

Megiddo Message



"O Give Thanks Unto the Lord"

Vol. 66, No. 10

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The Grace of Gumption

GUMPTION may sound like a strange companion for "grace," yet it stands, pure and vital. What is gumption? The dictionary defines it as "shrewd practical common sense; enterprise; initiative." Qualities we all need—who would attempt to get along without them in this world? and who would think of preparing fully for the world to come without this sort of gumption, the practical wisdom that discerns what is right and then has the get-up-and-go to *do* it! Surely it is a virtue we all need.

Jesus described gumption in this way: "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (John 13:17). In other words, it is not enough simply to *know* what is right; you need also that quality of character which will *apply* what you know, and that quality is gumption. Without it, you cannot possibly succeed.

This shrewd practical common sense is also needful in the matter of applying our faith and making it work. We know what we believe, we have the evidence; we have reviewed it a thousand times. But do we have the gumption, the practical common sense really to go ahead and *act* on that faith knowing that there is no question, and thus prevent any time-consuming hesitation? Do we have the ability to go "all-out" for God even when the evidence does not seem to be "all in"? This is what James calls faith that *works*. "Yea a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works. . . . But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?" (James 2:18, 20).

The second aspect of gumption is "enterprise." Enterprise is literally "readiness to engage in daring action." Are we not in a project requiring the utmost in daring action, even the committing of our entire lives to God and His cause, to those things that can be seen only by the eye of faith? Do we not need great "enterprise" to keep going? We will find it in gumption.

The third definition of gumption is perhaps the strongest: "initiative." This was what the apostle Paul was longing for when he wrote, "The good that I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do." In other words, he was saying, "I need the power to take hold of that man Paul and tell him exactly what he shall and shall not do." And Paul knew—as we also know—that that takes gumption.

When we look at ourselves and our shortcomings, do we not realize it the more? We need gumption. How else shall we be able to keep our gaze set firmly upon the wonders of the age to come? How else shall we keep our eyes from feasting on sights we know we should not observe? What other way is there to keep ourselves from spilling out sharp and cutting words when someone rubs us the wrong way? How else shall we overpower the feelings that rise so quickly within us, feelings that are easily hurt, offended or grieved? How else are we to seek out those wandering thoughts and bring them into captivity to the obedience of Christ? How else are we going to restrain those irregular desires and wishes that assert themselves so suddenly and without warning? How else are we to re-make this unruly nature that is ours into that pure, submissive, holy nature that is Christ's?

We need gumption. God has no use for weak-willed, spineless creatures that may be swayed and turned with any passing fancy or fascination. Nor does He need those who have no will to do something for themselves. The Christian development process, the molding and fashioning of the new creature, takes a special combination of qualities not found in nature. But they are qualities we all may, with concentration and effort, develop. And they are qualities which, once developed, will work for our good as long as we live—and through all the ages to come, if we prove faithful.

Why not concentrate on that special grace of gumption? We need it *now*! ●●

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).

Megiddo Message

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*

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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A Ladder of Praise

IN THE YEARS before World War II, a British prime minister received a diplomatic envoy from somewhere in central Europe. The envoy spoke to him of the gathering storm of intrigue, unrest, suspicion and hate. The two men sat and stared at each other in silence. Then abruptly the prime minister pushed toward the diplomat a huge bowl of roses that stood on the table between them, as if seeing in their beauty some token of present hope and future promise. "Bury your face in all that loveliness," he said simply, "and thank God."

Have we considered how many times the Bible admonishes us to set aside our problems and troubles in this world and *thank God*? "Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High" (Ps. 50:14). Thank Him for His works, His wonders, and His judgments. "O give thanks unto the Lord; call upon his name: make known his deeds among the people. Remember his marvellous works that he hath done; his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth" (Ps. 105:1, 5).

Thank Him for His mercy. "Praise ye the Lord. O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever" (Ps. 106:1).

Thank Him for the increase that He gives. "Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine" (Prov. 3:9-10).

"In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: both the one and the other God has made, so that man cannot find fault with him in anything" (Eccl. 7:14, KJV and New American Bible). We never have an occasion to complain or find fault with God's works.

Praise Him for the prospect of deliverance. "Go ye forth of Babylon . . . with a voice of singing declare ye, tell this, utter it even to the end of

the earth; say ye, The Lord hath redeemed his servant Jacob" (Isa. 48:20).

Give voice to your thanks, speaking to "yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph. 5:19-20). "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" (Phil. 4:6). "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light" (Col. 1:12). "Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving" (Col. 2:7). "And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. . . . And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him" (Col. 3:15, 17). "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving" (Col. 4:2). "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (I Thess. 5:18). "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name" (Heb. 13:15).

Can we ponder these texts, and wonder whether God wants His children to express their thanks—and more, to be thankful?

Real Gratitude

But the gratitude that is required is not a sentimental feeling; nor does the Bible try to cover up the grim and unpleasant experiences of life. It shows us how we can rise above the unpleasant and undesirable with a spirit of thankfulness which can keep the thought of God supreme whatever comes, and can see all things working together for good to those who truly love Him. By giving thanks to God in the midst of trial, we place ourselves in His care and realize we are not alone;

For the subject of this sermon we are indebted to Pulpit Digest, Box 5199, Jackson, Miss. 39216. Used by permission.

we realize that He will be our strength and will never allow anything more than we can bear. Thus we bow in humble, willing, grateful submission to Him who does all things right, rather than feeling ourselves the victims of chance or fate. And when we let God be Master and Ruler in our lives, we can know that whatever the immediate outlook and suffering, the end will be glorious beyond anything we can imagine.

Oh, the rich and overflowing blessings that spring from thankfulness!

The same God of the Bible who shows us how we can be thankful in the midst of life as it is, shows us also ourselves as we are—stubborn, rebellious, indifferent, self-centered, suspicious of the motives of others when we should be suspicious of ourselves—and shows us what thankfulness will do to transform us. There are hours dark as midnight when we see deep into our unregenerated hearts, and hope and God seem afar off; yet always, when there is within us a desire for holiness, God is ready to chasten, encourage, strengthen and help us to get right again. At such times, as a token of present hope and future promise, something in His Word seems to say to us, “Bury your face in all this loveliness, and thank God.” Thank Him not for what you are but for what you have the potential to *become*. Above all, *thank God*.

Our capacity to give thanks is our binding link with God. When we seem to have no other touch with Him, we can still give thanks. And as surely as we start counting our blessings that come from Him, we realize how deeply indebted and dependent we are. We are not self-sufficient in this world, much as we might like to think we are. We are not here because we deserved life, nor are we sustained by our own ingenuity. The processes and laws by which we exist are wholly God’s design; and were He to take away so small a thing as the oxygen we breathe, we would all perish together in a matter of minutes. Realizing this should draw from our hearts the deepest, humblest feeling of gratitude to Him who is so great, so all-wise, so omnipotent. When we tend to feel disheartened, or discouraged, or disenchanted with our lives as they are, if we just start to consider what God has done for us in the past, what He is doing for us today, and what He has promised to do for us in the future—does not the thought of all this draw our hearts to Him in praise and thankfulness?

A prominently religious scholar of this century writes of a time when as a youth he felt muddled and confused, “not knowing what to do with life nor what to make of it.” His faith was sorely shaken, and he found himself even doubting whether God were real. However, he did not throw

*Thank God not for what you are
but for what you have the
potential to become.
Above all, thank God.*

his religion away as so many do. Rather, he made a resolve to hang on to what remained of it by what he called “one thin thread of thanks.” He thanked whatever gods there might be for any life lived at all. He refused to whine or repine because there was so little in his life that seemed good. Instead, he kept directing his mind to the good he could find. He determined that he would take “life for gratitude, not for granted,” and he found in time that the “one thin thread of thanks” not only recovered for him the reality and radiance of faith but led him to a fuller, happier life.

We grow in grace as we grow in gratitude. In fact, we may think of our growth in grace in terms of the level of gratitude we have reached. Our gratitude must grow. Just as a newborn child cannot be grateful for life, so a beginner in the way of salvation cannot be truly grateful for the hope set before him. Gratitude comes with growth.

On the Ground

We see in the Bible different levels of gratitude, which may be arranged in an ascending scale. They are levels that we attain as we mature in the divine life. We might call them a ladder of praise, in which every rung “goes higher, higher.” Let us try to light up the rungs of this ladder with several texts of Scripture.

At the very bottom of the ladder are those who have no thought or desire for God. They say to the Lord by their actions, “Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto him?” (Job 21:14-15). They take life for granted, not for gratitude. Here are the murmurers, the grumblers, the complainers, who are satisfied with nothing, grateful for nothing, and—in the sight of God—good for nothing. God forbid that we should ever place ourselves among them.

Rung One: Self-Praise

The first level of praise, the lowest rung on our ladder, is found in these words: “Lord, I thank thee that I am not as other men.”

You will recall Jesus' parable of a Pharisee in the temple piously offering a prayer to heaven. "God, I thank thee," he began. Why? Why was he thanking God? "Because I am not as other men, . . . nor even as this tax-collector"—who was bowing his head in shame and humiliation because of his sinfulness, and crying out for divine mercy of which he felt so unworthy.

We doubt, of course, that the complacent Pharisee felt entirely satisfied with his life either; yet in a sense he was. He was satisfied because he had reached the low goal he had set for himself—to be better than someone else. We can visualize him walking among the upper class of the day, making the appropriate remarks at the appropriate times, well greeted by all and yet a friend of none. We call his attitude Pharisaical; his righteousness a sham. Yet, bad as it was, it was better than grumbling. His prayer contained at least a measure of thankfulness. When he compared his lot to that of other people—extortioners, unjust, adulterers,

publicans—he *did* have much to be thankful for.

"God, I thank thee that I am not as other men!" This is the lowest rung on the ladder of praise because it is passive; it will never go any higher. God does not condemn us for being grateful for the misfortunes we have escaped, but such was hardly the Pharisee's intent. "I feel so fortunate, when I compare myself with other people" could be a statement of sincere appreciation; but coming from the lips of the self-righteous Pharisee, it is a form of self-praise. What will happen to this Pharisee's gratitude when he sees others who enjoy *better* health, *greater* social distinction, *higher* position, *larger* measures of this world's goods, and a keener devotion to piety? How much gratitude will he have to offer *then*?

No, thankfulness that comes from looking down upon others can hardly be called thankfulness at all. It is not that "meek and quiet spirit" which is "in the sight of God of great price" (I Pet. 3:4). Nor does it find its highest satisfaction in pleasing

Let Us Pray . . .

