

Megiddo Message



Have You Thanked God?

Megiddo Message

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Editorially Speaking...

Get Smaller to Get Big

"IF YOU are too big for a little place," says an ancient proverb, "you are too little for a big place."

It is a definite rule for the children of the Kingdom that when we try to get big we always get smaller. God is a jealous God; we are only the products of His creative genius—who are we to think ourselves big? All we have and are we owe to Him who made us what we are. Any striving to appear great will bring the displeasure of God upon us and prevent our achieving the real greatness which we desire—the greatness which comes from uniting our lives with God's great purpose.

It is very easy for us to hinder our Christian effort by our attitude toward ourselves. A young man may set out in the Christian life with the notion that he is at least a bit above the average in intelligence and ability, and consequently he may hesitate to take a humble place. He wants to begin at the top and work upward—naturally! What happens is that he usually fails to reach the high place where his "great" talent could be used until he has changed his whole attitude toward himself and has added to his character the godly grace of humility. A proud young man was Moses; he knew just how to handle those who mistreated his brethren—at least he asked no one's advice; but forty years later when the Lord called him to deliver the oppressed Israelites, his first response was, "Who am I, that I should go . . . ?" (Ex. 3:11).

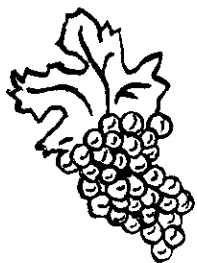
The danger of seeing an enlarged image of ourselves and our own usefulness is a serious potential hazard for all of us. The apostle Paul issued stern warning to "every man that is among [us]"—each of us must learn not to "be conceited or think too highly of [ourselves]; but think [our] way to a sober estimate based on the measure of faith that God has dealt to each of us" (Rom. 12:3, NEB). This may have been a rock of offense to Paul, but that truly great man learned to cut himself down to size to fill the great place God had for him.

When we feel tempted to imagined bigness, we might do well to imitate the naturalist who, after an evening's talk with his friend, would go outside and look up at the sky. When he could detect a certain faint spot of light-mist in the heavens, he would recite: "That is the Spiral Galaxy in Andromeda. It is as large as our Milky Way. It is one of a hundred million galaxies. It is 750,000 light-years away. It consists of one hundred billion suns, each larger than our sun." Whereupon his friend would respond, "Now I think we are small enough. Let's go to bed." This is a good exercise for anyone who thinks he is rather important in his sphere here on earth.

The humble man is truly great—because God chooses him: "The Lord taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify the meek with salvation." "The meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way" (Ps. 149:4; 25:9).

How can we get big? By getting smaller. ●●

*The earth belongs to God!
Everything in all the
world is his!*
—Ps. 24:1, *Living Bible*



Have You Thanked GOD?

THANKSGIVING is here again. It comes every year; and it goes, leaving us with pleasant memories of a bountiful feast and happy fellowship and a warm remembrance of the abundance of all things which we enjoy.

But—God forbid that this should be the extent of our Thanksgiving. For all our fellowship and kindness and gestures of gratitude count for naught if *God* be not the center and the recipient of our thankfulness.

Thanksgiving is part of daily life. It is a healing force, renewing our spirits, refreshing our souls and restoring our bodies. It is a unifying factor in our Christian association. It is said that the giving of thanks is twice blest: It blesses him who gives, and him who receives. We cannot know what joy our simple expression of appreciation may bring into another's life. Hence, we must be very careful not to take other's kindnesses for granted. No one will ever know of our gratitude unless we express it.

However, simple expressions of thankfulness to one another do not indicate that we have perfectly developed the virtue of gratitude. We must remember that "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" (James 1:17). The real depths of thankfulness are never discovered until we recognize God as the Source and Provider of all our blessings.

There is a lesson to be learned from the story of an elderly couple. Neither professed Christianity, nor did they worship God; yet they were continually expressing their thanks to each other. When the winter winds moaned through the trees and made their old house tremble, the old woman would smile and say, "Ah! How good it is that you have provided us this warm place to sleep on a night like this." And her husband would speak often of the children, now grown and scattered, all healthy and

mentally sound: "I am so thankful." Their satisfaction was genuine, but it was not real thanksgiving—they never thought of God.

We speak easily and often of our thanks to one another. And should it not be thus? Who could deny that we, above all people, have much to be thankful for. Yet the question comes to each of us: Have we thanked *God*? We must never forget the one Source of all our benefits and blessings, temporal and spiritual—God Almighty. It is much easier to repeat meaningless platitudes and blandly express our "Thank you" than to say from the heart as did the apostle Paul, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." The first is a routine gesture, non-arresting, non-committing. It is sometimes no more than a courteous phrase learned in childhood which the speaker utters because he knows it is expected of him. The second—"I thank God"—is earnest and dedicated. It is an unbreakable bond of love and gratitude binding the human receiver to the divine Giver. The true Christian is never ashamed to let others know that his thankfulness is, above all, directed to God.

An essential part of thanking God is counting our blessings. The heart that is thus committed to God never grows weary of this exercise. Daily we experience the hundredfold of blessings, as the Master promised. And daily should their repetition evoke in us a fresher, a sterner, a deeper probing of our own heart's recesses. Never should we allow these blessings to become common to us. Our souls must be impressed with the exhortations to thankfulness which our ears so willingly receive, and our hearts and lives must transmit our overflowing gratitude to God.

The apostle Paul covered every aspect of Christian living in four simple words: "In everything give thanks!" *Here* is a pointed and far-reaching command. *Here* is a challenge invading every aspect of our lives. *Here* is a summons to our most concentrated effort and serious meditation, on this

day set aside to remember our blessings, and every succeeding day of our lives.

To give thanks in everything is no easy proposition. To accomplish it, we must broaden our perspective to see the hand of God working all things together for our good. We must enlarge our minds, our lives and our goals to include the aims and purposes of God. Only then can we develop a truly thankful attitude and give thanks to God in everything.

What does "everything" include?

We are never destitute of something for which to be thankful. In fact, if we spent more time thinking about the daily mercies we receive from the hand of our God, we would be surprised to discover that we never have excuse for dissatisfaction or complaint.

With temporal prosperity we are blessed beyond measure. We are thankful for life, for health, for strength, for homes, gardens, food, families, friends, material possessions; for work, recreation, sunshine, rain and the thousand beauties of nature. And what about the multitude of smaller blessings which we are inclined to regard as trivial? Just try for one day to notice all the little things which help to make your day smoother and your work easier, and see if you are not richly blessed. And thankful we should be for all these temporal blessings, for they encourage us in the way to life by lessening the cares of daily existence and leaving us freer to involve ourselves in spiritual concerns.

We should thank God for all the associations of life, for those with whom we daily live and work. Our situation may not be what we would call "ideal," but God has allowed it—it may even be His special arrangement for our Christian development—have we thanked Him? Are we grateful for those who inspire us, and also for those who try us? Are we willing and anxious to make all things work together for our spiritual good? When we must associate with those who do not share our faith, are our lives a constant, silent testimonial to the God who has filled us with hope? Or do we emit an air of superiority, as though no one could approach our self-set standard of dignity? If we were really thankful for all our God-given opportunities for character growth, we would find that the unchristian feelings that too easily mar our daily intercourse with others would disappear.

And do we give God our special thanks for those friends who share our faith and who are always ready to see more and more Christian growth in us? They help us to see ourselves as we really are—and as God sees us—and many times their warnings could keep our eyes from straying and our

feet from slipping. Have we thanked God for all this?

We may find ourselves beset with temporal and spiritual adversity, but Paul's piercing command penetrates even to this: "In *everything* give thanks." There is never a situation without its blessing, though sometimes we may be able to see that blessing only, as it were, in a rear-view mirror.

And, of course, we thank God above all else for our most valuable possession—the pure, life-giving knowledge revealed in His Word. This priceless treasure should never become ordinary to us in any degree. Rather, as our knowledge increases and as we strive—and succeed—in putting that knowledge into practice in our daily lives, our gratitude for God's Holy Word will increase.

Our thankfulness to God is never complete without a glowing, heartfelt gratitude to God for the prospect of eternal life. Though we can never partake of *eternal* blessings without first being thankful for *present* blessings, we must learn even now to cherish the promises of God. For only as we appreciate them above everything else will we be truly thankful for them—thankful enough to change our lives to receive them.

There is yet one more blessing for which we should never fail to give thanks: our God-given willpower and determination that makes it possible for us to succeed in our spiritual undertaking. We know what to do; and thank God we have what it takes to *do* it. We also should thank Him for what we might call a divine dissatisfaction with the things of here and now. This is vital; without this desire for something better, something lasting, something eternal, we would live and die a part of the world around us. Without a longing for a better life and a higher service, we would be satisfied with our lot and with ourselves. Without a thirst for the things of eternity, we would be doomed to nonentity.

Do we thank God enough for the hope He has given us—a hope based on Bible evidence? We are living in troublous times. Recent events in our nation are enough to bring concern even to the most stalwart soul. But never to the Christian! We *know* what the present distress portends—the Apocalypse of the Son of God! And we wait for that auspicious event with eager hearts and radiant faces. How thankful we will be to see it come to pass—Jesus Christ, made king over a righteous people on a remade earth!

In the meantime, we should heed the words of the apostle Paul, included in his Epistle to the Philippian church: "I wish you all joy in the Lord.

(Continued on page 24)

*"Every man according as he purposeth in his heart,
so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity:
for God loveth a cheerful giver" (II Cor. 9:6)*

God's Cheerful Giver

PRAYER

Kind Father, Thou Mighty Being who by Thy power hath established the universe, created the earth and man upon it, Thou Great Judge of all to whose piercing eye the deepest secrets of our hearts are open and plainly visible. As once again we approach Thy throne, may it be in a spirit of sincerity, of humbleness, of thankfulness, of penitence.

We thank Thee for Thy great mercy and long-suffering. May we realize how many times we have needed it, how often we have gone astray.

We thank Thee for the knowledge of the great things of Thy law that have been revealed to us, that we are familiar with Thy flawless plan for the earth and its inhabitants. We rejoice to know the time is imminent when our Lord shall return to earth as King of kings and Lord of lords.

May we long to live in that better Day; may we become so enthused about our hope of future existence that it will become an irresistible force in our lives, impelling us to live constantly in the fear of doing wrong.

