

Megiddo Message

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“REST AND BE THANKUL”

THE SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY
OF PAUL THE APOSTLE

UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

THE KEEPING JEHOVAH

BIBLE A B C'S

ANGER—VIRTUE OR VICE?

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

MEDITATIONS ON THE
WORD

On . . .
and On . . .
With
Zeal
Indomitable



Megiddo Message

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Editorially Speaking...

"... And We Thank Thee for Our Food"

--Or Do We?

SHOULD you and I say grace before every meal, even in our busy, pressure-packed, modern society?

Studies show that church members in growing numbers are abandoning this ancient form of worship and thanksgiving.

Can we wonder why children grow up without learning to give thought or thanks to the God who supplies their needs?

Is the custom really necessary? Let us look into the Bible for a few examples.

With the Israelites, thankfulness was to be a continual thing, and not only for food but for every blessing they received. The command was clear: "When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the Lord thy God for the good land which he hath given thee" (Deut. 8:10).

When David was king over Israel, we read that he "blessed the people in the name of the Lord and gave food, a loaf of bread, a portion of meat, and a cake of raisins, to each Israelite, man or woman" (I Chron. 16:3-4, NEB)—he was expressing their gratitude for the food. And numerous times in the Psalms we read his heartfelt hymns of thanks and praise. Thankfulness was not simply an evening prayer for David; he said, "Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice" (Ps. 55:17).

The Jews with the passage of time apostatized from the original law as given by Moses and added multiple laws of their own devising. Forgetting the original intent of the sacred law of gratitude, they added meaningless forms to their table grace—every different article of food required a different blessing. One can imagine the complications of saying a blessing for a soup or a stew!

But such was not the pattern of our Great Example. The Gospels record three occasions on which Christ paused to give thanks before eating, simply and sincerely, and we can assume that such was His regular practice. Jesus gave thanks:

1) When He fed the multitude (Mark 8:6-9).

2) When He partook of the Last Supper with His disciples (Mark 14:22; Luke 22:17-19).

3) When He ate with His disciples after the resurrection (Luke 24:30-31). He blessed the bread before distributing it.

The New Testament epistles suggest thankfulness for food several times, and surely we cannot read over Paul's words, "In everything give thanks," and feel justified in eating our daily bread without expressing our gratitude.

Should the striving Christian perpetuate the custom? The answer is a positive "YES." But our table blessing must not simply be an empty custom; it must be the expression of a sincere heart that overflows with gratitude—otherwise, why bother? ●●

"Rest and Be Thankful"

IF you were to make your way up a rugged path in the Western Highlands of Scotland up through Glen Core and between the jagged peaks of the Cobbler and the Brack mountains, it is quite likely that you would be enchanted with the panoramic view—and exhausted with the climb. And should you continue your ascent, the prospect would be more and more rewarding: purple earth and blue sky, moor and ben, lakes and, in the distance, the seascape. And just before the road drops down through another glen on the other side of the mountain, you would arrive at a point appropriately named: "Rest and Be Thankful." And you would rest, and be thankful.

The poet Wordsworth has written a bit of verse about this extraordinary summit which he entitled, "Rest and Be Thankful."

*Doubling and doubling with laborious walk
Who, that has gained at length the wished-
for Height,*

*This brief, this simple wayside Call can
slight,*

And rests not thankful?

Let us take this as a parable of the seasonal spiritual refreshments the Lord provides for us as we struggle up the mountains of holiness and principle. For who has not, after a steep and rugged ascent, needed a moment to replenish his strength, to rest and be thankful for the heights already gained, before attempting those which still lie beyond?

However demanding and difficult the journey through life, we must take time to rest and be thankful. How are we to do this?

A Season of Thanksgiving

Some three thousand years ago the children of Israel observed their first thanksgiving—the Feast of Tabernacles. This was their time to rest and be thankful. Obeying the command of the Lord, they left their labor for one full week during the seventh month Tishri and rejoiced before the Lord, giving Him thanks for all the abundance which they had received from His hand during the harvest season. Let us hear again the words of instruction as they

are recorded in the book of Deuteronomy:

"Thou shalt observe the feast of tabernacles [booths] seven days, after that thou hast gathered in thy corn and thy wine: and thou shalt rejoice in thy feast, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite, the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are within thy gates. Seven days shalt thou keep a solemn feast unto the Lord thy God in the place which the Lord shall choose: because the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thine increase, and in all the works of thine hands, therefore thou shalt surely rejoice" (Deut. 16:13-15).

Notice the emphasis on the *rejoicing*—it was to be a season of joyful thanksgiving and spiritual refreshment. This season was observed each year by loyal Israelites as long as the nation existed.

Some three hundred years ago our Pilgrim Fathers set aside their season for thanksgiving. All are familiar with the setting in 1621—the glad recognition by the Pilgrims of the first harvest they had gathered from their fields. Yet, it is well for us to remember that, in material terms, there wasn't much for the Pilgrims to be thankful for. Those who were giving thanks were the surviving remnant of the colony—half of their original number already lay in the cemetery. A citizen of Paris was asked what he did during the French Revolution, to which he replied simply, "I survived." That is what the Pilgrim Fathers and mothers and children were giving thanks for. Their feast was a festival of food and fellowship, of psalm-singing and pleasurable association with the friendly Indians. It was a salute to God who had guaranteed their provisions for the coming winter.

Following their pattern, our government has set aside the observance of Thanksgiving Day, which we still perpetuate as a national harvest festival.

And this is proper. For all the fruits of the earth and the abundance of material blessings which we

as a nation enjoy, we certainly owe to God our heartfelt thanks. No other people in the world enjoy the standard of living which is common in our nation.

In addition to these, we need to be reminded of our privilege of living in a land where every man has the right to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," described in the Declaration of Independence as the "inalienable" right of mankind. However, unfortunately, the great majority of mankind have never possessed them. We should thank God that they are ours.

We plow the fields and scatter
The good seed on the land,
But it is fed and watered
By God's Almighty hand;
He sends the snow in winter,
The warmth to swell the grain,
The breezes and the sunshine,
And soft refreshing rain.
He only is the Maker
Of all things near and far;
He paints the wayside flower,
He lights the evening star;
The winds and waves obey Him,
By Him the birds are fed;
Much more to us, His children,
He gives our daily bread.

It is especially important that we as Christians take time to rest and be thankful for these daily blessings, as they give us opportunity to recognize ourselves as a part of God's creation. They help us to realize our utter dependence for all we have and are upon the God who sustains us. They help us to remember the importance of earth and air and sun and all things that our Creator has combined to make our existence possible. "We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture."

It was this point of our dependence upon God which Paul and Barnabas were teaching on their first missionary journey. They were in Asia Minor, in the town called Lystra. They had healed a lame man and the people of the town had jumped to the conclusion that these men were gods who had descended in human form. The townsfolk proceeded to worship Barnabas as Zeus, the head god, and Paul as Hermes, the messenger and spokesman of the gods. To put an end to the matter, Paul and Barnabas quickly denied any incarnation for themselves: "Men, why are you doing this? We also are men, of like nature with you..." (Acts 14:15, RSV).

What did they say next? They attempted to turn them from worshiping the creature to the worship of the Creator, "unto the living God, which made

heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein.... He... gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness" (vs. 15-17).

Recognizing these abundant provisions for our temporal lives moves us to give thanks; and giving thanks is an act of fellowship with God. Thus the common things of life are a means of drawing us nearer to our Creator and expressing thanks to Him.

Growing in the Christian life means, among other things, growing in the depth of appreciation which these common things of life awaken in us.

Still Deeper Thanksgiving

But our thanksgiving must not stop with these, for man does not live by bread alone. Should we not also raise our sights above our physical necessities and become more spiritually-minded and thank God for Himself and the greater blessings He has given to our souls, our *inner* lives?

How important that we learn to forget our busy life while we stop to give praise to God, while we rest and are thankful.

This enlarged thanksgiving includes learning to recognize the many opportunities which confront us daily—opportunities to strengthen our moral muscles and spiritual sinews; opportunities to expand our thinking and broaden our insight; opportunities to deepen our humility, to augment our patience, and multiply our happiness. Genuine blessings are these, for which we must be thankful; but first we must learn to recognize them.

No wonder Jesus said, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see."

But we do not always see them. And this is our tragedy. We become shortsighted, and in the doldrums of daily routine we see only the things and not God *in* and *through* the things. The experiences of life make us glad or sad, or they pass without affecting us, and we miss the valuable lessons they might have had for us. How many times have we given consent to an evil report—unverified—when we might have had the courage to stop and investigate the facts? How many times have we found fault with a friend or neighbor when we might have taken the opportunity to control our tongue? How many times have we let slip a word which we knew was unkind or thoughtless—perhaps it was in an attempt to bolster our own reputation. How many times have we gone out of our way to strengthen our friend in the Lord? Opportunities are all around us—God is providing them. Shall we let them pass and lose the benefit we might have had? Should we not rather pause and be thankful?

Too often we think and feel and act as though we had no God and no hope of future life; we meet our days with a harried frown instead of joy. We lose the deeper meaning of our life—seeing so little in what we see, because we are looking for so little and missing so much. Instead of each day's being a fresh adventure with God, it can become a matter of putting in time and getting it over with, seeking some occasional excitement—perhaps a touch of forbidden foolishness—to prevent boredom.

Such a tragedy can never befall the living, active Christian. His sights are set on the summit of perfection, and each new day presents a new challenge to climb higher, and still higher. The fault that he would naturally find with the members of the family whose ideas do not fit into his preconceived notions he stifles with the command to "forbear and forgive one another, if any man have a quarrel against any." The criticism which he might easily take as an insult or injury he sees as an opportunity to improve his life and character. The feelings of sensitiveness he might have when things do not go the way he felt they should he conquers with that perfect peace that nothing can offend. In every emergency of life he possesses the perfection of control; thus every trial and every test he sees as a fresh opportunity to exercise his spiritual strength. For each of these he is truly thankful.

God gave us our minds, but too often we are too scattered to concentrate—too concerned about everything else to enjoy and experience the reality of His purpose and direction. Like Martha in the New Testament, we are cumbered with so many things and missing out on the one thing that is needful—we are concerned about goals that are too near at hand. We can become so filled with regrets over the past and fears about the future that we never really live in the present and never prepare for the future. We become disturbed about things of little moment and blind to the real opportunities for growth that lie all around us. Why do we fill up with envy and resentment when we should show both love and understanding? Why do we allow our feelings to be hurt when we should be thanking God?

Oh, when will we rest and be thankful and resume our climbing toward the heights as yet unscaled?

Life slips away; and to what have we devoted it? How much potential good have we squeezed out of each moment?

But thanks be to God, every present moment is a new opportunity. We do not have to stay the way we are. Every present moment is filled with eternal significance, because God has a reason for entrusting it to us. He is giving us the opportunity

to make something of it of eternal worth. He is making it possible for us to live a higher life. And *now*. "Behold, now is the accepted time." Behold, now is the only time we really have.

