

Megiddo Message



Only One Turned Back -- Was It You?

Time for Intolerance

A PROMINENT senator recently called our day a "time for tolerance."

If he meant that we should be more ready to live and let live, so that we do nothing to hinder another in his own proper pursuits, he was right. And we should always be judging ourselves with rigor and others with leniency.

But true Christianity is not and never has been a religion of wide tolerance. There is a place for *intolerance*, and it is on the line of wrong principles.

We must be intolerant of sin and evil. We must be especially intolerant of it when it is in ourselves. It is not our task to regulate the lives of others, but neither must we look with pleasure upon evil. Wrong is wrong, and as surely as we condone it in others we shall be influenced by it ourselves.

There is a place for intolerance. We must be intolerant of our pride, whether we are singing a hymn in church or walking down Main Street. We must be intolerant of our dishonesty, whether we are reading our Bible or transacting business. We must be intolerant of our feelings of wrath, whether we are condemning a friend's misdeed or reprimanding our child. We must be intolerant of our selfishness, whether we are giving our time to the work of the Lord or to our brother. We must be intolerant of wrong wherever it is discovered.

Perhaps someone says this is mixing religion and business.

Certainly it is! And why not? If we are to have a vital religion that lives and grows in us, that religion is going to get mixed up in everything we do and every choice we make. It is going to get so mixed up in us and our business and our recreation and our relationships with other people in every area of life that whether we eat, or drink or whatever we do we will do it to the glory of God (I Cor. 10:31). Is not this our Christian duty? Our faith is not intended to be

part of life; it is to be a saturation of our entire personality and being with the spirit and example of Christ.

Our spirit of intolerance must be reflected in our attitude toward all types of sin. How can it be otherwise? How can a dedicated disciple of Christ be tolerant of the diet that is being fed those who attend the moving pictures and theaters? How can he be tolerant of that which is nourished on the sewer-level of thought? How can he be tolerant of plays and programs that are written by those having diseased minds and are performed by those of perverted morals?

What a travesty we would make of our Christian profession if we went about humming the tunes and laughing at the jokes and falling at the feet of entertainers of this world, who cynically call evil good.

Intolerance? Yes! Always on the line of wrong principle. It is never time for tolerance there.

It is said that Wendell Phillips went out one day to plead an unpopular cause. As he left the house, his wife said, "Wendell, don't shilly-shally!"

How we need that warning today. Don't shilly-shally. Don't play with evil. Stand up for your convictions. The Lord wants people with enough faith, enough conviction, and enough integrity to stand up in the face of all the filth and hypocrisy and violence of a sick society and not waver when they criticize the wrong.

Right is nothing to be ashamed of. Woe be upon us if we are ever ashamed of it! It may be unpopular for a time, but if "God be for us, who can be against us?" Right will triumph in the end. And now is the time to make it triumph in our own lives.

Yes, with God's help we can be intolerant of every wrong, whether we find it in school, in business, or at home, and not allow it to contaminate *our* lives. We cannot change others, but we *are* responsible for *ourselves*. It is always time for intolerance there! ●●

MEGIDDO means

"a place of troops" (*Gesenius' Hebrew Lexicon*); "a place of God" (*Young's Analytical Concordance*). Megiddo was and is a town in Palestine, strategically located, and the scene of frequent warfare. In the spiritual parallel, it is a place where soldiers engaged in spiritual warfare gather to renew their strength and courage (II Cor. 10:4, 5).

We believe

—in God the Creator of all things, all men, and all life.

We believe

—in the Bible as containing the genuine revelation of God and His purposes for men, and as being our only source of divine knowledge today.

We believe

—in Christ the Son of God and our Perfect Example, who was born of a Virgin, ministered among men, was crucified, resurrected, and taken to heaven, and who shall shortly return to be King of the whole earth.

We believe

—in life as the gift of God, and in our sacred responsibility to use it for God and His coming Kingdom.

We believe

—in all mankind as providing the nucleus from which a superior, God-honoring people shall be chosen to receive the blessings of immortal life.

We believe

—in ourselves as capable of fulfilling the demands and disciplines given us in the law of God, thus perfecting that high quality of character which God has promised to reward with life everlasting in His heavenly Kingdom on earth.

We believe

—in the promise of God, that a new age is coming—is near—when the earth will be filled with His glory, His people, and His will be done here as it is now done in heaven.

Bible Quotations in this issue:

Unidentified quotations are from the King James Version.

Other versions are identified as follows:

NEB—*New English Bible*

NIV—*New International Version*

NAS—*New American Standard*

RSV—*Revised Standard Version*

TLB—*The Living Bible*

TEV—*Today's English Version*

Phillips—*The New Testament in Modern English*

Berkeley—*The Modern Language New Testament*

Weymouth—*The New Testament in Modern Speech*

Moffatt—*The Bible, A New Translation*

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Only One Turned Back--

Was It You



IT WAS a cold day for traveling. But this somber group of men made silent, slow, and painful preparations in the dark shadows of the foothills. A dry, piercing wind needled their numbed and puffy skin as they turned from the litter of their shacks and caves. They moved stiffly across the desolate fields of shale and sand which stretched before them to the distant, mud-walled village. The vacant plains, without life, had the same sinister look as these ten lepers, empty and without hope.

Entering the village, they prepared themselves for the usual scorn. They noticed merchants singing about their wares from red and green tents huddled against the walls. The townspeople, who had been haggling over the price of salted fish and in-season melon, stopped their chattering and gawked and made way for these grotesque figures from the foothills. The lepers retreated to a corner, away from the disapproving stares.

They did not at first notice that Jesus was coming in their direction. Men on each side, wildly gesticulating, were trying to capture His full attention. The lepers stayed together at a respectable distance, and instead of crying "Unclean, unclean," as they had been accustomed to do, they called out, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" He stopped, looked over to them, and said, "Go and show yourselves to the priests."

The lepers had hoped to be touched by this miracle-worker and restored to wholeness. They had heard rumors that "sick were healed, and lepers were cleansed." Each of them felt the stab of disappointment; and, clustered together with stained and muddied black robes, they began their painful trip, with obedience born of despair, to the Temple to show themselves to the priests. They knew they were not allowed within the Temple courtyard, but they went on, perhaps mainly because they did not want to go back too soon to those caves and huts of humiliation.

They made their way slowly and stepped off the road to make room for passersby. They had

long since ceased looking at their own stumpy hands and each other's bloated faces. They were used to the shame of not being normal and had just one dimming desire—to be accepted as normal, to have freedom to walk wherever they wished, to rub shoulders with people in the market-place, to put their minds and their hands to work, and to set up home again. But all that was impossible.

Suddenly, one of them let out a shout, threw himself on the ground, jumped up, and put his face close to that of another. They stared, unbelieving, into each other's eyes, and their eyes brimmed with tears. They began to dance with joy.

They ran and stumbled to the Temple. Afterward one of them brought together a few rocks by the side of the road to mark the place of his new life. He began to praise God. And with undiminishing gratitude, he started back to the village to find Jesus.

Only one turned back

*After stroking his clean, distinguishable features
With limber and expressive hands. . . .*

Only one turned back—

*A Samaritan, who had been twice shunned,
Because of skin disease and because of race. . . .*

Only one knew gratitude. . . .

And took a step away

From his next appointment to give thanks.

After returning to the village he fell on the ground at Jesus' feet and gave thanks. And Jesus said: "Were there not ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" And Jesus said to him, "Rise, and go on your way; your faith has made you whole."

What is Luke emphasizing in this account? Physical healing? Faith healing? The miraculous power of our Lord? Or just what? All ten were healed, but this account is less about instant healing than the gradual making of a whole new

person. All ten had faith, shown by the fact that all prayed, "Lord, have mercy upon us." But for nine, faith ended with the healing and fell short of gratitude. Since Jesus had not touched them, maybe they had healed themselves or were simply beneficiaries of a stroke of good luck. They had what they wanted and were ready to celebrate, saying "Ours is not to reason why. . . ."

Only one went beyond faith and obedience to gratitude, which is a step away, temporarily, from one's destination. Gratitude is another instance of the extra distance traveled by Christians in the world. When we go with our enemy the second mile, we go out of our way to make him our friend. The good Samaritan traveled the extra distance to the other side of the road to help someone in need. Likewise, gratitude is extra distance, for to be grateful we must take a step away from our immediate destination.

The greatest temptation facing each of us this Thanksgiving season is the temptation that overcame the nine ex-lepers. And that is forgetting God's gifts to us and praising ourselves instead with the small thought, "See how much more fortunate we are than other people!"

But we should be unhappy, not so much for Jesus the Christ who is forgotten, as for the ungrateful ninety percent who never take the trouble to travel the extra distance which means not only cleansing but redemption, not only a cure but a whole new person.

Art Linkletter asked a girl named Debbie, who was studying General Science, "What is salt?" And Debbie replied, "Salt is what spoils the potatoes when you leave it out."

We might ask, "What is gratitude?" and answer, with Debbie, that gratitude is what spoils life when you leave it out. It wrecks the home and destroys the character, if you never express it.

Gratitude is not simply a feeling which comes over us after a promotion or honor, but it is something we do, and it is always a step away from where we thought we were going. ●●

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Learn How to Count.

COUNT your blessings instead of your crosses,
COUNT your gains instead of your losses,
COUNT your joys instead of your woes,
COUNT your health instead of your wealth.
COUNT your smiles instead of your tears.
COUNT your beliefs instead of your doubts.

HOLD ON

When troubles seem to linger
And refuse to go away,
When one thing and another
Keeps coming day by day,
Till faith is sorely tested
And seems about to break,
We must hold on! The Father knows
Just how much we can take.
Then, later when we understand
The meaning of each test,
Our thankful hearts will praise Him
For giving what was best.

We Most Humbly Offer Our Thanks

It was on December 20, 1620, that Governor John Carver gathered around him the small band of venturesome settlers at Plymouth to thank God in the midst of overwhelming adversities—he gathered them that they might give thanks to Him who had bestowed upon them so many good things.

On June 20, 1676, Edward Rawson in Charleston, Mass., published the first Thanksgiving proclamation in our country, passed officially by the town council. This document, short as it is, sets forth some simple principles of thankfulness. Speaking of God, it says, ". . . in the midst of His judgments He hath remembered mercy." How thankful we are for the mercy of our God, that He has not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities, as said the Psalmist long ago (Ps. 103:10).