O Lord of life and strength, many of Thy mercies do we plainly see, and we believe there is a boundless store behind all these. No morning stars that sing together can have greater cause than we for grateful joy and thankfulness. Thou hast given us a life of high vocation, and Thine own breathing in our hearts interprets for us its sacred opportunities.

Not a cloud of sorrow but Thou hast touched with glory. Not a dusty atmosphere of care but that Thy light shines through. Not a galling trial that we must bear must we bear alone. Underneath are Thy everlasting arms.

As Thou didst deliver Thy people out of their distresses as they wandered in the wilderness, and when hungry and thirsty Thou didst provide them water and food and didst deliver them out of their troubles, so today Thou art leading those who will be led to a new and better life here and now, and in the world to come life everlasting. For the winners in the struggle against the flesh, the limitations of our mortal existence will be replaced by a life that will be unending, accompanied by ever-mounting health and immortal vigor. And in promising us a place of habitation

Thou art assuring us of the verity of the things promised. A better life *can* be ours. It can be ours if we now apply ourselves to doing all that Thou hast commanded us in Thy Word. Thou art gracious and kind; Lord, we thank Thee.

Thou satisfieth the longing soul and filleth the hungry soul with goodness, and a Day will come when such as sit in darkness and the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron, will be released; blessings unspeakable will be the happy lot of each winner in the struggle against all sin and wrong.

We rejoice that Thou hast sent forth Thy Word to succor and heal us, and deliver us from a condition where we were marked for destruction and eventual nonentity. Oh that men would praise Thee for Thy goodness, and for Thy wonderful works to the children of men. We rejoice that a day will come when the righteous shall see and experience Thy wonderful salvation, and that as a result of divine administration by Thy dear Son and His faithful Bride or Church, all iniquity shall be obliged to stop her mouth.

The wise have the good judgment to observe these things. May we, too, fully comprehend Thy lovingkindness which is from everlasting to everlasting upon those who remember Thy commandments to do them. May we be among those super-wise individuals, is our humble prayer. In Jesus' name. Amen.

God; when it pleases itself, it is satisfied.

What did Jesus teach His pre-eminence-loving disciples about this all-too-human trait? "Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant" (Matt. 20:27). And what did the apostle Paul say about it? "For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves; but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise" (II Cor. 10:12). God does not honor His people for self-made distinctions. It is our duty to compare ourselves with the *divine standard*, not with other men.

If we are tempted to stay on this low, comfortable rung on the ladder of praise, let us start climbing immediately. God does not even hear the prayers that come from this level. For our prayers to reach the throne of grace, we must climb higher. Our prayer, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men" should be changed to one of genuine gratitude that says, "God, I thank thee for all that I am—thine is the glory."

Rung Two: Gratitude for Deliverance

The second rung up the ladder of praise is illustrated by this text: "And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, . . . fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks" (Luke 17:15-16).

This was the time Jesus healed ten men of that loathsome, deadly disease, leprosy. And only one of them—and he a despised Samaritan—returned to say thank you. His thanks was better than that of the Pharisee. There was no slow, calculating, haughty statement in it of being better than someone else, but simply a spontaneous outburst of praise for a boon unexpectedly and miraculously received. The man had been cured of incurable leprosy. He had been granted an undreamed of favor from God. Therefore he gave thanks.

Sheer courtesy requires that we climb to this second rung. Nothing seems more rude or insensitive than an attitude of ingratitude. We do not mind helping others who cannot help us in return, but we do like them to have the grace to say thank you. It is told of a distinguished lawyer that in the course of a brilliant career he saved seventy-nine accused murderers from the death-penalty—and not even one of them thanked him. If mere men feel themselves deserving of thanks, how much more does God!

Of the ten lepers, only one thought enough of the Healer to return and say thank you. "Where are the other nine?" asked Jesus. But they had

gone their thoughtless way, receiving the outer blessing and not taking time to turn back to obtain the greater healing Jesus could have given their *inner* lives.

Have we ever made this mistake? Have we partaken of God's bounty—and *felt* grateful, but never approached Him to *express* our thanks and seek the greater blessings He holds in store?

When we have received special blessings, praise comes naturally; we are not likely to make the mistake of the nine lepers. But this is not the height of thankfulness. This is only the second rung up the ladder. We want to go higher, higher.

Rung Three: Praise for Blessings

The third rung is indicated by this text: "O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men" (Ps. 107:8, 15, 21, 31).

So sang the Psalmist. Someone has commented that "all the way through the book of Psalms you feel that you are walking on a smouldering volcano of praise, which is liable to burst out at any moment into a great flame of gratitude to God."

Here is genuine praise for blessings rightly received. The men who wrote the Psalms praised God with their whole heart and soul. And for what? Not for material blessings and benefits such as we enjoy, because freedom, security, comfort and prosperity were not theirs. They had little of what we would call natural reasons for gratitude.

For what, then, did they thank God? They thanked Him for the visible demonstrations of Himself, His power, His creative ability; they thanked Him for His promises, and the better hope He was setting before the children of men, for promised blessings that would be independent of time and circumstance. "O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness," they exclaimed, "and for his wonderful works to the children of men."

The Psalmist thanked God for the visible creation. He thanked God because he realized how dependent he was upon the Giver of every good; he was grateful for the gift of life itself, and for the provisions to sustain it.

The Psalmist thanked God for divine providence, to know that if he was worthy, God would be with him, look out for him, and keep him safe from harm while he served Him. It was a simple yet profound faith. These men believed that God cared

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Note: "A Ladder of Praise" is available as a complete church-service on cassette. Price: \$3.00.

Moses, Man of Meekness

MEELINESS has been called the fairest flower that grows in the garden of virtue. And surely it is among the choicest of the fruits of the Spirit. Meekness is the fighting heart fully surrendered to the will of God. Meekness is the selfless soul, bereft of its own power but strong in the power of God. It is the mind destitute of its own thoughts but wholly concentrated on the thoughts of God. Meekness is the strength consecrated and the will broken, for "a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."

But beautiful as it is, meekness is by no means natural to the human race. It is a virtue acquired, like all others, only through diligent effort. Meekness grows from the humble mind.

Outstanding among the virtuous heroes of the divine Record is one named Moses. Moses was a man of meekness. Born to the house of Levi about fifteen centuries before Christ, he had his beginnings in exile in the pagan land of Egypt—and in the court of the royal palace itself! No circumstance could have seemed less conducive to godly character.

But the age of decision arrived when he had to choose whether to promote the cause of God or receive the honors of Egypt, and his noble decision stands on record for us: He chose "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward."

From that time on, Moses was subject to God's leading, and he found himself in many a circumstance which he used wisely to promote the growth of that fine virtue of meekness.

At the age of forty, Moses' proud and impetuous spirit was still strong. Seeing an Egyptian taskmaster beating one of his brethren, he boldly took the situation into his own hands and slew the Egyptian. Worse, he tried to cover his deed by burying him in the sand. But unknown to Moses, the deed was witnessed by other human eyes, and Moses fled from the land of Egypt, greatly humiliated.

For the next forty years the Lord kept Moses on the backside of the Midian desert, herding sheep for Jethro his father-in-law. That was part of his

schooling. There he learned patience, meekness, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, and faith. There his pride and arrogance diminished. Not until his desert training was complete could God say of him, "Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth."

Moses was God's choice jewel during the first forty years, but not until He had polished him with forty years of shepherding in the desert wilds, contending with the petty annoyances of life, exposing him to the greatness of his creation and the fierce odds of life and death was he the sparkling jewel God needed for another service. A lesser man would not have endured the polishing.

Moses was eighty years old before he was ready for the great and glorious service God had planned for him. Never does God consider the time too long or the task too tedious when He is preparing one of His own for special service.

We mar God's plans with haste and hurry; Moses did not.

Moses was tending sheep on the backside of the desert that day the angel called him to be the deliverer of the Hebrews. Forty years had taken the turmoil and tension out of Moses. The change had been as drastic as when he had changed the clothes of an Egyptian prince for the common garb of a desert shepherd. Now he no longer thought of himself as an Egyptian prince; Egypt offered him no temptation now. In fact, he had ceased thinking of Egypt altogether, except as the land of the bondage of his kin. He had ceased thinking of himself; he was ready now to be molded by God. And God did mold him, gradually, all those years, and the beauty of that God-shaped character reflected in every line and expression of his face. As a babe of three months he had been a "goodly child"; now at eighty he was a godly man.

Moses had taken the sheep to graze on Mount Horeb; he was alone. Suddenly he saw a bush ablaze with fire. Not so strange a sight in the desert; but this bush was different. It continued to burn—brighter and brighter. And it was not consumed! He walked toward it, when a voice spoke: "Moses, Moses."

Moses stopped dead in his tracks. A voice! His own name!

The voice spoke again. "Come no closer. Take off your shoes from off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground. I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."

"I have seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cries because of their taskmasters; I know their sorrows; and I am come down to deliver them out of that land and take them to a land flowing with milk and honey. Come now, Moses, I will send you to Pharaoh, that you may be able to guide the children of Israel out of Egypt" (Exodus 3).

Forty years earlier Moses would have thought himself ready to go; he would have been anxious. Now, the eighty-year-old man of meekness, the beautiful-souled, selfless Moses, replied to the angel, "Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?"

Moses was a changed man.

But Moses responded to God's call, and went. And during the forty years of wandering that followed, as he directed and governed a host of undisciplined, often ungrateful, and unwilling people, Moses surely encountered innumerable situations which further developed his meekness. He was teaching them obedience, and he himself was learning that same obedience from God.

The Lord gave Moses explicit directions which were to be obeyed with exactness. They had gone only to the Red Sea when the command came to Moses: "Stretch out your rod, Moses, over the waters, and they will divide." Moses did not stop to ask if he was very sure this was possible, or to suggest to the Lord some "better" way that he himself had thought of. No! He immediately stretched forth his rod, and the waters parted.

Moses was meek and obedient.

Just three days later, the Lord told Moses how to obtain water for the murmuring multitude. Moses obeyed, and the water was sweet and good. No record is given of their thanking either God or Moses for this much desired water. They simply complained and murmured, were given water, drank, were satisfied and forgot. But Moses did not complain about that; he had learned the virtue of meekness; he was God's servant doing God's behest. No doubt the fault-finding of the people grieved Moses again and again, but he who had been tutored in the school of obedience and trust answered the people, "Your murmuring is not against Aaron and me, but against the Lord."