Now is the time when we must dedicate ourselves to God. Now is the time to make every minute count. For the Christian there is no boundary line between so-called religious activity and non-religious activity. The daily task and the daily life are filled with significance, if we will but seek for it. For the Christian, all of life is significant; every experience may be turned into a spiritual opportunity.

And so why shouldn't we, ere we continue our ascent up the hill of a morally perfect life; why shouldn't we pause a moment to rest and be thankful!●●

From A Reader—

Needed: Faith

To be a Christian, we must keep our faith strong; without faith it is impossible to please God.

Abraham's faith enabled him to surrender his will to God, to follow the leading and dictates of God, no matter how absurd those demands appeared to the mind of a rational man. He went out "not knowing" where.

Faith is the hallmark of a real spiritual awakening. To do the will of God, faith must be active, responsive. We must ask ourselves, Have I such a faith? a faith that trusts like that of Abraham? God led him out and into the land of promise. Had he been unwilling to follow, the promise would never have been realized.

It is still true for all of us that, as Jesus said, "All things are possible to him that believeth" (Mark 9:23). To every believer the road is open, but there must be a real faith. Such a faith is more than the observance of religious customs; it is a complete and utter dependence on One who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think.

Finding God and knowing His fellowship is the result of active, saving faith—a faith which sanctifies.

*How wonderful it is to walk with God
Along the road that holy men have trod;
How wonderful it is to hear Him say,
"Fear not, have faith
—'tis I who leads the way."*

Mrs. A. L., Saint Johns, New Brunswick, Canada

THE SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY

of Paul the Apostle

Time: 49-52 A. D.

Reference: Acts 15:36—18:22

IT has been said that one of the deepest forms of human love is that of a missionary for the field of his former labors. How natural that Paul should say to Barnabas after they had been in Antioch only a short time, "Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do."

Paul knew that the farmer who sows the seed must also till the soil and tend the plants, that the doctor who treats a patient must return to give him further attention; that the shepherd who leaves his flock for short periods must come back to his sheep; that the pastor who acquaints people with the Lord must return to "see how they do."

The second missionary journey, like the first, started and ended at Antioch in Syria. The route which Paul followed gave him something like another 2800 miles of travel before he again returned to Antioch about three years later.

It was probably in the spring of 49 A. D. that Paul started out, about half a year after the Council at Jerusalem. Paul, however, did not go to Cyprus on this trip, as he had on the former journey, nor did he take his beloved companion Barnabas with him, as he had first planned. Instead, Barnabas with his nephew John Mark went to Cyprus, and Paul chose Silas and struck out for Asia.

God's hand guided the missionaries. When they ventured to follow their own inclinations, then "the Spirit suffered them not."

Northward—By Land

Apprehensive about the clusters of Christians in the north who were precariously clinging to the faith, Paul and Silas hurried to Syria and Cilicia. They climbed the narrow pass between the huge shoulders of the Taurus mountains and once more traveled on the Royal Road that led into the cities on the plateau where Paul and Barnabas had met such sharp hostility.

Being human, Paul must have felt some impulse of fear as he re-entered Lystra. But there is no mention of it in the account. Whatever instinctive fear he felt, it was under the control of his will—to go on in the work of the Lord. And Lystra was not without its compensations—besides giving to Paul his closest collision with death, it gave him also one of his closest companions in life—Timothy.

Paul Finds a Companion

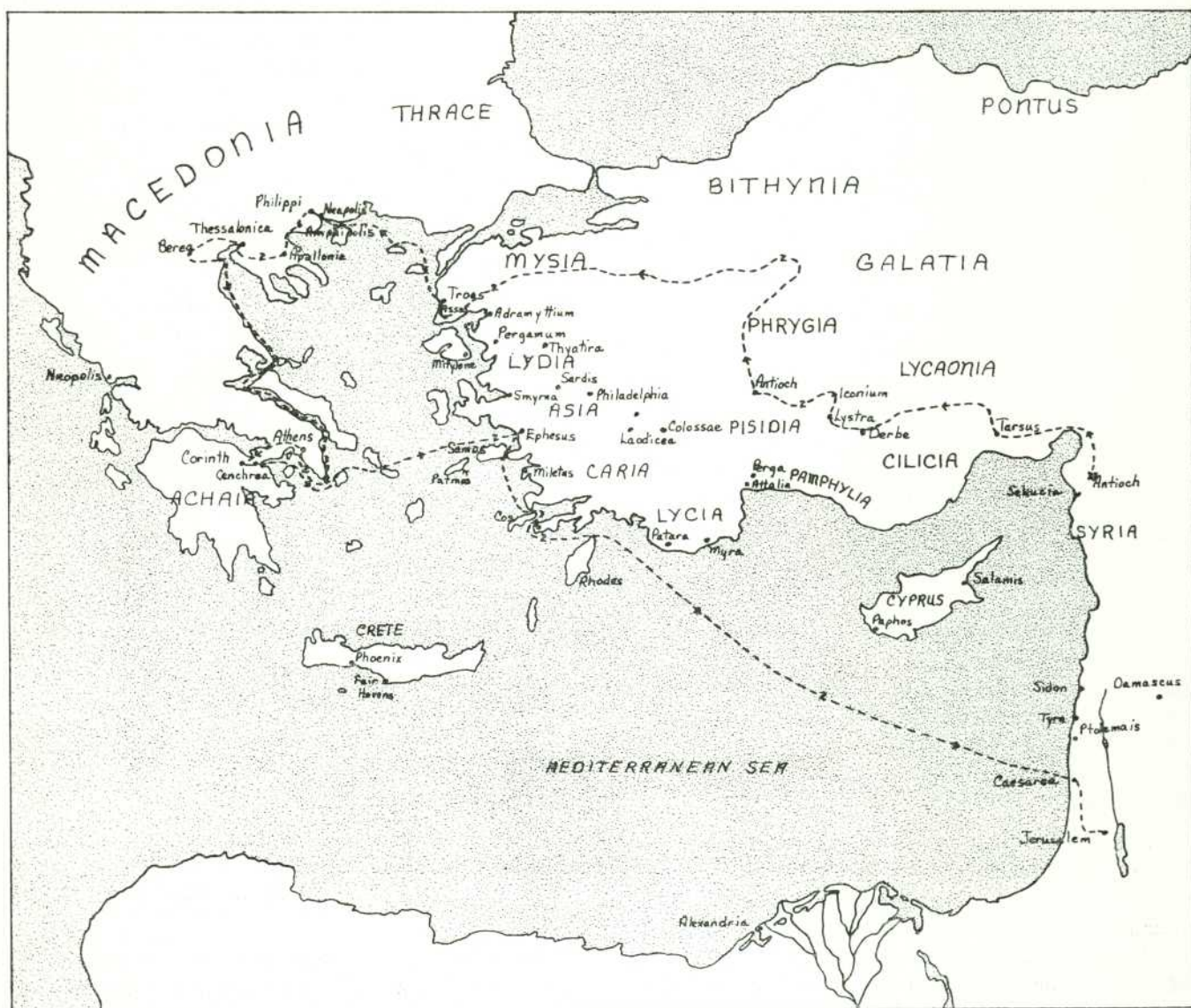
Paul needed an assistant. Even more than this, he needed a companion. No man is entirely self-sufficient; and the greater the man, the more he needs someone with whom he can share the heights and depths of his experience. To Paul, such a one was Timothy.

Undoubtedly Paul met Timothy and his family when he was at Lystra the first time. It has been suggested that when Paul recovered consciousness after being stoned, he found shelter and succour at Timothy's home.

At this time Timothy was an earnest lad of about 15 years. We can visualize how he developed filial love and respect for Paul. And Paul, in the absence of John Mark, yearned for youthful companionship and found consolation in young Timothy.

Timothy was in every way an outstanding young man. From a babe he had been taught the Scriptures. His grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice were both women in whom religion was a real and spontaneous thing.

It seemed that Timothy inherited his Greek father's love of knowledge and the strong Hebrew faith of his mother—a rich heritage. He was young and had all the enthusiasm of a man who had not been soured by life. And he was to be not only a friend, companion, and assistant to Paul—he was a son, a son-in-the-faith. There is no sign of anything but happiness in the relationship.



Paul's Second Missionary Journey

Timothy's Departure

CHARACTERS:

Eunice, Mother of Timothy

Lois, Grandmother of Timothy

Father of Timothy

SETTING: *Timothy's family's home*

EUNICE: Mother, did you know that Brother Paul has taken such an interest in our Timothy! He is such a noble example—and he has such a knowledge of the Scriptures. I am sure he will be such a help to Timothy in showing him the way to salvation.

November, 1973

LOIS: Yes, Eunice, I've thought about that too. Nothing in this world is so important as our salvation, and where could we find a better teacher than Brother Paul?

EUNICE: And, Mother, did you know that Brother Paul has asked our Timothy to go with him on his next missionary journey? He sent word by the brethren. We are expecting him to arrive any time now. It is so exciting! Won't that be a wonderful experience for Timothy?

LOIS: That sounds truly wonderful, Eunice—but aren't you concerned that he is a bit young to undertake such a journey? I know it is for the work of the Lord, but I would worry about him just the

same. But I suppose Timothy is not worrying.

EUNICE: Oh no, he is as excited as I am. And I am sure that the Lord will be with them. It seems the Lord's will for him to go. The whole Church offered special prayer for his safety at our meeting last night. He is so much younger than Brother Paul; I know he will be a great help to him.

(Enter FATHER, just arriving home after an extended trip to Antioch)

FATHER: Good-day to you all!

EUNICE AND LOIS: And our greetings to you. How was the trip?

FATHER: Successful, I believe. But I hear you talking about Timothy's proposed trip. Sounds like the plans are all made. I hurried back from Antioch as quickly as possible, thinking I might be able to forestall the trip. You know how I feel about this strange new religion—and Timothy is so young.

EUNICE: Yes, Father, I know. Would that you had been here when the brethren came with the word that Paul would be coming. Timothy was so elated—he started preparing immediately. He definitely wants to accompany Brother Paul on this missionary trip through Asia. Won't it be a wonderful experience for the lad?

FATHER: Experience! He could get some experience in the business helping *me*. And right here. I have to be out of town a great deal, and there is so much he could do at the shop, especially when I am away. Did he not even *consider* helping me? It seems to me that it would be much more worthwhile to help me than to run off with a traveling preacher. Why, he probably won't even be able to get enough to eat—and we may never see him again—not if they treat him like they treated Paul right here in our own city!

EUNICE: Father, please try to understand. I am sure Timothy would have talked this over with you more had you been home, but there was so little time. And the decision had to be made. You know it is Timothy's desire to serve the Lord, and I know the Lord will provide for him. We have God's promise that we will have sufficient—and I believe it. Ever since he first heard Brother Paul, he has thought of nothing but becoming a missionary like him. And it isn't as though we would never see him again—he will be back, I am sure. This is just the chance he had hoped for—and he really wants to go.

FATHER: I am aware that Timothy never showed much interest in the business—all he ever talks

about is religion. And it's all *your* fault! You've always made him think that there was nothing more important than learning from those scrolls! Why, if he spent half the time helping me in the business that he spends in his studies, we'd be much better off!

