despair? Do troubles your steps pursue? Oh, go to the Father and tell him your care. Just keep on praying until the light breaks through. • •

The Upward Call



Scene IV

To the prison-lodging of the APOSTLE PAUL in a narrow street of Rome come his spiritual children with their problems, and with his understanding and wise counsel he heals their troubled hearts.

LUCIUS, the young patrician, torn between present pleasures and future glory, is taught to discern between false values and true.

In the preceding scene, TELEMACHUS, the slave of a brutal master, comes in the depths of despair, unable to see a ray of light ahead. PAUL convinces him that his soul need not be enslaved to any man; in spite of his apparently hopeless position, he can still enjoy the promised hundredfold, through the fellowship, the equality, the dignity, and the hope provided by the Christian faith. Adversities need not overcome one, but may be used for character building. Even in slavery, he can witness for Christ by honest service, by exemplary conduct, even by dying for his principles, if it comes to that.

Christ's service gives him true freedom; his master, with his superstitions, his fears and lusts, his narrow mortal horizons, is the real slave. TELEMACHUS goes away, a man once more, his chin up.

In Scene IV of the drama, the problem is Old Age and Death, the common lot of all, but never pleasant to contemplate. It is now late afternoon, and the shadows are beginning to darken the room. To the door comes MATTHEW, an aged Jewish Christian. His beard is white, his form bent, his steps feeble and halting; his voice quavers with the weakness of extreme old age.

The soldier, evidently a gentleman at heart, springs to assist the old man to a chair. PAUL grasps his hand affectionately. After all, he and MATTHEW have a common background of race and religion; they "speak the same language."

PROBLEM—OLD AGE AND DEATH

PAUL. [*warmly*] Greetings, Brother Matthew! I have been wondering about you, and worrying a little. I'm sorry I haven't a more comfortable chair to offer you; my landlord thinks these are good enough—he doesn't have to use them.

MATT. [*surprised*] You find time to think of me—with all you have to do?

PAUL. That, Brother, is part of what I have to do, isn't it? Christians *must* think of each other, since the world doesn't think much of us. It's a lovely spring we're having, isn't it?

MATT. [*dolefully*] I guess it is; I had hardly noticed it. At any rate, it is not likely I shall ever see another, if I finish this one. I feel I am very near the end of the way.

PAUL. You have not been so well?

MATT. No. It's just all I can do to stay alive. My health is broken, my strength is gone.

PAUL. [*solicitously*] You have much pain?

MATT. Constantly. At night I wish it were morning, and in the morning I wish it were night. Life

is something of a burden. If only I could work . . . So, Brother Paul, I have dragged myself to your door once more, seeking a word of consolation. You know, I was a Pharisee, like you—a pretty good Pharisee. I believed I had an immortal soul, and had no doubt that when I died I would go right to heaven; but you have taken away that false comfort from me.

PAUL. Not I, but Christ.

MATT. True enough. I know it is true as Solomon and Ben Sirach have said, the son of man is not immortal, and the dead know not anything.

PAUL. As Pharisees, we chose to overlook those Scriptures, didn't we?

MATT. Yes, we did. We were blind. I know this is true, and that it is just and right, for it is God's way; yet, face to face with the end of my mortal existence, I am troubled.

PAUL. [*gently*] Are you afraid, Brother Matthew?

MATT. No . . . not exactly, but I long for some certainty, some assurance. It is strange that I, to whom life is so hard to bear, should tremble as the dark closes in, but there is the old, old dread of the unknown.

PAUL. But, my brother, it is *not* the unknown. We do not have to guess at what lies beyond; it is plainly revealed, and our Lord has passed through the veil and reported back to us. Death is, as the Scriptures say, a sleep—and what is better than sleep when one is weary? It is an end to weakness and pain, an end to all the troubles and disappointments and frustrations of this earthly life. But it is not the end—no, no; for we have the blessed assurance that our vile, mortal, decaying body shall be changed; this mortal shall put on immortality, and this corruptible shall put on incorruption.

MATT. In the Resurrection, we are taught.

PAUL. In the Resurrection, we *know*. I have known, Brother, that you have your troubles with doubts of the resurrection of the body—is it not true?

MATT. Yes, it is true. My relatives, of course, are Sadducees, and they argue that such things do not happen, and that it is not Scriptural. I try to resist these doubts, but they keep coming back.

PAUL. [*with intensity, his eyes glowing*] Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead? At the very heart of our faith is the risen Christ. Take that away, and we have nothing left—no hope. The Christian movement is not founded upon a myth. He who met a funeral procession coming out of the city of Nain, stopped it in the street, and brought back from death a widow's son—He who called out of a festering grave the decaying body of Lazarus—He who was Himself dead and is alive for evermore—

can we not believe His promise; "I will raise him up at the last day"?

Here is Someone who knows what He is talking about. Here is One speaking with authority. He has done it for others already. He has experienced it in His own body. He has done it . . . He can do it again.

Because He rose from the dead, we need have no fears of the darkness. "Be not afraid," He said, "only believe. He that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." Every man in his own order; Christ the firstfruits, afterward they that are Christ's at His coming. As Pharisees, we professed to believe in the Resurrection—remember?

MATT. True, and I wonder that we, as sensible men, could have been so confused. With an immortal soul, what need of a Resurrection?

PAUL. It is truly amazing, yet the confusion is so deeply rooted that it will probably take the coming of the Lord to clear away the darkness. But we who know the facts can go to rest in full assurance of faith that the words of Job will be fulfilled in us: "I know that my Redeemer liveth—"

MATT. "—and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." A blessed promise. But Job also said, "If I wait, the grave is mine house; I have made my bed in the darkness." How long will this waiting be? Do you think the Day is near?

PAUL. The waiting for us, Matthew, will be long; many centuries must pass and many things be fulfilled. The Spirit reveals to me, as I wrote to Thessalonica, that there will come a great falling away from the Truth, a complete apostasy, with all nations turned from the truth to fables. For more than a thousand years there will be no light, for no one will be willing to bear it aloft or walk by it; but in the last days there will be a restoration. A great leader will appear to raise up the truth from the dust and prepare a people to meet the Lord.

MATT. Some are saying that you teach the coming of Jesus is at hand.

PAUL. [*wearily*] I know it. I have fought this rumor with all my power, but it will not die. It is a false report, Matthew, utterly false.

MATT. They say you wrote to Corinth, "We shall not all sleep."

PAUL. True, but who are *we*? That *we*, as I meant it, is the whole body of believers, including the remnant of the last days—all honor to them! They are our brethren, although not yet born; it was for them I wrote, "We shall not all sleep." As for us—you and I and all this generation—barring the miracle of a translation like Elijah's, which is not likely, we must all take our place in the silent halls of the "house appointed for all living."

MATT. There to wait out the weary centuries.

PAUL. Why speak of weary centuries? In death there is no consciousness of time, long or short; the next moment after death is the Resurrection. You know these things, Matthew, if you will stop to think.

MATT. Still, death is an enemy—the last enemy that shall be destroyed.

PAUL. Yes, because it ends all opportunity for improvement. But if the improvement has been made, if our work is done, we can meet the enemy without fear, even greet him as a friend. This has been my constant aim ever since the Lord Jesus apprehended me on the Damascus road: to work out my salvation and be able to say at the end of the road, which may be closer to me than to you, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

MATT. I have no doubt of your crown. But what about those of us who may have unfinished work and no more time or strength to do it?