It is very important that we take time to give proper recognition to God as the author of all the blessings that have come our way. Our thanksgiving should be an act of erecting a spiritual memorial to the God who has brought us safely through another year. It is more than a national holiday; it is a day to make holy unto the Lord.

As suggested in the proclamation of President George Washington, "We unite in most humbly offering our prayers and supplications to the great Lord and Ruler of Nations and beseech Him to pardon our National and other transgressions." Thanksgiving can also be a time when we renew our dedication to Him who has blessed us so richly.

Jeremy Taylor, seventeenth century bishop and writer of Cambridge, might have a word in season for us: "The private and personal blessings that we enjoy, the blessings of immunity, safeguard, liberty, and integrity deserve the thanksgiving of a whole life."

It is worth remembering—in this and every season of the year. ●●

Think Magnificently About God!

NO ONE likes to be told that he is a small person—small in outlook, small in vision, small in soul, small in character. Of course not! Doesn't everyone know how really important he is? Ask the average man on the street a few questions, and you discover quite soon that he is very near the center of the universe—*his* universe, at least.

But when we are wrapped up in ourselves we are—in spite of our grand imaginings—a very small package. Smallness is the bane of our existence. Small thoughts consume us, small interests absorb us, small horizons limit us, small pleasures satisfy us, small problems vex us. This is our natural, unreformed state. It is to *redeem us* from this smallness that the knowledge of God comes, to show us broader horizons and higher goals. It comes to expand our minds, that we may expand our actions, that we may ultimately have our whole existence expanded! No small thing is this.

Why do we tend to be so small? There is but one reason: we *think* small. The Almighty has surrounded us with countless evidences of His greatness and His creative ability. But many are the small-minded admirers of beauty for beauty's sake, who fail to look beyond the beauty to its Creator. God has given His Word to tell of Himself and His magnificent plan. But many are those who read the Sacred Writings and see neither God nor His magnificence—and all because of their small thinking.

One area in which our small-mindedness is especially grievous is in our thinking about God. We recognize that He is our Creator, but too rarely does our outreach toward Him and our thinking about Him even touch His greatness. We say that we trust Him, but in actual fact we do not fully trust either our world or ourselves to God. We believe primarily in ourselves. The proof of this comes in our conversation, as we plan and propose without considering the will of God.

Our belief in ourselves shows also in our attitude, when we act as though the whole world would stop if we stopped pushing. And then we worry and fret, as though the God who sustains the universes was not capable of ordering our little lives aright. What small-minded creatures we are!

The Bible tells us that in former times men of God were moved in heart by the remembrance of His power; they were stirred to holiness by His goodness, filled with wonder by His purposes, and awed by the thought of His judgments. They entrusted the entire directing of their lives to God. When they approached Him in prayer, they prayed as though their life depended on gaining an audience in His presence. But for us—well, how is it with us? How close to God do *we* live? How desirous are we as we approach the throne of grace? Another writer has put the feeling of many into these words: "We are almost casual in our approach to God. It does not amaze us as our fathers were amazed, that we can speak to God in His glory," that we can address Him as "our Father," or turn to Him for strength in time of need. "We turn into His presence almost nonchalantly, shoving the door open with a lazy shoulder. We speak to Him as if He did not matter too much to us, as if He were about on our level, He and we."

Yet the central fact of all life is that *God is*. In serious moments we realize we do indeed need God. "I need thee every hour" is more than pleasing hymnbook meter; it is a fact we should never forget. In God "we live, and move, and have our being." Should He choose to withdraw our breath at any moment, all of us would perish together, as the patriarch Job observed long ago (Job 34:14).

We know this, but how do we get a deeper impression of our need for God, an impression so deep that we will never forget our dependence upon Him? How can we reach beyond our small world with its small interests and small goals into His infinite realm? How can we expand our minds, that we may expand our actions?

We need to follow the advice of a serious

NOTE: *Think Magnificently About God* is available as a church-service recording on cassette. Price: \$3.00

thinker of yesterday: "Think magnificently about God."

Let's try some magnificent thinking, and see what it can do for our spiritual vitality.

Think About God

Let us begin with God as our Great Creator. To Him we owe our very existence. "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof, the world, and they that dwell therein," sang the Psalmist of Israel. "The Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods. In his hand are the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills is his also. The sea is his, and he made it: and his hands formed the dry land. O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our maker. For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand" (Ps. 24:1; 95:3-7). Come, think magnificently about God!

Think of the processes of creation that brought into being the vastness of His world. Think of the orderliness and intelligibility of the creation. Think of the almost unbelievable perfection of the conditions which combine to make life on earth possible for us—the surrounding atmosphere in which the proportion of oxygen and nitrogen is *just right* (and that *margin* of "rightness" is very narrow). Think of the yearly round of heat and cold within the narrow temperature limits we are able to tolerate; the inclination of the earth's axis at $23\frac{1}{2}$ degrees, no more, no less; the revolution of the earth about the sun on its proper and unmarked path; the perfectly timed movements of the planets in our solar system: all these resulting in the succession of day and night and the recurring seasons. Think of the provision of adequate moisture; the relation of sea and land to each other, and of plant and animal life to each other, and of the natural resources for sustaining plant and animal life.

Here is wonderment beyond description. Here is the work of an infinitely Wise Mind, whose creation speaks to us in a million ways of ability beyond our power to fathom, much less duplicate. Here is creative power and extravagance that stirs sensitive minds and hearts to reverence and awe. Think magnificently about God!

Go outside on a clear night and look into the star-studded heavens. There light coming from a star strikes our eye. The light coming from this star left on its journey toward us long ago, perhaps while David was tending his sheep in the Palestinian hills, and it has been coming toward us ever since, traveling at the speed of

light, 186,000 miles every second of every hour of every day for 3,550 years. Our minds bog down because in our personal experience we can scarcely begin to comprehend the distance in a single light year, to say nothing of 3500 light years! To travel the distance of a single light year one would have to make 40 million trips around our earth, the equivalent of six trillion miles. And to think that light reaching our eyes now from the stars has been traveling for as much as hundreds, millions, and trillions of years!

What happens within mind and heart as we stand perceptively and sensitively before the vastness of such creation? Think magnificently about God!

See the wonder of His creative power in the infinitely great and the infinitely small; He is the God of space and time and eternity. He is the God who designed the atom, with its complexity of moving particles. He, the Creator of the countless worlds shining above is also the Creator of the lowly human family. That marvelous mechanism, the human body, with intricacies that defy explanation, was designed by Him. Think magnificently about God!

The fact that you and I are able to talk and think together as we do results from the fact that God *is*. For the capacity to use words we understand, we depend upon what He has put within the framework of our bodies. All consciousness and intelligence is the gift of God. It is God's wisdom which the scientist seeks constantly; His wisdom is behind the growth of every blade of grass, as well as the plan of the universes which fill interstellar space. In God is the source of life itself. Long before our little minds started functioning, God created universes which we are just now "discovering" by our most powerful instruments. Behind everything we see and touch and experience is the power of God. Oh, let us think magnificently about God!

Then think of ourselves set within this vast creation. One out of four billion human creatures on one small planet in one small solar system in one of the smaller galaxies of one of the universes of His creation—how does God even know we are here? In the words of King David, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man, that thou visitest him"? (Ps. 8:4). Say this, as you think magnificently about God!

He is so great, and so mighty, and so all-powerful, and yet He has offered to draw us poor frail creatures of dust into the circle of His special concern and purpose! He has offered to let us drink of the river of His pleasures, to taste the joy of His salvation, to give us a share in His di-

vine nature, and to crown us as eternal members of His eternal family—if we will meet His standards. Can we disregard such a high calling and honor? Nay! Rather, Think magnificently about God—yes, indeed, think magnificently about our God!

Others Have Thought Magnificently

People of God in all ages have thought magnificently about God. Their dedicated minds transcended the bondage of the earthly and touched upon the infinite and absolute. In such thinking, language became inarticulate. That is why **the apostle Paul**, who called himself “crude in speech,” exclaimed: “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out” (Rom. 11:33).

Prophets and poets of old found themselves frequently on the brink of the infinite gazing into the depth of a divinity that overwhelmed them and drew from their hearts such bursts of feeling as mere words cannot express. Again and again they exhausted their vocabularies and their powers of description, and still they fell short of the full magnificence they felt to ascribe. No small-minded men were those holy men of old; they thought magnificently about God, His power, His grandeur, His greatness, His justice, His righteousness, His truth.

Perhaps among the most magnificent descriptions of God are a few words in the book of Ephesians. Attempting to describe God’s ability to recompense the faithful, Paul wrote that God is able to do “exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think”—or this is how the words come to us in our King James Version (Eph. 3:20). Translators agree that the words of the passage defy translation—Paul went beyond the limits of his language in an attempt to describe that which exceeds the supreme! Indeed, Paul thought magnificently about God!

Abraham nearly four millenniums ago felt God’s magnificence so strongly—in contrast to His own littleness—that He did not venture to speak to the Lord’s angel without expressing His insignificance and utter nothingness. “Behold now,” he said in deepest humility, “I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes” (Gen. 18:27). He who was called the “friend of God” and communed with Him so frequently thought magnificently about God.

When **Moses** thought of God he seems to have been profoundly impressed with God’s faithfulness and mercy, a Being who could be trusted

to be true to His Word as far into the future as Moses could imagine. “Know therefore,” he told Israel, “that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations” (Deut. 7:9). We today are still well within that margin of time. This magnificent God is faithful to those who are faithful to Him for ever, even for ever and ever!

Again Moses’ magnificent thinking found beautiful—though still inadequate—expression as he wrote this song during his last days of life: “I will publish the name of the Lord: ascribe ye greatness unto our God. He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.” A little later, in the same exultant song, he wrote, speaking for God, “See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive: I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand. For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever” (Deut. 32:3-4; 39-41).

The book of Psalms is filled with **David’s** magnificent thoughts about God. “Great is our Lord, and of great power; his understanding is infinite” (Ps. 147:5). “Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable” (145:3). “O Lord, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches” (Ps. 104:24). “O Lord, how great are thy works! and thy thoughts are very deep” (Ps. 92:5). “Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory” (Ps. 72:18-19)—these are just a few out of many hundreds.