What do you know about this Brother Paul anyway? How do you know he isn't just another fake, that he won't take our Timothy and sell him for a slave?

LOIS: Now Son, you know we wouldn't let Timothy go unless we were sure of Brother Paul's reputation. We met him on his first journey when he came to our town. And we have also heard letters from other churches, and they all speak very well of him. And no Christian is a slave to any but Christ. I'm not at all worried about Timothy being sold as a slave.

EUNICE: Yes, Father, and we have heard from all the churches a concern for Paul's health. He's just trying to do too much. The care of all the churches is a great responsibility, besides the opposition from authorities in many of our cities. He has to spend considerable time defending himself and the faith. Timothy is sure he can help Brother Paul, and he really wants to go. Would that I could go also and help with the work!

FATHER: I—I didn't realize you felt so strongly about this new faith. I—I—perhaps I should investigate it further. But no, I can't—you see, all my friends are Greeks, and we have our gods, you know.

LOIS: Yes, Son, but your gods can do nothing for you. Our God and His Son Jesus are greater than all your Greek gods. What did they ever do for anyone? Our God raised Jesus from the dead—and someday He will do the same for me and for Eunice and Timothy—if we but make ourselves worthy during our lifetime.

EUNICE: Yes, Father, that is what we believe. You, too, could become a part of it—if you would turn and listen. The prophets wrote long ago of this Jesus whom we follow. We may be a little sect everywhere despised now, but that will not always be so. Someday the whole world will know that Jesus was the Messiah—when He comes again as King. If you will but hearken to the words of Jesus and the prophets now, you can be one with Him then. Father, it is not too late. It would make Timothy so happy.

FATHER: No, not now—maybe—someday—

EUNICE: I hear someone knocking—it must be Brother Paul now. Come—let us greet him!

FATHER: (stepping first to the door) I would like to meet the man myself and have a talk with him.

On--On to Macedonia

The missionaries—now three in number—toured the cities where Paul had founded congregations on his first journey, strengthening them in the word of the Lord. Then they left the area and headed westward.

And northward.

And southward.

And westward again. Plans changed drastically several times. Why such an erratic course? Luke words it simply: "And the Spirit suffered them not." Every road seemed to be blocked.

They were perplexed. What did it mean? Arriving finally at Troas, they wondered what they should do next, when one night Paul had a vision.

A man from Macedonia spoke to Paul in this vision in these beseeching words, "Come over into Macedonia and help us" (Acts 16:9). Here was the answer to their prayers and their appointed course of travel—to Macedonia (Greece).

At this point in the story in the book of Acts, the account takes on a new aspect of meaning. "Immediately," Luke states, "we sought to go on to Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them" (Acts 16:10). Note the "we" and "us"—a sudden change from the third person "they" and "them." Apparently Luke also had become part of the group.

How did Luke come to join Paul, Silas and Timothy? Had he previously known Paul? Was he perhaps a youthful acquaintance of Paul in Tarsus, or a fellow-student with him in Jerusalem? Did Paul invite him to go with them for the medical assistance he could provide, as well as to help with the missionary work? Or was Luke a

(Continued on page 10)

Lydia Speaks--

Greetings, Friends!

If you saw me in Thyatira, you may not recognize me now. Since I became a Christian, I exchanged my elaborate, costly robes for a plainer, simpler mode of dress which is becoming to women who profess godliness. You see, our Christian faith affects every aspect of our lives, including our attire. My wealth afforded me all the fine clothes and costly ornaments my heart could desire, but it was all for vanity and pride. How much happier I have been since I have been striving to please the Lord!

I like it here in Philippi, away from the madding crowds. Thyatira was a good place for selling my purple garments—it is a great commercial center. But I'm glad I moved here—especially because it was here that I met Brother Paul and learned of the faith of Jesus Christ.

I had always felt a leaning to

the Jewish faith, and in Thyatira I attended the synagogue—Judaism, with all its faults, is far, far ahead of the heathen religions of the Empire. I used to wonder if there could ever be any place for me—a Gentile—in the Jewish worship of God—the Jews in Thyatira were so exclusive of Gentiles. How glad I was to learn from Brother Paul that our great Creator is a God of both Jews and Gentiles, that He accepts everyone from every nation who will fear Him and depart from evil!

Have you heard how I met Brother Paul? It was on the riverbank. The few Jews living here could not support a large synagogue, so they met regularly on the riverbank for prayer and the reading of the Scriptures. How well I remember that day when the Christian missionaries joined our group. Just one glance at their faces and you *knew* they were men of character, men who carried a vital message from God.

After our meeting, the leaders

of our group asked them to speak. Paul stood up (he seemed to be the spokesman for the party). And he began to tell of so many things—of Jesus the Son of God, His life, His death, His resurrection, His ascension; and the glorious Kingdom that would someday be set up on this earth. He told us so much—never before had our little group of worshipers heard such words. And then he told us how we should live to be accepted of God. We should live in harmony with each other; we should learn to be longsuffering, forgiving, tenderhearted and kind to one another. We should never allow the cares of this present life to take first place in our hearts. And then he told us of the courage and determination we would need to endure to the end.

Such words, such heartfelt words moved me and my household. We invited the missionaries to our home. And there we were baptized. It was the beginning of a new life for all of us. ●●

man from Macedonia? We can only guess. Luke says nothing of himself.

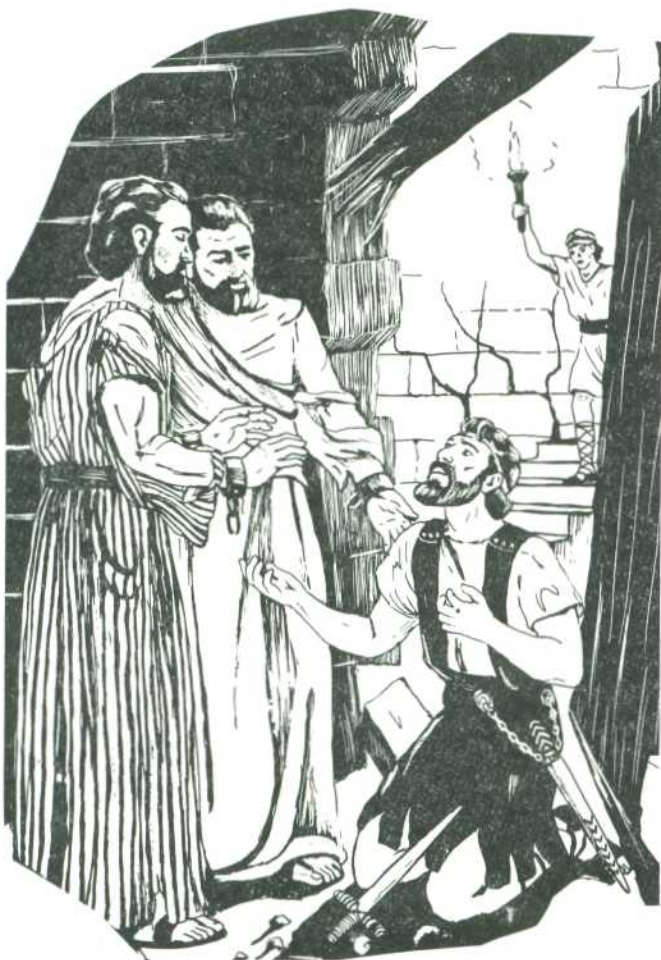
The missionaries lost no time embarking for Macedonia. Landing at the port of Neopolis, they stepped out on the great Roman East-West Road, the Egnatian Way that united Asia with Europe, and headed for the first city, Philippi.

A former military outpost settled by Roman veterans, Philippi bore all the likeness of Rome itself. Its population was largely Roman, though there were some Jews.

Paul's first convert in Philippi was a woman-merchant by the name of Lydia.

With Zeal Indomitable

How indomitable is your zeal for your Lord? How unquenchable is the fire of your faith? Could you endure being flailed with wooden rods until your back was bleeding, then be dragged to the



dark, foul-smelling dungeon of a prison and securely locked into stocks—and all for doing a good deed for an innocent slave girl? And then, in the midst of that dark, damp dungeon, could you lift your voice in hymns of praise to God?

That's the story of Paul and Silas at Philippi. Paul and Silas sang, and Luke tells us "the prisoners were listening" (Acts 16:25). These missionaries continued to witness for their faith—even in prison!

And as they sang, suddenly the whole building began to quake—and shake—it was an earthquake. A deep rumble, the crash of falling beams and the roar of collapsing walls brought screams of terror from the prisoners. When the dust had settled, Paul and Silas discovered that the bolts that had held them in the stocks were loose. They were free!

They could have fled in the confusion, but they did not.

Meanwhile the jailer had been awakened. What had happened? The prisoners were free? He took his sword to kill himself—death was better than disgrace to a Roman officer—but Paul and Silas restrained him. "Do thyself no harm: for we are all here." Then the jailer knelt before Paul and Silas and gasped, "What must I do to be saved?"

Gratefully, the jailer took Paul and Silas to his home where he washed their wounds and had a meal prepared for them. And we read that the jailer "rejoiced, believing in God with all his house." The unconquerable faith of Paul and Silas had brought them freedom and more converts.

When it was day, officers came to report that the magistrates wished the missionaries to leave town as quickly and quietly as possible. But Paul and Silas, thinking of what the Philippian brethren might have to suffer in time to come, let their rights as Roman citizens be known. They were determined to set the record straight so that the public would not be prejudiced against Christians. So Paul answered, "They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison; . . . let them come themselves and fetch us out."

Two bedrock rights of Roman citizens had been violated: No citizen could be punished without a trial, and no citizen could be beaten with rods. And by declaring their rights as Roman citizens, Paul and Silas won the respect and sympathy of magistrates and the general public who had formerly felt resentment toward them.

After visiting Lydia once again and the Christian congregation, Paul and Silas resumed their travels, continuing down the great East-West road that led through the heart of Greece.

On to Thessalonica . . .

From Philippi, Paul and Silas went on to Amphipolis to Apollonia to Thessalonica, a distance of nearly one hundred miles.

At Thessalonica, Paul, as usual, began his work in the synagogue—he sought the nucleus of his Christian congregations from among devout Jews. And in Thessalonica the result was the same as it had been in Lystra and Iconium and Antioch and elsewhere—trouble.

The Jewish leaders were infuriated. Branding the visiting missionaries as dangerous subversives, they engaged clever rabble-rousers to whip up a mob riot. The first object of their fury was the house of Paul's host, Jason. The charges against Jason and the other Christians were major: "These are the men who have turned the world upside down and have now come here," the accusation ran. "And Jason has taken them into his house. What is more, all these men act against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king called Jesus!" Terms like "ruler" and "kingdom" and "kingly power" and "allegiance" applied to someone other than the Emperor sounded like sedition to a suspicious mind.

Yet the charge brought against them is one of the greatest compliments ever paid to Christianity. "Those who are upsetting the civilized world have arrived here." The Jews—and everyone—saw that Christianity was a supremely effective thing.

