

Megiddo Message



Can I Still Thank God?

Megiddo Message

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The MEGIDDO MESSAGE will

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

Tell the Truth--It Pays

IF Watergate taught America anything, it should have taught us to tell the truth.

But all this sort of calculated deception in high places is not new. "The end justifies the means" has been the theory of many a politician and statesman, unfortunately. Better-than-realistic promises, stretched truths, colored facts and little white lies have been used time and again in different countries to win public support. But little white lies have a way of turning black; "real" facts have a way of popping out of their carefully made disguises.

Why does anyone ever lie? Usually the motive is to save face. Deception seems so much more appealing than plain out-and-out truthfulness—especially when one's reputation is at stake. The would-be liar never considers that by his attempt at covering he is only adding sin to sin, and that when his deception is found out—which it usually is—his reputation will suffer far more than as if he had told the truth in the first place.

The night of the crucifixion, Peter's courage faltered, and he resorted to lying. As is usually the case, one lie bred two more. Questioned by the maid of the palace, he first denied that he understood her question. When another maid put the question to him, "I do not know the man" was Peter's reply. A third question, from the bystanders, brought from Peter answers even stronger and more self-condemning. If Peter had remembered Jesus' warning, the whole denial could have been avoided. Or if Peter had corrected himself after the first denial, he might have saved himself from the second and third repetitions. But Peter failed, as we often have. To lie seemed so much safer than telling the truth.

Whatever its apparent value, a lie is always weak. It has no facts, no evidence to hold it up. Someone has suggested that a lie is an artificial attempt to prop up an inverted pyramid which only becomes more top heavy with every added lie; while truth is like a pyramid broadly based on reality, which cannot be overturned.

Absolute truthfulness is imperative to the Christian. Even the slightest prevarication, unless it be by "honest mistake" or misunderstanding, is wrong before the "God of truth."

"Lying lips are abomination to the Lord" (Prov. 12:22); and every "righteous man hateth lying" (Prov. 13:5). "All liars" are grouped with the worst of transgressors (Rev. 21:8).

What possible gain can come from lying? Our intentions to deceive, whether in thought or word or act, are destined to fail soon or late. Any lie is only temporary at best, for it exists only so long as it is supposed to be *not* a lie. When it is found out for what it is, its value perishes immediately.

Only truth is eternal. And since God is our judge, and since not even a thought can be withheld from Him (Job 42:2), why not tell the truth always—it *always* pays! ●●

Can I Still Give Thanks?

YOU may wonder why anyone who has *my* faith, or enjoys *my* blessings, or shares *my* opportunities should ask such a question. Can *I*, in my situation, *still* give thanks?

But I am a person (and I believe I am not alone) who associates thankfulness with the great and the spectacular. If I very narrowly escaped what looked like sure disaster; or if I were suddenly delivered from excruciating pain; or if I inherited some very special treasure I never dreamed could be mine—*then* I would be thankful.

Or I connect thankfulness with *other* people and *other* places. We send emergency relief to stricken inhabitants of the South, or the West or the Far-east. *They* should be thankful. Our country sends food provisions to starving Africans. *They* should be appreciative. But *I* who have so much, can *I* be thankful?

The question bothers me. It plagues me. It devastates me, simply because I know how irresponsible I have been when it comes to showing a lively gratitude to God for all that He has done for *me*, both temporally and spiritually.

Did you ever stop to think that an abundance of blessings can actually be a hindrance to real gratitude? that it is possible to be so busy using and enjoying our blessings that we neglect to give thanks to the Giver?

Another difficulty in my thankfulness is the fact that there are *so many* blessings that I do not know where to begin. If I had only a few, I think it would be different. As a child I longed for some things. If only I could have a new dress like Sally's. Or all the strawberries I wanted. Or something special that I could call my very own. But now, God has met all my needs and so much more—and can I still give thanks? I used to think, Why not take a pencil and paper and make a list? But alas!—today I would need a computer; for the multitude of my blessings is so great that I could not possibly list them

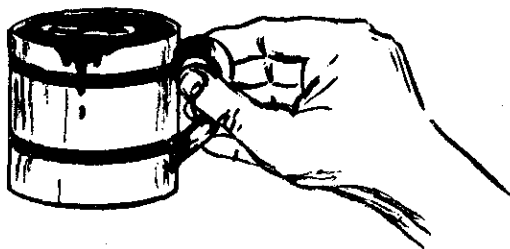
all. And the question: Can I still give thanks, even when I do not know where to begin?

Another difficulty is in remembering the ordinary blessings of my life. I awoke this morning; an alarm clock told me the hour, a common little mechanism; yet how many people have never seen such a device. And before I had been awake a single hour, I had already used dozens of seemingly ordinary blessings. Electric light at the flick of a switch; water at the turn of a faucet, hot or cold to suit my whim; a soft, dry towel which I had neither to spin thread for, nor weave. A comb, a toothbrush, a bar of soap; snaps, buttons, comfortable, colorful clothing, a pair of shoes—and I could go on and on. I prepared the morning meal for my family and used a dozen *more* "ordinary" blessings—dishes, spoons, a paring knife, a dishcloth, a smooth clean tabletop, a pantry stocked with good wholesome foods to meet my needs—all such very *common* blessings in my life, yet any one of which I would miss, were it suddenly removed. Am I thankful?

I pursued my regular work through the day, enjoying so many more common blessings—sunlight, and window glass to let it into my home; a stove to heat; a refrigerator to cool; a broom, a mop, a cloth, a vacuum cleaner; a pencil, a pad of paper, a printed book—and—God help me in my counting! And when the day is done, a soft-pillowed, clean-sheeted bed to give me rest. Can it be—all this for *me*, while millions crave only a place to lay their heads to sleep or forget their misery, or... to die?

I can walk, and talk, and move. I can think and work and pray. I am blessed with health and home and happiness and Christian fellowship; and hope and promise and understanding—and a God to approach in prayer—*what more could I ask?*

And then, the thought struck me: If all I call my own were suddenly taken away, and I were left alone in



"My cup runneth over"

the world, alone with only my faith in God to sustain me; alone, with all my creature-comforts gone; alone, with *survival* my only blessing—could I still give thanks?

I think of those who suffer from crippling disease and incurable pain. Were such a life to be mine, could I still give thanks?

I think of those who have lost their homes in floods or fires; whose families have been taken by accident or sickness; people who cannot enjoy a normal life. And those words haunted me all the more: Could I face it, and *still* give thanks?

I think of how many days I have lived as though I were the source of all my blessings. How often I have said thanks to God for a new day, and then turned around and *lived* as though the day were mine alone. I didn't *feel* thankful; but did God ever say we should thank Him only when we *feel* like it?

Today is Thanksgiving Day. The day has nationally-proclaimed significance. I worship. I pray. I sing. I do all the things a good Christian is expected to do. But all this will be only giving God a polite nod unless I am able to scrape away all the pulp of outward expression and get at the core, the real meaning of Thanksgiving in *my* life.

My mind runs to a bit of history, and I see a group of men and women, suffering, sick and dying. I see this courageous band enduring three and one-half months of agony on the Atlantic in a leaky boat. I see them clearing land and making homes in a place where wilderness and winter and disease all seem united against them. I see them, or barely half of them, observing a time of thanksgiving less than a year later, with a band of Indians as their guests. They were giving thanks—for what? their abundance? their affluence? No, their gratitude was for survival—for life itself, and for the opportunity to pursue life in this new land.

I picture myself in their situation. Could I have been there and given thanks? Could I still give thanks, if all I had to be thankful for were *survival itself*?

Yet the words of these great people of our American history were but echoes of the expressions of thanks offered by our forebears of another day and place. The Hebrews sang their songs of thanksgiving and praise even in times of adversity and suffering. Their song strikes a familiar chord in our ears. We have heard it before;

"O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good: for his mercy endureth forever."

Simple words, simple praise, simple thanks; yet I wonder—were I a captive Daniel in Babylon, could I have sung it? Or were I a Christian mis-

sionary in the days of the apostles, despised, forsaken, persecuted, deprived of all that makes life as I know it complete and comfortable—could I still give thanks?

Were I like Jeremiah, hunted for my life, or suffering in a dungeon; or like Joseph, young and energetic, yet compelled to languish in an Egyptian prison for two whole years—and that, unjustly—could I have faced life as it came to them, and still been thankful?

But thank God, these testings are *not* all mine. God has spared me their sufferings. And yet, I have been given my own life, and from it I must learn the same lessons they learned.

God may not always deem it wise or necessary to give me the abundance of things I now have. Perhaps even tonight He may see fit to "help" me by taking away something which seems most essential to my life. If He does, can I still call this day *Thanksgiving*? Can I still kneel tonight and say, "Thank you, Lord, for all your goodness to me; your mercy endures forever"?

I must remember that I am not here just to enjoy life; I am not here to revel in blessings. My objective is not pleasure—but perfection. And *however* God may bless me and help me toward that goal, can I *still* give thanks?

*Thou who hast given so much to me,
Give one thing more: a thankful heart;
Not thankful when it pleases me,
As though Thy blessings had spare days,
But such an heart whose pulse may be Thy praise!*

This is my prayer; won't it be yours also?●●

Christ Is Coming

Sands of time are running low,
Golden moments fleeting by;
Just what hour, we do not know,
But His coming draweth nigh.

Jesus' coming draweth near,
His descent shall come at last;
It may be this very year
Ere this generation's past!

Time is speeding to its end—
When the clock shall be no more;
And His angels He shall send—
Watch! 'tis even at the door!

—Selected.

MEGIDDO MESSAGE

Divine Forgiveness

PRAYER

Our Father in Heaven, all glory and honor be to Thy holy name. We approach Thy throne, recognizing Thee as the living God, the Eternal Creator, and Everlasting King.

O may Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven above.

We realize that to Thee we are indebted for the breath we breathe, and the life that we possess. Thou art He who redeemest our life from destruction, and crownest us with lovingkindness and tender mercies. We rejoice to know that Thou wilt forgive all our iniquities as fast as we confess and fully forsake them, and through Thy Word will heal all our spiritual diseases.