Help us to become so changed through the transforming power of the gospel that, like Paul, the things which we once loved we will now hate, and the things we once hated we will now love. May we learn to hate the pride, the self-centeredness, the contempt for others, the foolishness, the pettiness, things that were our natural heritage; and love and court discipline, trials, reverses, the carrying of crosses, and reproof.

May we show a pattern of good works wherever we are, demonstrating the moral superiority of the godly life we are trying to live. In us may men see truth upheld, honesty loved, and kindness practiced.

Keep and guide us in the strait and narrow way, and may we never grow weary in well doing, or say, even in our hearts, "my Lord delayeth his coming." But may we always feel like pressing on with ever mounting fervor, that our work may be well done, and a crown of life await us. Amen.

DISCOURSE

GIVING is a fundamental law of life. A man must sow before he can reap.

Giving is inseparable in human relations. He who does not give cannot know the joy of receiving.

Giving is the vitalizing power of the mind. That which is not expressed dies. Thoughts, ideals, motives, resolutions which enter the mind, if not acted upon or expressed, soon vanish from the mind entirely.

So it is in the realm of the spiritual. The need for the expression of Christian ideals is unparalleled. The Gospel of Christ, as given to the apostles and as His people now possess it, is the priceless possession of a few. It ceases to be priceless when we keep it to ourselves. The moment we dislike to share it, or do not share it when we can, we are dead as far as being true Christians is concerned. We have heard the good news, not only for our personal benefit but to tell it to others. We have been healed of our spiritual infirmities, to heal; we have been called, to call; invited, to invite; blessed, to bless; helped, to help; brought to life (from death in sin) to raise others to life; made to see, to cause others to see. A man's responsibility does not end when he receives the glad tidings of the gospel. Rather, it begins at that moment. The good news is ours *to share*, and the moment another shares our faith it means so much more to us. If we sow bountifully we shall also reap bountifully.

The Christian Gospel may well be expressed by the four principal words spoken by the angel to the women at Jesus' sepulcher on that first Easter morning: Come, see, go, tell (Matt. 28:6-7). They denote action. The invitation comes and we get the knowledge—we come and see. Then begins our duty—go and tell—and this duty must be a delight to us. It must be strong in us, an impulse difficult to restrain. If we do not possess this impulse, this "go and tell" desire, then the "come and see" experience really has not been ours; or if it was, it has faded away.

Our faith is not one which we can take or leave and nothing happens. It is such that if we do not take it to others we lose the very faith itself. Expression of our faith gives strength to our faith; it causes it to grow.

Among the parting words which Jesus spoke to His apostles are these: "Ye shall be witnesses unto me." Witnesses! The meaning is luminous. Jesus would be on trial before the world, in Jerusalem and elsewhere. Each of His disciples must testify concerning the genuineness of Jesus' life, work, death, and resurrection. Each received his summons then to testify, as before a world court.

In this day we cannot withdraw from the summons. The faith we possess is on trial before the world. Is it true? will it stand? is it of God? If we fail to speak in behalf of Him we join the persecution, for did not Jesus say: "He that is not with me is against me"? (Matt. 12:30). Or if called, suppose we talk indirectly, in two directions, apologetically, indecisively—then we fail to uphold Him. We hinder rather than advance His cause.

A weak or ill-informed advocate can do much damage to a cause he professes to support. While enemies cannot find any direct fault with the cause, they will, nevertheless, ridicule it if weak arguments are presented. Hence, we see the need of preparation in order to bear the message of Christ faithfully to the world.

We Must Sow

Paul's words to the Christian brethren are noteworthy: "He who gives the seed to the sower" (II Cor. 9:10, Phillips). The Lord provides seed for the *sower*, for the one who *uses* it. The more we use, the more we will receive; and those who do not put it to use do not get it. The mind becomes barren through inactivity.

The opportunity for sowing the good seed is ever present. One need not travel to the far shores of earth to do so. Men and women who need converting are everywhere, and those whose faith needs strengthening are always about us. Those to whom we speak a word may not heed it, they may ignore it entirely for the present, but some will hear and reconstruct their lives. In any case we are the better for having done on our part. We find strength for our own weakness by helping another who is weak; we become kind and compassionate by showing kindness and compassion to others; lovable by loving; and as expressed by the Wise author of the book of Proverbs: "He that watereth shall be watered also himself" (Prov. 11:25).

The great majority of believers are compelled through circumstances to do their sowing at home,

and in the small circle of their friends and associates. Let no one feel that one's role is insignificant in such a situation. Not all can devote their entire time in mission fields. Men like the apostle Paul are few. The testimony of our faith by living an upright life is more forceful than we sometimes think.

Whether through our speech or example, the degree of our interest and enthusiasm in the faith we possess determines how our lives influence others. We should ever remember that we can never hope to attract others to our cause by showing only feeble interest ourselves. Especially is this true in the home life. Parents who wish their children to take up the Christian way of life cannot for a moment risk doing anything contrary to the ideals of the Master. There can be no exceptions. A let-down in parent's profession only shows the children how to do the same in their time of testing. One's chances are far better when all precautions are taken; through neglect the harvest is nothing but heartaches.

And heartaches there will be, for most men have their own dejections and despairs, and the nature of the Christian's efforts is such that opposition is often aroused. When results seem meager it becomes easy, after a lifetime of effort, to pine away in a manner such as this: What have I been spending my life for? Who is the better for all my work? Who is any holier or any happier? Who is less selfish, any less proud, any less envious, any less ill-natured, any less fault-finding? So we are apt to despond and repine when our hopes do not materialize fully. But through all our disappointments come the words of Paul ringing triumphantly, "Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not"; and, from a more distant past come the strains of melody from the sweet singer of Israel: "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him" (Ps. 126:6).

Christian Giving

Then in II Cor. 9:7 Paul completes his thought on sowing by a command on giving: "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver." Giving is a type of action required of the true Christian. None of us can live to himself; each must be willing to share. Those with a plenty of this world's goods must be forward to help the less fortunate. And to be acceptable, this giving must be willingly and cheer-

fully done. God loves a cheerful giver. If anything is given grudgingly, under compulsion, the recipient still benefits from the gift, but no credit to the giver can be entered by the recording angel in the Eternal's "book of remembrance."

The virtue to the giver is not necessarily indicated by the size of the gift. The poor widow's two mites is a revealing example. The rich were casting into the treasury of their abundance. They did not feel what they gave, and they had much more left after making the gift. The two mites which the poor widow cast in was her whole living, it was *all* that she had. Jesus said of her: "Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all" (Luke 21:3).

Giving Ourselves

Important as this type of giving is, it is not the most essential. To be sure there are people who clutch their money so tightly that it pains them to let go even a small amount of it; but generally speaking, people are inclined to be charitable.

There are other types of giving, however, and one or more of these could prove problematic to many of us. We may be reluctant to give credit to another for fear of down-grading ourselves. It may irk us to give a word of praise or encouragement to someone else, especially if we feel that our own effort does not receive the recognition it should.

The cheerful giver must be prepared to give up his own idea of right and wrong. There may be nothing that he holds dearer than his own private opinion. Yet to gain salvation it must be surrendered. God's thoughts and ways are as superior to man's as the heaven is higher than the earth; hence our own thoughts must be given up cheerfully. And for good reason: "for to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace" (Rom. 8:6).

Some persons value prestige, to be held in high esteem by other people, as their greatest asset. Some have given up their life before they would face personal defeat. Perhaps the classic example of this was Ahithophel, King David's counsellor. He set his house in order and hanged himself before he would face the fact that he had lost prestige in the king's court. But seeking honor one of another must be given up cheerfully, for Jesus said: "How can ye believe, which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that cometh from God only?" (John 5:44).

We may be unwilling to give our time to worthy causes. Our daily schedule of activities may not be tied to any economic need or necessity, yet we just don't like to be bothered to have our program

for the day or week upset. However, the spiritual work must come first. Perhaps someone needs strengthening or encouraging. A sick friend may need visiting; some distraught person in a distant city may need a letter of cheer to lift his spirits. To properly discharge these duties will take time and effort. How we respond to the needs of others will determine whether or not we are a cheerful giver.

There are people who need sympathetic understanding. Do we cheerfully give it, or do we say to ourselves: "That person is a victim of his own folly; much of his trouble is imaginary. If only he would snap himself out of it he would be all right." But that may not be the true story; he may need the understanding and encouragement that only a Christian brother can give. To be a cheerful giver, we must give it.

The appreciative recipient must also give cheerfully in return. When Jesus sent out His twelve apostles He "gave them power against unclean spirits to cast them out, and heal all manner of sickness and all manner of diseases." He said to them: "heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give" (Matt. 10:8). This principle applies today. If we have been blessed with a comprehensive insight into the knowledge of God, we should want to share our good fortune with others. The Word of God is "without money and without price." If that precious treasure is in our possession we must be willing to share it with others. This may take time, effort and money, but it must be done, and done willingly and cheerfully. God loves a cheerful giver.

(Continued on page 21)

DECEMBER 25

the Birth of Christ?

NO!

**KNOW the evidence! GIVE it
to your friends.**

FREE LEAFLETS

Christ the Saviour Is Born

**Your supply is waiting.
SEND NOW!**

THE DEVIL

WHO IS HE?

A Spirit - A "Fallen" Angel - A Power - A Man ???

THE WORDS Satan and devil, as used in the languages in which God spoke to men, have no such ideas as are attached to them by theology.

The *Interpreter's Dictionary* defines Satan as: "the archfiend; chief of the devils; instigator of all evil; the rival of God; the Antichrist," and comments:

"The Hebrew root from which the name Satan derives, means primarily 'obstruct, oppose.' It is used in the Old Testament of obstructing a man's path (Num. 22:22-23), opposing in war (I Sam. 29:4), preferring charges in a court of law (Ps. 109:6), and playing the part of an adversary in general (Ps. 38:20)

"Nowhere in the Old Testament does Satan appear as a distinctive demonic figure, opposed to God and responsible for all evil. . . . It is simply an appellative, not a proper name—i. e., it merely defines the role which the being in question happens to play in a particular situation."

The word Satan is from the Hebrew root *stn*, meaning "to block," "to attack," "to malign." The Old Testament term "devil" has its origin in Hebrew judicial terminology as the "adversary," especially in the sense of the accuser at court (Zech. 3:1). "It is to be emphasized that the term is not identified with the ruler of this world."*

Much religious thinking and false teaching has attached to the word ideas which it was never meant to convey. The Bible itself does not teach the existence of a literal devil that tempts men to do wrong. False teaching has mystified the meaning of the original word and given countenance to pagan demonic theories which the Bible does not support.