At the time the people gave freely and willingly for the house of the Lord which Solomon was to build, David offered a magnificent prayer to his magnificent God, to whom he felt deeply indebted—but for God’s mercy he would have been cut off years before. These are his words: “Blessed be thou, Lord God of Israel our father, for ever and ever. Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honor come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all.” Feel the magnificence in these words. David was recognizing God as the source

of all his blessings. He was thinking magnificently about God (II Chron. 29:10-13).

David's son **Solomon** started out with the same reverential feeling toward the God of his fathers. As he stood before the altar of the Lord in the presence of all the congregation of Israel when dedicating the completed house of the Lord, he spread forth his hands toward heaven and prayed, "Lord God of Israel, there is no God like thee, in heaven above, or on earth beneath, who keepest covenant and mercy with thy servants that walk before thee with all their heart" (I Kings 8:22-23). Had he maintained this magnificent thinking toward God all of his days he would be among God's honor roll. But his name is not there.

The prophet **Isaiah** pictured God's magnificence as unrivaled and supreme: "Lift up your eyes on high," he wrote, "and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number; he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power;

not one faileth" (Isa. 40:26). He was extolling God's magnificence by calling attention to His vast creative work. He is the God who "fainteth not, neither is weary"; He is "the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth" (Isa. 40:28). "To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One" (Isa. 40:25).

The young **Jeremiah**, when called of God, thought of God so magnificently that he felt himself totally unworthy. "Ah, Lord God!" were the words that escaped his lips, "behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child" (Jer. 1:6).

Jeremiah addressed God as "the true God, he is the living God and an everlasting king: at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation. . . . Great in counsel, and mighty in work: for thine eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men: to give everyone according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings" (Jer. 10:10; 32:19).

(Continued on page 23)

Let Us Pray . . .

Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever Thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting Thou art God. For a thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night. Thou, even Thou, art Lord alone; Thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and Thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshipeth thee.

And when we look into Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars which Thou hast ordained, may our naturally proud attitude be humbled, so that we will be moved upon to ask: What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou visitest him? What am I that Thou hast opened to me such a delightful door of hope? Knowing as we do that all nations before Thee are as a drop of a bucket, help us to realize how unimportant we as individuals must be.

God of history, God of our day, and God of our future, lift us up that we may have fellowship with Thee, with one another, being a part of that broader fellowship of sainted souls who have gone before us. By holding in remembrance

the lives of holy men and women, may we ourselves become stronger and more righteous persons, better able to bear the burdens and meet the responsibilities of our own day.

O Lord our God, whose name is excellent and Thy praise above heaven and earth: we give Thee high praise and hearty thanks for all those who counted their lives not dear unto themselves, but laid them down for their friends; beseeching Thee to give them a part in those future rewards which Thou hast prepared for all whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life: grant that we, having them always in remembrance, may imitate their faithfulness and with them merit the new name which Thou hast promised to all who overcome.

May we always be keenly aware of Thy greatness, and often count and recount the evidence of Thy power and creative ability. The heavens declare Thy glory, and the earth shows Thy handiwork. In view of these evidences of Thy greatness may we be humbled, may we be overawed, and may we willingly exchange our shallow worthless thoughts for Thy thoughts, which are as high above the thoughts of erring man as the heaven is higher than the earth.

We thank Thee for this service, and may we go from this place of worship stronger to face the battles of life, that through virtue of a patient continuance in well doing we may merit a crown of life in the world to come. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

From

John the Elder



Fifth in a Series on the Epistle of First John

The Sons of God

A Study of I John 3:1-9

JOHN pauses as he contemplates the love of God. He is enraptured at the thought of being a son of God. He wants his brethren to ponder this truth. He exclaims,

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not."

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

"And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (I John 3:1-3).

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed. . . ." To John, God is "the Father." He is not a harsh being that exacts the cruel death of a loving Christ to appease His wrath. And "behold what love." Is there anything to compare with God's love, is there anything that could equal it! Think of the Almighty calling us mortals to be members of His family, His sons and daughters—a relationship that shall be everlasting!

But this honor is conditional. The love of the Father is only bestowed on those who comply with the conditions. The conditions are fair. John has already identified the children or sons of God. They are those who do righteousness, those who walk in the light, not in darkness, those who walk in truth, not error. They love not the world, nor the things of the world. They abide in Christ.

"Therefore the world knoweth us not." Had not Jesus said earlier, "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own, but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (John

15:19). John wants the followers of Jesus to realize this. We should not be surprised if the world hate us, for we know that it hated Jesus; men of the evil system persecuted the loving Christ, and we cannot expect anything else. We today do not face the active persecution John's disciples experienced, but we ought not to complain if our actions are misconstrued, our motives misrepresented, or our mode of life regarded as "madness."

The children of this world live for the present. Their desire is the gratification of their passions, the satisfaction of their appetite for riches and honor. Their ambition is the approbation of their fellowmen. What have they in common with men who set themselves against the *vox populi* (voice of the people)? What have they in common with men who put a curb on their passions, who shun earthly treasures, and regard the approbation of men as a snare? How can the servants of God expect the world to understand their regard for the honor of God, their love and reverence for His Word, their zeal for His worship? How can they understand their earnestness in spreading the gospel?

Well can we grasp the meaning of John's words, "Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not."

John has made it clear in his epistle that there are three steps in attaining that glorious sonship with the Father. First, we receive the "light," the knowledge of the ways of God; second, we walk in that light. We learn what God requires of us, and then we do it. When we have surrendered our whole life to the Father's will, we have done all that we can, we are truly sons of the Father mentally and morally. But the real sonship in all its fulness shall not be ours until the appearing of Jesus Christ. Then we shall see Him in all His glory. And we shall be made like Him, immortal.

As of now, that glorious immortal state is beyond all the powers of our imagination; we depend upon Christ to come and change us.

"And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he [Christ] is pure" (1 John 3:3).

Hope is a leading feature of the Christian life; it is the springboard of our noblest efforts, the animating principle of our actions. There is nothing that can so influence the human mind as the hope of immortality, the hope which Christ offers. This Christian hope spurs us on to keep purifying ourselves till we attain the full standard of Christ's purity. It is our incentive to root every evil out of our lives, every lust, every vain and worthless thought. All that is not of the Father must be resisted until Christ is fully formed in us, and we cease to have even the desire to transgress the divine will.

John wants the followers of Christ to realize that far more important even than the outside forces which we must resist are the evils in our own carnal mind. Surrounded as we are by the world, we cannot afford to have discord and divisions among ourselves, jealousy of another's ability, or impatience because things are not going our way. We must become pure from every evil, even as Christ became pure. This is the only way we shall ever know the reality of our hope of becoming God's eternal sons and daughters.

"Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law."

"And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin."

"Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him."

"Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous."

"He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil."

"Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God" (1 John 3:49).

The Gnostics of John's day were a great and constant threat to the believers in Christ. They stressed the obedience of their eccentric codes and paid no attention to sin. John counters their demand, declaring plainly that sin is lawlessness, the only lawlessness that matters.

When we sin, we are setting ourselves against the law of God, and our life is in direct opposition to the great purpose for which Jesus came into the world. He came to make clear and evident

the will of God. By His holy and sinless life, He showed us how completely we must submit to the will of the Father. And that is how Jesus "takes away our sins" (v. 5); He seeks to unite our heart and will with His mind and spirit until we like Him set ourselves with all earnestness to drive out, expel, and annihilate every sinful desire and tendency.

It is evident that Jesus did not literally "take away sin" from anyone, for according to John—and our own experience—sin continues to be a problem.

John longs to see sin removed, not only from the world in a general sense but from every Christian life. "Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not" (v. 6). John is trying to stir up the Christians of his day to a holy and perpetual warfare against sin. Sin and Christ are incompatible. If we abide in Him, if we are in constant and complete union with Him, we will not sin.

It should be our constant effort and prayer that our union with Christ become more complete every day. Such a union will issue in the overthrow of every sinful way. Then John repeats what he has already said, that the sinner does not know Christ—he does not appreciate or recognize Him. "Whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him" (v. 6).

Then John warns once again against deceivers. "Little children, let no man deceive you" (v. 7). Then, as now, there were those who believed the inner "spirit" could be redeemed regardless of the sinfulness of one's life. Men were prone to substitute anything else for the need for entire sanctification of man's whole nature. This idea is what John brings to a practical test. Words without deeds are nothing. The man who is righteous in character is recognized by his actions; his character underlies his deeds. He who acts righteously is the one who is righteous, even as God is righteous.

On the other hand, "he that committeth sin is of the devil" (v. 8). It is the same as Jesus said, "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them" (Matt. 7:20). He who sins is a child of "the devil." In the Bible, the term "devil" is applied to men and women who oppose God and disobey His laws. Jesus' words indicate this. Referring to Judas, He said to His apostles, "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" Judas had a sinful heart, he was not in union with Christ. He was a devil. And if we sin, we belong to a devil which is ourselves. We become "devils" by sinning.

It is the works of such devils that Jesus tried to destroy. That is what His preaching was all about; He taught people to put away sin and so

become worthy of salvation. John, too, was earnestly trying to destroy the works of the "devil." And that is what every Christian should do. As John said, these works of the devil existed at the very beginning when God called men and women to serve Him. And this same hostility to divine law is very active today.

John now pictures the Christian as a new creature, governed by the divine will. He is like the good tree that "bringeth forth good fruit" (Matt. 7:18). John says, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him" (v. 9). The figure of the "seed" stands for that which imparts life, the Word of God (Luke 8:11). If the seed or Word of God abides or lives in us, we will not sin. The same thought is expressed by the Psalmist, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee" (Ps. 119:11). God's Word is the vital power by which the mature Christian is developed. While we are born of God now by acquainting ourselves with His Word and making that Word a part of our lives, the ultimate will be the "grand birth of the Spirit," when our mortal bodies are changed to the immortal state and we are made like Christ, never to die. Then we will be completely and forever beyond the power of sin. ●●

NEXT: *The Marks of the Christian Life*

What Is Honor?