PAUL. God is just and merciful, Matthew, far beyond any justice or mercy of man's conception. He will give us time enough, if we use it, and He will reward every man according to his work, a reward far beyond what we can imagine, far beyond what we can ever earn. Can we not rest the future in His hands, having done all we can do? Death, if it comes, is an interlude; the best is yet to be, the better life for which this brief one was made. Then, Brother, we shall know the joy of life and labor and activity, world without end.

MATT. [*rising painfully, assisted by SOLDIER, and taking PAUL'S hand*] Brother Paul, you have helped me more than I can tell. I can see that so long as I have breath and the use of my mind, I can still work—work with myself; I can grow in faith and patience and acceptance of the will of God; and I can try to help others by my example. Whatever time is left me, I shall use. My fear is gone; now I have hope.

PAUL. Let us pray that we may both endure faithful to the end, to gain the crown of life.

[*They fold their hands and bow in prayer as the curtain falls.*]

NEXT ISSUE: *A Vision of the Future.*

Life's gold mine is a pure heart and a clear conscience.

Words to WALK By

Deeper living means deeper giving.

He who waits to do a great deal of good at once will never do anything.

Take life as you find it, but don't leave it so.

The lazier a man is, the more he intends to do tomorrow.

Poverty of purpose is far worse than poverty of the purse.

Opportunity never comes—it's here.

Choice, not chance, determines destiny.

He who does not profit from Christian fellowship here will never enjoy it in the Kingdom.

Men who live for self never succeed in satisfying self, or anybody else.

Self-mastery is the essence of heroism.

The greatest fault is to be conscious of none but other people's.

You Can't Fool God!

You can fool the hapless public,
You can be a subtle fraud,
You can hide your little meanness,
But you can't fool God!

You can advertise your virtues,
You can self-achievement laud,
You can load yourself with riches,
But you can't fool God!

You can criticize the Bible,
You can be a selfish clod,
You can lie and swear and gamble
But you can't fool God!

You can magnify your talent,
You can hear the world applaud,
You can boast yourself somebody—
But you can't fool God!

—Selected.

Life is mostly froth and bubble,
Two things stand like stone:
Kindness in another's trouble,
Courage in your own.

UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God."

The Devil of the Bible

IN OUR last lesson on the subject of the devil we learned that the only devil that has the power of death is sin, that sin is the devil Christ came to destroy. We learned that the prime source of that sin is the human heart, the mind of man, described by the prophet Jeremiah as "desperately wicked," and "deceitful above all things."

Sin results from man allowing his naturally evil desires to take control of his mind. As with Achan, the process is started with "the lust of the eyes," followed by the evil desire or covetousness, and finished with the act, the sin itself. Achan saw something he could not resist; he took it, committing the sin of stealing, and brought great trouble upon all Israel.

We also studied the actions, or work of the devil of the Bible. We found that the devil, or sin, was present in the world from the beginning, when God first called men and women to work in His vineyard. Eve fulfilled the part of the devil when she attempted to place the blame for her act on the serpent; Cain was a devil when he killed his brother in a fit of jealous rage; David played the part of Satan in going against the command of the Lord regarding the numbering of Israel; someone of authority, perhaps Herod, was the devil that tempted Jesus; and Peter became a devil when he opposed his Master.

In this lesson we will continue to study the subject of the devil, following our outline:

- III. Where Is the Devil?
 - A. The Devil in Action Throughout the Scriptures (cont'd)
 - B. The Devil in Action Today
 - C. Other Works of the Devil
- IV. Why Is the Devil So Prevalent?
 - A. Because God is Silent
 - B. Because Man Desires and Chooses the Evil

Last month we reviewed the "devilish" actions of some well-known Biblical characters down to the time of Jesus and the apostles. We will continue our

study with a few more examples of the devil in action after this time.

III. WHERE IS THE DEVIL?

A. The Devil in Action

6. Judas becomes a devil. When Judas first became a follower of Jesus, he was a disciple and an apostle, but when he allowed his wicked desires to lead him to betray the Master, he became a devil. Jesus had divine foreknowledge that He would be betrayed by one of His own. This led Him to say, "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" (John 6:70). Note that He said "One of you is a devil," not "One of you is possessed of the devil." Anyone fulfilling the part can become a devil, as did Judas.

7. The case of Ananias and Sapphira. Supporters of the literal devil theory fly to this incident in the Scriptures to support their position. But a careful reading of the whole story does not uphold their viewpoint. Peter said, "Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, . . . why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart?" (Acts 5:3, 4). The Scripture is self-explanatory. Ananias was the Satan, he had conceived the idea himself. It was a product of his own scheming mind, thus Ananias was the devil. The Satan that filled his heart was the evil thought that preceded the lie.

8. Elymas the sorcerer. Paul addressed Elymas as a "child of the devil" when he withstood him and sought to turn the Roman deputy away from hearing the Gospel (Acts 13:7-10). Elymas was a "child of the devil" in the same way that the wicked Cain was—because he was the servant of sin (John 8:34). Paul's words further describe him as a sinner: "O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?" (v. 10).

9. The devil that walks about. The apostle Peter, himself once described by Jesus as Satan, said, "Your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (I Peter 5:8). Who is this "roaring-lion devil"? The following

verse gives a clue: "Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world." The adversary or devil that might devour them was the evil influence of the world. Peter was warning the brethren that they would be subject to the same temptations as others in the world. There is no suggestion of a superhuman spirit or being walking around beguiling them.

B. The Devil in Action Today

Today, just as in the days of the apostle Peter, OUR "adversary, the devil, [walks] about, seeking whom he may devour." One need only pick up a current newspaper or news magazine to know that the devil—sin and all sinners—is very much alive and active in our day. Human nature has not changed. God said in Noah's day that men's thoughts tended only to evil (Gen. 6:5), and were He to speak today, He would only say it again. Men's thoughts not only run to evil today, but they "do evil with both hands earnestly," fulfilling the words of the prophet to the very letter. We will quote briefly from recent publications:

"Violent crimes rose 13 per cent overall, including rises of 17% in robbery, 11% in murder, 8% in aggravated assault, 7% in burglary and one per cent in car theft," in the first quarter of 1971.

"Dishonesty in business—thievery, kickbacks, other malpractices—is on the rise, adding billions to the cost of goods and services. In terms of dollars and number of people involved, business crime far exceeds crime in the streets. Employees steal more than ten million dollars a day in cash and merchandise—about three billion dollars a year; kickback payments are estimated to amount to another five billion dollars a year."

The President describes the drug problem in the U. S. as a "national emergency." Drug abuse, especially among U. S. servicemen and veterans is widespread, involving millions of individuals.

"Raging again: Battle over school busing. The battle over busing for school integration has flared anew on several fronts." Violence has erupted in many cities throughout the land resulting in several deaths.

During the past year we have had many so-called "peaceful protests," many of which ended in violence and bloodshed.

This is only a small sampling of things going on in our world today. What is the cause of all the wickedness so rampant in all nations? Fundamentalists still persist in blaming it on the devil. But can we believe it? NO! The cause of sin today is no different than the cause of sin in the earliest generations of mankind: **It is devised in the heart or**

mind of man. Covetousness—for money or for another man's wife, is often the motive for murder. The drug habit fosters other crimes. Drugs, especially illegal drugs, are expensive, and the drug addict is often unable to hold a job. He steals to obtain money to satisfy his habit.

Employee dishonesty is just another sign of the moral breakdown of our country. Violence that has erupted over school integration is a result of uncontrolled tempers and a general disrespect for law and order.