We confess with shame and remorse that we have not been worthy of all Thy great goodness to us. Thou hast not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities, else we should long ago have been cut off. And as high as the heaven is above the earth, so great has Thy mercy to us been.

We appreciate Thy pity, that as a father pitieth his children, so Thou wilt pity us if we will do the things to merit that pity. Thou knowest our frame, Thou rememberest that we are dust, and lookest upon us with a compassionate eye; but forbid it, Father, that we should presume upon Thy goodness, or perpetually put off the doing of the things that will qualify us to merit Thy compassion.

Thy mercy is from everlasting to everlasting, Thy righteousness unto children's children, but only to such as keep Thy covenant, and remember Thy commandments to do them.

We pray Thy blessing upon this service, and may it stimulate us to greater fervor in holy living. We pray Thy blessing upon such as have problems of youth or of age, with all in sickness or trouble, with those who do not have our advantage of constant assembly. Bless and sustain them as Thou hast promised.

Forgive us for the sins we have turned from and forsaken, and lead us in the way everlasting. For Thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

November, 1975

DISCOURSE

FORGIVENESS is a divine virtue in behalf of erring men. It is pardon, release from penalty, release from the consequences of wrongdoing. It restores a breached relationship and even includes release from all feelings of resentment and ill-will which the wrong action may have caused. Forgiveness may originate on the human level, or on the divine, but the recipient is always human.

Forgiveness presupposes guilt. The very fact that forgiveness is needed assumes the existence of law and a man's responsibility to that law; for "sin is not imputed when there is no law."

The divine pattern of forgiveness is clearly spelled out in the Word of God: "Whoso confesseth and forsaketh [his sins] shall have mercy" (Prov. 28:13). There are conditions to be met: Before we can obtain forgiveness, we must forsake our sins; and before we forsake our sins, we must confess them.

Confession

But the question presents itself: To whom must we confess?

The answer depends upon the nature of our transgression. The confessional, as practiced by some formal churches, is thoroughly unscriptural, being based upon the false idea of a succession of apostles with delegated power to forgive sins. As it seems to work out in actual practice, it becomes an endless round of sin and confess, sin and confess, go and sin again, always hoping that the end will find one in a position to make one last confession and receive final absolution.

Such is not the divine idea of confession. But audible confession fills a deep psychological need and may be a direct source of spiritual benefit. If our sin is known only to ourselves and God, our struggle with self may be confessed privately to our heavenly Father. But we shall find it helpful often to talk it out with a trusted spiritual adviser, and then make a new start with a lighter heart. The personal counsellor is as important to the health of the soul as the physician is to the body—even more important. *(Continued next page)*

If our transgression resulted in injury to another person, that injury must be confessed to him or her personally; and flagrant public offenses require public repentance.

God is the final source of all forgiveness; therefore, we must confess all our sins to God. We read in Psalm 103: "The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. . . . He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. . . . Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame, he remembereth that we are dust." "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16).

Forgiveness, A Possibility and A Necessity

"All have sinned, all come short of the glory of God," wrote the great Apostle to the Church at Rome (Rom. 3:23, Moffatt). It has been observed that if taken literally these words could mean that all have come short of meriting the eternal weight of glory which is the rightful heritage of those who live in perfect obedience.

But that approach is unscriptural. God does not

expect to find proven, perfect character all ready-made. "All have sinned." But the familiar texts in Ezekiel 18 and 33 reveal that forgiveness is a possibility. No matter what sin a person may have committed, that sin shall not stand against him once he has repented and turned from it. Ezekiel 33:15-16 reads: "If the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity, he shall surely live, he shall not die. None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him: he hath done that which is lawful and right; he shall surely live."

Sins confessed, repented of, and forgiven are wiped as completely from the slate of the divine remembrances as if they had never been committed. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool, after you have ceased to do evil and learned to do well, said the Almighty through the astute Isaiah (1:18).

In a footrace, a contestant forfeits the prize by one infraction of the rules. But this is not true in the race for eternal life. With God, the runner is judged by his position at the termination of the race, not during the running. The fact that the runner on the race course may go on running yet

"Ye Cannot Serve the Lord?"

--Joshua 24:19

WHEN Israel showed a desire to turn to God, why did Joshua tell them "Ye cannot serve the Lord: for he is a holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins"? (Josh. 24:19).

Let us look at this bit of history, recorded in Joshua 24. "And Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and called for the elders of Israel, and for their heads, and for their judges, and for their officers" (v. 1). Joshua was growing old; this might be the last time his health would permit him to warn and encourage Israel; this was his valedictory, and he did not fail to make use of it. He had something of importance to say to the twelve

tribes. And this message is just as important for us today.

Joshua called the convocation at Shechem. Then he sketched their history from Abraham to Isaac and Jacob, to their sojourn in Egypt, their deliverance by Moses when God worked so wondrously, to their crossing of the Jordan, the conquest of the nations in the land of Canaan, and dividing of the land to them by lot.

Then he pleaded with them to make the right choice, to serve the Lord and Him alone, as he himself had done and would continue to do. He said: "Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood [Jor-

not receive the reward because of one infraction of the rules does not apply to the Christian race. Forgiveness is a possibility. The divine arrangement is: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Isa. 55:7). After God has forgiven and abundantly pardoned, what more does one need to fit him for the weight of glory? How could God forgive and abundantly pardon if *one* transgression of law disqualifies us for forgiveness? The folly of such a position is too obvious to be overlooked.

God's law does not demand perfect obedience throughout one's entire lifetime without one slip, but it does demand ultimate perfection of character through growth. Jesus our great Example "learned obedience through the things which he suffered," and God asks no more of us. The divine arrangement is: "In whom all the building, fitly framed together, *groweth* unto an holy temple in the Lord" (Eph. 2:21).

Were it not for the process of forgiveness, it might be true that once we have sinned one small sin we have fallen short of the standard of perfect obedience and have forfeited our right to the prize. One school of religious thought advances the

thought that "all have sinned" as evidence of man's helplessness in his effort to fit himself for salvation through his own efforts, making substitution in the form of the atoning death of Christ essential. But this is not true. The Word of God is against it.

Achievement in any field comes through effort; likewise perfection of character is the sum total of many years of trial, failures, thwarted attempts, coupled with dogged determination to win. It is achievement through growth, with the result: acceptance through forgiveness.

Forgiveness Follows Repentance

The very first message to mankind at the time of the glorious outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost was: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). And a few days later Peter, speaking to his countrymen, said: "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19). Forgiveness, acceptance, and the blotting out of our sins will follow true conversion and repentance.

When Jesus appeared to Paul, as he was on his way to Damascus with authority to apprehend the saints, his initial commission was to preach re-

dan], and in Egypt; and serve ye the Lord. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (vs. 14-15).

The people answered enthusiastically in the affirmative. They said: "God forbid that we should forsake the Lord, to serve other gods." It was easy for them to say at a moment like this, "Yes, we will be loyal to God," even when they didn't really mean it—far easier than to face themselves in their true and often manifest attitude.

But Joshua was not to be

taken off guard. He knew too well they were not sincere. So he said to the people, "Ye cannot serve the Lord: for he is an holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins." God demands integrity, He demands wholeness, He demands sincerity. They were not sincere. Sin lay at their door which they had not confessed or made an earnest effort to forsake, hence God could not forgive them.

Why then did Joshua say "Ye cannot serve the Lord"? What was the matter? They were trying to look through their own eyes, doing the things that seemed right to them, and refused to fall into line with God's prophets and judges. They were much like we are many times, "Yes-men." Far easier was it to

say "Yes, we will," than to actually *do* what God required of them. So Joshua told them plainly, "Ye cannot serve the Lord: for he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins."

But Joshua did not mean that God would never forgive them. The key is in the next verse: "If." Ye cannot serve God "if ye forsake the Lord, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that he hath done you good" (v. 20).

The same lesson applies to us. If after we have been entrusted with a knowledge of God's saving law we fail to live by it, if we take from it or add to it at our own caprice, we cannot serve the Lord and He will not forgive our sins. ●●

pentance that the people might receive forgiveness of sins. The commission runs: "I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee, 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" (Acts 26:16-18).

Forgiveness is a possibility. God's mercy is great, yet it is selective. "But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them" (Ps. 103:17-18).

Sin Must Be Forsaken Before It Can Be Forgiven

Matthew 6:14-15 covers another aspect of the divine plan for forgiveness: a condition. We must forgive men their trespasses in order for God to forgive us our trespasses.

Let us first direct our attention to God as the great forgiver of sins. The text reads: "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

When we contemplate these words of our Master, we seem to have the feeling that we are treading, as it were, on holy ground, and are forced to realize the need of caution. These words and the words used in the prayer He taught His disciples, "forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors," are so constructed that it seems no comment is necessary. Truly, they are plain and understandable, with no allegorical meaning which might require many hours of study to fathom. Our meditation upon these texts, together with others pertaining to the subject of forgiving and forgiveness, may easily prove helpful to us. It may make us more aware of an important step which must be taken before we can be granted the full salvation.

Because our iniquities separate us from God and hide His face from us that He will not hear our prayers (Isa. 59:1-2), we need to change our relationship with Him so that we *can* secure forgiveness. Sin stands between us and God; it isolates us from Him, and in that state we cannot approach Him with petitions either for temporal blessings

(Continued on page 22)

As We Forgive

WE MUST confess our sins and transgressions to God, but frequently we must also confess to one another. We learn from James 5:16 that we are to "confess [our] faults one to another," and from Ephesians 4:32 that we are to forgive one another. The text reads: "Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." A Christian spirit is a forgiving spirit.

This aspect of brotherly forgiveness is vital to us as Christians. "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." These are the words of Jesus (Matt. 6:14-15), and we should take a personal lesson from them.

While petitioning forgiveness for our own shortcomings, we cannot in any way hold grudges or ill feelings against others who have caused us wrong in any way. An unforgiving spirit shuts the door in God's face, so to speak.