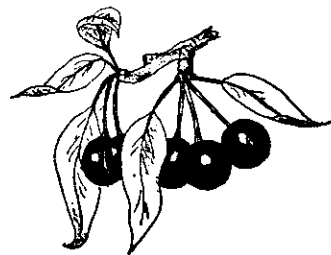
A certain gentleman was invited to Buckingham Palace, along with his wife and daughter, to receive from the Queen's hand the award he had been given; for his name was among those on the "New Year's Honour List."

Having left their modest home, they walked across the vast palace forecourt, climbed the flights of crimson-carpeted stairs between ranks of the "Household Cavalry" and "Gentlemen at Arms," made their way along corridors hung with portraits of kings and queens, to a ballroom that had six huge crystal chandeliers hanging from the ceiling at one end of the room. There were two thrones, and a military quartet which was playing a patriotic tune.

Imagine the feeling of these honored folk with all this grandeur surrounding them. But what of that Day if the Lord is able to say to each one of us, "Well done, come into my banquet house." What wondrous sights we shall see! If an earthly queen can put on regal splendors, how much more the KING of KINGS! Won't this alone repay each one for the efforts he has made during so short a lifetime?

Fruitful

Fragments



If success turns your head, you are facing the wrong direction.

Each of us is like a nail—of no use whatever until a powerful force strikes us on the head.

He who gives all, though but little, gives much because God looks not on the quantity of the gift but on the quality of the giver.

What we are is God's gift to us; what we become is our gift to God.

Lord, keep my words gracious and tender today, for tomorrow I may have to eat them.

Patience is idling your motor when you feel like stepping on the gas.

Lord, help me to learn to govern my speed. Help me to be slow to anger, slow to condemn, slow to criticize; and help me to be quick to hear, and quick to turn from my own way.

If you realize that you aren't as wise today as you thought you were yesterday, you are wiser today.

A friendship true is like pure gold;
It will not tarnish when it's old.

You never know what you can't do—until you try.

Life is too short to go through it wearing a long face.

Very often the chip on a person's shoulder is just bark.

If you would bear triumphantly the adversities and miseries of life, be a person of prayer.

Don't judge a man's future entirely by his past—experience may have taught him a lesson.

To be blind is bad; but far worse is it to have eyes and not see.

UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God."

The Sabbath of the Bible

DOES it matter which day of the week I keep as my sabbath?" asks a contemporary Sabbatarian. He proceeds to answer his own question: "Most certainly it does! . . . the real issue is, 'Am I willing to obey God by keeping Saturday as the Sabbath?'"

But is this the real issue? A study of the Scriptures reveals no apparent conflict concerning Saturday or Sunday worship; in fact, we cannot find either day mentioned.

Early in Jesus' ministry we read of His attendance at Sabbath services in the synagogue. But He went there to teach, not to hallow their time-honored customs. On the first such occasion, He aroused the ire of the Jews to such an extent that they "thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill . . . that they might cast him down headlong" (Luke 4:16-29). On another occasion He defied their Sabbath rules by healing a cripple (John 5:8-10), and again by healing a blind man (John 9:13-14), showing no respect for their Sabbath rules.

Paul was made a minister by Jesus, and he said, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ," or as rendered in the New English Bible, "Follow my example as I follow Christ's" (I Cor. 11:1). Paul gave no command to observe the Jewish Sabbath. He preached to the believers who gathered on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). Again, he reminded the Corinthians about making the collection on the first day of each week, saying that he had exhorted the Galatian Christians to do likewise (I Cor. 16:1-2).

These statements infer that the early Church met on the first day of the week. Must we assume that they were disobeying God? No, Paul was schooled in the Law, and had it been in force he most certainly would have been keeping it and exhorting the brethren to do likewise.

According to *Zondervan's Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, the early Church fathers were almost unanimous in their view of the Sabbath, agreeing that its observance was not binding on Christians.

Ignatius, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Clement and Tertullian, all of whom lived in the second or early third centuries, are among those quoted by Zondervan. There appears to have been no controversy over the Sabbath at this time. Rather, worship services were being held on Sunday, the first day of the calendar week.

While history alone is not sufficient proof, the writings of the Church hierarchy of these early centuries lend credence to the view that the seventh-day Sabbath law is no longer binding.

III. THE SABBATH TODAY—IS IT BINDING?

"The oldest memorial on earth is not made of stone and mortar but of time," writes a Sabbatarian. "Out of the fabric of the universe our Creator God fashioned an ensign for eternity—the seventh day Sabbath." And says another, the Sabbath is "an institution, which notwithstanding its demands, not only of the seventh part of all time, but of the seventh day in uninterrupted succession, was celebrated from the creation to the deluge, during the deluge, and after the deluge till the giving of the law."

Was the Sabbath instituted as an "ensign for eternity"? Has it been kept "in uninterrupted succession" from the creation? Must we believe that the Sabbath law was binding for all time, thus is in force today? Does the Bible support such a premise? Is there any reference to the Sabbath being celebrated "from the creation to the deluge," or "during the deluge"?

No, the above quotations find no support in the Bible. The Sabbath was not instituted at the creation, hence it could not have been kept "in unbroken succession" from that time. Nor was it to be an "ensign for eternity." God's laws have not all been permanent. Some have been given for specific people and for limited periods of time. God's law for Noah was to build an ark for the saving of his household—but no one since has had to build an ark. He commanded the Israelites to gather manna which He promised to provide six days out of every seven—but it was not to be so forever.

As we learned in our last lesson, the Sabbath

law was given in connection with the commands concerning gathering manna. It was a part of the covenant He had with Israel and was for Israel only. The Bible does not substantiate the claim that the Sabbath law was to be binding forever.

A. The Law ADDED

Paul was a student of the Law, learning it at "the feet of Gamaliel," (Acts 22:3), "a Pharisee, . . . a doctor of the law, had in reputation among all the people" (Acts 5:34). In his epistles he wrote much concerning the law and its disposition. In his letter to the Galatians he said of the law that it was "added because of transgressions" (Gal. 3:19). If it was "added" it must have been added to something. To what was it added, and for what purpose?

B. The Everlasting Covenant

The world was not without law until God gave the law to Moses on Sinai. From the time He first called men to serve Him, He made His laws known. These laws were not recorded and preserved as was the law of Moses, but they were known to the people of that time.

In the absence of law, there could be no sin, for there must be a standard for comparison. None could be said to be wicked or righteous without law, yet it is recorded that before the flood "the wickedness of man was great in the earth and . . . every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen. 6:5), while "Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generations" (v. 9).

It was recorded that Abraham "obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws" (Gen. 26:5), proving conclusively that God had commandments, statutes and laws that were known to Abraham. At the same time, "the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly," so much so that it was impossible to find ten righteous (Gen. 13:13; 18:32).

These people, and others of their time, could not have been judged by the law of Moses because it had not yet been given. Some today may contend that it was Moses' law they were under and that it was simply repeated to Moses at a later date. However, this contention is not supported by the Scriptures.

Paul refers to Abraham's knowledge of God's plan: "And Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles through faith, declared the Gospel to Abraham beforehand: 'In you all nations shall find blessing'" (Gal. 3:8, NEB). The "gospel" given to Abraham and all others who came under

covenant during the pre-Mosaic period, and by which they were judged, is what we know as the law of faith, or the royal law.

This law is further identified in the book of James: "If ye fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well" (Jas. 2:8). This command, found in Leviticus 19:18, and identified by Jesus in Mark 12:31 as one of the two greatest commandments, was no part of Moses' law. It was part of the law of faith, the law to which Moses' law was added, and the law that remained after Moses' law was abolished. Failure to distinguish between these two laws in the Bible is a major reason for misunderstanding the limitations of Moses' law. The laws governing Sabbath observance formed no part of the law of faith, or royal law, hence passed out of existence with Moses' law.

The royal law, or law of faith is also referred to in the Bible as the "everlasting covenant." Adventists believe Moses' law, including the Ten Commandments, to be part of this covenant.

This is but a vain attempt to prove the perpetuity of the Sabbath, for the "everlasting covenant" was made with Abraham more than four hundred years before the days of Moses and Sinai. We learn from the Psalmist of this covenant: "He [God] hath remembered his covenant for ever, . . . which covenant he made with Abraham, . . . and confirmed the same unto Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant" (Ps. 105:8-10). God's covenant with His people existed long before Moses. Moses' law, including the Sabbath, was added to that everlasting covenant, but only on a temporary basis; Moses' law was not a permanent addition.

C. The Two Laws Contrasted

When God first called men to work for Him, He gave them His law. To Noah, Abraham and the patriarchs He gave the royal law, or law of faith. When He chose the nation of Israel for His own, there was need for another law. They were uneducated and uncivilized and they needed a strict code to teach them the right way. It was at this time that He gave the law to Moses, adding it to the law already in existence, the law of faith. "It was added because of transgressions," said Paul, "till the seed [Jesus Christ] should come to whom the promise was made" (Gal. 3:19).

The two laws were markedly different in scope and benefit. The law of Moses was primarily a civil law to civilize, while the law of faith was unending in duration and held the promise of eternal benefits.

1. The law of Moses applied only to Israel. Moses

said: "The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day" (Deut. 5:3).

The law of faith applies to all who place themselves under it. All who covenant to serve God, regardless of race, come under it. God is no respecter of persons.

2. Moses' law covered only outward acts. Under it, a man had to commit the act to be guilty.

The law of faith governs the thoughts and intents of the heart, a necessary part of perfection of character. Under the law of faith, "Whosoever is angry with his brother" is in danger of the judgment (Matt. 5:22).

3. The law of Moses could not take away sin. It was a national or civil law and could not "make the comers thereunto perfect," but was a "shadow of good things to come" (Heb. 10:1).

The law of faith applied to the life of the Christian can cleanse "from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit" (II Cor. 7:1) and prepare the doer for eternal life.

4. The Sabbath law was a part of the law of Moses. Keeping the Sabbath law brought temporal benefits only. It was no part of the law of faith, hence keeping the seventh-day Sabbath today does not avail to salvation.

D. The Sabbath Law—Moral or Ceremonial?

Adventists, and other Sabbatarians, in an effort to hold onto that part of the law dealing with the Sabbath, attempt to prove that the law given to Israel in the time of Moses was divided into two parts, moral and ceremonial. It is their contention that only the Ten Commandment law written on the tablets of stone is moral, and that all civil laws and laws concerning other obligations to God were ceremonial. To them, only the Ten Commandments are "the law of God"; the balance is the "law of Moses."