In each case the underlying cause is in the heart or mind of individuals, "For from inside, out of a man's heart, come evil thoughts, acts of fornication, of theft, murder, adultery, ruthless greed, and malice; fraud, indecency, envy, slander, arrogance, and folly; these evil things all come from inside, and they defile the man." Jesus' words, spoken so many years ago, ring true. All of the ills of our society today can be tied to one of these thirteen evils as enumerated in Mark 7:21—23 (NEB). **There is absolutely no evidence of an outside spirit that tempts one to do evil. It is the devil of the Bible and not of theology that is active in the world today—sin and all sinners.** And because men lay the blame on an imaginary devil which does not exist, they have not been fighting the real devil, the evil within their own heart; therefore they have made no progress in stemming the tide of evil in the world.

C. Other Works of the Devil

If we study the Scriptures, we find the devil of the Bible to be involved in many lines of work. However, careful scrutiny shows that in every instance where the word "devil" or "Satan" is used it can be understood consistent with the definition given—sin and all sinners. We will review briefly some of the other "works of the devil" as they appear in the Bible.

1. **He hinders the gospel.** Paul, writing to the Thessalonians, said "we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us" (I Thess. 2:18). Who was the Satan? We do not know, but it was certainly no evil spirit, but an adversary, such as Alexander the coppersmith who greatly withstood the words of the Gospel (II Tim. 4:15).

2. **He quotes Scripture.** In the account of Jesus' temptation in Matthew's gospel, the devil is represented as quoting Psalm 91:11, 12 in an effort to persuade Jesus to tempt God. Our reason tells us that a spirit being could not converse with Jesus, hence the devil here must have been an individual, a person with authority in the land. Herod, the ruler at that time, was no doubt familiar with the prophets and Psalms. King Agrippa, whom Paul

"almost" persuaded to be a Christian, was a direct descendant of Herod, and of him Paul said, "Believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest" (Acts 26:27). He could not believe without knowing. It is not unlikely that the satan in this case was Herod.

3. **He appears as "an angel of light."** In our common version, II Corinthians 11:14 reads: "For Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light." Other translations make the meaning clearer, using "fashioneth himself as an angel of light" (RSV), and "masquerades as an angel of light" (NEB). In other words, Satan here is setting himself up as something he is not. Paul was here exposing some who claimed to be apostles of Christ, but were not. Anyone practicing any form of deceit is a satan. Deceit is one of the thirteen evils listed by Jesus as coming "from within, out of the heart of man." The one here posing or masquerading as "an angel of light," or a representative of the truth, is a deceiver, a satan.

4. **He sows the "tares among the wheat."** In His teaching, Jesus frequently used symbols familiar to His listeners. Nearly everyone grew their own grain in those days so would have easily understood sowing good seed, wheat and tares growing together, and reaping and binding (Matt. 13:24—30; 36—40). And today, people readily admit that the wheat and the tares are but symbols of the righteous and the wicked—but the devil must be literal!

"The enemy that sowed them is the devil [*diabolos*]" (v. 39). The devil is "the enemy," an enemy of the truth, perhaps one who sows discord among brethren.

5. **He has sinned from the beginning.** According to John, "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning" (I John 3:8). Earlier in this chapter, John defines sin as "the transgression of the law" (v. 4), thus we learn that **the devil and the sinner are one and the same**. The terms **devil and Satan** are used frequently in the Scriptures to picture those who oppose God and His laws. John was of one mind with Jesus concerning the matter. Jesus said, "Whosoever committeth sin is a servant of sin" (John 8:34), and John said, "He that committeth sin is of the devil," hence **anyone who is a "servant of sin" is also a "devil."**

6. **He works lying wonders.** To say one "works lying wonders" is to say he is a deceiver or that he is subtle and crafty. The devil of the Scriptures is described as having all these undesirable characteristics. Both Jesus and Paul prophesied that such "devils" would arise in the "last days." Jesus said; "Imposters will come claiming to be messiahs or prophets, and they will produce great signs and wonders to mislead even God's chosen, if such a

thing were possible" (Matt. 24:24, NEB); and Paul, speaking of that same time, said, "The Spirit says expressly that in after times some will desert from the faith and give their minds to subversive doctrines inspired by devils, through the specious falsehoods of men" (I Tim. 4:1, NEB). **The devils who "inspire subversive doctrines" are men, false prophets, just as are the imposters who claim to be messiahs or prophets.**

7. **He sets a trap for the unwary.** In writing to Timothy, Paul warns both bishops and servants of the Lord to beware of "the snare of the devil" (I Tim. 3:6; II Tim. 2:26). It is evident from the context of I Timothy 3 that the devil who would condemn or ensnare the believers was someone outside the church. Devil here is **diabolos**, meaning an "opposer," or "false-accuser." Paul was warning the ecclesia to "have a good report [from] them which are without," which is to say, "abstain from all appearance of evil." The pagan authorities of the day were only too willing to falsely accuse the Christians.

No one can be caught and ensnared by the devil at his will as might be indicated by a casual reading of II Timothy 2:26. They are only ensnared or trapped by their own evil thoughts and desires. The Berkeley translation of the verse in question clarifies it: "In the hope that God may grant repentance that leads to acknowledgment of the truth, and that they may come to their senses and be freed from the snare of the devil under whom they had been taken captive, to do His will."

Paul hoped that they might be freed from the devil's snare by "coming to their senses." **Man cannot be taken captive by evil against his will. The decision to do good or evil is entirely up to the individual himself, he is given a free choice. The only devil is the evil in men's hearts.**

8. **He may take advantage of the Christian.** In II Corinthians 2:11, Paul appears to be fearful lest Satan take advantage of him and the brethren. The verse reads: "Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices."

By reading the chapter from the beginning, we find that Paul's concern was over the censure of some of the brethren, which he thought might have been too severe. The Satan he feared might take advantage of the situation was discouragement. His warning to fathers is comparable: "Fathers, provoke not your children. . . , lest they be discouraged" (Col. 3:21). [Note we have omitted the phrase "to anger" since it was supplied by the translators. Newer translations also omit it.]

9. **He is the father of lies.** When answering the Jews that boasted of their heritage in Abraham, Jesus said: "Ye are of your father the devil, . . . He . . . abode not in the truth, because there is no truth

in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it" (John 8: 44). The New English Bible translates the latter part of the verse, "He is a liar and the father of lies."

It has been said that "the devil has many tools, but a lie is the handle that fits them all." Lying is itself a sin and often leads to other sins; the man that lies is a devil as is any other sinner. Jesus spoke clearly: "When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own." The lie comes from within his own heart or mind, it is not put there by anyone else. "Lying lips are abomination to the Lord" (Prov. 12: 22). The Jews were liars by their own choice and not necessarily because their fathers were. They were servants of sin; sin was their master, thus they were of the devil.

IV. WHY IS THE DEVIL SO PREVALENT

We have seen in our study that sin or the devil has been prevalent down through the ages. God has given man a choice to obey His commands or to disobey. The majority have chosen the latter, thus sin or the devil thrives. Our own day is no exception. Men not only disobey God, they resist all authority and break the laws of both God and man with impunity. Why?

A. Because God is Silent

With the close of the Apostolic Age, the Scriptures which now make up our Bible having been completed, divine revelations through the Holy Spirit ceased. Since that time no one has seen an angel, had a vision or received a word direct from God. God has been silent now for more than nineteen hundred years. His laws still control the universe, but His Word is largely ignored. Why does God choose to keep silence? We will review some of the reasons.