Again the people complained, and the Lord sent

manna to meet their need. But still they did not show gratitude. There is no record that they sang or danced or shouted for joy to the Lord who had given them food all ready to eat, and had promised to give them portions for each day until they should reach the land of Promise. An occasion for great rejoicing this could have been; but we read not so much as a word of it.

But even in gathering the manna, the people of Israel did not trust God. Instead of obediently gathering only enough for the day, they tried gathering extra—in spite of the fact that they had been told it would spoil; Moses' meekness must have been severely tried. Would these people *ever* learn to obey God?

But no, they never would; because of their stiff-necked and stubborn dispositions they would die in the wilderness. A new generation would reach Canaan. And during all the years between, Moses would have to bear with them.

Moses, we all need more of your meekness.

Moses was a great leader, but he was also a great follower. He did not appoint himself the leader of this great host of people; nor did he chart the route through the wilderness. He did not even appoint the time that the journey would take. Moses was a great—and meek—follower.

He was even willing to follow the advice of his father-in-law Jethro. Observing the heavy demand the people were making upon Moses' strength, Jethro suggested a better method for judging them. And Moses was not slow to follow it. A lesser man would have been too proud to admit that his father-in-law had better foresight—even in one matter—than he. Was not Moses the God-appointed leader of this people? And was he not of age and capable of judging for himself? But Moses was a man of meekness indeed, and he *listened*, and benefited from the wise advice.

The meek walk noiselessly, but they walk in the strength of God.

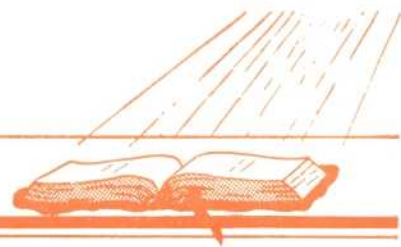
One of the greatest tests of Moses' meekness came not from rebellious Israel but from his own family. Aaron and Miriam, apparently not yet the spiritual giants their brother was, criticized. Still worse, they criticized his strongest virtue, his meekness. They said he was exalting himself.

What did Moses do? His manner of handling the situation shows the perfection of the meekness he had achieved. He answered them not a word, but took the matter to God. And God spoke, decisively. Miriam became leprous.

And then what happened? Did Moses turn to her and say, "That serves you right"? No, Moses harbored no grudge whatever; he had no room in

(Continued on page 18)

BIBLE STUDY HOUR



Our Love to God

(Part One)

IN OUR last lesson we talked about God's love toward His human family. This month we want to discuss our response to His love. God is in heaven, and we upon earth; God is infinite, we are finite, hence our means of communication are limited. Yet if we expect the benefits of His love in all its fulness, we must demonstrate our love toward Him.

Q. There are many reasons why we should love God. Could we mention a few?

A. He has showered us with so many blessings in this life, and has promised us so much for the future.

Q. Yes, and when we think of all our many blessings, what should our first thought be?

A. We should be grateful that God takes note of us. Compared to His family in heaven, we are very small indeed. We should say with the Psalmist, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" (Ps. 8:4).

Q. We should not fail to be thankful, and more than that—we should praise Him for all His goodness toward us. Many in the Bible had so much less than we, and they did not forget to record their thankfulness.

A. King David's words overflow with praise. "I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth" (Ps. 34:1).

Q. To bless the Lord at all times would be something like praying without ceasing. That would imply a continual attitude of praise and thanksgiving. David advocated such an attitude. He emphasized it by repetition in which Psalm?

A. Psalm 107. In verses 8, 15, 21, and 31, he repeats: "Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness and for his wonderful works to the children of men!"

Q. There is another Psalm that is nothing but praise. Which one is that?

A. Psalm 150. "Praise ye the Lord. Praise God in his sanctuary: Praise him in the firmament of his power. Praise him for his mighty acts: praise him according to his excellent greatness. Praise him with

the sound of the trumpet: praise him with the psaltery and harp. Praise him with the timbrel and dance: praise him with stringed instruments and organs. Praise him upon the loud cymbals: praise him upon the high sounding cymbals. Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord."

The shortest Psalm in the Bible is all praise, too. "O praise the Lord, all ye nations: praise him, all ye people. For his merciful kindness is great toward us: and the truth of the Lord endureth for ever. Praise ye the Lord" (Psalm 117).

Q. Those are both good. Many of the Psalms of David are filled with praise to God. We can show our love to God through praise and thanksgiving just as King David did.

Nearly everyone admits that we should love God—but why do the majority think we should love Him?

A. Most would say we should love God because He first loved us.

Q. Is that in the Bible?

A. Yes, it is in first John, the fourth chapter. "We love him, because he first loved us. . . . Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (vs. 19, 10).

Q. What do we mean when we say we love Him "because He first loved us?"

A. He first loved us by providing us with His saving knowledge. He recognized us as potential heirs of His salvation while we were still sinners. Without the knowledge He provided, we would have no more hope than anyone else in the world.

Q. That is true, but what does it mean when we read that He "sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins"? To the majority this means substitution—Christ's death on the cross for the sins of the world.

A. Christ is the means of our salvation—but His death was not a sacrifice. Nowhere in the Bible does it say that He died for our sins that we would not have to suffer the penalty for our own sin. Verse 9 of the same chapter says that God "sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him," but it does not say that He sent Him to die for us.

Q. Yes. I think the majority think of "propitiation" as an atoning sacrifice because that is what they have been taught. But that is not the true meaning of the word, as other translations would indicate. Today's English Version of the Bible renders it, He "sent his Son to be the means by which our sins are forgiven." The New English Bible says that God "sent his only Son into the world to bring us life. . . . as the remedy for the defilement of our sins."

Christ is the means of our salvation because it is through His teachings, His life and His perfect example that we can obtain salvation.

A. If we say that God sent Jesus as a sacrifice for our sins we contradict John's words earlier in the same book. "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him" (I John 2:4-5).

John also said, "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (I John 3:3). If man's sins were taken away by Jesus' death, he shouldn't have to purify himself—he would automatically be pure!

Q. It doesn't sound like Jesus' death saved man from the guilt of his sin. John had much to say about our love to God; how did he connect the love of God with obedience?

A. "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous" (I John 5:2-3).

Q. That tells plainly what the love of God is, but how are "His commandments . . . not grievous"?

A. Some other translations give it "not burdensome." The New English Bible renders it, "For to love God is to keep his commands; and they are not burdensome." In other words, we are able to keep them.

Q. Yes, the Jerusalem Bible says that His commandments are "not difficult." God would not ask us to do something we were not able to do. If we really love God we will be doing what He asks. This is true of children and parents. What is that little childhood rhyme that makes this point?

A. The child that really loved her mother proved it by helping her, doing something to prove that love.

Q. The proof of love is obedience—whether it be parents or God. There is one more good verse in First John that we should have. Would someone please read the 18th verse of the third chapter?

A. "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth."

Q. That is a good point to remember; it will not do for us to say we love God and do nothing to prove it. Just to frame the words with our tongue proves nothing. Our lips and our lives must agree. Our love must be both in word and in deed.

The apostle John also tied our love to God with loving someone else. Who was that?

A. He said we could not say that we loved God if we hated our brother in the faith. "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" (I John 4:20).

Q. We prove our love to God by the concern we show for our brother. We must be concerned for both his spiritual and temporal welfare. The apostle James had something to say on this subject. Could we have James 2:14-17 from the New English Bible?

A. "My brothers, what use is it for a man to say he has faith when he does nothing to show it? Can that faith save him? Suppose a brother or a sister is in rags with not enough food for the day, and one of you says, 'Good luck to you, keep yourselves warm, and have plenty to eat', but does nothing to supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So with faith; if it does not lead to action, it is in itself a lifeless thing."

Q. Faith and love are very closely allied. We have to prove our faith by our works and as we just had from the apostle John, we also prove our love by our works—both to our brother and to God.

Another apostle had some good words on this same thought. Who can tell us about it?

A. In Romans 12:9-10, Paul said, "Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another."

Q. That is good, but I like the wording from the New English Bible: "Love in all sincerity, loathing evil and clinging to the good. Let love for our brotherhood breed warmth of mutual affection." Other newer translations carry the same idea. "Let love be genuine," says the Revised Standard.

Our love for our brethren is part of our love for God. It is like the apostle John said, we cannot love God if we do not love our brother. Peter told us the proper attitude toward our brother and the outside world. What was that?

A. "Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king" (I Pet. 2:17). We are to treat all with respect, but in different degrees.

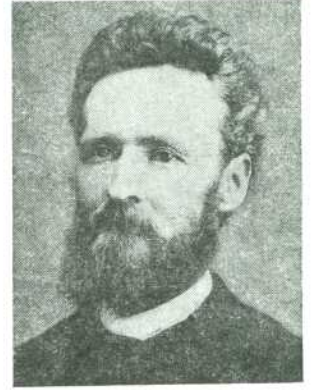
Paul said to "do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:10).

(To Be Continued Next Issue)



What Is Truth?

The Great Infidel Discussion



Reverend L. T. Nichols vs. Professor W. F. Jamieson

Part Two

IN THE YEAR 1890, our founder Rev. L. T. Nichols engaged in a series of debates with the great infidel debater Professor W. F. Jamieson. The debates extended through eight consecutive evenings between September 25 and October 2 and centered around the two following theses:

FIRST THESIS:

Resolved, That the Bible is wholly of human origin, and abounds in contradictory, immoral, absurd and inconsistent teachings.

W. F. Jamieson, Affirmed.

L. T. Nichols, Denied.

Six nights were spent discussing the First Thesis.

SECOND THESIS:

Resolved, That the teachings of the New Testament are all moral and elevating.

L. T. Nichols, Affirmed.

W. F. Jamieson, Denied.

The following articles are extracts from addresses by both speakers in the debates, which reflect the opposition our founder encountered and his sincere desire to discover fully the true teachings of the Word of God.

Mr. Jamieson's Second Address

My friend in starting out tells us: "I believe this book to be of Divine production." Certainly; that is what he is here to maintain as a counter argument. My friend says he was astonished in his opponent bringing certain views of men. He ought not to have been, for I did not make my good friend responsible for them; I quoted them. I have a right to quote an author wherever I can find him, especially when what the author says bears directly upon the subject under discussion. When I quoted this man, or these men, I distinctly stated that I did not hold them as authority nor advance them as authority, and that is always allowable in debate. Now my friend says, "Don't attribute any opinion that is not avowed in this dis-

cussion." Certainly not. He will not find me attributing a single thing to him which he does not avow. Now he has quoted a gentleman, but he said as I said, "I do not hold my opponent responsible for the views of that infidel," so that makes us even on that point. My friend wishes that I deal with him, and not with the theories that are extant in the world. That is just what I propose to do throughout this debate, and I think when we close my friend will have no ground to object that I did not take hold of his positions and grapple with them. This is my intention throughout.