When we realize the meaning of Jesus' words we are faced with a problem from which there is no escape. *He who is not ready to forgive another is not ready to be forgiven.*

We must positively and definitely extend forgiveness to anyone to whom we owe forgiveness. Jesus leaves no room for any possible evasion. He has constructed these words with such skill that once our attention has been drawn to this matter, we are obliged either to forgive our enemies, or cease repeating His prayer—and with that, cease growing spiritually.

Upon one occasion Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?" Perhaps Peter felt his longsuffering would be strained almost to the breaking point if he would forgive his brother as many as seven times. But Jesus astonished him by answering: "I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but until seventy times seven" (Matt. 18:21-22). Jesus wanted to impress a lesson upon Peter's

Those Who Trespass Against Us . . .

mind, a lesson of the need for longsuffering, so He specified, not only seven times but seventy times seven. Jesus may not have intended for us to take the seventy times literally, but He certainly indicated that we need a generous spirit of forgiveness.

An unparalleled principle with God has always been that if a man turns from his iniquity and does that which is lawful and right, his sins shall no more be mentioned. Just so must also our forgiveness be for those who trespass against us and then repent. If we say, I will forgive, but I won't forget, it is just another way of saying, I will not forgive. As someone once stated, forgiveness ought to be like a cancelled note, torn up and thrown away, so that it never can be shown against our debtor.

There are few people in the world who have not at some time or other been really hurt by someone else; or disappointed, or injured, or misled. Such things sink into the memory where they cause inflamed and festered wounds. There is but one remedy—they have to be plucked up and thrown away. Where the offender has repented, forgiveness must be extended; where the wrongdoer remains offensive, we must have no bitterness or resentment. A kindly act toward the offender will often soften him when nothing else will.

Of course, it is not difficult to forgive trifles, but the Lord requires that we forgive not only trifles but things which at first appear impossible. We may cry, I cannot do it, it is too much to ask, the injury was too great; but our own forgiveness from God is dependent upon our extending forgiveness to whom it is due. If we cannot do it and must postpone it, then, as was stated, our spiritual growth will cease, and we shall have to postpone the recital of the Lord's Prayer till such a time as we are able to do so.

More and more we need to examine and understand our own heart and character. We need to learn how deceitful and desperately wicked our hearts naturally are (Jer. 17:9); how we are so often puffed up by our own self-importance and

miserable pride; how vain and wayward have been the thoughts and imaginations of our minds. Then, too, we need to consider what our attitude has been toward our fellow man, our neighbor, our brother in the faith. Unquestionably, our brother has besetments too; for, being human like ourselves, he is subject to every temptation. Life is a growth, and we need to realize that our brother must grow like we must. Too suddenly we can pass judgment, that such a one is hopeless, that he will never merit God's favor. And in our hasty conclusions we forget that we are acting the part of Simon the Pharisee, of Jesus' day. In our self-righteousness we overlook the need of forgiveness for our manifold transgressions and are ready only to condemn another.

Jesus' parable of the Two Debtors is striking indeed, and His application of it to Simon and the sinful woman teaches us to look to ourselves. The woman was sinful and needed much forgiveness; but she realized this and was doing something about it. Simon thought he was just about all right. He thought that as far as the law was concerned, he was blameless. But in reality, he did not take the law to heart in the least. The pharisaic ordinances he performed with meticulous care, but the weightier matters of the law he overlooked completely. Hence, he too needed forgiveness, but did not know it.

Are we like that? If Jesus were to sup with us, would He have need to inform us: "I have somewhat to say to thee" (Luke 7:40)?

That we should forgive others for injuries done us and hold no thoughts of bitterness is told in a few dynamic words in the Lord's Prayer, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us." As we repeat this Prayer intelligently, considering and meaning what we say, we are suddenly confronted with a problem—we must positively and definitely extend forgiveness to everyone to whom we owe it. Jesus leaves no room for evasion. He has constructed His Prayer with more skill than ever yet has a lawyer

displayed in drafting a deed. He has so contrived it that once our attention is drawn to this matter we must forgive in sincerity and truth where forgiveness is due, or never repeat that Prayer. How can we attempt to seek God's Kingdom, and forgiveness for our sins, and at the same time hold grudges against others! After understanding this as we should, it can be safely predicted that should we attempt to repeat this Prayer while still angry against someone we would not finish it. We would stop, or hesitate, or the clause would stick in our throat.

Lest in that future Day we should be faced with that humiliating moment in the Lord's presence, let us examine our hearts and see that no grudges are camouflaged therein in some self-righteous way. Forgive as you would be forgiven; clear yourself of all resentments and bitterness, and you will find your happiness and spiritual growth to be nothing less than phenomenal.

It has been truly said, "He that can not forgive others breaks the bridge over which he must pass himself; for every man has need to be forgiven."•

4 Steps to Forgiveness

Do you want God to forgive you?

There are four preliminaries you must meet. They are pinpointed in King Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple, and are recorded for our learning.

If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves.

Humility is the first condition. Without humility one could not condescend to ask God for forgiveness.

And pray. Prayer is our means of expressing our sincere desire to be forgiven.

And seek my face. This is another way of saying that God does not run after us when we transgress. We must approach Him. And we must approach Him with the proper, seeking attitude. The self-confident man who would come to the throne of grace with the attitude of the typical Pharisee, who in his prayer enumerated his good qualities, could not reasonably hope to be heard and forgiven.

And turn from their wicked ways. Here is the final step to God's forgiveness. We must turn from our evil, forsake it, and do what God calls right.

Then God will hear from heaven, and will forgive our sin, and will heal our land (II Chron. 7:14).

A Prayer

Our Father, as our heads we bow,
We make a heartfelt plea;
We know that we but children are,
And weak, compared to Thee.

We are too young to understand
What life may hold in store;
But we are trusting all to Thee,
And we would trust Thee more.

We know Thy tender, chiding voice
Canst guide us o'er the tide,
And, Father, we will sing Thy praise
Upon the other side.

Our lives we yield to Thee, dear God,
To make them what Thou will,
And we, Thy willing servants, shall
Thy holy Word fulfill.

Our thoughts shall ever be of Thee,
To Thee we give our best;
And when our work for Thee is done,
Then may our souls be blest.



MEGIDDO MESSAGE

Which Are You-- Mouse or Man?

BY J. B. PHILLIPS

EVERY YEAR in the harvest fields of England there are thousands of little tragedies. The victims are those charming little creatures called harvest mice.

Earlier in the year the growing corn seems to them to be the ideal place in which to settle and bring up a family. Food, shelter, and building material are there in plenty, and everything seems perfectly adapted for their needs. The forest of innumerable cornstalks is their whole world, and in it they court and play and bring up their families. Their happiness seems to be complete.

Until the harvest. For when the day comes for the owner of the field to reap his harvest, tragedy inevitably begins for the harvest mouse. The whole world of waving corn which seemed so snug and secure, so specially designed for his comfort and nourishment, comes crashing down about his ears. The field which he thought was his world never really belonged to him at

all, and the fact that the growing corn was not meant for his food and shelter has, alas, never entered his tiny head.

The life of the harvest mouse is not a bad picture of the way in which some people live in this world. They, too, work and play and bring up children in the happy belief that it is their world, and that to think of any possible future calamity is old-fashioned and silly. Yet Christ said quite plainly that this world is like a field that belongs to God, and that it is moving inevitably toward a harvest. You can read about it in Matthew's Gospel, chapter 13, verses 24-43. For this little world is not, as some imagine, a permanent thing at all. When God decides that His great experiment has gone on long enough, He will reap the harvest. To quote Christ's words: "The harvest is the end of the world," the end of the present arrangement of things.

The field mouse is deceived be-

cause for months he is left to his own devices. He never sees the owner of the field and naturally knows nothing of the coming harvest. How easily today we may be deceived into thinking that because God, the Owner of the world, does not put in an appearance and does not interfere with the power of man to choose, He is not interested in the experiment we call life. Many imagine that the "field" actually belongs to man and that there is no such thing as an eventual "harvest."

But as surely as Christ lives, His statement about this world's being the field of God with an inevitable harvest is true and should be most seriously considered.

No one can blame the little harvest mouse for not realizing the true purpose of the cornfield or the certainty of the eventual reaping. But what are we—mice or men? ●●

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From A Reader—

The Heavens Declare

"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork" (Ps. 19:1).

The increasing development of improved methods for studying the starry heavens is producing more and more wonders about our universe. An article I read recently by Albert Rosenfeld tells about newly discovered objects of light and energy that "have caught even our astronomers who are accustomed to dealing on a cosmic scale, in open-mouthed astonishment." He says these objects are six billion light-years away from the earth and brighter than a whole galaxy of stars, or one mil-

lion suns, and are "incredibly beautiful and of unprecedented grandeur."

The Bible says, "The Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth: by understanding hath he established the heavens." The great book of nature is an amazing revelation of His wisdom which constantly unfolds in ever-increasing dimensions. Our scientists can but dimly perceive its entirety.

Through Christ, God made known a great new dimension of His love—so great that Paul speaks of the love of Christ "which passeth knowledge." What confidence and comfort is ours, to know that such incredible wisdom may be the controlling power in our lives!

—Mrs. M. E., Warwick, Queensland, Australia

Words to WALK By

God has promised forgiveness when we truly repent; but He has not promised tomorrow when we truly procrastinate.

Hindsight often explains what foresight could have prevented.

The less you look backward the farther forward you are likely to get.

He who postpones the time of beginning to live right is like the lad who waits for the river to run out before he crosses it.

Live cheerfully; think hopefully; pray earnestly; walk carefully.

When you are sure you are right, go straight ahead.

If your life seems empty, put more into it.

Wear a cheerful countenance. Don't blame the world for all your troubles by looking sour.

Resolve each day to live and work with resolution.

There is one thing God cannot do—give you back the time you wasted.

Some of the troubles on which we stub our toes are the little things we pushed aside yesterday as unimportant.

THINK!