1. **It was part of His plan.** That God would be silent at this period in history was foreshown by the Scriptures. First Corinthians 13:8 is definite: "Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away." These miraculous powers were part of Holy Spirit power and ceased when it was withdrawn. Joel 2 and Acts 2 picture a "former" and "latter" rain or outpouring of God's power upon mankind, with the inevitable dry spell between these two rains. We are now in this "dry spell." The "latter rain", the greater outpouring will accompany Christ's second coming, and with it God's long silence will end. [The subject of the Holy Spirit and the "former and latter rain" will be taken up in greater detail in future lessons of this series.]

2. **"We walk by faith, not by sight."** This was also part of God's plan. According to Paul, all that would remain after Holy Spirit powers were withdrawn was "faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity" (I Cor. 13:13). Charity, or love, which Paul said was the greatest, is the keeping of God's commandments (I John 5: 3), and it is through this that we may gain salvation.

B. Because Man Desires and Chooses the Evil

Another reason for the prevalence of the devil or sin in this age is that men want it that way. Given a free choice, they choose the evil and not the good. God decreed that the choice should be up to man: "See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil; . . . therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live" (Deut. 30:15, 19). It is obvious that through the ages man has not chosen life and good. The choice is man's, not the devil's.

1. **Cain was given a choice.** It was not the devil, but Cain's own choice that led him to murder his brother. The Lord said unto him: "If you do well, you are accepted; if not, sin is a demon crouching at the door. It shall be eager for you, and you will be mastered by it" (Gen. 4:7 NEB). Sin was the demon, or devil that mastered Cain.

The belief in a supernatural power of evil being so completely accepted by nominal Christianity, it may be difficult to accept the position taken in these studies. However, to accept the viewpoint that such a power does exist is so contrary to the concept of a God of love and unlimited mercy as to make that viewpoint unacceptable.

To be a messenger you must know the message.

TEST YOURSELF

1. Name three persons of Scripture who showed themselves to be devils.
2. What is the source of the evil that is rampant in the world today?
3. Who was the devil that tempted Jesus?
4. Who was the Satan who appeared as an angel of light?
5. Who is the devil working "lying wonders"?
6. What devil sows tares among the wheat?

Reprints of these studies are available upon request.

THE SABBATH

WHEN WAS IT GIVEN?
TO WHOM WAS IT GIVEN?
WHY WAS IT GIVEN?
WAS IT TO LAST FOREVER?
IF NOT, WHEN WAS IT TO CEASE?
WHAT LAW ARE WE NOW UNDER?

Jesus and the Sabbath

SINCE the "old covenant," the law of Moses that commanded Israel to "remember the Sabbath" was abolished and ended at the cross, what do we find in the New Testament about the Sabbath?

The New Testament contains about sixty references to the Sabbath of the Jewish law, but among all these is not one command to keep the day holy. And there is not one threat against anyone who does not keep it. In numerous lists of sins covering every kind of disobedience, Sabbath-breaking is mentioned not once.

Here is a notable difference between the preaching of seventh-day-keepers and that of the apostles: While Sabbatarians are always preaching and writing about the Sabbath, Paul in all his fourteen epistles mentions it but once (Col. 2:16), and then only to condemn it! We find in the New Testament "preach the gospel," fifty times; "preach Christ," twenty-three times; "preach the word," seventeen times; "preach the kingdom," eight times; "preach the law," or "the Sabbath," not once!*

In the Epistles of James, Peter, John and Jude, the word "sabbath" cannot be found—it certainly received no primary recognition. And Paul refers to the law written and engraven in stones—which contained the fourth commandment—as the "ministration of death," a law "done away."

At the time of Jesus, the Jews were still observing the seventh day as the Sabbath of rest as given in Moses' law—and much more. To the original Sabbath prohibitions against carrying burdens, going out of one's house, traveling, kindling a fire, cooking, and performing secular tasks, had been

added hundreds of minute interpretive laws which the rabbis and Pharisees of Jesus' day observed religiously. All this served only to augment their ceremonious and hypocritical pride.

Jesus' attitude toward the Pharisees' interpretation of the law of Moses was evident. All through His ministry He was reproving them for their proud, hypocritical observances of outward form and pointing them to God's higher, holier law that will bring salvation. "He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (Matt. 7:29). He was born and grew up under the law of Moses, but through His ministry came a change.

What was Jesus' attitude toward the Sabbath as it was given to Moses? Let us study the few recorded incidents.

Plucking Corn

Mark relates: "And it came to pass, that he went through the corn fields on the sabbath day; and his disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn. And the Pharisees said unto him, Behold, why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful? And he said unto them, Have ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was an hungered, he, and they that were with him? How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the shewbread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him? And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath" (Mark 2:23—28).

Why did Jesus excuse the conduct of His disciples? Sabbath law permitted such action only if life was in danger, or help was urgent. But there is no evidence that the disciples were in danger of starvation, nor were they bringing help to others in

* D. S. Warner, *The Sabbath*.

urgent need. Luke's Gospel makes this breach of the Sabbath even more serious: He tells us that the disciples plucked the ears of corn even before the first sheaf of the harvest had been offered to God* (Luke 6:1). Why did Jesus answer the Pharisees, "The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath" if the law of Moses was still in full force? Why was not such flagrant Sabbath-breaking vigorously condemned?

Obviously, Jesus was doing nothing less than enunciating a new principle. And in uttering it He was overthrowing the entire Sabbath theology of Judaism. The Jews' "conviction that it was their duty loyally to observe the Sabbath, the covenant gift of God, and strictly to keep the Sabbath commandment by paying no attention to their own needs would, therefore, have seemed to Jesus utterly perverse, for such an attitude had the effect of placing the Sabbath above human beings. . . . With such views Jesus was sure to provoke the opposition of all devotees of the law."†

Bishop Gore's *New Commentary on Holy Scripture*, commenting on Mark 2:28, shows Jesus' attitude toward the Sabbath law: "If the institution of the Sabbath was given for man's good, then the Man whom God had sent to be the instrument of setting up His visible kingdom upon earth and establishing His reign of righteousness, man's highest good, must needs have authority over the means and methods by which that good is to be attained. Note that in all our Lord's references to the Decalog (Mark 7:22; 10:19; 12:29—31, and parallels in Matthew and Luke) the fourth commandment is never even by implication cited or alluded to. It is, in fact, set aside [withdrawn] for Christians."‡

Healing on the Sabbath

Jesus healed the man with the withered hand on the Sabbath. We quote again from Mark: "And he saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill?" (Mark 3:4; also Luke 6:9). A man who has a sheep fall into a pit on the Sabbath will "lay hold on it and lift it out." "How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days" (Matt. 12:11, 12).

But Jesus' action in healing on the Sabbath day had motivation far deeper than that of preserving natural life, for a man with a withered hand could

have lived to be healed on the first day of the week rather than violate the Sabbath laws. The same is true of several of Jesus' Sabbath-day healings: the man which had an infirmity of 38 years (John 5:2—15); or the man born blind (John 9:14—28), or the woman which had a spirit of infirmity 18 years (Luke 13:11—17). In each case the illness was of a chronic nature, and the individual could have survived one more day if the law of the Sabbath was to be given first consideration.