Now with these preliminaries, I wish to continue with regard to the existence of a Deity. Did a god create light? Then there was a time when there was no light. I want my friend to meet these propo-

sitions concerning nature, for here we have been told that nature must have a creator, and we have followed the argument to the fountain head. Then there was a time when there was no light, for who created light? And the universe was for billions of ages wrapped in the gloom of thick darkness. I put these queries to my friend: "Do you hold"—if I understand my friend's position—"that which has a beginning," as an author has said, "must have an end"? If there was a beginning to light, there will be an end to light, and thus there could not be an eternal city of light or the universe of nature would sink again into chaos, primeval night. If it is answered that light was never created but always existed in God, and this personal God fills the immensity of the universe—that is the argument—then your answer turns your god into nature. I care not which way he answers. A god might as well be called—better—a "she," feminine gender, mother of all living, as well as "he". If God fills immensity, if Spinoza's idea of Pantheism is true, then I ask you again what right have you to call God he rather than she? Is it not true that man makes his own god, and God does not make man? And the answer leaves all things just as he found them.

Did God create motion, I ask? If so, there was a time when there was no motion. But if there was no motion, how could a motionless god evolve a universe full of motion? I tell you, if these arguments can be answered I am with him.

Now I will quote again, and I don't quote it as authority but to show what is the prevailing opinion in regard to the Bible. And my friend is not going to tell me how to proceed. Thank you. When I am out shooting I do not allow my opponent to tell me how to shoot. I am going to do that shooting independently, stand on my own feet, and my friend is going to do his shooting standing on his feet. So this shooting is going to be between my friend and myself, and if there is anything left of us when we get through, why we will go on with the debate, and if there isn't, shed a tear over our little green graves, and bury us together.

The Chicago Interior, a Christian paper, says concerning the God of the Bible, "One of the clearest and most convincing proofs of the divine origin of the Bible is the revelation in it of the character of God."

Now I do not care whether my friend believes this or not. If he doesn't, then I ask why he is here in this debate. If he does, then he cannot object to my quoting it as a sentiment avowed by himself, or at any rate entertained by him. "The King of kings, and Lord of lords," says the Interior, "busies himself with what men call trifles, but there are no trifles in the works and government of a perfect being. He must attend personally to everything, since every-

thing is to be shaped and polished according to His infinite wisdom. He could not slight the tinting of an animalcule's wing, counting the hairs of our heads. We see that is what our God must do if He is Omniscient, an Omniscient judge. When we consider God's moral character and government, we see more clearly still that it could not have been written only by men moved by the Holy Spirit. . . . A conception of God that satisfies reason and the heart of humanity today is too pure, too grand, too sweet ever to become obsolete."

You see my friend of the Interior is as emphatic as my friend himself, and so we have here to deal with a conception in regard to the idea of God from the Bible itself. I intend to devote tomorrow night to my two affirmative arguments in the main to a careful, analytical examination of the character of God, and there will be no half-way work about it. I hold that a puny man, as my friend said, cannot injure a single truth. Some people act as if truth could be battered into nothingness. We do not share that opinion.

I am striving honestly to give the general conviction of the people who believe in the Bible as the inspired volume. I am not here particularly to deal with what my friend holds, or what his theories may be, only so far as they bear on this question. Speaking of the God of the Bible, I find in Sunday Reading, or one of the journals of the day, it doesn't matter which: "When we study the picture in the written word we see that it presents to us just what a true god must be. Such a God we can believe in; we can trust. He awakens at once adoration and affection. We bow before him, dazzled by his glory, trembling as we listen to the thunders of his power, and yet amid the grandeur and terror, there ever comes, as the light at Mount Horeb, a still small voice. It assures us of Jehovah's sympathy and love. It is the voice of the Father."

I quote that to show what conceptions those who believe in the Bible have that it is divinely inspired; who believe, like my friend, that it is not human but that it is, as he says, wholly Divine. And so they are making it as strong as language itself can possibly make a proposition, that the God of the Bible is one of the proofs—aye, the greatest proof in the whole Bible that the Bible is not of man but is Divine.

I am going into a consideration of the character of the God of the Bible and see whether the ideas of those who believe that the Bible concept of God is glorious and good and pure can be borne out or not.

Deuteronomy 7:6, "Thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth." How do you like that? We are told by the God of the

Bible that we are His children, and yet He said to those barbaric Jews thousands of years ago that they were a special people unto himself. "Thou art an holy people."

Exodus 6:7, "And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God."

The God of the Bible, I maintain, is cruel; and if we can show that by the Bible, then certainly I cannot see how my friend in any counter argument of his will be able to show that the Bible is wholly divine. The reason why I think God is cruel and I will turn right to the book—and that is what my friend is especially anxious to have, so he gave us to understand. I am just as anxious as he is. I turn to the Bible and I find this: Numbers 31. He gave defenseless women and innocent babes to be murdered. Is that proof of the divinity of the volume? You may ask me where is the proof? I will tell you Numbers 31:17, "Now therefore kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman," and so on. He slaughtered a great many people because they merely peeked into his ark. Read I Samuel 6:19, "And he smote the men of Bethshemesh, because they had looked into the ark of the Lord, even he smote of the people fifty thousand and three score and ten men: and the people lamented, because the Lord had smitten many of the people with a great slaughter." Why, if a man did that they would hang him by the neck until he was dead, dead, dead. Three times over.

His anger was so great against His chosen people that He moved David to number them, and then He kills 70,000 innocent people because David did just that. Any kindness in that? Any love in that? Is that the love of a father toward his children? II Samuel 24:1, "And again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against him to say, Go number Israel and Judah."

Then we read, "And David's heart smote him after that he had numbered the people. And David said unto the Lord, I have sinned greatly in that I have done; and now, I beseech thee, O Lord, take away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly." 15th verse: "So the Lord sent a pestilence upon Israel." Not upon the guilty man, but upon the innocent. They had to die. Well, I don't know whether God did it after all. I don't believe, if there is in this universe a kind, loving, heavenly father, a good God, I cannot believe that He ever did any such things, and I do not believe that deep down in your hearts you believe it either. You are all free thinkers upon that point, because, as our friend has already told us, we believe according to the evidence; that he was a free thinker, and he was not a free thinker, and that would

be as flat a contradiction as I would be apt to find in the Bible. Don't deceive yourselves on that point. I think we know the difference between solecism, antithesis, and palpable flat contradiction. If we don't know it yet quite, we will before this debate is through.

My friend has been telling me what is coming. Well, let it come. I never was much afraid of thunder in the distance; and I will say here that if my friend can prove or produce the evidence in his counter arguments that this book is not wholly of human origin, it will save me a great deal of trouble in my future life. I will be ready candidly to accept it. I want to keep the light flickering. It may not be an electric light, an arc light, anything of that kind. It may be simply a tallow dip; but, my friend, the best I have got you will get, and we will have through this debate a lively, good-natured time.

The Bible contains evidence to show that God is partial—I mean the Bible God. Exodus 19:6, "And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation." Psalm 33:12, "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance." More petting. More of this one-sided manifestation of love to the Jewish children.

God proposed at one time to visit terrible punishment upon His chosen people, but Moses pleaded like a lawyer, and the God in consequence was changed from His unchangeable purpose. Now, has God a will that is unchangeable, or a purpose unchangeable, or not? Let me go to the Bible to find out about it. Malachi 3:6, "I am the Lord, I change not." James 1:17, "Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

But Moses appealed to God's approbateness, which was a masterly stroke on his part, and he succeeded in completely turning and changing an invariable and unchangeable Being.

I will not take time to go into details; but there is the teaching of the Bible that the Bible God is cruel; that He is unjust. It tells us that He hardened Pharaoh's heart, and afflicted the poor man because his heart was hard. Who is responsible for that? Is there any moral influence in that? Is that kindness, such as has been described and imputed to Him? He is proved a murderer, and had I time to go into it, the Bible teaches cannibalism. "Thou shalt eat of the flesh of thy sons and the flesh of thy daughters shalt thou eat." I cannot accept that as the least evidence of the Divine. I must say that that was written by human influence alone, misconceived and misdirected, and superstitious human influence at that.

Mr. Nichols' Second Reply

My pleasure increases thus far in this discussion, and if you are as joyful in this matter as I feel, we certainly are a happy class of individuals tonight.

Mr. Jamieson has dropped the first part of his thought with a few remarks in reference to the Deity, as to light, material, space, and so forth. Let me say, although we believe there was a time that there was not as many men on the face of the earth as there are today, and that there will be a time in the future when there will be more men than we see today, that does not prove to you that there have been men long ages ago. And because we take the position that we do, that light is uncreated and eternal in its existence and duration, that does not prove that there is not more light today than there was six thousand years ago. We believe that light is part of the Deity; His very being radiates light. We care not by what name you call Him. We believe that material always existed; that there never was a time that it did not exist, because we told you that we believe the Deity to be a personal Being, and it is impossible to have a personal existence without material. We believe, though, that because we cannot comprehend these things or take them and solve them in their details does not make them any less true. Because Mr. Jamieson and myself cannot tell why it is that when he was young and he and I would sit down at the table—or at present time, as there is a little shade of difference in our hair—that we can eat the same mutton and the same beef, and the same corn bread, and it produces different colors in our hairs; he cannot solve this question, nor can any other man upon the face of the globe. But is it any evidence that it is not so? And consequently I do not propose to make my brain caliber the center and circumference of possibilities or of facts existing as we find them. We shall now drop that part of the subject.

He tells us that he thinks that man made God, instead of God making man. Well, that is his thinking, and he is perfectly welcome to his thoughts; and I have no hesitancy whatever in saying that I grant him this entire right, as I claim to have this right myself. But because he thinks so, or I may think so, does not happen to make a thing so.