1. Who made known the interpretation
When writing caused great consternation?
He kept his soul in sound repair
By frequent, earnest, daily prayer.
2. What prophet great was said to be
Of passion like to you and me?
He taught a lesson great and stern—
"There is one God," this all should learn.
3. "Whom shall I send?" came heaven's plea.
Who answered, "Here am I, send me"?
This prophet saw a time of peace
When learning war shall forever cease.
4. Who said, "I'll joy in God's salvation
Whatever be my deprivation;
Though empty barn, and empty stall,
I'll joy in God, though I lose all"?
5. What herdsman came from Judah's clod
With heart intense in things of God?
He warned that songs God will not hear;
Without good deeds, He'll not draw near.

6. "That which I vowed Thee, I will pay,
With thanks and sacrifice I pray."
Who remembered the God who saves
When over him passed the billowy waves?

7. Who saw a man with measuring line
To measure Jerusalem, all sublime?
"Because of the multitude," the angel said,
"The city wall-less is inhabited."

8. Who gave the priests severe rebuke
Because they slighted the Pentateuch?
To God, the sick and the lame they gave;
For the governor's plate, the best did save.

9. Who forewarned Nineveh, a city great,
That for her crime she'd be desolate,
But those who trust in God, He knows,
He'll make them strong against their foes?

10. What prophet served God with holy desire?
In him God's word was a burning fire.
An iron pillar and wall was he
To warn kings, princes, and people, you see.

Answers

1. Daniel (5:17; 6:10) 2. Elijah (Jas. 5:17; 1 Kings 18:39) 3. Isaiah (6:8; 2:1-4) 4. Habakkuk (3:17-18) 5. Amos (1:1; 5:23-24) 6. Jonah (2:3-9) 7. Zechariah (2:1-4) 8. Malachi (1:6-8) 9. Nahum (1:7; 3:1-7) 10. Jeremiah (1:18; 20:9)

MEGIDDO MESSAGE

UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God."

The Mosaic Law

NO ONE can deny the need for law. Different periods of history have produced different laws, according to the needs of the people at that time. While there have been exceptions, most laws have benefited the people they governed. A lawless society would be disastrous in any age. Man, left to do as he pleases, would not long survive his own willful waywardness. He would do that which seemed right in his own eyes, to his own peril. Only under the discipline of enforced law is the best in man developed.

Among all systems of law that have existed, the Mosaic law stands alone as civil law that was God-given. Indeed, its author was God Almighty; for none but the Almighty could have prescribed a law which would work so perfectly for the well-being of every individual of a nation as did the so-called Law of Moses. Such a far-reaching law required deep insight into human nature, insight not possessed by humans.

"Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face" (Ps. 89:14). This text suggests two of the prime attributes of God—He is both just and righteous. Whatever He does is done in righteousness.

To men with only mortal, finite minds, living more than three millenniums this side of the Exodus, God's laws given to Israel and the punishments that accompanied them seem harsh. But we know that it was all for the good of the people. God Himself was directing, developing from a horde of illiterate slaves a civilized people, a people from whom He could select a few to call His own.

God gave Israel every advantage from the very first of His workings with them. By His power they escaped safely from their Egyptian pursuers, men of the most powerful nation on earth at that time. By Him they were fed with manna from heaven and provided with water out of the rock. By Him they were disciplined and taught respect and obedience. They were cut off for disobedience, but never without warning; always they were

given a chance to obey His commands and escape the punishment. Was not God just?

But how fickle is human nature! After all the miracles the Israelites had seen at the hand of God between Egypt and Mount Sinai, their leader had to be gone from their sight only six weeks and they were making themselves an idol, a calf of gold, reminiscent of the Egyptian animal-gods. The bull, Apis, had long been an object of worship among the Egyptians. Israel had yet to receive—and learn—the first commandment, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." The lesson took forty years to learn—forty years of trials and tribulations in the wilderness.

In our last lesson on this subject, we covered the part of the Law which dealt mostly with their social life, their relationship with one another. We will continue our study into the sacred portion of the Law.

II. THE LAW FROM SINAI

There is an old saying that runs, "Always let your conscience be your guide." But what is "conscience"? **Conscience** is defined as "Moral discrimination, the faculty by which distinctions are made between moral right and wrong." Hence, one's "conscience" is not a reliable guide unless it has been properly educated. An uneducated conscience cannot discern between good and evil.

The Mosaic law was Israel's conscience. It identified for them what was right and what was wrong. Through obeying the Law, applying its precepts to their lives, their consciences could become educated to know right from wrong. Accompanying obedience was demanded; no halfway service would do. God said, "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine." Israel heard the words from Moses, and made their covenant in these words: "All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient" (Ex. 19:5; 24:7).

The Ten Commandments contained moral restraints previously unknown to Israel. Through these they learned to accept responsibility for their

actions toward each other and toward God. In the listing, God was first, the family second and society last. Israel was to put responsibility toward God above all else (something sadly lacking in our modern society). Pagan religions were but idolatry and superstition, offering nothing that could lift the mind of man above its natural earthward gravitation. Pagan religions often helped to drag the mind of man down by appealing to his basest instincts. God wanted His people to be superior to all others, distinguished for their morality. In giving the Law, He was working toward this end.

The secular part of the Law which we have covered contained much for the creation of good government and many regulations that worked for the good of the people. But this was not all the Law. There was also a sacred part, a code that affected their everyday life as much as the secular laws. This code prescribed a ritual of sacrifice, provided for the construction of a tabernacle, and established a priesthood.

We will briefly study the religious Law, observing the types and shadows of the various symbols.

C. The Tabernacle

The tabernacle served as the center of worship for the Children of Israel for about 500 years. It was constructed of materials offered by the people, some of which they had received from the Egyptians when they left the Land of Goshen. It was fabricated according to exact specifications given to Moses in the Mount. The angel gave Moses directions for every board, every curtain, every hook, ring, clasp and loop for every cord. The whole structure was designed by the divine Architect and built by craftsmen "filled... with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship" (Ex. 31:3).

The tabernacle was unique. It was assembled in such a fashion that it could be taken down and moved on short notice, for "when the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the children of Israel went onward in all their journeys," and "when the cloud tarried long upon the tabernacle many days, then the children of Israel kept the charge of the Lord, and journeyed not" (Ex. 40:36; Num. 9:19).

Moses received the instructions for the tabernacle from God, and more than once he was exhorted to "Look that thou make them after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount [which thou wast caused to see]" (Ex. 25:40). The importance of fashioning it according to the pattern was emphasized by the writer to the

Hebrews many centuries later: "Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount" (Heb. 8:5). The lesson was one of obedience; first, God must have a leader that would follow His instructions.

"And it came to pass in the first month in the second year, on the first day of the month, that the tabernacle was reared up... Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle" (Ex. 40:17, 34-35). In this way God was setting His seal of approval on their work. The tabernacle was the meeting place of God and man; it symbolized the presence of God in their midst.

The tabernacle consisted of three main parts: the holy place, the most holy place and the court that surrounded it. A veil separated the holy place from the most holy place. According to the pattern given Moses, the court was about 75' x 150' and the tabernacle proper 15' x 45', with a cubicle 15' x 15' in one end known as the most holy place.

The completed tabernacle became to the Children of Israel the focal point of their religious life as well as the seat of justice. By way of the tabernacle God provided spiritual guidance; by it He directed their travels in the wilderness, and when they followed its direction, He protected them from their enemies. Its furnishings were God-designed and engineered; all had a specific purpose and were symbolic of future things, an "example and shadow of heavenly things" (Heb. 8:5), "a shadow of things to come," as Paul stated it (Col. 2:17). We will briefly review the furnishings and what they represent.

1. The ark of the covenant. The ark, built according to God-ordained specifications, was a chest of wood about three and one half feet by two and one half feet, overlaid with gold. It contained the original copy of the Law as received by Moses (Ex. 31:18), the two tables of stone given to Moses on the Mount, a pot of the manna with which they were fed in the Wilderness and Aaron's rod.

The ark itself was sacred and it was kept in the most sacred place, the Most Holy Place; hence it was seen only by the High Priest, and by him only once a year when he entered there. The ark symbolized the presence of God. Other ancient nations took images of their gods to battle; Israel took the ark. The cover of the ark was known as the "Mercy Seat," symbolizing God's righteous law. The ark was placed directly underneath the wide-spreading wings of the cherubims, which were symbolic of God's power and protection.

The articles contained in the ark were likewise significant. The two tables of stone represented God's law, indelibly engraved in stone, signifying its unchangeableness. The pot of Manna was emblematic of God's unfailing provision for His people, while Aaron's rod bore testimony that God had chosen Aaron and his sons for the service of the priesthood.

2. The table of shewbread. This was an important appurtenance to the tabernacle. Its size, shape, location, and use were God-decreed. It was kept in the Holy Place, the larger part of the tabernacle. It contained twelve loaves, one for each of the twelve tribes. The bread was to be renewed each week so that it would be always fresh. It was eaten by the priests.

The table is a symbol of the Lord's table (I Cor. 10:21) of which we must eat if we would become a part of the twelve spiritual tribes of His people, called spiritual Israel. The bread, the Word of God, is always fresh, never stale, and must be freely eaten that we may grow.

3. The seven-branched lampstand. This ornamental lamp occupied a place opposite the table of shewbread. It symbolizes the knowledge of God that shines in the lives of God's people in all ages. "Ye are the light of the world," said Jesus of His disciples.

4. The altar of incense. This was the only other furnishing inside the tabernacle. The priests burned incense here twice daily, typifying the prayers of the righteous that ascend to God (Rev. 8:3).

Outside in the court were located the laver and the brazen altar, or the altar of burnt offering. At this laver the priests washed themselves before their sacrificial rites, demonstrating that all sin must be washed away, thoroughly cleansed. The sacrifices offered upon the altar of burnt offering represented the "living sacrifice" which each faithful one must make. The fires that burned continually on this altar represent the continual sacrifice that must be made. The altar and the burnt offering were visual aids to illustrate how we must offer continual spiritual sacrifice that is acceptable to God.