When Christianity really goes into action, it causes a revolution both in the life of the individual and the life of society.

. . . And Berea and Athens

With so many hot-tempered Jews and mistrusting public officials in the city, Paul and Silas and Timothy decided to leave town. Disappointed, they retreated to Berea, some sixty miles down the road.

But what they found was gratifying—Luke records that these Bereans "were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few."

But again there was trouble—it came with some Jews from Thessalonica (Acts 17:13). To forestall more serious disturbances, some of the brethren

ren smuggled Paul out of the city and sent him on to Athens. Silas and Timothy and Luke followed him to Athens shortly.

Now Athens was the greatest university town in the world. And the greatest center of idolatry. It was said of Athens, "It's easier to meet a god there than a man"—there were idols *everywhere!*

Paul could not let the situation pass without taking occasion to speak. They invited him to a discussion on Mars Hill—philosophers loved to sit around and discuss new ideas, and Paul obviously had new ideas.

But his words were not what the people expected. To secure the attention of his audience he started speaking by telling them about their own city.

"I have been walking around your city, looking at all your altars to your many gods," he told them, "and there was one altar with this inscription on it: 'To the Unknown God.' You've been worshiping him whom you do not know—now I want to declare to you the real and living God, who made the world and all that is in it—He is Lord of both heaven and earth." They were all ears—this promised to be interesting.

And a few believed, among them a member of the City Council named Dionysius, and an otherwise unknown woman named Damaris.

From Athens Paul went on toward Corinth. Though he left a few believers, Athens was a disappointment; and Paul never again visited Athens. Nor did he ever write an "Epistle to the Athenians."

. . . And Corinth

Corinth was the last place on earth that anyone would have thought of trying to start a church. Proud of its position as "the city of the two seas," Corinth was one of the great maritime powers in the ancient world.

But Corinth was also the sinkhole of vice of the Roman Empire. Avarice, conceit and debauchery were everywhere. The temple in Corinth reeked with infamy. Corinthian morals were so low that "to live like a Corinthian" meant to satisfy one's appetite with all that is low and base and immoral.

Paul spent a year and a half with Priscilla and Aquila in their home in Corinth. This was a great opportunity for them, for Priscilla and Aquila had much in common with Paul. They shared their trade, for they were all tentmakers. But more than this, they shared their hope and faith as they engaged in the greater work of re-making their lives

for the world to come. Many were the soul-stirring talks they enjoyed as they worked together at their tentmaking.

And soon there were others who wanted to hear the gospel. Paul preached at the Jewish synagogue, until opposition forced him to remove to the house of a convert next door. Soon Paul had a Christian congregation in the city of Corinth.

The eighteen months Paul and his companions spent in Corinth were not all easy and pleasant. Several times violence threatened, and Paul was tempted to leave town. But the Lord said they should stay—"Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and let no one silence you, for I myself am with you and no man shall lift a finger to harm you. There are many in this city who belong to me." So Paul remained.

And when the Jews finally did attack Paul and take him to court, one named Gallio, the new governor of Achaia, spoke in behalf of Paul.

Gallio Tells His Story . . .

The Jews came to me complaining about Paul and those that were with him. They tried to make me believe that Paul was stirring up trouble and teaching contrary to Roman law. Of course, I could see right through their complaints. I knew it was jealousy and that Paul was innocent of any crime. So I answered them:

"Listen, you Jews. If this were a case involving some crime, I would be obliged to listen to you; but since it is merely a bunch of questions of words and personalities and your silly Jewish laws, *you* take care of it. I'm not interested and I'm not touching it."

I vowed I would remain impartial.

At each side of the judgment seat are my lictors armed with their official rods, and I ordered them to drive the Jews from the judgment seat.

From Ephesus to Jerusalem

Of the next few laps of Paul's journey we know only the route; Luke has recorded no details. He sailed for the coast of Syria and took Aquila and Priscilla with him. Leaving them at Ephesus, he hastened on to Jerusalem, hoping to arrive there in time for the Passover Feast. The feast over, he sped northward to Antioch.

The mother-church at Antioch had sent Paul out on two great missionary journeys, each stranger and more wonderful than they could have imagined

in their wildest dreams. There had been built, through the splendid quest of Paul and his companions, outposts of the Faith, churches garrisoned by brave Christians who held the line in the great strategic centers half-way across the Roman Empire.

And Luke dismisses a journey of around 2800 miles with barely a reference to the hardship of their travels.

There are untold tales of heroism of Paul which we will never know until, if found among Christ's faithful followers, we will hear from his own lips how he counted everything but refuse that he might win Christ. Paul himself sums it up thus: "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (II Cor. 4:17).●●

Words to WALK By

All who would know joy must share it—happiness was born a twin.

The best use of time is to spend it for something that outlasts it.

Life is a mirror: if you frown at it, it frowns back; if you smile, it returns the greeting.

Today is mine; each hour, each minute has tremendous challenge in it.

When you get wrinkled up with care and worry, it is a good time to get your faith lifted.

Let experience be your guidepost—not your hitching post.

The upward way is never the easy way.

Opportunities always look bigger going than coming.

We cannot control the length of our mortal life, but we can control its width and depth.

Little minds are tamed and subdued by misfortunes; great minds rise above them.

Yesterday's records are useful only when they keep us from repeating yesterday's mistakes.

Procrastination is the art of keeping up with yesterday.

UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God."

The Ministration of the Spirit

WHEN we study the subject of the Spirit of God from the Bible we find that it is never far removed from the idea of power. In most instances where the phrase "the Spirit of the Lord" is used we find that we could substitute "the power of the Lord" without altering the intended meaning. We learn from the Hebrew that "**hand**" as used of God also means power, and in the book of Ezekiel the two phrases "the Spirit of the Lord" and "the hand of the Lord" are used interchangeably.

The Spirit, as used in Scripture, is of God and not of man; it is the power of God in and through the lives of men. In the Old Testament Scriptures the extraordinary experiences of men are the acts of the Spirit. The Spirit was associated with the Creation as well as other natural phenomena. It is through the power of the Almighty that we have the sun and rain, seedtime and harvest, summer and winter.

In the period of the Exodus and in the Judges, the Spirit is the means of supernormal actions: It comes upon one man for the purpose of winning a battle; upon another for the pattern of the Tabernacle; on another to show him things the eye could not otherwise see; it provided food for forty years for the great mass of people known as the Children of Israel. The Spirit is God's gift for special work at special times. Presently this facet of the Spirit has been withdrawn from the earth, but we are promised that in the age to come it shall be restored, and in such abundance that it will be possessed by all.

To the prophets, the Spirit was the means of inspiration and revelation. Always the prophetic is associated with God or with His Spirit. The words of the prophets are not their own, but the words of God. Usually a prophet announced a message which had been given him through the Spirit of God; and almost invariably the message was accompanied by the words, "Thus saith the Lord."

The prophet Micah left no doubt as to the source of his inspiration: "But truly I am full of power

by the spirit of the Lord, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin" (Mic. 3:8).

The Spirit was a gift of power from the Lord enabling the prophet to speak God's word to men. These men were more than enabled to prophesy, they were more often **commanded** to speak. To Jeremiah, the Lord said, "Stand in the court of the Lord's house, and speak unto all . . . which come to worship . . . all the words that I command thee to speak unto them; diminish not a word"; to Isaiah, God said, "Go, and tell this people . . ."; Amos said, "The Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy?"; Daniel said, "There is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets," who "revealeth the deep and secret things" (Jer. 26:2; Isa. 6:9; Amos 3:8; Dan. 2:28, 22).

We read also that "the word of the Lord came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest . . . and the hand [power or Spirit] of the Lord was there upon him" (Ezek. 1:3); and Balaam, a "heathen divine," later mentioned as among the unfaithful, was used by God to speak His words: "If Balak [the king of Moab] would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the commandment of the Lord, . . . but what the Lord saith, that will I speak" (Num. 24:13).

These are but a few of the many instances where prophets were given orders direct from God, through His angels; others will be studied as we continue our study in this lesson on Old Testament ministration of God's Spirit, following our outline:

- IV. The Ministration of the Spirit—
 - Old Testament
 - D. The Spirit During the Undivided Kingdom
 - E. The Spirit During the Divided Kingdom
 - F. The Spirit Working Through the Prophets

Today the Spirit of God is evident on earth only in natural phenomena. God is still very much in control of the universe—else we would not be here, but He is not sharing this power with men. Some presume to have the Power, but no positive

evidence can be produced to prove it. On the contrary, the glaring lack of the power they profess is shown in the news media headlines of recent date: **Boy Dies from Lack of Insulin, Two Members of Cult Die From Poison and Snakebite Victim Critical.** The incidents involved are common knowledge, and all give evidence that the power of the Holy Spirit is not with us today. The eleven-year-old boy was supposedly healed by a "faith healer," and his parents threw out his medicine; the two who died from drinking poison claimed the promise of Jesus in Mark 16:18 was for this present time as well as for the Apostolic Age; the snakebite victim likewise claimed the promise of being able to take up serpents without harm. But the result of such presumptive claims is self-evident; neither we, nor anyone else has the power of the Holy Spirit today.

IV. THE MINISTRATION OF THE SPIRIT— OLD TESTAMENT

D. The Spirit During the Undivided Kingdom

We have seen the working of God on the earth through the ministration of His Spirit from the time He spoke to Adam through the rule of the Judges. Israel had become a nation, God's Kingdom on earth. They had solemnly entered into a covenant with Him agreeing to keep the laws and ordinances of God.

Israel was established as a theocracy with God Himself as the sovereign Ruler and Lawgiver. Other necessary leaders and rulers were "raised up" and empowered by God to fulfill their office. Had Israel remained true to their covenant with God, they had had no need of a king; God was their King. But other nations around them had a king, and they entreated Samuel, the last judge of Israel to "make us a king to judge us like all the nations" (I Sam. 8:5).

1. God chooses them a king. Samuel took the matter to the Lord in prayer, and the answer was that they should have the king they desired. The narrative of Saul searching for his father's asses is familiar history. The Lord had notified Samuel in advance of Saul's arrival. After being anointed by Samuel, we read that Saul was given a measure of the "Spirit of God" and that he prophesied. **This was the same Spirit or power that had been directing Israel from the beginning; the message to Samuel was also given by means of God's miraculous power, probably through an angel. God through His angels had chosen Israel's first king.** As long as the kingdom remained undivided, God chose the kings, but later the kingship was passed on by succession.

Saul was a human instrument of God's power, and because of disobedience the kingdom was taken from him, again by God's working through His Spirit. God was the sovereign Ruler of the kingdom; the human king was His tool, and because the tool proved worthless it was discarded.

2. David, the second king of the undivided kingdom was likewise chosen by God through His Spirit, and was also anointed by Samuel. We read in I Samuel 16:13 that after his anointing "the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward." During the seven years that David waited for his kingdom, the disgruntled King Saul sought to kill him many times, but always he was spared because the Lord was watching over His chosen king.