Now we do believe that the Jewish nation was a special and peculiar people unto God, the God of the Bible. Mr. Jamieson says they were God's pets. Well, haven't you got some pets? I have one, anyway, one little one down there in the audience. What objection is there to having a pet, provided that the pet is worthy of being a pet? And I claim myself

just, even though I have a pet. I don't know how it is with him, but I think he claims the same—I saw a manifestation of it today; hence his argument against the God of the Bible weighs not. Mr. Jamieson has a pet himself; he has a wife that he holds higher than he does all other women—does he not count all other specimens of humanity as inferior? And is that any evidence whatever of injustice? Can we not give to God the same privilege, to hold certain people higher than all others?

We pass on, then, to the first passage of Scripture that my opponent has brought before us, and I wish you to consider this, as he said he was going down to the bottom of this matter. I wish to call your attention to some of the testimonies he has read. Deuteronomy 7:6. We want you to read it carefully and consider the reasons and also the conditions and the qualifying terms by which it is surrounded. I claim that it is unfair for me, or Mr. Jamieson, or any other individual, to endeavor to quote a passage of Scripture and leave out the qualifying terms by which it is surrounded. We might as well attempt to argue as the man did with the lady with the bird on her hat. He said he could prove to her that it was wrong by quoting the Bible, and he quoted, "Top not, come down." Whereas, the testimony reads: "Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house." It is just as unfair to quote a passage of Scripture and leave out the qualifying terms as it was for that man to try to prove that the birds on your hats must come off because the Bible says, "Top not come down."

We propose to enter into this investigation in an open and fair manner, and to deal with these matters from a Bible standpoint, and from an honest heart and thorough conviction. So we read in the seventh chapter that he has quoted to us: "The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people, for ye were the fewest of all people." Now I would like to ask if Mr. Jamieson has not set his love and affection upon the lady of his choice. Can he, then, object to the God of heaven choosing Israel, when Mr. Jamieson has done the same himself? God has some prerogatives to do as He pleases in such a matter, and He does not have to consult my opponent or myself, or any other man. Hence He says:

"Because the Lord loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

"Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his command-

ments to a thousand generations."

Now, mark you, this covenant was made with those that loved Him. Has Mr. Jamieson a right, then, to arraign this testimony against the God of the Bible? It is only a sound, without reality. He said he was not afraid of distant thunder. I will say that I am not afraid of thunder either; it is lightning that kills, not thunder. Just so, his argument here is only thunder, no lightning; consequently I have no fears.

Again we read, "Know therefore, that"—what? He keeps His covenant with "them that love him, and keep his commandments to a thousand generations. And repayeth them that hate him to their face, to destroy them: he will not be slack to him that hateth him, he will repay him to the face." This covenant is of a two-fold nature; it contains promises of blessing to those that love Him, and destruction to those who hate Him. Now, because God repays the wicked for not walking in obedience to His commandments, is He to be called a harsh, cruel and unjust God?

Mr. Jamieson called your attention to I Samuel 6:19, which reads, "And he smote the men of Bethshemesh, because they had looked into the ark of the Lord, even he smote of the people fifty thousand and three score and ten men; and the people lamented, because the Lord had smitten many of the people with a great slaughter."

I would like to know who those men were. They were men walking in disobedience, and was it not necessary for an unchangeable Deity to carry out His covenant, that He would not only keep His covenant with them that loved Him but would repay those that hated Him to the face? When you tell me that the wife of mine does not do the thing she knows pleases me, you will tell me she does not love me. And when you point me to a class of individuals that did not do the things the Almighty had commanded, you point me to men that hated Him, and He said He would destroy them; and consequently He was only carrying out His unchangeable and immutable covenant and law that He had fixed.

We find again that his claim against the God of the Bible is only thunder, no lightning. Yes, I propose to let him do his own shooting, but I propose to have him load up his gun with what we agreed upon, that is, the Bible, and leave other men out of the argument. I will kindly again request him to do it. He can load up with it if he pleases; I have nothing to say about that, I only request him not to do it because I am not one with the ministers and the world at large, who do not come up fairly and grapple with the ideas Mr. Jamieson brings before you.

He has produced a testimony in reference to the slaying of little children, innocent children. I do not

propose to sit as judge and jury in this case, but let me say that I don't believe that God ever slew one single innocent person, but only those who, according to the covenant, hated Him. Mr. Jamieson says: "Could God hate them?" God knew the end from the beginning. If he was not an all-wise Being, then there would be no way for Him to know; but no, it was as easy for Him as it is for Mr. Jamieson and myself to travel over this prairie and come across, as a man did on my farm, a great big rattlesnake, and she opened her mouth and twenty-two little rattlesnakes ran into it. Did the boys say, "Those poor little innocent fellows, don't kill them, the little darlings"? Would you not, Mr. Jamieson, be justified in slaying them just as well as the old rattlesnake; knowing that those little snakes would soon be great big rattlesnakes and just as able to kill? Just so does God the Almighty look upon the human race, and He in His all-wise knowledge knowing that every one of those little fellows would soon be great sinners like their parents, He slew them. He was not cruel or unjust in so doing. Was the world not better without such? Here again, Mr. Jamieson's argument is only thunder, minus the lightning.

We know that the God of the Bible had more knowledge of those children He slew, consequently He declared that He would destroy them that hated Him. Discipline was necessary with God, and strictness, the same as in our army. Would you think because there was strictness on one hand that there was cruelty too? Was Mr. Jamieson there? I was, and he is seven years older than I. I was there in the army. Did Mr. Jamieson ever see a man punished because he went to sleep on guard? Did he think such punishment unjust? When we look at God's action from the standpoint of salvation, we see it was necessary to have discipline for the people of the living God, the people that He had chosen; this was to teach them a lesson in order for them to remain in His love and obedience.

We will call your attention next to the testimony that Mr. Jamieson brought before you in II Samuel 24:1,

"And again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah."

If he had read what is indicated in the margin, he could have been saved from all that trouble. The margin tells us the "he" that moved David was "Satan," the same as we are told in the account in Chronicles (I Chron. 21:1), so they agree. No contradiction whatever, and consequently we believe both statements are true because they are identical. It was Satan that moved him to number Israel against the God of heaven, and who was that Satan? It was David's

MEGIDDO MESSAGE

own heart, as we read David's own acknowledgment: "And David's heart smote him after that he had numbered the people. And David said unto the Lord, I have sinned greatly in that I have done" (I Sam. 24:10). David acknowledged that he sinned in doing that, and the Bible tells us that sin is the transgression of the law (I John 3:4). David's own evil heart moved him to do the evil act, and to sin against God.

I call your attention next to the testimony in Malachi 3:6 and James 1:17, "With whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning," and then to the testimony to show that God did change. I want to answer Mr. Jamieson on each point, but I am sure you are well aware that Mr. Jamieson has the advantage over me, just as a boy can submit more questions for a man to answer in ten minutes than the man is capable of answering in ten hours; in the same respect he has an advantage over me. But I shall endeavor to get over the main points in this investigation.

These testimonies that have been brought before you of the Deity changing, if you will turn to Jeremiah for a moment, we will read. One of the definitions of "turn from" is one of the definitions of "repent." We read in the book of Jeremiah: "If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it:

"If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good wherewith I said I would benefit them" (Jer. 18:8-10).

Is God changeable if He turns from either the good or the evil—when the people change—when He has plainly declared that He would thus do? Nay, not at all. He promised that when they changed, He would change His mind toward them. He is only keeping His Word.

I will mention one more of Mr. Jamieson's arguments, that the God of the Bible teaches cannibalism. What was the text he cited? "Thou shalt eat of the flesh of thy sons and the flesh of thy daughters shalt thou eat." Did we not say earlier that we must look at and examine the context of a passage before we can judge the meaning of it? This passage you will find if you turn with me to the 28th chapter of Deuteronomy (vs. 53), and here we find Moses stating the curses that would come upon the Israelite people if they would not hearken unto the voice of the Lord their God and keep His commandments. How can we charge God with cannibalism because He tells in advance the dire conditions to which His people will be reduced, because they did not listen

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to Him and heed His voice? It is God by His foreknowledge telling what conditions shall be, and when we read in history how these things were actually fulfilled, we can have faith in Him and know that His Word is true. ••

(To Be Continued)

We Have It Rather Easy

THERE are certain pressures that come upon us when we try to live out and out for God, yet I find that if I speak the truth on this matter, I have to admit that most of the pressure is of my own making. I don't get any abuse from others because I am a Christian. My life is not threatened because of what I stand for. No, I am allowed to lead my everyday life as it pleases me, a very far cry from those Biblical days when one could be stoned to death for what they believed. How many times Paul was flogged, how many times thrown into prison—and not prisons such as we have today; they were rat-infested, damp, dark, dirty places. How many times was he stoned; yet through it all he could give God the glory. Even today in some countries, life can be hard for the Christian. Do we suffer in this way? We cannot even claim that we have to go without those things which are necessary, like food and clothing. We have more than enough.

No, it seems to me the price of our salvation is rather "cheap" when compared with what others have had to suffer. If we think we are having a hard time now, what would we think if we had the testing which Paul had?

No, we have it very easy by comparison; we have nothing but our own selves to battle against. Let us thank our kind God for such easy passage, and if we are finding it hard, let us take a long, long look at ourselves. I am sure we may find this is where the trouble lies.

—H. L., Nottinghamshire, England

Not for the eyes of men

May this day's work be done

But unto Thee, O God,

That with the setting sun

My heart may know the matchless prize

Of sure approval in Thine eyes.

About Manna

THE HOUSE of Israel called their heaven-sent food Manna. It was a small round thing as white as coriander seed (an Old World herb of the carrot family with aromatic fruits) and tasted like wafers made of honey (Ex. 16:31; Num. 11:4-9). For every person in their households, the Israelites were to gather daily as much as they could eat, about seven pints per person (Ex. 16:16, Moffatt).

What does this mean in terms of quantity of supply? How much manna was "rained" from heaven daily for the Israelite people? Here is an estimate:

603,550	men over 20 (Num. 1:46)
1,810,650	total adults and children
22,000	Levites (Num. 3:39)
66,000	persons in Levite families
<hr/>	
2,502,200	total estimated number of persons in Moses' band. 2d yr., 2d mo.
@ 7	pints of Manna per day per person
<hr/>	
17,515,400	total pints of Manna DAILY!!
-	or
273,522	bushels of Manna daily!!
-	or
912	truckloads every day @ 300 bu. per truck:
a.)	loading 6 bu. across 10 bu. lengthwise 5 bu. deep
b.)	figuring @ 50% weight of potatoes or ½ lb. per pint, each truckload equals 4.8 tons.
c.)	making a total of 4,377.6 tons a day!