In the Bible, the term Satan is applied to "an

adversary, an opposer." Wicked men and women opposing God and His plans are called Satan. In Bible terminology the person performing evil is a Satan, a devil. In Matthew 16:23, Jesus showed clearly how a man becomes a devil: by opposing His words, by being His adversary. Peter said to Jesus: "Lord: this shall not be unto thee"; and Jesus said unto him: "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offense unto me." Peter became a Satan, an adversary of Jesus, by opposing His words.

The Greek word *diabolos* is the equivalent of the Hebrew *stn*, and means "an accuser, calumniator," one who defames or reviles. It was this word *diabolos* that Jesus employed in John 6:70 when He said of Judas, "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?"—note again that Jesus does not say one of them *is possessed* of a devil but one of them *is* a devil.

A devil is a wicked man, not a spirit of evil that may possess a man or a monster whose all-pervading powers and influence may overcome him. Peter became a Satan by opposing Jesus; Judas became a devil by betraying his Master, by allowing his covetousness to dominate him. And we ourselves become devils in the sight of God when we oppose the words of Jesus.

Bible Devils

Paul had a longing desire to visit his brethren at Thessalonica, and he wrote to them in the following manner: "Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us" (I Thess. 2:18). Who obstructed Paul's travels? Perhaps it was a government official. Or it may have been a sect of the Jews; on several occasions they watched the gates of the city to take his life. Once they stoned him and left him for dead; at another time, forty men vowed that they would neither eat nor drink until they had

* *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*. Abingdon Press, 1962, Vol. 1.

taken his life. Any such Satan could have prevented his travel in this case.

But whoever this Satan may have been, of one thing we may be certain: It was not the devil of popular belief.

This same devil or agent of evil is spoken of in their travels, when they cast them into the "inner prison," and made their feet fast in the stocks (Acts 16).

This same devil or agent of evil is spoken of in Rev. 2:10, "Behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried." No monster from the infernal regions would have come forth to cast the followers of Jesus into prison cells. Nor would a disembodied evil spirit have such a power. The devil in this instance was someone with authority, someone who would oppose the religion of Jesus and would have the power to open and close the prison doors, as did Herod when he imprisoned John the Baptist.

God AND the Devil?

If we accept belief in a literal devil or power of evil, we are recognizing a second deity with a second dominion. In the Divine Record, the Bible, all power and all dominion are clearly and unmistakably ascribed to Jehovah and to Him alone. God is the great First Cause and has no rivals. Through His prophet Isaiah, He says, "I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me" (Isa. 46:9). Also through His servant Moses: "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord" (Deut. 6:4). He is the One, Supreme God; He has no equal.

The Bible also speaks of devils, plural. There is only *one* God, and if He can have only one counterpart, one supreme cause of evil, then he also should be singular, not plural. But we read in James 2:19, "The devils also believe and tremble." Let us identify one such devil. We find him alluded to in Acts 24:25. As the great apostle Paul "reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled." This devil trembled, but his devil nature was unrestrained; and when Paul offered him no money, "Felix, willing to show the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound."

If we recognize a devil as a being of authority, he must have obtained that authority and power from the great Creator—for "there is no power but of God" (Rom. 13:1). Why would a good and wise Creator give power to a being that would continually thwart His purposes and designs and perpetrate all manner of evil?

But no, God is the one and only God. He will not share His dominion with another. "My glory

will not I give to another" (Isa. 42:8). If the theory of an all-powerful devil were true, then God *would* share His power with another—in fact, if that be the case, He much more than *shares* His glory with another, for the devil of popular belief gets ten adherents to the Almighty's one!

Sin Personified

The literary device known as personification is repeatedly employed in the Bible. For example, riches are personified in the following manner: "Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matt. 6:24). Wisdom is personified and termed "she": "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom. . . . She is more precious than rubies. . . . Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour" (Prov. 3:13-17). Again she is represented as a "tree of life to them that lay hold upon her" (v. 18). "Wisdom is justified of all her children" (Luke 7:35)—a clear case of personification.

Sin is also personified and termed a master. In Romans 6 this device is employed a number of times: "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. . . . For sin shall not have dominion over you. . . . Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that [though] ye were the servants of sin, . . . ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. . . . For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness" (Rom. 6:12, 14, 16-17, 20). Again, "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin" (John 8:34; see also I John 3:8).

By means of personification sin is also termed devil or Satan. When Jesus said to the Jews of His time, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do" (John 8:44), He also was employing this type of personification. He said in effect, "Ye are of your fathers, a generation of evil men." Shortly before, John the Baptist had styled them a "generation of vipers." But no one would suppose he meant a generation of *literal snakes*!

At the time that Ananias and his wife Sapphira sold a possession, keeping back part of the price, Peter questioned Ananias, "Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Spirit?" (Acts 5). Then three hours later Sapphira, not knowing of her husband's judicial death, came with the same story about the sale of the property. To her Peter said: "How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord?" The "Satan" that

had filled their hearts was their own evil devices. They had agreed together to lie to the Lord. If an all-powerful being called "Satan" was the instigator of the lie, then the Lord showed criminal unfairness: He let the deceiver himself escape unharmed, while punishing the deceived.

Paul describes this same Satan, or devil, sin personified, in Acts 26:16-18. Repeating the words which he had heard from Jesus at the time of his miraculous conversion, he says: "Rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, . . . delivering thee from the people and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me."

The author of the book of Hebrews also reveals who is the devil of the Bible. In Heb. 2:14, speaking of Christ, he says: "that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." Now if we can find any statement as to what has the power of death, by it we can identify the devil, for that is one of his special features. "The sting of death is sin" (I Cor. 15:56). "*The sting of death is sin.*" Here we have the same answer as we obtain from Heb. 2:14. Sin and the devil are synonymous terms. The devil has the power of death, and sin has the sting of death; hence, sin and all sinners compose the devil.

In Zechariah 3 Joshua, the high priest, is represented as standing before the angel of the Lord; and Satan, this same devil, the personification of evil, is at his right hand to resist him. Here is a situation that every earnest life-seeker has experienced. As the apostle Paul wrote of his personal conflict: "That which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom. 7:15-23). Here is the struggle with the devil, the perpetual conflict between our better and our worse self. ●●

(To Be Continued)

Measure yourself: Are you a big God-big men-little man, or a little God-little men-big man?

The more a man appreciates the bigness of God in contrast to the littleness of men, the bigger man he is.

From A Reader—

Danger in Affluence

A thought crept into mind as I was reading the accounts of the Kingdom during its zenith at the time of David and Solomon. The wealth and affluence of Israel were not exaggerated in the least—this is certainly food for thought. I guess it is a normal carnal activity of the mind to consider money or money-substitutes as the solution to all our problems, yet the Biblical account of Solomon disproves this notion. In fact, the book of Ecclesiastes is in a very real sense a frightening book, showing beyond any reasonable doubt that money, wealth, and fame can be disastrous. The frightening aspect of Solomon's situation was that he possessed wisdom, which was world famous, yet he was unable to develop the necessary self-discipline and acquired horses and women almost without number. I often challenge myself, and it's extremely arduous to admit that in the same identical circumstances I would not do the same as Solomon.

Gratefully, I have been spared these great trials and testings that have been fraught with danger. I can examine those I am familiar with, who have been given wealth and money, but it does not remake them into a humble and gracious individual, only the reverse. So I have truly been spared. The only true riches we can strive for is the Kingdom and eternal life with Jesus Christ. Everything beyond this is dross and chaff. Christ was quite emphatic about this.

Mr. K., Baton Rouge, Louisiana

You Cannot, Skeptic

O Skeptic, can you make a star like those on high?
And can you make a lovely bird and make it fly?
And can you fashion such a thing as that fair flower?
Or ocean vast, or lovely tint of sunset hour?

Now tell me—who gave wisdom to the tiny ant?
Or taught the busy bee her ways—I know you can't.
You can't explain the mysteries of these because
You know not God, His wondrous ways, His laws.

No, Skeptic, life for you is vain and empty—cheap;
You're sowing to the wind and the whirlwind you will reap.

All natural things in sky above and on the sod
Bespeak the power of a great and mighty God.

—Selected

TIMELY TOPICS

WORLD population is burgeoning. And seventy percent of its nearly four billion people have never heard of Christ or Christianity.

World problems are multiplying, in all fields—economic, social, political, moral and religious.

World conditions worsen steadily, as governments tremble and lawlessness and crime defy all authority.

**What About
Lausanne?** And the Second Advent of Christ draws ever nearer.

To recognize and meet these needs, the evangelical Protestants, inspired largely by Dr. Billy Graham, called a special congress this past summer. The call received enthusiastic and worldwide response, and the International Congress on World Evangelization was held for ten days in the city of Lausanne, Switzerland. Participating in it were three thousand men and women from evangelistic schools, churches, missions and societies in 150 different countries. Their one purpose: to restate their beliefs and goals and discuss methods for carrying out what they consider their God-given task.

Reporters agreed generally that the Congress was a stimulating success. According to *Time* magazine, it showed "the vigor of conservative, resolutely Biblical, fervently mission-minded Christianity." The Congress was a definite challenge to the philosophy of the World Council of Churches, which has been working for ecumenism by promoting socialism, a belief in universal salvation, and the compromising of basic beliefs and church practices. Leading speakers at the Congress lectured on such topics as the authority and uniqueness of the Bible, Christian personal and social ethics, guilt, conversion, modern psychology, man's search for freedom and fulfillment, mass evangelization and the Holy Spirit, as well as fundamental doctrines.

We would like to quote briefly a few of the evangelists and theologians present:

"The Scripture possesses an authority so great that it cannot be broken. What the Scripture says will stand steadfast and cannot be annulled."

Susumu Uda, from Japan.

"...What is still called Western Civilization is in an advanced stage of decomposition, and ... another Dark Age will soon be upon us, if, indeed, it has not already begun. With the Media, especially television, governing our lives, as they indubitably do, it is easily imaginable that this might happen without our noticing.

"To talk in this strain is ... to invite accusations of pessimism. ... I am not being a pessimist. ... To warn against [ruin] and denounce it is optimistic in the sense that it presupposes the possibility of building a house on secure foundations—as it is put in the New Testament, on a rock, so that when floods arise and streams beat violently against it, it stands firm. ...

"Each symptom of breakdown, however immediately painful and menacing in its future consequences, is also an occasion for hope and optimism, reminding us that truly God is not mocked, and that men can no more live without reference to him now than could the Children of Israel find their way to the Promised Land without his guidance and support. ...