Where in the Scriptures do we find such a division? Nowhere. It is a division made by man, not God. The Bible makes no distinction between the "law of God" and the "law of Moses." Moses' law was God's law. After spending forty days on the mount, "Moses gathered all the congregation of the children of Israel together, and said unto them, These are the words which the Lord hath commanded, that ye should do them" (Ex. 35:1). Moses had received all the law for Israel and he was about to instruct them concerning it.

Upon receiving the law, Israel had promised: "All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient" (Ex. 24:7). They were liable for all that the Lord had said. They were morally obli-

gated to keep the whole law. As far as they were concerned, there was but one law, and they were to obey it.

Were we to divide the law as stated above, all the laws concerning sacrifice and offerings would be classed as ceremonial. Likewise, the laws concerning the feasts would fall in the ceremonial category. But Israel was as morally bound to keep the feasts and to offer the sacrifices as to obey the Ten Commandments. "Three times in the year all thy males shall appear before the Lord God," was the command (Ex. 23:17). To disobey this law was to break the law as much as to ignore the Sabbath was to break the law.

The division between the "law of God" and the "law of Moses" and between "moral" and "ceremonial" laws is entirely man-made. There is nothing in the Scriptures to indicate such a division; it is based entirely on assumption. One part did not pass away and another remain. When God gave it, He gave the whole law; and when He removed it He removed the whole law. We are not justified in dividing it for convenience.

IV. THE LAW OF MOSES ABOLISHED

Like other non-permanent laws, the law given by God to Moses at Sinai was for a limited period of time and to a specific group of people. It was given to Israel and them alone, and it was to be limited to the period of time "till the seed should come," or in other words, until Christ (Gal. 3:19). When the law was abolished, the whole law was abolished; there is no evidence to the contrary. The Ten Commandments, being part of the Mosaic law, and the Sabbath command being one of the ten, passed away with it. Let us look at the evidence.

A. Jesus and the End of the Law

Jesus did not teach the law of Moses; He taught a law superior to it. Of Himself and the law He said: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. . . . Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" (Matt. 5:17-18).

Now believers in the seventh-day Sabbath quote this text to support their conviction that Sabbath observance is still binding today. But Jesus said He came to "fulfill" the law. This word "fulfill" has among its many meanings, "to pass, to come to pass, to be ended, fall, be finished, pass, be performed" (*Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*). Jesus came to "fulfill" the law, to bring its usefulness

to completion—as this very chapter shows. Jesus proceeds immediately to state the “new” law with power and authority. “It hath been said by them of old time, . . . but I say unto you . . .” (See Matthew 5:21-28).

Christ came to fulfill the law and the prophets, as He Himself testified: “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).

Jesus came “not to destroy, but to fulfill.” And when the law of Moses had been fulfilled it was withdrawn. Its time expired and its authority ceased.

Paul stated plainly that the law was given “till the seed should come” (Gal. 3:19). Jesus was the promised seed, hence He was “the end of the law . . . to everyone that believeth” (Rom. 10:4). The Sabbath law was part of the law of Moses that Christ fulfilled or finished, hence when the Law was finished, the Sabbath law was also finished.

Paul testified to the end of the Law in Christ in his letter to the Colossians: “Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; . . . Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: which are a shadow of things to come” (Col. 2:14, 16-17).

The old law with its sacrifices and new moons and sabbaths was gone; no one was to be judged by these observances any more. But seventh-day keepers try to circumvent this verse with the explanation that what Paul had reference to was the feast days and holy days of the law. A careful reading of the text shows that Paul includes all the Jewish holy days and feasts and the weekly sabbaths as well. Nor can the verse be sidestepped because the term “sabbath-days” is plural, as some would claim. Other comparable uses of the plural form—which definitely have reference to the weekly rest day—include: “My sabbaths ye shall keep” (Ex. 31:13); “Keep my sabbaths” (Lev. 19:30); “Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days?” (Matt. 12:10).

The word translated “sabbath-days” in Col. 2:16 is identical with the word used sixty times in the New Testament—all of which refer to the weekly sabbath rest day. The teaching is clear—Paul was letting them know that Jesus had ended the Law and they needed no longer to be bound by it.

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Honesty Pays

IT WAS one of those balmy autumn afternoons. The wind rustled through the trees, bringing down numberless red and gold leaves which scuttled around Jerry's feet as he came down the road whistling and swinging his school books. The wind was in a boisterous mood, and an exclamation escaped Jerry's lips as a paper fluttered from one of his books and sailed gaily through the air. "Good luck!" exclaimed Jerry, as the offending page lodged against a nearby fence. Jerry hastily captured the paper. Then a low whistle. Just over the fence, what do you suppose he saw? "Ripe apples, sure as you live!" he shouted. "The last time I came this way those apples were green!"

If he got down on his knees he might reach seven or eight which were lying on the ground. They looked like good, juicy apples too, not like those Mrs. Burton gave Mother last fall. She knew Mother was poor, and they were better than no apples; but these! Well, the more he looked, the more his mouth watered. Jerry reached out his hand and almost had two of them. Then quick as a flash he drew his hand back and jumped up. "No, I can't! I can't! It would be stealing! Mother has always told me never to take anything that belongs to someone else."

"But why," he reasoned, as he leaned on the fence and looked at the apples which were so big as to make the branches of the tree hang nearly to the ground, "why do some people have so much and others so little?"

Presently his thoughts were interrupted by the sound of an approaching car. "I must get away from here, or someone will think I really am stealing these apples."

Jerry hurried out to the road as a truck sped by and drove into a barn nearby. In his haste Jerry stepped into a hole by the roadside and turned his ankle. And did that ankle hurt! It brought tears to his eyes as he sat down to rub it. After what seemed a long time, it stopped hurting. So he got up and started once again toward home.

Again the smell of ripe apples engaged Jerry's attention. He surely did feel hungry. He could eat no less than a dozen right now. In fact he could

have eaten twice as much for noon lunch. With that thought, he took a second look into his lunch box. It was as empty as his stomach. How terrible he felt to see other children throw away good sandwiches if they were not the kind they liked; yes, even cake and cookies, which he seldom had. Another look at his ankle reminded him that the pain was about gone and that he had better hurry home.

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"Well, well, Son, what's the matter? Are you sick, or just day-dreaming?"

Jerry jumped up quickly in surprise. He hadn't noticed anyone around. Farmer Billings was tall and robust, with eyes that twinkled, and a cheery smile. Jerry couldn't help smiling as he looked up into his face. Stretching out his foot, he said, "I turned my ankle over in that hole back there, and you have no idea, sir, how much it hurt. I just had to sit down for awhile. It still hurts a little when I step on it. Do you suppose it is broken?"

Observing Jerry's worried look, Farmer Billings examined the sore ankle, then assured him that it would be all right soon. "I'll have to fill in that hole in the road. I'm glad you didn't get hurt any worse. I began to wonder just what was going on when I saw you sitting there so long. By the way, I saw you over by the fence when I came up the road," remarked the farmer as he cleared his throat and looked Jerry straight in the eyes.

Jerry looked as guilty as a dog caught stealing meat. In a sorrowful tone and with downcast eyes he confessed, "I did look at your apples quite awhile and I almost . . . but I didn't . . . because . . ."

The farmer's voice sounded stern. "Almost because what?"

Jerry's self-assurance came to his aid, for he knew he hadn't taken so much as a single bite. His voice became confident. "Sir, I almost did take some of your apples, but I remembered that Mother says no matter how badly you want something, if it belongs to someone else you must not touch it."

Farmer Billings looked both surprised and pleased. "Son, you are on

the right track to noble character. You are an honest boy. I've had apples stolen before, and when I saw you looking over the fence, I began to wonder. But I'll confess, I didn't see you take any. Always stick to that principle, my boy, and you will grow into a man that can be trusted. By the way, you haven't told me your name, Son; mine is Nelson Billings," said the farmer.

"I am Jerry Norris. My home is on Clay Road. We moved there two months ago."

"Well, Jerry, I have a plan. I've been thinking, since you have been such an honest boy and didn't take any apples, that I'm going to give you some. I was going to pick them tomorrow anyway, but I'll pick some of them today and you can help me. How would you like that?"

Jerry beamed with joy. "Oh, thank you! That will be wonderful! May I have that 'specially red one right over there for my mother, and one like it for my little sister?"

It probably was a little difficult to distinguish which apple Jerry was pointing at, but the farmer responded heartily. "You surely may, and one for your father, too, just as big or even larger, if we can find it."

Jerry's face grew suddenly sober and his voice faltered. "I haven't any father sir. He was killed in an accident last year."

Putting his hand affectionately on the boy's shoulder, Farmer Billings spoke. "I'm sorry to hear that, Son." And slipping his arm around the lad's shoulder, he continued, "Come with me and we will get those apples picked. I see your ankle is bothering you some by the way you walk, so I'll tell you what we will do. We'll fill up a bushel with these apples and put them in the truck and I'll take you home. Your mother probably has to work hard to feed and clothe two children."

The autumn breeze rustled the leaves on the apple tree while Farmer Billings and his young helper picked the best, juiciest apples Jerry had ever tasted in all his twelve years of life. And while they worked they talked. Farmer Billings was Sunday School superintendent down at Community

Church. "Now," said the farmer, "I want to tell you what the Bible says about resisting temptation, for that is just what you did when you wanted the apples and wouldn't take them because you knew it was wrong. The good old Book says, 'Blessed is the man that endureth [resisteth] temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.' That crown of life will be for you, Son, if you keep on doing right. But the people who steal will not get it. No sir! The Bible says that no thieves shall inherit the Kingdom of God. It's only sensible to reward those who are worthy of it."

"That's like it is in school. We don't get good marks unless we really study our lessons. I am glad we have a week off for Thanksgiving."

"Yes, Thanksgiving will soon be here," remarked the farmer as he shook the basket and added some more apples.

Jerry just loved apple picking. He had learned to love Farmer Billings, too. The basket of rosy apples was full much too soon and it was time to go home.