God did this for the children of Israel—to prove them, whether they would walk in His law, or no (Ex. 16:4). They murmured. Look at our table. Has He not done even more for us?

"Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power and might, be unto our God for ever and ever" (Rev. 7:12). ●●

"Let us give thanks to God upon Thanksgiving Day. Nature is beautiful and fellowmen are dear, and duty is close beside us, and God is watching over us. We want to trust Him with a fuller trust, and so at last to come to that high life where we shall 'be careful for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let our request be made known unto God'; for that, and that alone, is peace."

—Selected.

"Cultivate the thankful spirit—it will be to thee a perpetual feast. There is, or ought to be, with us no such things as small mercies. A really thankful heart will extract motive for gratitude from everything, making the most even of scanty blessings."

—Anonymous

Moses, Man of Meekness

(Continued from page 9)

his heart for such small-mindedness. Seeing Miriam's plight, he prayed to God in her behalf: "Heal her, now, O God, I beseech thee."

The Lord heard the prayer of this man of meekness, and after seven days Miriam was healed.

The Lord called Moses to the top of Mount Sinai, and there he stayed for forty days. But when Moses came down, he was not telling how *he* was to make of them a great nation, but was cut to the depths of his heart to find them far from God—even worshiping an idol they had fashioned! Moses was grieved not by any dishonor to himself in their deed, but by their disloyalty to God.

Had Moses been a self-seeking man, this would have been his chance for self-advancement. But Moses was meek; he thought first of God's honor and last of himself. Moses pleaded with God there on the mountaintop before he went down, that He would not destroy the people, but he was grieved at their sin. There was no spiritual pride because he had met God's messenger on the mountaintop, or because God had answered his prayer. There was only more and more meekness.

Do we long to have it said of us, that we are "very meek"? There is only one way to meekness, and it lies upon the road of obedience. Those who are the most obedient are the most meek, and in them the Lord delights; for He has promised to "beautify the meek with salvation."

What more could one ask in return for the sacrifices that make for meekness? ●●

Beautiful Fruits

THE APOSTLE PAUL admonishes us to put on the beautiful fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). But when putting them on, we need to remember they are mixed fruits; they are not like a basket of apples, or pears, or grapes. In a horticultural show you see plates of particular fruits, to which prizes have been awarded. Sometimes you see a plate heaped up with all kinds of fruits, to which a prize has been given for the best assortment. All the prizes offered in the Heavenly Horticultural Exhibition are for collections of mixed fruits. The fact is that in spiritual horticulture, it is difficult, if not impossible, to grow one kind without the others. It is true we have the figure of Jesus as the vine, and we as the branches; but these special branches, vitalized by the divine sap, must bear all the fruits of the Spirit.

If we think we can make a fair show in the Lord's sight with only one kind of fruit, without trying to grow the rest, we will only run into trouble. One, for instance, may enter the Heavenly Horticulture Show in the class of "Temperance" fruit; but when asked to show his fruit of Long-suffering, Gentleness, Meekness, or Patience, if he must say, "No, I don't think I have anything worth showing in those classes," his perfect fruits of temperance will not receive any lasting recognition.

In Psalm 92 is the beautiful promise that "those who are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God," and they shall "still bring forth fruit in old age." This reminds us of the trees which John the Revelator saw, which bore fruit all the year round. Sometimes you go into a garden and find an old fruit tree with a gnarled trunk, and the owner will tell you, "That tree used to bear splendid apples, but it has seen its best days, it bears little or nothing now." Those who are truly trees of the Lord, planted in His garden, are just the opposite of this—the older they get, the more fruitful. Their boughs are never so heavily laden with luscious fruit as when they are approaching the end of their allotted earthly span.

How fruitful shall we be? The closer our communion with God, the more fruit we will bear. If we are bearing little fruit, and that of poor quality, it may be that our attachment to the vine is a very slender one.

We need to be very watchful that we do not bear fruit that is not worth gathering. We may bear apples, but are they perhaps *crab* apples? There may be pears, but are they tasteless and woody?

When the apostle Paul speaks of the "fruit of the Spirit" he means that we are not to be content with one or two, but all nine are to be borne in every life. It is not for one man to show love, another joy, another peace, but it is for each of us to show the whole nine. It is like a perfect basket of fruit, you need every kind to make the basket complete—Love, Joy, Peace, Long-suffering, Kindness, Goodness, Faith, Meekness, and Self-control.

—E. H., Manitoba, Canada

Striving to Walk Worthy

HAVING listened to the cassette, "Forgiveness" just now, I am filled with a longing for such forgiveness and desire to forgive as did our Lord. One realizes how far short of perfection we are still, though by now we should be well along.

How we long for the appearance of our Lord and marvel at God's longsuffering at all the wrong which is going on, despite all His lovingkindness. We read Him in the flowers, the trees, the freshness of the fragrant breeze, the song of the bird upon the wing, the joy of summer and of winter. We read His power to bless and save beyond the darkness of the grave; yes, in the resurrection light, we read His might.

My desire is to be worthy of our high calling, to live up to it, show it daily, speak it. My whole being is wrapped up in the faith, and it occupies all my waking moments. To walk with Christ in the narrow way is a privilege we must value highly, letting our light shine as did He. Nothing else is of such importance as getting a pure heart and clean hands, a broken and a contrite spirit fit for the Kingdom. Such a work with self is time-consuming but time well spent; and someday I can be in the company of those who worship God in spirit and in truth and in the beauty of holiness. What a Day that will be! To fellowship with high and lofty ones, to be an adopted daughter of the Most High God! What a privilege is this probation period we are passing through!

—N. T., Crewe, Cheshire, England

There is a counterfeit forgiveness which is not worthy of the name. It is full of "buts" and "ifs" and "maybes." It moves with reluctance. It takes back with one hand what it gives with the other. It forgives, but things can never be the same as they were; it forgives but it cannot forget.

In the Thick of Thin Things

AS A RULE, we are attracted by "thin" things. In other words, we are absorbed by a certain delight in small, material values. A noted writer of yesteryear aptly described the situation today: "Things are in the saddle, and are riding mankind." Indeed, things, *thin* things are riding—goals of what we shall eat, what we shall drink, what we shall wear; or—worse yet—goals of How shall we get the most for ourselves at the expense of others, or How shall we get the better of our opponents? Generally speaking, men are engrossed in things which are seen—the temporal values of this world.

In the present arrangement of things, it is possible for a man to make a huge success of himself in the pursuit of "thin things." "He heapeth up riches"; "the glory of his house is increased" (Ps. 39:6; Ps. 49:16). Indeed, as the Preacher declared, "There is that waxeth rich by his wariness and pinching. . . . He saith, I have found rest, and now will eat continually of my goods, and yet he knoweth not what time shall come upon him, and that he must leave those things to others, and die" (Ecclesiasticus 11:17-18). Their inward thought is "that their houses shall continue forever," but the eternal question stands: "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Ps. 49:11; Mark 8:36). What is the real benefit of these "thin things"? They do not give lasting life, nor do they guarantee rich measures of satisfaction and happiness. What if one does get an abundance of these "thin," perishable things? He may enjoy his ease, comfort and security; his sole aim may be to make life last as long and be as trouble-free as possible. However, possessions cannot prolong our existence, they cannot bestow genuine happiness or assure us of life that will never end.

In the total span of human existence, as seen by the great Creator, the period of life in this world is short—very short! It is but a "vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away" (Jas. 4:14). It is only within this one brief moment that material possessions can serve; we leave this world as naked as we arrived (Eccl. 5:15), and if our life has been frittered away on mere "things" or "trifles," we will have nothing eternal. Death will separate us from all that we set our hearts upon; beyond that portal the material cannot go. God alone is Lord of life, and only the person truly "rich toward God," rich in faith, living in search of divine interests and not of carnal "thin things" has lasting riches.

A Christian's life is a life in quest of superior values, eternal values. He is not absorbed in transient trivia. He learns that outward assets or possessions are not the important things in life. He is satisfied to follow the advice given by the apostle Paul to Timothy: "Having food and raiment let us be therewith content" (I Tim. 6:8). The more humble and simple our needs, the nearer we may be to the Saviour. We set our hearts not on the things we possess but on finding godliness in contentment and using the things of this life to gain eternal life.

The things of the physical and immediate are necessary, but to be in the "thick" of these material values, of earthly things, is not for the true Christian. Neither can he get so involved in an earthly enterprise that its cares choke out living in the Word of God. While the Bible advises against contenting ourselves in a state of poverty, it also forbids laboring to be rich (Prov. 30:8). We must "occupy," but not be overcharged with the cares and thoughts of this world.

As professing Christians, we must not allow ourselves at any time to be completely engrossed by even such necessary things as money, food and clothing. However, this may not be our greatest danger. Self-deception may hold us in the thick of thin things in another sense. Are we not in the thick of thin things when seeking honor from men instead of from God? when we spend our efforts to make a good impression upon those around us, instead of thinking how we appear in God's eyes? Are we not in the thick of thin things when we are seeing ourselves better than we really are? when we are feeding on our own thoughts instead of hungering and thirsting after righteousness?

Measuring our actions by the standard of other men instead of weighing every thought, motive and impulse by the Word of God, keeps us in that realm of thin things. In a dreamy state of mind, leaning on our own understanding and trusting

in our own ways we are surely in the midst of thin things that can yield us no eternal benefit.

How many times we have closed our eyes to the true facts about ourselves. Surely we are not at such times fooling any but ourselves, when we allow ourselves to believe that God is not so exacting after all.

No doubt we are all painfully familiar with some temptation that leads us quickly into the midst of thin things. Can we not see that all our natural inclinations are thickly absorbing? Can we not see that they deaden us to the deep, spiritual perceptions that make us sensible to our true selves?

If we pursue the normal course of "thin things," we shall one day discover that we have held to worthless values and have lost eternity. So may we let go every "thin" thing and make our every interest in life subservient to our one great interest—and we shall someday find our lives in the Kingdom of God. ●●

Thoughts

... on Thoughts

He has achieved much who is able to control his thoughts.

Naturally, we think too much about ourselves, too much about things of no importance, too much of things that seem to hurt us, too much of what we do not like.

How different would be the whole picture of life if we would change our pattern of thinking!

How do we do it? We cannot always prevent wrong thoughts from rising in our minds, but we can put them aside. We do not have to dwell on them.

And there are several good preventions for wrong thoughts:

We can check the feelings that occasion them—the complacency, the irritations, the earthly longings, the petty interests.