David is probably best remembered for slaying the giant Goliath. It was the power of God that directed the stone from David's sling to the head of the giant. And David, though endowed with the "Spirit of the Lord," was nevertheless human and more than once fell into transgression during his 40-year reign. While it was his privilege to have been protected by the Lord's angel, it was also his calamity to be reproved through His prophets. David's sins brought reproach upon himself and his people. His sin in numbering the people brought three days of pestilence, resulting in the death of thousands. **This incident is an example of the ministration of the Spirit of God; it was the angel of God who administered the punishment.** Following the pestilence the angel of the Lord appeared to David at the site where the temple was later built. That the angel executed the punishment is definitely stated in II Sam. 24:16, "The Lord... said to the angel that destroyed the people, It is enough: stay now thine hand."

The Spirit of the Lord that was with David also inspired him to write many psalms, some of which contain prophecies fulfilled in Christ and others yet unfulfilled. Inspiration is as much a part of the work of the Spirit of God as are the miracles.

3. Solomon, a son of David, was the last king of the undivided kingdom. It had been revealed to David many years in advance that Solomon was God's choice of his sons to inherit the throne and to build the temple (I Chron. 22:8-9), and the promise was fulfilled.

If ever the hand of the Lord was upon one for good, it was upon Solomon. The Lord appeared to him in a dream and in answer to his request promised him wisdom and knowledge to lead his people, plus wealth beyond what mortals had heretofore known. **Visions and dreams were a common means of the ministration of the Spirit at this time, Both the dream and the fulfillment of the dream, or**

vision, were to be attributed to the Spirit of God. In this instance the vision was fulfilled, "and God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much... and Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east," and through this wisdom which was God-given, Solomon "spake three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five" (I Kings 4:29-32).

One of the most notable occasions of Solomon's career was the dedication of the Temple when "the glory of the Lord filled the house" after Solomon's lengthy prayer and the burnt offering. Following this occasion, the Lord again appeared to Solomon in a vision at night to inform him that his prayer had been heard and that the Temple which Solomon had built was acceptable to Him as a house of worship. Again, it was the Spirit or power of God through His angels that delivered the message to Solomon. Israel was God's Kingdom on earth, and through the power of His Spirit He was directing its affairs.

E. The Spirit During the Divided Kingdom

Solomon used his gift of wisdom and knowledge to write many words of wisdom which have been preserved to this day. He also used it to amass great wealth and to gain prestige among the nations of his time; but unfortunately he did not use it to govern his own conduct, hence he will be numbered among the unfaithful at the Judgment Day.

It was Solomon's errant behavior that brought about the division of the kingdom. Because he had forsaken God and turned to the gods of his foreign wives, God spoke to him a third time, sternly rebuking him and telling him that because of his sin the kingdom would be taken away from him. God allowed Solomon to be chastened by the armies of neighboring nations, and at the same time He allowed one of Solomon's servants to gain followers who opposed the king.

Jeroboam, the servant who led the rebellion, was destined to be the king of the seceded tribes. God sent the prophet Ahijah to Jeroboam with the message: "Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee" (I Kings 11:31). It was God's will that the kingdom should be divided and He arranged the circumstances through His power, His Spirit. Ahijah was only acting as God's messenger and was the means of the ministration of the Spirit.

1. Two kingdoms, two kings. Solomon's reign lasted forty years and at his death his son Rehoboam ascended the throne. The prophecy of Ahijah was fulfilled when Jeroboam returned from

exile and was quickly joined by his followers. The ten tribes followed Jeroboam and the two, Judah and Benjamin, stayed with Rehoboam according to the word of the Lord. **The ten-tribe kingdom was known as Israel or the Northern Kingdom while the two-tribe kingdom was known as Judah, or the Southern Kingdom.**

Jeroboam quickly strayed from following the Lord and erected golden calves for the people to worship and "made an house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people," and declared a feast. Again God sent "a man of God," this time to reprove Jeroboam for his wickedness. With the power of God the prophet caused the wicked king's hand to wither and the false altar to be torn down. At the king's request, his hand was restored to normal, but he continued in his evil way. **The "man of God" was the instrument of God's Spirit; God is able to delegate supernatural power to whomever He will.**

Rehoboam, the king of the two-tribe kingdom, was twice reproved by God's prophet Shemaiah. On the first occasion he sought to bring the ten tribes back into the fold, but it was not God's will and He sent His prophet with the message: "Thus saith the Lord, Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren... return every man to his house; for this thing is from me" (I Kings 12:24). **Although the kingdom was divided, it was clear that God meant it to be so. Shemaiah was the instrument of God's Spirit and was speaking for God.** The people "hearkened to the word of the Lord, and returned."

On the second occasion God allowed Shishak, king of Egypt to overrun the kingdom of Judah "because they had transgressed against the Lord" (II Chron. 12:5-8). But because they humbled themselves and listened to His words, God spared their lives, making them servants of the Egyptian king. **God, through His Spirit, was working with His chosen people, attempting to teach them that it was better to serve Him than to be in bondage to foreigners.**

F. The Spirit Working Through the Prophets

Rehoboam and Jeroboam, the first kings of the divided kingdom, died in due time and were succeeded by their sons; the sons died and were replaced by their sons, but the over-all sovereign Ruler of the kingdom did not change. Both the kingdom of Judah and the kingdom of Israel belonged to God, and although He allowed them to forget this fact for short periods of time, He never let them entirely out of His grasp.

The first three kings of the undivided kingdom were chosen by God Himself; and when they needed

reproof and correction, God sent messages direct to them through the means of angels or visions. But after the kingdom was divided, God no longer saw fit to influence their choice of kings and the office passed from father to son.

During the time of the undivided kingdom God used prophets to deliver His word to certain individuals: The prophet Gad was sent to David to give him a choice of three punishments for his sin (II Sam. 11:11-14); the prophet Nathan was sent to rebuke David for his adultery (II Sam. 12: 1-15); and, as stated above, the prophet Ahijah brought word to Jeroboam of the pending division of the kingdom (I Kings 11:29-31). **These prophets were the means of the ministration of God's Spirit or power at that time.**

Beginning with the ninth century B. C. the nations prospered, and as they prospered they mixed more and more with the pagan nations around them and adopted the pagan gods, forgetting the true God. During this time God raised up prophets to reprove kings, to remind the people of the covenant their fathers had made with Him and to reprove them for their transgressions. God's prophets were never afraid to speak or to act when necessary. Because the incidents are so numerous, we will be able to review only a few here.

1. Elijah the Tishbite. Probably the most memorable of the prophets whom God used to minister His Spirit on the earth was Elijah, described by the historian as "the sternest of the prophets."

Elijah's appearance was sudden and dramatic. Of his heritage we know nothing except that he had a direct contact with God and the line was always open. Whenever he called upon God, God answered, and whatever he prophesied came to pass. He possessed the Spirit of God, the power of God in large measure; and many were the miracles accomplished with it. We will mention some of the most notable events of his career.

a. Famine in Israel. When Elijah first appeared on the scene he announced to Ahab that there was to be a famine, and it "rained not for the space of three and one half years" (Jas. 5:17). Throughout the famine he was sustained by a widow and her son. The "barrel of meal" did not waste, and the "cruse of oil" did not fail (I Kings 17). **It was the Spirit of God that sustained Elijah and the woman.**

b. Widow's son restored to life. After the famine, the widow's son died and she called Elijah to her house. Elijah prayed to God and the child's life was restored (I Kings 17:17-23). The miracle proved to the woman that Elijah was a true prophet of God (v. 24). **Again, it was the work of God's Spirit.**

c. The test on Mt. Carmel. This is the most familiar incident in the life of Elijah. The contest

was between the 850 false prophets and the one prophet of the Lord. The issue was: Who is causing this famine? The outcome was never in doubt because Elijah had the true God on his side, and one with God is a majority. The rest of the narrative is familiar: The true God answered, the prophets of Baal were slain, and it rained. Baal worship was no longer a problem in Israel. **From beginning to end the whole event was the work of the Spirit of God on the earth. Only the power of God could have wrought such a miracle.**

d. Elijah's translation. Elijah's career ended with the same suddenness with which it began, but before it ended he had chosen a successor who was likewise to do many miracles. Elisha, his successor stood by as "there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven" (II Kings 2:12). **This was one of the greatest manifestations of God's Spirit on the earth. Nothing but the power of God could have removed Elijah bodily from the earth and preserved his life on some other world.**

2. Elisha, the next great prophet, ministered some 50 years during the reigns of Jehoram, Jehu, and Jehoahaz, kings of Israel, and Joram, Ahaziah and Joash, kings of Judah.

Elisha asked for the inheritance privilege of the eldest son—a "double portion" of what his "father" had to give, i. e. the share of two sons (he did not ask for more power than Elijah had). The request was granted; when Elijah was taken away, Elisha received the mantle of Elijah, with which he parted the Jordan (II Kings 2:12-14). And throughout his career, Elisha made frequent use of his special power from God.

Elisha did many miracles; we can list but a few—he sweetened a spring of water, caused water to appear for the armies of three kings, provided oil for a poor widow to sell, made an ax head to float, raised a dead boy to life, healed Naaman the leper. All these miracles were the work of the Spirit of God. God was not silent in those days; He was working openly, and Elisha was the means of the ministration of His Spirit.

3. Other prophets at the time of the kings. Following Elisha were several contemporary prophets—Isaiah, Micah, Hosea and Amos. These wrote their messages from God, and we have them in the form of the Bible.

Reprints of these studies are available upon request.

The Keeping Jehovah

PRAYER

Loving Father, once again we appear in Thy presence within Thy house to engage in worship, in prayer, and praise. Father, grant that our wills may be fully surrendered. May we come to Thee as children to their father, as servants to their master.

Father, we realize Thy goodness to us has been more than our iniquities have deserved. We have done the things we should not have done, and left undone the things we should have done. But grant that the time past of our life may suffice us to have surrendered to the flesh; and henceforth may our aim be: all of Thee, and none of self.

Father, we realize our help cometh from Thee. Vain is the help of man, vain are the things that he is all absorbed with, things which have no future, things which cannot win for him anything beyond the grave and oblivion.

Grant then that we may put our trust wholly in Thee. May we know of a certainty that Thou wilt never suffer our foot to be moved, or any circumstances to prevail not to our spiritual good if we are growing into holiness. Thou dost never slumber nor sleep, but Thine eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men to give everyone according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings.

We rejoice to know that Thou, Lord, art our keeper; our shade upon the right hand and upon the left. No burning ray of temptation can beat down upon us that is more than we are able to bear, no trial can come to us but that will be for our spiritual growth and improvement if only we are exercised thereby.

We implore Thee to preserve us from harm, that our souls may be bound in the bundle of life until we shall have had time to finish our work of self-mastery. Wilt Thou preserve our going out and our coming in as long as life lasts, and may we make ourselves worthy of perpetuation that we may be preserved eternally in that better Day.

And when we have worked out our salvation with fear and trembling, grant us the full reward, for Thine is the Kingdom, and the glory, and the power, forever. Amen.