D. The Priesthood

The Levitical Priesthood, ordained by God, served the Jewish nation both in civil and spiritual matters. The priests had to measure up to exacting qualifications specified in the Law. The priests were all Levites, but not all Levites were priests. The priests had to be descendants of Aaron, the first priest chosen by God.

At their consecration, the priests followed a pre-

scribed pattern, which included washing, change of clothing and anointing. The ceremony concluded with a sacrifice on the altar. During the ceremony, the blood of one of the rams was to be applied to the persons of Aaron and his sons, upon the ear, hand and foot. A Talmudic writing says that having the organs of hearing, handling and walking touched by the sacrifice implies that "the priest is to have hallowed ears to listen to God's commands, hallowed hands to perform his sacred offices, and hallowed feet to tread rightly the sacred places, as also to walk in holy ways."

The Levitical Priesthood symbolizes the Royal Priesthood, the body of "kings and priests" that will one day guide the nations of earth after the second coming of Christ. Just as the members of the Levitical Priesthood had to meet specified qualifications, so must the members of the future Royal Priesthood conform their lives to the standard set forth in God's Word.

Another important office of the Priesthood was the High Priest. The High Priest was the spiritual head of the nation, the chief mediator between God and men. Aaron was never designated as "high priest," but his office foreshadowed the position. The high priest was looked upon as the holiest man in the nation of Israel. He was looked up to as an example of all that God expected of men. The office was of such importance that epochs of time are dated by the death of the high priest.

It was the duty of the high priest to go into the most holy place once a year to make reconciliation for the sins of the people and to return with a blessing for them. (God was represented as speaking from above the mercy seat of the ark in the most holy place—Ex. 25:22.)

The office of high priest foreshadowed the position Christ will hold in the new order. The writer of Hebrews draws this parallel: "We have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God." He "is not entered into the holy places made with hands, . . . but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: . . . and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Heb. 4:14; 9:24, 28). As surely as the high priest under the Levitical order returned to bless the people, so will our High Priest return to bring the blessing of salvation unto those who look for Him.

E. The Sacrifices

The principle of sacrifice has ever been a part of God's plan. God made men free moral agents—free to choose the good or the evil, life or death. Always there is sacrifice involved. A person must

sacrifice the one to enjoy the other.

The Israelites' law prescribed many different types of sacrifices and offerings. We will discuss a few of them, according to the various purposes they served.

1. Expiation offerings. When a person violated the law, some form of expiation, or else a definite penalty—depending upon the nature of the offence—was required. The Mosaic law was a law designed to be obeyed. One might sin in total ignorance of the law, but ignorance was no excuse. When he learned of his sin, he had to make reparation. It was every person's duty to know and keep the law.

a. Sin offering. This offering was required when a person sinned "through ignorance . . . concerning things which ought not to be done" (Lev. 4:2). The person making the offering had to bring his own animal to the tabernacle. In the presence of the priest and the people he had to lay his hands upon the animal, thus acknowledging publicly that this was *his* offering for *his* sin. Whether ruler or common citizen, the requirement was the same. The offerer then had to slay his animal himself (Lev. 4:24-29), and the priest performed the rest of the ritual. The animal went to the priest as food.

b. Guilt offering. A guilt offering was a specific kind of sin offering, required when a man had deprived another of his rightful due. This offering applied to such acts as cheating in matters of deposit or security, robbery, failing to report the finding of lost property, etc. In addition to making the sin offering, the offender had to pay the full amount that had been defrauded, plus a fine of twenty percent (Lev. 5:16; 6:5).

Sin and guilt offerings could atone for ritual and ethical sins committed without forethought and plan; but other offenses, committed consciously and with real intent, sins of the "up-raised hand," "high handed sins" (Num. 15:30-31), required the payment of a penalty, often death. This was because such offenses were counted as outright rejection of God's covenant. Included in this category were idolatry, witchcraft and false prophesying, blasphemy, violation of the Sabbath, striking or reviling a parent, murder, adultery, unchastity, and false witness in capital cases. Rebellion such as that of Korah was a "highhanded sin" too great for any sacrifice to cover (Numbers 16). Violation of the ritual calendar and sacred institutions was also serious: non-observance of the Passover; eating of blood; eating sacrifices while in an unclean state; eating the remainder of a peace offering too late; touching holy things illegally; defiling the sanctuary by personal uncleanness—such infractions

were punished as evidence of one's rejection of God.

2. Consecration offerings. These were offerings by which the people renewed their commitment to God.

a. Burnt offering. Burnt offerings were by far the most frequent sacrifices at the Israelite sanctuary. The continual burnt offering was made twice each day, a male lamb morning and evening (Ex. 29:38-42). The climax of each of the annual festivals was marked by a series of elaborate burnt offerings, signifying Israel's complete surrender to God.

b. Cereal offering. A regular part of most animal sacrifice rituals was the cereal or "meat" offering (Lev. 6:14-23). It was a concoction of fine flour, olive oil, and frankincense baked in loaves or wafers or morsels. The offerer was responsible for bringing the prepared loaves or wafers to the sanctuary. The priest burned one handful on the altar and the rest was his portion to eat.

3. Communal offerings. These were offerings entirely voluntary. They were not required but were a special privilege permitted those who had met all the requirements of sin and consecration offerings.

a. Peace offering. All voluntary offerings were some form of peace offering—the freewill offering, the thank offering, the votive offering, the wave offering, the heave offering, the consecration offering. All were offered in thanksgiving to God, an expression of gratitude for mercies received. They were offered at every harvest festival and every occasion of rejoicing. In each case the offering had to be perfect, as in all other sacrifices.

Following every peace offering was a joyous occasion—a communal meal. Except for those parts which were burned upon the altar or assigned to the priest, the body of the sacrificed animal was given to the offerer; and he, with his family and the Levite from his community, could enjoy a feast, if they complied strictly with the rules governing such occasions (Deut. 12:6, 11; Lev. 7:19-21). This was God's way of telling Israel that if they gave God their best, in the end the best would be theirs.

The lesson in sacrifice was obedience. That which was offered upon the altar meant nothing to the Almighty. The animals, the incense, the meal and the oil in themselves were valueless. It was the principle of willingly giving up something for God, sacrificing something of value in obedience to His command that counted. The price was high; always the best belonged to God.

Reprints of these studies are available upon request.

Kathy Kandor's Korner

If In Doubt, Don't!

"MOM," KEN rested a sturdy elbow lightly on my shoulder.

Placing the spoon in the holder, I turned to give him my full attention.

"Yes, Son."

"Mom, the Juniors and Seniors are planning an outing for next weekend."

"Yes."

"Any chance it would be all right for me to go?"

"What would you say?" I asked quietly.

Ken studied the floor pattern. "Well-l-i-l—" he said doubtfully.

"Would you be comfortable to invite God to share in everything you would be doing on such a trip?"

"That all depends," was Ken's slow response.

"What about the attire that would be worn on such an outing—do you think God would approve of it?"

Ken shook his head vigorously.

"What about the places you would go?"

"Oh, they'll be seeing some things I'd really like to see. There's a big historic museum they plan to tour."

"Is that all?"

"And some special rock formations we've studied about in science class, our teacher wants to show us on the way."

"Is that all?"

"And some real live drama that's playing at some theatre Saturday night."

"Do you really think, Ken, that you could take God *there* with you?"

Ken shook his head. "But Mom, there are so many *good* things we'll be seeing and doing. They're planning a party, too, but I think I could stay away from that. I could go do something else."

"*Could* you? Isn't that part of the plan on these

outings, to do things *together*, as one group? And Ken, I don't really see how you could feel part of the group. Do you?"

No answer.

I could picture so many un-Christian activities and mannerisms and pastimes on such an outing, but hardly knew which to mention.

"What about some of the music you will be listening to?"

"I don't think much of what they call music—when it comes to rock, and pop, and so on. So much noise. I'll just close my ears."

"What will you be *talking* about?"

"Mom! How could I know? You can't plan *everything*!"

"No, but you as a Christian must think ahead. It *does matter* what you talk about, doesn't it?"

No answer, but I could see Ken was getting the point.

"Any of your classmates smoke?"

"Not in school."

"But you aren't going to be in school with them on an outing. And I think you'll find they're quite different outside school. You don't really know a lot of them, Ken."

"I know it, Mom. That's why I'd like to go. I'm sure some of them are really good people."

"I think you'll be amazed—and shocked—at some of the things they'll do and say when they're *on their own*."

"But Mom, what are they going to think of me if I don't go? I'll be the only one in the class that stays home, except for Claud and Joe. And nobody really wants them to go anyway. And I'll get rated right along with them."

"Ken." I looked squarely at my son as I shook my head. "Which means more to you—what your classmates think, or what God thinks of you?"

Ken's eyes dropped, and he was silent.

"Son, you aren't the first one to run into things like this. Paul had it in his day. Of course, it was different in some ways, but the people of his day wanted him to do things with them. Like joining with them in their feasts and eating meat that had been offered to idols. More than just eating the meat was involved. It was the company he would be in, and the reason he would be eating with them."

"What do you mean, Mom?"

"Let's read about it. It's in Romans 14." I washed my hands and went to the dining room for a Bible. Ken followed, and we settled down at the table.

"Verse 22. 'Hast thou faith? have it to thy-

(Continued on page 23)

The Pitcher Plant

AMONG the marvelous curiosities of the vegetable kingdom is the pitcher plant. This most attractive plant has one very distinguishing feature: it is literally a prison and death knell to every insect that enters its enclosures.

Throughout the world in boggy and tropical areas can be found over sixty different varieties of pitcher plants. These, instead of having ordinary leaf blades, have tall, pitcher-shaped or funnel-shaped leaves. These leaves stand more or less erect, each having a lid that serves to keep out most of the raindrops.