We can immerse ourselves in holier interests, which will produce holier thoughts. As we concentrate more and more on loftier principles, nobler desires, heavenly promises and higher goals, we will find ourselves being bothered less and less by thoughts of the petty, the selfish, the sensual and sinful.

And as we do this, we find ourselves drawing nearer and nearer to God and experiencing that peace that is part of His presence, that perfect peace that is never disturbed—never, not even by a wrong thought. ●●

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SCRIPTURAL SPOTLIGHT

"Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven."
—Matthew 6:1

THE YEARS which Jesus spent in the obscurity of Nazareth were fruitful years, not only in the personal development which they yielded but also as a school for the study of human nature. When He emerged from the seclusion and began His public ministry, He was thoroughly cognizant of the ways and workings of humankind.

The yearly pilgrimage to Jerusalem at Pass-over time, also His weekly worship at the Nazareth synagogue, had permitted an occasional observation of the Rabbi class, the professors of religion. Not without knowledge of the motives that move men had Jesus observed the scribes with their sweeping robes, or the Pharisees with their broad phylacteries, their ostentation, their love of prominence, their fondness of title, their self-exalting pride. Looking beneath all the smooth surface movements, He could discern clearly the underlying impulse.

Thus it was that when He began to be about thirty years of age and entered into His public ministry His first address, known to us as the Sermon on the Mount, devoted about one-fifth of the whole to a bold and uncompromising denunciation of all external religion that leaves the heart untouched.

"Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward" (Matt. 6:1-2).

Jesus spoke forcefully to the multitude who heard Him; but the application of His words is not to be confined to that age alone. Seeking the praise of men is still a clinging trait of human nature, and the Master's words re-echo in our

ears. "Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them."

It would seem childish indeed to bring attention to our charitable acts by blowing a trumpet to announce ourselves. But by any ambitious display or unnecessary show of ourselves, our talents, our sacrifices, we are guilty of this very offense. Our Lord classifies it as an especially heathen trait, which indeed it is. It serves to change sincere service into a theatrical performance, for the eyes of men instead of the eyes of God. The trumpet note is heard, and we are pleased to be the man behind the instrument.

It is not the acts of charity that are condemned; it is not self-sacrifice and self-denial that is condemned; it is the motive behind the deed that makes the deed of no benefit to the giver. The injunction is that our righteousness should be aimed so directly at the eye of God that we do not contemplate any outer observation; that anything short of this, any admixture of secret, unsafe, unhealthy craving for human notice and praise is disabling to the man or woman who seeks it and precludes the divine approval and reward. Those who seek future reward perform their acts of kindness so unconsciously that no trumpet blowing ever enters their minds. No desire for self-aggrandizement motivates them—the reward promised of God is sufficient.

Some may—almost unconsciously—choose to perform only the seemingly greater acts of service that receive the most recognition—hence the Master's edict, "They have their reward." How grievous the plight for one to be receiving his reward now—all that he will get—in this brief and troubled existence, when he could have had the reward that is everlasting in duration.

Further in this chapter (Matthew 6) is another of Jesus' commands against ostentation. "And

when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward." J. B. Phillips' translation of this text speaks of these hypocrites as "play-actors." All stage action for display, to impress an audience! If our life is staged for men, we have our reward.

How easy it is to manifest an outward show of holiness while the mind within wanders impurely. How easy to bow the head pharisaically, how difficult to be humbly penitent. How easy to obey a number of outward rules, how difficult to surrender the mind and heart to the will of God. How easy to think about the opinion of others, how difficult to think first of God's approval. How easy to be rigorous in condemning others, how difficult to even admit sin in ourselves. How easy to be the trumpet-blowing Pharisee, how difficult to be the disciple indeed; how easy to embrace the law of God outwardly, how difficult to serve from a clear conscience in the sight of God and men. How easy to glean satisfactions as we go along which preclude the receiving of the great

and heavenly blessings—"Verily I say unto you, they have their reward."

"Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."

Three times our Master spoke the word of condemnation. Three times He pronounced the woe. And let us remember, it is a word of warning to all His followers in every age. If in any degree we labor to be seen of men, if any vainglorious display moves us to action, we have our reward. We reap only the gratification of the moment, the approval of grasshoppers, as it were, so small are vain men in the estimation of God Almighty.

What of us? Whose approval means most to us? Are we intent upon God's blessing, so intent that the approval or disapproval of men is secondary? Or if Jesus were to disclose our inmost thoughts would He say to us, "They have their reward"? ●●

A Ladder of Praise

(Continued from page 7)

for His own, watched over them, protected them, guided them, and controlled their lives according to His wise and gracious purpose. Seeing signs of His providence in the creation gave them confidence. Seeing signs of His providence in history gave them hope for the future. They looked out, as we do, upon a turbulent, tottering world that threatened to commit suicide by its own folly and wickedness, but they stayed calm and serene in the confidence that above all the chances and changes of history abides the unchanging and eternal God, who directs all toward a predetermined triumph.

The Psalmist thanked God for hope. Whatever else he knew about God, he knew this: that in Him was the only hope of life beyond. God was kind, forgiving, merciful. And because God had worked in the past, he could be sure God would work yet more, doing more and more of those wonderful works in behalf of the children of men. To be saved from the misery of misfortune, saved from the bondage of sin, saved from the folly of his own passions, saved from the fear of death

and nonentity—these are life's supreme blessings, and the Psalmist had them; for all these he gave thanks. And in giving this thanks, he took a long step up the ladder of praise.

Are we standing firmly on this rung? Do we fully appreciate all the wondrous works of God in our behalf—past, present and future? He who has given to us so abundantly in this present life, and who has offered so much more for the future—are we becoming more and more grateful as we should? *Deep is the debt of gratitude we owe to God.* "O that men"—including you and me—"would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men."

Rung Four: Praise for Tribulations

But this is not yet the highest rung on the ladder that we may reach. There is one higher, and it is found in these words, that "the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread: and when he had given thanks, he brake it. . . . After the same manner also he took the cup" (I Cor. 11:23-25).

At once our minds recreate the familiar scene in the upper room. Jesus and His disciples are sharing their last Passover meal together before the time comes when they will eat it anew "in the

kingdom of God" (Luke 22:16, 18).

On this the eve of His crucifixion, Jesus has told His disciples of many things—of glory, and joy, and hope, and peace. Now He enacts a solemn and meaningful ceremony, which is to live as a sacred memorial among His disciples until He comes in His Kingdom. First He takes the bread, a symbol of the gospel He has been preaching and teaching among men, that divine wisdom which He received from His Father; He gives thanks for it, and divides it among His disciples. By this simple act He entrusts to them the holy principles of heavenly knowledge that had been His. Now it is yours, He says; take it, learn it, teach it to others.

But this is not all Jesus did. "After the same manner also he took the cup." Here is the symbol of his complete life-consecration, the full surrender, the relinquishing of His own will to do the will of His Father; for this, too, He gives thanks to God, and then passes it on to His disciples. This, too, is yours, He says; "drink ye all of it." Your surrender must also be completed; you likewise must drink. It is the cup of self-sacrifice, the cup of total commitment, the pouring out of one's very life-blood in consecration. And for this, too, Jesus gives thanks.

Think of the meaning in this simple act. Giving thanks for that which symbolizes suffering and death; giving thanks for that which means obedience unto death, "even the death of the cross" for Jesus (Phil. 2:8). Think of giving thanks for that final and supreme test that He knew would be His on the morrow. Here is a mind so in tune with the mind of the Father, so in harmony with His overarching purpose of wisdom, that He can make the event of sacrifice, shame and suffering an occasion for gratitude to God. Mortal hands can reach no higher rung on the ladder of praise than this.

It is easy to thank God when the cup is filled with pleasure and blessing. But when the cup is brimming with suffering and pain, sorrow and adversity, can we still give thanks for the cup? Are we strong enough to pull ourselves to this topmost rung on the ladder of praise?

The apostle Paul could do it. He said "we glory in tribulations also, knowing . . ." what? "Knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed" (Rom. 5:3-5).

And this praise and joy is a rebounding happiness; for what gives more joy, or a deeper feeling of gratitude to God, than a day lived victoriously, a day spent concentrating our whole mind on the future and cutting loose from the things of the present? What gives greater cause for gratitude

than to know that we are indeed making the surrender, the sacrifice of a living being, the severing of our own ways, thought-patterns and ideals? What gives greater joy than the sure knowledge that we are nearer our goal than we have ever been before, and that our prospects of living forever are indeed becoming more real? Should we not be anxious to thank God for *anything* that brings us this holy joy? Could anything make us more deeply grateful?

Perhaps the highest expression of this rung on the ladder of praise is found in the words of the Psalmist, spoken prophetically of Christ and also of each loyal follower of His who attains that supreme height. "I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart" (Ps. 40:8). To find delight in any duty, any task, any enduring, any sacrifice, any suffering, simply because we are convinced that it is the will of God for us and will bring us nearer to Him and to our goal—here is the spring of genuine gratitude.

Glorying in the Cross

The apostle Paul called it glorying "in the cross." "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal. 6:14). It was a cross that denied him the right to think or speak as he naturally would have done, or to pursue the goals which would have naturally attracted him. The sacrifice was a cross, and it brought about a crucifixion; but Paul rejoiced—because so far as the *world* was concerned any more, he was a dead man, who had nothing to offer it; and so far as *he* was concerned, he no longer had any desire for the world; Paul was lost to its attractions, its power, its influence. For this separation Paul praised God. "Therefore," he could write, "I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake" (II Cor. 12:10)—not for the sake of suffering but for *Christ's* sake. He did not glory because of the crucifixion itself, but because of the triumph which that cross—borne to the end—would bring him.

No longer was Paul bound by outward restrictions; he could call himself one of the "circumcision of the heart," one of those who "worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:3), bound to Him by a deep, inseparable bond of inner strength and common purpose. Nothing external mattered at all; His gratitude was for the experiences of his life—whether "good" or "bad" from a human point of view—if only they would bring him to LIFE in Christ's Kingdom.

Rung Five: Praise for Immortality

This gratitude in trial is the highest rung on the ladder—until we are lifted to one higher. And this is the praise that will resound when “this mortal” shall “put on immortality” and death be “swallowed up in victory” (I Cor. 15:53-54). It is praise which, once begun, shall continue through all the ages of eternity.