But Jesus was teaching. He was demonstrating again the point He had made before: that the "Son of man is Lord of the sabbath also." In the face of an inner compulsion to fulfill His divine commission Jesus saw that every outward restraint, even that of the Sabbath commandment, became irrelevant. The Sabbath commandment was not merely pushed into the background by the healing activity of Jesus: It was simply annulled. John 9:4 penetrates to the heart of the matter: "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work." Also John 5:17, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work."

Jesus knew that the time for the expiration of the old had come; and with incredible boldness, therefore, He swept away the barriers of Judaism which were standing in His path. It was not that the law was bad, but the law had been fulfilled, superseded, abolished by the new saving law of the new and better covenant. The matter of real importance was no longer merely the outward observance of the law but the inner loyalty to God.‡ There was nothing about a particular day which could not give way, when higher purposes and interests were at stake.

Preaching

In the Gospels we frequently hear of Jesus' visits to the synagogue on the Sabbath. However, this behavior does not necessarily mean that Jesus was a zealous observer of the Jewish law or that He was very strict about the Sabbath commandment. It stands to reason that Jesus used the opportunity to deliver His message in the synagogues when people were assembled on the Sabbath. On every occasion preaching was the purpose of His visit to the synagogue. ● ●

Continued Next Issue

* The first day of the year, Abib 1, being the first day of the week, the first sabbath (seventh day) occurred Abib 7; the second sabbath, Abib 14. The ceremonial waving of the first sheaf of the harvest was on Abib 15 (see Lev. 23:4—12).

† Willy Rordorf, *Sunday*, pp. 62, 63.

‡ *Ibid.*, pp. 70ff.

Good thoughts are blessed guests and should be heartily welcomed, well fed, and much sought after. Like rose leaves, they give out a sweet fragrance if laid up in the jar of memory.

Life's Important X-tras

HOW DO we look at our daily tasks? Do we tackle menial jobs as though they were special privileges?

Albert Rogers was an indefatigable shoeshine boy at New York's Hotel Americana, whose rhythmic artistry with polish and brush left a shine that almost hurt your eyes.

"Don't you ever get tired?" asked a passerby.

"No," he replied, "but I would if I just shined shoes."

Albert had something in common with a Vermont farmer, Will Edgers, who sold firewood. When friends ordered half a cord, he didn't just dump the wood from his truck. Before unloading, he gathered some flat stones and fitted them together on the ground to form a small platform. Then he carefully stacked the wood at a slant to keep rain-water from standing on it.

These men felt a glow of satisfaction that crowns an all-out effort to do a job—any job—a little bit better than it has to be done. It took a shade more effort, a bit more time, but it was worth it. With this approach, all tasks become meaningful and rewarding.

Too many of us hold back because we don't think our jobs are worth our best efforts. We are always saving ourselves for some great tasks—which never come. We don't realize that the big job consists of many small jobs done well.

Nowhere is life's important extra more valuable than in our Christian service to God. He demands our very best, not second best, nor what is left after we have first pleased ourselves. God does not recognize any inferior service. His champion isn't the man who has the most to give, but the man who gives the most.

Do we practice appreciation? Are we letting humility smooth the "scratchy" places in our personality? or have we become blissfully numb to the prickings of conscience? Have our spiritual muscles grown soft from neglect? If the fiber of our character is to be strong and true, we must exercise daily to godliness.

Do we get bogged down in the mire of everyday trivialities? When we analyze them, they become ridiculously insignificant—and yet, we have let them ruin more than one day.

The great electrical wizard Charles Steinmetz, used to work on in his laboratory of the General Electric Company hours after the rest of his staff had gone home. "Why do you do it?" a colleague asked him one day. "You don't have to prove anything. You'd get the same salary."

Steinmetz looked up from his workbench and said, "My friend, it doesn't matter how much you get or who pays you. You are always working for yourself."

This is doubly true in the Christian life. Every evil subtracted from our life adds to our spiritual stature.

The men and women who realize the need for life's important extras are the happiest people. They do not feel "beat" or "frustrated" or "alienated" from life. They have found ways of extracting from every disappointment, every trial and every temptation life's sweetest cordials.

If we would enjoy that abundantly blessed life, let our daily petition ascend to the heavenly Father:

Lord, help me to realize that to know myself is the foundation stone of knowledge.

Help me to be strong enough to know when I am weak, and brave enough to face myself when I am afraid.

Lead me safely, I pray, through comfort and stress, through difficulties and challenges. Let me learn to stand up in the storm and learn compassion for those who fall.

May my heart be clear and my goal high. Let me master myself before I seek to master others.

Give me humility, so that I may always remember the simplicity of true greatness, the open mind of true wisdom and the meekness of true strength. And may I never let wishes take the place of deeds.

O Lord, let this day be full of life's important extras—for Thee. Amen. • •

LETTERS

Thrilling Days

The coming of the Lord, the most important event in the history of the world, should indeed bring a thrill to our hearts. The culmination of the history of the ages will soon be upon us. I often ponder upon the thought of what a marvelous privilege it is—that of all the thousands of years that have passed, we are most highly favored to be living in so momentous a time. We should be all afire with zeal in the anticipation of this tremendous event so soon to take place before our very eyes. It should make us keenly aware of our responsibility toward God, toward ourselves, and toward our fellow travelers in this Way.

And we must ever keep the reward before our eyes, as Jesus tells us He will “give every man according as his work shall be.” There is a work to perform in order to gain this wondrous prize. It is a most important factor of our compact with God. For “of that day and hour knoweth no man” (Mark 13: 32), therefore the exhortation is to “be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.” We must be on constant watch and guard or we shall be taken by surprise in that fateful day. Jesus stressed the importance of watchfulness many times—“What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.”

One of our watches must be on that small member, the tongue. We must remember that the present set of circumstances in the world and in our own lives as well, are but for a short while. We must train ourselves to look ahead to the glorious future when “the former things are passed away” (Rev. 21:3, 4). Psalm 16:11 tells us that God will lead us in the path of life: and He will extend to us “pleasures for evermore.”

Is not such a glorious future as this worth our every effort to capture it? Then let us run the race with patience and determination that we may, with God's help, reach our ultimate goal.

Northfield, Ohio

P. L.

Not Bread Alone

Jesus taught that man must depend upon the life-giving and health-giving Word of God. “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.” Bread is not the most important source of life.

As a vehicle of thought and expression, words are essential. In reality they are the key to human personality. God expressed Himself through the written Word, the key to His thought and mind. He spoke to man so that man could understand how He feels, what He thinks and wills. First He spoke by sending angels to men. Then He spoke through His prophets. Then He sent His Son, Jesus Christ. Christ was the Word of God converted into life and action. Today we have the Bible.

When you read the words of the Bible, you hear God speak. By reading and meditating upon His Word, you make it a living part of you and through it you can find the life and strength of God and prepare yourself for eternal life. Isn't the Bible wonderful bread?

Warwick, Queensland, Australia

M. E. E.

A Companion

Thank you for sending me the *Megiddo Message*. I am alone a great deal and find I could not have better company.

Amherst, N. Y.

O. K.

God's Workmanship

The beauty, splendor, color interwoven so fantastically in the growing things we behold everywhere is certainly God's manifestation of His skilled workmanship. Even the starry heavens reveal the glory of God, as we find in Ps. 19:1. We marvel at all this—the degree of excellence and of superiority. Surely, “the works of the Lord are great”!

Wausau, Wisconsin

J. T.

Forefathers and Forth-farers

(Continued from page 6)

and the pesky parasites of smallness and pettiness make constant nuisance-raids upon his spiritual well-being.