"...What a blissful relief for the early Christians to turn aside from the capers of Emperor Nero and ... joyously await the promised Second Coming of their Lord and Saviour!

"Let us then as Christians rejoice" though "we see around us on every hand the decay of the institutions and instruments of power. On every hand intimations of empires falling to pieces, money in total disarray, dictators and lawmakers alike nonplussed by the confusion and conflicts which encompass them. ... Confronting this scene it is sometimes difficult to resist the conclusion that Western Man has decided to abolish himself, ... blowing the trumpet that brings the walls of his own city tumbling down."

—*Malcolm Muggeridge, Great Britain.*

"At present we are seeing a dramatic shift in the world monetary situation. ... The wealth of the West accumulated since World War II is draining away. ... Millions of people have a mood of deep pessimism. Men's hearts are indeed failing them for fear as our Lord predicted. Absence of a fear of God, loss of moral absolutes, sin accepted and glorified, breakdown in the home, disregard for authority, lawlessness, anxiety, hatred and despair—these are signs of a culture in decay.

"In the West we are witnessing societies in trauma, shaken by war, scandals, inflation; surfeited and bored with materialism; turned off by lifeless religion; turning to perversions, and occult, with its Satan worship, mind control, astrology and various ploys of evil. . .

"We meet at a time when the world longs for reassurance, peace, hope and purpose. . . We . . . have an unparalleled opportunity as the world may be standing on the very brink of Armageddon. Let us unite in proclaiming Jesus Christ . . . and persuading men to become His disciples at this fateful hour."

—Billy Graham, United States.

The Congress concluded by drawing up a "Covenant" in which the participants stated their view of fundamentals of faith, the world situation, the authority of the Bible, Christian social responsibility, evangelism, the power of the Holy Spirit and the return of Christ.

While we disagree greatly with the fundamental beliefs of the evangelicals, we admire their devotion, their willingness to sacrifice for the cause, their zeal and their courage to state their faith and stand firmly by what they believe to be the teaching of the Bible and their fervent desire to proclaim their beliefs to others. We also support them in their effort to spread the message of the imminent return of Christ to earth as the solution for our world's problems and as the climax of God's plan. We, too, look for this "blessed hope" through which the opportunity of salvation shall be extended to all people on earth. And we long for the day when "all shall know [the Lord] from the least of them even to the greatest," when "all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God."

But we do not expect—nor do those engaged in evangelism—to see the world converted to Christianity before Christ returns. Said Billy Graham himself, "We know the whole world will not be converted to Christ—the whole world is not going to become permanently peaceful"; but he says also, "our Lord did promise, 'And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.' " This one statement underlies their whole evangelistic effort, but its placement in Matthew 24 (v. 14) suggests to us its application to the Apostolic Age, the end of which arrived in A. D. 70 when Jerusalem fell. The apostles *did* preach the gospel "to every creature which is under heaven" (Col. 1:23); all peoples of the then-known world heard the gospel before that age ended, for the apostles preached and traveled widely, the Holy

Spirit power confirming their work. "They went forth, preaching every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following" (Mark 16:20). Our commission now is to extend the invitation which Jesus left to us: "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17).

God is at work in our world today. And who can measure or limit the scope of His activities? "The God that lived in Moses' day is just the same today," and He is just as powerful and just as active. Though His methods are veiled, He is nevertheless setting the stage for the next act of the great drama He has planned; and who can say that the present evangelistic movement is not contributing in some way to alert people to the existence of God and His Son, a preliminary preparation for the great work which is soon to commence openly when the prophet Elijah returns as the herald of Christ.

In the midst of distressing world events, political corruption, famine, oppression, poverty and war, it is refreshing to see that some are making a sincere effort to revive hope and spread the message of Jesus Christ. Their slogan: "Let the earth hear His voice" reminds us of the words of the ancient prophet of Israel: "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord" (Jer. 22:29).

And the question echoes to us: In this late hour, have *we* heard? have we responded with all that is in us? Are we ready to give the last full measure of *our* obedience, that *we* may be ready when the great Day arrives?

Lausanne is past; but the fact is vibrant: The King *is* coming! Whether proclaimed from Switzerland or America, it is the same truth; and truth is always divine, wherever it is found, "on heathen or on Christian ground, among your friends, among your foes, the plant's divine where'er it grows."

The King *IS* coming—let *us* be ready to greet Him! ●●

Obituary

We have received word of the death of a long-time subscriber and correspondent, Gordon Hough, of North Augusta, Ontario, Canada. Brother Hough has subscribed to our periodical for forty-two years. He made frequent visits to our Church, and was visited by many of our brethren. His regular letters will be missed. ●●

UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God."

Man and the Earth

THE Biblical fact of Creation and the theory of evolution are diametrically opposed. And there is actually no middle ground between the two, as possible explanations for the origin of life and of man. For if God created man, then there is no place for the continuous "natural" progression of life from the simplest form to the most complex. And if the first living cell just "happened" to appear in the sea by a unique and undirected combination of chemicals and gradually, through billions of years, progressed through all stages of development from the most simple forms of plant and animal life to the complex forms we see today, there is no place to acknowledge God as the Creator.

But the weaknesses of this latter theory, as we have seen in previous lessons, are numerous. Slight changes may occur within a species with the progression of time; there is evidence for this; but for the assumption that one species can, by the laws of the "survival of the fittest" and "natural selection," progress from what it is to a totally different species with a far more complex structure, there is absolutely no conclusive evidence.

Reason alone tells us that such is impossible; for if life today is the result of a continuing progression through all stages of existence, then why should the simple forms of life (unevolved) still exist alongside the infinitely more complex? Why should man be able to place a drop of water on a glass plate, examine it under a microscope, and see his earliest, ancient progenitor—the amoeba? And what of all the in-between stages that must have existed? Why do we not still see them, if life is the result of evolution? Why should the process suddenly terminate? Or where are the fossils of their remains?

Evolution also assumes the basic impossibility of living things changing in physical structure and becoming more "fitted" to survive in a particular environment. This happens, they explain, through freak "mutations"—changes in physical cell struc-

ture not inherited from the parent. And when the new plant or animal is better equipped to survive in its environment, it becomes dominant over the former kind and eventually displaces it. In this way life is said to become increasingly complex.

However, modern research has shown that forms of living things do not tend to change in structure. Changes occur, but they do not result in such additions as wings, feathers, horns or scales. The fruit fly was once celebrated as the proof of evolution; it multiplies rapidly and some changes were noted after several generations. However, further study has shown that no major structural changes are ever produced.

If we accept the theory of evolution, how shall we understand the origin of the marvelous capabilities of forms of life much simpler than man? For example, how does the Arctic Tern fly some 22,000 miles on its yearly migration route? This is a perplexity for which evolution has no answer. Evolution has no explanation for the instinctive behavior of animals.

The Arctic Tern, a bird about the size of a common seagull, navigates yearly over the open sea. To fly even a few hundred miles in an airplane, man must rely on a compass and other complicated navigation equipment, radio and radar. But this bird travels thousands of miles unaided and alone.

Where did it acquire its navigating ability? Not by any process of evolution. These birds did not learn to travel long distances by degrees. Their first trip was not a short one accompanied by other older birds. Rather, these birds set out when only a few months old (alone, if necessary) and follow the same routes as their progenitors. They possess an instinct given them by their Creator. Only an All-wise and Almighty God could bestow such navigation skill upon a bird.

In two previous lessons we have briefly covered the claims of evolution, disproving them by the Word of God. We have also discussed the evidence in favor of God as the Creator. Now we are ready to look into a third aspect of the subject: Crea-

(Continued on page 16)

The Fruit



of the Spirit

Love--joy--peace--patience--kindness--goodness--faithfulness--gentleness--self-control (Gal. 5:22-23, NASB)

Section I



Love--

Even For Enemies

Read I Corinthians 13



True Joy--

Rejoicing in Hope

Read Philippians 4:1-5

DOES it seem impossible? These are the words of Jesus: "Love your enemies." Is your first reaction, "I can't"?

Jesus commanded it; we must love those who make life difficult for us. What did He mean?

It is a new and startling demand. Not that we have "enemies," but the startling connection is the little word "love."

The word Jesus used for "love" here suggests not a physical love, nor the love that binds family and friends. It is not sentimental or romantic. It is a "love" which makes us act toward other men with a glow and persistence of goodwill in Christ. So the demand of Christ is not that we must make close friendship with everyone but that we act in goodwill from God toward all. In other words, Jesus is saying, "Don't be bitter to those who dislike you because of your religion. Treat all courteously and impartially—that is what God does. He sends rain on the just and unjust." Jesus never taught to stir up feelings.

This is a love that is strategy—it means to act toward others so that they will feel a burning sense of shame that they are not your brothers in Christ.

And real love means even more: **If we love our enemies, we can take their wrongs toward us without any ill feeling. Genuine love is something to learn.**

Prayer:

O God, help me to grow more loving day by day.
Help me to live more nearly as I pray. Amen.

THE GOOD tidings of God bring a rapturous change in the man who truly receives them and believes them. For they are good tidings of hope, of promise, and of providence. They are tidings of a better day soon to dawn upon earth, of the second advent of Christ and all that His coming will bring. Where Christian faith is vigorous, there is joy of soul.

A second-century sage wrote: "Put away sorrow from thyself, for she is the sister of doubtful-mindedness. . . . Clothe thyself with cheerfulness, which hath favor with God always. . . . For every cheerful man worketh good and thinketh good, and despiseth sadness; but the sad man is always committing sin."

Paul wrote that he was "sorrowful, yet always rejoicing." Or as phrased in *Phillips Modern English*, "We know sorrow, yet our joy is inextinguishable" (II Cor. 6:10). Peter felt the same surging joy, even in the midst of trial: because he was looking forward to the hope of salvation, "wherein ye greatly rejoice . . . with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (I Pet. 1:6-9).

Joy is not in things; it is in us according as we hope in God.

Prayer: O God, I have Thy Word. May it be to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart. Adversity and sorrow will come, but help me through all to find my strength in Thy joy. Remind me constantly of those who suffered greatly but whose joy was triumphant—because they hoped in Thee. Amen.



Peace--

Be Still

Read Numbers 6:24-25.

"BE STILL and know that I am God."