All pitcher plants secrete a sweet, honey-like substance which invites insects to explore the inside of the pitchers. Few insects can resist the lure of sweetness; others are attracted by the bright colors of many of the pitchers. Drawn by the smell of sweet fluid, the unwary insects enter the mouth of the pitcher and begin to eat the honey which lies around its edges. Desiring more and more of this sweet fluid, they crawl down into the neck of the pitcher, further and further, to an area lined with sharp and slippery hairs, all pointing downward, which serve to prevent their escape. Just below the hairs is a "slide zone" which is so slippery that insects touching it cannot keep from skidding further. Down they slide, and they are trapped. In their struggling they slip to the bottom where they drown in a small well of water and honey.

Such is the end of their pursuit of sweetness.

What lessons we as professing Christians can draw from the pitcher plant! The pleasures of this present evil world attract the natural man as does the pitcher plant the insect. Indeed, the attraction is so strong that only very few have willpower sufficient to resist, and those few must struggle continually to keep above its subtle powers.

The sweet honey and the attractive colors of the pitcher plant might be compared with the pleasure, honor and wealth of the world. Its gratifications may seem so satisfying and harmless; its honor and praise so sufficient to make us happy; its wealth would lead us to believe in a false security of having everything we might desire; its advanced science and technology would make us feel important and self-sufficient even to the point that we fail

to recognize our need for God who rules and sustains the universe. But beware!

Once we allow ourselves to be drawn into the pursuit of these, and taste their passing sweetness, we, like the insects, want more—and more—and more. Yet, in attempting to satisfy ourselves and get all we can from life, we only fall deeper and deeper into sin, never finding any real satisfaction. And all the time we are entering further and further into the prison house of darkness and our chances of escape are becoming slimmer.

When an insect reaches the layer of hairs, its descent is practically effortless; and all contrary effort is vain. As soon as it tries to climb back out, these spike-like hairs are arrayed against it as an army of swords. Escape at this point is very nearly impossible.

Likewise, in our human society, those who be-



come established and seem to have everything in their favor are often in a precarious position. At best, their social security is short-lived; and should they desire the higher pleasures that Christian living affords, they find that the very things that are pleasurable and satisfying are just the things that hinder most their attempt to climb to higher ground and a more rewarding life.

The "slide zone" might be compared to the declining years of one's life when change is nearly impossible because one is so firmly established in his old ways and habits. As the prophet Jeremiah wrote, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? Then also you can do no good who are accustomed to do evil" (Jer. 13:23, Berkeley). And finally, as the insect is drowned by the very sweetness it desired, so sin when it is finished bringeth forth death (Jas. 1:13-14). There is a way, wrote the wise Solomon, "that seemeth right

unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Prov. 14:12). "Bread of deceit is sweet to a man, but afterward his mouth shall be filled with gravel" (Prov. 20:17).

We see many people today, seemingly care-free and happy, clamoring for the things of the world, its gratification, its entertainments, its wealth or its pride. But if we would be wise and obtain something of greater and more eternal value, we must heed the counsel of the holy men of old. If we are inclined to think, "Just a little of the forbidden will be harmless," the apostle John says to us: "Love not the world." "Never give your hearts to this world or to any of the things in it. A man cannot love the Father and love the world at the same time. For the whole world system, based as it is on men's primitive desires, their greedy ambitions, and the glamor of all that they think splendid, is not derived from the Father at all, but from the world itself. The world and all its passionate desires will one day disappear. But the man who is following God's will is part of the permanent and cannot die" (I John 2:15-17, Phillips).

If we have any slight desire for the sweetness of pride, we should do well to derive a real lesson from this bit of nature study and heed the Bible warning: "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall."

God has given to each of us the power of choice. "Whoever loves his lower life will lose the higher; but whoever hates his lower life in this world preserves the higher for eternal life" (John 12:25, Phillips). This must be our attitude if we would avoid the dangers of fleshly indulgence and secure our place at the right hand of Christ. ●●

Small Enough?

A great naturalist and his friend, after an evening's talk, would often go outside, look up at the sky, and see who could first detect the faint spot of light-mist coming from the great galaxy, Andromeda. Then one of them would recite:

"That is the Spiral Galaxy of Andromeda. It is as large as our Milky Way. It is one of a hundred million galaxies. It is 2 million light years away. It consists of one hundred billion suns, each larger than our sun." Whereupon the other would respond, "Now I think we are small enough. Let's go to bed."

November, 1975

Touching Shoulders

*There's a comforting thought at the close of the day,
When I'm weary and tired, but not sad.
This thought, it grips hold of my faltering frame
And bids me rejoice and be glad.
It lightens my soul and it scatters the blue
And it thrills me with joy through and through
As I think of the spiritual strength that I gained
Walking shoulder to shoulder with you.*

*Did you know that you gave me new courage today?
Did you know I was laboring hard?
Did you know that I struggled and waited and prayed
And was cheered by your friendly, kind word?
Did you know I thanked God for the smile that you
gave,
The sound of your voice ringing true?
Did you know I grew stronger and better because
I had merely touched shoulders with you?*

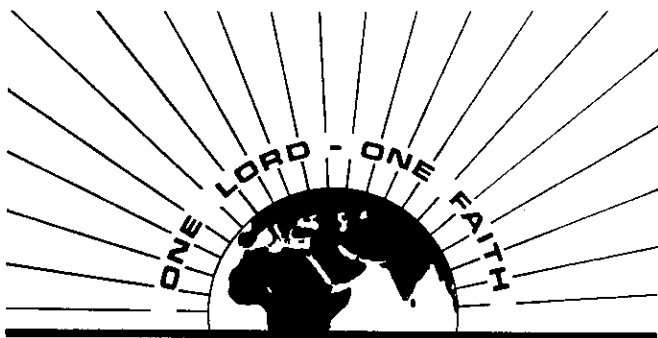
*I am glad that I live, that I battle and strive
A place in God's kingdom to fill.
I am thankful for trials, I'll meet with a smile
Whatever life brings, good or ill.
I may not have wealth and I may not be great,
But to God I resolve to be true.
And I still feel the courage that you gave to me
When I touched shoulders with you.*

*I long to be there when the ages roll on,
I'm determined to work with a will.
There's no satisfaction like moving ahead—
There is nothing to equal the thrill.
I see you hurry on, up this noble highway,
You are pressing your way straitly through.
Oh, it gives me new hope and a strong, noble lift
When I touch shoulders with you.*

*To be a new person, yes new through and through,
That's the goal of my life and desire.
I want heaven's blessing and glory supreme;
To the great crown of life I aspire!*

*Did you know that I traveled much faster today
For the friends that I met on the way?
May my life be a blessing to others, I pray,
May I hearten them on their way.
It would thrill me with joy to hear somebody say
In the Kingdom, with love ringing true,
"You can't know the strength you imparted to me
Every time I touched shoulders with you."*

—Contributed.



After the Resurrection

Jesus died. And that event marks the end of the story of the usual mortal career. Everything a man may possibly accomplish in this world must be pressed into the time between his birth and his death. "For there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest" (Eccl. 9:10).

But the story of Jesus is different—so different that the interval between His birth and His death may be called only the introduction to His biography. For though those first years were critical and upon their success depended the course of all that would follow, they were but the beginning.

Jesus started mortal life as other men, but at that point His story diverges; and the ending is vastly different. For in reality, Jesus' story is without end! Jesus outlived and shall continue to outlive all of His biographers, except for those who follow in His footsteps. For Jesus is alive for evermore!

Jesus died. But He was not left in death. The Father had plans for Him, and He raised Christ from the power of death. That resurrection was the opening of an entirely new phase of life for Jesus, life which would shortly be changed even in its basic form. Jesus was resurrected to mortal life. But shortly He would be crowned with immortality; never again would He have to taste of death.

This means that as you read these lines, Jesus is a living, thinking, active Being somewhere in God's mighty universe. What is He doing? What has He done in all those years since the time He was taken up? What will He be doing in the future? That is what we will be thinking about in this article.

Follow Jesus through each step up to this point: a child born in Bethlehem, a lad growing up in Nazareth, a young man working in the Nazareth carpenter shop, a young preacher traveling about

Galilee and Judea with a handful of faithful followers, and many, many enemies. Follow Him through the dark hours that followed—His suffering and death, to the tomb, and then—out of death—alive!

And then?

Read in your Bible the account of His experiences and activities in the days that followed His resurrection (see Matthew 28; Mark 16; Luke 24; John 20 and 21; Acts 1), and you will see Jesus emerging in a new role—a role in which He is both Lord and Master. No longer is He subject to the power of men. He is a man victorious over sin and death, a man whose career shall continue to unfold through all eternity.

JESUS' resurrected life was a continuance of mortal existence. He could walk and talk, eat and sleep as other men. But this does not mean that all things for Him were just the same *after* as they had been *before*. Jesus' death marked the end of His warfare against His natural inclinations. He could say with confidence, even before He was crucified, "It is finished." Again, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."

Jesus' death also marked the end of any possible fear of the effects of mortality. Never again would He have to face the hateful Sanhedrin. Never again would He feel the pangs of suffering. Never again would He find Himself in the hands of sinful men. Jesus was victorious.

The interval of time that separated the resurrection from the next great event—the ascension—was brief, only forty days. But those days were vital to Jesus' disciples. They were days of building up faith and restoring confidence and deepening insights. They were days of preparation for the long years which lay ahead. Much had to be communicated quickly, for Jesus would shortly be gone.

Little of specific events is recorded about the forty days between, but the Biblical historian Luke tells us about a particular meeting of Jesus' disciples which Jesus Himself came and joined—as a visitor uninvited and unexpected but very welcome (Luke 24:36-43). Jesus used the opportunity to strengthen their confidence in God and to give perspective to their faith. He reviewed vital prophecies with which they were familiar, and pointed to their fulfillment in Himself. "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me" (Luke 24:44).

Acts 1 (also authored by Luke) tells us that Jesus spent the brief forty days with His disciples "speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" (v. 3).

What "things pertaining"? We are told of one—it was a question of the time. They had heard it before; Jesus had told them when the Kingdom would be established, but they had not taken it in. He had compared Himself to a "nobleman" going into a "far country"—even heaven itself—"to receive for himself a kingdom and to return" (see Luke 19:11-27; Matt. 25:10-14). He had even noted that only after a "long time" would He return. But they had not comprehended.