Forth-faring Adventurers

Our forth-faring fathers in the faith, the patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, and all the holy men and women of old, were adventurers. They were not ashamed to admit that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. They were *not* satisfied with things as they were; they were looking ahead; they wanted the better things; they looked for “a city, which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” They desired a “better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city” (Heb. 11:10, 16). They wanted security, and they sought it at its surest and best. And God promised it to them on the most concrete of assurances. As He could swear by none greater He swore by Himself: “As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord” (Num. 14:21).

I will enumerate the names of a few forth-farers who lived in Bible times. Abraham looked forward. At the Lord's behest he left his native land and his kinsmen and took up his abode in a strange country which his posterity should after receive for an inheritance. Jacob, just before his death, when blessing his sons, was still looking forward, and prophesied of the time when Shiloh, or the Messiah, should come. Joseph, just prior to his death, spoke of the time when his brethren should depart from Egypt, and gave commandment concerning the removal of his bones. The details of the way were not all perfectly clear before these sturdy people, but they knew that God would not fail them; and the God who watched over them in that distant day is, just the same today.

MEGIDDO MESSAGE.

Moses was a forefather, also a forth-farer. He refused to be called "the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, . . . for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward" (Heb. 11:24—26).

Jeremiah showed himself a forth-farer when he bought Hanameel's field. Although he was in prison in Jerusalem, with no chance of being set free until the city should be smitten and the people taken into captivity, yet he showed his belief in the ultimate return of the people according to God's promise and bought the field. So today let us remember that God still lives, and His promise to send His Son to earth to begin the work so long foretold, and cleanse it from the accumulated sins of these many centuries of man's misrule, shall certainly be fulfilled.

Paul was a forth-farer. He showed his undaunted faith in the ultimate triumph of right when he said: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (II Tim. 4:7, 8).

And Jesus Himself was a forth-farer. It was for the "joy set before Him" that He "endured the cross, despising the shame," and is now set down at the "right hand of the throne of God." He was a Man of decision, and He also demanded decision of His followers; He said: "No man having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62).

Rev. L. T. Nichols, our beloved Founder, was a forth-farer. He was an adventurer of the highest type. And he was more. He was an explorer, a searcher for hidden wealth. Truth was the gem for which he sought, and he invested his all in finding it. He knew that the divine plan of salvation must be outlined in the Bible. If only he could free it from the vain traditions of man that had covered it, it should be plain and comprehensive. And he found it. Being a great lover of life, and convinced that the key to life was a pure and spotless character, a perfect life like his Master and King, Jesus, he spared no effort to square his own life with the Word of God.

True Forth-faring

God is just the same today as He was in the past. He has not forgotten us. His hand is not shortened that it cannot save; His ear is not heavy that it cannot hear our cry. If there is anything wrong, we ourselves are to blame. Some may say, "My Lord delays His coming." Others may say, "It is vain to

serve the Lord!" Still others may maintain an attitude of "wait and see." Such are not forth-farers.

To voice the ancient complaint that "the former days were better than these" is to encourage defeat, and is not the spirit of the true pioneer. If we have been taking definite steps toward the Kingdom, the days will be better, not worse. Things usually are what we make them. To brood over the past, or dream of the future will get us nowhere.

Action, immediate action, intelligent, uninterrupted action, is our only assurance of advancement and success.

Whatever our past may have been, to resign ourselves to fate is to invite stagnation and dam up the stream of spiritual progress. Every new day brings us a clean white sheet on which to make a better record than the day before. To say the work cannot be done, that we cannot rise above the inherent evils of our nature, is to insinuate that God has asked us to perform the impossible.

Remember, Jesus never prayed that His disciples be taken out of the world, but that they be kept from the evils that are in the world.

Brethren, can we say that *we* are forth-farers as our forefathers were? Have we the faith to carry us through every crisis that may arise? Do we know beyond the shadow of uncertainty that God still lives and that He is with us if we are with Him? The true adventurer doesn't have all the answers, else there could be no adventure. It would merely be routine procedure.

Today we live entirely by faith. We must take steps in the dark, but let us have the courage to take them. Let us hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end. "For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul" (Heb. 10:37—39).

If we possess the pioneer spirit, our spiritual morals will not weaken when the road becomes rough and steep, or the going hard; but such situations will only act as a signal for us to press on the harder.

It has become our blessed privilege to take the place of our spiritual forefathers and foremothers in the faith, and fare forth in this great movement sponsored by the God of Heaven Himself, and carry our part of the work to a victorious finish. We have our Master's own promise that if faithful we shall shine forth in the Kingdom of our Father, and then we shall be able to explore limitless new horizons throughout the endless ages of eternity.

Let us rise and meet the challenge! • •



Bee Happy

AS YOU read the words of the "Grumblers" song do you wonder how it can ever fit in with BEE HAPPY? Well, have you ever seen a grumbler who was happy? No. That is just the point. To be happy we must stop grumbling. Who likes to listen to someone grumble, grumble, grumble all the time?

Read the story below as told by a little boy named Johnny and I am sure you will agree that he heard BEE HAPPY buzzing in his ears a little while ago and now he is a much happier little boy.

.....

Would you believe it now, that last year when I was nine years old, I was one of the grumpiest boys on our street? Oh, I loved to play at most anything. But best of all, I loved to play in the snow. It is so fascinating.

When Mother called, "Come, look at the beautiful blanket of snow this morning," I came running, delighted to be the first one

out to make tracks in the new snow. And just as I was putting on my second boot, Mother said, "Before you play in the snow, Johnny, go right out and get the snow shovel and clean all of the walks, and then you can play."

Right away my mouth turned down at the corners in an ugly pout; but I knew when Mother told me to do anything, it had to be done. So I plowed my way through the snow to the garage for the snow shovel. I forgot to even notice how beautiful the snow was. Slowly and grudgingly I bent to shoveling.

Much later when I had finished, Mother said, "Johnny, do you realize that you spent twice as long as you should have, cleaning those walks? You could have done it in half the time, then you could have more time to play in the snow."

As I started to pull off my boots, Mother asked, "Aren't you going to play now?"

I said, "No, I am tired of snow

after working so hard."

So Mother decided that we would go visiting as soon as the snowplows had finished cleaning the streets. I wondered where we would be going, but Mother did not say, and about an hour later she backed the car out of the garage and we started off.

We went to the outskirts of the city. We stopped in front of a pretty little white house that I did not recognize. I said, "Who lives here, Mother?"

She said, "A little boy named Roger. He is about your age and I am sure that you will like him. I used to go to school with his mother when I was a little girl."

Roger's mother seemed glad to see us; and as we entered the living room, I noticed that Roger was sitting near a window with a book in his hand. To my surprise, he was sitting in a wheel chair. He greeted me with a cheerful smile and said, "Oh, isn't the snow beautiful?"

The next question was quite a

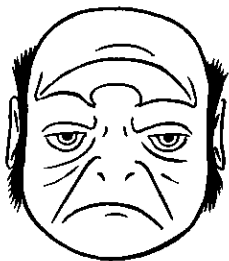


surprise. He said, "Did your mother let you go out and shovel the walks this morning?"

I managed to stammer a "Yes."

Then he said, "I have been sitting here, watching the boys across the street as they made the white snow fly with their shovels. You see, I have never walked, never made tracks in the beautiful snow, let alone shoveling walks for my mother. But see, my hands are good and they can help Mother in other ways, and that makes me happy."

Now, when I go out to shovel snow, I think of Roger and wish that he were strong and healthy so he could help his mother, and I do the work gladly. I am thankful for two good feet to stand on while I work with my hands.