DISCOURSE

AFTER reading the newspaper headlines that can be read almost any day in connection with world events, of flood, storm, earthquake, disaster, and crime, of race tension and uprising, of social and economic unrest, of turmoil that scars the nations of earth, a very comforting verse of Scripture comes to mind: "Come, my people, enter into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast" (Isa. 26:20).

What a blessed privilege to have the opportunity to become "my people," the true Israel of God, the "righteous little people" called out and preserved in these last perilous days, and given this loving invitation, "Come, my people, enter into thy chambers and shut thy doors about thee." This chamber is also the strong tower into which the righteous may run and be safe. And do we not need a place of safety? We see the nations rushing "like the rushing of many waters," and few, of all earth's inhabitants, know what the outcome will be. Soon, yes, very soon, "The Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity." And "God shall rebuke them and they shall flee afar off, and shall be chased as the chaff of the mountain before the wind, and as a rolling thing [thistledown] before the whirlwind" (Isa. 17:13). Only in His chamber (tower) can we hide in safety from this "indignation."

The present generation, considering their enlightenment, are making for themselves even a darker record than many that have gone before. They challenge the authority of the Eternal, worshipping the god of pleasure and personal possessions and aggrandizement, more than the Creator. They say to God, "Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto him?" (Job 21:14-15), and yet He remains silent until the harvest of the earth becomes fully ripe.

We read in the prophecies of Jeremiah, "The nations have drunken of her [Babylon's] wine;

therefore the nations are mad." We who have abandoned the use of this wine and have become sober by drinking freely of the water of Life, have seen for many years the fulfillment of this prophecy. But we see today that they are not only drunken on this wine of Babylon—confusion—religiously, but in this age of enlightenment, of higher education, of advanced civilization, the multitudes are drinking to the very dregs the cup of confusion politically, economically, and morally. In fact they are so hopelessly intoxicated with the work their own hands have wrought that they do not see they are rushing to their own destruction.

Frustration—National, Domestic

Was there ever such a time in the world's history when such desperate and despairing efforts were being made by the few to prevent the catastrophe of war, and at the same time such colossal preparations were being made for it? Truly they cry "Peace, peace, when there is no peace." Was there ever a time when treaties, pacts, conferences, etc., were treated with such contempt? Each of earth's two major nations watches with jealous eye the armed strength of the other—his potential enemy—and determines that it shall not outsize his own. We are living in a time when men and nations are governed by greed, hatred, and rivalry, and no contract is sacred, no rights respected.

As long as the nations of the world resort to war to settle their differences, as long as a strong nation can overpower and conquer a weaker one upon the slightest pretext, or no pretext at all, how far removed are they from the savage or barbarous tribes who in their ignorance knew no other means than the spear, the battle-axe, the tomahawk, or the poisoned arrow?

Let us look in another direction. It is an accepted fact that the home is the smallest—but not the least important—unit in civilized life. In fact, the very roots of civilization are nourished in that sacred institution. When the roots begin to decay, what of the tree? The downfall of the home and the decay of family life are evident on every hand. The divorce decree is almost as common as the marriage certificate. Childhood is blighted and youth frustrated and demoralized by the dissensions of parents and disrupted homes. Parental authority is practically nil in too many other homes, and the children are allowed to grow up developing their "individuality." It develops to the point of rebellion against all authority; hence youthful criminals abound. Naturally the child who is not subject to discipline and taught to respect the authority of parents and superiors will not grow

into a law-respecting citizen. (In this matter we are probably behind some less favored peoples.)

Downgrading Trends

Was there ever a time since the Dark Ages when morality was at such a low ebb; when honesty, integrity, sobriety, and chastity ceased to be virtues as they have today among the masses? In short, when all standards are dropped and every person does that which is right in his own eyes? Perhaps it were better to say, when the majority do as they please with no thought or care about the right or wrong of the matter.

We who are along in years have a distinct remembrance of our school days when we learned that one characteristic of savage and barbarous tribes was that they wore little or no clothing. We also learned that one of the first steps taken by missionaries in civilizing a people was to induce them to wear the clothing of civilized nations. But what of these so-called civilized peoples today? We can see on the streets almost any warm day men, women, and children, less than half clothed, with bodies browned by the sun to the shade of the native Malay. Can we say that these modes of dress are far removed from the loin-cloth of the savage or barbarian? And even worse than barbarism are the nude cults that may be found in many parts of our own and other countries.

Paganism exulted in cruel diversions and amusements. Gladiators fought to the death in the arena to entertain the Roman populace. Thousands of men and women applauded when a combatant went down, and the arena was often soaked with the blood of its victims. No, we do not have gladiatorial combats, but we do have prize fights. Men pound and bruise each other into insensibility in the prize ring, and the seats are filled with applauding thousands of both sexes. Men, women, and children of tender years, sit in their homes and watch television—so absorbed with what they see that they almost forget their meals—often witnessing what is by no means conducive to mental or moral improvement. How far removed from paganism are these present-day amusements? Which is worse, to be amused and entertained with a combat between two individuals armed for the fray, and who know what the outcome will be for one or both of them; or to witness, with thrills, the reproduction of a cold-blooded murder of an innocent person? Ah! civilization, shouldst thou not call paganism thy kinswoman?

These are a few of the most obvious signs which show our barbaric trend; others there are in abundance. But what can we do about it? Nothing in general; much in particular. We can keep our

own particular selves free from such a world and its contaminating influence. And this we must do. "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord; and touch not the unclean thing" (II Cor. 6:17). It means much to be *in* the world but not *of* it. We must not lay one grain of incense upon a pagan altar by conforming to any of their customs. There are no more explicit commands in the Bible than those regarding separation from the world. Why should anyone having the eyes of his understanding enlightened want to be a part of such a wicked, immoral, pagan world, rushing madly to its own destruction? Why should any woman or girl want to follow the pagan modes of dress—or rather of undress? Let us remember, too, that idols in our hearts will as truly separate us from God as if we worshiped at a pagan shrine.

The Almighty Keeper

We read in Isaiah 55:8-9, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." The only way to gain eternal life is to wage a good warfare against sin and evil. If we cannot bring all our thoughts into subjection and wage a good warfare against sin and evil, we are not worthy of the prize. The keeping Jehovah looks out upon the field of humanity, and He plans to save everyone who will do His will, everyone who will be an overcomer. Not only will He fill this earth with happy, immortal beings, but He has already filled innumerable worlds in the immensity of space.

In Psalm 130:7 we find other attributes of the keeping Jehovah: "Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption." Truly we can hope in the Lord. In fact, He is the only one in whom we can hope without disappointment. If we hope in ourselves we shall surely fail; not that we will neglect doing everything in our power to obtain what we desire, but it is physically impossible to fulfill our wish due to human limitations and the fickle nature of our mind. If we hope in others, they too are limited by the same handicaps as we ourselves; and besides, we have no assurance that we can continue in their good grace. We may bask in the sunshine of their favor one day, and they may turn a cold shoulder the next.

But with the Almighty it is different; we can hope in Him. "Every good gift, and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (Jas. 1:17).

And who could fail to agree with the Psalmist

that "with the Lord there is mercy"? Surely His longsuffering with the human race, and with us, is beyond anything we could reasonably expect. Since the dawn of civilization man's record has been one of wars, of atrocities, of inhumanity man to man. The earth is the property of Almighty God, yet He has suffered the masses to desecrate it with all sorts of crime, debauchery and misbehavior. Pleasure-seeking, graft, political corruption, and iniquity of all kinds have gone almost unchecked, and still the Almighty allows man to run his course.

How we should see to it every day that we are keeping in the chamber, that we are encompassed by this strong tower, this wonderful word of the Lord. It is ours to ascend the tower, to enter the chamber, and to shut the doors about us—this door of faith held tight and secure by the strong bolts of evidence of the truthfulness of His Word and the surety of His promises. Then it is ours to trust in God to do the keeping. As long as we stay in the chamber we shall be protected; and truly only the Eternal can keep us. What power have *we* to protect *ourselves* from the dangers which threaten on every hand?

Recurrently earthquakes and devastating storms sweep over sections of our country, and we see how puny is the power of man against the great forces of nature; and how much less potent will he be against the power of nature's God! Why, then, should we not be willing, even anxious to trust ourselves to the keeping of the great and All-wise Being who made heaven and earth, who holds the waters of the sea in His hand and pours them out upon the earth?

Being Kept

Being "kept"—that is a most comforting thought. Being willing to *submit* to His keeping is the high lesson for the Christian to learn. Said Peter, in the assurance of self-keeping, "Though all men should deny thee, yet will not I." He soon learned how poor is that keeping which one can set about himself if not fortified by an inner trust born of a strong abiding faith in God. In how short a time he sprawled in cowardice and denial! He learned through sad experience that it is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man—in the flesh. Had Peter's mind been stayed upon the Lord, he would not have forgotten the warning words of Jesus spoken so short a time before, "Before the cock crow thou shalt deny me thrice." But this impetuous disciple, trusting in his own strength, "rememberd the words of the Lord" only *after* the dastardly act was done.

What an example to us! Do we remember the

word of the Lord that it may fortify us against any trial? Are we giving the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we let them slip when the crucial test comes? Jesus said upon one occasion, "*Remember Lot's wife.*" It would be well for us to remember Peter's trial. After Peter was fully converted he used different speech. In his First Epistle he says, "Kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation."

Should your faith need strengthening in this matter of the Lord's keeping, turn to Psalm 121. Read it. Meditate upon it. Believe in its promises with all your heart, and you will find that "perfect peace" which comes to one "whose mind is stayed on thee." Why shall he be kept? "Because he trusteth in thee." That is our part of the work.

"I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills," wrote the Psalmist, "from whence cometh my help." Moffatt's translation reads, "I lift mine eyes to the mountains." Yes, we too must look to the mountains, the high ones, not those down in the valleys. One does not get help by looking to or consulting with those living on the lower levels. We must look to the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity, and consult with those high, strong ones who lead in the way to the mountain of His holiness. Look to the mountains, the elevated ones.

"He will not suffer thy foot to be moved" (v. 3). But to merit this care, what must *we* do? "Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil" (Prov. 4:26-27). This is the keeping command for the feet.

He that keepeth thee will not slumber. "Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep" (Ps. 121:4). A beautiful expression of God's constant care over His faithful children! Neither must we fall into a spiritual slumber. God will not protect a sleepy Christian, one who is not keeping wide awake to the dangers which beset his path on every hand. When one is drowsy he does not see the pitfalls, the stumbling blocks, of which there are many. In a slumbering moment the "little member," the tongue, speaks words to no profit, foolish words; the keeping command which is its especial recommendation is drowsily unobserved. It is: "keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips that they speak no guile." Evil feelings, sensitiveness, selfishness, jealousy, envy, pride, may be manifested; a prejudice, an undeserved sympathy; some unconquered lust of the flesh. Surely one is sleeping on guard when any of these dark serpent's heads thrusts itself out. A heroic and persistent effort to kill out the serpent is a good antidote for sleepiness. And the "keeping" command for this work is, "Keep thy heart [the mind] with

all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." Let them not be the issues of death. "Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof." Therefore, "keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile." "What meanest thou O sleeper? Arise and call thou upon thy God... that we perish not" (Prov. 4:23; 18:21; Ps. 34:13; Jonah 1:6).