Farmer Billings lifted the heaping basket into the back of the truck

and off they went. Jerry was jubilant as he sat in the seat beside his new friend, his sore ankle forgotten. His eyes sparkled as he told how surprised his mother would be about the nice apples. The farmer smiled. But he knew that this mother would have a much deeper satisfaction to see in her son's conduct the results of her labor. Her young son, though he often witnessed the dishonesty of his school-mates, was a boy who had determination to do what was right. Such a boy was an honor to his mother.

On Thanksgiving Day when Mr. and Mrs. Billings sat down for their Thanksgiving dinner, three visitors bowed their heads in thanks with them. Jerry Norris with his mother, and little sister, Joyce Ann, were invited guests. This was a happy day for the Norrises. It was the beginning of a permanent friendship between the two families.

A few days after Thanksgiving Mr. Billings said to his wife, "I'm going over to the Norrises and see if I can get Jerry to work for me nights after school and Saturdays. That family needs help and I can find plenty for

Jerry to do around here. Would you like to go along?"

Mrs. Billings was just as pleased with the idea as her husband was. Jerry's face glowed with pleasure at the prospect of working on a farm. Every afternoon on his way home from school Jerry stopped at the farm, changed into work clothes and set to work with a will. He did his duties so well and so earnestly that his employment increased from afternoons and Saturdays to summer vacations. The more Jerry was with the Billings family the more they liked him.

Not many years later, Mr. Billings had a neat little house built on his premises for the Norris family. Jerry whistled and sang at intervals as he brushed the glistening white paint on it.

As Jerry grew older Mr. Billings gave him more and more responsibility on the farm. Jerry had offers for other jobs and higher wages, for everyone knew how dependable and honest he was. Always his answer was the same. "No." He would be true to those who had done so much for him and his family.

Honesty had paid well. ●●

Waters to Swim In

I have been reading Ezekiel (chapter 47), where the water came up to the ankles when he first got into it, and each time the Lord measured a thousand cubits and each time Ezekiel entered the water, he found it deeper, so that it came up to his knees, then his loins, then it was a river of waters, waters to swim in, and finally "a river that could not be passed over"—it filled the whole earth (vs. 1-5).

What a picture it is of the knowledge of the Lord filling the earth! But another thought struck me as I read this vision again: The man had to be obedient, he had to get into the water to find any difference. Isn't that true of us, also? It is not until you start to be obedient unto God's law that there is any difference in your life; and it is not until you start to serve God fully that He will take you deeper and deeper into His work. Oh! yes, you can play around with the things of God and go through a lot of pretense, but you will only find yourself ankle deep—which may

soothe some people, but those who want God's best will want waters to *swim* in.

To become master of the deep is far better than just having a little paddle; and to master yourself, to bring your body under, as Paul did, in the hope of gaining eternal life, is far better than serving God half-heartedly without any hope of any reward.

An altar speaks of sacrifice and service. If we are to serve God in a real way, our personal lives have to be sacrificed and a life of service and dedication must take its place. But to take the place of this life which we give in service to God now, there is not only the hope of eternal life but also the joy of coming alive as new creatures, as we become more and more obedient to the commandments of God. The delight that comes in serving God and knowing that our lives are in tune with God will give us happiness even now, knowing that we have not an ankle-depth of faith, but "waters to swim in." ●●

—H. L.

FAITH

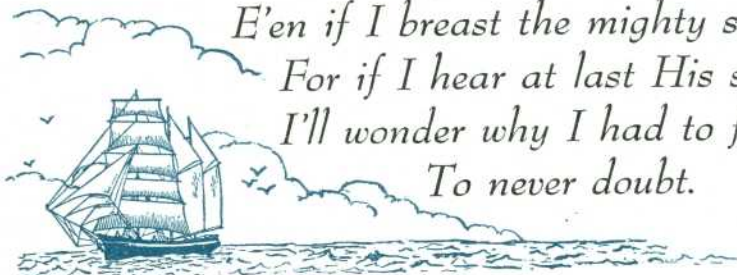
*I will not doubt, though all my ships at sea
Come drifting home with broken masts and sails;
I shall believe the Hand which never fails,
From seeming evil worketh good to me;
And, though I weep because those sails are battered,
Still will I cry, while my best hopes lie shattered,
"I trust in Thee."*

*I will not doubt, though all my prayers return
Unanswered from the still, white realm above;
I shall believe it is an all-wise Love
Which has refused those things for which I yearn;
And though, at times, I cannot keep from grieving,
Yet the pure ardor of my fixed believing
Undimmed shall burn.*

*I will not doubt, though sorrows fall like rain,
And troubles swarm like bees above a hive;
I shall believe the heights for which I strive
Are only reached by anguish and by pain;
And, though I groan and tremble with my crosses,
I yet shall see, through my severest losses,
The greater gain.*

*I will not doubt; well anchored in the faith,
Like some stanch ship, my soul braves every gale,
So strong its courage that it will not fail
E'en if I breast the mighty sea of death.
For if I hear at last His sweet approval,
I'll wonder why I had to fight so hard
To never doubt.*

--Selected.



Questions

"You say that the Word of God does not tell us about how God created the natural man and the physical earth. Yet the whole of Genesis, chapters 1 and 2, describe creation. Could it be that the idea of literal creation is only a surface point to proclaim the fundamental truth of the beginning of life on earth while the underlying meaning introduces the plan of God in reference to the destiny of men?"

"I like the idea of a spiritual creation, but it seems to me that we must not neglect the story of creation altogether. Creation is the fundamental proof of the reality of God. Without the authoritative acts of creation the Word would be incomplete. In the nature of every man there is a longing to understand where we have come from, why we are here, and where we are going. The Word must give an answer."

You are surely correct in your assumption that the Bible has the answers to the basic questions of life: where we have come from, why we are here, and where we are going.

We may also allow most assuredly that Genesis supports the idea that God is a Creator. Though we cannot believe that the different acts of creation describe literal phases of literal creation in literal days, the fact remains that God is the Creator. Our purpose in approaching the first three chapters of Genesis as allegorical is to seek teaching which will harmonize with reason and science and the rest of the Bible. But God would certainly have made a gross error if He had pictured Himself as Creator in a symbolic narrative if He is not in a literal sense the Creator of the physical world. The basic fact of the allegory is most certainly true—God is the Creator, in both a literal and a spiritual sense.

The Bible tells us in many other places that God is the Creator. "All things come of thee" was a statement made by the Hebrew King David. "Thou, even thou, art Lord alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all" is the testimony of a man named Nehemiah (9:6). The prophet Isaiah recorded the words as spoken by the Lord Himself: "I have made the

earth, and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded" (Isa. 45:12). Jeremiah recorded a similar statement as spoken by God: "I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are upon the ground, by my great power and by my outstretched arm, and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto me" (Jer. 27:5). Said the Psalmist, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handywork" (Ps. 19:1). Again he wrote: "Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands" (Ps. 102:25). And there are many more.

The Bible does not leave us with any question about where we came from, though it does not give us details about how God did the act of creating. But the evidence He has given is sufficient to prove beyond question that He is our Creator, and that He is supreme in His creation.

The purpose of the first of Genesis, then, we believe to be the revealing of a basic plan. When the narrative is understood as an allegory, describing a process that is still going on, the "creation" becomes even more significant and meaningful. We believe it is describing a "spiritual creation," the developing of a perfect world and perfect inhabitants for that world, which is really the goal of all natural creation (Isa. 45:17-18).

"Within the calm and restful confines of the garden, God placed Adam, a perfect being, created in the 'image' of God. He gave Adam also the knowledge of good and evil in the form of a fruitful tree, for 'dominion' was to be given him; and without the knowledge of good and evil, no ruling authority can be possible.

"Adam was perfect, but he had an unruly imagination which had to be restrained, lest he destroy himself by it. Therefore the commandment, 'Thou shalt not eat of it [the tree of the knowledge of good and evil], lest thou die.'

"Is this according to your understanding?"

Your statement about Adam's original perfect state in a restful and calm garden is wholly without Scriptural support. The literal man Adam was not created in the image of God physically some six thousand years ago, nor was he given a literal "dominion." The whole passage is far more understandable and meaningful when considered as an allegory, an outline of God's entire plan of salvation, spanning a period of seven thousand-year days. It describes a process of creation still continuing; and when it is finally complete and

God's will is consummated on earth, only then will all be "very good."

You suggest that Adam originally had a knowledge of good and evil; God gave Adam the knowledge by which he could learn to discern between good and evil, but God did not make Adam—or anyone else—originally a perfect moral being. All must develop and grow and learn to choose the good and refuse the evil; even Jesus Christ had to learn to choose the good (see Isa. 7:14-15). God promises to help and support those who do right and learn to choose the good (see Ps. 37: 23-25; 145:20; 103:17-18), but He does not make man instinctively good. Rather, the Bible teaches that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jer. 17:9).

You say that Adam had an "unruly imagination which had to be restrained, lest he destroy himself by it. Therefore the commandment, 'Thou shalt not eat of it, lest thou die.'" You also say "Adam was perfect." We know of no Bible support for this statement whatever. In fact, Genesis 3 records how Adam sinned.

Adam was a man representative of all who enter God's service and agree to serve Him; all have the same opportunity to obey or disobey; it is a matter of individual choice.

"What is the Greek word translated 'mercy' in the King James Version of Matthew 9:13, and what does it mean?"

Matthew 9:13 reads, "But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice."

The original word translated "mercy" in this text is defined as "pity, mercy, compassion, Matt. 9:13; 12:7; Luke 1:50; . . . benefit which results from compassion, kindness, mercies, blessings" (The Analytical Greek Lexicon).

"Matthew 9:13 is supposed to be a quotation from Hosea 6:6. In Hosea 6:6 in the New English Bible the word 'loyalty' appears instead of mercy. It is clear from the context that the translators interpret 'loyalty' as loyalty to God and His laws! Can the Greek word translated 'mercy' in Matthew 9:13 be translated 'loyalty'? Can it be translated 'spiritual commitment'? With this thought the text would read, 'I will have loyalty, and not sacrifice.'"

Jesus' words in Matthew 9:13 spell out the Lord's preference: He would rather see evidence of a man's "mercy," than to receive his "sacrifices." The word "mercy" itself does not seem to suggest the thought of loyalty, but the two are surely associated. Mercy is an attribute of God;

and it is an attribute He desires in all His human family. The Epistle of James gives special warning to the unmerciful: "He shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy" (Jas. 2:13).