And now, here is a picture of a grumpy face. I am sure you do not want to look like that. Listen to the buzz of BEE HAPPY like Johnny did.

Now, turn the picture upside down and see the difference between a GRUMPY FACE and a

HAPPY FACE. I like the HAPPY FACE better. Don't you? ••

grumblers

1. In coun - try, town or ci - ty some peo - ple can be found
 2. They grum - ble in the ci - ty, they grum - ble on the farm,
 3. They grum - ble when it's rain - ing, they grum - ble when it's dry,

Who spend their lives in grum - bling at ev - 'ry - thing a - round;
 They grum - ble at their neigh - bors, they think it is no harm;
 And if the crops are fail - ing, they grum - ble and they sigh,

O yes, they al - ways grum - ble, no mat - ter what we say,
 They grum - ble at their hus - bands, they grum - ble at their wives,
 They grum - ble at low pric - es and grum - ble when they're high

For these are chron - ic grum - blers and they grum - ble night and day.
 They grum - ble at their chil - dren; but the grum - bler nev - er thrives.
 They grum - ble all the year 'round and they grum - ble till they die.

O they grumble on Mon - day, Tues - day, Wednesday, grumble
 on Thursday too, Grumble on Friday, Sat - ur - day, Sunday,
 grumble the whole week thru. grumble the whole week thru.

THE HOLY BIBLE

*This Book, this glorious Volume, grand, sublime—
 Upon its leaves are found God's truths divine;
 And as we pore its blessed pages o'er,
 Draw from its depths the wondrous hidden store,
 Our minds expand, exalted to behold
 The finished work of God—This Word of Gold.*

Upon these wondrous leaves prophets and seers
 Transcribed the words that God revealed through
 years;
 Ah! Carefully they penned those thoughts sublime,
 As they received them in their day and time.
 Their work is done: we reap the treasure store—
 This marvelous Bible; Book that we adore.

*This Holy Book that brings to us good news,
 And tells us that the Lord shall come and choose
 Jerusalem again, His holy hill!
 And on her crest with risen saints shall dwell—
 "Jerusalem, thou City of the King,
 Joy of the whole earth!" Let nations sing.*

Jerusalem, that bringest tidings new,
 Proclaim unto the world thy message true;
 Lift up thy voice with strength, let it be heard;
 From pole to pole resound the glorious word!
 Let Gentile nations to thy rising come,
 And kings bow down before thy sovereign throne.

*Thou Blessed Bible, only Book of life,
 Thy Word is true! This world of sin and strife
 Shall bow before Thy King, all evil cease,
 And all Thy people dwell in love and peace,
 To Thee shall nations flow and tribute bring,
 Jerusalem, thou City of the King.*

Hushed be the noise of war at Thy command;
 Established Thou thy rule throughout the land;
 For Thine the glory is, and power divine:
 The majesty, dominion—all are Thine.
 On earth as in the heavens Thy will be done,
 Thou mighty God of love! Thy Kingdom come—

Contributed.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

"I have read in your literature where you apply Heb. 10: 26—29 to those who commit the unpardonable sin discussed in Heb. 6:3—6. As I understand it, the unpardonable sin cannot be committed today because it applied to those who had 'tasted of the heavenly gifts and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit'; we do not have the Holy Spirit. But why do you say that Heb. 10:26 is speaking of the unpardonable sin also?"

The passage reads: "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?"

The first warning in verse 26 is against "wilful" or deliberate apostasy. The author of Hebrews is rebuking his brethren for sluggishness, inattention, and Christian immaturity. He seems to be saying that a half-hearted adherence to the faith can have only one end; their drifting is in the direction of death and destruction; and such wilful sin, continued in, soon has no recourse: "there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin"—there is no possibility for reform beyond the end of our lives.

The author then proceeds to point up the supreme worth of the unusual privileges of his brethren. If an apostate under the law of Moses died without mercy at the testimony of two or three witnesses, how much more punishment . . . will be deserved by the man who has spurned the Son of God, the covenant of Christ—which is much better than the old law of Moses? The higher the privilege, the more severe the penalty: it is an immutable law of God.

We should note the three qualifications of apostasy in verse 29 to apply this passage correctly.

1) "Who hath trodden under foot the Son of God"—a literal translation more generally meaning "to treat with rudeness and insult."

2) "... And hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing. . . ." In reality, this is the only way an apos-

tate from the faith can escape the truthfulness of what he has formerly professed—by belittling, profaning, considering it common. It is the attempt to make sacrilege of the sacred.

3) "... And hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace." This last qualification limits the possibility of this severest condemnation to those who had been partakers of the power of God, the Holy Spirit. This was Jesus' message in Mark 3: "Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: but he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation."

William Barclay translates this last phrase of verse 29, "and who has insulted the Spirit, through whom God's grace comes to us"; the Amplified Bible also suggests its application to the "Holy Spirit." To contemptuously use the Holy Spirit, or to abuse or insult its powers was to commit a sin for which there is no forgiveness. To be partaker of the best and pronounce it the worst—this is to do "despite unto the Spirit of grace."

"Please compare I Peter 2:2, 'newborn babes' with the new birth Jesus mentioned in John 3:3 and 5. Are the two births the same? I have heard that this birth means 'begotten,' that is, conversion, change. Is this right? Is this why Jesus was called the 'only begotten Son'?"

In First Peter 2:2, the Apostle is comparing the growth of the newborn Christian to that of a human child. By desiring the "milk of the word," the "unadulterated spiritual milk" of the gospel these disciples young in the faith could grow stronger.

The birth to which Jesus refers in John 3:3, 5 is the birth "of water," that is, the birth into the knowledge of God's law and its application to one's daily life, to be followed by the birth "of the Spirit," or the birth into immortality, the physical change which Christ will grant to each faithful one when He returns (Phil. 3:20, 21).

At present, Christ is the only begotten Son of God—"he only hath immortality" (I Tim. 6:16). He is "the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence" (Col. 1:18). Other worthy mortals will be begotten into immortal life when Christ returns: "But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming" (I Cor. 15:23).

Seven days without prayer make one WEAK.

MEGIDDO MESSAGE



Meditations

On the Word

THIS QUESTION propounded to Peter and to other apostles at the close of Peter's powerful sermon on the Day of Pentecost is an evidence of conviction. The sermon was bearing fruit. Those Jewish people as they listened to Peter were aware that they had consented with their religious leaders in taking the life of the innocent One, and, although done ignorantly, they felt condemned.

Too often the sermons of today do not contain the element to produce conviction, and seldom does a frame of mind to be convicted exist in the congregation.

If as individuals we would obtain the greatest possible good when a practical lesson is forced home by a sermon, whether heard first-hand in public utterance or read in private from the printed page, we should employ the personal pronoun in our query as to its application, and say, "What shall *I* do?" Salvation is strictly a personal matter. Others can point out to us the way of salvation, others can help us to see our faults by constructive criticism, and help us to overcome them through reproof and warning, yet the burden of the work lies with ourselves, hence the timeliness of the query, "What shall *I* do?"

This is the question the jailer asked of Paul and Silas at midnight after the earthquake had miraculously loosened their bands. However, the answer to the question: "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," is not as simple as it is sometimes represented to be. To believe in the Lord Jesus Christ is not merely to believe that such a man as Jesus Christ once lived on earth, and accept Him as one's personal Saviour. To believe in the Lord Jesus Christ is to agree heartily with all that He taught, to accept willingly the discipline that His superior teachings impose on our lives,

"Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37).

and daily bear our cross of self-denial and duty.