Now they put the question to Him again: "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?"

Jesus' answer is meaningful: "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power." Or in other words, That time is so far in the future that even the times and seasons of it mean nothing to you. But I have work for you, a special assignment: "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:6-8). Here was a special promise of special power—the Holy Spirit; not a *person* but a *power*: "Ye shall receive power." It would be power for the purpose of confirming their words, to prove to all that they were men of God, divinely commissioned (see Mark 16:15-20).

The power would come upon them, and they were commanded to "tarry... in Jerusalem" until it came.

The Ascension

And then, "while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight." While they stood watching, their eyes fixed on His gradually disappearing form, two angels who were standing by spoke words of comforting assurance and promise: "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:9-11).

That is all we are told about the great event. But it is enough. Jesus went away, and as surely as He went away and in like manner He shall come again. This is the confident expectation of all His followers since that time. It was the expectation of the early Church; it is our hope today.

The disciples tarried in Jerusalem as they had

been instructed, and after only ten days, when they were all gathered together on the day of Pentecost, it happened. "Suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:1-4).

This was the power Jesus had promised. The fact that they had received it meant that Jesus had reached the Father's throne, and had been judged, approved, and crowned with glory and immortality. Peter, speaking by the power of the Holy Spirit, testified to this fact: "He being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, ... hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear" (Acts 2:33). Of some time previous, while Jesus was yet on earth, it has been written that "the Holy Spirit was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified" (John 7:39). The arrival of the Holy Spirit was a meaningful sign to those who knew Jesus!

Choosing an Apostle

The next event on earth to which Jesus was directly related was the choosing of a twelfth apostle to replace Judas. (You will recall that Judas had betrayed Christ into the hands of His enemies and had died as a result, losing the apostleship.)

The original plan had been for twelve apostles; and when one failed, Jesus saw fit to choose another to take his place. One qualification of being an apostle was that a man have seen the risen Christ and been appointed by Him.

Years went by while the Eleven carried on the work. Then the time came when Jesus saw the man He wanted to fill the twelfth place—a zealous, strong-headed Jew, at the time bent on making the Christians suffer for their beliefs; but a man who had tremendous potential.

Jesus' method of choosing this man was unique. He appeared to him, a blinding light from heaven which struck Saul to the ground. And Jesus spoke to him: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" From that moment forward the whole of Paul's career was changed. He became Christ's chosen vessel, counting everything else but loss "that [he] might win Christ" and the high calling to which Christ had called him (Phil. 3:8-14).

One Final Message

After Jesus had been in heaven a number of years, He still had one final message He wanted
(Continued on page 23)

Divine Forgiveness

(Continued from page 8)

or for rewards of life eternal.

The prophet Isaiah (1:16-18) suggests that if we wash and cleanse from our sins, if we cease to do evil and learn to do well, *then* though our sins had been red like crimson they shall be white as wool. God will pardon, He will forgive; all He asks is that we stop sinning, that we forsake our ways and thoughts and turn to Him with our whole heart (Isa. 55:6-7).

It is right and proper that we ask forgiveness for our many sins—and more, we are commanded to do so. For it is only as we ask and expect to receive forgiveness according to His terms that we shall make an effort to eliminate our sins.

And the eliminating of sin is absolutely essential. It is only he that “confesseth and forsaketh” his sins that “shall have mercy” (Prov. 28:13).

But Psalm 86:5 gives a heart-strengthening promise: “For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee.” When we have met His conditions, we may rejoice that He is ready to forgive. If sincere we need not fear that God will not hear our prayer, or that we cannot find Him. The promise is: “And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart” (Jer. 29:13). God is a God near at hand, as well as a God afar off.

The key to finding God and having Him hear our prayer is earnestness. And that earnestness must

be applied in a practical manner. A wise man of the world once said, “No man ever went successfully through any great enterprise whose earnestness did not amount to enthusiasm.” If our seeking after God is to be successful, it too must be sincere, and the earnestness with which we seek Him must amount to enthusiasm. Seeking and finding God is not the work of a moment, nor a process that can be successfully accomplished without effort. Seeking and finding Him implies the taking of essential and consecutive steps: the acquisition of a knowledge of Him and His ways; conviction, application, perfection. It would be absurd for us to expect Him to recognize us unless we recognize His indisputable authority. It is for Him to speak, and for us to humbly listen; His to command, and ours to obey.

And once merited, God’s forgiveness is abundant: “Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption” (Ps. 130:7). What a gracious promise! “With the Lord... is plenteous redemption.”

God Forgives Sins Only on His Own Terms

In I Samuel 11 is the account of King Saul’s first military venture. Only a month before he had been anointed king. As usual the critics were present to pass disparaging remarks. They had said of Saul, “How shall this man save us?” and they despised him and refused to send him gifts.

In his first battle with the Amorites, Israel won a decisive victory. Samuel, in a gesture to unite Israel under their new king, immediately called an assembly at Gilgal, and with appropriate ceremony renewed the kingdom there. As chief spokesman the Prophet addressed the people. After declaring the integrity of his long judgeship, he sketched for them a history of their nation, ending with their recent demand for a king. In demanding a king they had in effect rejected God as their King; but if from that time on they would be loyal to their God, both they and their king should prosper.

The Lord revealed His presence at that assembly that day by sending thunder and rain at the behest of Samuel. The people were impressed, and for the moment consternation seized them, and they “greatly feared the Lord and Samuel.” And they said to Samuel: “Pray for thy servants unto the Lord thy God, that we die not: for we have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king” (I Sam. 12:19). They were not in a condition to pray for themselves; sin lay at their door.

Then Samuel revealed upon what terms God could be implored: “And Samuel said unto the people, Fear not: ye have done all this wickedness:

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yet turn not aside from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart; and turn ye not aside: for then should ye go after vain things, which cannot profit nor deliver; for they are vain. . . . Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and right way: only fear the Lord, and serve him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great things he hath done for you" (I Sam. 12:20-24). Only upon condition that they would fear the Lord, and serve Him in truth with all their heart, would He hear and forgive.

Only God can forgive sins against Himself. I can sin against my brother, and if I go to him and confess my sin, he can say, "Yes, if you will turn over a new leaf and do differently, I will forgive you," but that is no sign that God has forgiven.

We may sin against the physical laws of nature and He can touch us and heal us; but our sins against His divine law He will forgive only upon the condition that we have ceased to do evil and learned to do well, and served Him with all our heart in sincerity and in truth. And the fact of that forgiveness will be certified to us at Judgment Day. ●●

One Lord, One Faith

(Continued from page 21)

to give to His brethren before the time should arrive when the vision would be complete. This message, a revelation of things to come, Jesus sent by His angel to the apostle John, who was isolated on the Isle of Patmos. John wrote the message as He received it, and it has been preserved for us as part of our Bible, the final book.

The book of Revelation begins: "The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John: who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw."

The book of Revelation tells of coming judgments, the second advent of Christ, and events to follow, in language highly figurative and often difficult to understand. But it is a book of revelation, and someday we will learn more about it. For now let us think of it as a final word from our Saviour, which closes with the solid promise of His return: "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. . . . Surely I come quickly." ●●

November, 1975

Kathy Kendor's Korner

(Continued from page 17)

self before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.' And the next verse, too. 'And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith; for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.'

"That's a little hard to get the point. But Paul is giving two attitudes about eating meat that had been offered to idols. His reasoning can apply to anything questionable. He says that 'whatsoever [activity] is not of faith [or is of doubt] is sin.' "

"In other words, then," mused Ken, "it's saying this. Whatever I do that I'm not positively persuaded is right, is *wrong* for me to do. If I doubt something and do it, my attitude really is, I don't care whether it's right or wrong. I'm going to do it anyhow!"

"Right! And that doesn't sound too good, does it?"

Ken sat silent for the moment, his eyes glued on the Bible that lay on the table. "I knew from the very first that I really shouldn't consider it, but I just had to be convinced."

"It's like the old adage, Ken, 'If in doubt, don't.' A pretty safe rule to follow. If you have any question, it's better to hold back. 'Hast thou faith?' " I pointed again to the text. "Are you *sure* it's all right? 'Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.' "

"Thanks, Mom," and Ken was off to his room. I heard his cheery whistle die away as I again picked up the wooden spoon to stir the bubbling apple butter. But my heart was overflowing with thankfulness. To have my son interested in obeying God!

What is a lesson for him always helps me, too. Whether it's his problem, or mine, it must always be, "What will *God* think if I do this?"—not what will *others* think.

Trying not to condemn myself by the things
which I allow,

Kathy

It is astonishing how soon the whole conscience begins to unravel, if a single stitch drops; one little sin indulged makes a hole you could put your head through.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

"Why did Paul say that God has forgiven us 'for Christ's sake' (Eph. 4:32)? Why the phrase 'for Christ's sake'?"

In Ephesians 4:31 and 32, the apostle Paul is concluding a whole chapter of intensely practical admonition with an appeal to harmonious personal relationships. "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you"—everyone knows where and how these originate. Wherever people must live and work together—be they friends, acquaintances, strangers, or members of the same family—there sooner or later arises occasion for one of the above-mentioned vices. And Paul is saying that all such must *go*, if we would prove ourselves true followers of Christ. Instead, we must reach beyond ourselves and be "kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another."

To give more strength to this already strong appeal, Paul lifts forgiveness from the human to the divine plane and compares our relationship with other men to our relationship with God: We must be as ready to forgive another as God is to forgive us. No malice here, no strife, no bitterness; for we must forgive "even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven."

Why "for Christ's sake?"

First, Christ, as a member of the human family who preserved the closest contact with His heavenly Father, forms an important link between us and God. He is our "mediator," our "intercessor" with the Father, our High Priest. In this role He represents us before God. Therefore anything that God does for us may be said to be done for Christ's sake, as we are Christ's personal charge; He is to be the instrument of our salvation—our Judge, and our coming King. Through Him we may be saved, if faithful; and then we shall become eternally His. Christ is interested in every potential heir of His Kingdom; therefore God may truly be said to forgive us "for Christ's sake"; for only as He forgives can Christ reward.