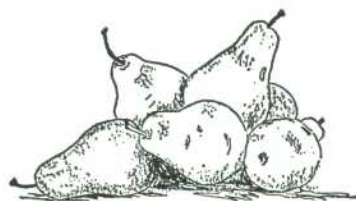
The devoted life is the quiet life. How many times our Lord found peace in quiet prayer away from the crowd. When He learned of the beheading of John the Baptist, the Scripture says, "He departed thence by ship into a desert place apart" (Matt. 14:13). When the task of selecting His companions was upon Him, He "continued all night in prayer to God."

It is in the quiet moments with God that life finds its greatest meaning and deepest peace. We need daily contact with God to keep our lives deep and meaningful, to maintain an undisturbed and undisturbable calm. If easily disturbed, we show we are not deep enough; our lives are too shallow.

"Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them" (Ps. 119:165).

*Peace upon peace, like wave upon wave,
This is the portion that I crave;
The peace of God which passeth thought,
The peace of God which changeth not.*

*O King of Peace, this peace bestow
Upon Thy children here below;
O God of peace, Thy peace impart
To every humble, contrite heart.*



What Is Patience?

Read James 1:2-4.

"PATIENCE is the art of hoping," said a French philosopher. And it is more, it is "concentrated strength." Patience is spiritual endurance, the willingness to wait God's time without doubting God's truth. Are you burdened with sorrow, heartsick from disappointment, broken with failure? Patience means peace because your confidence is in God. Only with patience can you keep your vision of the future steady, and your faith unshaken can rise from your defeat stronger than it ever was before.

Through the centuries the farmer has understood the meaning of patience. He knows the slow march

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of the seasons. The time between planting and the harvest cannot be hastened; he has learned to wait. But his patient waiting must be filled with work, for only so can his faith in the harvest become a reality.

"Patient endurance is what you need if, after doing God's will, you are to receive what he has promised. For yet a very little while, he that cometh shall come" (Heb. 10:36-37, Phillips).

Prayer:

O God, my Father, give me patience all through today.

*Give me patience with my work,
so that I may work at a job until I finish it or
get it right, no matter how difficult or trying
it may be.*

*Give me patience with other people,
so that I will not become irritated or annoyed,
and so that I may never lose my Christian
poise.*

*Give me patience with life,
so that I may never give up hope when wait-
ing time seems long; so that I may accept dis-
appointment without bitterness and delay
without complaint.* Amen.



Kindness--

the Fragrance
of Friendship

Read Ephesians 4:31-32.

"WHEREVER you find jealousy and ambition, you find disharmony, and wicked things of every kind being done; whereas the wisdom that comes down from above is essentially something pure; it also makes for peace, and is kindly and considerate; it is full of compassion and shows itself by doing good; nor is there any trace of partiality or hypocrisy in it" (Jas. 3:16-17, Jerusalem Bible).

To speak kindly never hurts the tongue.

To be kind is to be gentle. Nothing is so strong as gentleness, and nothing so gentle as real strength. By harshness and sharpness we make the way of others difficult; by kindness and gentleness we smooth their pathways.

Speak kindly—let no harsh words mar the testimony of your life.

Prayer: O God, I want that kindness which will give me a quick eye to see what I can do for others and a ready hand to do it. I am Thine, O Lord; use me as it pleaseth Thee. Amen. ●●

Understanding the Bible Continued

(Continued from page 13)

tionism (the belief that God created everything 6,000 years ago). We will follow our outline:

III. Creationism in Theory

A. Creationism Defined

B. Weaknesses of Creationism

Creationism is the opposite extreme from evolution, and is another attempt by man to explain the origin of the earth and the human race. The belief in Creationism was accepted almost universally by established religion until challenged by the explanations of evolution.

The Creationists have one strong point in their favor: They uphold a firm belief in the power of God and see Him as the source of all things. But their unreasoning literalism is too much for modern educated minds to accept, though current controversy is increasing the number of persons who accept Creationist beliefs.

III. CREATIONISM IN THEORY

A. Creationism Defined

It is the opinion of the supporters of this doctrine that "the known facts of science and history can be interpreted in either of two frameworks—that of evolutionary process or that of Creation and the Fall." To them, there is no other view. The earth and all life upon it, besides all the visible and invisible stars and planets, suns and moons, were all created by God about six thousand years ago in six twenty-four-hour days.

Creationists have long had their champions. One of the better known was William Jennings Bryan, whose participation in the Scopes Trial in 1925 made him a principal figure. Mr. Bryan at the trial defended an all-literal interpretation of the Bible. During the course of it Mr. Bryan was asked whether he believed God could make a fish big enough to swallow Jonah. Mr. Bryan replied: "Yes, Sir. Let me add: One miracle is just as easy to believe as another. I could as easily believe that Jonah swallowed the whale if the Bible said so."

While all believers in the literal creation six thousand years ago are not so outspoken as was Mr. Bryan, they generally believe in accepting the Biblical account as entirely literal throughout.

B. Weaknesses of Creationism

While we do not for a moment question the Creationist's acknowledgment of God as the Source and Creator of all things, we question the reason-

ableness of their answers to such questions as "how" and "when." The Bible enjoins us to "Come now, and let us reason together" (Isa. 1:18), and an all-literal interpretation of Genesis 1—3 is not "reasonable." Let us see why.

1. **"In the beginning."** The Creationists take these words to mean that the author of Genesis is telling us about the very first activity of the Great and Almighty God. But is this possible? Is our little planet the only concern of so Omnipotent a being?

2. **In six literal days.** The Creationists accept the Genesis account as descriptive of the activity of God within six literal days. But what is a day? To us it is the time between one sunrise and the next, a twenty-four-hour period. But this is a concept limited to our planet and our sphere. A "day" on a larger or smaller planet—of which there are countless millions—would be of a different length. And which "day" would be the period of time during which God accomplished each part of His creation? Furthermore, the Hebrew word translated "day" in Genesis 1 has two usages: as a term for a literal day, and also a figure for "a space of time."

3. **Six thousand years ago.** Generally speaking, Creationists accept a time for the creation to have taken place about six thousand years ago. Does this mean that all the universe came about at that time? What about the Biblical statement that the "mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting" (Ps. 103:17-18)? What about the "whole family in heaven and earth" (Eph. 3:15) of which the apostle Paul spoke—was the entire family "created" at the same time just 6,000 years ago?

And what about the millions of other stars in our Milky Way Galaxy, to say nothing of the myriads of stars and planets in other galaxies in the immensity of space—did all come about just six-thousand years ago?

4. **In specific order.** Many Creationists hold even to the order of Creation spelled out in Genesis. Such a position places weapons in the hands of infidels: How could "light" exist on earth before "day" and "night"? How could the earth exist without the "firmament" above? How could there be "light" before the creation of the "two great lights," greater and lesser, generally accepted to be the sun and the moon? And how could grass and herbs and fruit trees grow without the light of the sun?

*Reprints of these studies are available
upon request.*

ISRAEL

Yesterday

Today

Tomorrow

In Summary

IN A series of articles we have discussed Israel, past, present and future. We will now review briefly the story and take one final look at its significance.

The Bible abounds with promises to Israel—promises reaching far into the future; promises of life and health and prosperity and happiness. Israel is indeed the people favored of the Lord. But does it always refer to natural Israel? Read the following from the prophets:

“Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency!” (Deut. 33:29).

“Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all the heart. . . . The Lord hath taken away thy judgments, he hath cast out thine enemy: the king of Israel, even the Lord, is in the midst of thee thou shalt not see evil any more. . . .

“The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing. . . .

“... And I will... gather her that was driven out; and I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame.

“At that time will I bring you again, even in the time that I gather you: for I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth” (Zech. 3:14-20).

“But Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation: ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end.

“For thus saith the Lord that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited” (Isa. 45:17-18).

“Hearken unto me, ye stouthearted, that are far from righteousness: I bring near my righteousness; it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry; and I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory” (Isa. 46:13).

Shall we read divine promises of eternal blessing such as these and conclude that they are reserved for the natural descendants of Abraham alone? Shall we say that God will bestow all this on select persons who happen to be members of a certain family by physical descent, when we read elsewhere in the Scriptures that “God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him” (Acts 10:34-35)?

Can God be “no respecter of persons” and reserve special blessings for a specific family?

We read also that the redeemed who stand with Christ are taken “out of every kindred, and tongue, and people and nation” (Rev. 5:9-10)—are these all natural-born Israelites? When Christ returns and calls upon all nations to submit, shall the Jewish people be already His chosen race and be treated on a prior-right basis? The answer is *no*. The Bible tells of no such plan. The summons will go forth to all nations: “Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come” (Rev. 14:7), and “the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted” (Isa. 60:12)—“except Israel”? No. All who submit will be preserved; all who resist will perish, whatever their nationality.

Who Is Israel?

Who, then, is the Israel who shall receive the promises and eternal blessings?

The Bible uses the term “Israel” to designate more than one group of people. Originally it was applied to the descendants of “Israel,” the name God gave to Jacob. In later years the name was

given to the Kingdom of Israel; its people were called Israelites.

But when the nation of Israel became apostate, it became obvious that all the promises God had made to Israel had broader meaning than was at first imagined. For all the time God was selecting out of every nation those special people who would compose His own chosen people, a nation whom we call "spiritual" Israel, a people chosen not by nationality or birthright but by virtue of character and qualification.

The apostle Paul recognized God's plan when he wrote of the failure of natural Israel and the plan of God for another nation. The "chosen people," the natural descendants of Abraham, had many advantages and privileges. Paul enumerated: "They

perior to that of Abraham's natural offspring, a people whom we call spiritual Israel. Though not descended from Abraham, being believers they qualify as children of Abraham, for Abraham is "the father of all them that believe" (Rom. 4:11). They are Jews—not outwardly, but inwardly—which is supremely important to a God who looks on the heart. "For he is not a Jew which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God" (Rom. 2:28-29). This is a family of Israelites to whom any person from any nation may belong if—if he becomes circumcised *in heart*, a Jew—inwardly.

Natural Israel

What of natural Israel? If all the promises of eternal blessing pertain to God's specially chosen *spiritual* Israel, what of the original chosen nation?

God did originally promise great blessings for the natural descendants of Abraham. He made a covenant with Abraham: "Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward; for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever" (Gen. 13:14-15—this promise applies especially to Abraham's spiritual seed).

But note that the promises to Abraham were conditional, the condition being Abraham's obedience. "Because thou hast obeyed my voice" (Gen. 22:18) is the reason Abraham received the promise. Again and again this basic condition was repeated: that possession of the land and blessing depended wholly on the obedience of those people to God. All the promises to Israel were conditional.