When the people thronged about John the Baptist as he baptized in Jordan, they asked him: "What shall we do then?" His answers show a practical approach to the problem of right living. Upon the minds of his naturally covetous countrymen he impressed the lesson of need for sharing with others: "He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise." Upon the tax gatherers he impressed the lesson of honesty and integrity in extracting taxes from their fellow men. To them he said: "Exact no more than that which is appointed you." The soldiers likewise demanded of him, "And what shall we do?" His answer to them was emphatic: "Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages."

When Saul was struck down by the light shining above the brightness of the noonday sun, he was convicted, and he realized for the first time that he was in the wrong, that he was fighting against God. His first utterance after Jesus revealed His identity to him, was, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" From that very moment his life was changed. From his own statements we learn that when it pleased God to reveal His Son to him that he might preach among the Gentiles, immediately he "conferred not with flesh and blood." He did not consult with his old acquaintances among the Pharisees, or with the persecutors whose cause he so recently had championed. He made a complete turn around, becoming the strongest supporter of the cause which he had tried to destroy.

When the people heard Peter's preaching they were "pricked in their heart." What Peter said had burned in, it had made an impression, and that was what moved them to ask, "What shall

we do?" We need such conviction today; without it we shall make no spiritual progress. The gospel is the "power of God to salvation," and it must be a power to us. When shown that we have been walking in rebellion to divine law, and doing the things that displease God, jeopardizing our chances for eternal life, we should be "pricked" in heart. If we are not concerned when we learn we have done wrong, we shall have no incentive to do better.

When Paul wrote the letter to the Church at Corinth chastening them for a sin that had been reported to him, they were pricked in heart. What Paul wrote in that letter made them "sorry." And they not only asked "what shall we do?" but at once set about doing it, and a great cleansing followed. We quote from Moffatt's translation: "I did regret it when I discovered that my letter had pained you even for the time being, but I am glad now—not glad that you were pained but glad that your pain induced you to repent. For you were pained as God meant you to be pained, and so you got no harm from what I did. . . . See what this pain divine has done for you, how serious it has made you, how keen to clear yourselves, how indignant, how alarmed, how eager for me, how determined, how relentless" (II Cor. 7:8—11).

In the days of the Judges of Israel, under the judgeship of Deborah, as it is rendered in our Common Version, the people experienced a great spiritual upsurge, with the result that in "the divisions of Reuben there were great thoughts [margin, "impressions"] of heart" and "great searchings of heart" (Judges 5:15, 16, KJV). Israel had sinned; God had sold them into the hands of the Canaanites who cruelly oppressed them for twenty years. The time had now come for deliverance. The prophetess

Deborah accompanied Barak, captain of the army, to the conquest, and with the Lord's help they had triumphed gloriously. Twenty years of oppression had burned deep into the minds of the people, hence to avoid a recurrence was their chief concern. Realizing they themselves were to blame for the plight they had been in, they were in a mood to ask, "What then shall we do?"

God wants us to be ashamed when we do wrong; no other attitude can be fruitful. He wants us to be pricked at heart. In Ezek. 36:25, 26, 31, the Lord vividly pictures the cleansing power of His Word when given free rein in the heart broken by penitence: "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean. . . . A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh. . . . Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations."

When the Lord impressed a lesson upon Job's mind that showed him his own smallness as compared with the Almighty's greatness, he reacted as every truly humble person should. His heart was "pricked," and not only did he ask, What shall I do? but he promptly did the thing that demonstrated his conviction. He answered: "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:6).

Life is too short and eternity too long to trifle away any time in indecision. When a divine command reaches our intellect we should fly to obey it. When a personal defect is pointed out we should at once be alerted by the possibility of our receiving an unfavorable decision at Judgment Day, and immediately go to work to correct it. • •

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Editorially Speaking...

IF EVER there was a time in the history of God's people when there is great reason for thankfulness, it is now. We are surrounded by many temporal blessings, living under a government favorable to the advancement of holy living, and in an age when the truths of God's Word are again shining after the long night of the Apostasy; when we can behold with our eyes the fulfillment of Bible prophecies bespeaking to us that the end of Gentile times, the dawn of the Millennial Age, and the establishment of God's kingdom, is now very near.

Time to Be
THANKFUL As we look over the world today and behold the spirit of unrest and unthankfulness pervading the minds of men everywhere, we see how far mankind have drifted from God, even since the time of the first Thanksgiving by the Pilgrim Fathers. Truly we are living in the perilous times of which Paul spoke when he said the world would become "lovers of their own selves, unthankful, unholy, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God."

Thankfulness is a divine command, and records of its application are interspersed throughout Biblical history from the days of a righteous Abel, who offered a more acceptable sacrifice than his brother, Cain, to the time of Paul who commanded his Thessalonian brethren to "in everything give thanks." It is easy enough to give thanks in *some things*, to be thankful when everything seems to be coming our way, but a much greater accomplishment to be thankful when we suffer reverses, and to then believe that all things are working together for our good!

Abraham could offer the sacrifices of thanksgiving when passing through the supreme trial of his life. Joseph could be thankful though sold by jealous brethren into the hands of strangers in a heathen land; Jeremiah could lift up his heart with his hands "to God in the heavens," though suffering affliction such as we have never known. Jesus, while dying on the cross, could exclaim, "My God,

my gracious God, how great has been my deliverance!" Paul and Silas could sing praises at midnight locked in a prison cell, thankful that they were privileged to suffer in a cause that would, one day, bring life and liberty to an unnumbered host in God's future Kingdom.

We have many things to be thankful for. First, we are thankful for this temporal life, for without it we should have no opportunity to prepare for the eternal. Since we met during this Thanksgiving season a year ago, many millions have passed to their long homes, while we are still enjoying the blessing of life and activity. We are thankful, too, for temporal blessings. The Giver of all good has sent the sunshine and showers, and the earth has yielded an abundance for us. We can exclaim with the Psalmist: "Thou crownest the year with thy goodness; and thy paths drop fatness."

We are thankful for the signs along the way pointing to the nearness of Christ's coming; thankful that when He foretold there would be, in these last days, "distress of nations with perplexity, men's hearts failing them for fear and for looking after those things that are coming on the earth," He also added, "and when ye see these things begin to come to pass, know that your redemption is nigh." Beholding these forecasts rapidly meeting their fulfillment, we know the great Thanksgiving Day is not far off.

We are thankful for the knowledge of the saving truth which the world does not know, and we should feel as our Master did when He said, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that these things which are hidden to the wise and prudent, thou hast revealed unto babes."

And above all we are thankful for the chance to compete in a contest that will bring eternal life in unspeakable glory to the winners. If we are truly sincere in our appreciation of all of God's mercies, we will show it by a holy walk in the strait narrow way. • •

*For all true words that have been spoken,
For all brave deeds that have been done,
For every loaf in kindness broken,
For every race in valor run,
We give Thee thanks, O Father.*

*For each brave friend
who has not failed
To lift us up
when we were down;
For kingly souls
who have not quailed
To stand for right
and lead us on . . .*

*For each fair day
of golden joy
That brought to us
its glad refrain;
For every passing
wind of ill
That bowed us low
to rise again, . . .*

*For strength to help
and aid the weak,
For love by which
we climb to Thee;
For gold to mine
and good to seek,
For power to do
and live and be, . . .*

We
Give
Thee
Thanks
O
Father