"The Lord is thy keeper; the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night" (Ps. 121:5-6). No, the powers of earth, either great or small, shall not harm us if the Lord is our keeper.

The Keeping Terms

An old servant once was sent by his master on an important errand. Meeting with hearty success on his mission he gave as the explanation, "I, being in the way, the Lord led me" (Gen. 24:27). If we keep "in the way" we can be assured of the Lord's leading. But we must remember He does not always lead through green pastures and by still waters. Sometimes it is necessary for our development to be led by devious ways, over rough and thorny paths and through turbulent waters. A calm sea does not develop a hardy sailor. When the Lord knows our capabilities, He tests our strength. Was not the brave Paul shown how much he had to suffer for the name of Christ? Was not Abraham given the acid test?

So, Christian sailor, when the storm clouds grow thick, when the boisterous waves are rolling high and seem ready to overwhelm you, just remember you are on the old Ship of Zion; and though you may, in a moment of impatience, want to grasp the rudder and steer the ship in the way you think it should go, just submit to the Captain's orders and He will guide the vessel safe into port, for "the Lord shall preserve [or keep] thee from all evil; he shall preserve thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going out and coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore" (Ps. 121:7-8).

Six times in this short psalm is the sweet note of keeping struck, and how often the same note swells out in the songs of David—he who so often needed the Lord's keeping. "I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress; my God; in him will I trust... He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler... The eternal God is thy refuge; and underneath are the everlasting arms" (Ps. 91:2, 4; Deut. 33:27). What beautiful symbols of protection! Covered with His feathers—under His wings—upheld by His everlasting arms. All most appropriate figures of His power. Such wonderful, such hope-inspiring,

such faith-strengthening promises! What greater incentives could we have to help us perform our part of the keeping?

We are assured of God's keeping in two ways. As quoted from Peter (I Pet. 1:5), we are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." Yes, through faith in His power—which is the gospel—and obedience thereto, we shall gain salvation. We are assured of this life in which to do the work, and eternal salvation at the end—the keeping of a loving Father through all eternity. But the gospel in and of itself is impotent and has no power to save. It is only when applied, when put into actual practice in the daily affairs of life, that its preserving power becomes effective.

No shield or buckler is of any use unless worn, and they are not needed unless there is a battle.

So if we would claim its protecting power we must *read, understand, and keep* its glorious precepts. This is the whole duty of man. This part of the "keeping" all depends upon ourselves.

Then, when man is fulfilling his whole duty, he has the assurance that "the angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them.... Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for those who shall be heirs of salvation?" Surely in these troublous times we need the protection of the angel. But God will not do for us what we can do for ourselves. We must not tempt the Lord by putting ourselves in unnecessary dangers.

He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep—now or ever. If we will do our little part to merit His safe shelter, Jehovah will protect us in eternal safety. Again and again throughout His Book of instruction the terms are stated. If we keep His law, statutes, ways, testimonies—in short, His Word—His boundless promise is so very simply stated in the closing words of the Book, "Blessed are they that do [keep] his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." Once inside the gate, we shall share everything that is beyond. ●●

Life would be a great deal simpler if our moral temptations had even the decency of rattlesnakes that sound a warning before they strike. But most temptations are not like that. They are not gradual. Remember those unforeseen, those unexpected hours, at ease, off guard, when like a foe from ambush a temptation leaped!

November, 1973



The Day Is Near

We often think of the great mercy of our kind heavenly Father, for we have so many times departed from His ways; yet He has not rewarded us according to our iniquities. He is longsuffering, "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

We can see very plainly that the night of darkness is far spent and the day is at hand, that wonderful Day when we will rejoice with a great reward if we make ourselves worthy by living according to His will.

Vernon, British Columbia, Canada

A. S.

Dead to God?

It is far easier than we might think to find ourselves dead in the sight of God. We can be physically living but dead spiritually, as Christ said of the church at Sardis, "Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead" (Rev. 3:1).

Our longing for eternal life should be so intense that God will be always first in our lives. Otherwise we will forget that the things of this life are only a means to gain the eternal.

Wausau, Wisconsin

J. T.

Better Than Gold

The Christian faith is often called a light, sometimes a light that shineth in dark places. Christianity is meant to be seen, lived, made visible. If we are to be lights of the world we must make our daily lives a glowing light, visible to all with whom we come in contact.

A light is also a guide; if we are to be true Christians we must be a guide to those around us. With God's help we may all strive to keep our light burning bright.

The little lamps of friendship
We light along our way
Go shining on far down the years
And brighten every day.
'Tis love that keeps them burning
And sympathy and trust;
God help us that no lamp goes out
Because we let it rust.

Saint John, New Brunswick, Canada

M. L.

Plain Reading

I thank you so much for the booklet, *The Coming of Elijah and Jesus and the Kingdom of God*. It is the plainest reading of the Bible I have had, and I feel sure anyone reading it through would find the Bible a living Word, and that it would encourage them to seek and find Christ as their friend.

Panton Hill, Victoria, Australia

B. J.

Bible A B C's



U IS for Uzzah. Uzzah lived long ago in the days of King David. He was one of those chosen to help bring the Ark of the Lord back from Baalah to be put in the tabernacle. The Ark was put on a new cart and drawn by oxen. King David and the people who were with him sang joyful songs and played musical instruments in praise to God that the Ark would once more be in their midst.

As the cart carrying the Ark passed the threshing floor of Chidon, the oxen stumbled. Uzzah was afraid some harm would come to the ark. He reached out his hand and took hold of the Ark to steady it so it would not fall. But do you know that when he did this he disobeyed the commandment of the Lord? The command had been, "Thou shalt not touch any holy things lest thou die." So Uzzah lost his life.

God always means exactly what He says, and Uzzah did not obey. We should always remember Uzzah and learn not to do the things God has commanded us not to do.

u

U

W

Uzzah

Virgins

Wisdom

V IS for Virgins. When Jesus was teaching the people, many times He told them parables or stories that had great meaning. Once He told them the parable of the Ten Virgins. Five of these virgins were wise and five were foolish.

The ten virgins all took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Only the wise ones took extra oil with them. The bridegroom was delayed; and while the virgins waited for him, they went to sleep. At midnight they heard someone cry, "The bridegroom is coming, go out to meet him." By that time some of the virgins' lamps were going out. The wise virgins filled their lamps with oil from their vessels, but the foolish did not have any. The wise virgins had only enough oil for themselves, so the foolish virgins went to buy oil. While they were gone, the bridegroom came. The wise virgins went in to the feast with him, and the door was locked.

Then the foolish virgins came back and called, "Open the door for us." But the bridegroom said, "Go away! It is too late."

This story is to teach us to always be watching for Jesus to

come the second time to set up His kingdom. We must always keep our lamps of a good character brightly burning so He will invite us to enter His kingdom with Him and help Him to rule this earth in righteousness.

W IS for Wisdom. Many times in the Bible, Wisdom is referred to as a woman and is called "she."

Speaking of Wisdom, the wise man tells us, "Get wisdom, get understanding; forget it not." Also, "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom, and with all thy getting get understanding." We are told: "She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."

Isn't this a great reward for all who get wisdom? She has eternal life in one hand and riches and honor in the other. It is more than this whole world can offer us.

Would you like to know what this Wisdom really is? Job tells us, "The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom." And what is the fear of the Lord? Proverbs 8:13 tells us. "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil." This, then, tells us exactly what godly wisdom is. It is to hate evil and depart from it. If we do this we will possess true wisdom and will receive all the eternal blessings "she" can bestow. ●

In the Beauty of Holiness

*Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness,
Bow down before Him, His glory proclaim,
Gold of obedience, and incense of lowliness,
Kneel and adore Him—the Lord is His name.*

*Low at His feet lay thy burden of carefulness,
High on His heart He will bear it for thee,
Comfort thy sorrows, and answer thy prayerfulness,
Guiding thy steps as may best for thee be.*

*Truth in its beauty, and love in its tenderness,
These are the offerings we lay on His shrine;
These, though we bring them in trembling and
fearfulness,
He will accept in the Name all divine.*

—John S. B. Monsell, 1811-1875

November, 1973

Can You Spell Thanksgiving?

T Are you truly **THANKFUL** for all the blessings God has given you during the past year—even for blessings disguised?

H Are you strictly **HONEST** in everything you do? Can you say that you never compromise your principles for temporary advantage?

A Does God classify you among His **ACTIVE** followers—are you actively engaged in His cause?

N Do you possess the **NOBLE** aspirations of the saints of old? Are you earnestly striving to be one with them?

K Are you **KIND**—at home, at work, to family, friend and neighbor?

S Are you **SINCERE** in your attempt to remold your life to the pattern of Christ, or are you just pleasantly going along with those who take the matter more seriously?

G Are you setting a **GODLY** example before all you meet? Can others see by your life that your primary interests are God's interests?

I Are you **INTENSE** in your desire to serve God—does your whole being radiate the glow of His countenance?

V As a branch of the true **VINE**, are you alive and green, growing and productive, bearing *much* fruit?

I Do you keep **IRRELEVANT** things out of your life? Is your time balanced so that you have time to nourish your soul, focus your vision, and serve your God?

N Are you doing the most important things **NOW**? Or are you waiting for a season when the task will be easier? —you wait in vain!

G Do you belong to **GOD**—heart and soul and mind and strength? Are you one of His disciples?

Can you spell "THANKSGIVING"?

Anger--Virtue or Vice?

A spark—a flame—a fire—the whole forest is ablaze with devastating flames.

A thought—a feeling—a vindictive word—and fury—a man is consumed with the heat of uncontrolled passion. What is the name of this passion? It is anger.

But is anger always to be condemned?

Just as this issue goes to press, we have received a letter which we would like to quote and discuss for the benefit of our readers. Our friend writes as follows:

"I appreciate your sending me the *Megiddo Message*. I certainly find some of your articles to be very good, inspiring and knowledgeable.

"There is, however, a statement you made in your October, 1973 issue under 'Words to Walk By' which reads as follows: 'It is the act of a simpleton to get all stirred up and angry.'

"I strongly disagree with you about this statement. It is highly unrealistic, and anyone who lived like this day in and day out would be reduced to a mindless robot or unthinking person. God gave us a mind to think with. You certainly will recall that Jesus Christ became angry with the money makers and money changers in the temple. He 'threw them out,' so to speak, in a state of anger—He was 'stirred up' enough by anger to do something about the corruption taking place in His day.

"If no one ever became angry enough to do anything about corruption, injustice, etc., this old world would be completely taken over by evil and selfishness. I think your magazine would become a better publication if you avoided such 'simpleton' statements as 'it is the act of a simpleton to get all stirred up and angry.' "

We can certainly agree with our friend that the world desperately needs those who have strong feeling against evil, corruption and injustice. On the other hand, is our application of the term "simpleton" to the angry person any more severe than the Biblical classification: "Anger resteth in the bosom of fools" (Eccl. 7:9)?