Here at last is the highest and best level of praise—indeed, it is higher than we can now imagine. It is the level on which saints and angels join in triumphant hallelujahs to the great God who has glorified them and blessed them with delights indescribable. It is the ringing song the beloved John heard in vision. “Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great” (Rev. 19:5). It is the praise that shall arise as sweet incense to the throne of God when “all the angels . . . worshipped God, saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever” (Rev. 7:12).

Our founder, Rev. L. T. Nichols, delighted in attempting to imagine the wonders of that day. I would like to quote just a portion of one of his inspiring descriptions. “We should be so energized by this wonderful aspiration that our whole being will spring forth and be used in preparing to become one of those lofty and stately forms that will ascribe ‘blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might . . . unto our God for ever and ever.’ And as the great ‘Amen’ is pronounced, each heart will be so filled with ecstatic joy that there will be such a gusto that the happy Amen will break forth from every heart in such thundering tones that many a world on high will hear. And as they hear the gladsome sound, their joy will be increased, for they will realize that another world has been born into the celestial family of Him from whom all blessings flow.

“And then, as they listen, they will all return the echo with such magnified beauty and precision that every soul will bound with greater joy and pleasure as they listen so joyfully to the words, as it were ‘a voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.”

Oh, blessed be God—to think that we can be one to hear those gracious words and be part of that wife who has made herself ready. To think that the angels of God may someday speak these

words in *our* honor! Does it not seem, with such glory ahead, that we would be lost to the low and groveling world by which we are surrounded and become all absorbed with divine things?

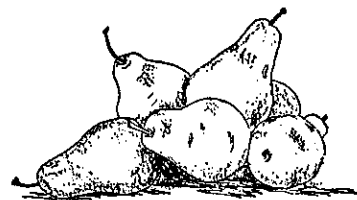
Oh, let us never forget the joy that will surround the top rung on the ladder of praise, those praises that will resound when earth has become a part of heaven and all below is Paradise!

How can we possibly content ourselves with small measures and low levels of gratitude, when that which is ahead is so “exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think”?

Oh, let us keep climbing, every rung going “higher, higher” until we reach the top. And then—remember—

*“When we’ve been there ten thousand years
Bright shining as the sun,
There’s no less days to sing God’s praise
Than when we first begun.”*

Fruitful Fragments



Adversity is a grindstone that puts an edge on us.

It is no small gain to know your own weaknesses.

*Our business in life is not to get ahead of others;
but to get ahead of ourselves.*

*The only way to prove that Christ’s teachings are
practical is to put them into practice.*

*Some minds are like concrete—all mixed up and
permanently set.*

*You can’t give away kindness; it always bounces
back.*

No man is truly honest until he is honest with God.

*Be careful of your thoughts; they may break into
words at any time.*

*The best way to get rid of unpleasant duties is to
discharge them faithfully.*

Habits are first cobwebs, at last cables.

Questions

"What is meant by Jesus' words that 'Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled' (Luke 21:24)? Wasn't this literally fulfilled when the Israelite people took the remainder of the city of Jerusalem in 1967?"

Exactly what Christ meant by the expression "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" we cannot be sure. Some people feel that the Jews recapturing Jerusalem is a sign that the time of the end is here; others feel that the present-day activities of the Jews in their nation is a sign.

Of one fact we may be sure: that the term "Israel" as used in Scripture many times refers not to the literal descendants of Abraham but to the "Israelite indeed" (John 1:47). As the apostle Paul wrote in Romans 2:28-29, "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God."

God did choose the nation of Israel to be His people. He gave them special promises conditioned upon obedience; He gave them special opportunities. But all was conditioned upon their accepting and obeying Him. When as a nation they rejected Him, He turned *from* them and turned *to* the Gentiles. It is to every man or woman, whether Jew or Gentile by birth, to become an "Israelite indeed," an adopted son or daughter of God. For "they are not all Israel, which are of Israel" (Rom. 9:6). "God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted with him" (Acts 10:34-35).

As far as the status of the literal city of Jerusalem today is concerned, it is currently occupied by "strangers to the true religion," which is a definition the Hebrew lexicon assigns to the term "Gentile." From what we can read, the inhabitants of Jerusalem are not serving God in truth and righteousness as God would have them. They are not "Israelites indeed, in whom there is no guile." This makes us wonder if the prophecy is not wholly fulfilled from another angle—as the rendering of the text in the Jerusalem Bible would suggest: "Jeru-

salem will be trampled down by the pagans until the age of the pagans is completely over." The New English Bible renders it, "Jerusalem will be trampled down by foreigners until their day has run its course." The word "pagan" in place of Gentiles would seem appropriate in this context.

This wording suggests a further similarity to the thought of Ezekiel 21:27, which is also a direct prophecy concerning the city of Jerusalem. The New International Version reads as follows: "A ruin! A ruin! It will not be restored until he comes to whom it rightfully belongs, to him I will give it." The phrase, "it will not be restored" is more accurate than the wording in the KJV, "it shall be no more." We cannot say that Jerusalem is "no more." But it is accurate to say that it has never been restored to its former glory and prominence; nor will it be "until he comes whose right it is."

There is another sense in which Jerusalem has not been restored. The temple at one time was the center from which the law of God was dispensed. After the destruction of the city in A. D. 70, that was no longer true. Jerusalem was not the center of religious knowledge. The city is still occupied by "pagans," as far as true religion is concerned, whether they be natural Jews or natural Gentiles. Only when Christ returns and sets up His kingdom will the "age of the pagans" be completely over and Jerusalem will become the "city of the great King," the metropolis of the whole earth (Ps. 48:2; Zech. 2:12; Matt. 5:35).

"Do you believe in the rapture?"

There are various theories extant about the rapture. If by the "rapture" you mean the transporting of a large group of saints to heaven, there to live with Christ, the answer is no, we do not believe this. We do, however, believe that all those who have served God during the 6000-year period between the time of Adam and the second advent of Christ will rise to meet Christ when He returns and be judged. We are not told where the Judgment will take place, but Paul states in I Thess. 4:16-17 that "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air." This is all we are told about the rapture. Revelation 14:1 informs us that Christ will stand on Mount Zion with 144,000 who have His "Father's name written in their foreheads." There are many details about which we wish we could know more, but the Lord in His wisdom did not see fit to reveal more. ●●

Our Readers Write...

Gleaning and Gleaning

Our loving Father, God, often through His tender mercies finds it in His heart to let drop in our pathway grains of blessings so that we, like Ruth of old, may glean those handfuls dropped on purpose. The world would leave only stubble which is only fit to be burned off; but not so our loving Father. He sees that we have enough and to spare, supplying us with those things which we need to enable us to grow from strength to strength in His blessed way.

Yes, gleaning can be back-aching work and patience is needed if we would acquire enough spiritual food for us to live a strong healthy spiritual life for God, but no one ever said that to be a Christian would be easy. But anything worth having has a price and where can you find such a fair deal as God has offered His children? "Love Me, serve Me, give Me your life of but a few short years, and I will bless you with untold wealth not for a few years but for eternity." This is His proposition to us.

Ruth was all the more conscientious in her task of gleaning because without grain she would have gone hungry. God does not want those who serve Him halfheartedly but those are hungering and thirsting after righteousness. We must serve our God not as though it did not matter but as though our very lives depend upon it—nay, a million lives, for eternity is the prize!

Workshop, England

H. L.

Singing

What joyous hours I spend listening to the tapes. I sing within as I follow you and your choir. The admonitions from the pastor are a great help to me, and I'm trying hard to be an overcomer. The hundredfold now is marvelous, but "What will it be to be there!" It fills all my waking moments, and on rising in the morning a song of praise runs through my head; then there is the daily spiritual breakfast before anything else. What a privilege is mine indeed!

Crewe, Cheshire, England

N. T.

Time Extended

It surely is wonderful to be alive, for the good Father is extending our time; we still have time to work to clean our own old self up before it becomes night when no man can work. So we should be very careful to redeem the time before it is too late. And we should do this before the crisis strikes.

If we really read and study the Bible with all the lessons, reproofs and warnings it contains, it should really build our faith. We have faith, hope and love left us in this age, and we really should build them within ourselves until we can say "it is written" when we are tempted to do this or that that we know we shouldn't do.

Kinards, South Carolina

H. C.

November, 1979

On the Homestretch

Being on the homestretch, every day—every minute of every day—counts. We can squander our time away, or we can make the best possible use of it. Not forever is the mercy of our God extended. The time is drawing near when we shall have to give account for the deeds done in this body, whether good or bad. Let us not be so short-sighted to think God will overlook any of our character imperfections and we still qualify for a place in His eternal Kingdom.

God is expending so much time with us. The last minute lessons we are getting are very strong and meaty. If truly alert we will realize they are for us to get all animated in serving the Lord with a pure heart fervently. The human nature is beset by so many faults which have to be watched daily. We have what it takes. We can if we will put sin far away from our tabernacles. Today is the day to do it.

South Amboy, New Jersey

L. M. K.

For the Highest Goal

With all the unrest in the nation today, it should move us to action so that we will redeem the time and think on things which are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, ever striving to attain new heights of character.

There are many goals in this life which men strive to attain, but we are striving for a higher goal. Let us keep our eyes on the goal just ahead.

We must remember that a day is coming when everyone will stand alone before God. Now is the time to get ready.

Peru, Kansas

W. R.

Deceased

My mother (Mrs. Goldie Nall) has not written many letters in the last few years, due to failing health. She passed away in her sleep September 22. She did not have to suffer long. I hated to lose her, but know it was God's will.

Mena, Arkansas

June Nall

Twelve Booklets

HISTORY OF THE MEGIDDO MISSION
THE COMING OF JESUS AND ELIJAH
WHAT MUST WE DO TO BE SAVED?
GOD'S SPIRITUAL CREATION
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The spacious firmament on high
With all the blue ethereal sky,
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Their great Original proclaim.

The unwearied sun from day to day
Does his Creator's power display;
And publishes to ev'ry land
The work of an almighty hand.

Soon as the evening shades prevail,
The moon takes up the wondrous tale,
And nightly to the list'ning earth
Repeats the story of her birth:

Whilst all the stars that round her burn,
And all the planets in their turn,
Confirm the tidings, as they roll
And spread the truth from pole to pole.

What though in solemn silence all
Move round the dark terrestrial ball?
What though no real voice nor sound
Amid their radiant orbs be found?

In reason's ear they all rejoice.
And utter forth a glorious voice;
Forever singing as they shine,
"The Hand that made us is Divine."