Jesus taught that it was every man's duty before God to show mercy to other men. It is among the beatitudes: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." It is the lesson of the parable of the Unmerciful Servant, in which the servant was glad for all the mercy shown to him but was unwilling to show the same kindness to others (Matt. 18:23-35). It is the thought of these words in our Lord's Prayer: "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." To be merciful is a definite part of our spiritual commitment and we cannot be truly loyal in God's sight without this quality. ●●

Thanksgiving in the Psalms

That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all thy wondrous works (Ps. 26:7).

How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God! (Psalm 36:7).

And my soul shall be joyful in the Lord: it shall rejoice in his salvation (Psalm 35:9).

Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand (Psalm 73:23).

Know ye that the Lord he is God (Psalm 100:3).

Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him (Psalm 105:2).

Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name (Psalm 96:8).

I will praise thee for ever, because thou hast done it (Psalm 52:9).

Voice of the Lord is full of majesty (Psalm 29:4).

I will praise thee, O Lord, with my whole heart (Psalm 9:1).

Now know I that the Lord saveth his anointed; he will hear him (Psalm 20:6).

Give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness (Psalm 97:12).

**He who controls himself is safe from others,
He wears a coat of mail that none can pierce.
None but yourself is your greatest foe;
None but one can harm you.**

—Selected.



SCRIPTURAL SPOTLIGHT

"Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord"—Ephesians 2:19-21.

IN ONE of the New England states is a stone bridge which has become the object of much interest and curiosity. While other bridges of the past century have crumbled away into ruins, this bridge still stands, serving man and beast. Year after year it has withstood the flood waters of spring thaws and the pressure of winter ice. How can it? What is the secret of its strength and endurance?

The whole secret lies in the way it was built. It was built from stones found in that vicinity which were shaped into a low arch-type construction. The stones were just ordinary and common run, but they were cut and shaped according to a specific pattern. Each stone was chiseled wedge-shape and so tapered that it joined and matched its neighbor. Thus each stone fitted into its place and supported the stones next to it without any give or play. This giving of support one to another strengthened the whole construction.

Each stone being true to shape and size, there was no need for mortar to bind the stones together. All stones were so fitted that no cementing was necessary. The heavier the load on the bridge, the more tightly the stones of the arch press together and the greater the resistance they offer to the pressure. The heavier the load, the stronger the bridge!

We today find ourselves in a world of pressure, of strife and confusion. How are we building? Is our structure strong enough to stand? Are we building just for today, or is our aim for lasting strength and endurance?

There is much building going on in our daily life, but not enough building with God; not enough spiritual upbuilding in thought, word and deed. It is just natural to build up pride, self-seeking

and vainglory; but it takes determination and prayerful, wholehearted practice to build into our character the Christian virtues of humility, benevolence and self-effacement.

*. . . O Lord, grant that
Together we build with Thee,
Building and shaping our destiny.*

Even as all the stones of that particular bridge are one bridge, so the apostle Paul tells us that all true Christians make up that one house, or church, or temple. We are all built together "upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord" (Eph. 2:20-21).

It is through this character-building that we come into fellowship with God and our fellowmen, working to become character stones of godly principle. We cannot do this building alone, but by being "workers together with God" His Word can be the shaping influence of our lives. If we aspire to associate with God tomorrow, we must build with Him today. He helps those who help themselves.

We are naturally rough, unhewn stones. Unless we submit to be cut, and carved, and shaped, we are of little earthly use, and no heavenly use whatever. In order to become a perfect stone, we must be worked upon and re-made according to God's design. Every day we should chip away on that stubborn will of ours, hew away on that old nature until in our daily living we show a marked contrast to the unhewn stones around us.

A new life designates a new way of living. The goal is perfection of character, a point which, when reached, will reveal an attitude of "none of

self and all of Thee." As the cutting and carving progresses, the beauty of an inner personality fashioned in the image of God will be disclosed.

When the old nature is all cut away, there will be greater unity between stone and stone. So close will be the bond that there will be no voids for unbelief or discouragement to enter, no possible chance for evil to wedge itself in.

The vital point of an arch is the keystone, the stone which completes the structure, giving it strength to carry the load. In our spiritual structure there is also a keystone, a mighty chief stone—even Jesus Himself. Without this vital keystone the arch would crumble; with it, neither storm nor flood nor time itself can shake it.

Why does it take so long to shape ourselves to fit into this structure? Why are we unwilling to get rid of the ugly bumps and deformities? Why do we pray for perfection and then dodge the instrument that comes to chisel away the imperfections? Apart from the cutting there can be no character. Then why do we not set our feet squarely on the ground and stand up straight and take the chiseling? The work will be easier and will not require so much time. What could have been chipped off at one stroke of the hammer often fails to give way due to our resistance, and the stroke must be given over and over again. Let us beg for help and assistance that we may yield to whatever God deems best for us, saying, "Not my will but thine be done."

When all evil has been cut away, then God will place His stamp of approval on our lives. "In Him each separate piece of building properly fitting into its neighbor, grows together into a temple consecrated to God" (Eph. 2:22, Phillips). By encouraging, supporting, and cleaving one to another in joy or in trial, our strength will be increased; come what may, our arch will remain unmovable and unshaken. The floodwaters of daily trial will not stir us; neither will the showers of prosperity or the winds of adversity weaken us; the loads of petty grievances will pass over us but will not crumble away our steadfastness. So closely will we be knit together with God and our fellow-Christians that we will be builded into a sturdy golden span that will arch over the gulf of Death and reach far into the joys of Eternity. •

Think Magnificently About God!

(Continued from page 9)

Nehemiah was thinking magnificently about God when he extolled Him in prayer: "Thou, even thou, art Lord alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshipeth thee" (Neh. 9:6).

No small-minded men were those prophets and apostles of old; they thought deeply, reverently, magnificently about God. And as we recall their words, are we not also stimulated to think magnificently? How can we possibly content ourselves with small thoughts, small goals, small utterances, when we worship the Creator of the universes? We who are so highly favored, called to be members of the heavenly family; we who hope to share someday the inheritance of the saints of God, can we not think magnificently about God?

Our Plague—Shallowness

But magnificent thinking is not natural to us. Shallowness is the plight of the majority of humankind, especially in this secular age. The mass media, radio and television, save thousands from the trouble of thinking for themselves. The moment's excitement or pleasure is almost the extent of their interest in life.

While this seems extreme, we cannot exempt ourselves from the danger of shallowness. We would do well to check often the depth-level of our thinking, for we are all too shallow by nature, too small in thought and vision. If we could see a written record of all our thoughts in a single day, we might be appalled at the multitude of small, repetitious thoughts we entertained. It is so easy to let our minds go over and over something of no value whatever, or to wander from this to that without aim or direction. No small task is it to bring every thought into captivity and make it obey Christ, but this is what we must do if ever we are accepted by Him. The Great Creator takes no delight in mental pygmies; He wants great souls who share His great thoughts and great interests. There is no place in God's family for miniature men with miniature minds and miniature characters. God deals only in greatness. Everything about Him is superlative.

Do we qualify? Are our thoughts appropriate to the magnificent God we serve? How much time do we waste reviewing minor issues that require practically no thought at all? How much time

Perseverance pays. Maybe your own row looks skimpy, in comparison to another; but if you stick to it and take everything as you come to it, you will get a lot more cotton than if you run around the field picking just big bolls.

might we have for soul-stirring prayer and heavenly meditating if we watched our thoughts with all vigilance and strictly prohibited our minds from dwelling on issues we have no power to change, or issues which are of no lasting consequence and provide no spiritual stimulus?

Using Our Minds

God has given us minds, and He wants us to use them. Thinking requires conscious, directed effort, but He has given us also the willpower to make that effort. We have all the faculties we need to think magnificently.

But how? Do we wonder how we of ourselves can ever originate a magnificent thought? We need not worry, for God knows our frame, and He has supplied our need abundantly. He has provided us an inexhaustible storehouse of lofty thoughts. Ten centuries could not exhaust its thinking possibilities, to say nothing of our little lifetime. All we have to do is to "read, and meditate," and then—grow! Could God possibly have made right thinking easier for us?

With all this done in our behalf, with minds to think, intellects to reason, memories to remember, and a wealth of magnificent thoughts all written out to be absorbed and put to use, do we realize what a dishonor we do our loving God when we fill our minds with petty interests, small desires, and useless whims?

In the Epistle of Paul to the Philippians is a breath-taking list of magnificent possibilities for worthwhile thinking: "Brothers," he writes, "whatever is true, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. . . . And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:8, 7, NIV).

The Effects of Magnificent Thinking

Magnificent thinking should have a profound effect upon our lives, for how can we truly worship the "high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy," without ourselves aspiring more and more to holiness? How can we meditate upon His supreme greatness and not be humbled? How can we recognize His almighty power and not feel our own impotence? How can we cherish thoughts of His great goodness and not be thoroughly ashamed of our pettiness, our little strifes, grumbles, grudges and gripes! How can we delight in any of these and at the

same time entertain magnificent thoughts of God and His holiness? Doesn't the very thought of God's magnificence move us to say with finality to one and all of our petty ways, "Be gone! I'll have no more to do with all such nothingness!"?

Thinking magnificently about God humbles us; it fills us with reverence and awe; it puts us in our place as "sheep of His pasture," creatures existing by His mercy, dependent upon our Creator for our very life and all that sustains it. And does it not at the same time stir within us a deeper appreciation of His love and goodness to us and a surging desire to please Him who has not dealt with us after our sins nor rewarded us according to our iniquities? Do we not feel to thank and praise Him whose lovingkindness is better than life? Do we not long to draw nearer and nearer to Him that we may have our souls bound in the bundle of life with Him? He who never calls evil good or good evil, do we not long to learn His definitions and order our lives in His fear?

How can we think magnificently about so loving and merciful a God and not be more and more willing—even eager—to serve Him?

And does not the thought of God's magnificence stimulate our desire to merit the abundant entrance into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and partake of the divine nature (II Pet. 1:11, 4)? What could we mortal creatures possibly do—or do without—to be worthy of such high honor?

Overwhelmed . . .

Oh, as we approach the Almighty and ponder the eternity He has set before us frail creatures of earth, there should rush up from the depths of our souls feelings which all our wealth of words is incapable of expressing. Words become weak and all but useless in describing the magnificent goodness He has shown us in setting before us such indescribable blessings.