When the children of Abraham, the Israelites, were delivered from Egyptian bondage and settled in the land of Canaan, their prosperity and peace depended wholly upon their obedience. When the people forsook the Lord, often they fell into the hands of their enemies. They were not worthy of the promised inheritance.

When during the reign of the kings the nation was divided and the people gradually went from bad to worse, the Lord brought against them enemies from distant lands to punish them. He used the nation of Assyria to destroy and take captive the northern kingdom. About a hundred and fifty years later the kingdom of Judah suffered a similar fate; these people, the natural descendants of Abraham, did not receive the "everlasting possession" promised to Abraham—they were not worthy of it.

Come, O my soul, in sacred lays,
Attempt thy great Creator's praise:
But oh, what tongue can speak His fame?
What mortal verse can reach the theme?

Enthroned amid the radiant spheres,
He glory like a garment wears;
To form a robe of light divine,
Ten thousand suns around Him shine.

In all our Maker's grand designs,
Omnipotence, with wisdom, shines;
His works, through all this wondrous frame,
Declare the glory of His name.

Raised on devotion's lofty wing,
Do thou, my soul, His glories sing;
And let His praise employ thy tongue,
Till listening worlds shall join the song.

—Selected.

are Israelites: they were made God's sons; theirs is the splendour of the divine presence, theirs the covenants, the law, the temple worship, and the promises. Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them, in natural descent, sprang the Messiah" (Rom. 9:4-5, NEB). As a nation, they were "called" of God.

However, the Apostle continues to point out that privilege and calling does not guarantee final acceptance and salvation. Why? "For not all descendants of Israel are truly Israel, nor, because they are Abraham's offspring, are they all his true children. . . . That is to say, it is not those born in the course of nature who are children of God; it is the children born through God's promise who are reckoned as Abraham's descendants" (Rom. 9:6-7, NEB).

Here Paul points out a nation of Israelites su-

After seventy years in captivity, believing Jews returned to Jerusalem to build again their city, their temple and their homeland. As a nation they had not fully learned their lesson, however, for later (A. D. 70), because of their wickedness and open defiance of God's law, their temple was destroyed and the people scattered.

Natural Israel proved unworthy of the covenant blessings; they broke their part of their covenant with God, hence God was not obliged to keep His agreement with them.

Israel and Prophecy Today

But what of Israel today? The ancient Jewish homeland free and independent and open to all Jews—it is a dream come true; it is modern-day Israel. When it was proclaimed a state in 1948, many called it a miracle; others derided it because of its limitations and forecast its early demise. But now, twenty-six years later, the little nation still survives, a match for any foe that has attacked.

How can this be, unless it be a fulfillment of Bible prophecy and an act of God?

The present state of Israel is in accordance with the plan of God—else it would not be; for “the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will” (Dan. 4:17). But the people of Israel today are not returned to their homeland in fulfillment of the prophecies of the great return; nor are they receiving any special blessing from God as a result of God's promises to Abraham; for Abraham's descendants proved unworthy.

But what of all the prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah and Ezekiel and the minor prophets concerning the establishing of Israel in their own land, the return, the restoration and the prosperity that will follow? Read some of these prophecies, and notice how far-reaching they are. The majority of them concern a strong and *eternal* nation and a righteous and God-fearing people. (See Jer. 23:5-6; Micah 4:7; II Sam. 7:10.) The sinful, wicked and unruly element shall be removed by divine judgment: “All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword” (Amos 9:10)—a prophecy not yet fulfilled; and the holy nation which survives shall prosper in peace and happiness forever: “And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God” (Amos 9:15). Present-day Israel has experienced no such purging or planting, nor have they any assurance that they shall abide forever in their land. This Israel of promise is to be a self-governing people who shall draw near to God (Jer. 30:21)—which modern-day

Israel does not. The promises pertain to a time when all men of all nations will “seek after the Lord” (Acts 15:16-17)—which we do not see fulfilled today. It will be a time when “Judah shall be saved” and “Jerusalem shall dwell safely” (Jer. 33:15-16); when “their seed shall be known among the Gentiles” and all shall “acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed” (Isa. 61:9). When the Lord will “gather” His people He will at the same time fulfill His greater promise to them: “...I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth”—which Israel today is not. It will be a time when temporal prosperity shall be an occasion for rejoicing before the Lord and “they shall not sorrow any more at all” (Jer. 31:12-13)—a promise definitely *not* fulfilled today. Those gathered in Israel shall “dwell safely” (Jer. 32:37); “and I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel, and one king shall be king to them all” (Ezek. 37:21-22). All these prophecies are not fulfilled now; they are reserved for a future time and a better, holier nation than natural Israel proved to be: Their fulfillment shall not be limited to the natural sons of Abraham, but shall reach to Abraham's entire family of believers—all of spiritual Israel, whether Israeli or Russian or Chinese by birth; all who have proven themselves righteous and acceptable to God shall receive the promises.

How many of the prophecies are partially fulfilled in the present state of Israel and its restoration we cannot say; but the majority of the prophecies, to be applied to Israel today, must be applied out of context if at all; and their fulfillment at best is very partial. Israel's day of blessing is future—and it will include all of spiritual Israel, not the natural descendants of Abraham alone.

What is to be Israel's role in the future when Christ shall come and call upon all to submit?

Only time will provide the answer; God has not seen fit to reveal all. But we can rest assured that all things are firmly under His wise direction and control. And should a large number of natural-born Israelites respond immediately to God's call and turn to Him, God will surely receive them and reward them accordingly. All who repent and turn will merit His blessing and protection—they shall become Israelites indeed, *spiritual* Jews.

And when the plan is fully realized and the Kingdom eternally established, “all Israel shall be saved”—all spiritual Israel, not all natural-born Jews. This is a holy nation of which we each may become a part, for it will include all those who are “called, and chosen, and faithful”—Israelites indeed! ●●

THE END

On Gratitude

Put your thanksgiving into the present tense. It's a sure cure for grumbling.

Give thanks part of the time and live thanks the rest of the time.

When you find it hard to pray, begin to give thanks and you'll have an ocean to swim in.

A grateful mind is a great mind.

Our thanks should be as fervent for mercies received, as our petitions for mercies sought.
—C. Simmons

O Lord, that lends me life, lend me a heart replete with thankfulness.
—Shakespeare

From David learn to give thanks for everything. Every furrow in the Book of Psalms is sown with the seeds of thanksgiving.
—Jeremy Taylor

If gratitude is due from children to their earthly parent, how much more is the gratitude of the great family of men due to our father in heaven.
—H. Ballou

If a man carries his cross beautifully and makes it radiant with glory of a meek and gentle spirit, the time will come when the things that now disturb will be the events for which he will most of all give gratitude to God.
—Anonymous

Some people complain because God put thorns on roses, while others praise Him for putting roses among thorns.
—Anonymous

Gratitude is the sign of noble souls.
—Aesop

Thank God every morning when you get up that you have something to do that day which must be done, whether you like it or not. Being forced to work, and forced to do your best, will breed in you temperance and self control, diligence and strength of will, cheerfulness and content, and a hundred virtues the idle never know. —Charles Kingsley

Gratitude is not only the memory but the homage of the heart—rendered to God for His goodness.
—Nathaniel P. Willis

Pride slays thanksgiving, but an humble mind is the soil out of which thanks naturally grow. A proud man is seldom a grateful man, for he never thinks he gets as much as he deserves.
—Henry Ward Beecher

I don't think the Lord wants any pompous proclamation of thanks on one Thursday in November as much as He wants a little humble service from us every day in the year.
—Burton Hills

Gratitude is born in hearts that take time to count up past mercies.
—Charles E. Jefferson

It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord.
—Ps. 92:1

In every thing give thanks.
—I Thess. 5:18

Enter into his gates with thanksgiving and into his courts with praise.
—Ps. 100:4

O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.
—Ps. 107:1

The worship most acceptable to God comes from a thankful and cheerful heart.
—Plutarch

Be thankful for the least gift, so shalt thou be meet to receive greater.
—Thomas a Kempis

If anyone would tell you the shortest, surest way to happiness and all perfection, he must tell you to make it a rule to yourself to thank and praise God for everything that happens to you. For it is certain that whatever seeming calamity happens to you, if you thank and praise God for it, you turn it into a blessing.
—William Law

God's Cheerful Giver

(Continued from page 7)

The cheerful giver must give his or her talents to the work of Christ and His Church. One may have musical ability and should be willing to use it. Even though one does not especially care to play an instrument, if doing so would help his church organization he should do it, and do it willingly. We should be glad to engage in any work that can be done to God's glory. If one can sing, he should be willing to do that. Another may be able to lead church groups. One can write suitably and impressively, another do secretarial work. Service in all these offices is gratis; one cannot expect to be paid as he goes along, only in the satisfaction of having shared his strength with a weaker brother. Some may not choose to make the effort to commit an address to memory; but if one is young and has the ability to memorize, he should be willing to do it. Recitation gives force to one's theme and provides listener interest in what he is saying, so he should be willing to do it. Whatever we can give, we should be willing to give it.

Paul gives a clear-cut statement on the use of talent in Romans 12:6-8 (Moffatt), "Our talents differ with the grace that is given us; if the talent is that of prophecy, let us employ it in proportion to our faith; if it is practical service, let us mind our service; the teacher must mind his teaching, the speaker his words of counsel; the contributor must be liberal, the superintendent must be in earnest, the sick visitor must be cheerful."

All these different types of giving which we have enumerated could be grouped under one general heading, giving *ourselves*. If we have given ourselves wholly to God, nothing will be reserved with which to serve the flesh. The words of the familiar Consecration Hymn, "Take My Life and Let It Be," depict the attitude perfectly.

*Take my life and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee;
Take my hands and let them move
At the impulse of Thy love.*

*Take my feet and let them be
Swift and beautiful for Thee;
Take my voice and let me sing
Always, only for my King.*

*Take my lips and let them be
Filled with messages from Thee;
Take my silver and my gold,
Not a mite would I withhold.*

*Take my moments and my days,
Let them flow in endless praise.
Take my intellect and use
Ev'ry pow'r as Thou shalt choose.*

*Take my will and make it Thine,
It shall be no longer mine.
Take my heart, it is Thine own,
It shall be Thy royal throne.*

*Take my love, my God, I pour
At Thy feet its treasure store;
Take myself, and I will be
Ever, only, all for Thee.*

Let us consider the virtuous qualities listed in this song. How easily our lips form the words: "Take my hands and let them move at the impulse of Thy love." Now let our hearts support, and whatever work we engage in, in whatever way we employ our hands, let it be to God's glory. Paul's hands labored for his own needs and the needs of those who were with him (Acts 20:34).