"Could Jesus' apostles forgive sins?"

Jesus had the power to forgive sins, and He delegated that power to His apostles.

In the account in Matthew 9, the people brought to Jesus a man sick with the palsy. Jesus said to him, "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven

thee." The scribes found fault with Jesus, and said within themselves, "This man blasphemeth. And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house" (vs. 2, 4-6).

And shortly before Jesus' ascension, He delegated to His apostles the power to forgive sins. It is recorded in John 20:21-22: "Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Spirit: whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained."

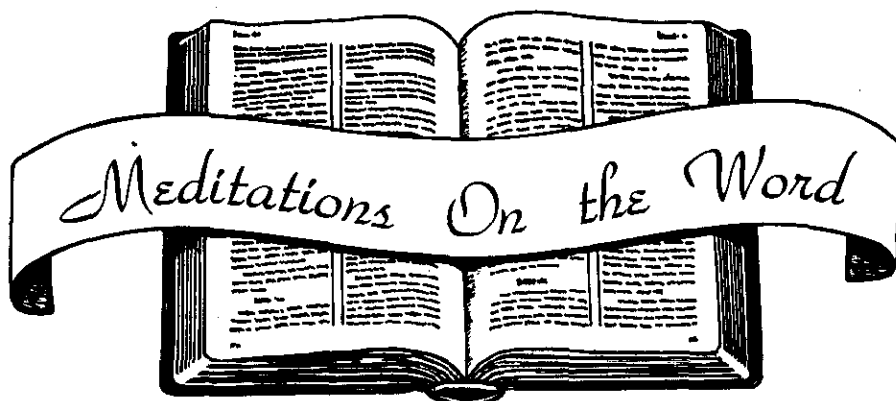
Jesus could forgive sins because He had the power of the Holy Spirit, by which He was able to read the thoughts of men's hearts. That Jesus had this power is shown in the statement in John 2:24-25: "But Jesus did not commit himself unto them; for he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man." A number of times in the Gospels it is stated that Jesus knew their thoughts.

When the apostles were given special power from God, they too could read men's thoughts, hence could forgive sins. The case of Ananias and Sapphira, who lied to the Holy Spirit about the amount for which they had sold their property, is proof that the apostles could discern the mind and thoughts.

"On the day of Pentecost, Peter saw the latter rain beginning, and I believe what we see today is more of it. Don't you think so?"

If we study Joel's prophecy, which Peter quoted, we will notice that Joel spoke of two distinctly separate outpourings of power. He said, "Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God: for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month" (Joel 2:23). The New American Standard Bible in a footnote explanation refers to the two rains as an "autumn" and a "spring" rain. The New English Bible is similar: "spring rain and autumn rain." And the prophecy being symbolic, there is a definite space of time—summer—between the two rains, when there is *no* rain. When Peter quoted Joel and said, "This is that which

(Continued on page 26)



"Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the Lord, till he come and rain righteousness upon you.

"Ye have plowed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity; ye have eaten the fruit of lies: because thou didst trust in thy way, in the multitude of thy mighty men"
 —(Hosea 10:12-13).

THE AGE-OLD dictum that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap," is too self-evident to require argument in its support, even though the daily life of the majority of mankind would seem to indicate a profound disbelief in cause and effect. Figs have never yet been gathered from thistles, nor the finest of the wheat harvested where wild oats have been sown. "He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting," whether in the days of Abel or of Isaiah or of Jesus or in our own time; whether on Betelguese or Arcturus, Jupiter or Venus or Earth. This is the keystone of the Plan of the Ages, immutable as the Eternal Himself. "Sow justice for yourselves, and reap a harvest of God's love," Moffatt renders our memory text. Sow an act and reap a habit; sow a habit and reap a character; sow a character and reap a destiny. We cannot escape it, evade it, go over or under or around it: there it stands,

and we may as well accept it.

Another thought: The quality of our sowing may be exactly right, but how about the quantity? "He which soweth sparingly," said the great Apostle, "shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully" (II Cor. 9:6). There stands another basic principle: our return will be in proportion to our investment. We say we are doing our best, but do we really know what our best is? We say we are serving with all our mind, might and strength, but do we study to know the full extent of our powers? In many an affair of life, both physical and mental, we have learned that we did not realize how much we could really do until we had to do it; there is an ever-present tendency to set our limits too low. Why? Well, it is a matter of effort. It is so much easier for most of us to confess we lack an ability and then fold our hands contentedly as though that settled it, than to look for that power and cultivate it in ourselves. We tell our friends

that we have "racked our brains" over a certain problem, when what we mean is that we have for a few moments exercised the relatively few brain cells which we habitually use.

In a spiritual way, there is danger of underestimating our possibilities. Often we seem to be afraid of doing too much or going too far; we progress to a certain level and there we stay, telling ourselves that we are, after all, vessels of small quantity, and the Lord will not expect too much from such poor material. The fact is, there is more latent power in most of us than we realize or wish to realize. The problem is to awaken and maintain an interest in bringing it out and putting it to work. The man who wrote, "Not failure, but low aim, is crime," may not have been exactly right, but he certainly hit the mark in the last half of the quotation. To fall back with complacency upon a too readily assumed inadequacy when the going gets hard is plain laziness.

The Prophet cries, "Break up your fallow ground." Fallow

means uncultivated, neglected. There is soil in us which we are neglecting, soil which might bear a surprising harvest if cultivated and sown with words of Truth. These fallow acres will stand against us in the day of Judgment, for the Master of the vineyard demands our best—not what we think is our best, but what He knows it to be. In Kipling's poem, "The Explorer," which is more a parable than anything else, the man who had settled down "for life" at the so-called "end of cultivation," hears the persistent inner voice urging,

"Something hidden: go and find it;
Go and look behind the ranges.
Something lost behind the ranges—
Lost, and waiting for you. Go!"

If we should venture behind the ranges, the limitations which we set for ourselves for the sake of ease and convenience; who can tell what hidden powers of mind and spirit might be found? Paul, that dauntless pioneer of exploration, went far beyond the ranges of his former complacency and self-righteousness and brought back the glowing report, "I can do *all things* through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13).

There is the key—"through Christ"—not of ourselves, for the arm of flesh is weak and the natural mind "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked" (Jer. 17:9). But the power of God's divine law to transform and elevate is boundless, limited only by our unwillingness to co-operate. Right motives are imperative. If we explore with the hope of receiving honor of men, our expedition is foredoomed to disaster. If we break up our fallow ground with an unlawful object, be it ever so well concealed by self-deception or pretense, our harvest will be one of grief and of desperate sorrow (Isa. 17:11). The only question moving us must be, What can I do for Him who has done so much for me? How can I prepare myself to live with Him and learn of Him through eternity?

Our past failures and present frustrations are the result of attempting to do the work of the Lord deceitfully or negligently (Jer. 48:10), of having confidence in the flesh; and the fruit of lies has been bitter. We have trusted in our own ways, in the multitude of our mighty men, which is to say, our own thoughts and ideas as opposed to God's. Thus it is we have perhaps been inflated by our little accomplishments. Thus it is we have magnified our fancied superiorities. Thus it is we have lost sight of the unexplored ranges beyond ranges still beyond, stretching into infinity—the much that we do not know and cannot do. Thus it is we forget that our very best will be little enough, that no temporal work can ever equal an eternal reward.

Whatever talents our explorations reveal, they are useless until put into service. A relatively small ability is no excuse, but rather a challenge. The man with the one talent could have succeeded, and the man with the five could have failed; the difference was not in the gifts but in the use made of them. ●●

Questions and Answers

(Continued from page 24)

was spoken by the prophet Joel," he could not have been referring to both the "autumn" and the "spring" rain, for the two could not fall at the same time.

What Peter must have meant was, "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel," or, This is the first rain, the first outpouring of power Joel prophesied; and there is a greater outpouring still future: For "it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon *all* flesh (Acts 2:17). The outpouring on the day of Pentecost was not upon *all* flesh, but only upon a very limited number who were gathered for the occasion in Jerusalem. The apostles went out to use the power they had received in spreading the gospel, but there is no record that they met anyone who already possessed the power of the Holy Spirit. "All flesh" did *not* possess the power, nor do they possess it today. Those who profess to have special power today do not claim it for all men.

Joel's prophecy indicates distinct groups that will have this power when it is finally poured out. "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out of my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions; and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out of my spirit" (Joel 2:28-29). Even the "servants" and the "handmaids," suggestive of the subject class, the general populace of the earth during the New Age, will enjoy the benefits of divine power; for they are the people who shall fill the earth with God's glory.

The fulfillment of this prophecy has definitely *not* arrived; it is reserved for the future when "all things" will be restored (Matt. 17:11). ●●



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*Praise be Thine, eternal King,
Young and old hosanna sing;
Thou hast blest us far and wide
At the bounteous harvest-tide.
Angel voices high are blending
In the anthem never ending;
Hear us, while we fain would render
Praise for mercies kind and tender.*



*Lord, 'tis Thine almighty hand
That upholds this noble land;
That the pastures doth enfold
In a royal robe of gold;
Shining vineyards, hill-tops hoary,
Woods aflame declare Thy glory;
Thou hast hung the fruitage glowing
Where the orchard bows are blowing.*

*Praise for sun, and praise for dew,
Praise for love forever new!
Praise for bounties richly shed,
That Thy children may be fed;
Bread of life, for all availing,
Vine the true, the never-failing!
Feed our souls, in Thee confiding,
Keep our lives in Thine abiding.*

**H
A
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V
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S**

Thanks

*Old and young their voices raise;
All Thy children chant Thy praise;
Every season, every year,
Are Thy tender mercies near;
Thou, our Hope, our Help forever,
God of Harvest, leave us never
Till we reach the bliss eternal
Bringing homeward sheaves supernal.*