We need to be overwhelmed with the realization that we are dealing with Omnipotence. We need to be put to silence in the presence of the divine. We need to be confounded by the magnitude of what He offers so that it is on our minds continually. We need to think more and more magnificently about God.

For . . .

Someday we shall have to come to terms with this magnificence. God, who is supreme in knowledge, supreme in wisdom, supreme in creative ability and intelligence, is also supreme in righteousness, in equity and in justice. He has one

perfect standard by which He judges all—even us. Someday we shall find ourselves face to face with His righteousness and justice. And what can we expect then? Dare we think that the omnipotent Creator will crown with His magnificence anything that is not itself magnificent?

It is this uncompromising quality of God's nature that will guarantee the blessedness and beauty of His new creation. There will be nothing to hurt nor destroy in that new world because combined with God's long long-suffering and patience is an unflinching intolerance of evil. He will not always chide, nor will He withhold His indignation forever (Ps. 103:9). When the time is right He will act, and no workers of iniquity will survive. His new creation must be as perfect and pure as His own divine nature; God loves righteousness, and justice and judgment are the eternal habitation of His throne; (Ps. 89:14), where He reigns, these prevail.

This aspect of God's magnificence should create in us a deeper consciousness of the reality and seriousness of our commitment to God. Never must we forget that He is of too pure eyes to behold iniquity—the world's iniquity, your iniquity, my iniquity—with any degree of tolerance (Hab. 1:13). Sin, any sin, small or great, is nothing less than sin in His sight. And sin, any sin, is exceeding sinful. Before we can hope to know the magnificent blessings He has in store for His own, we will have to learn to see sin as God sees it and eradicate every trace of it from our lives.

The righteous Lord loves righteousness, and His countenance beholds the upright with most loving approval (Ps. 11:7). He would have us "all glorious within," polished "after the similitude of a palace," "perfect and complete with never a defect," "not having spot nor wrinkle or any such thing," but "holy and without blemish." With examples of this perfection continually before Him and around Him in His heavenly realm, can we wonder that He *hates* sin in all of its forms?

Obvious sins—dishonesty, drunkenness, revelry, fornication—may appall us. But our magnificent God sees more than these. He sees all the way into the depths of our being and knows the thoughts that come into our minds, every one of them. There is not a word in our tongue but that He knows—even before it is spoken. He sees even to the thoughts and intents of the heart (Heb. 4:12), and as long as any dark or shady motives are hiding there, He will never bestow upon us His eternal blessings.

God does not classify sins as small, medium and large. He hates all forms of all sins. Oh, let

us learn to feel that same abhorrence of our own sins in the depths of our being as we think magnificently about God!

Magnificent Love

Do we realize how endearingly He has spoken of those who turn from sin and learn to live uprightly before Him? We know that whole nations who are unmindful of Him and His great purposes are "as nothing"; they are counted as mere dust upon a balance scale; "all nations are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity" (Isa. 40: 15-17). But those who become holy and righteous, who live by His laws and attain to His standard, are called His "beloved" (Deut. 33:12); His "jewels" (Mal. 3:17); His "peculiar treasure" (Ex. 19:5); those upon whom He has set His love (Deut. 7:6-7); those whom He will make "high above all nations which he hath made, in praise, and in name, and in honour, . . . an holy people unto the Lord thy God" (Deut. 26:18-19); those who are "called by the name of the Lord" (Deut. 28: 10); those whom He has set apart for Himself (Ps. 4:3); "a people near unto him" (Ps. 148:14). Such as are "upright in heart are his delight" (Prov. 11:20)—think of being one in whom the God of heaven *delights*! They are His "sons and daughters" whom He will gather "from the ends of the earth; even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him" (Isa. 43:6-7).

The remembrance of these chosen ones is with Him continually, even more continually than a mother remembers her newborn infant (Isa. 49: 15). "Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me" (Isa. 49:16). "I have covered thee in the shadow of

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mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou art my people" (Isa. 51:16). "My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee" (Isa. 54:10). "Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: . . . for the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married [shall be called "a Home"—Knox], . . . and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee" (Isa. 62:4-5).

God sent His prophets to warn, but the promises of blessing abound in their words—blessings for the faithful and obedient. "The Lord thy God . . . will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing" (Zeph. 3:17). So precious will they be that they will be "as a signet" (Hag. 2:23), and "he that toucheth [them] toucheth the apple of his eye" (Zech. 2:8).

Has not God dealt magnificently with us? He has given us this life and all we need to sustain it, while we prepare for life in His better, future world. He has sent His Word to steady us, instruct us, and inspire us; He has sent His Son to show us the way, and brethren to help and accompany us. And He has placed us in the midst of a magnificent creation, giving us countless reminders of His existence, His ability, His omnipotence. How can we possibly be casual and indifferent about such magnificence?

And how can we rest content with ourselves until we have exerted the last ounce of strength within us to attain to the exalted standard of His magnificence?

What a holy privilege is ours to be called into the sphere of such magnificence. Oh, let us think magnificently about our God!

And now, "unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen." ●●

*Life is a book in volumes three:
The past, the present, the yet to be.
The past is written and laid away;
The present we're writing, day by day.
The last and best, our volume three,
Is locked from sight, God holds the key.*

Obituary

Vaughn Vosburgh

Once again we have been reminded of the brevity of life as we received word of the passing of a long-time friend, brother and subscriber, Vaughn Vosburgh, of Stone Arabia, New York. Brother Vosburgh had been in failing health for several years, and death came peacefully on October 3.

Brother Vosburgh was a very kind, gentle, and honest man, who never took unfair advantage of his fellowman. He was earnest in his religious convictions, which he maintained for many years, and which he expressed freely to any who should chance to inquire. He kept constantly in mind his Christian hope of the imminent return of Christ to set up a Kingdom of justice and righteousness for all, and made an effort to so live that he might share in that Kingdom.

The Vosburgh family acquaintance with the Megiddo Church dates back to 1921. Brother Vosburgh is survived by two brothers, Ralph and Gerald, both of Stone Arabia, New York, with whom he made his home and who looked after him during his illness.

Funeral services were conducted by our assistant pastor, Newton H. Payne, in Fort Plain, New York, on October 7. Interment was in Fort Plain Cemetery, where our brother will rest until the Day when the great Judge returns to reward every man according as his works have been and dispense justice and righteousness to all. ●●

Lord, TAKE me,

Me, with all my selfishness, with
All my pride and jealousy,

All my wilful disobedience,
All my lack of faith and love,

Me, with all my faults and frailties,
All my secret, hidden sins,

And BREAK me!

Break my stiff and stubborn will, Lord,
Break my self with all its pride;
And all its dearest dreams, ambitions, . . .
Break my heart, its idols smash—

And MAKE me!

With Thy tender, skilful hands, Lord,
Make me like Thyself to be,
Molded in Thy glorious image,
Sweet and loving, humble, kind,
Faithful, gentle, peaceful, good,
Doing always my Father's will.

Our Readers Write ...

Getting Ready

The words of Scripture we read give us so much strength and courage to press on to gain that glorious world to come. They are indeed strong meat and a precious morsel indeed, which is vitally needed for our spiritual nourishment. May we never lose our desire and hunger for this heavenly food, the sustaining bread of life, which alone has the power to give us length of days, riches and honor and peace surpassing all our understanding. For "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom. . . . She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her, and happy is everyone that retaineth her." What wonderful counsel to have always in our thoughts.

Truly, we do not know how long our days of opportunity will be, and we should and must use the time we have left in preparing ourselves in readiness for the coming of the King. We should and must get everything in perfect order. Readiness means to be continually checking and examining ourselves by the Word, by removing any spots whether they may be bad habits, lack of enthusiasm, or lack of meekness. We must be alerted with all diligence to hold the fort until the dawning of the Great Day of the Lord.

What a great honor then, if we are faithful! What a great honor to be a vessel unto honor, of gold or silver, to be chosen for use in God's holy temple, to be a "crown of glory" in the hand of the Lord, and a "royal diadem in the hand of our God" (Isa. 62:3).

Warwick, Queensland, Australia

A. B.

Today, or Tomorrow, or—

Jesus Christ is coming again, and He will be the King over the whole earth. He will set matters right for all the nations on this earth. They then shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nations shall not learn war any more. There will be genuine peace all over the earth, and happiness will prevail over the earth with divine blessings. There will be no more mental institutions, no more deaths, no more crime, no more divorces, no more prisons, no more gangsters, no more depressions or inflations. Everything is going to be a new creation by God.

We all hope to see that Day, the great and glorious Day of God, the day when His Son Jesus Christ shall return.

Are you people well prepared for that day when it comes? It could be today, tomorrow, or in the very near future.

Three Oaks, Michigan

J. H.

Only God Knows

While we may judge people by their fruits, God only knows what is in the heart. Our heart must be washed clean of evil if we would be saved. We can have no vain thoughts lodging within to defile us.

How we should work, with God to help and strengthen us, to bear the lovely fruits of the Spirit, to be worthy to enjoy the wonderful time which is coming when all shall "know the Lord from the least to the greatest."

Swansea, South Wales, England

R. B.

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for CHRISTIANS?

Just To Say "Thank You"

Lord, I just want to say Thank You
 For the world in which I live,
 For all the beautiful things in it,
 For all the useful things in it
 Which I may enjoy to your glory.

Thank you for the life you have given me,
 For a body to act,
 For a mind to think,
 For a memory to remember,
 For a heart to appreciate and understand.

Grant me, O God,
 Grace to say Yes when I am asked to do a service in Your name;
 Strength to resolutely say No, when tempted to do wrong;
 Patience to say to myself Wait when I am in too much of a hurry;
 Obedience to say, Lord, what do you want me to do?
 in every choice that comes my way.

And Lord, help me
 To be obedient when I would like my own way;
 To persevere when I am tired and discouraged;
 To study and concentrate when I would rather let my mind drift;
 To help another with his work when I feel I can't be bothered;
 To forgive when I am tempted to feel hurt or sore or bitter,
 To keep my temper when I could easily let it blaze.

Help me to keep the far-away view, Lord,
 To think more of Your promises than of anything of the present.

Thank you for the tremendous opportunity of making my life count.
 Amen.