The hands of the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31 were busy doing errands of mercy and caring for her household. Of her it was said: "She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands... She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens... Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates" (vs. 13, 15, 31).

Dorcas, whom Peter raised from the dead, possessed hands that had moved at the impulse of God's love.

It was Paul's desire that "men" should "pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting." And such hands are taught to fight a winning battle against all sin and wrong.

"Take my feet, and let them be swift and beautiful for Thee." "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation" (Isa. 52:7). How beautiful are the feet that tread with carefulness every furlong of the narrow way to life. How beautiful are the feet that "run the way of His commandments." Feet swift and beautiful for God are feet that go on errands of mercy. "I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame," said the patriarch Job (29:15).

Consecrated feet are the feet that are "shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace."

"Take my voice and let me sing, always, only for my

King." "I will sing of mercy and judgment, unto thee, O Lord, will I sing," said the sweet singer of Israel (Ps. 101:1). The voice of the cheerful giver will never chant the doleful melody of the sluggard: The work cannot be done, the evils of my nature cannot be conquered. His voice will not be wailing: The way is hard, the Lord's ways are not equal. Rather, the earnest Christian will always be singing and making melody in his heart to the Lord (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). And a consecration of this type will meet its fruition with the voice singing that new song of the redeemed: "Thou hast made

O Lord, To Thee

O Lord of heav'n and earth and sea,
To Thee all praise and glory be;
How shall we show our love to Thee,
Who givest all?

Thou giv'st us wisdom's blessed dower,
Spirit of life and love and power,
And dost Thy sev'nfold graces shower
Upon us all.

For promised life, for sins forgiv'n,
For means of grace and hopes of Zion,
Father, what can to Thee be giv'n,
Who givest all?

We lose what on ourselves we spend,
We have as treasure without end
Whatever, Lord, to Thee we lend,
Who givest all.

Whatever, Lord, we lend to Thee,
Repaid a thousandfold will be;
Then gladly will we give to Thee,
Who givest all.

To Thee, from Whom we all derive
Our life, our gifts, our power to give:
O may we ever for Thee live,
Who givest all.

us unto our God kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth" (Rev. 5:9-10).

"Take my lips and let them be, filled with messages from Thee." The lips fulfilling this vital role will speak of the glorious honor of God's majesty all the day long, and talk of His wonderful works, and will declare His greatness. They will speak of the glory of His kingdom and talk of His power: "to make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom" (Psalm 145: 5-7, 11-12).

If our lips are filled with messages from God we will speak as an oracle of His, and never presume to speak a word of our own. We will speak to build up others, and never to tear down. Such lips will speak faith-inspiring messages. They will speak peace to the troubled soul, pouring on the oil of reconciliation, rather than the acid of malicious gossip. They will speak a word in season to him that is weary of sin, will administer words of reproof and warning to him that is out of the way. They will act upon the divine injunction: "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another" (Rom. 14:19).

"Take my silver and my gold, not a mite would I withhold." The cheerful giver will be prepared to say with King David of Israel: "for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee. . . . All this store that we have prepared to build thee an house for thine holy name cometh of thine own hand, and is all thine own" (I Chron. 29: 14, 16). Once all our silver and gold is placed at the disposal of the Eternal, not one cent will be spent for a purpose which He could not condone, but only as He directs.

"Take my moments and my days, let them flow in endless praise." If such is our determination, our time will be wholly redeemed (Eph. 5:15-16). We will spend none of it with the sinful pleasures of the world: speaking words, listening to conversation, going places, doing things, which are not to God's glory. Conscious of time as opportunity, we will be aware that "the night is far spent, the day is at hand," hence it is imperative that we "cast off the works of darkness, . . . and put on the armor of light" (Rom. 13:12).

The ancient Greeks had two words for time, *chronos*, meaning calendar time, the time of day, and *karios*, time as measured by opportunity. They pictured *karios* as a youth who is a swift runner. The back of his head is smoothly shaven, whereas the hair in front is long. It symbolizes the truth that, if we are able to seize the time-charged opportunity, we must be prepared for it as it comes and grasp it by the forelock. If we hesitate, the swiftly running youth passes us by and we cannot possibly seize him, as his hair is too short in back to lay hold of him. The opportunity is then no longer within our grasp. This observation points up the importance of redeeming the time.

"Take my intellect and use every power as Thou shalt choose." The fully surrendered mind is not

free to think as it pleases. It will not be dwelling on evil things. Every vain harmful thought will be banished, each wandering thought brought into subjection. Thoughts of doubt and despondency will be given no lodgment in that mind. In short, we will *think before we think*.

"Take my will and make it Thine, it shall be no longer mine." If we have given *ourselves*, we will follow implicitly the example of our great Pattern, doing always the things that please our heavenly Father. "Not my will but Thine be done," will be our ready answer to each divine command.

In response to the loving entreaty, "My son, give me thine heart," the cheerful giver will answer: "Take my heart, it is thine own, it shall be Thy royal throne." We will throw the doors of our hearts wide open, while saying, "Let the King of glory come in."

"Take my love, my God, I pour at Thy feet its treasure's store; Take myself, and I will be, ever only all for Thee." And as the end result of such complete surrender, we will have no one in heaven but God, and desire no one upon earth above Him.

To offer all this sincerely to God, we have to conquer our natural selves. We have to have our minds and bodies under absolute control of our wills.

Let us quote again II Corinthians 9:7 to emphasize its concluding thought: "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver." If we purpose in our heart to do all that we can, then we are sowing freely and we can reap bountifully in that coming Day. Our lives are a constant influence upon other lives, and we want to influence others in the right way. Giving our all to God can be a rewarding work.

But giving alone is not enough, even if we give ourselves. For "God loveth a cheerful giver." Whatever we do, we have to practice giving *cheerfully*. We have to learn to give ourselves wholeheartedly, willingly, and gladly.

Our Willingness

A timely thought on cheerful giving occurs in II Corinthians 8:12, "For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not." It is the *giver* and not the *gift* that the Lord values. God does not ask for what we don't have. He judges our liberality in relation to the means we possess, not by the amount we actually give. The widow who put her two mites into the temple treasury was commended by Jesus as an example of liberality,

because though the gift was small, it was all she had. This principle applies to all kinds of giving.

"For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath." The willingness is the first consideration in determining the acceptability of the gift. After the willingness and wholeheartedness is determined, the gift to God, both temporal and spiritual, is according to that which the giver is able to give.

A willing enthusiasm for His precepts is what the Eternal requires. "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land," says the Prophet (Isa. 1:19). God wants a cheerful giver: "if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to that he hath not." Jesus illustrates this principle of full consecration in the parable of the Hidden Treasure, in Matt. 13:44. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof he goeth and selleth *all* that *he hath*, and buyeth that field." However, the selling out of our own ways to the Lord for the great treasure of life eternal is not in itself enough. It must be done joyfully, and with a willing mind. "No man having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62). We cannot be serving God with a willing mind when we are looking back toward the things we have renounced in the world.

Without the willing mind, the work necessary for the true Christian will never be done. In Matt. 21:28-31 Jesus gives in a few verses a whole sermon on willingness. One of the sons whom the father bade go to work in the vineyard readily assented, but he went not. His was only a lip service, and he merely wished to get along agreeably. That was as far as his willingness went. The other son refused to work, but when he thought it over and saw the evil of his ways, changed his mind and with a willingness went and worked.

The willingness always precedes the effective work of the true Christian. This illustration of Jesus' also brings out one of the beautiful elements of God's plan—His mercy. With willingness there is always in spiritual things the opportunity to change our ways and do better. In the temporal, a mistake is all too often final; but if we are willingly serving God, and anxious to do better, the mistakes can be corrected.

The thing that brings out our best, that shows us what we can really do, is willingness, a willingness expanded to the point of eagerness. Such a willingness does so many things. It releases dormant energies; it makes unpleasant duties part of joyful service; it is the anesthetic that lessens the pain of

self-crucifixion. Through the mercy and justice of God, it even supplies for the abilities we lack. The Lord's directive at the time the tabernacle in the wilderness was fabricated, was, "Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me an offering: of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take my offering" (Ex. 25:2). A reluctant or grudging offering is no offering at all. God loves a cheerful giver.

For the worker for God who would really get started and go somewhere, the first step is self-examination and self-acceptance—to find out what is in us and realistically set to work to see what can be done with it. It is necessary to aspire to the heights, but an apple tree would gain little by aspiring to be an orange tree. What can be done, however, is to make it a better apple tree. We are what we are, with all our limitations and possibilities. The goal is set before us, and it is within our limits. This we know by divine revelation, even though we may at times feel inadequate.

It is natural to vision greener pastures beyond the next fence, to wish for the other person's ability, or his disposition, or his job; but such wishing will get us nowhere, except as we imitate his desirable qualities. What we do must be done with our own equipment, under our own power. In First Corinthians 12 Paul the apostle illustrates the church, the mystical body of Christ, by the exquisite harmony in the members of the human body. The ear cannot be the eye, nor the foot the head; yet every member has its place, its function, which it is expected to perform in rhythm with all the rest.

Thus it is that when one member suffers, all suffer with it; when one lags, it is distress to all. We are important. Yet it is most important to *us* that we do our part, for the body can get along without us; our share will be done by someone, if not by us. Dead branches are pruned from trees and vines, and the body of Christ is peculiar in that it possesses the power of regeneration, enabling it to replace members which become dead and unprofitable. The body will be presented perfect and complete in the great Day of Judgment, and if we are not a part of it, only we shall be the losers.

Regardless of our natural endowments, which are admittedly unequal, the Eternal has just one requirement—our best. And He loves a cheerful giver. Because we feel that our best is not very good, because we sense our inferiority, that does not excuse us from trying. A debtor who makes no attempt to pay because he lacks the full amount would hardly be called honest.

Our first thought in connection with the giver is that of the "have-not," the man or woman who is

willing but lacks the "wherewith." But it also operates in reverse. It applies equally to the "have," the person with more than average endowments. To be acceptable this offering, whether of goods or service, must be accompanied by the same willingness we commend in the less fortunate—the willingness to give all, and wish we could do more.