To clarify the subject, our first need is for an

adequate definition of our term. What is anger?

The dictionary gives two definitions, and we must distinguish between them. The first is a feeling of antagonism, which is actively expressed opposition, hostility or antipathy. This is the anger which is a resentful emotion of the mind, aroused by an affront or injury. It is the anger which breaks friendships, divides families and sometimes results in violent crime. It is selfish, undisciplined, uncontrolled, passionate, and though it blazes quickly and may die quickly, it may leave in its wake much regrettable and needless destruction.

The Bible is clear in its denunciation of this type of anger. The Psalmist condemned it forthrightly: "Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil" (Ps. 37:8). Numerous Proverbs condemn it: "He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding: but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly" (14:29); "A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger" (15:1); "A wrathful man stirreth up strife: but he that is slow to anger appeaseth strife" (15:18). "He that is soon angry dealeth foolishly" (14:17); "Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go: lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul" (22:24-25); "Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous" (27:4); "An angry man stirreth up strife, and a furious man aboundeth in transgression" (29:22).

The New Testament continues with strong condemnations of this unholy passion. "The wrath of man," said James, "worketh not the righteousness of God" (Jas. 1:20). Paul ordered his brethren to put off all "anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy" (Col. 3:5). "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you with all malice" (Eph. 4:31).

The New Testament also contains countless exhortations to self-control, temperance, patience, godliness, kindness, long-suffering, goodness—none of which are compatible with stirred or angry feelings or temperament. And there are numerous exhortations to peace. "If it be possible," wrote Paul, "as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." The writer to the Hebrews added, "Aim at peace with all, and at that consecration without which no one will ever see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14, Moffatt Bible). Anger certainly does nothing to promote peace.

But there is a second type of displeasure sometimes called "anger," and this is the anger to which our friend refers. It is strong feeling of vexation with corruption, injustice, and evil, which we might call "righteous indignation" in contrast to the human passion commonly understood as anger. Unlike human anger, this displeasure with evil is the result of an educated conscience and a desire to see God's law enforced. Free from hatred and malice, it is disciplined and controlled.

Such must have been any indignation which Jesus showed when He drove the money changers and traders out of the temple. But we should note that none of the accounts of this incident even suggest that Jesus lost control of His temper, that He was angry or wroth or stirred with feelings of violence (see Matt. 21: 12-13; Mark 11:15-19; Luke 19:45-46; John 2: 13-16). John's account is the most complete, stressing the irreverence of such trafficking within the temple precincts where people came to worship. Only John mentions the "whip of cord" which Jesus made to assist Him in driving out the cattle and sheep and oxen—the sticks and weapons normally used by cattle drivers were not allowed within the temple, hence Jesus' reason for making a "whip of cord." But the use of such an instrument to drive out cattle—and the men that were responsible for having brought the cattle in—does not suggest any feelings of anger. The only possible suggestion of the use of force comes from the verb used in the account, translated to "cast out" (*ekballoo*). And this is the verb commonly used with the removal of cattle and may be used with or without the suggestion of force. Jesus used this same word in John 10:4, "When he [the shepherd] putteth forth [*ekballoo*] his own sheep, he goeth before them." When Jesus healed insanity, He was said to "cast out" (*ekballoo*) devils.

We cannot doubt but that Jesus felt strongly about the desecration of the sacred temple area and the hindrance to sincere worshipers by cattle-dealers and money changers. And Jesus took strong measures to correct the situation. But His action was not an expression of any human trait of anger; it was a zealous action, and a definite action, but it was controlled and directed.

This same type of divine displeasure is frequently attributed to God, and His holy and just displeasure with sin and sinners, and the evidence of it in His righteous judgments (Ps. 6:1; 7:11). In this attribute of God there is no suggestion of an unjust passion or uncontrolled feeling; it is a principle arising out of His holy and just nature. When God executes His "wrath" (judgments) upon evil doers (see Rom. 1:18; Eph. 5:6; Ps. 78:

31), He is simply enforcing His righteous laws upon the guilty. He is not angry in the sense that He loses control of Himself; He only executes the penalty of the law.

This is the only "anger" allowed to us as striving Christians—a godlike displeasure with sin and a strong desire to see the law of God enforced. But let us remember that even in this our feelings must be always perfectly controlled, for vengeance is not ours to execute: "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord" (Rom. 12:19). Any manifestation of anger beyond this limitation classifies us as "simpletons" in the sight of the Lord—or "fools," if that term is preferable.●●

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

"Do you believe that the men who left Abraham in Genesis 18:22 are the two angels that came to Sodom in Genesis 19:1? If so, that is, if they are the same two, how could they say in verse 13 of Genesis 19 that Yahweh or the 'Lord' had sent them to destroy Sodom, for we do not read in Genesis 18:22 that God had sent them to destroy Sodom? Please explain."

From the account in Genesis, chapters 18 and 19, it seems quite logical to conclude that the two angels that came to Sodom were the same two who had left Abraham in Genesis 18:22, although we are not specifically told. But it does say that the two angels, upon leaving Abraham, "turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom." This surely suggests that after leaving Abraham, they went on to Sodom.

Your thought, that they could not be the same two angels who had been talking with Abraham because Genesis 18 does not state that they told Abraham they had come to destroy Sodom, seems to be without foundation and without evidence.

And Genesis 18:23 would indicate that perhaps we are not told all that was said. Abraham understood that the angels had been sent to destroy Sodom, hence his pleadings with the angel that remained with him to spare the city if certain numbers of righteous persons could be found there. "Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?" asked Abraham of the angel—suggesting that the angel had power either to destroy or to spare.

The angels were God's messengers, and were sent to accomplish His purposes. ●●



Meditations

On the Word

THE Psalmist contemplates the mercies of God with a song in his heart, a song of rejoicing and thankfulness that the judgments of God and His wonderful plan for man have been made known unto him. "I will sing of mercy and judgment; unto thee, O Lord, will I sing" (Psalm 101:1), and until we have that song of rejoicing in our hearts, the truth has not worked effectually within, causing us to rejoice evermore as Paul commands us in I Thess. 5:16. But true rejoicing is never the result of a command but an overflowing of our gratefulness for God's wonderful mercies. The very time which we enjoy from day to day is one of God's outstanding mercies, for "it is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not" (Lam. 3:22).

The Prophet declares in Isa. 55: 8-9, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." Men once considered it an act of mercy to strangle a man with a small rope before burning him at the stake! But the Word tells us, "Be ye therefore merciful as your Father also is merciful" (Luke 6:36). Man's mercy differs under circumstances, but until man's life is copied directly after God, he can never be godly in mercy or in any other of God's attributes.

God's mercy is completely impartial in every respect and in each small detail. Jesus tells us the Father "maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matt. 5:45); and Jesus urges us to be as

"But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them"

—Psalm 103: 17-18.

good as that also, that we may become His children. The Father gives life freely to all, and freedom to use it for good or evil. Is it as easy for us to be as impartial to everyone? God's mercy has provided enough for all, and to spare, but man's low and selfish ideas of mercy have

brought want and misery to millions, largely because his own ideas of mercy extend only to himself and a very few about him.

God's mercy often may not be just what we think it should be, or what we think best, but it is divine mercy nevertheless. The Hebrews, newly delivered from Egypt's bondage, were suddenly trapped by Pharaoh's forces against the sea. They could not imagine how deliverance could be theirs, yet God's mercy provided exactly the deliverance they needed, just when they needed it and in the most unexpected manner. Naaman the Syrian expected that God's mercy should be displayed as the priests of the heathen gods performed their wonders, but he was allowed to experience the mercy of the Lord in a strange and simple way, when he had humbled himself enough. Perhaps no other way of healing his leprosy would ever have impressed him that there was a living God who had a true prophet in Israel. As we try to live the lives of true Christians, there are probably very few who cannot point to at least one instance where the mercy of God was extended to us in a personal way, when we did not immediately recognize it or believe it to be as merciful as it later proved to be. Truly He knows the end from the beginning and searcheth the heart of man.

"The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting ." Does this sound as though God made

His first man only six thousand years ago? Six thousand years is only a tick on the clock of eternity, and had we no other evidence of any sort, a thoughtful consideration of this verse should direct our thoughts toward the idea that the Great Eternal must have been creating worlds and peopling them through the endless years of eternity; for the only proper object of godly mercy is men, godly men. This brings us to the idea that some of God's mercies are conditional. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him." And the mercy that lasts forever is conditional. "For this is the love of God that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous" (1 John 5:3). He offers eternal mercy to those who fear Him and do His commandments. As Psalm 103: 10 says, "He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities." No, not yet; but the mercy of continued time will come to an end someday so that the eternal mercies may commence, and it is the friends of God that will partake of these grand mercies beyond the imagination of man now to understand. And to become friends of God we must do "whatsoever I command you," says Jesus (John 15:14).

The KJV of our memory verse says, "His righteousness unto children's children." The *Moffatt Bible* gives this: "The Eternal's love is everlasting, his loyalty goes on to children's children, when they obey his compact." We are aware of the need for loyalty to God, but here God speaks of His loyalty to us *if* we obey the compact we have made with Him. What a wonderful thought, of the Eternal being loyal to frail man! and yet it is not to man as

physical men, but as to their moral character. All men are physical, but this is to those who have kept their compact with Him. Here is something in opposition to man-made creeds, which insist on having all mankind subject to reward or punishment at death. Here we see that the loyalty of God's everlasting love is only to a restricted class which has met an established condition.

It is difficult to get the full benefit from our two memory verses without considering the two preceding and the two following. Still reading in the *Moffatt Bible*, beginning with the 15th verse, we find man's low mortal state pictured. "Poor man!—his days are like the grass, he blooms like a flower in the meadow; at the breath of a breeze it is gone, and its place never sees it again." Certainly this is a temporary state. Then in our meditation verses we have learned that God requires of man a work, in keeping his compact with God, by keeping every commandment.

Through the eyes of faith the sweet singer of Israel could see away down to the time when all these wonderful mercies would be poured out upon the faithful. In Psalm 103:4 he says, "He crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies." He could exclaim in admiration of God's mercies because he knew that the crowning would come down at the end, after the work had been done. In Psalm 138:8 he says, "Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth forever." And if we do the work and partake of those mercies, we will not think of them as mercies, but they will come so fast and freely that they will seem as one unending mercy; and that is just what eternal life is, the unending mercy of God—to them that love Him. ●●

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We Thank Thee

*For all things beautiful and good and true;
For all things that seemed not good, yet turned to good;
For all the sweet compulsions of Thy will
That chastened, tried and wrought us to Thy shape;
For things unnumbered that we take of right,
And value first when they are withheld;
For light and air; sweet sense of sound and smell;
For ears to hear the heavenly harmonies;
For eyes to see the unseen in the seen;
For vision of the Worker in the work;
For hearts to apprehend Thee everywhere;--
We thank Thee, Lord.*

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