The Eternal could find millions upon millions of part-time, less-than-best servants, but the standard is higher than that. Eternal life in glory is the thing at stake, and if such a prize is not worth entire consecration, it is worth nothing. Jesus had this in mind when He said to the rich young man, "Sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and follow me." This command is to all. When we have complied with it, our lives and our possessions are still in our hands, but on a different basis. We are stewards, not owners. The young man, we read, "went away sorrowful"; it was too stern a proposition. He would have given part, but not all. He would gladly have given what he had not, but what he had he was unwilling to part with, even to gain eternal life.

It is, then, all or nothing. The price is high, but the rewards are higher.

In closing let me ask in the appealing words of King David, "Who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?" ●●

Have You Thanked God?

(Continued from page 4)

I will say it again: all joy be yours. Let your magnanimity be manifest to all. The Lord is near; have no anxiety, but in everything make your requests known to God in prayer and petition with thanksgiving. Then the peace of God, which is beyond our utmost understanding, will keep guard over your hearts and your thoughts, in Christ Jesus.

"And now, my friends, all that is true, all that is noble, all that is just and pure, all that is lovable and gracious, whatever is excellent and admirable—fill all your thoughts with these things. The lessons I taught you, the tradition I have passed on, all that you heard me say or saw me do, put into practice; and the God of peace will be with you" (Phil. 4:4-9, Phillips).

Thanksgiving can be a blessed day. Let's make it a thankful day, from which we gain a deeper sense of heartfelt gratitude which will make *all* our days henceforth abound with thankfulness—to God! ●●

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

"If natural Israel is not the chosen race to inherit God's promised blessings, why does Revelation 7 enumerate the 144,000 chosen as 12,000 from each tribe? And why is the book of James addressed to the 'twelve tribes which are scattered'? And why did Paul stand upon the promise made to the 'twelve tribes' (Acts 26:6-7)?"

The Bible uses the "twelve tribes" to illustrate God's truly chosen people. It is a representation retained from ancient times when God was working with the people of Israel. This figure of speech is used in Revelation 7, where the 144,000 redeemed are described as twelve thousand from each of the tribes of Israel. This is the same number, and we believe the same composition, as was seen with Christ on Mount Zion (Revelation 14). We read: "And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Zion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads" (v. 1). And in verses 3 and 4, the composition of these "Israelites" is revealed: These "were redeemed from the earth," "were redeemed from among men." The description suggests an international group of people, not all natural Israelites.

The point is that the name "Israel" continues to be associated with those whom God calls, or selects and proves. All among this number have been grafted into the stock of Israel (Romans 11) and have been allowed to remain because they produced the fruit required of true members of the stock of Israel.

The context in which the statement concerning the 144,000 of Revelation 14:1 occurs shows that they are to be the group which will reign with Christ, and Revelation 5:9-10 identifies this same reigning group as being "redeemed to . . . God . . . out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." They are not all natural-born Israelites.

The same illustration of the "twelve tribes" appears in James 1:1-2. We read, "James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting. My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations."

To whom was James writing? To his *brethren*.

A writer in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* rightly suggests that the " 'twelve tribes' are to be under-

stood allegorically. As Abraham is the father of all believers, so all believers make up the nation of twelve tribes." Other Bible commentators express the same thought. We note the observation of one: "Some commentators have felt, not unnaturally, that the phrase should be interpreted rather literally as indicating that the Epistle is addressed to Jewish Christians alone. But as there is nothing elsewhere in the letter that deals with the special problems of Jewish Christianity, . . . it is far preferable to explain *the twelve tribes* as meaning the whole of spiritual Israel, i. e., all Christians."

Paul in his defence before Agrippa, also spoke of the "twelve tribes": "Now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers. Unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night hope to come; for which hope's sake . . . I am accused of the Jews" (Acts 26:6-7).

When Paul spoke these words, ten of the original tribes were widely scattered, and the only readily identifiable segments of Israel were the two tribes known as Jews, who had recently rejected Jesus' teaching and instigated His crucifixion—these could not be described as "instantly serving God day and night."

In Acts 26, Paul pictures two Israels, the twelve tribes of spiritual Israel who were "instantly serving God day and night" in hope of obtaining the promises, and the natural Jews who were accusing him wrongfully. Only those "instantly serving God," worshiping Him "in spirit and in truth," are the "twelve tribes" of spiritual Israel.

Just as Abraham was the father of Israel's twelve tribes, so all believers make up the twelve tribes of spiritual Israel (Rom. 4:11, 17).

Jesus mentions these twelve tribes in Luke 22:29-30: "And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." A position of authority is part of the promise made to overcomers (Rev. 3:21)—and during the Millennium Age they shall be judges over the multitude of believers—both Jew and Gentile, spiritual Israel, who shall inhabit God's Kingdom. ••

To be aware of his spiritual assets, a man needs to get acquainted with the Bible, not simply to know about it. The wise Christian is as regular in the use of his Bible as he is in other habits which are basic to health and well-being.



Meditations

On the Word

PAUL is known to have visited the Ephesian brethren at least twice, and was writing to people with whom he was acquainted, and whom he loved. It would be difficult to read this Epistle and not feel the tender, pleading solicitude so constantly expressed. We see here no high church dignitary in ecclesiastical robes holding forth a jeweled finger for homage. Instead, we see a tender father pleading for a holy life in his children, a father who supported himself with the toil of his own hands.

Almost before the salutation is finished, Paul begins a review of the high calling of the Christian. Throughout the first three chapters are such phrases as will lift the believers' spiritual gaze from the plodding present to the wonderful Tomorrow, the glorious Kingdom that beckoned the worthies of old. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ . . . having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will . . . sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance. . . . That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us, through Christ Jesus." Almost continuous reference to the wondrous future shows the constant direction of the Apostle's thoughts and his untiring efforts to direct our thoughts similarly.

Paul was writing from Rome where he was a prisoner of the Roman government. That the brethren were touched by his circumstances and concerned for him is shown in 3:13, "So I beg of

"I therefore the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

—Ephesians 4:1-3.

you not to lose heart over what I am suffering on your behalf; my sufferings are an honor to you" (Moffatt). He then draws from these circumstances the very strong figure for his appeal in our meditation verse. The appeal could scarcely fail to move these Ephesian Christians.

Two visits by the Apostle could not have left them entire strangers to his unpleasant and painful experiences in prison at the hands of over-zealous officials. Paul quickly carries them from the sordid level of Roman "justice" to the high plane of the honorable calling of being the Lord's prisoner. He brings to life in their minds the same thought once expressed to another Christian group: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Thus briefly are thirty-nine stripes dismissed, in the Eternal's service.

Many undesirable habits and characteristics can be so eliminated from the Christian's everyday living as to be in time entirely forgotten. But it is not this type of achievement that Paul is urging upon the Ephesian brethren in the second verse. It is rather the exercise of virtues from which the Christian can never rest during his probation. "With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love." These are the noble characteristics which hold the old man in subjection, firmly gripped as the hand grips a coiled spring, forbidding it to uncoil and exercise its hidden energy. It is these virtues which must become a part of everyday living to make any life worthy of the name of Christian. They cannot be put on as a cloak, but only acquired little by little.

They cannot be taught by preachment or precept, but by godly living.

Jesus said, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart. . . ." This is the lowliness and meekness Paul is advocating: a lowliness and meekness, a humbleness, which allow the learning of godly ways and thinking to replace the sensual earthly ways naturally found in our hearts that rebel against discipline and reproof. The Bible indicates that Moses inquired of the Lord even in cases that seemed easy of solution. It was this humble spirit of meekness, the willingness to recognize and consult a Higher Power, that earned for him not only the leadership of God's people but the witness of Numbers 12:3, "Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth." The quality often described in the Scriptures by the term *meekness* differs widely from the commonly accepted definition of the word. Primarily, the man God calls meek is one who reveres Him, who never dares speak a word God has not spoken, but who has the courage to speak every word *He* has spoken, and enforce every principle *He* has laid down.

"With longsuffering, forbearing one another in love," does not indicate a sentimental feeling toward brethren, but that we must treat them with patience and kindness both in keeping the commandments ourselves and in assisting them to do likewise. This is the true love that John tells us about, "For this is the love of God that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous."

Moffatt's translation of our meditation verse reads, "As the Lord's prisoner, then, I beg of you to live a life worthy of your calling, with perfect modesty and gentleness, showing forbearance to one another patiently, zealous in love to preserve the unity of the Spirit by binding peace upon yourselves." With his appeal for holy living, Paul couples the practical formula which makes it possible for two or more to walk together in agreement. In one brief breath the Apostle gives the essence of true Christian living and the means of applying it in daily living, a tempered mortar which will bind believers together into a single body.

What stronger or more urgent appeal could be made to anyone who knows the truth? When all has been said that can be said to the Christian, its essence is that we must walk worthy of our high calling. When all has been taken away that can be taken away, this is still left, that we walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called. For the Christian it is both his duty and privilege to walk

worthy of the call of truth. Whether alone or surrounded with the world, in the calm of meditation or in the stress of trial, to walk with this high calling in mind must come first. In thinking or in speaking, God's high calling must stand out. In prosperity or in need we are still being called to a high position in God's plan. In sickness or in health, to walk worthy of the Living God is still our calling. And if Death's chill hand beckons, even then it is the Christian's privilege to walk worthy, unfaltering to the end. Many have done it. Should this sound like an obsession, it may well be so, for only with such determination can one become developed to say in every circumstance, "Thy will be done, not mine," and reach the stature of Him who said, "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." ••

That man is invincible who nourishes his soul regularly on the Word of God. Calamity may strike, but his spiritual resources make him invulnerable. In a crisis he rides the waves instead of being overcome by them.

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Just Go On!

*Just **go** on,
Regardless of obstacles in view.*

*Just **pray** on,
Believing that you are coming through.*

*Just **push** on,
Ignoring the hindrances ahead.*

*Just **plod** on,
Though lonely and hard the path you tread.*

*Just **press** on,
Untroubled by phantoms of the mind.*

*Just **live** on,
Determined now to leave the past behind.*

*Just **sing** on,
Though sometimes an unseen tear may fall.*

*Just **plow** on--
This furrow may be the worst of all.*

*Just **hope** on.
Life changes when turned towards the light.*

*Just **keep** on
Affirming that things are coming out right.*

*Sometimes God rewards us
When everything has gone--
Not for great achievements, but
Just for **going on!***

